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Collaborative Conversations in a Post-Graduate Study Group: Constructing Academic and Professional Identities

Elspeth Michelle Kempe

A thesis submitted to the Wits School of Education, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Johannesburg

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Abstract

There appears to be very little research into the functioning of teacher-student study groups that operate at the interface between academic and professional environments, and into the possible influences of such groups on the members' teacher and post-graduate student identities. In particular, there appears to be no insider research into groups that are self-constituted and therefore function without the mediation of a researcher.

This study is an insider investigation of the ways of talking in a self-constituted teacher-student study group in an attempt to establish how the use of dialogic talk contributed to the co-construction of knowledge and at the same time to the constitution of identities as confident, innovative students and teachers.

It takes a socio-cultural approach to learning, and draws on the theories of Vygotsky and Bakhtin which highlight the use of talk, especially dialogic talk, as a tool for learning. It draws on the work of Wenger and of Gee in the analysis of the constitution of identities as confident, innovative students and teachers, and on the concept of 'figured worlds', developed by Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, to develop an understanding of what enabled or constrained each group member's identity/ies as a confident and innovative teacher.

The data were comprised of transcripts of the conversations of study group members working together, and of two sets of interviews: the first conducted while the group members were still studying and the second two years after they had graduated.

The findings show firstly, that engaging in dialogic talk while working together played an important role both in the co-construction of knowledge and in the constitution of confident student and teacher identities, and secondly, that continued professional engagement with other study group members may be significant for the on-going development of professional identities as confident teachers.

The study concludes that encouraging teachers who return to study to form study and support groups, encouraging them to draw on each others' professional knowledge as a resource during the learning process, and encouraging them to use dialogic talk as they work together, may provide some of the support needed for them to develop confidence in themselves as both students and teachers.

Key words: identity, teacher-student study groups, dialogic talk, communities of practice, figured worlds, insider research.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other University.

_____

Elspeth Kempe

_____ day of _____ in the year 2014

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my study buddies, without whom I might not have graduated with the Honours degree. Your generosity of spirit while we studied turned me into a long-term student; the years that we have spent talking teaching have profoundly changed my practice as a teacher.

Anne
Brad
Daisy
Emma
Pat
Meg
Wendy

You have been my fellow travellers on every step of this long journey; I hope I have done justice to your voices.

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I wish to thank my supervisors:

Professor Yvonne Reed
and
the late Professor Pippa Stein.

You believed in me:
you took me to the edge,
you pushed me,
and because of you,
I flew.

Grateful thanks are also due to:

My husband, John, and my sons, Andy and Greg, who have lived with this project for more years than I care to count, thank you for your endless support. The three of you have sorted out my computer problems with admirable patience: it is entirely due to you that I never succumbed to computer rage.

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Kay Brown, if it had not been for your help with the formatting I would still be typing out chapter contents and sorting out page references by hand. My deepest appreciation for your late night efforts.

My mother, Dors Ellenberger, who set the example by putting herself through a B. Com. at Wits when a young woman.

Last, but most important, Yvonne: I cannot sufficiently express my gratitude for your support and all the hours you have put into helping me complete this thesis. Pippa started me off on the journey, but you have guided me to the conclusion. All I can say is thank you.

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1.1. General introduction

The impetus for this research came from the formation of a study group when five high school teachers of English, including myself, returned to university to study part-time for an Honours degree in Applied Linguistics. A year after finishing the Honours degree the same group registered for a Masters degree in English Education, at the start of which three other students joined the study group, bringing the number of members to eight. Throughout the study this group is referred to as a teacher-student group.

When I questioned the members of the study group about their experiences, each teacher-student felt that working together had not only helped them in their studies but had also led to increased confidence in themselves as innovative teachers.

Research with a focus on students who work co-operatively while studying is not new: collaborative study groups are a well-documented way of supporting students at both school and at university levels (Edwards, 2005; Johnson & Johnson, 1992, 1994; Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 2007; Johnson, Johnson, & Stanne, 2000; Slavin, 1992, 1996).

There has also been considerable investigation of teachers working together. Such research shows that collegial support groups, teacher networks and teacher study groups are useful ways of supporting and sustaining professional development (Arbaugh, 2003; Carroll, 2005; Clair, 1998; Deppeler, 2007; Firestone & Pennell, 1997; Lieberman, 2000; McCotter, 2001; Penuel & Riel, 2007; Saavedra, 1996).

There appears, however, to be very little research into the functioning of teacher-student study groups that operate at the interface between academic and professional environments, and into the possible influences of such groups on the members' teacher and post-graduate student identities. In particular, there appears to be no insider research into groups that are self-constituted and therefore function without the mediation of a researcher.

1.2. Research context: changes in South African education

In post-apartheid South Africa there have been significant changes in education policies and practices. At the time when this study began teachers were struggling to locate themselves within the new paradigm of integrated[1] schools. They are still having to cope with the multiple curriculum changes introduced with the aim of offering equality of educational opportunity for all South African learners.

There have been three sets of curriculum change since 1994. The first and greatest change was Curriculum 2005, the controversial South African version of outcomes-based education (Chisholm, 2003; Cross, Mungadi, & Rouhani, 2002; Jansen & Christie, 1999). This was introduced in 1997 bringing with it new approaches to teaching and a range of new assessment practices. Curriculum 2005 expected teachers to be able to change from a pedagogy which, in many schools, was centred on rote learning, to one focused on learner-centered learning with teachers acting as facilitators not providers of knowledge (Fiske & Ladd, 2005). Problems in the implementation of the new curriculum saw subsequent revisions, in 2002 for example, and its replacement from 2010 with the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement. Coping with a change of the magnitude of Curriculum 2005 alone was stressful, having to adjust to further changes has placed a great burden on the country's teachers.

While curriculum change is an expected feature of any educational landscape (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992), research shows that it is a major source of stress in teachers' lives

[1] During the apartheid years in South Africa schools were racially segregated: learners were only allowed to attend schools designated for their particular racial group. In the early 1990s as the apartheid policies were done away with, racially segregated schooling disappeared as schools started taking in learners from all 'race groups'.

(Kelchtermans, 2005; Lasky, 2005; McCormick, Ayres, & Beechey, 2006; Smylie, 1999; Woods, 1999) and that teachers need support in various forms if curriculum change is to be successfully implemented (Gess-Newsome, Southerland, Johnston, & Woodbury, 2003; Smylie, 1996). Two of the central forms of support mentioned in almost all the literature are professional development for teachers in order to inform them of the nature of the reforms, and support for teachers during the in-class implementation process.

Much of the comment on the success or lack thereof of Curriculum 2005 mentions these two points: teacher education to improve teachers' pedagogic knowledge is insufficient, as is ongoing support, both social and administrative, to help teachers actually implement the new curriculum (Bantwini, 2010; Bloch, 2009a; Fiske & Ladd, 2005; Gower, 2009; Southwood & Kuiper, 2003; N. Taylor, 2008; Treu, Olivier, Bean, & Van der Walt, 2010).

Both forms of support, professional development and ongoing support during the implementation process, are necessary if the curriculum changes are to be accomplished successfully.

Against this background of change and the subsequent need for professional development and support, some teachers in South Africa are returning to part-time study in an attempt to both enhance their subject knowledge and to find new ways of working with that knowledge in their classrooms, ways that are more in line with the requirements of the new curriculum.

However, returning to part-time study as mature students is not without its challenges. Many of the teacher-students find that they struggle intellectually and emotionally with their studies. As students they have to come to new understandings of their subject and their practice, and thus to new understandings of themselves as teachers (Graven, 2002; Reio, 2005). As teachers they face the difficult task of implementing their new understandings, often in the face of opposition from their colleagues in their schools. As part-time students they face both these challenges simultaneously, as well as the

challenge of trying to carve out time for their studies from already busy personal and professional lives. So while returning to study may provide them with new pedagogic knowledge, their need for support increases as they take on the extra load of being students as well as being teachers in a process of transition.

They may also face a variety of problems typical of many mature students; they may not necessarily have full family support and may experience a sense of alienation from friends and colleagues (Baxter & Britton, 1999; James, 1995), and they may feel they are sacrificing their families (Castle & Munro, 2002). All or any of these problems put a great deal of pressure on them emotionally. Unexpected struggles with their studies or receiving lower grades than anticipated may damage their self-confidence (James, 1995).

Added to this they have the extra stress of making themselves vulnerable as teachers by taking on student identities. McWilliam (2005) lists a number of 'mental' habits that teachers tend to adhere to, three of which offer powerful explanations for why being a teacher-student is stressful. Firstly there is the idea that teachers should know more than students, secondly the idea that teachers lead, students follow and thirdly that teachers assess and students are assessed. Finding oneself positioned as a student and therefore with limited knowledge in a new field, having to follow rather than lead and having to be assessed rather than to assess others may leave one feeling very exposed when one is accustomed to the safety of being on the other side of the desk.

1.3. Aim and research questions

The aim of this research is to provide a thick description and an analysis of the events and practices in a teacher-learner study group over a period of time in order to contribute to the theoretical understanding of how teacher-student study groups could function to allow members to draw on the cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) provided by their professional identities to inform their learner identities, and subsequently to draw on their new graduate identities when introducing new teaching approaches in their classrooms.

A secondary aim is to offer an empathetic retelling and analysis of narratives of the study group members' professional teaching lives two years after the group had ceased to meet,

in order to establish in what ways their professional identities had developed and changed during this time, given that identities are, according to Weedon: "constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak" (Weedon, 1987, p. 33).

1.3.1. Research questions

The main question is: How did the study group's ways of working together lead to the development of each group member's 'enabled identities' as student and teacher?

Secondary questions related to this question are the following:

- How was talk used as a tool to mediate learning in the group?
- What role did different 'talk genres' play in this learning?
- In the learning talk, how did the interplay between group members' student and professional knowledges support the constitution of confident student and teacher identities?

With reference to the secondary aim of the study, the final research question is: Beyond the life of the study group, what enabled or constrained each group member's identity/ies as a confident and innovative teacher?

1.3.2. Rationale

It is possible that teachers, or professionals in other fields, who return to study might recognise, in the data, experiences similar to their own, and that the data analysis will offer them ways in which they can support each other as both students and as innovative teachers.

It is anticipated that findings from this study could be of interest to teacher educators and other academics who work with post-graduate students who are also experienced practitioners in their professional fields.

1.4. Prologue: the story of the study group

I was one of the founding members of the study group being researched, so this research is deeply intertwined with my own life: I am both a full participant in the group's activities and the researcher.

Returning to study

I had decided that I needed to study further as I wanted to return to teaching after a gap of almost ten years. I was hoping to change direction slightly and move into adult literacy, teaching English as a second or other language (ESOL) rather than the high school English teaching for which I was qualified. I felt that my pedagogic knowledge was both out of date and inadequate for adult ESOL teaching so I registered for an Honours degree in Applied English Language Studies (AELS) at the University of the Witwatersrand.

One of the first courses for the Honours degree was on transformational grammar for which Larsen-Freeman and Celce-Murcia's book *The Grammar Book* (Larsen-Freeman & Celce-Murcia, 1983) was a key text. At that stage my knowledge of grammar was very limited: I had managed to succeed at school, university and in the teaching I had done with only an implicit knowledge of the grammar of my home language. While I could correct a badly written sentence, I could not articulate what the grammatical errors in the sentence were or the grammatical reasons for correcting it: my knowledge was implicit and intuitive, I could not access it overtly. As a result I struggled with the combined task of learning grammatical meta-language at the same time as using it to 'tree diagram' sentences: a technique used for understanding how the grammatical structure of a sentence changes as tenses and clauses are introduced, and thus how grammatical errors are 'arrived at' when complex sentence structures are used.

Studying alone

Determined to succeed, I worked hard on my own at home, reading up on grammatical meta-language and working through the sets of study questions and answers at the end of each chapter in *The Grammar Book*.

Four weeks into the course we were given a class test. I went into the test room feeling well-prepared and reasonably confident. I came out worried. There had been questions which I did not completely understand, let alone feel sure about answering. My worst fears were confirmed when we got the results back the following week: I had failed.

Failure

I sat in the seminar room feeling deeply shaken on several levels. Firstly, as a learner: I had been working consistently, I felt I had prepared reasonably well for the test. What learning was I not doing, or what aspect of the learning was I doing 'wrong'? When I embarked on the course I had felt relatively confident of my ability to study; I already had one Honours degree behind me. The fact that I had failed in spite of all my hard work badly shook my confidence in my academic ability.

Secondly, as a teacher: doubt about my abilities as a teacher slowly crept in. I had always assured my students that if they studied hard they would succeed – but I had studied hard and I had failed. What kind of teacher was I if my own sage advice did not work when I applied it to my own learning? Failure as a student seemed to signal failure as a teacher.

Lastly, on a personal level: it was not a happy prospect to have to admit to my colleagues, my husband and (especially) my teenage sons that in spite of all the work I had done I had failed my first test! Looking back on it I am very aware that the fact that I had failed put a large dent in both my pride and my image of myself as a competent teacher and student.

Working with others

Fortunately for me, I was sitting by chance next to Anne[2], one of the other mature students on the course, at the moment when our tests were returned. She had an extensive knowledge of grammar and had done well in the test. Seeing my stricken face she asked whether I would like some help. I eagerly agreed to her suggestion that we should read the relevant chapter for the week and then meet at her house on Saturday afternoon to work through the study questions and do the 'homework' together. I knew I needed help; my own resources were clearly insufficient.

[2] These are not the group members' real names, they all chose pseudonyms to protect their privacy.

A few weeks later Daisy heard us planning our Saturday session and asked what we were doing. Anne promptly invited her to join us and from then on the three of us met every Saturday afternoon to work on transformational grammar together, jokingly calling ourselves 'The Middle-aged Nerds Support Group'. At the end of the grammar course we all passed with good marks; as a tool to support learning the study group had been successful, especially for me!

A community of practice

In the next semester we continued to meet, working together on the other courses we were taking. We soon settled on a modus operandi; we would decide on one of the readings that had been given to us, read it in our own time and meet at Anne's house to discuss it. We never got round to formally organising our group by electing a leader, so selecting the reading was an ad hoc decision. As we left the seminar room one of us would ask, 'What shall we read for Saturday?' and someone would make a suggestion. Sometimes they had looked at it and found it difficult, often it was a reading that had been mentioned by the lecturer during the seminar. Brad and Wendy joined us some time during this period, no one can remember exactly when. They had joined us for the two-day study period before the mid-year exams and later asked if they could join us permanently, saying that we seemed to have so much fun.

For the rest of the Honours programme the five of us met every weekend on Saturday afternoons. We built up a very strong community ethos: if for some reason one of us could not make the Saturday afternoon because of a school duty or a social occasion that could not be changed, the session was moved to either Saturday morning or some time on Sunday. If the session could not be rescheduled at all on that weekend we did not meet, it was a case of all or none of us. We all graduated with excellent results at the end of the Honours degree; it seemed that the group had provided support in our studies for all of us.

The year between degrees – teachers supporting teachers

During the year after we had graduated we continued to meet about every four to six weeks, to talk about our teaching and sometimes to read and discuss an article someone

had found in a journal. We often shared teaching materials, a habit which had started as the pressures of simultaneously teaching and studying had grown heavier.

Towards the end of the year the possibility of studying for a Masters degree arose. Everyone agrees that there was no overt decision that we would *all* continue studying, or that the question, 'Would anyone else be interested in a Masters degree?' was even asked. There was just a general feeling that if some of the group studied further you would be missing out on a continuation of the group experience if you did not join them.

The MA years

When we had all decided to register for an MA in English Education degree we made a conscious decision to extend an invitation to the rest of the Masters class to join our study sessions. We did this for three reasons: we did not want to be seen as an exclusive 'coterie'; we thought it would be useful to have a larger group as other people's viewpoints would widen our horizons; pragmatically, there would be electives to choose from in the Master's programme and as people pursued their individual interests it would be useful to have a larger group of 'study buddies' to draw on to ensure that everyone always had at least one person from the group to work with.

Three new members joined the group at the start of the Masters programme. Meg, Emma and Pat already knew some or all of the group members and at the encouragement of those they knew in the group they accepted the invitation to study with us.

The group only met with all eight members for the first six months of the degree, the duration of the compulsory core course. Thereafter we chose electives and split up into smaller units. As we had hoped, there were now enough group members for every sub-group to have at least two individuals to support one another.

Developing a researcher's interest

My interest in researching the study group grew very slowly through the first eighteen months of the Masters programme. After we had all registered two of the lecturers in the

AELS department had mentioned to some of us that they felt the activities of the study group may be worth investigating. We could not see what the point of interest could be: to us it was just tea and talk on Saturday afternoons.

Then, during the core course, a meeting was held between all the students and the lecturers involved in the MA to discuss a vexing question: should we students be expected to assess ourselves and if so, how much weight should our self assessments carry in the overall course mark? We had not discussed the matter the previous Saturday afternoon, yet at this meeting I suddenly realised that several times as a study group member finished speaking the rest of the group appeared to turn to the group member we seemed to expect to talk next. I was intrigued: did we have some sort of order in which we spoke or were we picking up 'I want to speak next' signals from each other? We were clearly attuned to working together and I began to understand why the AELS lecturers had found our group interesting. I started noticing our interactions with a more observant eye but was not yet sufficiently interested to consider making the study group the subject of my research.

In the second year of the Masters degree Daisy and I chose to do an elective together. We worked together on Saturday afternoons; we shared every reading and every reference with each other. We chose the same essay topic, discussed the topic together and read and commented on each other's first and final drafts of the essay. I found her comments and critique invaluable and she has said that she valued my contributions (T8B/AD/I[3]). Yet the essays we produced were totally different. I was intrigued by the fact that we could work so closely together yet retain such independent opinions and approaches. Was this a feature of the way the group worked? My interest in the workings of the group increased.

It was only towards the middle of the second year that I finally decided to research the study group. I had noticed that in spite of the fact that we were now meeting in sub-groups we still seemed to feel connected to the overall community of practice: we were all reading for our research proposals and I realised that we often went to some lengths to

[3] The method of annotating the data sets is described in Chapter 3.

pass on to other group members information about articles or books that we thought might be useful to their research – items that we had seen while reading for our own projects. We were still giving to and receiving support from the community even though, in practical terms, it no longer existed. It was becoming aware of the strength of the ties that bound our study community together that convinced me that the group could be a fruitful subject for research.

My initial research interest was in the ways of talking in the study group, and how this supported the construction of knowledge in the group (as evidenced by academic success) but at the same time allowed members to continue to hold disparate viewpoints – hence Daisy and I could work very closely together but still produce entirely different essays. It was only later, looking at the first research interviews where the group members talked about what the group had meant to them and spoke of the degree of confidence it had given them in their professional lives, that I realised that perhaps the real importance of the group lay in the way that it functioned at the interface of the members' social, academic and professional lives. It is frequently difficult to implement innovative practices in one's classroom due to lack of support, and sometimes opposition, from colleagues in one's school (Wells, 2000). Somehow, during the discussions on academic matters, the support received as students had permeated the group members' professional lives as well. I asked myself what was it about our ways of working together that had caused this to happen.

As a result of this rather late decision – in terms of the lifespan of the study group – to research the activities of the group it was not possible to collect data of the whole group working together on course material: we were now meeting in sub-groups of two or three which had chosen different elective courses offered as part of the Masters degree. The only common activity in which we were all engaged was the preparation of our research proposals. Several group members had already suggested that it might be useful to know more about each other's research questions, so I organised for the group to meet on a number of afternoons to read through and critique each other's proposals in preparation for the formal seminars at which we were to present the proposals to the lecturers and the

rest of the Masters students. The study afternoons had been run on a simple format: we had selected a reading (an academic paper or book chapter) which we all read in advance, then we met and one of the group members launched the discussion by starting to read the paper/chapter out loud. As the paper/chapter was read questions were asked, points were raised, and the discussion got under way. We approached the proposals in the same way: the writer distributed copies of her/his proposal, started reading it out loud, and the other group members interrupted with questions and comments.

With the permission of the group members I audiotaped these work sessions in order to investigate the ways in which the group talked as they worked together, and subsequently conducted small group interviews to ask them what they remembered of the way the group had worked, how they felt about being members of the group, and how it had helped them as teachers.

From the first to the second phase of the research

In its earliest stages the research focus was on the ways in which the group worked together to co-construct knowledge and provide support for each other as students, and on the possible implications for the constitution of student identities. When I realised the importance of the group as a support for developing confident teacher identities, I decided to also investigate how the learning talk in the group had contributed to members' confidence in themselves as teachers.

However as the study progressed another point of interest surfaced when my research supervisor asked me if the group members were still in contact with each other and whether I thought that we still drew support from each other. I could tell her that we all met for lunch every few months and that everybody seemed to be happy with their teaching: I had not noticed more than the usual grumbles about a hard-working teacher's lot. We discussed the matter, and decided it might be useful to look at the 'afterlife' of the group: what, if any, changes had occurred in the group members' teaching lives and how they felt about the directions which their careers had taken.

As a result I conducted another round of interviews, this time an individual interview with each group member to find out what had happened in their teaching lives. Two responses were unexpected: while five of the group members spoke with confidence of the changes they had introduced into their teaching and how they were moving forward in their careers, two formerly confident teachers were now quite despondent.

This discovery led to an additional research question: Beyond the life of the study group, what enabled or constrained each group member's identity/ies as a confident and innovative teacher?

1.5. The composition of the group

It should be noted that the group was reasonably homogenous in terms of social class, 'race' and previous experiences of good quality education, formerly available only to 'white' South Africans. It was largely female, having only one male member (which possibly reflects teacher demographics in many schools). The greatest variation was in age: with twenty five years separating the oldest from the youngest. The variation in age was seen as an asset by group members: the older members had a depth of experience that was useful in group discussions and the diverse, more modern academic approaches brought by younger members were appreciated by the older members (T3A/KP). The relative homogeneity of the group may have contributed to the commonality of perspective evident in the discussions of a range of socio-cultural issues.

1.6. Outline of chapters

As the research focus differs in each of the three data presentation and analysis chapters, so the theory which informs the analysis is also different. In Chapter 2 I discuss the theoretical framework which informs the overall study; at the beginning of Chapters 4, 5 and 6 there is a short presentation of the theory on which the data analysis is based in that particular chapter.

The chapters are as follows:

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Chapter 4: Becoming confident post-graduate students: the role of learning talk

Chapter 5: Gaining confidence as students and as innovative teachers: the role of gossip and ‘war stories’

Chapter 6: Sustaining (or not) expert identities: the afterlife of the study group

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Recommendations

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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2.1. Introduction

This study investigates the ways in which language is used by members of a post-graduate study group as a tool to mediate the construction of academic and professional knowledges, and for the constitution of student and teacher identities.

This research is framed by theories and concepts relevant to the use of language in the construction of identity, and is also informed by several key concepts that are related to the main theoretical works discussed.

The study takes a sociocultural approach to language as a tool for learning, an approach that has its origins in the work of Vygotsky and Bakhtin, and which draws attention to the relationships between individuals, their actions and the sociocultural context in which the actions take place (Wertsch, 1998).

The chapter begins with an overview of a sociocultural approach to language use, after which I discuss some of the writings of Vygotsky on language as a tool for mediating learning. Next I review some of the work of Bakhtin, who emphasises the need to focus on the situated nature of the 'utterance' as the unit of communication, because an utterance is produced by a 'voice' which always speaks from a point of view or a context. This review is followed by a discussion of the concepts of Gee, how these concepts are a useful extension of Bakhtin's approaches to language, and how these concepts can be used as tools for understanding how identities are constituted through talk. This is followed by a discussion of post-structuralist approaches to identity and subjectivity, followed by an analysis of Gee's (2000-2001) method of viewing identity as an amalgam of four different 'identity aspects': a person's background, their position in society, the ways in which others speak of them and the results of sharing practices with other members of different communities. I then consider how Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of communities of practice contributes to an understanding of identity constitution through involvement in practice, and how pedagogic safe houses (Canagarajah, 1997, 2004) are a particular type of community which enable the constitution of particular identities. The chapter ends with an examination of the constructs of figured worlds and identities in practice, developed by Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain (1998), and the ways in which these ideas can be used as tools to understand the enactment of identity.

2.2. A sociocultural approach to language use

Wertsch defines "the task of a sociocultural approach" as being: "to explicate the relationships between human action, on the one hand, and the cultural, historical, and institutional contexts in which this action occurs, on the other" (Wertsch, 1998, p. 24).

He sees the relationship between the individual performing the action and the context in which the action takes place as being mediated by the use of a tool of some kind, either a material tool – he cites as an example of a material tool the pole that is used when pole-vaulting – or a semiotic tool – such as language or number systems (Wertsch, 1991b, 1998). There is a dynamic tension between the individual, the tool and the action: they function as a single entity, an "individual-acting-with-mediated-means" (Wertsch, 1991b, p. 12). Because tools are culturally embedded, they and the actions for which they are used cannot be separated from the context in which the actions occur (Wertsch, 1991b).

This research examines the use of language as a mediational tool in the construction of knowledge and in the constitution of identities within a post-graduate study group. Central to a sociocultural approach to language use is a view of the language-and-the-speakers as embedded in, or drawn from, wider cultural, historical, and institutional contexts, in this case those in which the study group was situated.

In Chapters 4 and 5 taking a sociocultural approach to the group's language use enables an understanding of the 'working talk' of the group as being drawn from their overlapping academic, professional and social life spaces, rather than just from an academic, students-studying-together-in-a-group space. In Chapters 5 and 6 this approach to language use makes it possible to understand the identities enacted in the interviews as both multiple and changeable: the interviewees move between presenting themselves as the-teachers-they-were, situated in the professional spaces they occupied while they were studying, and as the-teachers-they-are-now, situated in their current professional spaces.

By taking a sociocultural approach I am able to "live in the middle" (Wertsch, 1998, p. 16): to view the data from the different perspectives provided by the different contexts,

and to identify the ways in which the intersecting identities of the research participants, (as students, as teachers, as friends) informed the attributes of their talk as they worked together. This approach has enabled the analysis of the 'work' of the talk (for example, constructing an understanding of what is meant by 'writing in the classroom') as it happened in the 'here and now' of an afternoon study session, and at the same time to identify how the 'types' or genres of talk were drawn from the 'there and then' of the members' location in other social spaces (Doecke, Kostogriz, & Charles, 2004). At the same time this approach has enabled the identification of the role played by different talk genres in both knowledge construction and the constitution of identities.

2.3. Vygotsky and language

While Vygotsky does not use the term 'sociocultural' in his writing, he proposes that learning is a social process shaped by culture (Mercer, 2004; Vygotsky, 1986). From this perspective learning is a communicative activity, in which language is used as a social mode of thinking and for sharing knowledge and constructing understanding in culturally-formed settings (Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000; Mercer, 1994, 1995).

2.3.1. Language as a tool for mediating learning

According to Vygotsky, learning is mediated by psychological tools such as "language; various systems for counting; mnemonic techniques; algebraic symbol systems; works of art; writing, schemes, diagrams, maps and mechanical drawings; all sorts of conventional signs; and so on" (Vygotsky, 1981, p. 137). He considers language to be the "tool of tools", arguing that "intellectual growth is contingent on mastering the social means of thought, that is, language" (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 47) and suggesting that language is the means by which the interpersonal processes of learning – the discussion of concepts, problems, etc with others – become the intrapersonal processes of learning, both the talk of others and one's own words becoming internalised as thought (Vygotsky, 1986; Wells, 1999; Wertsch, 1991b).

This view of language as a mediational tool applies to both learning and personal development: language is also one of the psychological tools by which individuals can 'construct' their own sense of self (Daniels, 2001). The analysis of the research data in

Chapters 4 and 5 is informed by this perspective on language: that it mediates both learning and the development of identity.

2.3.2. Talk and mediation

Mediation involves providing access to something in some way. Tappan describes mediated action as entailing:

> two central elements: an 'agent', the person who is doing the acting, on the one hand, and 'cultural tools' or 'mediational means', the tools, means, or 'instruments', appropriated from the culture, and used by the agent to accomplish a given action, on the other (Tappan, 2006, p. 3).

The mediating cultural tool being investigated in this thesis is language, specifically the ways in which language use mediates the construction of academic knowledge, a deeper understanding of teaching practice and the formation of identity.

Bruner (1986) and Wertsch (1999) suggest Vygotsky's concept of 'tools' should be reframed as 'a tool kit', a set of options from which participants choose as they interact, rather than one specific way of acting. Thus in this research 'talk as a tool' can be expanded into 'a toolkit of different types of talk'. In the analysis of study group conversations various talk types are identified and the ways in which they accomplish different actions are analysed. The talk types identified include social genres[4] of talk, such as teacher talk – where questions are asked in order to check information; and student talk – where questions are asked in order to obtain information; and discourse types such as social languages[5] – which are used to position the speaker in relation to both other speakers and to long-term cultural and historical discussions, such as the value of teaching Shakespeare.

Viewing talk from a sociocultural perspective requires taking into account the cultural and historical backgrounds from which the talk types originate and the social context in which the conversation takes place (Wertsch & Rupert, 1993), as the different backgrounds and contexts shape the talk in different ways (Wertsch, 1991b).

[4] For a discussion of talk genres see section 2.4.4.
[5] For a discussion of Gee's (1999a; 2011) concept of social languages see section 2.5.

While I found it useful to conceptualise the study group as a community of practice (see 2.8 below), I argue that it is a particularly complex one because its members are situated at the intersection of three social contexts: the academic learning environment, the professional environment of the school and the social environment of friendship. The group members in the study had a four and a half year history of personal friendship, as well as histories of teaching and studying in a variety of contexts, all of which made available to them a variety of 'language tools' (social languages, genres of talk) which were used as they worked. Examining the talk against these varied cultural, historical and institutional backgrounds enables an explanation of phenomena such as the contribution of stories about teaching experience to the learning situation (Chapter 5), how using different talk genres shaped the way learning occurred (Chapter 4), what impact the use of different social languages had on the conversation (Chapter 5), and how discourse choices facilitated the construction of understanding as discussions moved between everyday and academic talk (Chapter 4).

This research analyses data from real life, unstructured interactions where interaction between peers is central to the learning process, unlike much of the research into cognitive functioning which has been done under controlled conditions, such as adult-child dyads working together (Wertsch & Rupert, 1993). Under these conditions issues of power, authority and emotion are largely ignored, as "the range of emotional responses is relatively narrow and power and authority relations are fixed" (Wertsch & Rupert, 1993, p. 229). In real life circumstances the issues of power, authority and emotion have to be taken into account, as they are variable and play an important role in mediating the way in which the language tools function. For example, the institutional contexts from which some of the talk genres originate – such as 'lecturer talk' or 'student talk' which are derived from the academic context – influence the degree of authority of the speaker and therefore the power of the genre to direct the conversation (see Chapter 4 p. 82 for a discussion of what constitutes 'lecturer talk' and 'student talk'). The social or friendship context of the group offers other genres, such as 'co-inquirer' and 'friendship talk', which

are less authoritative genres but ones which carry a great deal of 'power' in terms of emotional support.

The value that is placed on different talk genres also depends on the context in which they are used (Gee, 1992; Wertsch, 1991b; Wertsch & Rupert, 1993). For example, in an academic context being able to 'do' academic talk is highly valued, and the use of everyday talk genres such as recount or storytelling is considered to be of lesser value. In an academic context a student's use of academic or everyday talk is often used as a measure of the student's level of cognitive functioning, with the use of everyday talk genres indicating lower cognitive functioning. But if one considers how everyday concepts can mediate the understanding of scientific concepts (see section 2.3.3 below), in the context of a study group everyday talk may be a valuable tool when used by group members to 'bootstrap' themselves into an understanding of difficult academic concepts and terminology, and the telling of stories about classroom activities may provide valuable teaching advice (see Chapters 4 and 5). However mediational tools can constrain as well as enable action, depending on how they are used (Wertsch, 1998). For example, while recounts of classroom activities might enable the construction of knowledge, they might also waste time by moving the discussion away from the main topic in unproductive directions.

An important focus of analysis in the research is the identification of the genres of talk that were used in the group, what the sociocultural forces were that shaped the genres (in other words how the differing social contexts contributed to the function of the group's talk) and what 'work' was done by the different genres in the learning activity.

2.3.3. Talk and the development of concepts

Vygotsky distinguishes between two groups of concepts: scientific and everyday or spontaneous concepts. Scientific concepts are abstract and detached from reality, "reaching far beyond the immediate experience of the child" (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 161). They are formed by "systematic, organised and hierarchical thinking" (Daniels, 1996, p. 11) and are generally learned through school or other educational processes. By contrast, everyday concepts are learned spontaneously in face-to-face, practical, concrete

situations. While scientific concepts might be 'known' in the form of memorised facts, they are only fully assimilated (in that they can be used) through the mediation of already acquired, everyday concepts. The processes through which the two types of concept develop are closely linked and depend on each other: an understanding of geographic concepts must grow out of the knowledge that some places are 'here' and that other places are 'there'. But the ability to reflect on everyday experience is learned through working with and reflecting on scientific concepts: "scientific concepts grow downward through spontaneous concepts; spontaneous concepts grow upward through scientific concepts" (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 194).

Talk is an important tool for mediating the development of academic concepts, both through discussion with others and in thinking alone. Talk helps with the assimilation of academic concepts so that they 'mature' (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and become available for use.

2.3.4. The ZPD and scaffolding

Vygotsky worked largely with children and was interested in how the process of learning through talk between a child and an adult (or a more knowledgeable other) became internalised as thought. But similar processes of learning through talk can be seen in the conversations of adults working together, when talk may be seen as a social mode of thinking in which ideas are shared, personal viewpoints are offered and alternative ways of seeing the world are made available (Mercer, 1994).

In order to explain the social nature of this kind of learning Vygotsky developed the term "Zone of Proximal Development" (ZPD), which he defines as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers." (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).

The idea of learning happening within a ZPD has led to the development of the concept of 'scaffolding', defined by Bruner as "the steps taken *to reduce the degrees of freedom* in carrying out some task so that the child can concentrate on the difficult skill she is in

the process of acquiring" (Bruner, 1986, p. 73). Not only does the concept of scaffolding rest on different levels of competence amongst the participants in the learning process, but it has come to mean a *pre-planned* action or series of actions by the more competent individual (Mercer, 1995) in which prompts, confirmations, queries and elicitations are used to guide the learner towards understanding. The concept is linked to pedagogical approaches that explicitly provide support for the initial performance of tasks (Lave & Wenger, 1996).

Lave and Wenger (1996) propose a slightly different interpretation of the ZPD which involves a 'collectivist' or 'societal' perspective. In support of this perspective they use Engeström's definition of the ZPD as the "distance between the everyday actions of individuals and the historically new form of the activity that can be collectively generated" (Engestrom, 1987, in Lave & Wenger, 1996, p. 144). This definition is useful for analysing the activities in a study group composed of equally capable peers (rather than Vygotsky's more capable peers) with differing degrees and types of experience: it permits an investigation of the ways in which the knowledge and expertise were distributed across the group and were used as resources for developing a collective understanding of problems. Wells (1999) writing about cooperative learning, quotes studies which show that it is not necessary for there to be a more competent individual in the group for learning to happen. As long as there is a willingness on the part of all to learn from and with each other, by working together in a group each member "is 'forced to rise above himself' (*sic*)" (Wells, 1999, p. 324) as individuals work with and build on each other's contributions.

2.4. Bakhtin and dialogic talk

Vygotsky's view of language as a primary tool for constructing understanding is usefully extended by examining Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of language, in which talk is considered to be both a cognitive and a social practice (Clark & Holquist, 1984). Both Vygotsky and Bakhtin deem language to be a dynamic system: Vygotsky's concept of language as a tool to mediate learning focuses, like Bakhtin's concept of 'utterance' (which is central to his dialogic view of language), on the exchange of information in socially-situated contexts. As a result, Bakhtin's work on dialogic talk has been widely used by

researchers such as Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez, Alvarez and Chiu (1999), Gutiérrez and Rymes (1995), Maybin (2001; 2003; 2004) Mercer (1995; 2000), Wells (1999) and others in the investigation of how language is used for meaning-making in the classroom, especially in co-operative learning situations.

A Bakhtinian approach to language is essentially dialogic. In its simplest form dialogism involves the verbal interaction of two or more individuals, but for Bakhtin it is a way of viewing a person's interactions with the world: "Life by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in a dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his (*sic*) whole life" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 293).

Holquist and Emerson in their glossary to Bakhtin's *Dialogic Imagination* define dialogism as "a constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 426). This interaction between meanings includes the interaction between speakers' meanings as well as the interaction between individuals and the sociocultural contexts in which they are situated. For example, an attempt to change one's approach to teaching involves engaging in a spoken dialogue with other teachers on the use of new approaches, while at the same time engaging in an unspoken dialogue with one's sociocultural context on how the new teaching approaches might be successfully utilised in one's own classroom.

Bakhtin's work provides a number of concepts which are fundamental to the analysis of the data in this study. These concepts are: 'authoritative' and 'internally persuasive' discourse, the utterance, voice, social languages and speech genres, heteroglossia and ventriloquation.

2.4.1. 'Authoritative' and 'internally persuasive discourse'

Bakhtin differentiates between two kinds of discourse: "authoritative" and "internally persuasive". The "authoritative word is … the word of the father, the teacher (and) demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own" (Bakhtin, 1981 p. 342). Authoritative discourse requires complete acceptance of statements as true and

unarguable; when speakers appropriate an authoritative voice they close down avenues of discussion.

By contrast, "internally persuasive" discourse uses the "internally persuasive word (which) is half ours and half someone else's" (Bakhtin, 1981 p. 345) and which acknowledges that there is no 'final word' in the construction of meaning: we use the ideas of others to build our own understanding.

In Chapter 4 the transcribed conversations of the study group are examined for evidence of these two talk types and analysed to determine the affordances and constraints of each for the construction of knowledge.

Dentith writes about internally persuasive discourse being part of the process of individual growth:

> The internally persuasive word starts out as the word of another, in competition with other words that have similarly been internalized. The process of ideological becoming is one in which these different words are more and more thoroughly assimilated, brought into contact with each other, made more thoroughly one's own through never becoming wholly so and thus always remaining in some sense double-voiced. (Dentith, 1995, p. 57)

For the purposes of this study dialogic talk is taken to be internally persuasive discourse, in which the exchange of information opens up multiple viewpoints which serve to interanimate each other, furthering the development of understanding and individual growth:

> … such a word awakens new and independent words, … it organises masses of our words from within and does not remain in a static and isolated condition. It is not so much interpreted by us as it is further, that is, freely, developed, applied to new material, new conditions; it enters into interanimating relationships with new contexts. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 345-346)

The concept of internally persuasive discourse as a means by which ideas interanimate each other is used in Chapters 4 and 5 in the discussion of the process of study group members' identity formation as both students and teachers.

2.4.2. The utterance

For Bakhtin the utterance is the fundamental unit of communication, and is inherently socially situated:

> Speech can exist in reality only in the form of concrete utterances of individual speaking people, speech subjects. Speech is always cast in the form of an utterance belonging to a particular speaking subject, and outside this form it cannot exist. (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 71)

Because they are socially-situated, utterances do not stand alone, they are part of on-going conversations, "a link in a very complexly organised chain of other utterances" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 69), and occur within a socio-historical context: people communicating in a particular way about a particular topic in a particular social context. As a result utterances are not neutral, they reflect the attitude of the speaker in relation to the hearers: utterances "are aware of and mutually reflect each other" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 91), and are "filled with dialogic overtones" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 92).

Two important qualities of this "mutual reflection" inherent in dialogic communication are responsivity and addressivity, each of which works reciprocally to shape the utterance. An utterance has responsivity in that it responds to previous utterances, both those of immediate, face-to-face communication and those generalised utterances which over time have conveyed the attitudes of the speaker's community or social context. As a result, utterances are shaped by the voices or points of view to which the speaker is responding. At the same time the utterance is also shaped by addressivity, "the quality of turning to someone else" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 99), expecting a response from the 'other': either another person or the community to which the speaker belongs. According to Bakhtin, "the entire utterance is constructed, as it were, in anticipation of encountering this response" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 94).

In this study viewing the data as situated utterances which are either responding to or addressing 'an other' is valuable when asking the question 'What work is being done by this stretch of language?'. It is a constant reminder that nothing, be it a grunted "uhum" of agreement or an uninterrupted stretch of several sentences, is uttered without a communicative reason. Even a seemingly random remark is doing 'work' of some sort,

and what that 'work' is needs to be uncovered in order to fully understand the significance of the conversation.

2.4.3. Voices

According to Wertsch utterances "can exist only by being produced by a voice" (Wertsch, 1991a, p. 94). Holquist and Emerson, in their glossary to Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination*, define "a voice" as being "the speaking personality, the speaking consciousness" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 434) which expresses a particular viewpoint or set of attitudes which have been derived from a particular sociocultural context (Fernyhough, 1999; Wertsch, 1991b). Voices are inherently dialogic, as the viewpoint or attitude expressed is shaped by multiple forces: the utterances to which the voice is responding, the anticipated reaction of the audience which the voice is addressing, and the sociocultural setting in which the interaction takes place (Lee, 2004). Following Wertsch (1991b) I prefer to use the plural 'voices' to emphasise the essential plurality of dialogic talk.

Voices are an important concept in my study: identifying and tracing the effects of viewpoints or attitudes inherent in the voices used is helpful for understanding how the discussions in the study group worked to change, or not, the ways in which the group members conceptualised their subject and saw themselves as English teachers (Chapter 5).

2.4.4. Social languages and speech genres

The concept of the individual speaking with a 'voice' is closely linked to the concepts of social languages and speech genres, as it is from these that voices are derived. Wertsch distinguishes between the two concepts, with social languages being associated with "particular groups of speakers" (Wertsch, 1998, p. 76) and genres being associated with "types of speech situations" (Wertsch, 1998, p. 76). But at the same time the two are often intertwined: "speakers from certain social strata, or groups (e.g. the military) are typically the ones who invoke certain speech genres (e.g. military commands)" (Wertsch & Smolka, 1993, p. 76). In addition, social languages give rise to a multitude of genres

(Lee, 2004): the genre of giving a military command is different to the genre of a formal response to such a command.

Examples of social languages are the language of a profession, such as legal language, or the slang typical of a teenager in a particular sociocultural context. The discussion of the same news item in different settings such as an academic seminar room, a university café or a middle class family dining room, will involve a particular variety of social language, each one apposite to that particular social group. The use of social languages is connected to the enactment of a socially-situated identity (Gee, 2004): using the social language of academia, for instance, is an integral part of 'being' an academic.

While speech genres such as military commands, greetings, farewells, scientific statements, and so on (Bakhtin, 1986) are typically a form of utterance generated in particular situations, Bakhtin also includes less formulaic genres such as "genres of table conversations, intimate conversations among friends, intimate conversations with the family, and so on" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 76).

The use of specific genres is indicative of a particular viewpoint (Bakhtin, 1981). In this study (in Chapters 4 and 5) the identification of the genres and the analysis of their use provides valuable insights into both the construction of knowledge and the constitution of the group members' identities as English teachers.

2.4.5. Heteroglossia

Bakhtin uses the term heteroglossia to mean the use of a "dynamic multiplicity of voices, genres and social languages" (Maybin, 2001, p. 67) intermingling in a discussion. For Bakhtin, who considered language to have "no neutral words or forms" and who viewed all utterances as being in a constant state of responding to and addressing other utterances, a great deal of everyday speech is heteroglossic. In his view it is this constant rubbing up against the words and utterances of others that enables the dynamics of language (Bakhtin, 1981). In this research the impact of heteroglossia is assessed by identifying the socio-cultural origins of the talk genres used by the study group, and analysing the effect of the different genres on the discussions.

Emerson and Holquist's observation in their glossary to *The Dialogic Imagination,* that heteroglossia is "where centripetal and centrifugal forces collide" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 428), indicates that not all talk is completely dialogic, some is what Bakhtin terms monologic talk. Monologic talk conveys the word of authority; it "demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 342). Monologic discourse is essentially centripetal, it closes down the exploratory quality of a conversation. By contrast, dialogic talk is centrifugal: the multitude of voices offer a multitude of viewpoints which open up exploratory avenues in the conversation. Dialogic talk leads to internally persuasive discourse, or the development of understanding.

Viewing the conversations of the group as heteroglossic provides a useful standpoint for exploring the data: it provides evidence for the possible value of the different genres of talk in the construction of knowledge and the constitution of identity. It also opens up the possibility that individual talk genres could have a centripetal function on one occasion, resulting in monologic talk, and a centrifugal function on another, serving to open up the conversation to a dialogic discussion with multiple viewpoints. Analysing these occasions offers insight into how the group's interactions created or closed down opportunities for learning moments as they worked together.

2.4.6. Ventriloquation

An important part of heteroglossia is 'ventriloquation' or incorporating other speakers' voices in a stretch of conversation. According to Wertsch, ventriloquation is the "process whereby one voice speaks *through* another voice or voice type in a social language" (Wertsch, 1991b, p. 59) (italics in original).

