PART B

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

CHAPTER 3

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE: TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

A theory of literature is not a luxury item for the busy teacher but a starting point for any and all programs. A theory of literature is, in effect, a theory of education, a point most forcefully made by Northrop Frye (Willinsky 1991: 11).

3.1 Introduction

Part B of this study examines the views of preservice and practising teachers on the roles of children's literature in the primary school classroom. Through analysis of the survey and interview data, a picture emerges of the attitudes and knowledge of the respondents to reading and children's literature and, in turn, the implications for classroom practice can be ascertained.

Through the instrument of a survey, described in Chapter 2, information was collected on student attitude to and knowledge of children's literature, its roles in the primary classroom and, in turn, on the knowledge they identified as being valuable to enhance that understanding. This addressed the broad research question and the secondary questions A and B previously outlined in 1.1.

The data of the survey and the follow-up responses by eight respondents selected from the survey showed a general valuing of children's literature, but a lack of a clear understanding of a number of factors: the genre itself, how to enhance a knowledge of it, and how to best make it part of an English program. It also raised questions about the effectiveness and relevance of current teacher education programs to meet the needs of preservice and practising teachers.

3.2 The survey

3.2.1 Validating the Instrument

To validate the instrument it was necessary:

- to ensure that there was a heterogeneous sample

- to ensure that the items could be separated into easier and more difficult items
- to reduce the possibility of responses that do not fit the model, for example, where respondents give the same response to each item.

As was described in 2.3.2, content validity had been established through the selection of items that had been drawn largely from previous test items, together with questions based on research and reading.

Rasch modelling, as discussed in Chapter 2, was used to establish construct validity.

Items were expected to form two major constructs of latent traits, namely:
- attitudes to reading and literature (items 13–21)
- roles of children's literature in the classroom (items 22–48).

Each set of items was submitted to Rasch scaling. The fit statistics for the item estimates are shown in Table 3.1 and those for the case estimates are shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.1: Fit statistics for item estimates

CONSTRUCT 1			
Infit Mean Square		**Outfit Mean Square**	
Mean	1.00	Mean	1.00
SD	.17	SD	.20
Infit t	**Outfit t**		
Mean	-.15	Mean	-.08
SD	1.95	SD	1.80
CONSTRUCT 2			
Infit Mean Square		**Outfit Mean Square**	
Mean	1.00	Mean	1.01
SD	.16	SD	.21
Infit t	**Outfit t**		
Mean	-.01	Mean	.07
SD	1.99	SD	1.87

Table 3.2: Fit statistics for case estimates

CONSTRUCT 1			
Infit Mean Square		**Outfit Mean Square**	
Mean	.99	Mean	1.00
SD	.64	SD	.65
Infit t	**Outfit t**		
Mean	-.12	Mean	-.02
SD	1.27	SD	1.02
CONSTRUCT 2			
Infit Mean Square		**Oufit Mean Square**	
Mean	1.04	Mean	1.01
SD	.48	SD	.46
Infit t	**Outfit t**		
Mean	0.00	Mean	-.03
SD	1.58	SD	1.21

As shown in Tables 3.1. and 3.2, all of the infit mean squares are close to 1 and the transformed infit (infit t) means are close to zero, which is the ideal mean. This indicates that the data fit the Rasch model. Thus, the fit statistics suggest unidimensional data sets. The 'fit' statistics for both items and cases suggest homogeneity.

The fit maps, to be discussed in more detail in 3.1.2 and 3.1.3, provide additional verification of these findings.

3.2.2 Items

As was explained in Chapter 2, the Rasch model was useful to examine items, as it is able to provide *an item reliability index* to see if the items form constructs. It also offers *estimates of item difficulty* to consider if the items provide a measure of ability or difficulty where, in this case, difficulty is interpreted as 'agreement'.

The Rasch fit statistics had confirmed that there were indeed two constructs:

- Construct 1—attitudes to reading and literature (items 13–21)
- Construct 2—roles of children's literature in the classroom (items (22–48).

The *reliability of item estimates* provides a separation index for constructs 1 and 2. This suggests that items be sufficiently well separated to make reliable judgements of items possible on a scale. For Construct 1, the reliability for attitudes to reading and literature, (items 13–21) was 0.88 and for Construct 2, the roles of children's literature in the classroom, (items 22–48) it was 0.57. Given that the acceptable reliability is 0.7, the former reliability is acceptable but the latter needs to be interpreted with some caution.