The ventriloquation of ideas in a conversation is an example of the creative power of dialogic talk for the construction of meaning. It is an aspect of "internally persuasive" discourse, described by Bakhtin as:

> … half ours and half someone else's. Its creativity and productiveness consist precisely in the fact that such a word awakens new and independent words, that it organises masses of our words from within, and does not remain in an isolated and static condition. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 345)

Ventriloquation occurs when speakers take up another's words or ideas and re-voice them, developing concepts and ideas and so moving the discussion forward. There are a number of 'others' who may contribute these words or ideas, quite apart from members of the study group, such as the authorial voices in texts being quoted, or the voices of lecturers, other teachers on the course and teaching colleagues. Wertsch (1991b) relates ventriloquation to Vygotsky's concept of internalization of knowledge: it is an equivalent process and occurs when the many items of information made available by others in a social context are appropriated and assimilated into a coherent, internalised whole.

The use of ventriloquation by the group members during discussions is analysed to establish how it functions as a tool in the social development of knowledge.

2.5. Gee – Discourses and genres of talk

Bakhtin's concepts of voice, social languages and speech genres have been utilised by James Gee in his work in the field of social linguistics (Gee, 1996, 1999a, 2000-2001). He proposes the use of four tools to analyse how language is used to create both the world around us and the identities acted out in such worlds. He calls these tools Conversations[6], social languages, Discourses and situated identities.

Gee uses Bakhtin's concept of 'voice', the expression of a viewpoint or set of attitudes derived from a sociocultural context, terming this concept Conversations: long-running themes or debates that have occurred over time and in a variety of institutions (Gee, 1999a). They are the expression of the attitudes and opinions of particular social groups, such as debates around the importance of reading as an educational tool (See Chapter 5).

[6] The reasons for using 'Discourse' and 'Conversations' with capital 'D' and 'C' are discussed on p. 69 of Chapter 3.

While Bakhtin defines social languages as the languages used by specific social groups, Gee extends the concept by connecting it to the enactment of identity: he uses social languages to mean the registers of language that are used to demonstrate identity in social settings, such as the use of informal or academic language in academic settings.

Gee uses Bakhtin's concept of speech genres as part of what he calls 'grammar two': the ways in which patterns of language use signal specific identities being enacted. (By 'grammar one' Gee means the traditional understanding of grammar: the rules which govern the formation of words and sentences.) It is the use of grammar two structures that constitutes a particular social language and thereby particular identities. These identities are variable according to context, in the way that someone may at one moment use the genre of 'teacher-speak' – and therefore be understood to be a teacher and be responded to as a teacher – and at the next moment speak like a student – and therefore be identified as and responded to as a student.

In this study Gee's concepts of social languages and genres are used as tools for analysing the ways in which situated identities are constituted through the use of Discourses (Chapter 5). By situated identities he means the identities which are relevant to particular social contexts: such as an individual who 'is' a teacher when she stands at the front of a classroom and uses a particular social language to address the rest of the people in the classroom, then 'is' a student when she uses another social language as she sits facing a lecturer in the seminar room.

His concept of Discourses goes beyond language: he states that "'Big D' Discourses are always language *plus* other stuff" (Gee, 1999a, p. 17) (italics in original) such as dress, possessions, gesture, values, ways of behaving and so on. They are the ways of talking – taking the 'correct' line in a Conversation by using the 'correct' social language and grammar two constructions, and dressing, behaving, etc, in an appropriate way in order to 'produce' particular kinds of situated identities. In this research, where the data consists of transcriptions of audiotapes, the focus is on the ways in which language use signifies

values, beliefs, and privileges certain ways of thinking and ways of knowing over others, and is indicative of particular identities in action.

2.6. Subjectivity and identity

Educational researchers such as Gee (1992; 1996; 2001), Maybin (1994), Norton (2006; 2010; Norton Peirce, 1995) and Wells (1999), have found Bakhtinian concepts such as social languages, voice and genre useful for investigating the ways in which learner identities are constituted. They take a sociocultural approach to identity: as meaning is constantly under construction and changeable, so is identity, because both are dependent on the social context in which the talk is taking place. I find it useful to consider theories of identity constitution in order to situate my investigation of language and identity against a background of the manner in which subject positions are constituted through talk.

Theories of subjectivity and identity offer marginally different but complementary lenses through which to view self as a social construction: subjectivity locates the individual in a variety of subject positions within networks of socially powerful cultural discourses and practices; identity is the ever-changing sense of 'self-in-practice', the result of taking up or contesting these subject positions by developing "through and around the cultural forms by which they are identified, and identify themselves" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 33).

Mansfield (2000) provides an overview of the theorisation of subjectivity in which he divides the debate on studies of the subject into two broad divisions: structuralist and post-structuralist approaches. The structuralist approach holds that the subject can be understood as "a real thing, with a fixed structure operating in knowable and predictable patterns" (Mansfield, 2000, p. 9). Hall critiques this notion of the subject as "a self-sustaining entity" (Hall, 1996, p. 1), taking the post-structuralist view in which identity is "a construction … always in process … conditional, lodged in contingency" (Hall, 1996, pp. 2-3). He calls the post-structuralist approach "not a theory of the knowing subject but rather a theory of discursive practice" (Hall, 1996, p. 2). Weedon likewise views subjectivity as "precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak" (Weedon, 1987, p. 33).

Mansfield defines subjectivity as

> … an abstract or general principle that defies our separation into distinct selves and that encourages us to imagine that, or simply helps us to understand why, our interior lives inevitably seem to involve other people, either as objects of need, desire and interest or as necessary sharers of common experience. (Mansfield, 2000, p. 3)

This definition connects 'the self' wholly with 'the other': one is either the subject *of* the discourse or subject *to* the discourse (Norton Peirce, 1995). When communicating with others we not only convey information, but also "make claims about who we are relative to one another and the nature of our relationships" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 26). In other words, we place ourselves and each other in subject positions as we talk, and the power inherent in both the discourse and the practices around the discourse, plays out on the 'selves' of both speaker and listener.

Language is thus one of the pre-eminent tools through which such subject positions and their associated identities are taken up or resisted (Norton, 2006; Weedon, 2004), and through which identity is continually negotiated and renegotiated in relation to the social world in which we are situated (Norton, 2010).

The way in which post-structuralist theorists position 'I' and 'other' as the basis of identity work echoes Bakhtin's view of language as dialogic, a situation in which persons are always situated in a state of either being addressed or of answering:

> The self is a position from which meaning is made, a position that is 'addressed by' and 'answers' others and the 'world' (the physical and cultural environment). In answering (which is the stuff of existence), the 'self' authors the world – including itself and others. (Holland et al., 1998, p. 173)

Three characteristics of a post-structuralist approach to identity are important for this study: firstly, that identities are multiple and changeable; secondly that identities are constituted through discourse; and thirdly that subject positions (and the possible identities associated with them) are related to social and institutional distributions of power. These post-structuralist theories of identity are allied to a sociocultural approach to language and identity: identity is seen as neither singular nor fixed, language is

prioritised as a mediating tool for the constitution of identity, and the subject positions to which identity is attached are dependent on the cultural, historical and institutional elements of the social context. The construction of and movement between subject positions is based on the types of language used, making it possible for some identities to be successfully enacted while others will fail to be recognised.

2.7. Gee's four ways of viewing identity

Gee (2000-2001) proposes four ways of viewing identity, of seeing "what it means to be recognised as 'a certain kind of person'" (Gee, 2000-2001, p. 100) under certain circumstances. These four ways allow one to focus on different aspects of identity formation, and provide ways in which one can "formulate questions about how identity is functioning for a specific person" (Gee, 2000-2001, p. 101). Mansfield sees the subject as "always linked to something outside of it – an idea or principle or the society of other subjects" (Mansfield, 2000, p. 3). Gee's four ways of viewing identity are useful for examining how these ideas, principles and social constructs play out on the individual, and on the individual's ability to take up or reject the subject positions offered. The perspectives on identity are interrelated; the features by which an individual can be identified as 'that' kind of person at 'that' point in time are an assemblage of these four viewpoints. The composite identities are displayed on the body through physical qualities such as skin colour, clothing, gesture, behaviour and other physical features, and through varieties of discourse and language.

The four ways of viewing identity outlined by Gee (2000-2001) are:

- Nature-Identity: biologically endowed characteristics, such as race and gender
- Institution-Identity: the aspects of identity which accrue from an individual's position in society, such as being a teacher or a student
- Discourse-Identity: the attributes which are the result of the way an individual is perceived and talked about by others, and so comes to perceive him or herself in that way, such as being seen/seeing oneself as an innovative teacher
- Affinity-Identity: the characteristics which are acquired through taking part in the practices of an affinity group, such as being seen/seeing oneself as a 'nerd'

> because one is involved in the 'nerdy' activities of a study group, or in activities typically associated with working class or middle class social groups.

Three of these identity perspectives are useful to this study: Institution-Identity, Discourse-Identity and Affinity-Identity. Each perspective positions the individual in a different way, because they arise from and derive their importance or "power" (Gee, 2000-2001, p. 101) from a different source.

An individual's Institution-Identities derive their power from institutions such as universities or schools. These institutions authorise those in positions of power, such as Heads of Departments in schools, with associated authority to issue directives, and responsibilities such as overseeing the implementation of new programmes. The investigation of this identity focuses on *institutional position*.

An individual's Discourse-Identities derive their power from the discourse of other people: when individuals are spoken about as having certain characteristics, such as being innovative, they then acquire the identity of 'an innovative person'. The investigation of this identity focuses on the *discourse* or *dialogue* that occurs around an individual.

Affinity-Identities derive their power from an individual's participation in and sharing in a distinctive set of practices with other like-minded individuals, such as sharing and critiquing teaching approaches with other teachers. Through these shared activities the participants come to see themselves as part of a particular group and thus as particular kinds of people. The investigation of this identity focuses on *distinctive social practices.*

These three perspectives on identity provide multiple lenses through which to view the identities displayed in the pre- and post-graduation interviews with study group members. I am able to focus on the way that *institutional position* is affecting an individual's identity, what the nature of the *discourse* or *dialogue* occurring around an individual is, and what varieties of *distinctive social practices* an individual is able/unable to share with

others, and then to consider how these factors influence the nature of the student identity (Chapter 4) or teacher identity (Chapters 5 and 6) being enacted in the interviews.

Gee maintains that recognition is key to successful identity work (Gee, 1999a, 2000-2001): one cannot 'be' in isolation. Identities are negotiated with others via language; through dialogic interaction; and through Gee's 'Discourses' (Gee, 1999a), an amalgam of language and other factors such as behaviour.

Bartlett (2007b) adds another dimension to successful identity work: 'feeling' in oneself that one is a particular kind of person, which is additional to successfully 'seeming' to be that person to others. I suggest that being able to 'feel' one really is a particular kind of person is important, especially when considering Institutional-Identities. Gee suggests that certain types of Institutional-Identities are a "calling" (Gee, 2000-2001, p. 103): when individuals are 'called to' or appointed to a position, the identity associated with the position is then 'taken up' by the individual, and they are authorised to act in specific ways. I argue that the ability to confidently author[7] oneself as having a particular Institutional-Identity is an equally important part of successfully taking up that Institutional-Identity. In other words, even though an individual might *apparently* be successful in performing the functions of Head of Department in a school, if the individual is unable to convince him or herself that he or she is doing the required work competently and therefore does not 'feel' a competent Head of Department, this lack of self-belief makes it difficult to successfully enact the institutional identity of 'Head of Department in a school'.

As has been already mentioned, these perspectives on or areas of identity formation are interrelated and a sense of being inadequate in one area may have a knock-on effect on the others. Not 'feeling' oneself to be a real Head of Department threatens one's ability to acquire the Affinity-Identity of Head of Department, as it raises questions (for the individual) about whether he or she really belongs to the affinity group 'Heads of Department' as he or she does not feel proficient in the required social practices.

[7] See section 2.10.2 p. 47 for an explanation of the concept of 'authoring'.

2.8. Communities of practice

Lave and Wenger (1991) coined the phrase 'communities of practice' while investigating apprenticeship as a learning model. In an apprenticeship model the 'apprentices' or newcomers work alongside more experienced individuals, learning both the skills and techniques required to be able to perform their craft and at the same time, through the stories told by more experienced individuals, learning the 'lore' of how to 'be' a member of that particular community. Learning is a central part of the activities of a community of practice, the community members do more than simply work together, they learn as they work.

Lave and Wenger define communities of practice as "a set of relations among persons, activity and world, over time and in relation to other tangential and overlapping communities of practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 98). Their definition indicates that communities of practice do not operate in isolation: flows of information both move between members of a particular community and draw on knowledge from other communities of practice. It is through sharing the experience gained in these other communities that a wide and varied knowledge base is built by a community.

In his later work Wenger (2000, 2004) studied communities of practice found outside apprenticeship learning situations, in industry and commerce. He defines these communities of practice as "social structures that focus on knowledge … groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (Wenger, 2004, p. 2). In these communities individuals are not apprentices and learn not necessarily from more experienced members of the group, but from others who are more likely to be their peers.

While the two definitions differ slightly and Wenger's later work lies outside the apprenticeship model, there is a common focus on relationships, interaction, sharing and knowledge; and on learning as a shared, social activity.

I find both definitions useful for my research, as the concept of drawing knowledge from tangential, overlapping communities fits with the situation of the study group as a community intersecting with the overlapping communities of social group, academia and professional workplaces. It also fits with the ways in which the group members drew on other areas of activity as resources to inform their work. The second definition, coming out of Wenger's later work, is also useful as it focuses less on the acquisition of knowledge (particularly from more experienced others) and more on the extension of knowledge through regular interaction with others who are involved in the same activity, a situation that Gee (2000-2001; 2004) calls belonging to an 'affinity group'.

2.8.1. Critique of community of practice theory

Lave and Wenger's early work has been criticised on various grounds. Firstly, they do not provide a clear definition of what constitutes a community. Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004) suggest that there are two interpretations of the idea, one broad and one narrow. Working with the concept of 'field' as developed by Bourdieu, they suggest that the wider interpretation would be better conceptualised as a field of practice, whereas using the narrower definition makes it easier to define actual communities of practice. I use the narrower definition of a small, easily defined, tight-knit group of individuals situated within the wider fields of practice of academia and the professional workplace.

Lave and Wenger assumed that learning happened equally effectively in all communities whereas work done by Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004) shows that some communities do not operate as efficiently as knowledge-producing communities as others do. In Chapter 6 of this thesis I show how some of the group members find that their post-graduation professional communities support the development of greater understanding of their teaching, while other group members either find their professional communities do not support this development, or that they have no community of practice in their workplaces.

2.8.2. Communities of practice, affinity groups and figured worlds

Communities of practice and affinity groups are allied concepts: Gee calls communities of practice "an important type of affinity group" (Gee, 2004, p. 285). Knowledge is a

significant element in both concepts: in both knowledge is shared and distributed across the group, and tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge are valued by the group (Gee, 2004; Wenger, 1998).

Community of practice theory has links with Holland et al.'s (1998) work with figured worlds (see Section 2.10 p. 44): both make a connection between the constitution of identity and involvement in practice, and emphasise the role played by imagination in constituting the self.

In this research the concept of communities of practice is used when investigating how talk around a shared endeavour functioned to co-construct identities of confidence as teachers (Chapter 5). In Chapter 6 the concept is used to highlight the importance of the support that comes from belonging to a community of practice in maintaining identities as innovative, confident teachers.

2.9. Pedagogic safe houses

Canagarajah takes the concept of 'safe houses' from Pratt's (1991) paper on post-colonial societies. Pratt defines safe houses as "social and intellectual spaces where groups can constitute themselves as horizontal, homogenous, sovereign communities with high degrees of trust, shared understandings, and temporary protection from legacies of oppression" (Pratt, 1991, p. 40). Canagarajah (1997; 2004) applies the concept to the classroom, to what he calls pedagogic safe houses. These are protected sites situated away from the scrutiny of teachers and other authority figures, in which students are able to negotiate identities of expertise through their engagement in learning-related but off-task activities.

He uses the concept in his discussion of the ways in which English as a Second Language (ESL) learners negotiate identities both inside and outside the classroom. He cites two studies of ESL learners negotiating empowered identities as English speakers *outside* the English classroom, identities that are vastly different to those ascribed to them *inside* the classroom where they are seen as learning disabled. His own research looks at safe houses situated inside the classroom, where he examines the strategies used by students

in e-mails and online chat discussions to celebrate other identities and practice subversive discourses in "sites that are relatively free from surveillance, especially by authority figures" (Canagarajah, 2004, p. 121). He examines these off-task but essentially in-classroom sites to determine their role in "enabling the construction of more complex student identities and the development of critical learning practices" (Canagarajah, 2004, p. 121).

In this research the concept is applied to the role that the study group played in sheltering its members from the surveillance of both academia and their professional work spaces, giving them the space and opportunity to imagine and play out new identities for themselves as both students and teachers (Chapter 4 and Chapter 5).

2.10. Figured worlds

The concept of figured worlds grows out of the work of Vygotsky and Bakhtin, in which the constitution of identity is situated in a locus of social activity and mediated by cultural tools made available by the sociocultural context. Holland et al. define a figured world as a "socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation where characters and actors are recognised, significance is assigned to certain actions and some outcomes are valued over others" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 52). Gee describes a figured world as "a picture of a simplified world that captures what is taken to be typical or normal" (Gee, 2011, p. 70) and states that when using figured worlds as a tool for discourse analysis one is looking for the typical stories (the social realm of interpretation) that are being told, asking who the participants (the characters and actors) are, what the activities and ways of interacting (the actions) are, and what values are being ascribed to in that particular figured world (Gee, 2011).

Figured worlds are conceptual constructs that connect identity, activity and values (Kitchell, Erin, & Kempton, 2000): as individuals interact in their daily lives they take on roles that define who they are (Boaler & Greeno, 2000), the roles being ranked (and so the individual positioned) according to the value system of the social context in which the activity takes place. Because of their emphasis on actions, actors and values in specific contexts, the figured world is a useful tool for conceptualising communities of practice

and evaluating the activities and identities that occur within those communities (Tan & Barton, 2008). The construct has been used in education studies by researchers such as Boaler and Greeno (2000), Gee (2011), Hatt (2007), Rubin (2007), Tan and Barton (2008) and Tonso (2006; 2008), and also, more specifically, in the field of literacy studies: Bartlett (2001; 2003; 2005; 2007a; 2007b), Bartlett and Holland (2002) Dagenais, Day and Toohey (2006) and Toohey and Gajdamaschko (2005).

Figured worlds are multiple and can be both generic and local. For example, Holland et al. (1998) discuss the generic stories of 'the good woman' that they heard during their research in Nepal. These stories created a figured world of expectations which defined the way in which women were expected to behave, what they were entitled to and their access to certain spaces and activities within the Brahmanical code of Hindu Nepal. However as young women became politicised they began to sing songs and tell stories in which they could act differently and expect better treatment such as the right to education and to inherit land. Through these songs and stories they constructed a local figured world in which "new dispositions and new sensibilities could be formed" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 268), a figured world which, over the period of the research, appeared to be extending its influence to other areas of activity.

Particular locations, such as an individual school, often have local figured worlds or cultural models of the way in which 'things happen'. These are built around particular activities, such as the figured worlds of teaching – which are local to the teachers – or the figured worlds of learning – which are local to the learners in the school, or in this research, local to teachers-who-are-university-students studying together. The concept of a localised figured world is important for analysing the pre- and post-graduation interviews (Chapter 6) in order to identify the nature of the identities presented in these interviews, how the identities relate to the figured world of teaching as constructed by the study group members, and how these identities are connected to and affected by the post-graduation professional contexts in which the group members are working.

2.10.1. Artefacts

A figured world is "opened up" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 61) for examination by identifying the artefacts or items which are used to mediate the action within the world. They are "the means by which figured worlds are evoked, collectively developed, individually learned, and made socially and personally powerful" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 61). They can be physical, such as the poker chips in the world of Alcoholics Anonymous, and the patients' medical charts in the world of mental health care, or verbal, such as the gender-marked labels 'stud' or 'foxy' used in the figured world of college romance (Holland et al., 1998). The artefacts acquire importance through their "collectively remembered history of use and interpretation" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 36), they are identified, organised and developed through social activity in a particular context.

Hatt (2007) in her analysis of 'the figured world of smartness' in a school, identified cultural artefacts which the students in the school connected with 'being smart in school'. The artefacts included 'visible' artefacts such as good grades, high test scores, and diplomas; as well as 'intangible' artefacts such as reading a lot of books, having a large vocabulary, and being spoken about as being 'gifted' or an 'honours student'. These artefacts, or the lack thereof, position the learners in ways which affect their trajectory through the education system: if learners cannot 'gather' the artefacts necessary to being seen as 'smart' they have difficulty in performing identities of 'smartness'.

Tonso (2006; 2008), in her work on the acquisition of the identity of 'an engineer' by engineering students, identified artefacts which she calls "cultural forms for engineer identity" (Tonso, 2006, p. 218). These include terms by which students were labelled such as 'nerds', 'hard-core over-achievers', 'fraternity man' and 'sorority chick', which indicated student behaviours such as how much time was spent studying or socialising. This labelling had important implications for the women students' ability to think about themselves as engineers and to "perform engineer selves" (Tonso, 2006, p. 274), as the culture of the institute in which they were studying did not include appropriate labels with which the women could 'do' engineer identity work.

2.10.2. Identity in practice

Holland et al. (1998) view identity as being grounded in practice, an individual's ability to 'author' her or himself through behaving and thus 'being' in a particular way. Identifying and analysing the artefacts used in the process of authoring self are essential parts of establishing identity (Bartlett, 2007a). The artefacts are a means of thinking about identity in terms of practice: which activities are central to 'being' that kind of person and how doing them 'fits' with the activities of significant others in that particular social context.

Identities-in-practice can be analysed by referring to four "contexts of activity" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 271): the *figured worlds* themselves, *positionality*, the *space of authoring* and *making worlds*. Each of these is discussed briefly below.

Identifying the *figured world* of teaching that the study group constructed as they worked together provides the backdrop, the figurings, with which the group members identify as innovative teachers. The nature of this figured world is established by identifying the artefacts, the words and metaphors, which indicate attitudes towards teaching and studying and are evidence of activities that are key to particular ways of teaching. Analysis of the artefacts in the post-graduation interviews suggests the degree to which the group members are able to continue identifying themselves as innovative teachers or not.

Holland et al.'s concept of *positionality* is linked to Gee's (2000-2001) concept of Institutional-Identity, as it is based on the attributes of power and position which derive from an institutional source such as a school (for example, when a school appoints an individual to the position of teacher or head of department). While positions of authority should, theoretically, empower an individual, this research investigates whether this is actually the case.

The *space of authoring* is based on Bakhtin's concept of dialogism, in which an individual is always addressing and being addressed and a sense of self is orchestrated

through the ways in which the individual responds to the world with more or less authority depending on the circumstances. 'Authoring a self' is the process of telling, by behaving in certain ways, both others *and oneself* that one is who one claims to be (Holland et al., 1998). The artefacts present in the pre- and post-graduation interviews are analysed in order to identify the ability/inability of the group members to author themselves as confident, innovative teachers.

The fourth context is that of *making worlds*, or building new worlds through "serious play" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 272), through 'imagining', planning and talking and rehearsing a different way of being which then becomes habitual. Engaging in joint activities, sharing a common discourse with significant others in a community of practice may provide the opportunities for making such worlds.

2.10.3. Figured worlds and Gee's four ways of viewing identity

There is a connection between Gee's four ways of viewing identity and the artefacts which signal identities in figured worlds. In Hatt's (2007) study the artefacts which signal 'school smartness' lead to Discourse-Identities in which individuals are spoken about as 'being smart' or 'being slow', which leads to Institutional-Identities in which the school positions individuals as 'honours students' or 'learning disabled students', Institutional-Identities that follow the students across time and out into the world. Similarly Tonso's (2006; 2008) study shows how the Nature-Identity of being female constrains women students' ability to use the available 'cultural forms for engineer identity' to join the 'engineer affinity group'. As a result they have difficulty in authoring Affinity-Identities for themselves as women engineers.

In this study, Gee's four aspects of identity together with figured worlds are useful for focussing on the continued development of, or subsequent weakening of, the study group members' ability to see themselves as confident, innovative teachers after they had completed their studies.

2.11. Conclusion

In this chapter I have reviewed literature which informs the overall study. However, additional authors are referred to at the start of Chapters 4, 5 and 6, as their work is pertinent to the data which is the focus of analysis in each of these chapters. It is to the collection and analysis of data that I now turn in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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3.1. Research design

This research is a case study of a teacher-student study and professional support group. Case studies are widely used in educational research (Merriam, 1998) and are distinguished by the interest of a researcher in an individual case, a study of the particular, not by the methods of inquiry used (Stake, 2003). In case study research there is a focus on the specific, the bounded and the unique (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995), which makes case studies suited to educational situations which are often difficult to replicate. While this focus on the unique has often been seen as problematic because case studies do not provide generalisations which are applicable to wider populations, or they lack rigor as they cannot be replicated, in the area of qualitative research it is generally agreed that case study research can provide insights into complex phenomena in ways that other approaches to research cannot (Bassey, 1999; Cohen & Manion, 1994; Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995; Simons, 1996; Stake, 2003; Yin, 2003). Such insights are characteristically obtained through the use of 'thick description' which provides a detailed portrait, a "hard-to-summarise narrative" (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 237) of what is

happening in the case under observation, enabling readers to identify with the issues and concerns raised (Nunan, 1992).

Ponterotto (2006) makes the point that 'thick description' is not simply the provision of a detailed description of an activity, its context, circumstances, the emotions and social relationships that connect the participants. A central component is "the interpretative characteristic of the description of what is being observed" (Ponterotto, 2006, p. 542). His definition of 'thick description' is quoted below to highlight the value of case study research, especially in education, in providing readers (other teachers in particular) with the opportunity to develop an understanding of their own classrooms or professional situations by comparing them to case studies of similar situations:

> Thick description refers to the researcher's task of both describing and interpreting observed social action (or behavior) within its particular context. The context can be within a smaller unit (such as a couple, a family, a work environment) or within a larger unit (such as one's village, a community, or general culture). Thick description accurately describes observed social actions and assigns purpose and intentionality to these actions, by way of the researcher's understanding and clear description of the context under which the social actions took place. Thick description captures the thoughts and feelings of participants as well as the often complex web of relationships among them. Thick description leads to thick interpretation, which in turn leads to thick meaning of the research findings for the researchers and participants themselves, and for the report's intended readership. Thick meaning of findings leads readers to a sense of verisimilitude, wherein they can cognitively and emotively "place" themselves within the research context. (Ponterotto, 2006, p. 543)

A 'thick' or detailed description of a teaching/learning situation provides a multiplicity of details about the situation, allowing the researcher to identify what Geertz (1973, p. 9) calls "the structures of signification", then to analyse in detail how these structures are related and how they impact on the activity taking place. In this thesis 'thick interpretation' and the consequent construction of 'thick meaning' aims to make it possible for readers to get beneath the surface of the social action being described, become emotionally engaged and to make links between what they are reading and what they know through their own experience. It is through the personal and social construction of knowledge that is engendered by 'thick description' that case study research has the power to "stimulate thinking as much as express conclusions … and to perhaps provoke the reader to think differently" (Stake & Kerr, 1994, in Simons, 1996, p. 8).

3.1.1. Case studies

Stake (2003) divides case studies into three types:

- Intrinsic case studies – which are undertaken in order to obtain a better understanding of a particular case
- Instrumental case studies – which are undertaken in order to provide insight into a particular issue
- Collective case studies – in which a number of cases are jointly studied in order to examine a general condition.

This research falls into the intrinsic case study category as it seeks to provide a rich, descriptive account of this particular case, a study group's activities, in order to understand how the connections between the academic, professional and social life worlds of the group members provided the resources for constituting identities of expertise as both students and as teachers.

It is often argued that one of the shortcomings of case studies is that their findings cannot be generalised (Bassey, 1999, 2001; Flyvbjerg, 2006; Stake, 1995, 2003; Yin, 2003). However according to Stake it is their "particularity and ordinariness" (Stake, 2003, p. 136) that makes the study of cases worthwhile, and "the real business of case study is particularization, not generalization" (Stake, 1995, p. 8).

Rather than aiming to be able to generalise from one case to many, Bassey (1999) suggests that case study researchers should aim to provide what he calls "fuzzy generalizations" or "general statements with built-in uncertainty" (Bassey, 1999, p. 52). He argues that the fuzzy generalisation "arises from studies of singularities and typically claims that *it is possible, or likely, or unlikely that* what was found in the singularity will be found in similar situations elsewhere" (Bassey, 1999, p. 12) (italics in original). The advantage of fuzzy generalisations (as opposed to direct claims) is that they allow for the complexity and variety of educational settings and are an invitation to other educational practitioners to consider whether the generalisation *might* or *might not* hold true in their educational setting.

3.1.2. Educational case studies

Bassey defines an educational case study as

> an empirical enquiry which is:
> - conducted within a localised boundary of space and time;
> - into *interesting* aspects of an educational activity, or programme, or institution, or system;
> - mainly in its natural context and within an ethic of respect for persons;
> - in order to inform the judgements of practitioners or policy makers;
> - or of theoreticians who are working to these ends;
> - in such a way that sufficient data are collected for the researcher to be able
>
> a) to explore *significant* features of the case,
> b) to create *plausible* interpretations of what is found,
> c) to test for the trustworthiness of these interpretations,
> d) to construct a *worthwhile* argument or story,
> e) to relate the argument or story to the relevant research in the literature,
> f) to convey *convincingly* to an audience this argument or story,
> g) to provide an audit trail by which other researchers may validate or challenge the findings, or construct alternative arguments.
>
> (Bassey, 1999, p. 58) (italics in original)

His definition is aligned with the description of case study as 'a tool to stimulate thinking as much as express conclusions', as outlined above, as it calls for the observation and analysis (criteria for a 'thick description') of a specific, interesting educational activity (focus on the unique) in its natural context (recognisable and familiar to other educational practitioners) to inform the judgements (to stimulate the thinking) of others in education, especially practitioners.

The research actions Bassey lists as central to a case study have distinct depth to them: in line with the need for 'thickness' in description, interpretation and meaning, the features and interpretations must be *significant* and *plausible*, the story *worthwhile* and *convincingly* told (italics in the original), the interpretations *trustworthy* (my italics) and laid out in such a way as to allow others to interpret the data for themselves and to apply the findings to their own contexts.

I aim to provide a 'thick description' of both the working activity and the members' recollections of the study group, in order to be able to make 'fuzzy generalisations' about the ways in which being a member of this group led to the development of enabled

identities as both students and teachers, in the hope that other teachers who return to part-time study might recognise their own situations and benefit from these insights.

3.2. Data collection

Because case studies are empirical enquiries, the starting point for the research was the collection of data on the activities of the study group. The data are divided into two categories of audio recordings: those of the group working together and those of interviews with the group members.

In the first category, which is the recordings of the study group work sessions, the number of participants attending each session varied between five and the full group of eight members. Thus the number of group members who participate in the conversations selected for analysis varies.

The second category is individual and small group interviews in which the group members discuss how they remember the group working, the way in which they saw themselves as group members and the effect they felt that working in the group had on them as both students and teachers. The interviews provide another perspective on the ways in which the group worked. This combination of data sources allows for cross-checking the data for consistency and coherence.

The data were collected in three phases:

- Phase 1: a total of 10 hours of audiotaped recordings of the group working together over a period of five months.
- Phase 2: a total of just over 6 hours of individual and small group interviews during which the group members discussed their recollections of working together
- Phase 3: a total of 10 hours of individual, open-ended interviews conducted two years after the group members had completed their Masters degrees, during which the participants spoke about how their careers had developed since finishing their

MAs and how much of their study experiences they thought had remained with them or been lost in the intervening time.[8]

I also kept a research journal in which I recorded my own memories and feelings about the group as a form of self-interview on my experiences as a group member. While conducting the interviews I made notes in the journal after the interviews: how participants had reacted to my questions, how the different interviews had gone in different directions and why, in retrospect, I thought the conversations had moved the way they had.

As I started analysing the data I spoke on a number of occasions to group members to get more in-depth information. Sometimes this was to check particulars which were referred to obliquely in the recordings and twice to confirm the emotions which I was interpreting from the interviews. I also asked some group members for additional facts on some of the research projects for descriptive purposes, and to confirm their reasons for deciding to do the Honours course. Detailed notes from these conversations were recorded in the research journal.

3.2.1. Participant observation

Observing the phenomenon being researched is an essential part of doing a case study (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Merriam, 1998). Most writers on the subject present a continuum for observation, ranging from non-participant observers who do not participate at all in the activities they are studying, to participant observers who "engage in the very activities they set out to observe" (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 107), with some writers referring to a further category of observant participants; individuals who are involved in the activity then subsequently become an observer of the activity (B. A. Johnstone, 2007). Being a member of the study group before I started doing my research placed me as an observant participant, a position which has its own advantages and disadvantages. As an observant participant I had the advantage of an in-depth knowledge

[8] There are a number of reasons for the fairly long time period between collecting the data and completing this thesis: firstly the illness and subsequent death of my first supervisor, Professor P. Stein, with associated delays in the appointment of a new supervisor, and two lengthy periods of ill-health on my own part.

of the group, its history and its culture, but I quickly found that "being too close to the action" (B. A. Johnstone, 2007, p. 107) brought its own problems. For example I had originally intended to make research notes on what I had seen 'happening' while audiotaping the discussions, to supplement the audiotapes, as recommended by writers on educational case study research (for example, Cohen & Manion, 1994). However, being an active member of the group meant that I was rapidly drawn into making my own contribution to the work being done and thus I soon found that it was impossible to be both a participant and an observer. I decided it was more important to contribute to the group's endeavours: the rest of the group members had readily agreed to help me with my research by giving up valuable time for the coming interviews, so I owed it to them to give them whatever help I could with their research. Not to mention that *not* taking part would have been a reversal of the situation in which most participant observers/observant participants find themselves: the worry that their participation will impact negatively on their data. My absence from the group's activities might equally have had an impact on how the group worked as a unit. So instead I made notes in the evening after recording the group working together, writing down what I could remember that seemed important of the afternoon's activities. I also listened to and transcribed the recordings as soon as was possible, making further notes as my memory of the afternoon's activity was stimulated by what I heard on the tapes.

Getting to the point where I could adopt "the detached viewpoint of an observer" (B. A. Johnstone, 2007, p. 108) was not easy. Two criticisms of participant observation noted by Cohen and Manion, that: "participant observations are often described as subjective, biased, impressionistic, [and] idiosyncratic," and "how do we know that observers do not lose their perspective and become blind to the peculiarities they are supposed to be investigating?" (Cohen & Manion, 1994, pp. 110-111) were relevant to my position as an insider group member. Firstly, it was very difficult to stand back and be objective about the data as I was aware I had a positive bias towards the group and its activities; these were the friends who had helped me move from failure to success. Consequently I found it difficult to adopt a neutral approach. Secondly, when I started working with the data I did seem to be 'blind to the peculiarities' I was supposed to be

investigating. I found it difficult to see anything significant in the group's discussions at all: it was "just so ordinary" (Research Journal 1, p. 10[9]), how could any significant research be done on such "common, everyday talk" (Research Journal 1, p. 12)?

Establishing the necessary perspective to be able to 'see' the value of the data took time. It was only after I had audiotaped and transcribed the first interviews that I could start comparing what participants had *said* about the group's activities with what I actually *heard* happening in the sessions. I used the reflections in my journal (as discussed below, p. 60) as a tool to move myself from 'group member' mode into 'researcher' mode as I revisited the notes made while transcribing the work sessions and discovered patterns in my questions which led me to see patterns in the data.

Conversely, being an insider in the group did give me access to layers of meaning in the talk which might not have been available to an outsider researcher (Carroll, 2005).

3.1.1 Conducting the interviews

The interviews were conducted in two phases: the first was a set of small group interviews and three individual interviews (conducted using the same list of question areas as was used for the group interviews, see Appendix 3, p. 257), done towards the end of the MA year, and another set of individual, one-on-one interviews, done two to two and a half years later (see Appendix 4, p. 259).

First phase, pre-graduation interviews

These interviews were planned as small group, semi-structured interviews. When I started conducting the interviews I was very aware of the problems I faced as an interviewer. I did not feel like a researcher and did not know how to 'make' myself into a researcher. I was a full group member, these were my friends that I was interviewing and

[9] When I started writing the research journal I dated each entry. But as I began reflecting on what I'd written I would often record further thoughts sideways in the margin, next to the first observation. As the internal discussion continued these entries got longer, and would overflow onto other pages – "contd. p 57" – so I stopped trying to keep track of the dates on which entries had been made and used coloured pens and topic headings instead. Hence the quotes from the Research Journal give only the journal number and page number.

I had been an active participant in the events that I wanted the group members to discuss. At first I felt I should perhaps establish some 'distance' between myself and the discussion as I did not want to guide the conversation or perhaps cue the others into providing particular responses. This was partly the reason for deciding to do group rather than individual interviews: with two or three others present as well as myself I felt that my influence on the kind of response to or direction of the conversation would be minimised. Maintaining 'distance', however, proved to be difficult. I very soon forgot to 'be' the researcher and became a group member and had to consciously remember to ask further questions. While I definitely had the rapport necessary to obtain in-depth information (Silverman, 1993) from the interviewees, there are occasions when the notes in my research journal indicate that I had possibly missed opportunities to probe more deeply into particular areas of participants' accounts because I appeared to be too involved in the conversation to be aware that a well-placed question might have been useful.

I used semi-structured interviews for this set as I wanted to give the group members the space to recall what they thought was important about the experience of working together and to reflect on what they thought the impact of the group experience had been on them as students and as teachers. I prepared in advance a list of areas that I wanted to address in the interviews, but allowed the discussions to develop in the directions chosen by the interviewees. I did not want to impose my own view of the group's functioning as the only way of viewing the group, as I knew that their perspectives on the way the study group had functioned would give me insights I did not have.

I planned for all the first set of interviews to be group interviews as, apart from diluting my presence (Wilkinson, 1998), I thought that the group interaction would facilitate the 'sparking' of thoughts and memories among participants, producing insights that might not surface in individual interviews and giving greater richness and depth to the data (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Montell, 1999). Montell's comment that when using small groups "the information that is produced is more likely to be framed by the categories and understandings of the interviewees rather than those of the interviewer" (Montell,

1999, p. 50), confirmed my decision not to use individual interviews. The approach to interviewing as described by Fontana and Frey where the interviewer "may 'come down' to the level of the respondent to engage in 'real' conversation, with give-and-take and empathetic understanding" (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 660) also reassured me that any possible shifts from 'interviewer' to 'participant' would not necessarily mean that the interviewee opinions expressed in the data were no longer valid because I had had a hand in constructing them. Having a group also helps to provide 'balance' to the discussion: imperfect recall produces different memories which provide discussion around the different viewpoints of the event (Frey & Fontana, 1991). The details which emerge during discussion make for greater accuracy in the stories about what happened and how the participants felt about the group's activities (Simons, 2009; Wilkinson, 1998).

However, three of the group members were unable to fit in with any of the scheduled time for the interviews, so these, perforce, were individual interviews. While at the time I regretted this, as I felt these group members had not had the benefit of having thoughts and memories stimulated through talking to other group members, I later discovered that there was an unexpected benefit to one of the individual interviews. When I came to analyse the data for Chapter 6, the individual, post-graduation interviews conducted with Wendy and Anne were the two selected for in-depth analysis in this chapter. Wendy's interview from the pre-graduation phase had been one of the individual interviews whereas Anne had taken part in a small group interview in this first phase. I was able to compare the themes and artefacts Wendy used across her two interviews in a way not possible in Anne's case, as the interaction between speakers in Anne's group made it difficult to establish how deeply themes and artefacts related just to her or were a more communal construct of the whole group.

Second phase, post-graduation interviews

The second set of interviews consisted of individual, unstructured / non-directed / open-ended interviews conducted between two and two and a half years after the members of the group had completed their Masters degrees. For this phase of the data gathering I decided to use individual interviews rather than the small groups I had used for the pre-

graduation interviews, as the interaction that happens in groups makes them an unsuitable tool for gathering reflective, biographical data (Kitzinger, 1994), and I wanted group members to reflect on *their histories of themselves* as teachers and the directions in which their professional lives had moved since the years of study.

I chose to do what are variously known as unstructured / non-directed / open-ended interviews (Cohen & Manion, 1994; B. A. Johnstone, 2007; Silverman, 1993). These are "more like conversations with perhaps just an initial general focus or direction" (B. A. Johnstone, 2007, p. 110) and are a way of obtaining the "thick description, nuance and meaning" (B. A. Johnstone, 2007, p. 110) and the in-depth emotions and perceptions (Cohen & Manion, 1994) which I hoped would illuminate the interviewee's sense of self as a teacher more vividly than more directed interviews would.

For these interviews I prepared an opening question which would initiate the discussions in a similar manner across all the interviews, but which would be flexible enough to open up individual spaces in which the participants could talk about and "ascribe meanings" (Silverman, 1993, p. 110) to their teaching lives after completing their Masters degrees. In open-ended interviews the interviewer is an active participant in constructing the conversation (Silverman, 1993) which was important to me as these were my friends and in a conversation between friends both individuals *must* play a part in constructing the dialogue. The realisation that I could legitimately 'be' part of the conversation was a great help in navigating my way through the complex relationship of being at one and the same time a friend, a colleague, and a researcher/interviewer. In the final analysis 'how' something is said is as important as 'what' is said. It is incumbent on the researcher to examine the details with care (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

3.2.2. Keeping a research journal

Research journals have their roots in ethnography, where field notes are used to record observations of activities in the field as part of the ethnographic data collection process (Merriam, 1998), and are used as part of the reflective process necessary to order and categorise the data during data analysis. As part of the research process I kept a research journal for both these functions: as a form of self-interview to collect data on my own

reactions to being a member of the study group, and as part of the reflective process of analysing the data.

Self-interview

I initially started keeping a research journal as part of the data collection process: I used it for making notes on what had happened during a study group meeting, the notes I thought I would have made as an observer had I not decided that it was more important to contribute than observe. Then I started writing about how *I felt* about the afternoon's activities: I wrote about *how I remembered* the group's activities, *my reactions* to other group members' opinions and *my feelings* about what I had seen and heard during the afternoon. This 'self-interview' function was a large part of the journal entries done during the preliminary listening to the afternoon work sessions, and after the interview recordings, before starting on the transcriptions. I recorded what *I* remembered about the group and its activities, as an addition to the other members' memories.

Reflecting in the journal

Keeping a journal is "ultimately a way of getting feedback from ourselves" (Janesick, 1999, p. 507): I started to use the journal for reflection as I began to analyse the transcriptions of the audiotapes. Coming to the data analysis process as an inexperienced insider researcher I discovered I had a completely emic view of the data; I knew it so deeply as a group member that I could not understand it any other way. Donald Schön, one of the seminal writers on reflective practice, says that, "Our knowing is ordinarily tacit, implicit in our patterns of action and in our feel for the stuff with which we are dealing" (Schön, 1995, p. 29). This tacit, insider knowledge framed the data as "such common, everyday talk, it's just the usual afternoon of conversation" (Research Journal 1, p. 12), obscuring anything special or unusual, any patterns or themes in the group's interactions. I needed to gain an etic perspective on the data in order to analyse it. I needed to problematise the data (Clarke, 1995), to reframe it in a way that would make it possible to see the data through a researcher's lens.

Winter (1988) acknowledges the difficulties of not simply documenting old familiar insights when looking at one's data and advocates the use of imagination and play to develop new understandings of it. In order to reframe the data I played with it, constructing the conversations as a series of stories telling what happened during the afternoons on which the group had met. The process of dividing a three hour transcript into story sections brought some order to the complex messiness of an afternoon's talk. Deciding on the boundaries of the stories and assigning them to topic categories gave me a sense of control which had hitherto eluded me. Scrutinising my data from this entirely different angle started to make the familiar strange. What had been a flow of ordinary conversation started to become collections of story-artefacts (Allender & Manke, 2004), available for analysis as individual yet related items.

I then started writing journal entries in which I reflected on what had happened to the data as I had retold it in story form, using questions very similar to the two which Schön suggests using to drive reflective processes: "What *is* this?" and "What understandings and strategies of mine have led me to produce this?" (Schön, 1995, p. 30)[10].

The questions around "What is this?" were questions such as how would my understanding of 'what this story is' change if I moved a story's boundaries by including data that came before or after the story in the audiotapes? How would my understanding of the story change if I moved it into another category, or linked it with another story? The "What understandings and strategies of mine have led me to produce this?" included questions such as why had I drawn *those* boundaries for a story, why had I put it into *this* category not *that* one, how had I chosen the categories? In a nutshell, what had I been sensitised to in my data through retelling it in story form (Eisner, 1997)?

Holly (1989) writes about "the many small minds" that are "wheeled into consciousness" when writing for reflective purposes, going on to say that the way these minds work becomes "visible through journal writing" (Holly, 1989, pp. 76-77). Two journal

[10] While Schön's work has been criticised for its reliance on an emic perspective, I found his approach to the reflective process more useful than any of the others encountered in the literature.

activities made me notice how I was drawing on my intuitive knowledge of the group's activity processes as I rewrote the data in story form. The first was examining the language choices I had made when writing the stories, and comparing the words used in the stories to the words in the transcript. The second was reflecting on the decisions I had made when selecting and categorising the stories. Becoming aware of how my mind was working, of what my subject position was in relation to the data, allowed me to step back progressively further from the data and view it more objectively.

Keeping notes on this process in the journal not only forced me to clarify my thoughts by putting them down on paper (Holly, 1989), but the thoughts were captured for later review, leading to progressive clarification of insight (Hiemstra, 2001). Through an iterative process of reflection, description, then reflection on this description, I was able to frame and reframe the data in ways which moved me further and further from my insider viewpoint, gradually leading to deeper understanding.

This record of the insights I gained through reflecting on the storytelling process not only helped me extract meaning from them (Boud, 2001), but enabled me to see the gaps; it highlighted the sections of the data in which I had not found any stories worth telling (Allender & Manke, 2004). I realised that in the early stages of data analysis I had set aside fairly large sections of data as 'off-topic': in the journal I bemoan the fact that "there is so much here that is irrelevant, we chat on about what's happening in our schools, how we do things in our classrooms, what we've seen on TV, books we remember reading …" (Research Journal 1, p. 25). Because in these sections we were not talking about the afternoon's appointed 'study topic' they had been deemed to not have relevant (to my research) stories to tell. I then revisited these off-topic data sections and asked myself what happened in these sections: why had I labelled them as 'off-topic' – what did I mean by 'off-topic' – and what work did the conversations actually do for the group's activities, how did they help or hinder the goal of the moment (Research Journal 2, p. 63)? This was an epiphany: much of the 'off-topic' data was the group members talking about their classroom experiences. This made me aware of the effect of some of my tacit insider understanding: I had allowed the often-repeated comment, made when

one of the group members thought that the talk had strayed for too long to classroom matters, "Enough gossip about school, let's get back on topic" (Research Journal 2, p. 6), to frame my view of learning as 'talking about the academic matters in hand'.

I realised that I had decided in advance what I was going to take learning activities to be (and therefore what was off- or on-topic) rather than letting this category 'rise' from the data as I worked. By talking about their classroom experiences the group members were drawing on their professional teaching knowledge as a resource to inform the 'work' being done in the conversation. Because I had captured in the journal my thoughts and reactions as I went through the process of categorising the data, I was able to revisit these decisions. This gave me another view of the data and many of the sections labelled 'off-topic', and therefore irrelevant, became valuable resources during the data analysis.

Further along in the research process the journal also performed a therapeutic function (Holly & McLoughlin, 1989) as I struggled with the consequences of trying to see the data objectively. Stepping back from the data by retelling the transcripts as stories, told in my own words, in the past tense, using pseudonyms to make the transcripts less familiar, gave me the distance to be able to view the data as 'saying something important' rather than 'just talk'. But as I analysed the data I became uncomfortably aware that my friends were becoming the 'objects' of my research, and as I read about research methodology I became concerned about the undemocratic nature of the research process: I was in danger of producing "research results in which the voices of the people involved no longer appeared" (Schratz & Walker, 1995, p. 7). I used the journal for a form of self-analysis of the conflict I felt between my position as a group member and my position as researcher: as a student I was "part of the group, being a member has shaped me as a successful student" (Research Journal 3, p. 31), as a researcher I was, in effect, using the group to become 'a more successful student'. I worried that in order to be 'a successful researcher' I would have to write in the third person, which would position me as the "omniscient, invisible author" (Wyatt, 2006, p. 815) in a way that did not acknowledge the study group's contribution to me as a student and my work as a researcher. I had multiple conversations with myself in the journal for several months before coming to the

following decisions, as ways of managing these tensions: to write the descriptions of the group in the first person so as to clearly place myself as group member; and in the data analysis to refer to myself, as well as the other group members, in the third person to retain the sense of group membership[11]; to quote extended extracts from the transcripts so as to give as much authentic 'voice' to the group members as possible[12]; and to write the data analysis in the present tense to mirror the immediacy of the transcripts.

3.3. Transcription of the Data

I audiotaped the group's work sessions and the interviews, numbered the tapes consecutively as they were used, and then transcribed them using transcription conventions adapted from those recommended by Ochs (1979):

( )	indecipherable utterance
(presents?)	best guess as to what was said
(*noise of passing truck*)	transcriber's comment
[	overlapping talk
(….)	pause, length indicated in approximately one dot per second

As I was principally interested in the content of the dialogue rather than the style of its delivery, the conventions used were kept to a minimum.

After transcribing the audiotapes I categorised and labelled the transcripts, resulting in code, for example T5A/EG/MP, which facilitated both identifying data selections from the transcripts and finding the relevant audio data on the audiotapes if the transcripts needed to be reviewed.

The first letter-and-number sequence, T1A, T1B, T2A and so on, identifies the number of the audiotape and the side of the tape, A or B.

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[11] In the data analysis I use the pseudonym 'Kate' to refer to myself.

[12] The only exception to this is the presentation of the data in Anne's post-graduate interview in Chapter 6. The stories of optimism and of stress I needed to analyse were closely interwoven across the length of the interview. To quote all of them in their entirety would have made the chapter too long, so as many stories as possible were quoted in their entirety, with short excerpts used only when absolutely necessary.

The next letter sequence indicates which category the data falls into, group work sessions or interviews. The group work sessions were divided into two sets: the core group and the extended group. Transcripts of the core group at work are indicated by CG and the extended group by EG. Then follows the initial of the person whose proposal was being worked on, with the letter P for proposal. For example: T1A/CG/AP indicates Tape 1 side A/Core Group/Ann's Proposal, and T5A/EG/MP indicates Tape 5 side A/Extended Group/Meg's Proposal.

The interviews from the first phase of interviewing were coded with the initial of the interviewee and I for interview, for example: T9A/E/I indicates Tape 9 side A/ Emma/Interview. The interviews from the second phase were initially called the 'second round interviews', which is reflected in the coding which contains the initial of the interviewee and SRI for second round interview. For example T19A/B/SRI indicates Tape 19 side A/Brad/Second Round Interview[13].

3.4. Data Analysis

The analysis of the data is informed by a sociocultural theory of language, as explained in Chapter 2 (Gee, 1999a; Wertsch, 1991b, 1998). This is a theory of language in use: language is viewed as an activity or practice happening in a social context in more or less ritualised patterns as information is exchanged. The patterns or rules that govern the ways in which language is used are largely determined by the culture of the social context in which the exchange happens. But language is more than just an exchange of information in a particular social context; it is the acting out of social structure, the affirmation of social roles and status, the setting up and passing on of shared systems of value and knowledge (Halliday, 1978, in Wells, 1999). For example: in the classroom the identities of teacher and learner, their roles and the rules which govern their interaction are, in part, enacted through the ways in which language is used.

[13] When writing about the interviews in the data analysis chapters I refer to them as pre-graduation and post-graduation interviews rather than first and second round interviews, in order to make it clearer when the two sets of interviews were conducted.

There is a reciprocal relationship between language and social contexts: language occurs in and is shaped by social contexts, but at the same time all contexts are created and maintained through language (Wells, 1999). It is this reciprocity that provides for growth and change in language use, contexts and identities. A classroom culture which is based on the 'transmission of knowledge' requires a certain type of teacher-talk and learner-response, with corresponding identities of teacher-as-knowledge-source and learners-as-empty-vessels. By changing the teacher-talk to a 'facilitating discovery of knowledge' approach, the kind of talk that happens in the classroom is changed, which changes the culture of the classroom and the teacher and learner identities. Hence language is a social resource for creating and sustaining both culture and the associated identities[14].

3.4.1. Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is widely used across many disciplines and takes many forms (Heller, 2001; B. Johnstone, 2002; Tannen, 1989; S. Taylor, 2001; van Dijk, 1997). Taylor defines discourse analysis in its widest sense as "the close study of language in use" (S. Taylor, 2001, p. 5). It is a close study not only of the organisation of words in a conversation, but of the context of usage: the physical and temporal *context surrounding* the talk and *what is being accomplished* through the talk. The focus of the analysis in this study is the work done by talk in a social setting, or discourse as "a form of social action" (Heller, 2001, p. 251).

Each of the three data analysis chapters focuses on a different aspect of language in use:

- in Chapter 4 the use of dialogic talk in the mediation of knowledge and the constitution of post-graduate student identities is investigated
- in Chapter 5 the focus is on the ways in which drawing on professional knowledge as a tool for constructing understanding mediates the constitution of teacher identities
- in Chapter 6 the post-graduation interviews are analysed to establish ways in which language is used to situate the teacher identities constructed in the figured

[14] It must be noted that the research into learning talk has been done in classrooms, seminar rooms in institutions of higher education, and in groups led by academic researchers. There appears to be no research done into learning talk into self-constituted peer groups such as the study group being investigated here.

world of teaching in the study group, relative to the identities in the group members' post-graduation professional contexts.

For Chapters 4 and 5 I use James Gee's method of discourse analysis (Gee, 1999a), central to which are the concepts of social languages and genres of talk, Discourses, Conversations, and situated identities as tools of inquiry into the activity that is accomplished by talk. The reasons for using 'Discourse' and 'Conversations' with upper case 'D' and 'C' are discussed below. In Chapter 6 I use the concepts of figured worlds and identities-in-practice (Holland et al., 1998), supported by Gee's (2000-2001) four ways of viewing identity. (For a discussion of these concepts see pp. 44, 47 and p. 38).

Social languages

Social languages are "different styles of language used for different purposes and occasions" (Gee, 1996, p. 3). They are ways of expressing two things in any given sociocultural context: firstly, who we are, and secondly, what we're doing (Gee, 1996). The analysis of social languages focuses on *how* language is used in a particular social context, *what* kind of identity is constituted by using that kind of language, and *what work* is done through assuming that identity at that moment in that context. For instance, when describing an incident (such as a traffic accident) to someone in a position of authority an individual will identify her/himself as a particular kind of person (such as a responsible motorist) by using a particular social language. The work done by the social language involved in being 'a responsible motorist' will include mitigating the degree of blame which could be attached to the speaker's role in the traffic accident. By using a particular social language speakers construct for themselves a particular position or identity in that social space at that particular time.

Social languages can be identified by the variety of 'grammar two' that is used. As explained in Chapter 2 (p. 35), Gee distinguishes between 'grammar one' and 'grammar two'. 'Grammar one' is the traditional classification of language into nouns, verbs, clauses, etc. and the rules which govern the use of these language components when forming sentences. 'Grammar two' is "the 'rules' by which grammatical units like nouns

and verbs, phrases and clauses, are used to create *patterns* which signal or 'index' characteristic *whos-doing-whats-within-Discourses*" (Gee, 1999a, p. 29) (Italics in original). Identifying 'grammar two' patterns is important for establishing which social language is being used in a conversation.

Associated with social languages are speech genres, which are patterns of language associated with patterns of action and intentions (Gee, 2002). An example of a speech genre is teacher talk in classrooms, such as the initiation-response-feedback genre in which the teacher asks a question, the learner answers and the teacher 'rates' the accuracy of the response. The action of the interchange is 'question-and-answer' but the intention is not to acquire information but to check the knowledge of the responder: the work done by the social language of this genre sets up identities of 'teacher-who-has-knowledge' and therefore is able to test and evaluate others, and 'learner-who-is-acquiring-knowledge' and therefore must be able to remember and articulate the correct answer in the correct manner.

Discourses

Social languages are closely connected to Gee's concept of Discourses (as opposed to discourses, or stretches of language in use, with a lower case 'd') (Gee, 1999a). He defines Discourses as "socially accepted associations among ways of using language, of thinking, valuing, acting, and interacting, in the 'right' places and at the 'right' times with the 'right' objects", these associations "can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group" (Gee, 1999a, p. 17). These Discourses are thus more than just language being used in particular ways, they are "language plus 'other stuff'" (Gee, 1999a, p. 17) such as behaviour and associated values. The Discourse of 'teaching' in the social context of a staffroom requires the use of a particular social language *as well as* a certain kind of behaviour which demonstrates certain values, if an individual is to be accepted as 'a teacher' by the rest of the social group in that staffroom.

Conversations

Part of the successful accomplishment of a Discourse is knowing which aspects of the talk are relevant to that Discourse; one needs to know "what counts for a given group of people at a given time and place as 'relevant' by having been privy to certain major 'conversations' those people have heretofore had" (Gee, 1999a, p. 34). Gee calls these "major 'conversations'" Conversations with a capital 'C' (to distinguish them from day to day conversations) and defines them as long-running themes and debates that are threaded through social history. An example of a Conversation would be the debate on corporal punishment in schools.

Situated identities

Social languages, Discourse and Conversations are neither fixed nor permanent: they change with use, over time, and in relation to contexts of use.

By using a particular social language and the associated Discourses, one positions oneself relative to others and the associated Conversations, resulting in the enactment of socially-situated identities.

According to Gee (1999b), when people communicate successfully in a specific setting they are doing, through their talk, the following four things:

1. enacting a specific, socially-situated identity
2. accomplishing a specific, socially-situated activity
3. presenting a specific, socially-situated meaning
4. using a shared cultural model or perspective on the world.

Successful communication is enabled when they 'design' their language at the level of word, phrase, sentence, and discourse so that the above elements are created and reflected in their talk. It is the variations in the nature of these elements that distinguish the varieties of social languages.

In Chapters 4 and 5 extracts from the data are analysed in order to firstly identify patterns in or particular instances of language usage, and secondly to understand what social

action was being accomplished through these usages. In order to do this the following questions, based on Gee (1999a; 2000-2001), were asked:

- What activity is going on here? How is this activity placed in the larger, overall activity of the study group?
- What is the 'design' of the language use – the choice of language?
- What identities/social positions are being created by the language used – how do the situated meanings embodied in the choice of words work to 'do' this positioning?
- What positions are therefore made available for others to take up?
- Which of those positions *are* taken up and what does this take-up 'do' to the activity?
- What perspective on the world do they want to share with the others? This is particularly applicable in Chapter 4 when looking at the 'work' the discourse does to create and maintain the study group as a community of practice.

3.4.2. Figured Worlds

In Chapter 6 the data analysis is based on the concepts of figured worlds and identities-in-practice (Holland et al., 1998), supported by Gee's (2000-2001) four ways of viewing identity. These concepts complement Gee's method of discourse analysis (Gee, 2011), as the relevant social languages (the styles of languages used in different social settings), Discourses (the ways in which language use signifies values and beliefs) and Conversations (the long-running themes that are indicative of the attitudes of social groups) provide the immediate context or background to the social interaction, to "the typical stories or figured worlds the words and phrases of the communication are assuming and inviting listeners to assume" (Gee, 2011, p. 72).

Gee recommends that when using figured worlds as a tool for discourse analysis one asks the following types of questions:

- What figured worlds are relevant here? What must I, as an analyst, assume people feel, value, and believe, consciously or not, in order to talk (write), act and/or interact in this way?

- Are there differences here between the figured worlds that are affecting espoused beliefs and those that are affecting actual actions and practices? What sort of figured worlds, if any, are being used here to make value judgements about oneself or others?
- What other figured worlds are related to the ones most active here? Are there "master figured worlds" at work?
- What sort of texts, media, experiences, interactions, and/or institutions could have given rise to these figured worlds?
- How are the relevant figured worlds here helping to reproduce, transform, or create social, cultural, institutional, and/or political relationships? What Discourses and Conversations are these figured worlds helping to transform, reproduce, or create? (Gee, 2011, p. 95)

Identifying what these figured worlds 'are' is done by analysing the language used during the study group members' post-graduation interviews, and identifying the artefacts (i.e. the lexical items used), which open up what the study group members understand to be the figured worlds of teaching in the study group and the figured worlds of teaching in their schools. Through an examination of these artefacts, 'pictures' can be built up of the figured worlds in these two spaces. In the study group space, a 'picture' of the practices that constituted 'good' or 'innovative' teaching, and how working with others in the group affected the way group members saw themselves as teachers; and in their school spaces, a 'picture' of the teaching practices that were seen to be valued in this professional sphere.

Lexical artefacts are similar to metaphors, in that they are "not just a surface ornamentation of language, but a phenomenon of human thought processes" (Cameron, 2003, p. 2). Like metaphors, they are a word choice which "reveals something of how people think and feel" (Cameron et al., 2009, p. 63) and can be used to gain an understanding of how people comprehend themselves and the world around them.

The artefacts in the interviews are identified by looking for themes, the use of synonyms, repetition of words and concepts, and words that carry added meaning (these words were often metaphors). Rather than relying on an intuitive understanding of the artefacts, I follow the recommendations of the Pragglejaz Group (2007) for determining the actual meaning of language used in real discourse, and work with dictionary definitions of the

lexical items. My choice of the *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* (Rundell & Fox, 2007) was guided, once again, by the Pragglejaz Group, as this dictionary:

> is based on a fairly recent, well-balanced corpus of 220 million words, which makes it suitable for identifying metaphor in contemporary texts. Its language data stems from a broad range of text types and from both written and spoken discourse. (Krennmayr, 2008, p. 101)

Occasionally, when the definition of the lexical item in the *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* does not seem to completely explain the apparent contextual meanings of the word, I use *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles* (Onions, 1972) to provide additional information.

The use of the artefacts in the interviews is then analysed to establish how the interviewees 'see' the figured world of teaching in the study group and those in the schools in which they teach. The degree of 'fit' between the figured worlds is examined in an attempt to explain the study group members' ability or inability to continue perceiving themselves as confident and innovative.

3.4.3. Data presentation

Each data extract is presented in a table in which the data have been divided into sequences of talk, placed in numbered blocks. The division is based on "patterns of subsequent actions where the 'subsequentiality' is not an arbitrary occurrence" (ten Have, 1999, p. 114).

In Chapter 4 the data extracts have been divided into blocks of talk according to talk genre: each block contains a single genre type. In some extracts parts of the text are printed in different colours in order to distinguish the talk genres and the development of ideas within the discussion, and in some extracts core concepts have been underlined to facilitate tracking them as they emerge across the discussion.

In Chapter 5 the division of the data extracts has been done according to the function of the language: the Discourse displayed, situated identity enacted, support given or source of confidence found in each sequence. Coloured text has also been used in the last section

of this chapter, to distinguish the different themes which have contributed to this group member's situated identity as a confident teacher. The colours also highlight the manner in which the different sources of a group member's confidence have become intertwined and contribute to a particular subject position.

In Chapter 6 the data extracts have been divided according to informational function (Gee, 1999a): each block demarcating a chunk of talk that contains one idea or piece of information. Key words or groups of key words are identified by using **bold** typeface in both the extracts and the discussion.

3.4.4. Choice of data for analysis

When doing the data analysis for Chapters 4 and 5 (which focus on the group interaction as, firstly, part of the learning process - Chapter 4 - and secondly, as a tool for constituting identities as confident, innovative teachers - Chapter 5), I initially examined all the transcripts of the group working together. But I rapidly realised that only the transcripts of the core group working together were suitable for analysis due to the quality of the audio recordings. In the recordings of the core group there are only five individuals talking and for the most part their voices and the content of the conversation are clearly audible. Only occasionally – and generally only for a few words – do their voices overlap to the extent that I am unable to tease out what is being said and the actual words that are being used. On only three occasions in five and a half hours of recording does the group of five break down into two sub-groups carrying on individual discussions, resulting in me being unable to transcribe that portion of the discussion as I cannot, with confidence, establish the actual words that are being used.

However, in the recordings of the extended group where there are eight individuals contributing to the discussion there is a sharp rise in the number of occasions when voices overlap and become indistinguishable because two or three speakers are commenting simultaneously. But even more important is the fact that the group frequently breaks up into sub-groups, at times three sub-groups, all talking at the same time. Sometimes I am able to determine that individuals are checking up on or elaborating on what has been said previously. Sometimes I can work out the general gist

of the main discussion but not the details, but frequently I am able to identify words only intermittently for quite lengthy stretches of conversation, occasionally for as long as five minutes. There are several instances in these recordings when the dialogic talk can be heard breaking down because the proposal presenter silences the group's contributions. For a short time individual voices are clear, but as the discussion resumes several speakers quickly join the conversation, the voices overlap and I am unable to establish how the monologic impasse was resolved.

The data analysis focuses closely on the speakers' linguistic choices in order to establish, in Chapter 4, the dialogic nature of the talk, the genres of talk that are used, and how the different genres act to promote the learning that happened in the group. In Chapter 5 the analysis investigates how linguistic choices determine the social languages and Discourses used in the process of constituting situated identities. Knowing exactly what words are used, how the voices overlap, how individuals pick up and use or rephrase the words of others, is vital to the success of this type of analysis. I am able to track the development of the group's interactions across the core group transcriptions, but am repeatedly unable to do so across the extended group transcriptions because of the frequent, sometimes lengthy blank sections in the transcripts. As a result I decided that only the core group data could be reliably used for analysis in these chapters.

For Chapter 6 post-graduation interviews with each group member were analysed. The analysis indicated that for two teachers the confident professional identities constituted during the life of the study group had not been maintained. As a result these two interviews became the focus of the chapter; the other members' interviews provide a counterpoint with evidence of continued development of identities as confident, innovative teachers.

3.4.5. Outline of data analysis in Chapters 4, 5 and 6

In Chapter 4 the focus of analysis is on the study group's use of dialogic talk to help group members refine the topics of their research projects, and on the ways in which this process worked to constitute particular student identities.

In Chapter 5 the analytic focus is on the study group's talk about teaching and on the ways in which this process worked to constitute particular student identities.

In Chapter 6 the artefacts which indicate the nature of the figured worlds of teaching in the post-graduation interviews are analysed to identify the ability/inability of the group members to author themselves as confident, innovative teachers.

3.5. Ethical considerations

Ethics clearance was obtained from the Wits School of Education. Participants were provided with a description of the research project (Appendix 1). They all signed consent forms in which they agreed to take part in small group and individual interviews and to allow the audiotaping and transcription of these interviews. They also signed consent forms in which they agreed to the audiotaping and transcription of a number of the group's Saturday afternoon work sessions (Appendix 2). They were assured in writing that confidentiality would be maintained through the use of pseudonyms, which they themselves chose.

CHAPTER 4: BECOMING CONFIDENT POST-GRADUATE STUDENTS: THE ROLE OF LEARNING TALK

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4.1. Introduction

In this chapter I argue that the study group used dialogic talk to mediate the construction of understanding as they worked. Analysis of the data of the group working together suggests that the group members used not only their academic knowledge as they critiqued each other's research proposals, but also drew on other 'frames of experience' (Gutiérrez & Rymes, 1995; Lyle, 2008) such as the teaching knowledge and experience acquired in their professional lives, to mediate the learning activities in the group.

The chapter begins (section 4.2) with a brief review of key ideas from the work of Vygotsky, Bakhtin, Wertsch and others on the concept of language as a sociocultural tool for the development of understanding. This is followed (section 4.3) by a description of key features of dialogic talk in action. The central part of the chapter (section 4.4) offers a two part analysis of extracts from the transcripts of the group working together. The first part analyses the use of a range of genres of talk as a tool for mediating understanding as one group member's proposal is read and discussed by the group. The second part analyses the use of questions as a way of mediating understanding as another group member's proposal is read and discussed by the group. Section 4.5 summarises the ways

- considering alternative viewpoints (centrifugal function of talk, see Chapter 2, p. 33);
- asking authentic questions which are open-ended and invite reflection and evaluation[15] (centrifugal function of talk), rather than 'teacher talk' questions where the answers are known to the speaker (centripetal function of talk);
- making extended contributions that help to move understanding forward;
- exploring and refining ideas, both one's own and those of others, through reformulating and offering alternatives;
- building on others' ideas in a cumulative fashion;
- acknowledging the possibility of different views and approaches/contexts;
- drawing on own experience;
- accepting that agreeing with each other's diverse viewpoints is not always necessary;
- giving criticism in a friendly and constructive manner;
- drawing on everyday, common sense perspectives.

(Alexander, 2005; Dysthe, 1996; Lyle, 2008; Mercer, 1995; Wells, 2000)

For dialogic talk to be successful the speakers need to agree on the topic for discussion, or the activity to be accomplished by the conversation (Graumann, 1990). In Vygotskian terms, the parameters of the ZPD need to be established. But within the topic contradictory or differing viewpoints are needed to feed the dialogue, to give it 'movement'. According to Graumann (1990) "… the dynamics of the dialogue are fed by subtle qualifications of the perspective presented: it is accepted but evaluated differently by moving to a related aspect within the horizon of comprehension" (Graumann, 1990 p. 121). These differing viewpoints are provided when speakers use different genres of talk, drawn from the different contexts which go to make up the culture of the group (academic, student, teacher, friend) as they provide suggestions, information and advice during a discussion.

[15] Authentic questions include questions asked to confirm knowledge of or understanding of a situation. The speaker *thinks* he or she knows the answer, but is prepared to engage in discussion.

Discourse which demonstrates dialogic talk incorporates:

- shared conversational floors, where speakers 'interleave' their talk, their voices;
- overlapping as they share in the joint construction of meaning (Edelsky, 1981);
- the joint construction of talk, where speakers move each other, turn and turn about, towards a joint conclusion;
- building knowledge collaboratively over successive turns;
- duetting, where speakers take on and use each other's words and complete each other's sentences;
- the introduction of contrasting viewpoints and their development through debate;
- the appropriation of particular social languages in the conversation;
- the interanimation of speech by the voices of others;
- treating the utterances of others as 'thinking devices'.

(Koschmann, 1999; Sarja, 2000; Wertsch, 1990a)

4.4. Examining dialogic talk in the data

Three extracts from the transcribed audiotapes have been selected to demonstrate the group using dialogic talk to mediate learning[16]. The first two come from Anne's reading of her proposal for her research report to the group; the third comes from Daisy's reading of her research proposal.

4.4.1. Anne's proposal

Anne is passionate about teaching English, especially teaching writing[17]. She says that when she first started teaching she would put up three essay topics on the board and tell her class to choose one and write about it. When she marked the essays she could recognise a good essay and an error-free but mediocre essay, but she neither knew why they were good or mediocre, nor how to explain to her learners why their work was good

[16] These extracts were selected as they provided extended examples of the group pursuing a line of enquiry in spite of lack of agreement (extracts 1 and 2), or because of direct opposition (extract 3), from the proposal writers. The other extended examples of dialogic talk contained fairly lengthy interruptions to the main thread of the discussions. As I wanted to retain the integrity of the conversations and not trim them of what might have been considered 'extraneous material', using such digressive extracts would have made the chapter too long.

[17] The information about Anne on this page is drawn from the notes made during a conversation with her in June 2008.

and how to continue to produce more good writing, or why it was mediocre and how to improve it.

When she returned to teaching after a break of several years to be at home with her small children, she discovered that writing pedagogy had changed. The younger teachers in her school started a writing class by discussing the topic with their learners and doing pre-writing activities to help learners develop ideas for their writing. Anne then started to teach herself the "craft" of teaching writing. She picked up information about pre-writing activities from the "younger, idea-filled teachers in the staffroom", started keeping notes of writing techniques that she read in journals and books and in general became a collector of writing methods and skills. But, in her words, "my knowledge about teaching writing lacked a theoretical background, it was a ragbag of ideas, information, methods, skills, procedures and systems" (Research Journal 4, p. 20).

Her decision to research how to organise a writing programme for her school sprang from this fascination with teaching writing. She feels that the English curriculum in schools is over-crowded and that there is often not enough time to teach writing properly. Her hope was that a well-thought out programme with a solid theoretical base might make English teachers' lives easier. She thought that providing the teachers with an explanation of the theories of how writing might best be taught might enable them to focus on the implementation of these theories in their classroom practice.

What do you mean by writing?

In the first extract analysed, the different genres of talk show how the study group members draw on different areas of their lives to fuel the discussion. The speakers are not limited to one perspective; their 'voices' are fluid and changeable, they change genres as they move between points of view as the discussion progresses.

Five genres of talk have been identified in this extract from the transcribed audiotaped discussions:

1. co-inquirer talk – clarifying understanding, summarising and checking information, speaking with insider-member-of-the-group knowledge;
2. student talk – speakers situate themselves as students, often quoting what lecturers or their supervisors have said to them;
3. lecturer/supervisor talk – occasions where *advice is given*, not *suggestions made;*
4. teacher talk – quoting classroom experience, drawing on knowledge of the English curriculum in schools and using terminology drawn from talking-about-teaching-English-in-the-staffroom talk. Little calls this "local pedagogical talk" (Little, 2003, p. 12);
5. academic talk – working towards a deeper conceptualisation of theory or definitions, using terminology more common to academic discussions and academic writing than to general English teacher talk.

Brad opens the discussion when he interrupts Anne as she reads from her research proposal, to ask a question about the theoretically-informed writing programme she wants to develop for her research project. In the first two sentences of the extract the area of enquiry is set up. No individual has 'the answer'; the group works collaboratively to construct a reasonable definition of what 'writing' could mean for the purposes of Anne's research.

Anne's Proposal: What do you mean by writing? – *Extract 1*

(T1A/CG/AP[18])

		Conversation	**Talk genre**
1	B	I'm sure this is a really thick question, but, when you say 'writing', what writing do you mean?	Co-inquirer query
	A	I know, I don't know! I know.	
Brad's question aligns him <u>with</u> Anne as a co-inquirer: he is honest and slightly tentative, "I'm sure this is .." and "thick" indicate that he might have missed something that she has already read and that he is not sure of the answer himself. Anne's response is equally honest: "I don't know!"			

[18] See Chapter 3 p. 65 for an explanation of the coding of the data transcriptions.

2	W A B	Creative and transactional. Um, Like, (..) long expositional, [expository	Teacher talk Academic talk
Wendy and Brad offer ideas drawn from their teacher knowledge of the genres of writing taught in schools.			
3	A	[(*My supervisor*) says I'm going to have to define writing, [do I mean one word, do I mean two sentences …	Student talk
Anne situates herself as a student with a very honest admission: in spite of her supervisor already having pointed out the need to define what she means by writing, she still doesn't know how she is going to define it.			
4	B D B	[Ja, that's [you mean, no, you mean any time they express themselves, in a recorded, verbal way, when they record But you can have, (…) and, you're not talking about, short answers, you're talking about, developed writing, developed thought.	Academic talk
Together Daisy and Brad cut into Anne's admission, they are focussed on the teacher talk suggestions made in block 2. Their comments start to construct a deeper understanding of writing than the relatively 'surface' concepts of "creative and transactional", that writing is a record of developed thought.			
5	W A W	You're talking about essays. Well, it could be letters Ja	Teacher talk
Wendy sets the academic definitions into concrete classroom terms: "developed thought" becomes "essays", to which Anne adds "letters".			
6	K W A	There's not just one ans, [one sentence answering [it's not short Could it be one sentence answers?	Co-inquirer talk
Kate attempts to summarise the information, turning "writing is … not short answers" into "one sentence answering" with Wendy's overlapping agreement. *In spite of what looks like a consensus of opinion that 'writing' is more than one sentence, Anne is still not sure.*			
7	K A	What do you want to talk about? Well I don't know!	Co-inquirer talk

Kate democratically reminds Anne that this is her decision, but Anne is still undecided.			
8	W D W	[I think [( ) talk about [( ) as well [I think you must narrow it down.	Supervisor talk
Wendy insistently overrides Daisy's introduction of a further aspect of writing and uses the authority of lecturer/supervisor talk to push Anne into making a decision.			
9	A B W	It has to be longer passages, hey? [At least a paragraph. [Ja [Ja.	Co-inquirer talk
Anne finally decides that 'writing' has to be at least a paragraph long, but the agreement of her peers is important, she phrases her decision as a question first, then a statement. Brad and Wendy duet their support.			
10	B A B A	And, is your focus English, largely. Ja. Okay, so it wouldn't be the history essay, for example. No.	Co-inquirer query
In a four step question-and-answer exchange Brad gets Anne to clarify, for both himself and herself, that her topic is writing in the English classroom, not for other subjects.			
11	W	Ja.	Co-inquirer support
Wendy supports the clarification with back-channelled agreement[19]*.*			
12	B A B	I think the only area where they are doing a bit more writing apart from [English is the history essay. ( ) anything else. [Ja, ja. They do write a biology essay, but very factual The occasional project.	Co-inquirer talk
Brad's next remarks confirm that this is as much for his clarification as Anne's, as he reflects on the other school subjects where written work of any length is produced.			
Anne continues to read.			

Dialogic talk in action is evident from the start of the extract with Brad asking an authentic question. His inquiry is genuine: he wants the answer for his own

[19] Back-channel comments are short expression of support, generally one word or sound such as "ja", "yes" or "mmm".

understanding, as much as to help develop clarity in Anne's proposal. Aligning himself as a co-inquirer with Anne opens up the inquiry to suggestions from the group in a way that a more definite, knowledge-checking inquiry might not have.

In response to what is interpreted as a request for help, group members reply using different genres of talk. Ideas are provided in the form of concrete concepts drawn from their teacher vocabulary: "creative", "transactional" (block 2, p. 84). These terms, which come from the curriculum documents for subject English, are then rephrased in more academic vocabulary in attempts to decide what the conceptual nature of writing is: "express themselves", "recorded", "developed writing, developed thought" (block 4, p. 84).

Their academic talk does not display the same mastery (Wertsch, 1998) as their teacher talk; their voices when they use teacher terms such as "creative and transactional" (block 2) are confident and crisp and they do not attempt to elaborate as they know their fellow teachers understand these terms. When they use academic talk, in block 4, their voices are slower and more hesitant, they are thinking out loud, developing the ideas in academic terminology 'on the fly'. (Interestingly, they come quite close to a definition of writing produced by Emig, one of the early theorists on process writing, who describes writing as the "evolutionary development of thought" (Emig, 1977, p. 127).)

These changes in the way the two talk genres are spoken highlight some of the constraints and affordances inherent in the genres. The exploratory, thinking out loud nature of the academic talk is a valuable affordance for developing understanding: it provides a centrifugal component to the dialogic discourse as it is open and provisional (Maybin, 2001), available for discussion. Through thinking aloud the group members make their thought processes available as public knowledge to the others, widening the intellectual space of the discussion (Doecke et al., 2004) and adding to the general fund of available knowledge. By contrast, the teacher talk (as used here) is a constraint, as it has a centripetal function: the fact that the teacher terms are understood by all fixes their

meanings in a monoglossic fashion. As a result the terms are not questioned or discussed, limiting the possibilities for developing a deeper understanding of the concepts.

This movement across genres deepens the discussion. The academic talk provides additional information not available from the monoglossic labels of "creative writing", "essays" and "letters". The return to teacher talk in block 5 (p. 84) grounds the conversation in the reality of the writing programme that Anne wants to develop. While it is not clear how much of a role the academic talk plays in moving Anne towards making a decision – all her comments are couched in the teacher talk genre – the academic genre comments about "developed thought" are arguably part of the background information that make her decide on "longer passages" in block 9 (p. 82), and the introduction of contrasting viewpoints on the subject (an important aspect of dialogic talk) gives her time to come to a decision.

Brad's topic initiation and Anne's response (block 1, p. 83) are good examples of the openness and honesty of the group's interactions, and are indicative of the supportive nature of dialogic inquiry (Lyle, 2008). Trust, openness and honesty are necessary for good group work: the group know Anne to be an experienced teacher who is very focused on teaching writing and they also know her to be a successful student. With this one admission she could be putting both these reputations at risk: surely an experienced teacher of writing knows what she means by writing, and surely a good student has thought through the concept that is central to her research, especially after her supervisor has told her she needs to define it? But while her admission "I know, I don't know!" is made in an emphatic tone of some anxiety, the final "I know" has a note of desperation that possibly indicates not anxiety for her reputation but anxiety over her own inability to decide exactly what she means by 'writing'. The fact that her fellow group members do not hesitate before making suggestions indicates the close bonds between the members. They are committed to helping her and rise to the challenge.

The suggestions made by the group after Anne's confession seem to get her nowhere. In block 6 (p. 84) she is still wondering about single sentences. Even Kate's direct question

does not have any immediate effect. But the joint discussion gives her the time and the ideas to help her make up her mind. Brad agrees with her and is supported by Wendy. The 'duetting' displayed in block 9 (p. 85) is evidence of solidarity between close friends (Coates, 1994).

This support encourages Brad to check on the area of writing more closely and he confirms with Anne that her focus is on the English classroom (block 10, p. 85). Once again he is asking authentic, co-inquirer questions: he is clarifying the matter in his own mind as much as hers. Wendy's one word agreement (block 11, p. 85) indicates she too is still thinking about the area of Anne's research. The rest of the group do not participate, they have accepted Anne's definition of "at least a paragraph" and are ready to let her move on.

These 12 blocks of talk are predominantly co-inquirer talk as the group work to clarify their own understanding of the topic as well as Anne's. The energy necessary to move the discussion forward is provided by the change to student talk in block 3 (p. 84), which provides the impetus for the academic talk in the next block, and Wendy's use of lecturer/supervisor talk in block 8 (p. 85). Through the friendly, collegial nature of the co-inquirer talk the group members show respect for the fact that this is Anne's decision. They offer suggestions that Anne can take up or leave as she wishes. In block 7 (p. 84) Kate hands the responsibility for making a decision back to Anne, pointing out that this is her decision to make, not theirs. But this talk fails to push Anne into making a decision. One of the affordances of the lecturer/supervisor talk in block 8 (p. 85) is that it sets boundaries: when Anne repeats that she does not know how she wants to define writing, Wendy shifts to lecturer/supervisor talk and tactfully (she softens her comment by prefixing it with "I think") but firmly (her voice drops at the end of the statement, it doesn't have the rising inflection of suggestion) tells Anne she must make a decision. This is an example of Bakhtin's heteroglossia in action: by changing to a 'supervisor voice' Wendy speaks with a degree of authority which is not available when using other, more egalitarian talk genres.

Refining the focus of the research

A more extensive extract from this conversation opens at the point where Anne, reading from her proposal, says:

> "… at this stage I'm uncertain how much I'll be looking at English across the curriculum, i.e. English as a service industry for other subjects and how much I'll look at skills and genres which are limited to the English curriculum."

Kate then interrupts and furthers Wendy's comment about "narrowing it down" from block 8 (p. 85) in the first extract, pointing out that Anne will probably be unable to cover everything in an MA research study and will have to choose an area, suggesting "creative writing" as an example of such an area. Anne's statement of uncertainty together with Kate's interruption serve to set up the topic of discussion: does Anne have to focus on a particular area for her research and if so, what area?

That this actually is the topic for discussion is not overtly stated. As Kate talks, Wendy supports her with back-channel agreement sounds; "Mm" and "Yeah", and Anne utters a tentative "Ja", but agreement on the topic is shown more clearly through the way that the rest of the group persevere with the topic despite Anne's resistance to taking up their ideas.

Although Anne has broadly stated the problem – she outlines the two areas on which she could focus and says she is not sure how deeply she will investigate the two areas – she resists the pressure from the others to commit herself to focussing on a particular area. It is this resistance that provides the dynamic energy that drives the discussion forward and keeps it in line with the 'problem'. Through her resistance Anne 'chairs' the discussion. Her rejection of her fellow students' opinions and suggestions keeps the group focussed on working towards a 'solution' that will suit her.

The group's continued participation in the face of Anne's resistance indicates their commitment to co-constructing a 'solution'. There is an unspoken acknowledgement of Anne's ownership of the 'problem': the 'solution' must fit her vision of the research area, not theirs. They will continue to work co-operatively until Anne is satisfied.

There is also an underlying acceptance of diversity of viewpoint; Kate uses predominantly lecturer/supervisor talk; Daisy tends to use teacher talk; Wendy moves between the two; Brad's comments are mostly co-inquirer/insider talk. They do not criticise each other's ideas; they support them through back-channel agreement and use them to feed their own suggestions, but they leave negative comments to Anne. This is her 'problem', only she has the right to reject suggestions.

For ease of reading, in the next extract the data has been 'cleaned' for presentation. The back-channel comments have been moved from the body of the conversation into a separate column on the right. They have been placed as closely as possible to their actual position in the conversation, a single square bracket [indicating where comments overlap in the conversation. Because the right hand column has been used for the back-channel comments, the talk genres used by the group in this discussion are shown in colour in the extract.

The colours used are:

1. co-inquirer talk – green
2. lecturer/supervisor talk – red
3. teacher talk – blue
4. academic talk – brown

Concepts surface in the conversation as it progresses. By the end of the conversation these concepts form part of Anne's definition of what her research is about: that she is researching theories of teaching writing and how they could inform a writing programme. These concepts are underlined in the data.

Anne's Proposal: Refining the focus of the research – *Extract 2*

(T1A/CG/AP)

		Main body of talk	Back-channel comments
1	A	(reading) "… at this stage I'm uncertain how much I'll be looking at English across the curriculum, ie English as a service industry for other subjects and how much I'll look at skills and genres which are limited to the English curriculum"	
	K	You might find, that you cannot, in the scope of this, research, look at everything, and you're going to have to state that. And you're then going to have to choose, you're only [going to look at (..) creative writing.	W [Mm A [Ja W Yeah
Kate's comment sets the parameters of the inquiry: does Anne have to focus on a particular area, if so, what area? The comment is tactfully but firmly phrased, using lecturer/supervisor talk. She starts by using the modal "might", expressing uncertainty, then becomes more definite as she details what will "have to" happen if Anne follows her advice.			*Wendy's back-channel agreement supports Kate, Anne's "Ja" is tentative.*
2	A	But I don't yet know, I've got to see where it takes me.	
Anne doesn't turn down the advice but resists it, indicating through restating her uncertainty that she can't act on it.			
3	K	Ja, but I think you might find that.	
	A	Okay	
Kate indicates that she understands Anne's dilemma but stands firm in her opinion, indicated by her restatement. Anne tentatively accepts it.			
4	D	But there's also something else here, if you could, maybe you want to just specify here, when you talk about looking at English across the curriculum, you could narrow yourself down by saying, in, within this domain, you'll only look at those kind of essays, what do we call them, argumentative, no, expository essays which could be used for say, geography, or history, or, or the recount genre, which is like a history, so you'd only, (…) Do you know what I'm trying to say? [( ) you're not going to start looking at [note writing, that would be used in	A [You say I must state the ..?

		history, you're just looking at the essays, maybe, that would be used in the other subjects.	W [Ja
Daisy picks up Kate's "choose" (block 1) and rewords it as "specify" and "narrow down" and offers as an example a writing genre from the classroom context. She is thinking out loud as she looks at the problem primarily from a classroom perspective, resituating Anne's academic research in a school situation.			*Anne and Wendy signal that they are listening.*
5	B A	But you're focussing on journal writing? I know, but I'm beginning to think ( )	
Brad speaks as an insider as he draws on his prior knowledge of Anne's work as he asks for clarification. He changes Daisy's "specify" and "narrow down" (4) to "focussing on", taking Anne back to her original research intent.			
6	W	It's so broad. You see, because I mean, that brings in summary, it brings in all of that stuff. You're going to have to focus, you're going to have to decide where, what you want to focus on.	A Yes but I
Wendy ventriloquates[20] concepts from earlier in the conversation: "choose" (1),"specify" and "narrow down" (4) and "focussing"(5), and uses classroom contextualisation to justify her lecturer/supervisor advice to "focus", moving from one talk genre to the other as she talks.			*Anne continues to demur.*
7	D W A W	But in order to make a scheme of work you, do you want to cover ( ) everything? But for the purposes of this research you only need to work on But I can't state it yet now, because I don't quite know where it's going to take me. But you know what, you must state it now, it can change later.	A Ja, ja
Four successive statements are prefaced with a contradictory 'but', yet the conversation continues in the same vein, focussed by Anne's continuing resistance. The group's comments are starting to put pressure on Anne; they've moved from "might" (1 & 3), "could" and "maybe" (4) to "have			*Although Anne is resisting, her repeated back-channel "Ja"s*

[20] Ventriloquation is the process of speaking through words borrowed from another (Wertsch, 1991b), in which speakers use another's words as a means for mediating the construction of knowledge.

to" (6) and "must" (7).			*indicate to the others that she is listening and is still open to suggestions.*
8	B W A	Ja. Make a choice and maybe [change it later. [Make a choice, change later. [But what choice must I make, though?	
Brad rewords Wendy's comment and they 'duet' their agreement on making a choice that could be changed later. This double lecturer/supervisor voice puts Anne under enough pressure for her to change her stance from 'can't choose' to "what choice", though she still resists with a "but".			
9	W	Because then in your research you'll actually say "initially I decided to do this, but I found that the research was going in this direction, and so, I, I did this". You'll say that [and you'll ( )	
Wendy increases the pressure and reinforces her advice by moving from making a suggestion to concrete, academic wording for the proposal.			
10	D A	[Why don't you look at the writing skills that are traditionally in place, the letters, the different kinds of compositions, (……) and then you can leave out summary writing, because that's actually a whole ball game on its own. The, the letters, okay, the business and personal, then the essays, your literary essay, and all those other types. The argumentative, the [expository, (……) and you just look at those. [And of course paragraphs. You see there are there are things like, there are things like journals, and, um, which are not really a genre, or they are in a way, [but, they can be done, but they, perform an important process function, although not a product function. I need to say somewhere that writing will be looked at as a process.	W [Ja B [What ( )? B [Mm
Daisy is thinking out loud again as she provides details about writing			

genres used in the classroom. This produces a line of thought from Anne about teaching writing as genre and teaching writing as a process. For the first time in this data segment Anne uses academic talk as she articulates an insight: the first key concept, 'writing as a process', surfaces.			
11	W	A process, ja.	
	B	You mean you may (*his voice tails off*)	
	D	Yes, you've got to say what your view of writing is.	
	A	Ja.	
The support provided by Wendy's repetition of "process" probably serves to embed the idea for Anne. The combination of Anne's statement and Wendy's repetition moves Daisy from teacher talk to an academic approach to the problem, as she uses lecturer/supervisor talk to shift Anne's statement slightly from "writing will be looked at" to "say what your view of writing is". She reiterates the key concept that writing must be viewed as 'a process'. Although Anne agrees, the final solution has not yet fully emerged.			
12	W	And you know, Anne, I actually think that you might even have to narrow it down to the point where you actually decide on one particular category. Because if you, especially if you're going to look at the process and you're going to want to really look at (..) at in detail, at like, at the writing of a letter. And then you're going to want to do group work, and, at how do you write this letter and what processes went into it.	B Ja
	A	But I'm not actually devising lessons. I'm not creating lesson plans.	B Mm
	D	No but you want to know, [that at the end of this, your Grade 8s, or Std 6s, whatever you call them, are going to begin, letter-writing in this way, and in Grade 9, it's developed that way and in Grade 10, it's something else, so by the time they get to matric, they've been through a whole, [kind of process.	W [You want to A [Ja
	W	If you want to, if you want to track that process, which it sounds to me, I might be [wrong, I [( ) understand this, but if you want to [track that process, you're going to have a common, you're going to need to have a common theme throughout, and	A [Ja [Ja A [Ja

		you're going to have to make sure that, um, each of them are doing the same, or developing or building on those skills. So I'm not exactly sure what you want to do here.	
	A	Ja, no neither am I.	
The discussion appears to be heading towards a dead end. Wendy picks up Anne's word "process" and goes into classroom details to make her point. Daisy also uses it but in a slightly different context, the process of learning English as opposed to writing as a process. Wendy follows this use in her next comment. They seem to have gone off track somewhat. The admission that nobody knows what Anne wants to do seems to bring the conversation to a dead end.			*Although Anne doesn't agree with the suggestions, her continued "Ja" indicates she's still listening.*
13	B	I thought all along you were doing general writing.	
	A	No I was, but that's what I've changed from.	
	B	You're, you're not doing that any more. Definitely.	
	A	No. Definitely. I'm now doing revising the writing programme.	
	B	[Your focus is the programme itself.	D [Ja but
	A	The programme.	D The programme, then you see
		(Overlapping voices, Wendy, Daisy and Brad together for a few seconds)	
	A	( ) and that involves the theoretical background, and what writing tasks should they be given. From their entry point to their exit point, so that they leave confident and empowered.	W Ja
Brad's comment/question links back to his question in block 5: the change in what he thought Anne was researching. His repeated statements focus Anne and she produces the next two key comments: she is researching the writing programme and this will involve theorising the teaching of writing. In order to answer his questions Anne synthesises Wendy's and Daisy's details about the process of learning English (12) into a formalised "the programme" and the necessary "theoretical background" to support her decisions.			
14	B	I don't see how you can narrow it, so much.	
	A	No.	