Construct 2 could be further divided into sub-components of:

- views on teaching English and reading
- goals of using children's literature
- basis of text selection
- desired children's responses.

An analysis of Construct 2 into its sub-components to identify sub-constructs confirmed that there were only two possible clearly identifiable constructs. Items 22–28 relating to views on teaching English and reading and items 35–43 relating to the basis of text selection both had acceptable reliability of item estimates of 0.74. Sub-components, items

29–34 relating to teachers' perceived goals of using children's literature and items 44–48, relating to the children's responses to literature that teachers see as the most important had an unacceptable reliability of item estimate of 0.00. This information confirmed that there were really only two acceptable sub-constructs.

Item fit

The QUEST implementation of the Rasch model produces an item fit mean square map that identifies those items within infit mean square values. Wright and Linacre (1994) suggest that the interval of components should fall between 0.7 and 1.3 if they are collectively to represent a single underlying construct. The infit statistics show how appropriately each item fits the model, that is to say, whether each item measures the same construct. Figures 3.1 and 3.2 provide infit mean square maps of two constructs, each item in the construct being represented by an asterisk. The acceptable limits of fit are indicated by vertical dotted lines, items outside of these lines being considered inappropriate.

The items in Construct 1 (items 13–21) consider attitudes to reading and to literature. They focus on enjoyment, insight and utilitarian values of reading and literature. Figure 3.1, which indicates the fit of the items to this underlying construct, shows that all the items are falling within the acceptable interval and are spread around 1.00, suggesting that all items are behaving consistently and that there are no reversals.

For Construct 2, the roles of children's literature in the classroom (items 22–48), Rasch analysis of the infit mean square map (Figure 3.2) shows that all items are within the acceptable limits except three items in the section that asked for the respondents' opinions on a broad variety of questions on English teaching and classroom reading.

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Item Fit                                                    19-Mar-** 21: 05: 44
all on all (N = 289 L = 9 Probability Level= .50)
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
INFIT
MNSQ        .63       .71       .83      1.00      1.20      1.40
1.60
--------------+---------+---------+---------+---------+---------+---------+-----
  1 q13                       .    *          |                   .
  2 q14                       .         *     |                   .
  3 q15                       .               |   *               .
  4 q16                       .    *          |                   .
  5 q17                       .          *    |                   .
  6 q18                       .               |             *     .
  7 q19                       .               |                 * .
  8 q20                       .          *    |                   .
  9 q21                       .               |*                  .
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Figure 3.1: Infit mean square map for Construct 1 (items 13-21)