	W	But it's such a huge thing, I mean you, you might end up doing, a whole lot of stuff that really, (..) doesn't	
	D	Ja but what that maybe you're trying to say, that you don't want kids to be suddenly hit with a business letter in Std 9. You, you want to devise a programme, that they've perhaps dealt with it before, maybe in a [simpler way or something. Is that what you're trying to say?	A Ja
	A	Ja. Particularly, actually in that particular example, if Grade 9 is an exit point they must all write one in Grade 9. In theory in future they can leave school at the [end	
	D	[Because you can, if, if you have this uncoordinated arrangement that you described earlier, especially with the ( ). You can have teachers who do know what they want, so, if they don't like to mark essays they can conceivably never give their kids an essay, a whole year can go by and the kids never write an essay. Or they write one sort of an essay, and you want a programme to avoid that, is that what.	A Ja A Ja A Mm
	A	That's right, that's exactly right. Okay, now I'm going to just, um, I don't want to cut us short, this discussion is most valuable, but I just want to get through a bit more. Now [my	B Mmm W Ja
Once again the conversation appears to be at a dead end. Brad and Wendy are back at the choose/narrow/focus impasse, Daisy is still talking about classroom details. Anne senses this and politely – she is careful to retain group support – suggests they move on. But Daisy has picked up on Anne's "writing programme" key comment (13) and her comments, now structured around devising a writing programme, spark an interruption from Wendy.			
15	W	[Sorry can I just ask another question. What exactly are you, are you just looking at devising a programme?	
	A	And the theoretical background, and it has to involve methodology. For example as far as I'm concerned the programme has to, has to imply, process approach, plus some genre approach.	
Wendy's question "are you just looking at .." brings from Anne the final			

key comment on what she is doing. Without realising it she has defined what her research is about.			
16	W A W A W A	Okay. Does it explain this as you go on? Or not. No! (*general laughter*) I'm just wanting to ask you some questions that are going to be asked of you. No it doesn't! (*Laughter*) No! So you're really looking at various, theories of writing and how it should inform the writing programme. Thank you, that's very nice. (…….) (*Anne writes down Wendy's comment*)	
Wendy appears to realise that Anne has produced the necessary definition, and in a series of comments, moving from a supervisor voice to friend and back to a supervisor, finally crystallises in academic talk the definition based on Anne's key comment in block 15. The fact that Anne writes it down indicates how central Wendy's contribution is to the 'learning moment' (Baynham, 1996)			
17	K B D W A	Very well put. Well, or a theory, yes. So you're going to, (..) lobby for a, a combined genre and process [approach to teaching. Okay. Now my literature review and theoretical framework … (*she continues to read*)	A [Ja, ja
The rest of the group agree with Wendy's definition, Anne has it written down and they all move on.			

This lengthy excerpt from a group session is indicative of the value of what Wells (1999) calls 'messy conversations': conversations where students are grappling productively to make meaning and develop understanding rather than laying knowledge out for others to pick up. The talk is dialogic in that there are multiple viewpoints expressed in different

genres of talk. Each genre serves a different purpose. Teacher talk is frequently used to provide information, which then acts as a thinking device (Wertsch & Smolka, 1993) with which to develop ideas, as the group members think out loud how the teaching of writing actually plays out in the classroom (Daisy in blocks 4 and 10), to check understanding (Daisy in blocks 4 and 14) and to clarify meaning (Daisy in block 4 and Daisy and Wendy in blocks 12 and 14).

Lecturer/supervisor talk, on the other hand, is used to encourage Anne to focus on defining her topic. The movement between the teacher and lecturer/supervisor genres within a single stretch of talk by an individual is particularly noticeable in block 12 (p. 94) where Wendy and Daisy shift from one genre to the other as they speak. They use lecturer/supervisor talk to suggest reasons why Anne must narrow her research focus, illustrating these reasons in teacher talk. The tension between these two genres, the one used to give advice and the other to support the advice given, adds a dynamic energy to the discussion (Graumann, 1990). Related-but-different aspects of information are provided by the different perspectives of the related genres and are then drawn into the discussion. The group members use the lecturer/supervisor genre with confidence: as teachers they are accustomed to using something very similar to this genre in their classrooms.

Anne uses predominantly the co-inquirer talk genre. In Extract 1 she uses it mainly to provide clarifying information and to appeal for support. In Extract 2, being the principal inquirer and thus having the power to accept or reject suggestions, she uses the genre to repeatedly resist the other group members' suggestions for a focus for her research. Anne is not trying to be stubborn in her resistance; her struggle to find a focus is genuine. The four statements of resistance all begin with the discourse connector "but", which functions here as a point-making device (Schiffrin, 1987) to signal her deep uncertainty as to what the focus of her research should be.

The group members' use of the academic talk genre is variable. In the first data extract Brad and Daisy use academic talk rather hesitantly as they attempt to define what the

term ‘writing’ would encompass in an English classroom, almost thinking out loud as they try to find the correct lexis, finally settling on “when they express themselves in a recorded way” and writing as “developed thought” (Extract 1, block 4, p. 84). However in Extract 2 block 9 (p. 93), Wendy uses the genre with fluent confidence. Her use of a spoken ‘direct quote’ utilises the authoritative discourse of the social sciences (Lillis, 2003) to lend weight to her argument as she works to persuade Anne to change her stance. In other examples group members use short phrases containing lexical items drawn from the academic genre (Ivanič, 1994), such as “within this domain” (Extract 2, block 4, p.91) and “want to devise a programme” (Extract 2, block 14, p. 96) to add authority to their comments.

The dialogue has a semantically open structure (Skidmore, 2000): there is no ‘correct information’ that can be given (as in the semantically closed structure of the Initiation, Response and Follow-up sequence (Mercer, 1992) in the classroom), the discussion has a recursive structure indicative of shared ideas and collaborative knowledge building. While the goal of the discussion is not overtly stated, it is to help Anne decide whether she has to focus on a particular area of teaching writing for her research and if so what area. But this is Anne’s decision: the group cannot make it for her. All they can do is continue to offer ideas which she can use or reject as she works to construct a better understanding of her research area.

While in Extract 2 the group are still aware that it is Anne who has to make the decision, indicated by comments such as Wendy’s “So I’m not exactly sure what you want to do here” (end of block 12, p. 95), they use far stronger talk than was used in Extract 1, in order to push her to making a decision. In Extract 1 the inquiry was driven by the group members’ need, expressed in co-inquirer talk, to satisfy their own interest in and understanding of Anne’s research project. In Extract 2 the inquiry is driven by the insistence of the group (indicated by their greater use of lecturer/supervisor talk), that Anne must focus on the area that her writing programme will address. Almost every block in Extract 2 contains lecturer/supervisor talk used by group members to give advice, and only six of the 17 blocks contain group member comments made in co-

inquirer talk. Their insistence is in turn fuelled by Anne's resistance to deciding on what the focal point could be.

4.4.2. Daisy's proposal

Daisy's choice of research topic developed out of her search for new ways of working in her classroom. Early in the Masters course Gunther Kress, Professor of Semiotics and Education at the University of London and a member of The New London Group, visited South Africa and gave a lecture on visual modes of learning and developing understanding. Having already learned something about the pedagogies of multiliteracies, as developed by The New London Group (1996), Daisy was intrigued by the possibilities offered by the design of visual responses to literary texts[21]. She thought that this would be another way of both developing understanding and expressing that understanding, especially for the 'non-writers' in her classes who struggled with the dual task of producing a cohesive, coherent, well-structured literature essay and at the same time expressing their ideas, opinions and understandings of the literary text they had read. Producing a visual representation of a theme from a literary text, rather than writing an essay about it, would separate the *construction* of knowledge from the *production* of knowledge. She hoped that her learners, having had to think deeply about the meanings of the literary text as they constructed their visual representation, would have internalised their understanding to the point that when they had to write an exam essay on the text they would be able to focus on how to write the essays, rather than having to juggle both the organisation of knowledge and the essay structure simultaneously.

Assessing visual representation of literary texts

Having decided to offer learners the opportunity to use a range of predominantly visual modes to demonstrate understanding of literary texts, Daisy then faced the problem of how to assess these visual 'texts' as it did not seem appropriate to use criteria from the art classroom in the English classroom. As a result, her research had a double focus: the investigation of learning through the production of visual responses to themes in literary texts and, importantly, an investigation of how to assess these visual responses.

[21] The information about Daisy on this and the next page is drawn from the notes made during a conversation with her in May 2008

The problem-solving discussion that occurs as Daisy reads her research proposal (Extract 3) differs in three ways from the problem-solving discussion that occurs in Extract 2. The first difference lies in the genres of talk used by the group members. In Extract 2, the dominant talk genres, as used by the group members other than the proposal reader, are lecturer/supervisor talk (used twenty times) and teacher talk (used fourteen times). Other than the exchange where Brad confirms with Anne the topic of her research (block 13, p. 95), co-inquirer talk is used by group members, (excluding Anne), only six times. In Daisy's proposal, Extract 3, the group use mostly the co-inquirer genre: excluding the proposal reader, Daisy, they use it fourteen times. There is only one instance of teacher talk and none of lecturer/supervisor talk.

Secondly, in Extracts 1 and 2 the discussion was driven by Anne's resistance to taking up the suggestions made by her fellow group members. In Daisy's proposal, Extract 3, the inquiry is driven by the questions asked by the group members (these questions are highlighted in turquoise in the extract). Daisy's refusals to take up suggestions are made in the student rather than co-inquirer talk genre, and work to silence further discussion. These instances of the student talk genre are shown in orange in the data extract.

Thirdly, in this extract two new talk genres are introduced: the friend/close colleague genre, used to offer help or comment on teaching loads, and the storytelling genre. As Daisy talks, she focuses on how she had tried using visual representations of literary themes with her learners the previous year. She introduces the storytelling genre as she tells stories of her classroom experiences the previous year to support the way she was using the visual representations in her classroom this time. This storytelling genre is shown in pink in the data extract.

Daisy's Proposal: Assessing visual representations – *Extract 3, Section 1*

(T1B/CG/DP)

		Conversation	Talk genre
1	D	(reading) "….. produce a visual representation of any moment in the novel that the learner found particularly appealing."	
	B	Now, um, is that done yet?	Co-inquirer talk
	D	No, that they're handing in, God willing, [the first	
	B	[the structure, it sounds so vague	
Brad's question serves to interrupt Daisy's reading, providing the space for the ensuing discussion. His comment on the vagueness of the structure – he is referring to the way Daisy has set up the task for her learners – moves Daisy to draw on her experience of how the task had played out when she had tried it the previous year. The tone of voice used for his critique is quiet, almost reflective, as though he is thinking out loud rather than talking directly to Daisy.			
2	D	They all liked that, they did it last year, and, they were quite happy to do it. Some of them [are just drawings, and some did huge things, and models, and	Storytelling
	B	[( )	
Daisy's first story-from-last-year serves to justify her current actions based on her experience from the previous year's task – the 'vague structure' had not been a hindrance then to the learners' participation.			
3	W	How do you evaluate it?	Co-inquirer talk
	D	That what I want to find out!	
	B	[What's, what about it?	
	W	[How to evaluate it.	
Wendy's question sets up the topic of enquiry for this segment of talk: how is Daisy going to assess the visual representations? Daisy's response to the question, like Anne's response in Data Extract 1, block1, p. 83, is honest and open: she doesn't know how to do the evaluation.			
4	D	Now what am I going to do with it. That, that's, instead of an essay, they've done this and they had to think of it, hey. Last year I did a little sort of, survey, a questionnaire. And they said "it was so useful, it was much better". It really made them understand, they had to go back to the book and reread, they had to think of things. They think this was	Co-inquirer talk Storytelling

		marvellous. It helped them learn the book.	
Daisy rewords the topic, moving from "evaluating" to "going to do with it" which leads her to reflect on the task itself: instead of working with writing, in the form of an essay, her learners have worked with a visual task and this has made them think deeply. Then she tells a second story-from-the-past, which justifies using this method of approaching literature.			
5	W D W	And how did you evaluate it last year? I just mucked around a bit. (..) [I just ( ) given my own aesthetics, and standards, which is not the way to do it. [It seems to me (..) though, would it do, if you used that, that response, um, their responses from the questionnaire, to, to work to assess themselves.	Co-inquirer talk
6	D	I'm not going to do that, that's where I need [(*my supervisor*) to help me.	Student talk
Wendy's question brings the conversation back to the enquiry topic, with a repeat of the verb "evaluate". She then uses the idea of the questionnaire from Daisy's story (block 4) to try to provide a solution to the assessment problem. But Daisy cuts that line of thought off by using student talk, citing needing the help of a lecturer, someone more knowledgeable and authoritative. This instance of double-voiced discourse (discourse with an orientation to someone else's discourse) (Bakhtin, 1984) derives its silencing power by suggesting a narrative authority beyond that of the character/speaker (Dentith, 1995). The echoes of her supervisor's authority silence the others.			
7	A ? A ? A B A	[It seems to me, couldn't you have some criteria like, (..) must show an understanding of the book. [If [Ja they just choose a minor scene, a, if that minor scene has no relevance to any theme maybe, maybe when you give the task, it's too late now, you should say, any minor scene can, maybe you've got to, (…) state certain themes at the outset. Theme of colonisation, the theme of this or the theme of that. Because the sex story, might be important or it might not, the sex scene. [If it relates to [Ja one of the themes, It's a minor ( ) Ja	Teacher talk

Anne is thinking out loud, trying to establish a set of guidelines for choosing themes which are important to the book being studied. Even though her contribution is too late to help Daisy – as she acknowledges, this should have been before Daisy set the task – she continues to formulate her idea. The value to Daisy is two-fold, she is getting advice that might be useful if she does the task again and these guidelines might be of some help in establishing assessment criteria.			
8	D	But you see this, this individ, the thing that they did last year, one kid, did, it was the simplest one, virtually, and it was one of the most effective. She took an A4 piece of paper, she went to some magazines and she got out, pictures of eyes and she cut them out. Just stuck them in and a couple of, (..) and she just wrote fear, guilt, (..) and then, I'm telling you, in my view, she captured [the essence of what that book is about.	Storytelling
Anne's somewhat incoherent thinking out loud causes Daisy to tell another story-from-last-year, about how effective even an unguided choice of themes can be.			

Daisy uses stories-from-last-year to give her actions authority as she justifies the way she has undertaken the task. The group members had come, over the four and a half years of the existence of the group, to value each other as colleagues as well as fellow students. Part of this valuing was reflected in asking for and accepting help with teaching issues. In her post-graduate interview Wendy talks of how she found being asked for copies of her teaching materials validated her as a teacher (T16B/W/SRI). Study sessions often ended with someone asking for information and materials on teaching a literary text. For example, at the end of one of the afternoons (T3A/CG/TAG) Anne asks "Have any of you got anything on teaching, or teaching ideas on *The Crucible*, or *Death of a Salesman*, or *The Glass Menagerie*?" Brad immediately offers to bring background information he has prepared on *The Crucible* and Wendy offers to bring the film of *The Crucible*, both offers being gratefully accepted by Anne. Asking for and accepting others' materials and teaching suggestions indicates how they had come to respect each others' teaching knowledge and skills.

This respect influences the way the group receives the stories that individuals tell about their teaching and what happens in their classrooms. These stories are valued as tokens of expertise in teaching that accord the teller a degree of authority. As a result the stories

told about how things have been done in their classrooms are listened to with respect and often accepted as advice on issues such as methods of assessment (see 'War Stories' Chapter 5 p. 149).

By telling stories-from-last-year Daisy gives herself the authority of 'a respected teacher', an authority drawn from the value invested by the group in each others' teaching knowledge. These stories serve to legitimise the methods she had used the previous year: they are a reassurance for her and proof to the others that the strategy of requiring learners to produce visual representations of their understanding of literary themes is a successful one. In the first story (block 2 p. 102) the learners liked the process, in the second (block 4 p. 102) the task was successful as both she and the learners thought that they had learned a lot in the process of doing the task and in the third story (block 8 p. 104) she details how successful a multi-modal representation can be in capturing the themes of a literary text.

In this she is successful, no one challenges her stories; Brad doesn't point out that using a weak structure last year is no reason to do so again. Daisy's assumed status of 'respected teacher' constrains the rest of the group from embarking on a discussion which might have given Daisy some valuable insights into improving her teaching methodology.

The stories also have another, more personal function in that they help Daisy to ground abstract theory in reality: she reminds herself that this was how the theory had played out in her classroom the first time she had used it and reflects on how she might improve on this the second time around.

Daisy's Proposal: Explaining visual representations – *Data Extract 3, Section 2*

(T1B/CG/DP)

		Conversation	**Talk genre**
9	W	[Is, is there a lot of eye imagery, looking imagery, or was it like perceptions?	Co-inquirer talk
	D	It's a perception thing, and people not seeing who, who's true and	

	W	who's not. Do they have to explain their, this to you?	
Even though her assessment suggestion has been turned down, Wendy continues to participate in the activity. She drives the enquiry forward with two more questions.			
10	D B	Well I made them [(present?) [That's one way how you can get around [it.	Co-inquirer talk
Brad takes a turn at suggesting a method of assessing the visual texts.			
11	D B D	[That's how I've got to work it out with [(*my* [Ja *supervisor*). But then see, I eventually end up saying, we have to fall back on the bloody verbal. You can't use visual by itself. Cause if you do, you end up by being an art teacher, and looking at a formal, compositional point of view. You start looking at, the spatial relationships, or the use of colour, which, (….) English teachers have enough to do.	Student talk Co-inquirer talk Friend/close colleague talk
Daisy reverts to student talk and rejects Brad's suggestion. Once again her supervisor's authority permeates Daisy's 'voice' and Brad accepts her rejection with a "Ja". She then changes genre and elaborates on her problem in co-inquirer talk, falling into teacher-complaining-to-colleagues talk at the end. She uses three talk genres in one utterance, moving from refusing a suggestion, on to elaborating her problem then complaining about teachers' workloads in general. The latter two genres work to soften her refusal to take up Brad's suggestions, as she goes on to solicit help from the group as co-inquirers and then support from them as fellow English teachers.			
12	W K	But is it strictly verbal though? Is that strictly [verbal? [But when it's multi- modal, you're looking at, so [many	Co-inquirer talk
The rationale behind the visual task is to provide ways of expressing understanding other than through written work. Wendy seems to interpret Daisy's use of "verbal" to mean 'written words'. Her question seems to be trying to point out to Daisy that a presentation is not writing, it differs from writing and provides another mode of expression, available for assessment purposes.			
13	A	[Do you have art at your school?	Friend/close

	D	No.	colleague talk
	A	Well, we do, you know, you, we have two art teachers, you could come and talk to [them	
	D	[I'll have to go and find an art teacher.	
	A	You could come to the art teachers and say, (..) Ja. If, if a painting will work, has to reflect a particular idea, how do they mark?	
	D	Ja. No, that's on my list to do.	
	W	Ja.	
	D	I think I mention it somewhere here.	
Anne introduces another genre of talk in this block as, speaking as a friend and colleague, she offers to introduce Daisy to the art teachers at her school.			

Only twice in the discussion has someone offered Daisy a direct suggestion. In block 5 (p. 103) Wendy suggests Daisy uses the responses to the previous year's questionnaire to devise an assessment tool and in block 10 (p. 106) Brad suggests she uses the oral presentations to assess the visual task. Both times Daisy turns the suggestions down and ends the lines of enquiry by using a lecturer's name. The invoking of a more knowledgeable individual as a reason for not taking up these options acts very powerfully on the group; nobody argues with her or continues to pursue the line of thinking. Sensitivity to another's discourse is an important part of dialogical communication: as participants in a dialogue we have an implicit understanding of what is "displayed or carried in the specific variabilities" of utterances (Shotter & Billig, 1998, p. 23), "we sensitively catch the smallest shift in intonation, the slightest interruption of voices in anything of importance to us in another person's practical everyday discourse" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 201). By using the student genre of talk Daisy employs double-voiced discourse: she orients herself to another's discourse, that of her supervisor. Her student voice takes on the perspective or speaking personality of the 'other' (Wertsch, 1991b), the lecturer-with-authority, and the rest of the group respond accordingly.

In other places in Extract 3 Daisy's responses have a centrifugal action on the group, they open up lines of enquiry. On other occasions during the afternoon meetings, during social chat sessions, the group members do not hesitate to challenge the perceived opinions of

lecturers in their discussions. But the student genre responses in blocks 6 (p. 103) and 11 (p. 106) have a centripetal action; they close the enquiry down. By evoking the mental presence of a knowledgeable other in a serious discussion, Daisy uses authoritative or monologic discourse. This discourse may not be challenged and is surrounded by "an uncrossable exclusion zone" (Dentith, 1995, p. 57), which closes down the talk.

There are other occasions in the data when Daisy rejects the group's advice; these are also connected to her supervisor (and other lecturers on the course) and the advice that she anticipates or that they have already given her (see Chapter 5 p. 151 for another example). There are two possible reasons for this rejection of her peers' suggestions: Daisy's high regard for her supervisor and the fact that she already has a plan of action in mind.

Firstly, Daisy holds her supervisor, Ruth, in high regard as both an academic and a fellow teacher. In the first round small group interview she and Anne talk about their supervisors, and she comments that she is "the luckiest fish" because on hearing other students talk about their supervisors she is coming to realise that Ruth "is fabulous". The academic support and advice Ruth has given her has always been extremely helpful and the fact that Ruth has also been a teacher is advantageous: her knowledge of the classroom "makes such a difference" (T8A/AD/I). This is compared to Anne's ironic comment about her supervisor's advice on the practical aspects of her research: "What do I know and what does (*she*) know?" (T8A/AD/I), her supervisor having no classroom teaching experience at all.

Secondly, Daisy is a very organised individual – she was often teased by the rest of the group for having essays and assignments ready to hand in well in advance of the due date – and part of her organisation was having a clear plan of how she was going to tackle tasks. She has struck a problem here, and clearly her plan is to go and discuss the matter with her supervisor. It is possible that having a plan in place to consult an authority whose advice she respects makes her unable to 'hear' her peers' suggestions.

Multi-modality, the verbal and the visual

But the group members have become closely engaged with Daisy's problem and they persist with their suggestions. Anne offers the help of art teachers at her school and Wendy, in the next section, successfully draws Daisy into a discussion on multi-modality and between them they co-construct some of the core concepts (underlined in the extract below) of multi-modality: that the verbal and the visual work together to build deeper understanding.

Daisy's Proposal: Multi-modality, the verbal and the visual

Data Extract 3, Section 3

(T1B/CG/DP)

		Conversation	**Talk genre**
14	W	But you see, I think what you're trying to say, that it's not that you fall back on it if they work together,	Co-inquirer talk
	?	Mm	
	W	and at the end of the day, [you could have, [you've written it down, they	
	B	[Equal weighting	
	D	[( ) they'll do a multi-modality, ja	
	W	could have written an essay, but it would have had less impact than, doing this. And by doing this, this assignment, by, by (.) going through this process, they've actually internalised more [on the way to understanding all of it.	Academic talk
Wendy ignores the interrupting talk about art teachers and continues to press for the argument that the two actions of conceptualising a visual representation and then explaining it work together to construct understanding. Her move from co-inquirer talk to academic talk helps to change Daisy's mind, her "… multi-modality, ja" indicates she might be coming round to Wendy's point of view.			
15	D	[( ) (….) if you go along with what this Arnheim says, that you think visually,	Academic talk
	W	Mm	
	D	that it's made them think very deeply.	
	W	But now, what you're making them do is articulate that	

	D	Ja, mm.	
	W	so I think <u>they work in conjunction</u>.	
	D	Ja. (..) ok, so they're going to do this and if they haven't done it I'm going to give them [( )	
		[*laughter*	
	B	[(also tests?) their ability to explain, (..) their, their individual visual mode.	

Wendy's summary (block 14) of the rationale behind the task has changed Daisy's stance. Daisy ventriloquates, from Arnheim, one of her academic sources, a concept about the value of thinking visually. In doing so she takes up Wendy's use of <u>internalised</u> and rewords it as <u>think very deeply</u>. With this double ventriloquation she theorises the work of the visual in constructing understanding. This is the first constructing-understanding statement that she has made in this extract. All her other statements have either been factual or expressing the problem she faces.

The academic talk produced in blocks 14 and 15 is noteworthy for its confidence, its length, (it is over fifty words long), its co-construction and the work that it does in the discussion.

There are only two instances in the data analysed in this chapter where academic talk was used with confidence. The first was in the data extract from Anne's proposal (Data Extract 2, block 9, p. 93) where Wendy paraphrased the way in which Anne could make a statement about the direction of her research. This paraphrase is competently phrased and to the point, but contains no information. As a teacher, Wendy has possibly used this kind of paraphrase with her learners; it is unlikely that this discourse model is new to her. Because it contains no factual information she has not had to think it through beforehand, so her confident usage is not unexpected.

By contrast, the academic talk in Data Extract 3, Section 3, blocks 14 and 15 (p. 109) contains a great deal of information. The mastery of the academic talk genre displayed by the two speakers is possibly the result of compiling the information they present across a couple of minutes of talk. It is the culmination of ventriloquated talk happening across a long stretch of conversation.

The initial information is introduced in block 4 (p. 102), where Daisy tells a story: the previous year she had set her learners a task in which instead of writing an essay on a literary theme they produced a visual representation of the theme. She observes that in order to accomplish this task they had had to think deeply about the literary theme. The discussion that follows her story focuses on possible methods of evaluating these visual representations. In blocks 9 and 10 (pp. 106-106) the possibility of using oral presentations about the representations is raised, but rejected by Daisy on the grounds that she does not want to "fall back on the verbal".

In block 14 (p. 109) Wendy links the concepts of having to "think of it" when making a visual representation (block 4, p. 102), with "falling back on the verbal" for assessment (block 11, p. 106) and using informal, co-inquirer talk proposes that the two modes, visual and verbal, work together. She and Daisy then collaborate across blocks 14 and 15 (p. 109) to produce an academic explanation of how the two modes work together.

In the paragraph below this co-constructed explanation is made visible by linking together the core concepts. The linking words are in italics, the speakers' initials are in brackets.

> (W) They (*the verbal and visual*) work together .. (D) *if learners* do a multi-modality *exercise* .. (W) they've actually internalised more .. (D) *if people* think visually .. (D) it's made them think very deeply .. (W) *if learners* articulate that *thinking* .. (W) *it shows that* they (*the visual and verbal*) work in conjunction.

Wendy draws Daisy into co-operating in the discussion by attributing her suggestion (how the two modes work together) to Daisy herself: "I think what you're trying to say". This seems to persuade Daisy to continue with the conversation. Daisy then replaces "work together" with the academic term "multi-modality" which ratchets up the rest of the discussion into a co-operative use of the academic genre to construct an agreement.

The result of the co-construction of talk is that Daisy changes her thinking and agrees with Wendy. Block 15 (p. 109) is an example of construction of understanding through joint construction of talk (Edelsky, 1981; Sarja, 2000). The co-ordinated agreement between the two women can be seen in the structure of their talk; they each use a paired turn of two lines, each pair punctuated by the other's back-channel "Mm" of agreement as they provide support for each other's reasoning. This is a good example of how dialogic talk can function to transform an individual's position on a subject, when a diversity of viewpoints (Kalman, 2004) are interanimated as they come into contact with each other in a dialogic discussion. Daisy has rejected all the other suggestions on assessment, this is the first evidence of her coming to some form of agreement on using the visual and the verbal together to assess the visual representations. (In Chapter 5, Data Extract 3, p. 150, which follows very closely on this data extract, a solution to Daisy's assessment problems is finally co-constructed by the group.)

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter has presented an analysis of the nature of the learning talk that happened while the group were working together. There is evidence throughout the data extracts of dialogic talk in action: group members' discussions are collective, reciprocal, supportive, cumulative and purposeful (Lyle, 2008). The 'tool kit' of talk described by Bruner (1986) and Wertsch (1999) can be seen in the variety of talk genres used. This 'tool kit' derives from the sociocultural contexts in which the group functions: they are at one and the same time students, teachers, friends and colleagues and the genres used reflect these contexts.

The use of these heteroglossic talk genres gives the group members a larger set of tools to work with in their interactions than would have been the case if they were limited to only the student talk genre. The genres diversify the number of available ways of looking at and thinking about a problem, and are enabling in different ways: co-inquirer talk allows them to ask for and clarify information and give support; teacher talk allows them to draw on their knowledge as teachers as a resource to develop ideas; lecturer/supervisor talk allows them to offer advice in ways that drive the enquiry forward; academic talk allows them to refine ideas by reformulating them; friends' and colleagues' talk allows

them to appeal for and to offer help, and to demonstrate solidarity and lighten the load of academic work with humour. (See Chapter 5 for evidence of solidarity and humour.)

However the tools also constrain in different ways, especially if used in long stretches without the diluting effect of other talk genres. Teacher talk on its own can be centripetal and lock down the discussion. Lecturer/supervisor talk can become undemocratic when speakers offer continuous advice. Academic talk can be incoherent and not particularly constructive. Anne's use of co-inquirer talk to protest her inability to make a decision limits her ability to act. The value of each talk genre depends on the way in which it is used.

The variation in the constraints and affordances of student talk illustrate this clearly. When Anne uses student talk in Extract 1, block 3 (p. 84) it performs a reporting/confirming function – she confirms the dawning notion that she has to define what she means by 'writing', by reporting that her supervisor has already told her she needs a definition. This reporting function is what could be expected of the student talk genre and used this way it is not enabling for Anne as an individual. It reflects the centripetal function of authoritative monologic talk: she has been told what she must do but she is, as yet, unable to do it. However in the wider context of the group discussion the work done by using her comment is useful: it spurs on the rest of the group to help Anne decide on a definition.

When Daisy uses this genre in Extract 3, Section 1 and 2, blocks 6 and 11 (pp. 103 & 106), the tool of student talk allows her to control the discussion. By using it as a double-voiced discourse to invoke the authority of her supervisor, Daisy is able to cut off the lines of suggestion completely. She uses the centripetal function to control the conversation. Whether this is valuable overall is debatable, as the work done by cutting off the lines of suggestion deprives Daisy of the group's expertise. It is only Wendy's persistence and ventriloquation of talk across the conversation that opens up the discussion in a way that allows her to work with Daisy to co-construct an acceptable compromise.

The way in which the group members use the genres as they interact, and the continual movement of the group members' talk between genres, works to distribute power and authority across the group. The use of the genres tends to be distributed across the group; no single group member has a monopoly on any of the types of talk. While Wendy plays a significant role in helping both Anne and Daisy arrive at satisfactory decisions, she would not have been able to do it without the supporting contributions of the rest of the group. It is their input which provides her with the concepts which she ventriloquates so successfully across the discussions.

In all the extracts there is evidence of engagement in the purposeful, collective action that is one of the hallmarks of dialogic talk (Wertsch, 1991b). In Extract 1 the group's main purpose is to deepen their understanding of Anne's research project. In Extract 2 they are motivated by a need to support Anne as she defines the focus of her research. In Extract 3 there is a double purpose, initially group members are asking questions to further their own understanding of Daisy's work, then they move on and focus on Daisy's need for a method of evaluating her learners' work.

The 'activity' of the talk is, however, driven in different ways. In the discussion of Anne's proposal the inquiry is driven by suggestions, fuelled by Anne's reaction to the suggestions with negative 'but' statements. In Daisy's proposal reading the inquiry is driven by questions asked by the group members. The meaning-making that can be seen happening in these extracts is essentially dialogic: the on-going conflict between the diverse perspectives of the group members makes it truly open-ended dialogue (Fernyhough, 1999). Because of the negative reactions of the two proposal readers the group continues to move on with the discussion, trying to find a satisfactory solution. These on-going collaborative discussions support Bakhtin's claim for dialogic talk: "Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 110).

While evidence in the data indicates that the group members are generally not very confident, or indeed competent users of the academic talk genre, this does not suggest that they lack confidence in themselves as apprentice academics. Analysis of the data shows that they do not hesitate to question, offer ideas, take up each other's ideas, comment on them and build on them, and importantly, critique and resist proffered ideas. Because the talk is dialogic this resistance is generative: even though it might turn the discussion in another direction (as in the case of Daisy's proposal) it fuels the talk and moves it forward, indicating the confidence that the group members have in themselves and their academic ability.

The dialogic give and take of the discussions plays an important role in building their confidence in themselves as students. There are two important aspects to this role: firstly, having valued others demonstrate their belief in your work through their focus on and persistence in trying to help you devise solutions to your problems, builds confidence in the worth of your research and thus yourself as a student. Secondly, having valued others take up your thoughts, comments and ideas, and to build on them, incorporate them into subsequent discussions and make them a resource for learning, builds confidence in your abilities as a student.

In the next chapter I analyse transcripts of the study group members working together, looking at the ways in which the group members' interactions as students influenced the ways in they saw themselves and each other as teachers.

CHAPTER 5: GAINING CONFIDENCE AS STUDENTS AND AS INNOVATIVE TEACHERS: THE ROLE OF GOSSIP AND 'WAR STORIES'

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5.1. Introduction

In the interviews with the study group members there is evidence that during the years in which they were postgraduate students they had developed greater confidence in themselves as teachers. In this chapter I argue that this confidence is plausibly a result of the support provided by the interactions in the study group as they worked together.

In the process of supporting each other as students they drew on both their academic knowledge and their teaching experience, as has been shown in Chapter 4. I claim that the affirmation that resulted from being able to offer comments, suggestions and recounts of professional experience and having these items interrogated, accepted and used in both the academic and professional spheres, enabled the constitution of hybrid identities of confidence as innovative students-and-teachers. This increased confidence in themselves

as teachers was carried over into their professional lives as they started to implement their new understandings of their subject in their classrooms.

The chapter begins (section 5.2) with a presentation and discussion of the evidence from the interviews that the group members felt increased confidence in themselves as teachers. This is followed by a brief summary (section 5.3) of approaches to subjectivity and identity that have informed the analysis of the data. Then there is a discussion of Gee's (2000-2001) perspective on using identity as a lens for analysing discourse (section 5.4) and of the concept of communities of practice and pedagogic safe houses (section 5.5)

The central part of the chapter (sections 5.6) offers a three part analysis of extracts from the data:

1. the Woman from Oprah 1: the use of social languages for community building purposes and The Woman from Oprah 2: the use of 'off-academic-topic' talk as a source of agency and support for change as teachers;
2. 'War Stories': the role of tacit or informally generated knowledge (Tschannen-Moran & Nestor-Baker, 2004), as expressed in stories drawn from classroom practice, in providing academic support;
3. intertwined identities: the development of an Affinity-Identity through support from the group.

The chapter concludes (section 5.7) with a summary of the ways in which the group members have used a variety of Discourses to provide support for each other as both students and teachers. These are the Discourses made available to them by the culture of their particular community of practice.

5.2. Prologue: evidence of increased confidence as teachers

Early in the research project, as I was developing the research plan, two areas of inquiry surfaced: to establish what intellectual, cognitive and affective benefits the members felt

they had gained from the study group and to establish how they felt they had changed as a result of being members of the group.

As I started collecting the data it soon became apparent that the group members ascribed the change in themselves not just to being part of the group, but to a combination of the support received from the group members and the knowledge gained from their studies.

Anne felt that some of the lecturers in Applied English Language Studies had played a part in changing her:

> It was partly though, Ellen (*a lecturer in the department*). I mean Ellen got me ( ), Ellen made my head different. … Because I went, week after week, and I was given two little paragraphs to read, to talk about with somebody else, and then, I would leave. And then after a month, I think I said to Kate, isn't it interesting that we hardly ever get anything done. Then slowly I realised, (..) how I was thinking differently.
> (T1B/CG/DP)

Brad felt changed by both the coursework and the group:

> Ja, I definitely felt that if I went back to my school, I wasn't just empowered by the academic course itself, I was empowered by the shared, experiences and ideas of the group. I felt that I could take back an idea to my staff and present it more forcefully because, I had the group sanction, I had, their agreement that it was a sound idea. Also their contribution to the idea, they might have added to it, or critiqued it in some way.
> (T5B/B/I)

Wendy found being able to discuss with the group the implementation of the new concepts very supportive:

> That is probably, probably one of the reasons why I, was still part of the group, because there was that strong practical element and implementation of all these, um, ideas. And people were constantly swopping ideas about teaching, and talking about, what, um, they were doing in their classrooms, so often for me, more importantly than actually doing the reading and discussing the reading, was actually talking to people about, um, what they were doing with their classes, what was working, sharing ideas, actually being able to tell the people in the group some of the things that I was doing, … and I think that was a very strong factor, the fact that we were all geared towards finding different practices of teaching, and using what we were learning on the course to, to um, to implement those ideas, and then being able to discuss those ideas and how they were working.
> (T7A/W/I)

Daisy, Kate and Brad commented on the shared knowledge and support gained from the group:

D You know about writing, so I learn from you. (..) He knows about, doing, doing research so I learn, you know, like that. That we're, feeding in and out of each other.
K You see you, because you have, you say you would like to try this whole, ethnographic business in your classroom. Now, you're not (..) because you have Brad here, and Wendy, who've tried this, next year, you go to them and say, listen, I want to try that. Let's just talk it through. You'll go ahead and do it. You don't have to, wait for it to come down as something from the (*education department*). As a new idea to try in the classroom. That you draw, all sorts of information, and power, from, (..) this kind of group.
B I think, a lot about power I'm sure. For this group, gives me, I'm sure, in your own, environments, where you work, I think. It gives me confidence in saying what I believe.
K Ja.
(T1B/CG/DP)

They felt that they had changed as teachers: they had developed new approaches to teaching and were able to take these into their schools as a result of the combined effect of what they had learnt, the way they had learnt it and the support they had received from each other.

5.3. Approaches to subjectivity and identity

In this study I use a post-structuralist approach to subjectivity and identity, in which subject positions (and thus the identities enacted in response to these positionings) are viewed as changeable and dependent on context and in which discourse and language play a central role in the enactment of identity (Hall & du Gay, 1996; Weedon, 1987).

Norton (Norton, 2006; Norton Peirce, 1995) takes a post-structuralist approach to her work on English second language learner's identity formation, as this provides her with a means for viewing identity as multiple and complex, set within a framework of the local community and wider social structures (Norton Peirce, 1995). She refers to identity as a sociocultural construct as it "must be understood with respect to larger institutional practices in schools, home and workplaces (the social) as well as more grounded practices associated with particular groups (the cultural)" (Norton, 2006, p. 4).

I find taking a post-structuralist approach useful, as it takes into account the influence of both the social structure of the study group and of the academic and professional spheres of activity, on the constitution of identity in the study group.

5.4. Gee and identity as an analytic lens

Gee's (2000-2001) perspective on identity develops the social and cultural aspects highlighted by Norton. As outlined in Chapter 2, his four ways of viewing identity are Nature-Identity, Institution-Identity, Discourse-Identity and Affinity-Identity.

The first two 'identities', Nature-Identity and Institution-Identity, tend to be governed by social forces (Norton's "larger institutional practices"), as it is society that privileges the meaning ascribed to race and gender and prescribes the values placed on social position. The second two 'identities', Discourse-Identity and Affinity-Identity, tend to be governed by cultural forces, (Norton's "grounded practices"), as it is within cultural communities that the characteristics of being 'an innovative teacher' are demarcated and recognised. Gee argues that these identity aspects co-exist, that the features by which an individual can be identified at any point in time are an assemblage of these four ways of viewing identity. He also emphasises that identity is always multiple – depending on context – and changing – depending on the individual's reaction to the context.

In this chapter I use evidence of Discourse- and Affinity-Identities as indicators of the ways in which the group members saw themselves and each other as teachers, and of their affiliations to the group's practices.

In order to investigate the enactment of these identities I use Gee's method of discourse analysis (Gee, 1999a) – a description of which is found in Chapter 3 (p. 67). This involves:

- identifying the social languages being used in conversations;
- examining how these social languages are used to position both the speakers and the listeners through drawing on Conversations (the important themes and debates that are threaded through social history) and cultural models (expectations as to the way events should typically unfold), thus creating situated identities;
- exploring how the group's cultural models around teaching and learning shift, leading to identity changes;

- considering how certain Discourses are indicative of communities of practice that function as pedagogic safe houses.

5.5. The study group as a community of practice

Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of communities of practice has been widely applied to the ways in which learning happens in classrooms. They defined communities of practice as "a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation to other tangential and overlapping communities of practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 98). Wenger's later work (Wenger, 1998) refined the "set of relations" in communities of practice by suggesting that there must be "mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire (of resources for negotiating meaning)" (Wenger, 1998, p. 73).

The study group exhibits the characteristics of a community of practice: it was a group of people engaged in a mutual activity over a period of time with a shared repertoire of tools for constructing knowledge, and it was situated between and overlapping with other spheres of activity, principally the academic world in which they were studying and the professional worlds in which they taught.

As a community of practice, the study group was initially located entirely in the academic sphere. Its purpose was to provide support for learning in order to pass examinations, bearing in mind that the reason behind the formation of the group was Kate's failure in a coursework test. But the raison d'être for the Honours degree was itself two-fold: 1) to provide knowledge about new ways of approaching the teaching of English in the multi-cultural classroom, and 2) to model ways of teaching that would, with the academic knowledge learned while studying for the degree, translate into new ways of being-an-English-teacher in the classroom. However, research shows that providing teachers with new methods of working with their subject matter does not necessarily result in actual changes in the classroom (Gess-Newsome et al., 2003; Guskey, 2002)!

If learning is understood as part of the process of identity development and transformation (Brown & Duguid, 2001; Bruner, 1986; Wenger, 1998), the group members were involved in two simultaneous aspects of identity development as they studied. Firstly, they were working towards the hoped for identity of competent academics: being skilled at discussing/presenting/writing about 'new ways of teaching English' in an appropriate academic style.

The other aspect, closely related to the first, was towards becoming teachers who were able to implement 'new ways of teaching English' in their classrooms. This entailed both gaining insight into themselves as teachers and their attitudes towards their subject, as well as developing ways of working with their new knowledge in their classrooms.

So while the work done by the study group on an overt level was to give academic support, as part of the process of working together the group members supported each other in the development of new-ways-of-teaching-English teacher identities. The study group gave them a safe space in which they could discuss the ways in which they taught and how they conceptualised their subject. They could talk through the new approaches they were learning about and decide in which ways these ideas could be applied in their classrooms.

Thus working together to learn resulted in an identity shift in both areas: a change in their identities as students and a change in their identities as teachers. The two identities are closely intertwined: in the data extracts discussed in this chapter the group members can be seen shifting back and forth between identities during the discussions.

5.5.1. Communities of practice as pedagogic safe houses

Canagarajah's (1997; 2004) conceptualisation of a pedagogic safe house as a site that is free from surveillance and that allows students to "position themselves strategically for an independent and creative voice" (Canagarajah, 2004, p. 132), is useful for examining the interchanges between the study group members. It allows me to identify how the interaction between different Discourses enabled the group members to constitute

identities of possibility, which arguably led to their increased confidence in themselves as teachers.

Gutiérrez and others (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez, & Turner, 1997; Gutiérrez & Rymes, 1995) identify what they call 'third spaces' in the classroom, the points where the teacher's official space and the students' unofficial spaces intersect. It is in these spaces where all the available cultural discourses, those of both the teacher *and* the students, are utilised for the process of constructing knowledge. In the study group the discourses of academia are the official discourses which the group members had to adopt if they were to be successful, and the discourses stemming from their professional and social lives serve as the unofficial discourses which function as a resource, supplementing the official discourses as they study.

I view the study group as a community of practice that functioned as a pedagogic safe house with 'third space' characteristics in which the contexts, discourses and support patterns of the group members' academic, professional and social lives were available as resources. In this space situated identities and social languages, drawn from all the above-mentioned spaces, enable the generation of new meanings and understandings as the diverse discourses dialogically interanimate (Bakhtin, 1981) each other.

I propose that for its members the study group acted as a two-way safe house, safe from the surveillance of academia and the educational system that they experienced in their professional lives as teachers.

As post-graduate students they found themselves under pressure from their lecturers to perform in certain ways. They were expected to take on board new theories, new ideas and new approaches to teaching and to display competence in these areas in assignments and examinations. They were expected to ask the 'correct' kinds of questions: questions that displayed a background knowledge of teaching and an understanding of the new concepts they were learning about. At the same time they were under pressure from their

fellow students in the seminar room, where they were also expected to display 'teacherly' knowledge and academic understanding during discussions.

As teachers they were under surveillance by their pupils, their colleagues in their staffrooms, their heads of department, their head teachers, and subject advisors from the provincial education department, who all expected them to possess all the necessary knowledge about their teaching subject, the ability to pass it on and the classroom management skills to maintain a classroom environment conducive to teaching and learning. In schools this 'teacherly ability' is constructed through the results achieved by pupils in tests and examinations, and is measured regularly throughout the academic year.

The dominant discourses in these two sites constructed the study group members as having certain identities of expertise whether or not they felt they truly had this expertise. Being placed in both these sites simultaneously added to the pressure and expectations. It is very difficult to admit to one's colleagues in the staffroom that one is struggling with one's studies, as the identity which is constituted through being a good teacher is somehow conflated with the identity of being a good student and vice versa.

Ironically, successful completion of the Honours degree added to the pressure experienced in their schools. They now had new ideas and approaches to teaching that they wanted to put into practice. They now needed the confidence to assume 'identities of expertise' in order to persuade their Heads of Department and colleagues to let them use some of these new approaches in their classrooms.

The study group functioned as a pedagogic safe house to provide its members with a location in which they could safely move between identities such as competent teacher, anxious student, knowledgeable school staff member, uninformed learner, confident advisor and insecure apprentice. In this safe environment they could draw on the cultural discourses of academia, their professional worlds and of friendship to support each other in the development of new identities of expertise as students and as teachers as they worked to situate their new knowledge in their classrooms.

5.6. Data Analysis – Identities in a Community at Work

The primary 'work' of the talk in the Honours/Masters study group during the years in which the group functioned was the joint construction of an understanding of the academic texts and associated concepts that the group encountered in their courses. However, for the reasons outlined in Chapter 1 under the section entitled *Developing a researcher's interest* (p. 13), the talk which was audiotaped for use as data was that of the group working together on each other's research proposals. The declared objective of the afternoon was twofold: to help the writer improve his or her research proposal before having to present it at a seminar, and for group members to familiarise themselves with the topics of each other's research.

These meetings were organised in much the same way as the study afternoons had been. A group member read her or his proposal aloud, pausing occasionally to make a comment or ask for advice, with the others interrupting with questions and comments. The main difference was that the document being read aloud was a research proposal, not a paper from an academic journal or a chapter from an academic book.

At the beginning and end of the afternoons the social talk was generally about school or teaching matters, and served to promote group cohesion (Wenger, 1998) and to develop and maintain professional and social relationships (Holmes, 2006). During the work sessions a variety of stories were told and occasionally the talk moved onto personal matters. These were often viewed by the group as off-topic gossip (in his pre-graduation interview Brad says: "And we'd break halfway for a, for some tea, and we'd gossip a little bit" (T5A/B/I)), but the stories generally helped to clarify their comments and to support the advice given. The personal stories offered group members the opportunity to reinforce or reflect on and reposition their social identities.

5.6.1. Gossip and/or workplace narratives

While the study group members tended to refer to the off-topic conversations as 'gossip', the conversations are not what Jones, in her paper on gossip calls "a continuous chorus and commentary on the incidents of women's (*sic*) daily lives" (Jones, 1990, p. 248) serving the function of "an informal communications network" (Jones, 1990, p. 244).

They are what Holmes (2005; 2006) calls "workplace narratives", which occur "at the margins of … serious transactional talk at work" and act "as the conduit between people's private lives and their professional identities" (Holmes, 2006, p. 183), in this research the 'workplace' being the study group where the 'work' is 'learning about academic matters'. However, as the group members called these conversations 'gossip' I will continue to use that descriptive label.

There are a number of examples in the audio recordings where, in the process of sharing their academic knowledge, the talk moved from academic-topic-centred to academic-topic-associated and sometimes to entirely off-academic-topic conversation. Frequently, after a few moments, the talk would be brought back to the theory under discussion by a comment along the lines of 'enough gossip, back to work' (Research Journal 2, p. 6). The feeling was that the off-academic-topic talk or 'gossip' (and even sometimes the academic-topic-associated talk) was wasting time which could be better used in doing academic work. In his first interview Brad comments on this moving away from academic-topic-centred discussions:

> Sometimes, (..) we would be sidetracked, people would bring up their teaching experiences to, to prove, er, or disprove a theory, and that could take quite a long diversion. And often Anne would be the person to say 'Let's get back to this.'
> (T5B/B/I).

The classroom talk was a "side-track", a "diversion", and the teacherly habit of needing to remain focussed on what is seen as the official curriculum brought them back to academic matters. This, combined with the influence of the "null curriculum" (this being the knowledge which is not selected as part of the official curriculum as it is "deemed extraneous to the values of efficiency and standardization" (Britzman, 1989, p. 149)) worked to devalue the knowledge and expertise contained in the topic-associated talk and the off-topic stories of personal experience.

However, I argue that the 'gossip' was frequently a source of agency. As speakers moved from the academic-topic-centred discussion they started to use a different social language which oriented them to another Discourse or way of being (Gee, 1999a). Situating themselves outside the academic-topic-centred discussion offered opportunities to see the

texts they were working on, themselves as students and English teachers, and the way they taught and wanted to teach their subject, from different perspectives. It offered opportunities for insight and change.

To demonstrate the movement between Discourses, with the associated change in social language and identity, I use a data excerpt which I have called 'The Woman from Oprah'[22]. There are two parts to this excerpt: Part 1 is the 'gossip' topic, a story told during a break in the presentations which shows the group aligning themselves with a particular cultural model related to reading and at the same time constituting a culturally-shared identity as particular types of readers. Part 2 is the off-task talk which happens in the middle of the presentation. It shows the 'gossip' topic being introduced and how it triggers a repositioning of opinion among the group members. In both extracts the group use the talk genre of friends and colleagues.

5.6.1.1. Introducing 'The Woman from Oprah'

In this extract Daisy tells the others about an episode of 'The Oprah Show' (a popular American television talk show hosted by celebrity Oprah Winfrey) which she had seen on television.

Introducing the Woman from Oprah – *Data Extract 1*

(T1B/CG/DP)

		Conversation	Language, Discourse, Identity
1	D	The best thing I heard about reading came from Oprah the other day. She was doing one of her book club things. She was going on about how this book was absolutely marvellous, you know, her usual. And one idiot woman in the audience got up and said 'I never read in high school, and I never read in college, in fact I haven't read a book since high school, this is the first	Gossip, or off-academic-topic talk. The social language used positions Daisy as a Regular Reader[23] talking to friends who are also Regular Readers. She speaks with a confidence that indicates she expects them to

[22] These two data extracts were chosen as they were the only occasion when an entire 'gossip session' had (fortuitously) been captured on tape and the subject matter was later extensively used during a discussion.
[23] I have used capital letters to indicate that I am naming this as a situated identity which emerges as the group talks.

		book I've read and it's really great.' I mean, if, you could read anything, even Barbara Cartland, and find it really great if you hadn't read a book for five years! *Laughter*	agree with her. Situated ID[24] expands to become Regular Readers of Good Books
2	W D A D	Imagine that she had the [(nerve?) [She was one of many. That woman, that she was not embarrassed to get up before the world and [and say 'I've never read a book'. [that she's never read in college Oprah said 'How did you get through college without reading?' She said 'Oh, I just used to listen to what other people said, then I'd just say what they said'.	Whole group enacts the Discourse of Regular Readers of Good Books Education thread introduced, situated ID becomes Educated Regular Readers of Good Books
3	B W B W D K	But it's a bit like on the internet, people reviewing books that they've just read on (..) whatever, one guy will say 'This book on, on marine life was real neat, I'm going to give it a ten out of ten'. All these reviews written in the most banal fashion, and you think well, if he liked the book how can I possibly Ja! want to read it! *Laughter* In fact, thank you, I'll remember that whenever I'm teaching writing reviews, I'm going to say, that. Well I mean, this woman was the living proof of 'I read a book once'! You know! Ja! *Laughter*	Situated ID of a reader who writes about the books that are read. Discourse now includes the concept of being a Critical Reader of/Writer about Good Books Situated ID of an English teacher Discourse of Well-educated Reader

This extract comes from the very beginning of this study session. Judging by Daisy's opening words "The best thing I heard about reading", the conversation was probably rooted in talk about reading and the classroom, but the recording begins here with Daisy

[24] I have abbreviated 'identity' to 'ID' to save space in this column.

telling a story of a personal experience. In the extract the speakers use an informal social language which positions them as friends. Their identities are constituted relationally (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005): they do not talk about themselves as readers, their identities are based on the construction of difference between themselves and the 'other who does not read', who is the subject of the discussion.

Setting up the Conversation around books

This conversation draws on a cultural model built around books, reading and education, and a related cultural model built around television and education. These cultural models are associated with ongoing Conversations[25] (especially amongst teachers and readers of books) about reading and television watching. The Conversation about reading holds that it is an intellectual pastime involving what users of this Discourse recognise as 'good books', and that reading, understanding and appreciating 'good books' is an important part of becoming educated. The Conversation around television holds that watching television is a non-intellectual pastime, watching television talk shows is unlikely to be intellectually stimulating, and therefore watching television talk shows is not a part of becoming educated.

The conversation starts setting up a binary between reading and TV watching. Initially the Conversation around reading is simply around reading good books; reading for educational reasons comes in later. The group use the Conversations to build situated identities for themselves as Readers of a Certain Kind.

Setting up the Conversation around television

In block 1 (p. 127) Daisy sets the scene as she starts her story, linking reading ("the *best* thing" she'd heard) with a TV talk show, an ironic pairing coming from an English teacher. Her use of trivialising language: "book club *things*", "She was *going on*", "her *usual*" and attributing to Oprah the cliché "*absolutely marvellous*" draws on a

[25] I follow Gee's (1999a) convention by using the "big C" for "Conversation" to distinguish long-running Conversations across society from social conversations between friends. See Chapter 3 p. 70.

Conversation in which television and talk shows are constituted as non-intellectual media.

Her use of the adjective "*idiot* woman" to describe an audience member adds a lack-of-educational-value thread to the television and talk show Conversation. *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'idiot' as someone who is "ignorant, uneducated, not professionally learned" (Onions, 1972, p. 952)[26]. The 'uneducated' sense of 'idiot' is supported by the statement in block 2 (p. 128) where Daisy is amazed that someone could stand up and admit very publically that she hasn't read a book for several years. Her amazement positions her as an Educated Reader: educated readers would be too embarrassed to make such an admission, especially on television.

Prefacing "*idiot* woman" with the quantifier "*one*" subtly indicates that more members of the audience might be expected to be ignorant and uneducated. This is confirmed in block 2 (p. 128) when she says "She (*the idiot woman*) was one of many". A final cliché about the book, attributed to the "idiot woman", "it was *really great*" adds to the lack of intellectual depth of books discussed on the show and thus to the Conversation around the lack of intellectual value of television and talk shows generally.

Moving to the Conversation around reading

Daisy's use of direct speech to report the woman's remarks gives a sense of immediacy and veracity to her report, direct quotes often being used to give credibility to a reported item (Van Leeuwen, 2008). These were probably not the woman's exact words, but the fact that this is the information that remains after being "filtered by memory" (Rosen, 1988, p. 85) highlights Daisy's amazement that someone could publicly admit to not being a reader. Constructing the direct speech statements as a series of repetitions: "I *never read* in high school, and I *never read* in college, in fact I *haven't read* a book since high school, this is the first book I've *read* (since then)" reinforces Daisy's astonishment

[26] The definition of 'idiot' in the *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* is grounded on 'stupidity' and 'lack of intelligence', an interesting aspect to Daisy's use of the word in view of subsequent discussions of this conversation in section 5.6.1.2 on p. 135.

(Tannen, 1989) and works to construct for her an identity position opposite to the woman; as someone who reads often and regularly.

The intellectual quality of the books in the Conversation around reading surfaces in Daisy's next comment, which reflects on the possible quality of the book being discussed on the show; she compares it to the writing of Barbara Cartland, a prolific writer of 'pot-boiler' period romances. Her use of the comparative adverb "even" indicates how low Cartland's writing rates in her estimation: this is lowbrow culture. The complete statement that "you could read anything, even Barbara Cartland, and find it really great if you hadn't read for five years" is part of the Conversation around reading in terms of which reading is a taken-for-granted, everyday cultural practice, and that to be deprived of this practice for an extended period of time would render any reading matter palatable.

Daisy is using the Conversation around reading to position herself as part of an intellectual elite of Educated Regular Readers: intellectual because they wouldn't normally read Barbara Cartland who does not write 'good books', elite because they do not belong to 'that' mass of television viewers and talk show audiences, and Regular because they would find it difficult to forgo reading for several years.

In block 2 (p.128) other group members signal their membership of the Discourse of Elite Educated Regular Readers of Good Books. Their sentences overlap as they talk, a collaborative construction of conversation which indicates close agreement between the participants (Holmes, 1999). Wendy marks her affiliation as a Regular Reader by situating herself as an outsider to the people in the story; she asks the others to "imagine" with her what it must be like to have … it is unfortunate that her final noun is only semi audible, but it sounds like "nerve". Daisy joins in the 'othering' Wendy has started by using the demonstrative adjective "*that* woman" to confirm her own membership of the elite group of Regular Readers.

In block 2 (p. 128) Anne's comment "she's never read in college" introduces an educational thread, the Conversation on reading has expanded to include reading, good

books and now education. Daisy attributes the link between college (symbolic of education) and reading to Oprah: "Oprah said 'How did you get through college without reading?'". The repetition of "just" in the attributed reply: "*just* used to listen" and "*just* say what they said" reinforces the uncritical thought that is assumed to inform the quality of the 'education' that is connected to television talk shows. This sets the Conversation around television talk shows in opposition, educationally, to the Conversation around reading.

Adding writing to the Conversation

In block 3 (p. 128) Brad introduces another thread, writing about reading. He comments on the kind of writing often seen publicly displayed on the internet in the form of book reviews.

Like Daisy in block 1 he uses slang to indicate the trivial nature of the writing that can be found on the internet: "one *guy*" and "this book … was *real neat*", the last echoing Daisy's use of "*really great*" to describe a book. He categorises the reviews as written in the "*most banal* fashion", they are uncritical, written without thought or intellectual depth. He signals his affiliation to the elite, thinking reader-and-writer club by 'othering' the review writers saying "if he (the uncritical *most banal* writer) liked the book how can I (a critical reader of good writing) possibly want to read it". The Discourse now includes the concept of an Elite Reader also being a Critical Reader.

Wendy's response is made as a teacher. She positions herself as a teacher who believes in using real-life situations in her classroom, drawing on a Conversation about learning as the socio-cultural construction of knowledge (Bruner, 1986, 1990; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990; Wells, 1999; Wertsch & Rupert, 1993). She draws out of the discussion an element that she could use in her classroom: Brad's comment which connects writing and reading as inter-linked elements that demonstrate a cultural model of intellectual standing. She can use it to illustrate the cultural model to her students: if you want to demonstrate intellectual ability you have to be able to read and write critically and with equal fluency and ability.

This excerpt concludes with the woman from the audience being presented almost as a museum specimen, "this woman was the *living proof"* of a model of deficit education, which safely positions the speakers outside the deficit model as part of a group who have a good education. Her use of the phrase "I read a book once!" indicates the lack of critical engagement in what is considered lowbrow reading. Interestingly the woman from the audience has become "*this* woman", no longer "*that* woman", now that she has use as an educational exhibit.

Three bursts of laughter punctuate the discussion, each time it sounds as if it comes from the whole group. This laughter signals group cohesion: the participants are marking their affiliation to the Conversation that they have been drawing on, and at the same time to the group's community of practice as English teachers for whom this is a familiar Conversation.

The Conversation around reading and education has expanded during this part of the discussion. It started as 'reading is an educated person's pastime', moved on to include 'good books are read by educated readers', then extended to 'educated readers read good books regularly'. Brad's introduction of writing as linked to reading brings in the second 'leg' of the educational three R tripod: Reading, Writing and 'Rithmatic'. When this element is added to the Conversation around reading it then becomes 'educated readers read well-written books regularly'. The last educational component draws in the intellectual aspect of reading, in the end the elements of the Conversation are 'an Elite group of Educated Intellectuals who are Critical, Regular Readers of Good Books'.

The study group members are enacting a Discourse that constitutes for them situated identities as intellectual readers and as teachers who believe firmly in the value of reading and writing as learning tools. This Discourse is associated with a cultural model of reading as highbrow and valuable, and an opposing cultural model of television viewing as lowbrow and valued only by uneducated individuals. Their association with the highbrow cultural model is done implicitly: the closest the group comes to overtly stating their intellectual position is when Brad says "if he liked the book how can I possibly want

to read it!" (block 3, p. 128). For the most part their position as 'highbrow' is marked by contrast, as they assign 'the other' to the lowbrow position: high culture being frequently dependent on "popular culture to give it definitional solidarity" (Storey, 1993, p. 87).

Through the joint enactment of these situated identities they position themselves as members of an affinity group[27] that approves of (and thus has a common cultural model of) a certain set of practices around reading, writing, teaching and learning. In doing so they signal recognition of mutual Affinity-Identities (Gee, 2000-2001) that bind them together as particular kinds of teachers and students. This kind of discussion does "creating team" (Holmes, 2006, p. 177) work for the group, uniting them as a community of practice.

It is interesting that while the group set themselves up as 'highbrow' by virtue of the fact that they are readers and not 'lowbrow' watchers of television, nowhere does anyone comment on or mark Daisy's non-intellectual activity of watching 'The Oprah Show'. The data extract comes from the start of the recording and there are no notes in my journal about the conversation before the recording, simply because at that point in the research process I had not yet realised the value of these off-academic-topic conversations. But judging from Daisy's opening statement "The best thing I heard about reading", I assume the earlier discussion was about reading and it seems that Daisy gave no justification for watching 'The Oprah Show'. The discussion finishes at the end of the extract and the talk turns to other matters. Perhaps the group accepts that even intellectuals are allowed time off to relax with the mass media!

The analysis of the second data extract demonstrates how a revisiting of this 'gossip' story about 'The Woman from Oprah' becomes a tool for negotiating change in the group's understandings of learning and teaching.

[27] Their construction of such an affinity group would doubtless have been facilitated by the homogenous nature of the study group, as outlined in section 1.5, p. 17

5.6.1.2. Gossip as agency – insights from 'The Woman from Oprah'

The second data extract starts with Daisy reading out loud from her research proposal. She then pauses in her reading to ask the group whether she should, at this point in her proposal, include a discussion of the concept of multiple intelligences.

But Daisy's question, apart from an inconclusive attempt by Kate, remains unanswered. This is in contrast to the data extracts analysed in Chapter 4 where the group focuses on the academic topic and persists with it until Anne's 'problem' is resolved. In the data extracts analysed in this chapter the conversation moves off the academic topic of Daisy's proposal onto the topic-associated 'gossip' story of the Oprah show, then onto off-academic-topics until it is finally terminated by Daisy continuing to read from her proposal.

The work done by the conversation, presented below in three sections, is not the resolution of an academic problem, but builds a world, a community of practice, which supports change and transformation through the power of language-in-action (Gee, 1999a).

The data extract is presented in three sections:

Section 1 – Insights into intelligence;

Section 2 – Talking about books;

Section 3 – Talking about teaching writing.

The focus in each section is on a different aspect of how the 'gossip' story about the Oprah Winfrey show works to support the development of group members' understanding of themselves as individual readers and writers, as teachers, and of their teaching practice.

Insights into Intelligence – *Data Extract 2, Section 1*

(T1B/CG/DP)

		Conversation	Discourse and Situated Identity
1	D	*Reading* .. learners have other means whereby they can display their understanding. (..) And I think there I should talk about (multiple intelligences?) Not that I understand one bit of it even though there, ( ) the books ( ). Anyway. Do you think so?	Displaying the Discourse of apprentice academics; such topic-centred talk is usually associated with academic talk (Canagarajah, 1997). Situated ID: struggling student
	K	Ja. I think especially the bit with the, the fact that they feed into each other, that one can understand, a, written work, (..) one can gain great understanding, of say a written work through music or art. Simply by, through the, the (..)	Kate supporting Daisy as a fellow student. Situated ID: supportive fellow student, apprentice academic
2	W	It's like the lady from Oprah, the fact that she managed to get through college without reading a book, says something about the kind of intelligences she had.	Topic-associated talk, not academic phrasing, indicates thinking independently of academic expectations – talk not normally found in the seminar room. Situated ID: liberated academic[28]. Back-channel support for Daisy's reply.
	D	Mm. She doesn't read books at all.	
	W	No.	
3	B	The 'kind' she doesn't have.	Return to Discourse of Educated Regular Reader of Good Books. Situated ID: educated intellectual.
4	A	Isn't it interesting that you say [( ),	Group community of practice Discourse; dawning insight into her own attitude to what constitutes intelligence.
5	D	[And so positively admiringly!	Return to Discourse of Educated Regular Reader of Good Books. Situated ID: educated intellectual.

[28] See p. 138 for a discussion of what is meant by a 'liberated academic'.

6	A	my traditional prejudice would be to say she's an absolute fool. [And I realised how wrong I am when you said that!	Group community of practice Discourse, insight into her own intellectual prejudice, consequences of this might play out in her classroom.
	W	[Mm	Back-channel support.
	B	[Mm	
	W	Mm *General laughter*	Group community of practice Discourse, insight into her attitude to 'intelligence'.
	D	I, I also thought she was a fool because I, I'm a book-bound verbal person.	Back-channel support, followed by a pause as the group considers what has been said. Situated IDs: liberated academics
	K	Ja (……)	
7	D	Mind you we don't know what college she went to. *General laughter*	Bakhtin's concept of humour – the carnival – as taking time out from serious business (Bakhtin, 1968) working here to soften the hard work of gaining insight into personal prejudice. Use of collaborative humour for bonding in the community of practice. Situated IDs: educated intellectuals.
	K	It was in [America remember	
	B	[It was in America ( )	
	K	Ja it wasn't Harvard *General laughter*	
	B	MIT	

Resituating knowledge

Wendy's introduction of the story about the woman in the Oprah show is the pivot on which the conversation turns to off-academic-topic matters and the consequent development of understanding. The story comes into the conversation as a topic-associated comment: Daisy asks the group if she should expand on multiple intelligences (the major topic) then says that she doesn't really understand the concept (a secondary topic). Kate tries to explain her understanding of the theory and after a short pause, during which the group are presumably thinking the matter over, Wendy offers her reframing of the story in a calm, reflective tone of voice, contributing an alternative understanding of multiple intelligences through resituating the meaning of 'intelligence' for the group.

The difference in the Discourses used in blocks 1 and 2 (p. 136) is striking. In block 1 Daisy and Kate speak as apprentice academics: Daisy uses "I *think*" and "I *should*" indicating that she is unsure of herself, her disclaimer that she understands "not one bit of it" and her appeal for confirmation support this. Kate's apprentice status is indicated by her lack of fluency as she talks. She rephrases her initial statement, changing from the conversational format "the bit that they feed into each other" and "one can understand" to a more academic tone by using the third person "one" and the nominalised form "understanding" (Gee, 1999a) in "one can gain great understanding of .. a written work through music".

In block 2 (p. 136) Wendy speaks as a different kind of academic. Her "grammar two"[29] (Gee, 1999a) patterns do not have the nominalised, third person, decontextualised forms which index the academic Discourse Kate is trying to produce. She uses informal, conversational language to make an academic claim about multiple intelligences as illustrated by the woman from Oprah story.

Wendy is working with a cultural model of academic-support-within-the-group in which items of information drawn from outside academia (such as 'war stories' from their professional lives, see p. 149) are considered useful mediational tools when trying to solve academic 'problems'. Because these stories are told as personal recollection, the use of colloquial language such as "It's like the lady", "she managed to get through" and "says something about" is an acceptable way of presenting academic support.

Becoming 'liberated academics'

The Discourse of this type of academic support stands in sharp contrast to the apprentice academic Discourse of Kate's offer of support. Gee (2008) states that a "liberating Discourse is formed when we have to juxtapose two different Discourses and rise above them" (interview quoted in St Clair & Phipps, 2008, p. 92). I argue that by valuing stories about personal experiences when they are offered as elements of academic support, the study group has, over time, inserted the Discourse of personal recollection into the

[29] See Chapter 3 p. 35 for an explanation of what is meant by "grammar two".

Discourse of academia to form a new Discourse, one that I call 'liberated academic'. In this way they have freed themselves from the "narrow perspectives" (St Clair & Phipps, 2008, p. 92) of standard academic Discourse and are able to use as an academic resource the store of personal knowledge and insights available to them from their professional experiences.

The work done by Wendy's comment does more than simply add to the group's understanding of multiple intelligences: it illuminates for Anne how narrow and prejudiced was the perspective on books and reading created by the group while they constructed the Conversation of 'Educated Intellectuals who are Critical, Regular Readers of Good Books'.

The supportive culture of the group allows Anne to express this insight without fear of criticism: she realises that her initial reaction to the story of the non-reader was an unthinking habit (traditional) which is narrow-minded and judgemental (prejudice): her views have been constrained by the Discourse of Regular Readers of Good Books. She is supported in this insight by back-channel "Mm" and "Ja" sounds from the others and Daisy's assessment of herself as "book-bound", made in a slightly surprised tone of voice as she realises how she too is prejudiced. This moment of insight is punctuated by a burst of laughter from the group, as they laugh at themselves. Because they laugh *together* at *themselves* this laughter has a supportive function, it strengthens the mutuality of the insights acknowledged by the whole group during the preceding conversation (Holmes & Marra, 2002b).

But the insight into themselves as holders of thoughtless prejudices about non-readers does not bring about an immediate change of all their attitudes. In block 3 (p. 136) Brad is still using the Educated Regular Reader of Good Books Discourse, supported by Kate's laughter. Daisy's scornful interjection "and so positively admiringly" in block 5 (p. 136) comes in spite of the thoughtful tone of her comment in block 2 (p. 136).

Block 7 (p. 137) follows a pause as everyone considers what they have just learned, and provides a break from the intensity of the work involved in realising how intellectually prejudiced they are both as individuals and as teachers. Daisy revisits the highbrow/lowbrow dichotomy of Extract 1, querying in a humorous interplay with Kate and Brad the possible quality of the college attended by the audience member in the Oprah show. Knowing of the large number of community colleges in the USA and the disparity in the educational qualifications between these and the more prestigious universities named, they make the assumption that the woman in the talk show could not have attended an elite American university. As they themselves are studying at one of the top South African universities they are, through this interchange, situating themselves at the elite end of the educational spectrum. Through the joint construction of this episode and the mutual laughter they step back from the self-criticism of acknowledging their prejudice and reaffirm the value of the group culture (Holmes & Marra, 2002b; White, 1988).

This type of interaction is a feature of the Discourse of the study group community, functioning as a pedagogic safe house (Canagarajah, 1997, 2004) situated between the academic and professional spaces of the group members' lives. There is no fear of being overheard, the group members can be politically incorrect if they want to. They are able to take time to sort through and reframe ideas, and to transfer them across into their student and teacher lives.

Talking about Books – *Data Extract 2, Section 2*

(T1B/CG/DP)

		Conversation	**Discourse and Situated Identity**
8	W	But you can quote Oprah in your, your thing. I think it would make a wonderful, different kind of resource, as opposed to the book-bound, verbal thing that we have to get our research out of. (…..)	Return to topic-associated talk, offering Daisy academic support in the form of alternative resource. Situated ID: liberated academic.

9	D B D B W	Actually she, that book thing that she does is a very powerful thing. And it has made a huge [difference I've heard about it. [Ordinary people talk about her [book review ( ) [They read now, because of it. She reckons that (*a book*) became a best seller in five weeks, [apparently [Ja	Discourse of regular readers Situated ID: Regular reader/Teacher who approves of reading. Situated IDs: Educated Readers not ordinary people. Building a world in which reading is a valued activity.
10	D A W K A	And she, she interviews budding writers, who get invited to talk to her about their books. So the people hear about writing. Hell you know, isn't there a message there, for us. Mm Mm To promote reading in my classroom.	Situated ID: teacher who connects reading to writing, the process of producing a text. Situated ID: innovative teacher, she transfers communally-constructed insight about the value of television talk shows into her teaching practice.
11	K D W	Here's another research report, what you can [learn, from Oprah [Learn from Oprah! There you go! *Laughter*	Discourse of liberated academic. Playful comment, in line with Wendy's suggestion (8) that talk show could be used as an academic information source. Co-operatively constructed humour.

Once again a comment of Wendy's is pivotal in directing the conversation towards the development of a new understanding. She returns the conversation to academic-topic-associated talk as she reframes for a second time the 'Woman from Oprah' story. In block 2 (p. 136) she used the story to illustrate an academic concept, here she suggests its use as an academic resource. Again she uses the Discourse of a liberated academic, using informal, non-specific, conversational vocabulary – "you can quote Oprah in your *thing*", "the book-bound, verbal *thing* we have to get our research out of" – to make a direct claim about an academic matter. In doing so she subverts the standard cultural model of references suitable for use in academia.

Becoming 'liberated teachers'

The reframing of the Oprah talk show as a show that has academic merit works to shift everyone else's perspective on the show. After Wendy's comment there is a pause while the group members think about her claim. Then in block 9 (p. 141) Daisy and Brad co-construct a view of the show as having merit because it encourages people to read. While they do not situate themselves directly in the classroom, they use the social language of English teachers (who have a professional interest in promoting reading) as they indicate their approval of the work of the book club show in encouraging people to read. Their vocabulary is not the dismissive Discourse of Regular Readers of Good Books, but still positions them as those-who-are-already-readers: Daisy has "heard about it (the difference the book show has made)" but *she* has not experienced it making a difference to *her* reading, it is "*ordinary people* (who) talk about her book review", "*the people* hear about writing" and as a result "*they* read now".

Even though they still position themselves as non-members of the Oprah book club, their attitude to the show has changed. In Extract 1 the show was constructed as lacking educational value as the books discussed lacked intellectual depth and were read uncritically. In Extract 2 they begin to see some merit in the show. The academic-value-reframing of the show is transferred across into their professional lives; it acquires value as a resource in the English teacher's struggle to encourage reading.

The work done by the conversation in block 10 (p. 141) continues to focus on their professional lives. Daisy connects reading books with writing books, saying that when a writer talks about his or her book "the people hear about *writing*". This connection highlights her in-this-moment socially situated identity as an English teacher, who perceives the writer's talk as not just more information about the book but about the process of producing the book. Anne's following comment positions her and the rest of the group, by virtue of the inclusive marker "you know" (Irwin, 2006) and the pronoun 'us' in "a message for *us*", as teachers-in-the-classroom as she points out the power of the book show to promote reading in their professional lives.

The work done across these two blocks of talk parallels the work done in blocks 2, 4 and 6 (pp. 136, 137,) in the previous data extract where the group members' perceptions of learning styles were shifted. Here their perceptions of the value of television talk shows are changed.

Kate's contribution (block 11, p. 141) connects the academic-value-of-a-television-talk-show (block 8, p. 140) and the professional-value-of-a-television-talk-show (block 10, p. 141) and provides the only burst of laughter in this section, as she gently mocks both academic research and the idea that something of value could be learned from the Oprah show. Daisy supports her, mirroring her comment about "learning from Oprah", the insider joke, about research, acting as an important community building activity through the demonstration of a shared repertoire of understanding (Wenger, 1998).

The interaction in Extract 1 (p. 127) demonstrated a seamless constitution of a cohesive group identity, an example of world building (Gee, 1999a). The interactions in Extract 2, sections 1 (p. 136) and 2 (p. 140) are not as straightforward. A change in perspective is slowly developing: the group members are becoming aware of their personal prejudices about non-readers and are revising their stance towards the value of television talk shows. The change happens in small increments and recursively: the speakers move towards insight, then step back into the habitual Regular Readers of Good Books Discourse. The group also use a modified version of Regular Readers of Good Books Discourse as they position themselves as teachers who are trying to encourage their learners to read. They still value reading, but television talk shows have risen in value, as they are now seen as a possible tool in their campaign to encourage reading.

The movement towards change is destabilising and the group uses laughter to re-establish cohesion. In Extract 2, section 1 there are three occasions when the group laugh together at themselves (block 6, p. 137, and block 7, p. 137) and both section 1 (block 7, p. 137) and 2 (block 11, p. 141) end with co-constructed humour episodes as the group 'does collegiality' (Holmes & Marra, 2002a) to reassure themselves and maintain group solidarity.

In the next section the conversation moves on to a more personal level, as Brad comments on how he feels about listening to authors talking about their work.

Talking about Writing – *Data Extract 2, Section 3*

(T1B/CG/DP)

		Conversation	**Discourse and Situated Identity**
12	B	But there's something in it, when I read, when I hear a writer talk about their work, I find their, more interesting.	Discourse of regular reader Situated ID: thinking reader. Repeated use of 'I', he is talking about himself not as a teacher or a student but as an individual who is a reader.
	D	Yes.	Back-channel support.
	W	Mm	
	B	I like to know what was in their mind when they wrote something.	
13	W	So that's why, even though I'm a bit peed off with (*a guest speaker on a course*) about the marks that he handed out to everybody, I'd love to get him to come and talk to, the kids at school. Because I think that if they had to see him, then it, his poems have much more meaning.	Situated ID: changes as she talks; firstly teacher who is *able to act* (cataphoric reference to the statement after the upcoming intervening clause), changes to student who is *unable to act* to change unfavourable marks, reverts to teacher who is *able to invite* guest speaker. Inter-animation of teacher/student voices enables her to situate her student self in professional domain where she holds the power to act.
	K	Yes, yes. They're not abstract. I agree.	Support for Wendy's teacher ID.
	W	They're not just like, printed [words on a page,	Reaction to support: elaborates meaning of "not abstract".
	K	[Mm	Co-construction of meaning and interleaved talk indicative of support.
	W	they actually become more [meaningful.	
	K	[When you know who actually wrote them.	

14	B	But you would facilitate better than (...)	Situated ID: supportive community member.
	W	Oh, absolutely. I know more about teaching [than he does, and I know more about	Situated ID: enabled/confident teacher.
	B	[Make sure he came back to the topic occasionally	Situated ID: supportive community member – demonstrating insider knowledge of guest lecturer.
	W	judging writing, sometimes. *General laughter*	
	W	Yes! *(she chuckles)*	
15	D	Ok. Yes. "The emphasis on the importance of visual literacy……. *She continues to read.*	

This final data section consists of entirely off-academic-topic conversation which demonstrates the dialogic nature of the talk: these comments draw on previous parts of the conversation to make their meaning. Notably, each new topic is introduced by the use of a discourse marker which indicates the link back to the previous talk.

Enacting situated identities as liberated academics and teachers

Brad uses "But" twice as an opening marker. In block 12 it marks the contrast between his personal opinion of the value of hearing about writing and the mocking laughter of block 11 (p. 141), as he supports on a personal level (marked by his repeated use of "I") Daisy and Anne's attachment of value to having writers talk about their craft (block 10, p. 141). His second opening "But" (block 14, p. 145) links back to events that happened long before this conversation, to a not particularly well-run seminar in the previous year involving the guest speaker mentioned by Wendy, and contrasts Wendy's ability to facilitate a classroom discussion with that of their lecturer.

Wendy's use of the discourse marker "So" (block 13, p. 144) demonstrates how ideas are ventriloquated across the study group's talk: how they used each other's ideas to inform their own understanding. Schiffrin (1987) classes 'so' as a "marker of main idea units"

(Schiffrin, 1987, p. 191). It marks the relevance of a concluding remark to information which has been given earlier in the conversation. In the examples Schiffrin uses to illustrate this marking work, the 'so' refers to *information given earlier by that speaker*. The speaker uses 'so' to warrant drawing a conclusion from his or her own information. On the surface Wendy's use of 'so' seems unjustified: nowhere earlier in the conversation does *she* talk about the value of having a writer talk about his or her work. However, when Wendy uses 'so' she is drawing on the information provided earlier by other speakers *as if it were her own*, making links that go back almost to the start of section 2 (p. 141). These links are constructed along the following lines:

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">Daisy and Brad's joint endorsement of the Oprah show as "a powerful thing" (block 9)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">↓</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Daisy's comments about Oprah inviting writers onto the television show (block 10)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">↓</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Anne's insight into promoting reading in their classrooms (block 10)</td></tr>
<tr><td>↓</td><td></td><td>↓</td></tr>
<tr><td>Brad's personal validation of hearing writers talk about their work (block 12)</td><td>→</td><td>Provide the information used by Wendy to come to the conclusion that having a writer come and talk to her learners about his poems would be a powerful tool for enhancing her learners' understanding of poetry. (block 13)</td></tr>
</table>

This data section is a good example of the group's use of dialogic talk to jointly construct understanding. The speakers address the group as a whole: only twice do speakers address an individual (blocks 8 and 14, pp. 140 and 145). The conversation is co-operatively constructed as speakers both interleave their comments (blocks 13 and 14, pp. 144, 145) and complete each other's statements (Kate and Wendy at the end of block 13). The understanding, agency and identities are also co-constructed. Wendy's developing understanding of how inviting a writer into her classroom could be a teaching tool is based on information provided by other speakers. This is an example of what Davis and

Sumara call "Us/not us" (Davis & Sumara, 1997, p. 111), where occasions can be identified in which individuals have moments of insight, but the development of the understanding can only be traced by examining the joint activity which has led to the insight. "The focus of inquiry is not so much on the components of experience (persons, objects, places), but, rather, on the relations that bind these elements together in action" (Davis & Sumara, 1997, p. 111). The 'understanding' that Wendy encapsulates in her 'conclusion' is not the result of her acting on her own. It is the result of the interaction of the group working within a supportive community of practice with a culture of dialogic discussion. According to Bakhtin, meaning is made as part of a social activity by using other speaker's words: the word "exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word and make it one's own" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 294). By taking part in the conversation Wendy is able to use the words-and-intentions of the other group members to develop her own understanding.

Talking in a pedagogic safe house

The group is a source of agency as well as understanding for Wendy. Their acceptance of her academic suggestions in blocks 2 and 8 (pp. 136 and 140) positions her as a liberated academic, someone who can 'think outside the academic box'. Their support gives her the agency to move between two poles of power in block 13 (p. 144), from student-without-control unable to disagree and have poor marks changed, to teacher-in-control able to introduce change into her classroom by inviting others into it[30]. This identity change is recognised by Brad as he acknowledges her teaching expertise in block 14 (p. 145), giving her the Discourse-Identity of a knowledgeable, competent teacher.

These two data extracts illustrate the value of the study group's situation at the interface of two arenas of power, academia and school. In the first 'Woman from Oprah' extract

[30] During the previous year the group had attended a lecture given by a guest speaker, a writer, who had also acted as an 'outside marker' and had assessed some of their writing. The group had felt that the talk had been poorly facilitated – the lecturer who had invited the writer to come and talk about his poetry and novels had allowed the guest to 'ramble on' on topics unrelated to his writing, leaving very little time for questions at the end of the class – and they had been unhappy with the assessment in that the criteria used to assess their work had not been discussed in advance.

the situated identities they adopt position them as power-holders: they are part of an elite group in educational terms: Educated Intellectuals who are Regular Readers of Good Books.

The second data extract opens with the group situating themselves as students at the powerless end of the academic spectrum, unsure of how to proceed in the writing of an academic document. But because the conversation is happening in a safe place they are able to try new Discourses, causing a power shift as they move back and forth between being powerless students using the Discourse of apprentice academics and power-holding teachers using the Discourse of Educated Intellectuals, resulting in an authoritative new Discourse of liberated academics and teachers.

The interchange in block 14 (p. 145) demonstrates the effect of this Discourse: Wendy is able to move from confident teacher to powerless student and back to confident teacher again because of the power derived from the Discourse-Identity of confident, innovative teacher. While the Discourse-Identity in this block is ascribed to her by Brad, it is the culmination of the ventriloquation of ideas across the entire conversation by the whole group, ventriloquation made possible by the privacy of the study group's position in a pedagogic safe house.

Schools play a key role in the production and reproduction of social identities and unequal relations of power (Martin-Jones & Heller, 1996), as teachers are in a position to assign value to cultural capital in educational practices such as reading. The value of the study group lies in its provision of an intellectual space in which the group members could become aware of their attitudes to reading and how these attitudes had been formed by the Conversations around reading practices that represent the interests of dominant social groups. It also gives them the space to consider whether they are possibly reproducing and reinforcing these attitudes unthinkingly in the classroom. Teachers need similar opportunities to confront their own situatedness (Saavedra, 1996); to become conscious of the beliefs they hold, consciously or unconsciously, about their practices and their learners (Dirkx, 1998).

5.6.2. 'War Stories' as a resource in the pedagogic safe house

Orr (1996) first coined the term 'war stories' in his ethnographic investigation into the ways in which Xerox technicians used stories about machine malfunctions as a method of 'troubleshooting' problems (Brown, 2000). These stories formed a reservoir of tacit knowledge (an important resource in the functioning of a community of practice), drawn from experience, which provided the information which ultimately led to insight into the cause of the malfunction, and to diagnosis and repair.

As the study group members worked together they likewise drew on experiences from both the classroom and academia, telling stories from the 'front line' of teaching and studying, which built a knowledge base for their community of practice. Their stories utilise tacit knowledge of teaching and studying and are told about how they have solved problems in the past. By collaboratively applying their 'expert' teaching knowledge in the construction of solutions to teaching problems, they simultaneously ascribe Discourse-Identities to each other as teachers with valuable professional knowledge and as respected co-inquirers into innovative teaching practices.

Two of the 'war stories' found in the data are presented here[31]. The first story comes from Daisy's proposal reading and provides knowledge drawn from classroom experience as a solution to a problem. The second comes from Anne's proposal reading and the information, derived from academic experience, gives Anne insight into a gap in her data gathering.

In Daisy's proposal the story is told as a direct solution to her problem; in Anne's it is told as an aside, but in both cases the discussion that follows the story is central to moving the proposal reader towards either a solution to her problem or an insight into her research.

[31] These data extracts were chosen as extract 3 provides an extended example of a 'war story' in which opposing viewpoints are productive for learning, while extract 4 is an example of a 'war story' which was equally productive for learning even though the speakers agreed with each other.

5.6.2.1. Daisy's Proposal – Peer Marking

While the group discussed Daisy's proposal – she was talking about her learners who were producing visual representations of themes in a literature text – a problem arose: her learners were already designing their visual representations but she still had to find a suitable way of evaluating their work. The lengthy discussion that ensued was analysed in detail in Chapter 4, Data Extract 3 (p.101), by the end of which Daisy had modified her stance from rejecting the group's help to co-operating in an academic discussion with Wendy.

At the end of this extract there are a further thirteen comments about visual, oral and written assessment, then Anne had an idea and told a story about getting her learners to do peer marking of their own work.

Peer Marking – *Data Extract 3*

(T1B/CG/DP)

		Conversation	**Situated Identity**
1	W	Is it all art work?	Supportive community member
		(……)	
	D	Ja. (…) this section, the individual project is an art [thing.	Knowledgeable teacher
	W	[Could you	Supportive community member
		[display it?	
2	A	[How about a ( ). I've just had an idea.	Supportive community member
		Last year, my grade eights, as part of a 'Me' project, had to do a photographic collage. (..) Of themselves.	Innovative teacher, sharing her experience
		And in the end I couldn't cope with the marking,	Overloaded teacher, with too much marking
		I had to do peer marking. I set up a poster, a questionnaire, and, of criteria and they put ticks under strong, medium or needs improvement, or whatever, satisfactory, and a tick	Innovative teacher, prepared to try a new method of assessment

		under strong counted for two points, and a tick under, satisfactory counted for one point, etc, so in the end they added up ticks and gave a mark. And every, collage had to be marked by at least two groups, if not three groups, and the third group totalled the marks and averaged them. And the group that was marked could go and query about that assignment the marks they were unhappy with, and I as teacher was there as ultimate arbiter. It was the first time I did it and I didn't handle it well enough, I didn't tell them I was going to be ultimate arbiter, some of them rushed home to their parents and said they were going to be marked by, ( ) were unfair and I should have made that clearer in the beginning, I got a phone call from a mother! But that is a way of doing it, and I can even show that the thing that I worked out for the ( )	that will reduce the teacher-to-learner authority gradient in her classroom, letting her learners share in the assessment process Reflective/critical teacher, evaluating her methods Supportive community member, she offers the use of her assessment rubric
3	D	But you see the criteria that I'll need to set up, I'll only know them myself once I've spoken to several art teachers, and I've finished reading all these others, by Arnheim [and	Struggling student, sets out her problem
4	A	[You know another thing	Supportive community member
5	D	by people about how you look at a picture, you know, you've got to look at (..) when (*a lecturer*) spoke about a book, I don't know if she ever got hold of it, by ( ) I finally got hold of it. And that's what ( ) my plan. But (*another lecturer*) said, I have to use, Kress and Van Leeuwen's Grammar of Visual Design and use their, categories. So I have to read that. And then surely I would have to give all the little groups, who're going to mark each other's work, what criteria	Struggling student, she has a plan for resolving the problem by doing the recommended reading

6	A	No, but I'm going to say, why don't you ask in class what sort of criteria they think it should be marked with?	Supportive community member: innovative teacher
7	D	Ja, I, well, I can ask them, but in addition, we've got to come with something worthwhile. As well. Something, (..) realistic	Struggling student, beginning to see the value of suggestion, restates part of the problem
8	W	You've got to have, er, you've got to have a framework within which to actually evaluate.	Supportive community member: fellow student
9	D	Ja. (…) Now I've got to do all this, thoroughly, quickly, and there's a blooming student arriving as well! To cap it.	Struggling student/harassed teacher
10	A	'Cause that takes the responsibility off you, and the kids will learn a lot from doing the marking. (..) It makes them think of the criteria, each time, as they mark two or three. And each piece of marking teaches them, they're thinking of criteria each time.	Supportive community member: innovative teacher reflecting on the value of peer marking
11	W	Do you want to include that in your research statement? Cause you see you want [them ( ) to include the marking of other people	Supportive community member: fellow student
12	D	[No, I think I do, because what I'm trying to say is, how do I mark this? If I sit by myself with each little visual collage, or whatever they make, I don't know what to do. So, the way to mark it is, for us, me and them, to discuss what the criteria are. Even if it's, one of the criteria is, you look at the thing, does it tell you something about, 'A Grain of Wheat'? It must, you must have that. But you know, if I work out with them, like that, then I'll have to present to them, some fixed, sort of, visual criteria, ( ) learners, whoever, (..) and then they can mark their group ( ), the real way, cause then they can cut down,	Innovative teacher/competent student who can act independently

13	K	And also that extends this whole, (..) [learning	Supportive community member: fellow student
14	D	[it comes in, it, comes into this business I'm trying to, argue for, this, new approaches to [literacy.	Innovative teacher/competent, independent student
15	K W K	[To assess it, absolutely. This whole, sort of multi, (…) ja, you're right multi functional, way of learning. So once again it gets away from the top down, that you say, this is your mark, because (..) whatever.	Supportive community members: fellow students

In telling her 'war story' Anne presents a complex amalgam of identities, framed by her overall stance as a supportive community member working towards a solution to Daisy's problem. Part of the culture of the group was supporting each other and her opening statement "I've just had an idea" stems from her commitment to providing help.

Offering advice: a productive lack of agreement

Anne's movement between teaching identities is an indication that this is tacit knowledge, a story recalling past experience, not explicit knowledge in the form of a well thought-through solution to the problem. While she starts as an *innovative teacher* – her story is about using a visual medium in her language classroom – she quickly drops into the identity of a *teacher overloaded with marking* as she recalls the experience. The use of this familiar identity connects her with her listeners: as fellow teachers they can relate to the problem. She becomes once again an *innovative teacher* as she details her method of peer marking, but changes into a *reflective/critical teacher* as she considers how she could have better handled the situation. Once again the detail connects her with her audience: a phone call from an irate parent, every teacher's nightmare. Her return to *supportive community member* closes the storytelling, as she offers practical assistance in the form of her assessment rubric. She makes two further comments in the data extract (blocks 6 and 10, p. 152), both of which position her as an innovative teacher. Her final comment (block 10) indicates her implicit understanding of the work done by peer

marking: it makes the learners think about the assessment criteria very carefully, and for her this deep thinking does the same intellectual work as reflecting on the visual representations as the learners prepare to write or talk about their work.

The construction of her narrative as she adopts a variety of situated identities enables her to make connections between herself and the others in the community of the study group (Riessman, 1992, 2000). The story's dialogic nature connects past experience with a present problem, providing the possibility of changing the ways in which assessment happens in the future (Coulter, 1999).

But Daisy does not take up the suggestion: she has had several books recommended to her by lecturers on the course and plans to read these before she decides what to do. She stands firm against Anne's suggestions across two blocks of talk (blocks 3 and 5, p. 151). She positions herself as a student striving to accomplish a task according to a plan devised by herself using the recommendations of knowledgeable others.

However the lack of agreement is productive; this is a dialogic discussion not a monologic argument where neither will move from their "authoritative" position. A dialogic interaction involves genuine communication, where multiple voices interact and struggle to make meaning. It needs "a plurality of independent unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 6). The two voices here are involved in such a dialogic interaction: Anne, situating herself in the classroom as an innovative teacher, genuinely believes her suggestion of peer assessment would be useful to Daisy, whereas Daisy, positioning herself as a struggling student, genuinely believes that her solution lies in doing the academic reading that has been recommended. The development of the complex identities of competent-students-becoming-innovative-teachers lies in the struggle between such voices: "The importance of struggling with another's discourse, its influence in the history of an individual's coming to ideological consciousness, is enormous" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 348).

The lack of agreement between the two speakers – a result of their viewing the problem from different identity standpoints – fuels the discussion: the innovative teacher persists in endorsing peer assessment in spite of resistance *because* she believes it will work *because* of her experience of using it. The striving student's continued reluctance to depart from her planned reading programme probably stems from Daisy's need to be organised (see Chapter 4, p. 108): she has a stated plan of action (block 3, p. 151) and she wants to follow it.

This type of social interaction, in which participants presented opposing viewpoints in an energetic discussion, was part of the culture of the group. When asked if he was aware of disagreement in the group Brad commented:

> … I think disagreement was actually encouraged in the group as well. I mean, generally we agreed on most things, but I think, (…) one of, I mean two of the good things were that people accepted you and you were allowed to be ignorant, but the second thing I think was that distinctive about the group was that, um, people said that they felt differently from you, but they, they said it in a sort of, humorous, or (..) um, or kind of lively way, but people felt free to disagree from early on."
> (T5B/B/I)

Wendy valued the diversity of opinions:

> I mean we don't always agree. But I think there were times, when, maybe Anne's thinking differed from my idea (….) it still, still broadened the, um, understanding of a term, it makes you think of the possible alternatives.
> (T7A/W/I)

Freedman and Ball, writing about using Bakhtinian concepts when studying language and learning, state that "the social interactions that are most effective in promoting learning are those that are filled with tension and conflict" (Freedman & Ball, 2004, p. 6). Daisy's resistance draw others into the discussion, increasing the polyphony of voices, bringing other identities into play, widening the resources on offer.

Ascribing Discourse-Identities

In blocks 8 and 11 (p. 152) Wendy brings the situated identity of a supportive fellow student to the discussion. In block 8 she uses academic terminology to rework the discussion about criteria, saying Daisy needs "a framework within which to actually

evaluate". In block 10 she makes the assumption (based on Daisy's comment that "I've got to do all this" in block 9) that Daisy *will* be using peer assessment and changes the question from 'should peer assessment be used' to 'should peer assessment be included in the research statement'.

In making this assumption she gives Daisy the Discourse-Identity of an innovative teacher/independent student, able to make her own decisions on an innovative assessment technique. Daisy reacts by taking on this Discourse-Identity in her reply. Her comments on assessment earlier in the discussion drew on a cultural model of teaching in which she, as the teacher, controlled the authoritative word and would decide what the assessment criteria would be. Her need to control the situation is evident in her use of the pronoun "I" in blocks 3 and 5 (p. 151), and especially her repeated use of the modal phrase "I have to" in block 5. In block 7 (p. 152) she introduces "we" (she and her learners) for the first time, by block 12 (p. 152) she is using the inclusive forms "us", "we" and "them" to describe who will be deciding on the criteria. Her elaboration on how the assessment process will be "work(ed) out with them" draws on an entirely different cultural model from the first one presented in which the teacher is in control. Here she presents a dialogic cultural model in which her learners' knowledge and understanding of their work is valued as a resource in the assessment process.

In the initial discussion Daisy also positioned herself according to a cultural model in which she, as a student, would follow the recommendations of her lecturers rather than use a suggestion offered by a fellow student. The combined influence of Anne's firm belief in peer assessment as a solution and Wendy's faith in Daisy's academic ability enabled Daisy to reposition herself as an independent student using a cultural model in which the professional expertise of her fellow students is a valued resource in her academic work.

Presenting advice as a 'war story' rather than as expert advice was part of the democratic culture of the group; it gave Daisy the opportunity to turn down the advice if she wanted to and the rest of the group the opportunity to contribute their suggestions.

Working in a pedagogic safe house

There are two factors that mark this as essentially a pedagogic safe house activity. First is Daisy's initial admission that she does not know how to assess the task her learners are already producing. Good teachers – the desired seminar room identity – devise their marking rubric before giving their pupils a task; good researchers plan their research design thoroughly before beginning the research! The study group was a safe place: "admitting that one's practice is less than perfect is an act of vulnerability that depends on group trust and mutual respect" (Wilson & Berne, 1999, p. 188): it was acceptable not only to admit that you did not know how to assess learners' work, but also to be honest about not being fully prepared as a researcher and, in Anne's case, that you had come to the classroom not fully prepared as a teacher.

Secondly, it is important that there are no 'authorities' in the form of lecturers taking part in the discussion, no one is speaking the "authoritative word" that "demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own: it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 342). Having an 'authority' present would limit the ability of the participants to take on other Discourse-Identities, and silence the presenting of options other than the standard cultural models of authoritative teacher and compliant student.

5.6.2.2. Anne's Proposal – Doing a Survey

Anne's research was concerned with theories of teaching writing and how these could inform a writing programme for learners at her school. She had just started reading her proposal out loud to the group when Daisy realised the immensity of the project Anne appeared to be undertaking and felt the need to comment on it. She interrupted Anne to tell a story about a discovery she made as an academic researcher during her Honours year: that in her school teachers did not necessarily directly teach the learners how to write the essay genre for their particular subject. The ensuing discussion on what happens in different schools made Anne realise that she did not know whether this was the situation in her school or not.

Doing a Survey – *Data Extract 4*

(T1A/CG/AP)

		Conversation	Situated Identity
1	D A	Can I just say something here? Mm	Polite community member
2	D	When I did my Honours thing, I had to talk to the teachers in the school about the kinds of writing they were doing. And what I found out was, they don't teach them to write in every text (*she means genre*). So your task is huge. (..) The biology teacher will expect in matric a beautiful biology essay, but they don't actually teach the genre of that text.	Experienced academic researcher
3	K	They expect you to do this, as an English teacher?	Outsider, non-high-school teacher query
4	D B W	They expect them to kind of [know it [just know it Ja	Knowledgeable teachers
5	K	Ok, ok	Outsider teacher
6	D	and in the junior classes, in order to make their marking easy, geography teachers, history teachers, will go in for stacks of matching up, gap-fill, so some, (.) they don't do any writing to speak of.	Experienced academic researcher
7	W B W	You see our ( ) We have the opposite, um, just on that issue of the teachers (..) our biology and history teachers will all teach them to write, essays for, their subject. Well, we have a history essay method (..) at our school Ja	Knowledgeable teachers
8	D	Well that's damn lucky.	Envious teacher
9	A	Well I've just realised that in my methodology,	Insightful student

		which is about two sentences long, I must say 'I must find out (..) in my own school'	
10	D A W	You'd have to do a little survey or something Mm, mm Yes, do a survey.	Knowledgeable students
11	A	Ok. In theory the English teachers at the school follow the syllabus …	

The primary purpose of Daisy's story is to point out to Anne the size of the task she appears to be undertaking, the key statement in the story is "So your task is huge". The rest of the story is information to support her statement. It is actually Kate's question (block 3) arising from the story that triggers the discussion that leads to Anne's insight. As a teacher in an EFL (English as a foreign language) school Kate is unfamiliar with the situation in high schools and Wendy and Brad's comments (blocks 4 and 7) are directed at telling her about what happens in schools in general and theirs in particular. It is their comments that lead to Anne's insight that she must do a survey to find out the situation in her school.

The identities assumed in this excerpt are all very positive ones, unlike some of those shown in the Peer Marking data extract. The speakers present themselves as knowledgeable teachers, experienced researchers, insightful students; the kinds of identities that are desired in the seminar room. What makes this a pedagogic safe house activity is not the identities presented but the fact that the structure of seminar room activities discourages storytelling. It is difficult for the academy to make space for 'gossip' about individual's teaching/researching experiences during class time. The lecturer has a set amount of work to get through and there is not much time for in-depth investigations of students' individual stories. The significance of the pedagogic safe house is not just that it affords the privacy to assume identities that might be considered 'politically incorrect' or that are not valued by the academy, but also that the smaller numbers and less structured activities allow greater scope for storytelling with its possible benefits.

5.6.3. Developing an Affinity-Identity through support from the group

Affinity-Identities are based on having a shared set of experiences as part of an affinity group. Gee defines an affinity group as people who share "*allegiance to, access to, and participation in specific practices*" (Gee, 2000-2001, p. 105) (italics in original). Having the Affinity-Identity of a member of the study group meant participating in the sharing of knowledge and expertise, the receiving of support (as has been demonstrated earlier in this chapter), and, as I will show, the sharing and critiquing of 'ideas' for new teaching approaches.

In this section I consider how Brad positions himself as a confident teacher in both his pre- and post-graduation interviews. This is the result of his Affinity-Identity as a group member: he believes that this confidence is a result of having shared experiences with the group in which they worked through academic knowledge together, refined each other's new teaching ideas and shared teaching experiences with each other. An important attribute of the group's practices is the way in which the academic and professional aspects of their lives simultaneously provided support as the group worked.

In his pre-graduation interview he responds to the question "Do you feel more empowered as a teacher?" by acknowledging the influence of the academic course, but focussing principally on the influence of the study group[32].

(In the data extract the sense of being empowered is shown in blue and pink indicates the influence of the group.)

[32] The content of Brad's response illustrates one of the advantages that accrued from my status as an observant participant: not only did I have an in-depth knowledge of the group, but the group had an in-depth knowledge of my research. Brad's response is likely to be influenced by the fact that as a group member he has been a fellow researcher-into-teaching-and-learning and as a friend has a deep interest in my research.

Confidence as a teacher – *Data Extract 5*

(T5B/B/I)

	Conversation	Sources of confidence
K	Do you feel more empowered as a teacher?	
B	Ja, I definitely felt that if I went back to my school, I wasn't just empowered by the academic course itself,	Confidence engendered by his studies
	I was empowered by the shared, experiences and ideas of the group.	Confidence engendered by the group
	I felt that I could take back an idea to my staff and present it more forcefully because,	Confidence in arguing for the classroom implementation of an idea
	I had the group sanction, I had, their agreement that it was a sound idea.	Confidence engendered through group assessment of an idea
	Also their contribution to the idea, they might have added to it, or critiqued it in some way.	Confidence engendered through group discussion and development of an idea

The contribution made to his identity as a confident teacher by his academic studies is taken as a given: he "wasn't *just* empowered by the academic course itself"; he does not feel the need to expand on the contribution of academia. But he makes a direct connection between the confidence derived from "the course" and that stemming from being part of the group: his sentence moves straight from academia to the "shared, experiences and ideas of the group" and here he does elaborate on the experience. He can present new methods to his colleagues with conviction because of the group's practice of evaluating new teaching methods against a standard which they had established through working together.

Brad's post-graduation interview shows how his experiences in the group have become so intertwined in their effect on his teaching that their influences on his identity as a teacher, confident in his ability to implement change, are difficult to tease apart. In the time between the two interviews he had changed schools, becoming head of the English department at his new school. Having been asked "What do you think is still with you,

from that experience (of being in the group, doing the Honours, doing the Masters) that you have brought directly into this new job with you now?" (T21B/B/SRI) he replied in the words presented in Data Extract 6 below.

(The themes which illustrate the influence of the academic and professional spheres and their effect on his teaching are shown in coloured script.
Blue highlights the contribution of the combined experience theme
Brown highlights the contribution of academia theme
Red highlights the contribution of classroom experience theme
Green highlights the coalescing group voice theme)

Sources of confidence – *Data Extract 6*

(T21B/B/SRI)

	Conversation	**Sources of confidence**
1	I don't think that I could confidently do the job as I feel like I've done reasonably confidently, without that experience. No question.	Confidence linked to experience of combined study and group work
2	There are lots of people out there who, work through the system, as English teachers and become heads of department, and become effective ones. But when you look at the work their schools produce there's nothing particularly educational about their work, it's simply, effective schooling.	Work his school produces is more than just "effective schooling", it is "educational"
3	I think what I've got from my studies, within the study group and also outside of that with the masters and the honours course,	'Studying' as a combination of work done in the group and work done on the academic courses
4	it's just given me knowledge, a lot of deep background knowledge, a lot of shared ideas.	"Knowledge" as both academic theory and shared practice
5	I mean in the group we've pooled a lot of information, a lot of experiences, on theory and our classroom practice.	Work done by group: combining information/theory and experience/practice

6	And I feel with that when I come to this school, I come with all those people, in my head. All those ideas, all those conversations.	Multiple support sources fused into a single entity
7	And if I say to my, my department, we're going to do a reading programme, I can say it cause I understand that these are effective things to do, my colleagues are doing them, that I've read about it on the course.	'Understanding' of effective practice developed through both shared information and theory
8	Um, so I feel like I can, it gives me the confidence to do my job. I really feel that.	Confidence in his professional ability
9	I'm a, quite an anxious person by nature but I think I've coped with the job, um, very much because of the knowledge I've brought from the course.	Confidence from "knowledge" seen as theory
10	And not just that I think, but also the sense that my ideas have been tested in the group. In the nerd group. Um, that all our ideas have been tested,	and from "ideas" that have been 'measured against the standard' set by the group
11	so I feel like, if I speak it's actually four or five of us speaking as one. Um, you know that combined authority.	Multiple support sources fused into a single entity
12	That I think is something that we shouldn't, underestimate. I certainly feel that. I don't know if any of the others feel that at all.	

All four themes run right through the extract. Brad starts by attributing his confidence in his new position to "that experience", the combined 'experiencing-academia-through-working-with-others' rather than to 'the academic course' or 'studying with the group'. The experience theme can be summarised as studying (which encapsulates the effect of both academic theory and the group experience) which has given him an understanding, knowledge and tested ideas: he has the theory *and* he can apply it in his teaching, which has resulted in him feeling empowered in his current teaching position.

The manner in which the academic and professional experiences have become closely intertwined in the interval between the two interviews becomes apparent as he expands on his studies; the two themes appear in pairs as he talks:

	Academic theme	Classroom experience theme
4	a lot of deep background knowledge	a lot of shared ideas
5	a lot of information … on theory	a lot of experiences … our classroom practice
7	I've read about it on the course	my colleagues are doing them
9	knowledge I've brought from the course	
10		my ideas have been tested … all our ideas have been tested

The academic and professional experiences have become fused into a single influence on his teaching life.

Running through the intertwined themes of academic and professional life is a theme of sharing that was part of the group's culture, sharing ideas and pooling information, which has resulted in the group coalescing into a single, internal voice of authority that speaks with him when he speaks:

> "… shared … pooled … I come with all those people, in my head. All those ideas, all those conversations … if I speak it's actually four or five of us speaking as one … combined authority"

The interactions in the study group had become a confidence-building resource (Graven, 2004). His Discourse-Identity as an informed, innovative teacher, stemming from the ways in which the other group members talk to and about him, combined with his Affinity-Identity as someone who shares norms and values about innovative teaching with other teachers, has given him the confidence to carry his innovative teacher identity into his new professional position in his school. His voice of authority speaks from the fused worlds of theory and classroom practice, through the combined voices of the study group members. He has internalised these voices and the two situated identities of confident teacher and liberated/innovative student have become the single identity of a confident, innovative teacher.

5.7. Conclusion

In this chapter I have analysed the ways in which the study group members' interactions as students influenced the constitution of their identities as confident, innovative teachers. This was done, firstly, by analysing how off-topic discussions provided the opportunity for the group members to reflect on themselves as teachers and on their teaching practice. Secondly, by examining the telling of 'war stories' or the offering of tacit professional knowledge as possible solutions to academic problems and, thirdly, by exploring the expression of self as a confident, innovative teacher by one of the group members in his post-graduation interview.

Two factors made it possible for the group members to have off-topic discussions and offer 'war stories' as ways of solving academic problems: the fact that by the time this study was done they were already a cohesive community of practice and the fact that the community functioned as a pedagogic safe house – it met in a group member's home, away from the scrutiny of their professional colleagues and from the lecturers and colleagues at the university.

Over the four and a half years that the study group members worked together they had built up a history of relationships, of shared experiences and shared practices. The brief cameo of enabled, confident teachership, enacted by Kate, Wendy and Brad in the second data extract (blocks 13 and 14, pp. 144-145), neatly illustrates the group members' degree of engagement as a community of practice: their sentences are interleaved and overlap each other, indicating a close degree of engagement and alignment in the conversation; they draw on a group memory of their student identities to contrast with and inform their identities as teachers and in doing so are able to offer and take up Discourse-Identities as knowledgeable, competent teachers.

Their group histories as students and as teachers are important building blocks for the constitution of identities as confident, innovative teachers. In the Peer Marking extract (starting on p. 150) Anne presents multiple teacher identities, only one of which is as an innovative teacher, but Daisy's acceptance of her proffered solution (even though Daisy

does not actually say as much) accords Anne the Discourse-Identity of an innovative teacher. Daisy starts as a struggling student needing advice from 'experts', but by addressing her as an independent student Wendy makes a crucial contribution to Daisy developing the agency to reposition herself as both a competent student *and* as an innovative teacher, the two Discourse-Identities going hand-in-hand. There is no evidence at the start of the extract to support Wendy's assumption that Daisy is either competent or independent; it is Wendy's background knowledge of Daisy, built up over time and shared practices, which gives her this confidence in Daisy's abilities.

The excerpt from Brad's post-graduation interview (p. 162) provides a fascinating insight into the results of shared affinity practices, and the reciprocity of addressing and being addressed as competent students and innovative teachers. Through internalising the voices and the beliefs of the group he is able to believe in himself and his new knowledge, and speak with authority. Such hybrid identities and discourses have been "profoundly productive historically: they are pregnant with potential for new world views, with new 'internal forms' for perceiving the world in words" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 360).

In Chapter 6 I analyse the transcripts of the group members' interviews, looking at the durability or not of the identities of confident, innovative teachers over time.

CHAPTER 6: SUSTAINING (OR NOT) EXPERT IDENTITIES: THE AFTERLIFE OF THE STUDY GROUP

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6.1. Introduction

Given the evidence (presented in Chapters 4 and 5) that participation in the study group contributed to confident teacher and student identities for its members, I began to wonder whether the confident teacher identities would be maintained over time. Two years after the study group members had graduated I conducted an individual, audiotaped interview with each group member, this time focussing on how they now saw themselves as teachers. We discussed what had changed in their teaching situations and whether they thought there were still any connections between the ways in which they were currently teaching, and their previous studies and study group experiences.

In this chapter I argue that for new professional identities, established while studying, to be sustained and to continue to develop over time, some kind of ongoing support and affirmation may be needed.

The chapter begins (section 6.2) with a brief review of the changes in the group members' teaching situations which had occurred in the two and a half years between the

two sets of interviews. This is followed (section 6.3) by a discussion of identity formation and Gee's (2000-2001) constitution of Discourse-Identities and Affinity-Identities. Section 6.4 describes how the concepts of figured worlds and identity-in-practice (Holland et al., 1998) are used as a frame of reference for exploring the constitution of identities evident in the post-graduation interviews. The main part of the chapter (section 6.5) offers an analysis of the narratives of teacher identity found in the post-graduation interviews, with a focus on two of the group members.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of the role that continued professional contact with other members of the study group may have played in supporting the continued development of the identities as confident, innovative teachers for some of the group members.

6.2. Prologue: changes in the group members' professional lives

In the two and a half years between the two sets of interviews all the group members had experienced changes in their positions as teachers; for most of them it was a promotion of some kind. Brad and Wendy were now teaching in different schools (Brad was Head of Department in his new school) and Meg had moved to another institution of higher education. Anne and Pat were still teaching in their original schools but both were now Heads of Department in these schools. Daisy was still at her original school but now had a post as Curriculum Advisor and was teaching only one of the subjects she had taught while she was studying. Emma was now working freelance in the field of adult literacy, whereas previously she had taught adult literacy classes in a large company. Meg, Emma and Kate were also undertaking doctoral research.

Each interview was guided by the following introductory questions, in order to provide the same general focus and direction (B. A. Johnstone, 2007):

- What is happening now in your practice as a teacher?
- Do you feel, two years after finishing your studies, that there is anything that you are still doing that is a result of your studies and your study group experiences?

Some of the responses surprised me. While the whole group only met occasionally we all had news of each other from each other[33]. We passed between us news about changes in each other's teaching positions, grumbles about teaching problems and other social news. On the surface we all appeared to be progressing satisfactorily with our careers.

Unexpectedly, however, two of the group members, Anne and Wendy, were no longer feeling the same confidence in themselves as teachers as they had while studying. What was it that had eroded their confidence in themselves as innovative, risk-taking teachers while the rest of the group were still able to continue developing their new teacher identities?

When reading through the transcripts of the interviews I realised that while *social* ties still bound the whole group together, within the group there were pairs who were meeting and working together on professional or study matters: Daisy and Pat were working together on a regular basis to prepare units of work for the learners they taught, Brad and Meg were collaborating on a project involving Brad's school learners and Meg's university students, and Emma and Kate were meeting weekly on the university campus to work on their research. These continued, professional pairings seemed to have their origins in a range of personal circumstances such as individuals living near each other. While the group was aware that some individuals were working with others, I doubt that anyone realised that only Anne and Wendy no longer had an ongoing professional link with anyone else in the group.

Noting this, I began to wonder if the support provided by working on professional matters with another group member for a period after the study group had stopped meeting was perhaps an important factor in enabling the continued development of innovative, risk-taking teaching identities.

[33] We were still all loosely in touch across the group: Daisy, Anne and Kate lunched together sometimes; Kate frequently had coffee with Anne or Daisy or Emma; Emma occasionally played bridge with Daisy, who often had supper with Pat or Meg; Meg and her partner socialised with Brad and his wife, and so on.

6.3. Identity

Taking a post-structuralist approach to identity (as done in Chapter 5) means viewing identities as changeable and contextualised, and their enactment as related to social and institutional distributions of power. In other words, the ability to 'be' a confident, innovative teacher depends on the social context of the moment: is 'that' identity seen to be legitimate, valuable, powerful, and so on, in 'that' context? The context is in turn shaped by the historical and institutional forces playing out in the moment; what are the circumstances which lead to certain types of identities being seen as legitimate, valuable, and powerful identities in one context, but not in another?

Danielewicz, in her work on the development of teacher identities, describes this complex situation very elegantly as she writes about how individuals want to both "be" and to "be seen" as someone or something:

> … individuals have agency, or the ability to signal to others how they wish to be seen. However, these projections always occur in social contexts. No matter how free individuals are to project whatever images of self they desire, they cannot control how others will perceive or interpret them. In all social encounters, there are many kinds of unpredictable and uncontrollable forces at work. Even though individuals are energetically constructing "presentations of selves", they are not existing in a vacuum. Others are active too. Institutions, situations, actors – all features of the social world are involved and affect not only what selves get presented, but also how they are interpreted, taken up, or transformed by our social partners. (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 61)

Bearing in mind that agency is always mediated – Wertsch and Rupert's "individuals-operating-with-mediational-means" (Wertsch & Rupert, 1993, p. 230) as discussed in Chapter 4 (p. 78) – the mediational means available, with which to signal and recognise identity are crucial to the success of identity enactment. In other words, if criteria key to an 'innovative teacher identity' are not a feature of a particular social world, the identity of 'innovative teacher' is not likely to be successfully enacted in that world.

Bartlett (2007b) adds another aspect to identity formation, that of convincing *oneself* as well as others that one is a particular kind of person. In her work on situated identities and literacy practices she discusses how identity work is done simultaneously on two levels: the interpersonal (seeming to others) and the intrapersonal (feeling in oneself), a situation "in which one works to convince others and oneself that one is the 'kind of

person' who knows how to read and write" (Bartlett, 2007b, p. 55). In this case, if there are factors at play in a social world which render an individual unsure of his or her actions as a head of department, that individual's ability to convince her or himself that she or he is a competent head of department is compromised, irrespective of whether she or he 'seems' competent to others.

It is not enough simply to enact an identity by signalling how one wishes to be seen. To ensure successfully being and being seen to be a particular kind of person the identity has to 'fit' the context, the performance has to be accepted by the other actors and has to convince the actor if it is to be successful.

6.3.1. Discourse-Identities and Affinity-Identities

Two of Gee's (2000-2001) four perspectives on identity, Discourse-Identity and Affinity-Identity (introduced in Chapter 2 and discussed in Chapter 5, p. 120), are useful for focussing on how identities are sustained and on how they may weaken without adequate support.

Discourse-Identities are determined through discourse or dialogue; they are the result of being talked about by others in particular ways. In order to 'be' a 'confident and innovative' teacher one has to be recognised and spoken about by significant others as confident and innovative, to the point where, through dialogic interaction, one comes to see oneself in this way. Affinity-Identities depend on sharing a distinctive set of experiences, which come from taking part in a distinctive set of practices (Gee, 2000-2001). Gee characterises affinity groups in educational settings as having a common set of goals and as sharing "norms, values and knowledge about what constitutes degrees of mastery in that (educational) domain" (Gee, 2008, p. 138).

During the years of working together in the study group, Discourse-Identities as confident and innovative teachers were developed through the ways in which the group members spoke to and about each other, as was discussed in Chapter 5. At the same time, through talking about and sharing their classroom experiences, group members developed Affinity-Identities: as students who were aware of and self-critical of their positions as

educated readers and users of English, and how these attitudes might impact on their teaching (as was discussed in Chapter 4), and as teachers who demonstrate that they value their learners' knowledge and expertise, by using their learners' peer assessment of each others' work as an assessment tool (as was discussed in Chapter 5). The two Identities were mutually developed: honesty and in-depth discussion was part of the group's Affinity practices, as was examining and critiquing innovative ways of teaching, and it was this talk which gave rise to the Discourse-Identities.

An important aspect of these Identities (and indeed all identities) is that they have to be enacted in order to be recognised. If one is no longer able to take part in the relevant practices or is not in regular contact with other members of the Affinity group this mirror aspect of identity formation is not happening: there is neither the enactment of the relevant practices nor the dialogic reflection of oneself as an innovative teacher with the confidence to take risks in one's teaching.

Under these circumstances it is possible that being placed in other subject positions in the professional contexts in which they are teaching might undermine the identities developed while working with the group. Some form of activity in which their group Discourse- and Affinity-Identities are recognised and accepted may need to be ongoing if individuals are to retain their identities of confident, innovative teachers.

6.4. Figured Worlds and Identity-in-practice

The concepts of figured worlds and identity-in-practice (Holland et al., 1998) are useful "frames of reference" (Dagenais et al., 2006, p. 206) for analysing the teaching identities constituted in the post-graduation interviews.

Gee defines a figured world as "a picture of a simplified world that captures what is taken to be typical or normal" (Gee, 2011, p. 70). It contains typical participants, activities, forms of language, objectives and so on, and is a simulation of what might or ought to happen under typical circumstances and gives a perspective on teaching from a particular point of view (Gee, 2011).

Figured worlds place the enactment of identity in typical, simplified worlds that are socially and culturally constructed. In the case of schools, each world is individual to the culture of the school and the people teaching in that school. Using the concept of identities-in-practice provides several points of entry when analysing how individuals author (or struggle to author) themselves as they participate in the activities that make up those worlds. These points of entry are: examining the artefacts which illuminate a figured world, investigating the role played by the positioning of the individual in his or her school, and considering the ability of the individual to imagine her or himself being a certain kind of person within a world, through 'serious play' with others.

Using figured worlds to analyse the post-graduation interviews involves identifying the artefacts – lexical items which indicate attitudes or themes which run through the interviews and "open up" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 61) the figured worlds – then analysing the artefacts as indicators of identity by asking what values are ascribed by these lexical items to the activities and practices being discussed. The artefacts build up both the figured worlds of teaching that the interviewees would like to put in place, which are based on the figured worlds of teaching built up by the study group members, and the figured worlds of the schools in which they teach. The artefacts also reveal the positionality of the speakers: their ability/inability to author themselves as confident, innovative teachers, and whether they are in a position to employ 'serious play' to make new worlds of teaching.

In the data extracts, key words (or groups of words) are in bold typeface, to indicate concepts that are the artefacts that explicate the figured worlds of teaching as developed the study group, and the figured worlds of teaching in the schools in which Wendy and Anne teach.

6.5. Data analysis

In the first part of this section (6.5.1) I discuss the evidence for continued identities as confident, innovative teachers found in the post-graduation interviews with Brad, Meg, Daisy, Pat, Emma and Kate. The second part of this section (6.5.2) offers an in-depth examination of the post-graduation interviews with Wendy and Anne, looking for possible reasons for their lack of continued confidence in themselves as innovative teachers[34].

6.5.1. Post-graduation identities – Brad, Meg, Daisy, Pat, Emma and Kate

In the analysis of Brad's post-graduation interview there is evidence that his Affinity-Identity as a group member is still very strong and continues to provide support for the implementation of new teaching approaches in his new school (Chapter 5, p. 160). He says that while he would like to meet more regularly with the other group members:

> … the point is that we worked together all that time, so all of that, that hasn't gone away, the fact that we don't meet as much any more, um, hasn't meant that I've lost that sense of group knowledge. You know, that's now part of who I am.
> (T21B/B/SRI)

He discusses his collaboration with Meg on their joint project: they both see it as an attempt to bring popular culture and their learners' social interests into the classroom. It is possible that this regular interaction with another teacher on an innovative teaching project provides the dialogic interaction to build a Discourse-Identity as well as maintaining an Affinity-Identity as a successful, innovative teacher.

Meg also mentions working on the joint project with Brad, and that she meets and talks about teaching with Daisy, saying "I see those two fairly regularly" (T25B/M/SRI). Evidence for an on-going Affinity-Identity as a group member can be seen in her need to work and exchange ideas with others. This need was one of the reasons for her move to teach in another institution:

[34] I found these two interviews searing in their honesty as Wendy and Anne discussed their feelings of frustration and failure. Such candour might not have been possible had we not been such good friends, one of the advantages of being an observant participant in the research. I feel deeply honoured that they trusted me sufficiently to be able to make these feelings publicly available to me as their contribution to my research.

> There's no community of practice, although there were people that were very nice and very engaging, in a whole lot of other ways. There wasn't a community of practice, you were kind of working on your own, ah, you don't really get challenged. (T25A/M/SRI)

The desire to be part of a community which debated ideas critically, as had happened in the group, was important to her: "But, ja, but ultimately, (…) um (…) ja, it's nice to have people around that you can bounce ideas off, and that can challenge you, and that you challenge" (T25A/M/SRI), as was the need to continue developing her teaching: "I just didn't see the point in spending the next, ten years of my life just doing the same course, every semester" (T25A/M/SRI). The agency that stems from this combination of Affinity- and Discourse-Identities possibly reinforced her ability to move on from a situation in which she felt undervalued: "I felt that if I stayed in that environment for much longer, I wouldn't feel my work, (.) my area of work is valuable" (T25A/M/SRI). Spending too long without being part of a community might threaten her Affinity-Identity as a lecturer involved in developing innovative approaches to teaching.

In Daisy's post-graduation interview there is evidence that her identity as an innovative teacher is still active in all aspects of her teaching situation. She has a new post as the staff member in charge of co-ordinating the implementation of a new curriculum in her school, as well as still teaching English. Tan and Barton say that "identities-in-practice are both fluid and multiple in nature" (Tan & Barton, 2008, p. 68): this fluidity and multiplicity can be seen as Daisy moves between identities as 'an English teacher' and 'a curriculum advisor', where her role is to help her colleagues to adjust to "working within learning areas, and producing, learner portfolios, to specifications laid down, and bring in new approaches to assessment" (T17Ac/D/SRI). As an English teacher she has the confidence to introduce a new approach to teaching African Literature (an approach she 'borrows' from Wendy) and feels that "every year I'm fine-tuning my procedures, if you want to call it that" and that her knowledge and practice are still growing; "I feel I'm in, on that level I'm learning all the time" (T17B/D/SRI).

But there are aspects of her new identity as curriculum advisor which she finds problematic. As Dagenais et al. point out "Institutional practices are imbued with

meanings that collectively figure actors in particular positions in the social structure" (Dagenais et al., 2006, p. 214). In her school Daisy has in the past been figured as Daisy-the-English-teacher not Daisy-the-curriculum-expert, and she is worried her colleagues would see her as being "bossy, or prescriptive, or, superior" (T17B/D/SRI) if she were now to start telling them what to do. She does not doubt her ability as a curriculum advisor but is keenly aware of the social ramifications of enacting her new identity too forcefully with her colleagues. While political constraints limit her ability to fully enact her Daisy-the-curriculum-expert identity, she demonstrates agency by finding an alternative solution; she invites "outsiders" to come and do the talking:

> So one of the things that I've found easier, is to call in somebody else. In giving little workshops, and, (..) and things. So it doesn't always seem as if I'm telling them what to do. [….] Um, when I see some of these outsiders come and do their, little workshops, I know that I could have done, the same. [….] but it's probably better politically that I don't. [….] They will see it as though I know everything
> (T17B/D/SRI)

At the same time she practices and works at establishing her new identity by taking the opportunity to 'be the expert' when talking one-to-one with a mathematics teacher colleague:

> She (*the colleague*) said but how am I going to have these, these writing tasks, in this portfolio. Well surely, what can one write! So I said well, I don't know, what about for example, er, even if you just said you know, well, explain this theorem in words. And I said and all it is is one tiny little paragraph, I said, but if you read that paragraph in two ticks you'll know whether the child, is talking rubbish or not and, it won't be a big deal to mark and there is a little writing task.
> (T17B/D/SRI)

Her resourceful reactions to these varying situations are a result of what Holland et al. (1998) describe as becoming sensitised to

> … a set of culturally devised games or contexts of action like our figured worlds, where there are general, dispositional motives and actors and ways of faring well and faring poorly. Agency lies in the improvisations that people create in response to particular situations, mediated by these senses and sensitivities. (Holland et al., 1998, p. 279)

Daisy does not mention in the interview having discussions or getting any advice on these issues from Pat, but evidence of mutual advice-giving sessions, one of the distinctive practices of the study group, comes from Pat's post-graduation interview, where she mentions the support that, as a new HoD, she gets from Daisy when discussing problems

such as ways of giving Pat's colleagues critical feedback on the setting of examination papers. So it is quite possible that the agency to develop solutions to Daisy-the-curriculum-expert's problems is a result of considering them with Pat at some point as they worked together.

Pat's interview includes stories of numerous activities such as preparing examinations and units of work together, and sharing ideas and materials, which would provide her and Daisy with opportunities to reinforce their Affinity-Identities and at the same time build Discourse-Identities as innovative teachers. That Pat has developed this type of Discourse-Identity is indicated by two anecdotes about being invited to present papers at teaching conferences, and how she felt affirmed when experienced teachers asked her for copies of her paper, and for more information on how to use her teaching methods in their classrooms.

All the above pairings occur on a professional level, with group members meeting to work together as educators. The remaining pair of Emma and Kate differs in that they continued to meet as an academic partnership, not a teaching partnership. They had both continued to study and met weekly for several years, working on their research in adjoining carrels in the university's School of Humanities Post-Graduate Research Centre.

Even though their research topics were in entirely different areas, they both found the partnership supportive on multiple levels. On a personal level Emma recalls that she often felt guilty about the amount of time that she spent closeted away from her husband and very young daughter because of her studies: "It helped … for my husband to realize that I had a study partner who was going through the same, taking as long, being away from her husband as well" (Email 14/07/2013). Kate especially valued the way Emma drove her to "plod on" (Research Journal 4, p. 40) and continue writing during the difficult months after the death of her first supervisor.

As a student, Emma recalls the level of trust as being critical to the relationship:

> The fact that I depended on Kate, to keep me going … I don't think it was that we were mature students, or anything like that. I think it was because we had already established who and what we were to each other, in the Masters. So when we worked together after it, a real trust was already well established. I felt completely ok with revealing my research inadequacies to Kate – specifically as a researcher.
> (Email 14/07/2013)

The Affinity-Identities they had established during the Masters as critical but trust-worthy study-partners were still in place:

> To complete the degree you have to answer to yourself, then to your supervisor, your family, the department, your funder, but this was different. Perhaps more binding, because you're both in the same place and no-one could understand the difficulties like your study partner. I could make excuses to my supervisor – and everyone else, including even my husband – but I couldn't make excuses to Kate, because she'd see right through them.
> (Email 14/07/2013)

Kate recorded in her research journal the pleasure of being able to "throw around research problems" (Research Journal 3, p. 41), such as how to lay out her data for description, with another keen, interested mind:

> Even though her data is so different, her input helps. Perhaps it's just having someone who really, really understands the importance of getting it right that makes all the difference.
> (Research Journal 3, p. 59)

6.5.2. Post-graduation identities: Wendy – A "terrible" teacher

In the time between the two interviews Wendy had moved to a new school where there were only two other teachers in the English department, both of whom had worked together for several years. In spite of the fact that Wendy was recruited to the new school because of her Masters degree in English Education (and presumably because of the new approaches that she had learned and would bring with her) her new ideas and approaches appear not to be valued by her colleagues at the new school.

Wendy – Part 1: A teacher in crisis

As the interview opens Wendy responds to the question of whether the experience of studying with others in a group still has any effect on her teaching practice, with an emotional statement in which she identifies herself as a teacher in crisis. There is a recursive aspect to the thoughts she expresses: she moves back and forth between the kind of teacher she remembers being in the past and the kind of teacher she feels she is

now, as she reflects on what made her able to be "an innovative teacher" then and what it is that causes her to feel that she is "a terrible teacher" now.

This first narrative provides the outlines of the two contrasting figured worlds: Wendy's personal figured world of good teaching, which is closely connected to being a member of the study group, and the figured world of her school, which is revealed in the attitudes and teaching approaches of her colleagues. The details of these worlds become apparent as the artefacts are tracked across the interview.

Wendy: A terrible teacher – *Extract 1, Section 1*

(T16A/W/SRI)

		Conversation	**Identity**
1	W	Well, .hh I, the one thing, and and er actually, funnily enough you being here today has, has made it very clear to me. At the moment I **feel, terrible**, I feel like **a terrible teacher**.	(Present) Teacher identity: **a terrible teacher** – a teacher of very bad quality Feels **terrible** – her emotional state
2		And, um, what I found is that when I look back now, when **we were** t, when **we were working** in our study group, probably because of the interest and obviously because of the course but I think it largely because of the group of people **we were working with**,	(Past) Reason for being innovative teacher: working with others – **we were working with** – the combined effects of the group and the course
3		I was very **innovative**, as a teacher.	(Past) Teacher identity : **innovative** teacher – one who brings in new ideas
4		And even though I was **very busy**, I still **found** the time and **found** the **energy** to **create exciting** lessons and to think of **exciting ideas** and **to run** with them.	(Past) Effect of group: energising, provided agency
5		And now I feel very much **out on a limb**.	(Present) Statement of self: **out on a limb** – isolated, has reached a dead end.

6		And, and I actually **long, for** the kind of, um, (..) kind of, the, little, almost like the **think tank**, that we had. Because, when, spending that time together meant that we, **we exchanged ideas**, whether we did it, (.) um, you know, knowingly, sort of, knowing that, well, **we are**, um, **exchanging lessons** here, or whether **we** just simply by, **by talking about** certain things **ideas sprang up**, I don't know,	(Past) Effect of group: support, source of ideas and energy **long for** – emotional reaction **think tank** – group who work to produce new ideas **exchange** – give and take, both ideas and lessons **ideas** – importance of new thinking **sprang up** – energy
7		but, I **haven't found** the same thing again.	(Present) Statement of self: **haven't found** – lack of agency
8		And I find, I've found that working with my colleagues very, I've found that **very frustrating**. Because I **find** them, **limiting**, I **find** them, um, **staid**,	(Present) Effect of working with colleagues: **frustrating** – feeling annoyed, impatient, because prevented from achieving something[35], **limiting** – preventing someone from developing or improving[36] **staid** – serious, boring[37]
9		and as a result I've **sunk** into **some kind of (.) funk**.	(Present) Effect of working with colleagues: **sunk** – movement down **funk** – avoiding dealing with a situation because of not knowing what to do[38]
10		And, um, now I **really miss it** I think it's a combination of things, I can't just say it's (…)	(Present) Statement of self: lacks energy source
11		I think I'm also just a bit **burnt out**.	(Present) Statement of self: **burnt out** – energy has been consumed

Wendy does not actually answer the question about what she has brought forward in her practice at all. She focuses on the fact that Kate's presence has brought about a moment

[35] Frustrating: Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (Rundell and Fox, 2007, p. 605)
[36] Limiting: Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (Rundell and Fox, 2007, p. 876)
[37] Staid: Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (Rundell and Fox, 2007, p. 1451)
[38] Funk: Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (Rundell and Fox, 2007, p. 610)

of insight: she is no longer the same kind of teacher that she was when working in the study group, she now feels "like a **terrible teacher**".

Exactly what being "a **terrible** teacher" is for Wendy is unstated; it is realised only through comparison with the kind of teacher she remembers being while she was studying and working with the group: "I was **innovative**, as a teacher".

Remembering the past

Wendy moves immediately from her statement of how she sees herself at that moment (block 1, p. 179) to when she was still part of the group (block 2, p. 179), positioning group membership as the source of the agency which made her able to successfully identify herself as an innovative teacher.

An Affinity-Identity

As she looks back at studying in the group Wendy immediately takes on an Affinity-Identity as a member of the study group, signalled by her repeated use of the inclusive first person plural form "**we**". Twice in block 2 (p. 179) she says "**we were working**" to describe her studies, rather than the exclusive first person singular 'I was working'. She uses this form again in block 6 (p. 180) where she starts with an emotional first person singular "I actually **long, for**" and changes directly to "**we**": "**we exchanged ideas**" and "**we** .. **by talking about** certain things **ideas sprang up**". When, further on in the interview, she speaks about her/the group's activities, she again uses "**we**" rather than "I": "**we were there discussing it**", "**we don't meet**" and "**we would meet regularly**" (T16B/W/SRI).

This inclusive "**we**" emphasises her Affinity-Identity as an innovative group member over her identity as an innovative individual. This identity is strikingly realised through examining the topic of the conversation in blocks 1 to 3 (p. 179). The topic is how *she* sees herself as a teacher: "I feel **terrible**" (block 1) and "I was very **innovative**" (block 3), so the subjects of the subordinate clauses in block 2 should also be "I" not "**we**". The fact that this is not so suggests that her Affinity-Identity is closely connected to her

ability to be "**innovative**", and that working with others is an important part of being "**innovative**".

Co-operative practices – developing and sharing ideas

The "set of distinctive practices" (Gee, 2000-2001, p. 105) that Wendy shared with the rest of the group, which are key to her Affinity-Identity as an innovative teacher, can be established by identifying the artefacts in the data which relate to the group's activities. Wendy connects innovative teaching to collaborative work, both on their studies and teaching practices, and the development and sharing of ideas.

Being innovative involves developing and "using new ideas or methods"[39]; working with others in the study group was fundamental to the development of such ideas for her teaching. This can be seen in the way she refers to the study group as a "**think tank**" (block 6, p. 180) – a business metaphor for putting people together "to produce new ideas"[40] – for "**exchanging**" and "**talking about**" ideas and lessons. Interestingly, in her first round interview she uses a similar metaphor, referring to the group as "**a forum**" – a place "where people can express their ideas and opinions"[41] – where group members' ideas could "**be aired**" so that people could "**consider them**", the discussion resulting in "feeling that your **ideas are not stupid**" (T7A/W/I).

These artefacts of "**think tank**" and "**forum**" establish collaboratively working with ideas as a central theme running through Wendy's figured world of teaching. Further on in the post-graduation interview she says of the group: "we were so **hungry for ideas**, and we were so **busy thinking, about ideas**, and **swopping ideas**" (T16B/W/SRI). Similarly, in her pre-graduation interview she says "**we were all geared towards finding different practices** of teaching" and "people were **constantly swopping ideas** about teaching, and **talking about, what, um, they were doing in their classrooms**" (T7A/W/I).

[39] Innovative: Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (Rundell and Fox, 2007, p. 779)
[40] Think tank: Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (Rundell and Fox, 2007, p. 1556)
[41] Forum: Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (Rundell and Fox, 2007, p. 591)

The support that comes from sharing the development and implementation of ideas is an important figuring in Wendy's identity as an innovative teacher.

Energy, movement and excitement

Further significant artefacts are the effects of working with others on new ideas: such collaborative work energises and excites her, and moves her teaching forward. In block 4 (p. 179) Wendy uses language that is charged with energy: because of the group she has the energy to "**create exciting**" lessons, think of "**exciting ideas**", then "**run** with them", in block 6 (p. 180)ideas "**sprang up**" because of the group interaction.

There are similar artefacts of collaborative energy in her first round interview:

> Because there's all the **bouncing** of ideas and you, you get so much more out of it, (….) **working** through the text together, um, the bits that you'd just kind of skimmed over initially, suddenly were, like **lifted from the page**, and people made comments and you **thought "oh!"**. You hadn't noticed that before, and um, we all noticed different things, in the text. (T7B/W/I)

In both interviews there is an impression of energetic movement, forwards and upwards: running, springing, bouncing and lifting, and of excitement, "**oh!**". This sense of collaborative endeavour being a facilitator of change, figured as rising movement, appears again later in the post-graduation interview:

> … the thing is, is that, when people ask you (*to share your ideas and approaches*) they **validate** you. And, they might not use all of it, but they're actually saying to you, gee we like that, that's a good idea, ooh I can use that idea, so, um, (.) they (.) **motivate** you (..) **to doing** (.) **higher and better stuff**.
> (T16B/W/SRI)

Agency through cooperative endeavour

These artefacts of Wendy's figured world nest within each other: co-operative endeavour (symbolic of the study group members working together), when developing and sharing ideas, which generates energy and enthusiasm and promotes agency; the ability and desire to continue developing her skills as a teacher. The artefacts in this figured world mediate the constitution of her identity as an "**innovative teacher**".

However mediational means "are culturally, historically, and institutionally situated" (Wertsch & Rupert, 1993, p. 230). These mediational tools are closely connected to being a member of the study group. When she was no longer meeting with the study group and was teaching in a new school she found herself in a different teaching space, informed by a different cultural model, in which the development of new teaching ideas was not a valued cultural practice. In this new figured world of teaching she no longer had available to her the artefacts for constituting a 'confident, innovative teacher' identity constitution.

Considering the present

The artefacts that can be identified as Wendy talks about her current situation and interactions with her work colleagues stand in stark contrast to the artefacts in evidence when she talks about working in the group. Having set herself *within* the study group in block 2 (p. 179), her first comment on her status with her current colleagues places her *outside* their 'group': "And now I feel very much **out on a limb**" (block 5, p. 179), without the support derived from an insider, Affinity-Identity. As a result, instead of drawing inspiration for development from her colleagues, she finds them "**frustrating**", she is "prevent(ed) from achieving"[42] innovative teaching because they do not like her methods; and "**limiting**"; their attitudes "prevent (her) from developing and improving"[43] her teaching (block 8, p. 180). Unlike the study group they are not a source of energy and excitement: they are "**staid**" (block 8, p. 180), she finds them "boring"[44] so their relationship does not generate the excitement necessary to move her teaching forward. As a result she is "**burnt out**" (block 11, p. 180), "lacking energy"[45], her only movement is down, she has "**sunk** into some kind of funk" (block 9, p. 180).

Working with her colleagues does not stimulate development in her teaching, nor does it generate excitement and energy. As a result she lacks agency to move her teaching forward and upwards.

[42] Frustrating: Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (Rundell and Fox, 2007, p. 605)
[43] Limiting: Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (Rundell and Fox, 2007, p. 876)
[44] Staid: Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (Rundell and Fox, 2007, p. 1451)
[45] Burnt out: Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (Rundell and Fox, 2007, p. 193)

Wendy – Part 2: Working with her colleagues

Section 2 follows on directly from section 1, as I ask Wendy to expand on what she means by her colleagues being "limiting". Her reply opens with a statement that goes to the heart of the difference between the two figured worlds: her colleagues do not value ideas and new approaches in the same way that the study group did. The two figured worlds are informed by different cultural models, which can be seen through a comparison of the artefacts which embody 'good teaching'.

Wendy's figured world, informed by the study group's cultural model of good teaching, can be seen in the 'negative'; by what her colleagues do not like about her approaches or in what they want her to do.

Wendy: Working with her colleagues – *Extract 1, Section 2*

(T16A/W/SRI)

		Conversation	Artefacts of teaching
12	K	When you say you've found them limiting, working with colleagues, what do you mean by limiting?	
13	W	That they don't have the same **ideas** that we had in the group, um, they're **not prepared to try things,** they're not prepared to, to, **go through a process**.	Wendy: **try things** – teaching as learning through trying different approaches, intellectual curiosity **go through** – teaching as movement forward.
14		They, they **simply** see, well, ok, this is what we've got to do, ah, we've go to **teach** the **basics**, we've got to **teach** the **fundamentals**, which you do have to do but you can **extend** it.	Colleagues: **simply**, **basics**, **fundamentals** – teaching as straight forward, transmitting a set of competencies[46]

[46] I am using the term 'competencies' to mean basic skills necessary to be able to competently perform a classroom task in order to pass an examination, not 'higher skills' which can be usefully applied in the world beyond school. In his interview Brad refers to the acquisition of 'competencies' as "effective schooling" and the acquisition of 'skills' as "effective education" (T21B/B/SRI).

			Wendy: **extend** – teaching as moving further
15		And, they never really seem to **step out** of what they are comfortable with they never want to **experiment**, they never seem to want to, they never want to **take the risk**, of doing something that might not work out, but **do it** just **for the hell of it** anyway because it's something else, um, and everything seems to be **a crisis** with them.	Wendy: **step out** – teaching as movement **experiment**, **take the risk**, **do it for the hell of it** – teaching as learning, moving unto the unknown Colleagues: **a crisis** – her approach to teaching seen as "dangerous situation where one could fail"[47].
16		Um, (.) you know, it's like, we, we did this, you know my African literature project you know I did. I did it this year, and er, (.) the, the one, well there was only the two of us working together because there are only two classes.	Example of new idea/approach to teaching
17		But, they, she, did not **like** the assignment at all.	The study group and her previous school all **liked** her work
18		And it was a very **open-ended assignment**, and it **asked them to think a lot**, you know they're also **required to do readings** that, yes, are **possibly above them**, but it's certainly, it's certainly not going to hurt them to **give it a go**, and at the end of the day, they, they did very well. They wrote very good literature essays.	Wendy: **open-ended** – teaching as having no set limits **above them** – learning as moving upwards **give it a go** – learning as risk-taking, extending oneself into the unknown
19		But it has, it's, it **cast a damper**, on our relationship, because she was not happy with the process at all.	**Cast a damper** – closed down warmth/energy in relationship
20	K	Er, she wasn't happy with th (.) wi (.) what process?	

[47] Crisis: Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (Rundell and Fox, 2007, p. 350)

21	W	Ah, with (.) the way in which **we did** it. The, um, that **we went through** this project by, **reading** stuff that possibly is **first year varsity material**.	Wendy: **went through** – teaching as movement, through and up, reading 'higher' material
22		Even though it was **guided** it was, it was **elevated**.	Wendy: **guided** – teaching as movement, controlling the risk **Elevated** – teaching as moving upwards
23		And she kept saying she does have the weaker class, she kept saying no, she feels this is, **beyond them**, it's **too hard**, um,	Colleagues: **beyond them** – teaching as static **too hard** – learning as having limits.
24		and, um she never really **bought into** the whole thing.	Colleagues: **never bought into** – not prepared to invest herself/time/energy
25		Um (.) and it was one, it's **one section of the year**, it's not really going to be, (..) um, (.) it's not something that they're going to pass or fail on.	Wendy: **one section of the year** – controlled risk
26		But it was a **different approach**, and, and she wasn't prepared to do that.	Colleagues: **different approach** – stay within comfort zone
27		They like to teach in **structured ways.** They like to teach, um, **character, theme, plot**, er, **contextual**, you know that is how they like to teach.	Colleagues: **structured ways –** approach is pre-set, no experimenting
28		They don't really want to **try any other kind of approaches**.	Colleagues: **try any other kind of approaches** – stay within comfort zone
29		And I find that very **frustrating**.	Wendy: **frustrating** – unable to achieve results by colleague's reluctance
30		You know she, she had **some lovely ideas** too, and um, I've certainly **given them a bash**.	Wendy: **lovely ideas** – accepts colleague's ideas

			given them a bash – comfortable with risk-taking
31		I haven't liked all of them, but I've certainly **tried them out**. Um, (.) and (..) but I, I feel that I can.	Wendy: **tried them out** – able to use colleagues ideas
32		I've **tried to learn from her** I just, I'm not really sure that, that, the (.) that it's reciprocal.	Wendy: **tried to learn** – teaching as learning

The artefacts that illustrate her colleagues' figured world of teaching appear first in block 14 (p. 185) and later in block 27 (p. 187). The cultural model of this figured world draws on the 'transmission metaphor' of teaching (Sfard, 1998) and conceptualises teaching as a **simple**, 'known' activity: the passing on of "**basic**", "**fundamental**" (block 14, p. 185) 'competencies' which the teacher knows and understands, such as how to identify "**character**, **theme** and **plot**" (block 27, p. 187). Wendy calls this transmission style of teaching "**structured**" (block 27): the method is pre-set, the teacher knows what the expected learning outcome should be. Elsewhere in the interview she says that her colleagues' teaching methods have "quite a lot of structure", citing their use of "the SIFT method"[48] (T16A/W/SRI) of teaching poetry as an example.

This cultural model appears again a few sentences further on in the interview when Wendy says that her colleagues have:

> **a very definite way to teach**. And you **don't deviate** from it. You know, you **get** your objective and you **get** your aim and you, that's how you do it. You **teach** the conflict, and, you **do** the scaffolding, and there's no such thing as well let's **try it out** this way. Let's **throw this at them** and **see how they cope**, and there's, there's nothing like that, at all. There's no, I don't really see a **challenge**. (..) And, and (..) I find it, I find it **unstimulating**. (T16A/W/SRI)

It is a model of "**teaching**" in which information is transmitted so that the learners can "**get**" or "be given"[49] knowledge, rather than organising information to facilitate 'constructing' understanding. The support or "scaffolding" that the teachers "**do**" is a

[48] The SIFT approach to analysing poetry or literature involves following a set of steps for identifying Symbols, Images, Figures of Speech, and Tone and Theme.
[49] Get: Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (Rundell and Fox, 2007, p. 627)

known system; they do not "**experiment**" (block 15, p. 186) with teaching approaches and so do not learn alongside their learners.

Wendy: teaching as learning

The cultural model of teaching that her colleagues draw on is in direct contrast to Wendy's figured world, which is based on a cultural model of teaching in which ongoing learning, about one's subject and oneself as a teacher, lies at the heart of good teaching. An artefact which illustrates this is Wendy's use of the verb "**try**". Trying different ideas as part of the process of developing new approaches to teaching was one of the distinctive practices of the affinity group (as discussed on p. 160). For Wendy "**trying**", "finding out if something is .. suitable (and) effective"[50], is an important part of her practice as an innovative teacher, as it is only through experimenting that approaches can be refined and improved. But it is not so for her colleagues, they are "**not prepared to try things**" (block 13, p. 185) or "**to try any other kind of approaches**" (block 28, p. 187), there is "no such thing as well let's **try it out** this way" (data extract p. 188).

She gives an example of trying a different approach, an African literature project, which she calls "**open-ended**" as the learning objective was not for the learners to simply "**get**" information about African literature text but to become aware of and assess their own reactions to reading this literature[51]. The process of structuring learning opportunities that will "**guide**" (block 22, p. 187) and facilitate reading and thinking about "**elevated**" (block 22) materials is stimulating for her as a teacher, by "**throw(ing) this at them**" (data extract p. 188) and "**see(ing) how they cope**" (data extract p. 188) she challenges both them and herself; she learns what works and what could be done better next time. Challenging oneself as a teacher, "**stepping out**" of one's comfort zone (block 15, p. 186) by developing and implementing new approaches to teaching, was a central practice

[50] Try: Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (Rundell and Fox, 2007, p. 1608)

[51] Wendy had developed the project as part of her research for her Masters degree. In her proposal presentation she says "I see a lot of, attitude (amongst learners), that, Africa has nothing to offer us, Africa is inferior and I actually wanted to turn that on its side" and that she wanted her learners to "interrogate their own perceptions of Africa" (T2A/CG/WP) by examining African literature through a post-colonial lens.

of the study group – it was one of the reasons why they were all studying – and a defining practice of the group as an affinity group.

A further artefact of teaching as learning is Wendy's use of the inclusive "**we**" (block 21, p. 187) as she talks about the project: she says "the way **we did** it … that **we went through** this project by **reading** stuff", including herself in the learning process.

Result of the conflict between the approaches

There are a number of artefacts which indicate the result of the conflict between the two approaches to teaching. Firstly, the fact that her colleague did not like the assignment (blocks 17, 19, p. 186) "**cast a damper**" on their relationship (block 19), closing down the warmth and energy flow between them. The energy generated when collaborating with others is an important source of agency for Wendy. Elsewhere in the interview she says of her relationship with her colleagues:

> I think I'm getting tired ... but I'm not being stimulated and, and before when I was tired, I kept going because I felt (….) stimulated, I was motivated.
> (T16B/W/SRI)

Her sense that she is "**sinking**" (block 9, p. 180) (as opposed to the rising movement produced when working with the group) and "**burnt out**" (block 11, p. 180) is a result of this lack of energy and stimulation.

Another artefact indicating her struggle for identity can be seen when she talks about her learners and tests which are set by her colleagues:

> But I know that they're ( ) than, than (…) the third class, but it seems that (..) the way in which tests are set, (..) I'm **not teaching them for those tests**, ja. That's, that's my feeling. And, and I'm trying very hard to understand what (*her colleague)* **is trying** to, what (*her colleague)* **is doing** so that I can **teach them in the same way** so they can at least **pass the damn test**. But um, (…) ja, well, that's an ongoing battle. (.) You know I, I (….) so, ja, there's a whole series of **frustrations** there.
> (T16A/W/SRI)

This is the first time in the interview that she talks about herself as "**teaching**". Up until this point she has spoken of her colleagues' work as "teaching" (for example blocks 14, 27, pp. 185, 187). In contrast when she speaks about her own work she says that she

"**went through**" a project (block 21, p. 187) and the project "**asked**" (block 18, p. 186) her learners to think and it "**required**" them to read (block 18). In the above data extract she is 'teaching to the test': structuring the lessons to give her learners the knowledge they need to pass a test, rather than structuring the lessons to encourage them to think, developing skills rather than giving information. It is interesting that she starts to say she is trying to understand what her colleague "**is trying to**", then she reformulates her sentence, changing it to "**what** (*she*) **is doing**". Again, her colleague is not 'trying' anything out because she knows what she is 'doing'.

The final artefact showing the effect of the mismatch between the two cultural models of teaching is Wendy's feeling of frustration: in block 8 (p. 180) and block 29 (p. 187) she repeats that she finds her colleagues "very **frustrating**", which culminates in the above extract with "there's a whole series of **frustrations** there". While the *Macmillan English Dictionary* (Rundell & Fox, 2007, p. 605) defines 'to frustrate' as "to prevent someone from achieving something", *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (Onions, 1972, p. 757) defines it as "to render ineffectual". The first definition describes the effect of the mismatch on her teaching, the second describes the effect on how she sees herself.

The struggle to maintain Discourse- and Affinity-Identities

Bartlett claims that "cultural models shape expectations of how things work and they guide situated meaning-making in practice" (Bartlett, 2001, p. 22). Wendy's Affinity-Identity as an innovative teacher is based on a cultural model of support which was the result of discussing, developing and sharing innovative teaching approaches, whereas her colleagues' cultural model of teaching is based on a clearly defined, "structured" approach in which they teach information so that tests can be passed. The meaning-making around 'good teaching practice' in her current school creates a Discourse-Identity of 'a good teacher' that excludes Wendy. Without the support stemming from a Discourse-Identity of expertise, she is struggling to see herself as an innovative guide to the construction of knowledge. Finding herself 'teaching to the test', a practice contrary to the practices of her innovative affinity group, contributes to her view of herself as "**a terrible teacher**" (block 1, p. 179).

Wendy is aware that her lack of agency to be "**innovative**" is due to no longer meeting and sharing her teaching with other group members. Elsewhere in the interview she says "I find (.) I do miss the group. Very much" (T16A/W/SRI) and:

> And you know, I think, (..) I think having the group's validation, the fact that we were there discussing it as a group, made me feel that I was right. So I could actually go in, and, maybe that's the difference between now and when I was at (*her previous school*), I could go in and say no, this is why and this is, this is why we're doing it and kind of feel like I had the support from some area, even if, the people that I was facing, that I actually taught with, weren't entirely sure, about what I was doing. Now at, at (*her current school*), now that I've moved, (.) um, and of course **because we don't meet (.) as a group any longer**, um, **I don't have that confidence**. (..) I don't feel like I have that **support** necessarily. (T16A/W/SRI)

Wendy's identity as a confident, innovative teacher, developed as a Discourse-Identity through having "the group's validation" (as was demonstrated in her interaction with Brad in Chapter 5 p. 145) which gave her the confidence to argue for innovative teaching methods, has been eroded. This is partly because she no longer meets with her affinity group and so does not have the dialogic reflection of this identity coming from any of the group members, and partly because the innovative approaches to teaching that she wants to implement do not 'fit' the figured world of good teaching in her current school.

6.5.3. Post-graduation interview: Anne – A fractured sense of self

While Wendy's inability to retain her identity as an innovative teacher is partly a result of lack of 'fit' in her new school, Anne is still teaching in the same school: her struggle to maintain her identity as a confident, innovative teacher is a result of a different set of pressures.

In Anne's post-graduation interview she moves back and forth between narratives of optimism in which she talks about striving for focussed, innovative teaching, and narratives of stress, struggle, pressure and exhaustion.

The table below shows the interwoven pattern of the narrative telling. Where a narrative of stress opens with '***but***' this indicates occasions when Anne herself uses the conjunction as she switches from a narrative of optimism to one of stress.

Anne: Mapping out Narratives of Optimism and Stress

	Narratives of optimism		Narratives of stress
1a	The power of **talk** as **a tool for learning**	1b	***But*** she seldom sits and **talks** with colleagues. Her own school's ethos: the focus is on **running around** over bureaucratic issues, not **thoughtful** teaching
2a	**Planning** together with other teachers, which needs **time** and **focus (mental energy)**	2b	***But*** **the system** doesn't make it easy: cluster meetings are **time consuming**, **drain on energy**, as the focus is on sorting out minor problems rather than discussing 'real' topics
3a	Her belief in **co-operative learning**, which needs **time** and **thought**ful **planning**	3b	***But*** it hasn't been a better year, have been problems in implementing and moderating portfolios for assessment, which are **time consuming**
		4b	Constant **change** in her own school, engenders a **fractured sense of reality**
5a	On committee investigating progressive educational methods, have stimulated **intellectual engagement**: how to promote genuine mental development and thinking in classrooms. Need to cover less work but do more thinking		
6a	**Ideas**: book clubs and box books as a ways of encouraging **reading** and **talking** about books in the classroom	6b	***But*** **bureaucracy** hinders her, changes have been made to the curriculum statements, **draining** and a **waste of time**
7a	Thank you cards from Matric learners who remember her creative teaching	7b	***But*** time and brain feel **fractured**, no **time** or **energy** for creativity, last years have been **draining**
		8b	**System's** focus is on **bureaucratic issues** not real support for teaching, official support

			sessions **boring** and a **waste of time**
9a	Lists achievements: new approach to teaching writing, more reading done, testing more meaningful, produced overview scheme of work (*orderly, organised, planned, focussed*) Challenge – to cover everything and still think more while covering less ground		
10a	Developing marking rubrics to **save time**	10b	Feels **drained**, **bureaucracy undermines** her **creativity** and **confidence**, her **time/brain is fractured**
		11b	Dealing with **bureaucratic issues time consuming**: she holds a planning session then official materials are revised, they need to plan again

Anne – Part 1: Narratives of optimism – Talking, thinking and planning

The interview opens with Kate asking Anne how much of the "studying in a group" experience is still with her, and if there is anything that she is doing which is a result of that experience.

Anne: The Power of Talk – *Narratives 1a and 1b*

(T19A/A/SRI)

		Conversation	**Artefacts and identity**
1	A	I think I've been totally, um, what is with me is a, is a great belief, in the **power** of **conversation**, **to talk**, of **discussion** on a topic, **to talk** your **way into an understanding**. Um, which helps with retention. Um, so I think I do, because I've **talked about** articles, with other people, I think I have, a better memory of them	Artefact – **conversation**, **talk**, **discussion**, **way into an understanding**, talk as a tool for learning ID – An individual for whom learning is a social activity, learning is moving forward. Talk is a tool for

		than things I just read on my own.	accomplishing this movement.
2	K A K A K	When you say talking about articles, you mean when we were studying, or since then? When we were studying. Right. We haven't met that much since then. Do you ever t, though, talk to anybody else?	
3	A	Um, but at school, unfortunately, the, the **ethos** is, **run around**, **doing** things, **collecting papers**, **creating policies**, **putting policies** in the right places, **filing**, **collecting marks**,	Artefacts that constitute the figured world of teaching in her school – administrative activities.
4		there isn't a sufficient emphasis on, **really thoughtful teaching**. And I, I think **I'm different**, maybe, from many teachers, I'm certainly from, the teachers in my department. Very few of them, ever really want to sit and **talk methodology**. They might say, I'm not sure how to introduce this poem. Or do you think this will work or that will work? There's a bit of that sort of talking, **but** we seldom, with other people I seldom sit and **talk ideas**, the way we have in the group. And I think it's because, maybe there are not enough people around, who like **talking ideas**.	Artefacts that constitute her personal figured world of teaching – **thoughtful teaching**, meta-thinking about her practice – **talk methodology**, talk about the theory of teaching, – **talk ideas**, talk about innovative ways of teaching. ID – teacher striving for a meta-understanding of her practice

Anne's reply (narratives 1a and 1b) opens with a statement about what is still with her from the studying/learning aspect of the "studying in a group" experience, rather than what she is still doing in her practice as a result of the experience. In block 1 (p. 194) she speaks about "the power of … **talk**" and using talk "**to talk** your **way** into an understanding", establishing an artefact of talk as a tool that is central to the activity of learning. This artefact, which can be tracked across the interview, sets up 'talk as a tool' as one of the central artefacts of her personal figured world of learning and teaching, and demonstrates how her figured world is closely linked to that of the study group.

The importance of talk

The dialogic and dialectic nature of the "**talk**" is intensified by being repeated and grouped with other 'talk' nouns: "**conversation**", private and informal talk[52], and "**discussion**", a more formal concept, the process of talking about something important[53]. Both of these nouns imply the contributions of other participants; this is dialogic talk, a multi-voiced exchange of ideas, not monologic one voice 'talking to' another. The strength and vigour of 'talk as a learning tool' is accentuated by her use of the noun "**power**": "the ability to influence or control what people do or think"[54]. Through the dialectic give and take of a conversation/discussion the participants investigate and mutually move towards a better understanding of their subject.

The sense of talk as a *tool* for learning is underscored by the construction of the sentence: she has a great belief in the power of talk/conversation/discussion when used (as tools) "**to talk** your **way** into an **understanding**". The use of "**way into**" creates an impression that for Anne learning is moving forward, a journey in which the talk operates to construct a road, path or track[55] which leads into understanding. This links to the cognitive metaphor, *a conversation is a journey*, (which arises from phrases such as 'I was coming to that', 'Go back to what you were saying' and 'We arrived at a conclusion'[56]) supporting the impression that for Anne, like Wendy, learning is moving forward, making progress.

The emphasis placed on talk as a tool for learning indicates an identity built on the belief that learning is a social activity.

While Anne's opening statement clearly relates to her experience of learning as a student in the study group, when asked if she "talks to anybody else" (block 2, p. 195) she conflates the study experience with her professional practice, moving seamlessly from

[52] Conversation: Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (Rundell and Fox, 2007, p. 324)
[53] Discussion: Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (Rundell and Fox, 2007, p. 420)
[54] Power: Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (Rundell and Fox, 2007, p. 1160)
[55] Way: Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (Rundell and Fox, 2007, p. 1685)
[56] Conversation – metaphor: Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (Rundell and Fox, 2007, p. 324)

'talking as an activity central to her studies' to 'talking as an activity that is central to teaching', which does not happen in her school. This is the first indication of a connection between 'learning' and 'teaching' that develops though the interview, indicating a cultural model, shared with Wendy, in which 'striving for good teaching' is a constant process of 'learning about teaching'.

Contrasting figured worlds of teaching

In block 3 (p. 195) the activities which apparently constitute her school's figured world of teaching first become apparent. The "**ethos**" (attitudes and beliefs that are typical of an organisation or a group of people[57]) of her school is established through a closely packed collection of active verbs: "**doing"**, "**collecting**", "**creating**", "**putting**" and "**filing**", all administrative activities connected to marks, policies and papers. It appears that the focus in her staffroom, which is where 'talking about teaching' would occur, is on the administrative side of teaching, not on what happens in the classroom. This ethos of busyness is heightened by the term "**run around**", indicating a great deal of quick activity and implying that these activities might not be particularly helpful.

By contrast, the figurings of her personal figured world of teaching appear in block 4 (p. 195): "**thoughtful teaching**", "**talk(ing) methodology**" and "**talk(ing) ideas**". In this figured world of teaching, which embodies the neo-Vygotskian concept of language as a social mode of thinking (Mercer, 1995, 2004), talk and thought are conflated. This can be seen in her uninterrupted move from the concept of "**thoughtful teaching**" as a goal to the way in which the goal can be achieved, by talking ideas and methodology.

Talking methodology and ideas

It is significant that Anne does not use the construction 'talk *about*' or 'talk *of*': there is a more direct engagement with the subject implied in "want(ing) to **talk ideas/methodology**" than in the more distanced 'talk about'. This is an infrequently used construction which implies a certain kind of identity. In a search of three hundred entries for 'talk' drawn from the British National Corpus[58] (British National Corpus, n.d.), only

[57] Ethos: Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (Rundell and Fox, 2007, p. 501)
[58] "The British National Corpus (BNC) is a 100 million word collection of samples of written and spoken language from a wide range of sources, designed to represent a wide cross-section of current British

three examples were found of this construction, where the verb 'talk' was followed by a noun:

> B75 1985 'But you don't want to talk business, do you?'[59]
>
> KSS 868 Because me dad didn't talk broad Lancashire.[60]
>
> BP8 1404 After tea we children would wander off casually into the garage with despising giggles for the grownups planted solidly in their wicker chairs talking boring grown-up talk.[61]

In each case some form of insider/outsider identity is being ascribed: a speaker for whom business talk is important and a listener for whom it is not, a father who is 'different' as he does not have the typical, broad accent of the region, children as interesting individuals and adults as dull.

Interestingly, Daisy also uses this construction when talking about both the conversations she has with a new colleague, who shares her interest in implementing new ideas, and the teaching discussions she has with Pat:

> Now, in her place is a very experienced teacher. And definitely somebody on, more on my wavelength, and it's been very refreshing to talk, **talk shop** with her. It's the first time I've had this, I, er, I, the **talking shop** I've had to do with Pat over the phone. Or with other people, but not, with my working, colleagues.
> (T17B/D/SRI)

The construction "**talking shop**" carries a very strong insider identity connotation as it implies that the talk is "boring for other people"[62]. These insider identities of Anne, Daisy and Pat are part of their Affinity-Identities as members of the study group: "**talking shop**" by "**talk(ing) ideas**" and "**talk(ing) methodology**" was a characteristic part of the group's figured world of studying and teaching. The fact that Anne presents this important aspect of her teaching self as being an 'insider' in the study group but an

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English, both spoken and written." http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/ The sources of the BNC samples quoted are provided below, the coding of the samples is that used by the BNC, including the two question marks in sample B75.

[59] **B75** *New Scientist.* London: IPC Magazines Ltd, 1991, pp. ??. 2166 s-units, 43804 words.

[60] **KSS** 16 conversations recorded by 'June2' (PS6R8) between 2 and 8 April 1992 with 9 interlocutors, totalling 37585 words, 4319 utterances, and over 1 hour 19 minutes 18 seconds of recordings.

[61] **BP8** *Tales I tell my mother.* Wandor, M; Miner, V; Fairbairns, Z; M Roberts; Maitland, Sara. London: The Journeyman Press, 1978, pp. 11-115. 1998 s-units, 29593 words.

[62] Talking shop: Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, (Rundell and Fox, 2007, p. 1375)

'outsider' in her staffroom indicates a significant dislocation in her sense of self as an innovative teacher in her school.

The value of "**talk(ing) methodology**" as an artefact in her figured world is reinforced later in the interview when she uses the same abbreviated sentence construction to talk about a colleague's inability to work with a deeper understanding of her teaching:

> (*Narrative 10b*)
> When you have a meeting, she never **talks principles**. Well I do this and I do that. And you listen to a boring, ball by ball approach, of what she says, but not the theory. I try and get them to understand A, (…) because then they can do B quite easily.
> (T19B/A/SRI)

The value of "**talking ideas**" with other innovative teachers as an artefact is supported by narratives 5a and 6a, each of which lasts for several minutes. In narrative 5a Anne tells of attending a presentation in which the speakers (teachers from a school which is considered to pioneer progressive teaching methods) talk of trying to promote "genuine mental activity and mental activity and thinking" in classrooms, and "they believe less is more" (T19B/A/SRI). She finds the concept of doing less work in order to focus on more thinking an interesting challenge:

> (*Narrative 5a*)
> So, I thought, for me, this is a real **challenge**, because I think our schemes of work are overcrowded, and we don't do perhaps enough, real thinking. Although we do do some quite creative and challenging work with our classes, on the other hand. But at the same time, every time I say things to our teachers they say well we do too many set works[63]. 'Cause I try and make them do two a term.
> (T19B/A/SRI)

While she is a firm believer in the value of getting learners to read in order to improve their English, the time taken up by extensive reading is problematic. The challenge to resolve this leads to narrative 6a in which she talks for several minutes about two innovations designed to promote reading. Both ideas have come out of conversations with teachers from other schools: the idea of "book club" reading sessions, and the concept of "box books" (boxed sets of books which are moved from class to class). Anne values these strategies as "they're getting (the learners) talking about reading and talking

[63] "Set works" are books which are to be studied by the whole class.

about, books" (T19B/A/SRI). The value of talk as a learning tool is apparent on two levels here: she has discovered these teaching ideas through talk with other teachers, and these ideas will encourage her learners to talk more and so think more about what they have read. Her identity as a social learner feeds into her teaching identity: providing opportunities for social learning is important to her.

These artefacts of good teaching: thinking, talking, learning, rising to teaching challenges, are all significant indicators of the teaching identity she would like to enact. However, these activities happen outside her school, not with her colleagues, another sign of the disjunction between her desired identity and the figured world of teaching in her school.

Talking, thinking, planning together - collegiality

When Anne is pressed on what she discusses with the other teachers at school, the importance of talk as a tool for planning appears when she speaks about getting together with other teachers to plan sections of work on literature and on grammar.

Anne: Working with Others – *Narrative 2a*[64]

(T19A/A/SRI)

		Conversation	**Artefacts and Identity**
5	K	Do you (*talk together with your colleagues*), if you have something that you think is slightly unusual, slightly out of the way?	
6	A	Yes we do it, I do, we do, a bit. Um, and I have, as you know, in Gauteng, I don't think the setworks for matric have changed for over ten years. Um, but certainly I could remember when I taught the Great Gatsby, **getting together** with another teacher in the evening. And, we, **planned** a whole section of work. Er, we **planned** a variety of activities, how many weeks it would take us, and all of that. And we both felt, **very**	Artefacts of her personal figured world – **getting together**, collegiality/social thinking, working with others – **planning**, necessary to achieve innovative, organised teaching – **empower**, promoting

[64] Narrative 2a follows on directly from Narratives 1a and b, hence the consecutive numbering.

		empowered when we taught that, because of the, the **planning**, and the, the **synergy of ideas** that came from both of us. **Together**.	confidence as teachers – **synergy**, added energy, linked to empowerment **- together**, emphasises collegiality
7	K	So she as well, do you think, [felt,	
8	A	[Yea, I think so. I know tha, I know that she liked, very much the work that we produced **together**. Although, she's very much a teacher who, um, doesn't like to work in groups, and, um, didn't want to get together with other people in the evenings to prepare, or anything. But she did then, for some reason, and I know she **enjoyed** it and **benefited** from it. She said that.	Artefact – **together**, **enjoyed**, **benefited**, collegiality and the resulting pleasure and profit
9	K	Okay. And was there anything, unusual, er, I mean that's only, that one teacher.	
10	A	Ja. And she, funnily enough she's the teacher who was, she's not at our school any more, who was least likely to do that. But the two of us were teaching matric together, and we just **got together** and **planned** it, and it **worked well** for us. I think it was the first year we taught Gatsby.	Artefacts – **got together**, **planned**, collegiality/social thinking and planning – **worked well**, results in empowerment
11	K	Ok	
12	A	Um, and, at the, end of the holidays, I **got together** with a young teacher in her first year of teaching matric, and we **planned** some language lessons for the matrics.	Artefacts – **got together**, **planned**, collegiality/social thinking and planning
13	K	Ok, I met her.	
14	A	Jane Smith, that's right, yes, that's what we were doing then. (…) I think I **prepare** many of my **best lessons**, **with other people**. But **the system** doesn't make it easy.	Artefact – **prepare**, **best lessons**, **with other people**, good teaching as a result of collegiality/social thinking and planning

			ID: organised, forward-looking, collaborative teacher

In the first data extract links were made between the artefacts of talk as a tool for learning, talk as a social mode of thinking and learning as a social activity. Through talk/thinking she came to understand new concepts and methodologies, through talk/thinking she would like to develop and implement these in her teaching in order to achieve "**thoughtful teaching**".

This second narrative, about planning her teaching, expands further the artefact of 'talk as a tool' in Anne's figured world of teaching. The words "**plan**" (or "**prepare**") and "**together**" are used in conjunction in every block in which Anne speaks, highlighting the dialogical, social aspect of the artefact. To plan means "to *think* carefully about a series of actions"[65], which strengthens the concept of the planning talk being a social mode of thinking. Good teaching – her "**best lessons**" (block 14, p. 201) – is the result of this social thinking with another person.

The collegiality is "**empowering**" for both of them (block 6, p. 200), her colleague felt she "**benefitted**" from it and it "**worked well**" for both of them. There is a sense of energy being generated through working together, which comes from her use of "**empowering**" and "the **synergy of ideas**" ("extra energy … that people … create when they combine their efforts"[66]), an energy that would have fuelled their teaching leading to successful results (it "**worked well**") in the classroom. Like Wendy, being energised as a teacher is a key artefact of good teaching.

Planning, preparing in advance, is an important artefact in Anne's figured world of teaching. This is reinforced when in narrative 3a she says:

[65] Plan: Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (Rundell and Fox, 2007, p. 1133)
[66] Synergy: Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (Rundell and Fox, 2007, p. 1518)

(*Narrative 3a*)
As you know I'm absolutely **committed** to **co-operative learning**. I don't know if you do know that. I, I believe in co-operative learning, but to do real co-operative learning, **demand**s **thinking**, and **planning ahead of time**.
(T19A/A/SRI)

Her use of the strong verbs "**committed**" and "**demands**" are indicative of the value she places on thinking and planning, especially if using innovative teaching methods such as co-operative learning.

Evidence that she had developed a Discourse-Identity[67] within her school as an innovative, thinking, well-planned teacher comes in narratives 7a and b, where she talks about the acknowledgement she has received from some of her learners who remember some of her lessons.

Anne: The Struggle to Focus – *Narratives 7a and 7b*

(T19B/A/SRI)

		Conversation	**Artefacts and Identity**
1	A	And I said I have just received a whole lot of, **thank you cards** from the Matrics. And some of them have said, they, remember and appreciated things that I did with them in grade eight and I said I haven't done those things with my grade eights for the last two years. And why. Because of **OBE**. (…) But those are the few things they remember from grade [eight.	Artefact – **thank you cards**, evidence of a Discourse-Identity ID – memorable, successful, appreciated teacher ID – teacher struggling with the demands of the new curriculum Artefact – **OBE**[68], the new curriculum
2	K	[eight. Yes, the different things you did.	
3	A	You know one of them said **I still remember** sitting in your class in grade eight trying to think of words to describe smells. And she said	Artefact – **I still remember**, learner's memories of a lesson ID – Discourse-Identity, successful

[67] The source of Discourse-Identities is "the *discourse* or *dialogue* of other people" (Gee, 2000-2001, p. 103). Anne has the identity of 'memorable teacher with expertise' because other people, in this case her past learners, talk about her in this way.
[68] Spady defines OBE as "A comprehensive approach to organizing and operating an education system that is focused on and defined by the successful demonstrations of learning sought from each student" (Spady, 1994, p. 191).

		you taught me writing skills. (….) You taught me how to express myself in writing. (…)	teacher
4		I don't have the **time** and the **energy**, to bring in, twigs of lemon verbena and, bits of garlic and, stuff for them to try and smell and then find the words, because (…) **my time** is, my **brain is too fractured**, as I said earlier.	Artefacts – lack of **time** – lack of **energy** – sense of being **fractured** ID – struggling teacher, lacking time and energy to focus on the details of her teaching
5		And it's a combination of, (..) **my particular school**. With, **government's policies**. (….) And **Gauteng's policies**. (…)	Artefacts – her school's ethos – **policies**, of national education department and provincial education department
6		So whereas I certainly want to **learn**, and I am **learning** and I am trying **to change and do things**, I have found these last years **draining**.	Artefacts – **learn**, teaching as learning – **change**, learning as change – **draining**, lack of energy

This narrative is typical of much of Anne's interview, as it shows how closely the positive and negative artefacts are sometimes woven together, in this case sentence by sentence. The positive artefacts are the thank you notes (block 1) with recollections of memorable lessons (block 3) which indicate that the time and energy spent planning her teaching in advance have been successful. Placed between these positive artefacts are artefacts of stress: the struggle with the new curriculum (block 1), fatigue, lack of time and energy, of **fracture**, the inability to focus on the details which are key to good teaching (block 4). The thank you notes with details of memorable lessons are evidence of a Discourse-Identity (Gee, 2000-2001) in her school as well as in the study group, of Anne as a memorable teacher with expertise. But the pressure and stress arising from "**the system**" (block 14, p. 201); her school's ethos and the new education policies, make it difficult for her to focus on careful thinking and planning and thus 'be' this kind of teacher.

The first data extract established the central artefact of 'talk as a tool', with associated artefacts of talk as a tool for learning, talk as a social mode of thinking and talk as a

means of achieving "thoughtful teaching" through talking methodology and ideas. The second data extract added the artefacts of planning/preparing as social thinking, and social thinking as a source of energy and ideas. The third data extract provided artefacts of the success of thoughtful, planned teaching in the form of tributes from her learners.

However, thinking and planning require time, energy and focus. In each of the three data extracts there are artefacts which signal the effect of other worlds of schooling, figured worlds which have a profound effect on Anne's ability to author herself as the confident, innovative, thoughtful teacher she strives to be.

Anne – Part 2: Narratives of stress – "The system" and "a fractured sense of reality"

As has been noted, the narratives of confidence and stress are closely interwoven. Six of the eight positive data extracts move straight on to narratives of stress, stress which is generated by the figured world of "the system" and which 'fractures' her ability to focus on good teaching.

"The system"

Block 5 of narratives 7a and 7b (p. 204) illustrates how "the system" is a combination of two elements: her school, with its apparent focus on administrative activities (Narratives 1a and 1b, p. 194), and the ongoing changes to the implementation of the outcomes-based educational curriculum (OBE) that was new at the time of the interview.

Changes in OBE – drained energy and wasted time

The theory behind OBE had been part of Anne's studies and in the pre-graduation interview with Anne and Daisy it is clear that they both felt they have a considerable degree of confidence in their understanding of it:

D Ok, um, (..) one thing that's very clear is, I think I have, (...) a bit more confidence about (..) understanding, (..) how shall we say, pedagogical theories.
A If, ja, if we take this, OBE and, new curriculum story, (…..) I think I understand it.
D Whereas before I ever went into the Honours and so on, and in fact even while we were in the Honours, I had a pretty vague idea of what Curriculum 2005 was.
K Right.
D Now I have a better idea.
(T8A/AD/I)

The above statements of confidence are a result of the interaction and Discourse-Identity work done over time, as discussed in Chapter 5. Anne and Daisy's understanding has been developed through the combination of studying and talking together with other members of the study group. Together they had discussed and developed ways in which to apply the new curriculum in their schools. But the new curriculum was undergoing a continual process of refinement and modification and the methods that they had developed as students were now no longer fully applicable. This change impacts on Anne's ability to successfully implement the curriculum, as can be seen in a number of narratives.

In Narrative 6b (see p. 193) Anne mentions a discussion with fellow members of a school committee about how all but one of the original design features of OBE had been eliminated, saying that "those things (changes in educational policy), are really, **draining**, and a **waste of time**" (T19A/A/SRI).

In Narrative 2b she talks about 'cluster meetings': meetings of groups of schools, organised by the education department, intended to help schools implement portfolio assessment. These meetings, which could have been the source of stimulating exchanges of ideas, are "often **boring**, or **draining**" as much of their time is spent:

> (*Narrative 2b*)
> … just ironing out, the most pathetic problems which the department should have ironed out. Like the instructions are not clear, so do you think we should do this or do you think we should do that, or, they're unrealistic we don't have enough time so we'll compromise this is what I intend doing and then other people agree to do that as well.
> (T19A/A/SRI)

In Narrative 11b she details how the ongoing changes, combined with an apparent lack of planning on the part of officialdom, impact on her and her colleagues.

Anne: Wasted Time – *Narrative 11b*

(T17A/A/SRI)

		Conversation	Artefacts and Identity
1	A	Yes, it is, it's the new syllabus, and the fact that the department has, **rushes** everything, **before they were ready**. They send **materials that they've not edited**.	Artefacts – **rushes**, hasty activities in the education department – lack of adequate thought – lack of careful planning
2		So you've just, the other day about two Saturdays ago I met my grade nine teachers at school. On a **Saturday morning**. **Everyone came**. Some of them **live quite far away**. We went through, what the department had sent us, for the common assessment task. And they div, they **worked out how many lessons** they would need, we **made a list** of all the things that were very confusing to us, and where there was no clarity. But they **divided up how much time** they would need, etcetera. (..) One week later we get **a revised version**, with co, with different demands in it. ((*K sighs*))	Artefacts – **Saturday morning**, private time being spent by teachers on their work – **Everyone came**, **live quite far away**, evidence of the effort made by her colleagues to attend – **worked out how many lessons, made a list**, **divided up how much time**, careful planning – **a revised version**, inadequate planning by the department
3	K A	So you've wasted a whole Saturday morning. Ja, or we haven't **wasted**, but, ja, we partly **wasted.** Our time estimates and everything were **all wrong**. All the decisions made. And that is **how we operate**. All the time.	Artefacts – **wasted**, time wasted – **all wrong**, **how we operate**, preparation becomes inefficient

These three narratives, with their artefacts of wasted time and being drained of energy indicate how "the system" works against her goal of thoughtful, planned teaching. She has had to spend more time working to understand the changed requirements for OBE (narrative 6b, see p. 193), the opportunity to talk with other teachers and build a deeper understanding of the theory behind the assessment methods is wasted as the meeting time is spent on administrative details, not energising talk about the new approach (narrative

2b, p. 206), and even administrative details are difficult to put in place because of ongoing changes, resulting in more time wasted.

The struggle to author a confident self – Anne as HoD

"The system" also impacts on Anne's ability to be a confident head of department (HoD). As HoD Anne is charged with overseeing changes to the curriculum and implementing the new methods which are being introduced by both the provincial and national departments of education. The effect of "the system" on her confidence can be seen in the following data extract, where she talks about implementing portfolios an as assessment tool.

Anne: The Struggle for Confidence – Narratives 3a and b

(T19A/A/SRI and T19B/A/SRI)

		Conversation	Artefacts and Identity
1		Um, and er, (…) I thought I was going to have a much better year at school this year, not having (*she lists a series of personal problems*). But it hasn't been a much better year.	Her situation the previous year
2		And I think it's (.) the portfolio, and **portfolios** in grade nine for the first time, although I don't teach grade nine, **I'm supposed to know what's going on as head of department**, and honestly Kate, the portfolios for grade nine, had to have something like twenty pieces of work in them, and they gave us the instructions of what had to be in them, in some *(Break in recording as new cassette is inserted into tape recorder)*	Artefact – **portfolios**, implementation of new assessment method Conflicting IDs – **I'm supposed to know**, personal ID, lacks confidence – **what's going on as head of department**, Institutional-Identity, she should know what is happening
3	K	Sorry, you were saying? Oh, the portfolios. And you only got the, the layout in, in June.	
4	A	Yes. And then there's a **panic** and there's a **first year teacher** and there's X who's a third	Artefacts – **panic**, unable to think calmly

		year teacher but **not that confident**, although she's very competent, and (..) a a **replacement teacher** for the man who died, in the holidays. And it's just been (…) **a hell of a runaround**. (..)	– **first year teacher**, colleagues lack experience – **not that confident**, colleagues uncertain – **replacement teacher**, newcomer unfamiliar with school – **a hell of a runaround**, resulting frantic activity
5		And me saying to them don't worry it's fine whatever you've done is good enough what else can they expect, etcetera.	ID – 'seems' confident HoD

Anne signals that her identity as a confident HoD is under threat at the start of her narrative: "**I'm supposed to know what's going on as head of department**" (block 2, p. 208). In the generic figured world of schooling an effective HoD is organised, mediates confidently between the Department of Education and her colleagues and knows what must be done, but it is clear that Anne does not feel like an effective HoD. Thinking about and planning her work ahead of time are important to her, and she has not had the time to either think or plan for the implementation of the task. Without the support of someone else to devise coping strategies it is difficult for her to be confident of what she is doing.

Bartlett's (2007b) two levels of identity work, seeming to others and feeling in oneself, provide a useful insight here. Anne's Institutional-Identity (Gee, 2000-2001) as HoD puts her in a position of power: her colleagues turn to her for advice and she tells them what to do, so on an interpersonal level she is able to 'seem' a competent HoD to them. But her use of "**supposed**" signals her intrapersonal, 'felt' inability to adequately support her colleagues. In spite of the fact that she *is* able to give instructions and provide support for them, because it is unplanned and last minute she feels disempowered and struggles to author herself as a confident HoD.

Her sense of inadequacy is demonstrated in block 4 (p. 208) and starts with "**a panic**", in which she is "unable to think clearly or calmly"[69], which describes probably both the feelings of her colleagues (who are inexperienced, do not 'know the ropes' in the school, and lack confidence), and definitely her own feelings of anxiety about how she is going to help them organise the portfolios in time. It culminates in "And it's just been (…) **a hell of a runaround**", a comment that cuts two ways: she has been 'given the runaround' by the education department who have "behave(d) in a way that is not helpful"[70] with their late delivery of instructions, and her worry that her own help might have been inadequate and that the "**runaround**" has spilled over to her colleagues. The final part of her narrative (block 5, p. 209), follows a short pause in which she presumably reflects on the situation, as she quotes herself reassuring her colleagues, using reported speech. The reported speech, combined with "**panic**" in the previous block, creates an anxious atmosphere as it rises to a climax (Holt, 2000). It tumbles out in one breath, without pauses, the intonation rising towards the end, with a short in-breath before "etcetera", which is followed by a slight sigh. Together these artefacts create a figured world of anxious, hasty activity at odds with her personal world of organised thinking and planning ahead of time, at odds with her Institutional-Identity as a competent HoD.

A fractured reality

In addition to the stresses stemming from the inefficient roll out of the new curriculum there are stresses arising from the way her school operates. In narrative 1b the figured world of teaching in her school first appeared, illustrated by artefacts of hurried administrative activities. This figured world is further illuminated in narrative 4b.

Anne: A Fractured Reality – *Narrative 4b*

(T19B/A/SRI)

		Conversation	Artefacts and Identity
1	A	So why else this hasn't been a good year for me, is, um, (…) it's partly, besides **portfolios**	Artefacts of the figured world of "the system" – **portfolios**, new assessment

[69] Panic: Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (Rundell and Fox, 2007, p. 1081)
[70] Give somebody the runaround: Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (Rundell and Fox, 2007, p. 1306)

		and everything and the fact that **the department** (…) unintentionally **seems to make life a lot harder** for us, not easier. (….)	method – **seems to make life a lot harder,** inefficiency of the department
2		Um, is my, our own particular headmistress. Who loves **novelty**, and **change**, and is always **experimenting**, and **never satisfied** with what we've done, and **always trying something new**, and (…….) and we've had **a rolling timetable** this year, so you don't even wake up on a Tuesday and know what you're going to teach on a Tuesday. You have **no feeling for what a Tuesday is like**.	Artefacts of figured world of her school – **novelty**, **change**, **experiment**, **never satisfied**, **always trying something new**, ongoing change – **rolling timetable**, new approaches ID – disoriented, feels inefficient, not in touch with her life
3		And there've just been so many things like that, which, uh I had a very **fractured reality**. Which bring out, the worst in me. I, I don't mind a bit of chaos. I find it quite stimulating, but it's, my **sense of reality's** just been **too fractured**. (….)	Artefact – **fractured reality**, inability to focus ID – distracted, unable to focus, not sufficiently engaged with her practice

The constant adjustment to new administrative structures in her school, such as "**a rolling timetable**", is deeply destabilising. The comment "You have **no feeling for what a Tuesday is like**" combines with "I had a very **fractured reality**" to constitute an identity of someone who feels disoriented, out of touch with her daily routine. The repetition of "**fractured reality**" heightens the rupture between what she wants to do in her teaching and what actually happens. It is as if the lens of organisation, thinking and planning, which she uses to focus on her teaching has cracked. Being unable to focus causes her to lack stability and feel inefficient and unsure of herself.

The artefact of "fracture" appears again in narrative 10b, associated here with coping with OBE. The narrative starts with Anne making a sincere statement about how much she has enjoyed teaching and why her pleasure has now been dimmed.

Anne: Creativity and Confidence Undermined – *Narrative 10b*

(T17A/A/SRI)

		Conversation	Artefacts and Identity
16	A	I've **always enjoyed teaching**. I, somehow I'm not enjoying it as much as I used to. I think because I feel too **drained** and I don't feel **creative** enough. (..) But I always have been **passionate about** teaching. And **loved** it. (…)	Artefacts – **always enjoyed**, **passionate about,** great love for teaching – **drained**, but needs energy to be creative ID – dissatisfaction with herself because she is not teaching creatively
17	K A K	You're feeling not creative enough. Ja. Why?	
18	A	Because of all, everything I've been, telling you about. Because of OBE, and, it's that **fractured reality**, like, I **run around,** feeling, **guilty**, and **expecting to be in trouble** all the time. Because of things that I **haven't done**. Or things that I will have **forgotten**. (……)	Artefacts – **fractured**, inability to focus – **run around,** hurried activity that consumes energy – **haven't done**, **forgotten**, inefficient – **guilty**, **expecting to be in trouble**, lack of confidence
19	K A K	And this is the bureaucracy that you haven't done. [Not your teaching that you [Ja haven't done or forgo[tten.	
20	A	[Well it's, the bureaucracy I haven't done and it and it **undermines my creativity and my confidence** in myself. And then, (..) ja, and, and there is **very little time for the teaching**.	Artefacts – **undermines my creativity and my confidence**, saps her belief in herself, unable to author herself as confident Lack of confidence as HoD seeps into teaching

For the first time she articulates directly her lack of confidence in herself as an HoD: the "**fractured reality**" "**undermines**" her, making her "gradually less successful, confident

or successful"[71] because of the administrative "things" that she has forgotten or has not done because she is unable to focus adequately.

Her 'sense of what is real' in her figured world as a teacher is grounded in having the *time* to *think* and *plan* her lessons, as an HoD in having the *time* to *think* and *plan* how to effectively implement the new curriculum. But the constant changes in the figured world of "the system", both in the administrative structures in her school and the application of the new curriculum "fracture" her time, her ability to focus and thus her sense of self. These artefacts of *time, thought* and *planning*, crucial figurings in her world of teaching which mediate her sense of identity as a teacher and HoD, are not part of her day-to-day reality. Without them her ability to author herself as a confident, innovative teacher and HoD is seriously compromised.

6.6. Conclusion

Holland et al. (1998) point out that identity formation occurs on intimate and social levels, and takes time. The intimate level is connected to Bartlett's (2007b) intrapersonal level (feeling in oneself), in which one comes to understand and have confidence in oneself as someone whose acts 'count' in the world. This self-belief is accomplished over time through the aid of "behavioural prompting and verbal feedback" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 285) from others. This prompting and feedback occurs on the social level – corresponding to Bartlett's (2007b) interpersonal level (seeming to others) – while one is engaged in affinity group activities, and is part of the recognition that, over time, leads to the establishment of a Discourse-Identity.

There is evidence in the post-graduation interviews of Brad, Daisy and Pat (the three other group members who, like Anne and Wendy, are teaching in schools), that the identities of expertise as confident, innovative teachers, built up while working and studying as members of the study group, are being maintained, possibly via their continued professional interaction with another group member. This interaction provides them with the opportunity to participate in and share affinity practices, thus maintaining

[71] Undermine: Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (Rundell and Fox, 2007, p. 1627)

their group Affinity-Identities, and is a source of Discourse-Identities as competent, innovative teachers. The 'power' of these two identities fuels their ability to believe in themselves: that they are indeed competent and innovative, and make it possible for them to behave as competent and innovative teachers and to implement the institutional power invested in them as HoDs in their schools.

However both Wendy and Anne are struggling to retain these identities, and I argue that their lack of an ongoing, professional link with another member of the group may be a significant factor in their struggle. Being isolated from the affinity group means that Wendy and Anne lack the prompting and feedback necessary to, in Wendy's case, maintain an identity of expertise in the face of opposing figured worlds of teaching, and in Anne's case to believe herself to be a competent HoD under the pressure of the endlessly changing demands of "the system".

The other members of the study group appear to have the support necessary to carry their figured worlds and related identities as innovative teachers or doctoral research students forward with them into their individual schools or their research. But as Holland et al. point out, figured worlds do not "necessarily endure the transfiguration beyond the local sites of their production … or an opposition may successfully choke them off" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 285). Ongoing support from a community or other individuals may be needed if a figured world and its associated identities are to be effectively transferred into another context of activity.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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7.1. Introduction

This study had its origins in my experience of returning to university as a mature student to upgrade my qualifications and to acquire new knowledge and skills as an English teacher. I had not anticipated having any difficulties with my studies as I already had one post-graduate degree and a post-graduate teaching diploma, but I soon discovered that returning to university after many years was not unproblematic.

I was very fortunate that the opportunity to work with other students arose early in the academic year and that within six months there were five of us working together in a study group. Within the group I was not the only person to have initial problems with the course work. Brad had also done badly in two of the exams early on in the course, and felt alone and unsupported (T5B/B/I), and Wendy, too, was worried about her academic performance in the early part of the course (T7A/W/I). Other group members reported that while they were coping with the academic work, they were looking for support and company as they were feeling isolated (T8B/AD/I) and alone (T23B/P/SRI).

While other variables will have played a part in the group members' academic success, I argue that the data analysed in Chapters 4 and 5, demonstrates that the group members' engagement in the study group enabled a great deal of their success and growth in self-confidence. All the group members did well in the Honours degree, and everyone went on to register for an MA in English Education. The larger group of eight that completed the Masters degree was also academically successful, and three of us went on to register for PhDs. After our studies everybody received professional recognition in some form, either through promotion in the institutions in which we had been teaching while we were studying or through appointment to new positions in other schools or universities shortly after graduating. I suggest that the professional support provided by the group contributed to this recognition of professional worth.

During conversations with the group members two years after we had completed our Masters degrees, I asked each one how their careers were developing, to find out whether they still had the same confidence in themselves as teachers that they had expressed at the end of their studies. To my surprise two of the group members said they no longer felt able to work innovatively in their classrooms. This discovery led to an additional research question for the study.

Before turning to a summary of findings in relation to each of the research questions, I begin with a brief review of the research process which was adopted for the study and use this to make two claims for the possible value of the research process to others with an interest in doing research into the ways of working together of experienced teachers who return to university for further studies in their field.

7.2. Addressing 'gaps' in the literature

An extensive literature search revealed that there is a considerable body of literature on the value of learning in groups in school classrooms, and a more limited literature on the value of learning in groups for adults in informal settings, and for mature-aged students attending university for the first time as undergraduates. However I was unable to find research on the value of learning in groups for experienced teachers who return to university for post-graduate studies in their field.

Another literature search revealed that there has been considerable research with a focus on the constitution of the teacher identities of pre-service teachers and some into the identities of teachers on in-service programmes. However, I was unable to find research that focussed on identity shifts experienced by teachers returning to university for post-graduate studies.

This research therefore has aimed to respond to both these gaps in the literatures, through an investigation of the success of a post-graduate study group formed by experienced teachers, and the simultaneous constitution of group members' identities as post-graduate students and innovative teachers.

7.3. Working from an insider perspective

As indicated in Chapter 3, I was an observant participant researcher (B. A. Johnstone, 2007): I had been a member of the study group for four years before I started doing research on the ways in which the group functioned. As a result I had an insider perspective of the group's ways of working which made it difficult for me to see anything unusual or research-worthy in the transcripts of the conversations of group members working together on each other's research proposals. While many of the writers on being a participant observer warn of the dangers of being or discuss what it is like to be an insider (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Heley, 2011; Kanuha, 2000; LaSala, 2003; Waddington, 2004), I could not find any advice on how to move myself from an emic to an etic viewpoint. I thus had to develop for myself ways of reframing the transcripts to make it possible to view them through a researcher's rather than an insider's lens. The motivation to use storytelling arose from a comment made by my first supervisor, the late Professor Stein, to the effect that even if the data seemed "such everyday talk" (Research Journal 1, p. 54) there must be some stories in it somewhere, and that I must find the stories and tell them. As discussed in Chapter 3, I started 'telling' the data as stories and through a process of 'retelling', reflecting on my reasons for making the decisions I had made, and then working with the data again, I was gradually able to step back further and further from the data until I was able to view it with a degree of objectivity as being research-worthy.

I anticipate that this method of gaining distance from one's data could be of use to other teachers or professionals doing observant participant research in their own communities.

Exploring the study group's interactions through storytelling led me to investigate ways of doing justice to their contribution to my research. The process of deciding on story boundaries, categorising the stories, then changing the story boundaries and having to re-categorise the stories made me very aware of the power I had as 'the researcher' to turn my fellow group members into 'the objects' of my research. I wished to honour the part their voices played in the research, and was determined to give them, as far as was possible, the status of "actors in a research narrative" (Tierney & Lincoln, 1997, p. xi). In order to accomplish this I used, as far as was practical[72], complete 'stories' for the data analysis, from the moment when the reader was interrupted to the moment when reading was resumed, rather than cutting out short excerpts to illustrate the themes of the research. I also decided to use the present tense when discussing the data in order to draw the reader into the 'narrative moment' of the discussion and to deliberately "problematize 'the privileged authorial perspective'" (Webster, 1983, p. 195, quoted in Tierney, 1997, p. 31). I drew on work by Gee (1999a; 2011) Lather (1996; 1997) and Tanaka (1997) to develop the method of displaying long excerpts from the transcripts in tables, in numbered (for easy reference in the main text) rows, with brief commentaries interspersed between the rows and preliminary analysis in the columns to the right of the extract sections.

I suggest that this way of presenting and analysing transcripts of groups talking could be of value to other researchers who wish to preserve the integrity of data transcripts by displaying them in lengthy extracts.

7.4. Collaborative conversations: developing and sustaining identities

In this final short chapter I argue that Vygotsky's theories on the social nature of learning, Bakhtin's theories about the nature and function of dialogic talk, Lave and

[72] I did not cut material out of the middle of the extracts, and on only two occasions cut off the last part of the conversation as it had moved off at a tangent and was no longer germane to the topic being analysed.

Wenger's concept of communities of practice, Gee's work on identity and Holland et al.'s concept of figured worlds have been productive for analysis of study group conversations and interviews with study group members, and that findings from this analysis have enabled me to address each of the research questions posed in Chapter 1:

1. How did the study group's ways of working together lead to the development of each group member's 'enabled identities' as student and teacher?
2. How was talk used as a tool to mediate learning in the group?
3. What role did different 'talk genres' play in this learning?
4. In the learning talk, how did the interplay between group members' student and professional knowledges support the constitution of confident student and teacher identities?
5. Beyond the life of the study group, what enabled or constrained each group member's identity/ies as a confident and innovative teacher?

7.4.1. The role of learning talk in the constitution of confident post-graduate student identities

In Chapter 4 I used the work of Vygotsky and Bakhtin to inform an analysis of the transcripts of the study group's conversations.

The writings of Lev Vygotsky provided a number of concepts valuable for this research: firstly, the importance of the social, cultural and historical context in which learning takes place and secondly, the centrality of language, both as a cultural tool for social interaction and as a psychological tool for learning. Vygotsky views learning as a social, communicative process, in which individuals draw on resources derived from their personal histories to inform the development of understanding, and language as a social mode of thinking (Mercer, 2002).

Mikhail Bakhtin's writings on dialogic talk provided a range of tools for investigating this social, communicative learning process. He views dialogic talk as being an active, responsive engagement with others (Bakhtin, 1986), in which individuals always speak with a 'voice' or from a point of view, and are continually in a process of both responding to and addressing others.

Researchers such as Mercer (1995; 2002) Wells (1986; 1999), Wegerif (Wegerif & Mercer, 1996, 1997; Wegerif & Scrimshaw, 1997) and Edwards (2005) have shown how the use of dialogic, exploratory talk in classrooms leads to the co-construction of knowledge. Research also shows that the presence of a "more learned other" (Edwards, 2005, p. 8) is not necessary for cognitive growth. As stated above, there appears to be limited research into adult learners using dialogic talk as a learning tool[73] and none that I could find on experienced teachers returning to post-graduate study, but my study has shown dialogic, exploratory talk to be equally useful when used by professionally qualified and experienced adults working together.

The findings presented in Chapter 4 revealed that the group members used dialogic talk as they worked together. Identification and analysis of the features which made the talk dialogic enabled me to address the second of the research questions: how the group used talk as a tool to mediate learning.

Some of the features of dialogic talk that were identified are: engagement in collective action such as sharing, exploring and building on each other's ideas; asking authentic questions; and drawing on personal, commonsense perspectives.

In spite of the fact that the group was informally constituted with no designated group leader tasked with keeping the talk 'on track', there was an ongoing, purposeful engagement with the topic of discussion on the part of all the members of the group, one of the hallmarks of dialogic talk. The analysis indicated that they had been listening closely not only to the reader, but also to each other: they offered advice, such as Kate's statement "You might find, that you cannot, in the scope of this, research, look at everything, and you're going to have to state that" (T1A/CG/AP), and built on each other's advice. Wendy, Brad, and Daisy could be seen supporting Kate, restating and

[73] Grossman, Smagorinsky, and Valencia (1999) use dialogic talk as one of the tools in an activity theory framework to better understand how pre-service teachers draw on the language of others as a resource, Rule (2004) uses the concept of dialogic spaces in his investigation into adult education classes, and Greenleaf and Katz (2004) use Bakhtin's concepts of dialogism and authoring as a framework for investigating inquiry-based professional development for teachers.

refining her statement by saying: “You’re going to have to focus”, “Make a choice” and “You’ve got to say what your view of writing is” (T1A/CG/AP) (Chapter 4 p. 94). Their implied criticism of another’s work was made firmly but tactfully: the comments were aimed at the work, not the writer, and were framed positively in the form of questions or advice, not censure.

The group members used open-ended, authentic questions, such as when Brad interrupted Anne’s reading with “I’m sure this is a really thick question, but, when you say ‘writing’, what writing do you mean?” (T1A/CG/AP) (Chapter 4 p. 83), which served to open up the discussions, and to encourage the proposal reader to clarify issues.

Their observations and suggestions were drawn from their own experiences as teachers and students, and frequently stimulated extended discussions and further contributions. Their range of experiences provided a variety of viewpoints, which were identified in the data analysis as different talk genres, another central feature of dialogic talk. Each genre brought a different perspective to bear on the problem under discussion: the perspective of a teacher, a student, an academic, a fellow inquirer, a lecturer or supervisor, or a friend or close colleague.

Analysis of the role played by the study group’s use of different talk genres in the construction of understanding addresses research question three: the role played by talk genres in learning. The study group offered a space where group members could draw on genres that originated in all three of the social contexts of the group: their academic lives, their professional lives and their relationships as friends. As a result these discussions differed from those that would normally take place either with colleagues at work or with other students. The environment of the study group facilitated the merging of the different talk genres and truly dialogic talk to emerge.

While each genre performed a different function, such as working towards a deeper conceptualisation of theory (academic talk) or quoting classroom experience (teacher talk), these functions were generally mutually supportive. For example, the data analysis

showed that the group members were, for the most part, not fluent users of the academic talk genre and that advice on academic matters was often halting and fragmented. Being able to frame and reframe their suggestions in the more fluent teacher talk genre opened different paths to understanding, which resulted in a wider variety of ideas becoming available as academic 'thinking devices' (Wertsch & Smolka, 1993). These two particular genres often worked in conjunction: ideas provided in one genre were expanded in another, subtle differences between the two perspectives providing a dynamic which gave the discussion impetus. As an example, the analysis of the group helping Anne to decide what constituted 'writing' showed how academic talk provided information which was confirmed in teacher talk, with the use of the two genres resulting in the co-construction of information: that 'writing' could not be short, single sentence writing; it had to be longer texts which provided evidence of developed thought (Chapter 4 p. 84). Conversely, the next discussion of Anne's work showed how voicing ideas in teacher talk allowed fragments of academic talk to surface. These fragments were revoiced and refined through the use of all the talk genres, resulting in a collaboratively arrived at, coherent focus for Anne's research (Chapter 4 p. 91).

Talk in the lecturer/supervisor genre had the inherent authority to move the conversation forward and was generally used to encourage the reader of the proposal to come to a decision about her or his writing. This advice was not always taken, and the refusal, rather than halting the discussion, stimulated extended discussion and contributions.

It is interesting to note that the student talk genre, which in theory is situated at the opposite end of the authority spectrum to the lecturer/supervisor genre, was used several times by Daisy to successfully reject suggestions (Chapter 5 p. 103 and 106). It was the use of double-voiced discourse, the orientation of her voice to the authority of her supervisor or academic books, which gave her student talk the 'weight' to decline advice so effectively that the group did not follow up their suggestions. Anne's use of the student talk genre (Chapter 4 p. 91) had positioned her at the powerless end of the authority spectrum: she had been given advice by her supervisor but still did not know how to define her topic. Unlike Daisy, when she turned down advice it was done using

the co-enquirer genre, which had the effect of encouraging the other group members to continue searching for a solution, rather than silencing them.

With reference to the fourth research question, the group's use of heteroglossic talk not only mediated learning, but was instrumental in the constitution of confident student and teacher identities. The enactment of confident student identities was not made apparent in a display of fluent academic talk, but could be observed in the group members' use of the co-inquirer talk genre and in their on-going behaviour as co-inquirers. They displayed a genuine interest in and commitment to each other's research as they talked: they asked questions because *they* wanted to understand more (such as Brad's questions in Chapter 4, p. 85), they persisted in the search for solutions to other member's problems in spite of being rebuffed (Daisy's proposal) (Chapter 4 p. 103 and 106), and even, in Anne's proposal reading, a direct statement that she wanted to end the discussion and move on (Chapter 4 p. 96).

This persistence was a statement of faith in the value of each other's research: being continually addressed as a co-inquirer served to validate the writer as a researcher, as did having the collaborative assistance of the group when attempting to frame one's problem in the academic talk genre. Having co-inquirers pick up and ventriloquate one's ideas in the course of a discussion – especially if the re-voicing of ideas led to an acceptable solution – also served as a vote of confidence in one's abilities as an apprentice academic. Being treated as 'a competent researcher doing valuable research' encouraged the listener to respond as – and therefore see her or himself as – a knowledgeable student, thus supporting the constitution of the identities of confident students.

The data analysis showed that responses to talk genres, used as part of the 'tool kit' for doing student 'learning work', also addressed group members' teacher identities: the two identities fed each other. The process of taking up, critiquing and building on comments and suggestions made in the teacher talk genre gave value to the professional knowledge being offered, contributing to the group members' confidence in themselves as teachers. This confidence was reinforced when encouragement such as "narrow down", "focus on"

or “make a choice” was heeded. These types of comments were voiced in the lecturer/supervisor genre, which is closely allied to the teacher genre, and gave the speaker the status of a knowledgeable authority.

The importance of the mutuality of the group’s student and teacher identities is discussed further in the next section.

7.4.2. The role of student and teacher talk in constituting more confident, innovative identities

In Chapter 5 the analysis of the transcripts and Brad’s post-graduate interview was framed by the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) on communities of practice and how these can be viewed as “social learning systems” (Wenger, 2010, p. 179), and by Gee’s (2000-2001) four perspectives on identity.

The study group was considered as a community of practice which, in addition, functioned as a pedagogic safe house (Canagarajah, 1997, 2004): it was a safe space located away from both school and university and so sheltered the group members and their activities from an outside gaze. Findings from the analysis indicate the value of such safe space positioning: the ‘politically incorrect’ discussions about television shows, the admissions that as students they had not planned their research adequately and as teachers they had gone under-prepared into the classroom, the telling of off-topic stories, all happened because the group met in a place where they were free from both academic and professional surveillance. There is evidence of the value of these discussions for building a community of teacher-students and the positive effect that this kind of talk had on the constitution of student and teacher identities.

Wenger (1998) theorises communities of practice as social learning systems defined by engagement in joint practices which result in the development of understanding and identity (Wenger, 1998, 2010). He proposes three modes of belonging in a community of practice: mutual engagement – the creation of a history of relationships around negotiating knowledge and ‘doing things’ with knowledge with others; imagination – being able to orient oneself to different ways of being and doing through reflection and

discussion with others; and alignment – engaging with others to work together towards a common goal (Wenger, 2010). These three modes of belonging play a significant role in the mutual constitution of identities in communities of practice[74].

Findings from this study revealed these modes of belonging to be an important part of the way in which the study group functioned simultaneously as a learning community and as a teaching community, and in doing so address the first research question. The degree of engagement in and alignment with each other's work as students could be seen in the data analysed in Chapter 4, in which the group continued to work towards a solution to other member's research problems *in spite of* the resistance of the proposal readers. The history of their relationship was evident in the degree of trust as they turned to each other for support, admitted to not understanding concepts closely related to their academic and professional work, and admitted to not being 'good' teachers and students.

The group's discussions about reading as they talked about the incident on the Oprah Winfrey Show (Chapter 5 p. 127) demonstrated how closely they aligned themselves with each other as teachers of English and as readers of a particular kind, using cultural models relating to the value of reading as a tool for learning. This is illustrative of the ways in which they developed Affinity-Identities as individuals sharing certain kinds of practices, and the ways in which, in the process of aligning themselves with each other, they offered and responded to Discourse-Identities as particular kinds of teachers.

In Chapter 5 the analysis of the data in Data Extract 2 (p. 136), demonstrated the role played by imagination in the group's ability to reframe their personal opinions, their views of themselves as teachers and their approaches to teaching. Through the use of cross-genre, dialogic and heteroglossic talk as they worked together they were able to develop new understandings of themselves as teachers and of the ways in which they

[74] Caveat: Wenger (1998; 2010) does note that it should not be assumed that all communities of practice are necessarily successful or 'good': "A community of practice can be dysfunctional, counterproductive, even harmful" (Wenger, 2010, p. 180). As is discussed in Chapter 6, one can be involved in a joint practice without feeling that one is a valued member of that community: a group of English teachers in a school can be mutually engaged on a variety of tasks in their teaching, be aligned towards a common goal of assisting learners to achieve success, yet all be imagining different, conflicting ways of achieving this goal.

could use these understandings in their classrooms. The emergence of new identities, such as that of 'liberated academic', through this kind of group interaction is an important indicator of the potential value of study groups as a tool for personal learning and for changing individual's views of the world.

Discussions such as these created moments for the strengthening of Discourse-Identities as confident students and teachers: with the support of other group members Wendy was able to reframe her interactions with a lecturer, in which she had been positioned as a powerless student, to one in which she was empowered to use him as a resource in her classroom (pp. 144-145). The analysis of these interactions addresses the first research question, as the interactions are indicative of how the group's ways of working together led to the development of hybrid identities as confident, innovative students-and-teachers.

The analysis of the excerpt from Brad's post-graduation interview provided evidence of one such hybrid identity as a confident-student-and-confident-innovative-teacher. His ability to enact this identity was the result of a combination of two identities: his ongoing Affinity-Identity as a confident teacher-and-student who was a member of a group who shared in the collaborative development of innovative practices, and his ongoing Discourse-Identity which was a result of the reciprocity of addressing others and being addressed by them as a competent, innovative teacher-and-student.

7.4.3. The value of affinity group support for sustaining identities as innovative teachers

In the final data analysis chapter the concepts of identity-in-practice, figured worlds and their associated artefacts (Holland et al., 1998) were used to focus on the teacher identities evident in the group members' post-graduation interviews. An analysis of the identities-in-practice of two of the group members, Anne and Wendy, attempted to ascertain why they no longer felt the same degree of confidence in themselves as innovative teachers as they had while they were studying. Gee's (2000-2001) concepts of Discourse-Identities and Affinity-Identities enabled a focus on why, in Anne's case, she was unable to enact identities of confidence and innovative teaching, and why, in

Wendy's case, her new colleagues' failure to recognise her identity as an innovative teacher impacted on her sense of self as a competent teacher.

The findings presented in Chapter 6 respond to the fifth research question: what enabled or constrained each group member's identity/ies as a confident and innovative teacher? These are necessarily tentative. Firstly, I am not able to come to firm conclusions through the analysis of only two interviews, and secondly, it is possible that factors other than the lack of support from another group member played a role in the waning sense of self as innovative teachers expressed by two group members. However, the findings do suggest that continued "behavioural promptings and verbal feedback" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 285), which come from sharing your practice with other like-minded teachers, play a role in supporting the continued development of newly-formed professional identities.

Researchers such as Luttrell and Parker (2001), Bartlett (2007a), Hatt (2007), Michael, Andrade and Bartlett (2007) and Rubin (2007) identified the artefacts which figured 'success' or 'failure' in the figured worlds of a variety of schools and used them to analyse how learners are positioned as 'gifted' or as 'special needs' by the value system of the schools in which they are studying. I used the artefacts identified in the post-graduate interviews to analyse the ways in which Anne and Wendy positioned *themselves* as teachers relative to the figured worlds of 'efficiency', 'good administration' and 'good teaching' in the schools in which they were teaching.

The overview of the interviews with the rest of the study group members demonstrated the importance of being able to discuss one's professional activities with like-minded colleagues in order to maintain and continue developing Discourse- and Affinity-Identities as innovative teachers and researchers.

The findings of the analysis of the post-graduation interviews with Anne and Wendy indicated a mismatch between the artefacts which had been part of the group's practices as confident, innovative teachers, and the artefacts which explicated good teaching practice in the schools in which both women were teaching. For both Anne and Wendy

the primary artefact identified in the study group as indicative of practices of good teaching, was a view of teaching as a process of learning. This artefact was a product of the affinity practices of the study group, which were focussed on learning about and developing ways of implementing new practices in their classrooms. Connected to the artefact of 'teaching as learning' was the artefact of talk as a tool for learning: as was discussed in Chapter 4, the collaborative development of ideas with the associated development of Discourse-Identities was an important part of the group's activities.

The artefacts which characterised teaching in their schools did not match their personal artefacts: in Anne's school there was a focus on administrative activities, in Wendy's school there was a focus on set, known ways of teaching. Neither had colleagues with whom they could share talk about innovative practices. Their inability to sustain their Affinity- and Discourse-Identities appeared to be connected to a lack of the support on a professional level that the other former study group members seemed to be getting from their continued, informal professional pairings, and possibly also from their work colleagues.

Anne's situation was further exacerbated by the constant changes in her school, some of which were the result of the requirements by the education authorities to implement a new curriculum. The findings indicate that she no longer believed in her ability to confidently oversee the implementation of these changes. It is possible that if she had been in regular professional contact with one or some of the other group members who had also become Heads of Department in their schools, the sharing of and talking about the new practices might have helped her to develop greater confidence in her capacity to handle change.

I recognise that there may be many other reasons for this loss of confidence in themselves as teachers, some of which are discussed in the extensive literature, both local and international, on teacher professional development (for example Bertram, 2011; Timperley et al, 2008). However, this literature tends to background or ignore the

affective aspects of including new professional knowledge in one's practice, which is the focal point of this research.

7.5. Limitations of the study

One of the major limitations of a tightly-focussed case study is that one cannot make generalisations based on the findings of the research (Bassey, 1999). This was one study group with eight members: it is not possible to say that what 'worked' for this group would work in other groups under other conditions. However Bassey (2001) recommends making 'fuzzy generalisations' along the lines of 'If X happened under conditions Y, it may be found that …'

The composition of this particular study group might, on the surface, suggest that even fuzzy generalisations are not warranted. The members of the study group were all well-qualified teachers: they all had initial degrees and post-graduate teaching diplomas, two of the five members of the original Honours study group already had Honours degrees in other subjects. Everyone had experienced success as university students and had embarked on the Honours degree in Applied Linguistics with every expectation of further success (T3A/TAG). They were also all knowledgeable teachers, with a minimum of nine years of teaching experience. There cannot be many teacher-student study groups with this depth of academic and professional expertise.

But in spite of this depth, the original group was formed because three of the five members found they were struggling with the academic work, and the other two felt they needed support if they were to be successful. Becoming students when they were accustomed to being teachers resulted in them feeling destabilised and unsure of themselves.

Thus a fuzzy generalisation that can be made is the following: if teacher-students with this depth of academic and professional experience felt the need for the support of their peers, it is likely that other teachers (and possibly professionals in other fields) who

return to study would also benefit from the support of their peers, and thus that the formation of such groups should be encouraged.

Another possible limitation arises from the researcher's emic position. As indicated earlier in this chapter, I attempted to address this through devising a method of working with the transcripts aimed at increasing my ability to view the data with a degree of objectivity. However, the possible limits of my neutrality are acknowledged.

7.6. Recommendations for further research

Education in post-apartheid South Africa still appears to be in 'crisis' (Bloch, 2009b), with the content knowledge of many teachers being found to be inadequate, a legacy of teacher education during the apartheid period (Fiske & Ladd, 2005). At least some of these teachers are likely to return to study to extend their knowledge and improve their qualifications. It is possible that they too will struggle with both their studies and implementing their new knowledge in their classrooms after graduation. Further research into the ways that teacher-students work together, and into possible ways in which they could support each other both while studying and after their studies have been completed, could be useful to both teacher-students and teacher educators.

In addition, this study group was reasonably homogenous in composition, as was noted in section 1.5, p. 17. Research into the functioning and development of support systems in groups with more heterogeneous membership would add to what has been begun in this study.

7.7. Conclusion

South African and international teacher education literature (for example Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2008), currently emphasises the value of professional learning communities (PLCs) as a vehicle for teachers' professional development. This trend towards PLCs, combined with the fact that worthwhile teacher professional development that is focussed on extending content and pedagogic knowledge is challenging for teachers, suggests that exploring ways in which teacher-students learn when studying together could contribute to the success of such programmes.

The key contribution of this research is the finding that engaging in dialogic talk while learning together not only plays an important part in the co-construction of knowledge, but also in the constitution of identities as confident, innovative students and teachers. According to Wertsch, dialogic communication is characterised by "a dialogicality of voices: when a speaker produces an utterance, at least two voices can be heard simultaneously" (Wertsch, 1991b, p. 13). In this study the two voices can be 'heard' in the simultaneous 'responsive' and 'addressive' quality of the group's discussions. The first voice 'speaks' through *responding* to the situation: the engaged, persistent nature of the responses 'says' that the problem or situation under discussion is worth engaging with; it has value. The second voice 'speaks' through the talk genre which the responder uses to *address* the situation: by using a particular genre of talk, the responder situates her or himself as a 'holder of valuable knowledge of X type', that of an academic, a teacher and so on. As these voices 'speak' to the situation under discussion, so they 'speak' to the constitution of identities. The speakers engage with and align themselves to each others' 'voices' as co-inquirers-open-to-new-ideas and teachers-with-valuable-professional-knowledge, which are crucial elements in developing Affinity-Identities and mutual Discourse-Identities as confident, innovative students and teachers.

A second contribution is the finding that continued professional engagement with members of their study groups, or with like-minded colleagues in their workplaces, may also be important for the ongoing development of professional teaching identities as innovative teachers who are successful in their classrooms.

It is notable that the central factor in both these findings is the quality of 'being engaged with others'. Engagement is an important component of both dialogic talk and of successful affinity groups and communities of practice. Without engagement in each other's academic and professional lives, the necessary 'addressing' and 'responding' to, and consequent valuing of, each other's identities as students and teachers is unlikely to occur. In this study such engagement appears to be the core of the mutual constitution of identities as confident students and confident teachers, with continued professional

engagement possibly an important element in supporting the ongoing development of confident teacher identities.

Findings from the study suggest that firstly, encouraging teachers who return to study to form study and support groups, and secondly, encouraging them to draw on each others' professional knowledge as a resource during the learning process, is likely to provide some of the support needed for them to develop confidence in themselves as both students and teachers. The findings also suggest that promoting the use of dialogic talk in such groups by discussing in the seminar room how to share, explore and build on other teacher-students' ideas; by discussing how to ask probing questions that will move the inquiry forward; and by modelling dialogic talk in the seminar room, is likely to help teacher-students develop the dialogic talk skills necessary to build supportive communities of enquiry. Finally, the findings suggest that encouraging teacher-students to maintain professional contact with other teachers from their support group may enable them to continue developing confident professional identities when they have finished their studies.

It is hoped that these findings will be of value to researchers who wish to investigate how teacher-students support themselves and each other as they study, and to teacher educators who wish to assist teacher-students to maximize the benefits of their studies.

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APPENDIX 1: PARTICIPANTS' INFORMATION SHEET

Dear …….

I, Elspeth Kempe, am a post-graduate student in the department of Applied English Language Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand.

I am about to start researching the ways in which our study group has worked together over the past five and a half years.

I would like to invite you, as a study group member, to participate in this research. There will be no untoward consequences should you decide not to participate in the research, your participation is entirely voluntary, you may decline to answer any of the questions put to you during the interviews and you may withdraw from the study at any time should you wish to do so.

Participation in the research will involve:

- Consenting to an audio recording being made of our weekly Saturday afternoon work sessions, which will then be transcribed.
- Taking part in both individual and focus group interviews to discuss your experience of being a study group member. These will also be audiotaped and transcribed.
- Consenting to the analysis of the above transcriptions.

Your identity will be protected as far as is possible through the use of pseudonyms (which you will be able to choose) for all the participants. You may, if you wish, peruse the data.

The data will be kept under lock and key at my home for five years after the research has been completed, after which it will be destroyed.

There will be no financial remuneration connected to involvement in the research, and I foresee no risks, side-effects, discomforts or benefits to participating in the research project. I anticipate concluding the research within the next three years.

I hope that the results of the research will benefit teachers who, like us, return to do part-time studies at the University, as well as teacher educators who work with such teacher/students.

Thanking you,

Yours sincerely

Elspeth Kempe

APPENDIX 2: CONSENT FORMS

Consent Form 1

I …….. hereby consent to taking part in:

1. a focus group interview in which we discuss your experience of being a study group member

……

2. an individual interview in which we discuss what effect, if any, the years of studying and working together had on your current professional situation

……

Consent Form 2

I …….. hereby consent to the audiotaping and transcription of:

3. a focus group interview in which we discuss your experience of being a study group member

……

4. an individual interview in which we discuss what effect, if any, the years of studying and working together had on your current professional situation

……

Consent Form 3

I …….. hereby consent to the audiotaping and transcription of our weekly Saturday afternoon work sessions.

……

NOTE: While anonymity cannot be guaranteed as the members of the study group are known to both staff and other students at the university, confidentiality will preserved through the use of pseudonyms in any writing about the research.

APPENDIX 3: PRE-GRADUATION INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Joining the group
When did you join the group?

What made you want to join?

Was it important to you to attend meetings regularly? Why/why not?

Do you feel working with the group helped you in your studies? If so, to what extent?

Did you ever feel pressured to agree with other group members/take on their views/come to a combined agreement on a topic/question? If so, how did you feel about this?

Support
What part, if any, did being a group member play in your successfully completing the Honours course?

Did you find that working together on Saturdays made learning to use the academic discourse any easier? If so, in what ways?

Did you ever feel that coping with really difficult concepts or ideas, things that you were struggling to understand, was made possible by working within the group? If so, in what ways?

Was working on your own made easier because you'd worked with the group?
(Such as coping with difficult concepts?)

Did you find that the group dynamics were useful for keeping you 'up to the mark' with your studying and work?

Did you feel that you could call on people for help and support if necessary?

Did you ever feel any responsibility to help other group members in any way?

Group functioning
Tell me about how you remember a study group afternoon happening.

Was the way the group worked efficient? (Did we get all the work done?) Were you comfortable with the way the group worked?

Did you ever feel there was any conflict in the group? (What were the areas of conflict/where did they lie?)

In what ways, if any, did working with other teachers in the group feed back into your teaching practice?

Do you feel that everyone in the group got what they needed from the group meetings? Why/why not?

Were you able to share teaching issues with other group members? If so, was it useful to be able to do this?

Do you find you still go back to group members to discuss teaching issues? If so, what areas do you talk about?

Would it be useful to have the teaching support you've got from the group continue in the future?

Do you feel more empowered as a teacher? Why/why not?

Group structure

How do you feel the group was structured, in terms of leadership and organization?

How do you feel the age disparity between the group members was handled by the members?

Did you ever feel there were gender issues in the group? If so, how did theses affect you?

In what ways, if at all, did the group influence your decision to do the Masters degree?

APPENDIX 4: POST-GRADUATION INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

What is happening now in your practice as a teacher?

Do you feel, two years after finishing your studies, that there is anything that you are still doing that is a result of your studies and your study group experiences?