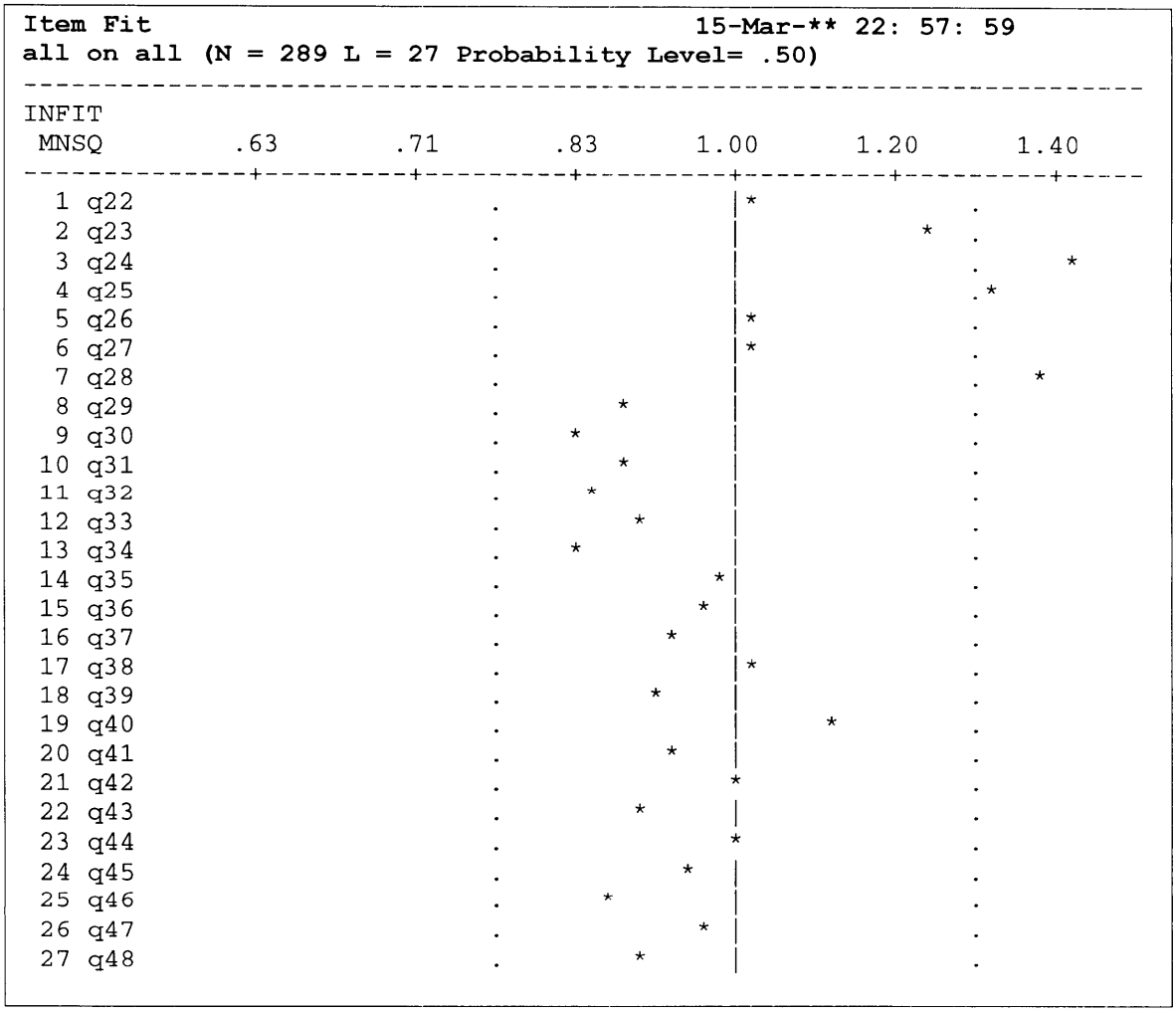

Figure 3.2: Infit mean square map for Construct 2 (items 22–48)

Items with an Infit Mean Square value of greater than 1.3 indicate that they are implicated in too many reversal patterns, suggesting that they may not be elements of the same construct as the better fitting items. Three items are seen as not conforming: Item 24 *(A teacher should encourage children to read* ***a few good quality*** *books rather than large quantities of other literature);* Item 25 *(A teacher should encourage children to read in* ***great quantities****, irrespective of the type of reading material);* and Item 28 *(English can be taught effectively even where library resources are poor)* are identified as the most problematic. All other items relating to the roles of children's literature are behaving consistently. The reasons for the reversals can only be surmised but all three items were derived from the one instrument, the ACER questionnaire (Australian UNESCO 1972). The items identified share a broader perspective than a focus on the roles of literature in the classroom and may therefore be seen as too general for the construct. While it is acknowledged that the three items fall outside the 'tramlines', they do not do so by much, so they will be included in discussion results.

In the survey, two constructs have been identified through Rasch analysis. In Construct 1, all items fit. The second construct had three items, which did not fit the construct. However, overwhelmingly, the remaining 24 items fit the second construct.

Item agreement

Item estimates provide a measure of ability needed to move to the next level of difficulty. The estimates are expressed on a logit scale ranging from +5.0 to –4.0. Maps of item estimates for each construct indicate the ability level that is required for a person to have a fifty percent chance of successfully passing the item (Adams & Khoo 1996). The figures on the extreme left of each map represent the logit scale, which indicates the relative difficulty of the item. In the case of the present study, 'difficulty' can be interpreted as 'agreement' where less agreement to an item is indicated by higher degree of item difficulty. The xxxs represent the distribution of case estimates over the logit scale. The items on the right hand side are plotted according to their degree of difficulty. The first digit refers to the number of the item and the second digit the step difficulty on the Likert scale. There are four possible steps and these refer to the chance of moving from one level of agreement to another. Thresholds are derived for every step. For example, 'strongly disagree' to 'disagree' = step 1 (shown as .1). The partial credit model of analysis of item estimates is preferred in this study as it allows for differential steps in item difficulty where the pattern of difficulty does not need to be the same for each item.

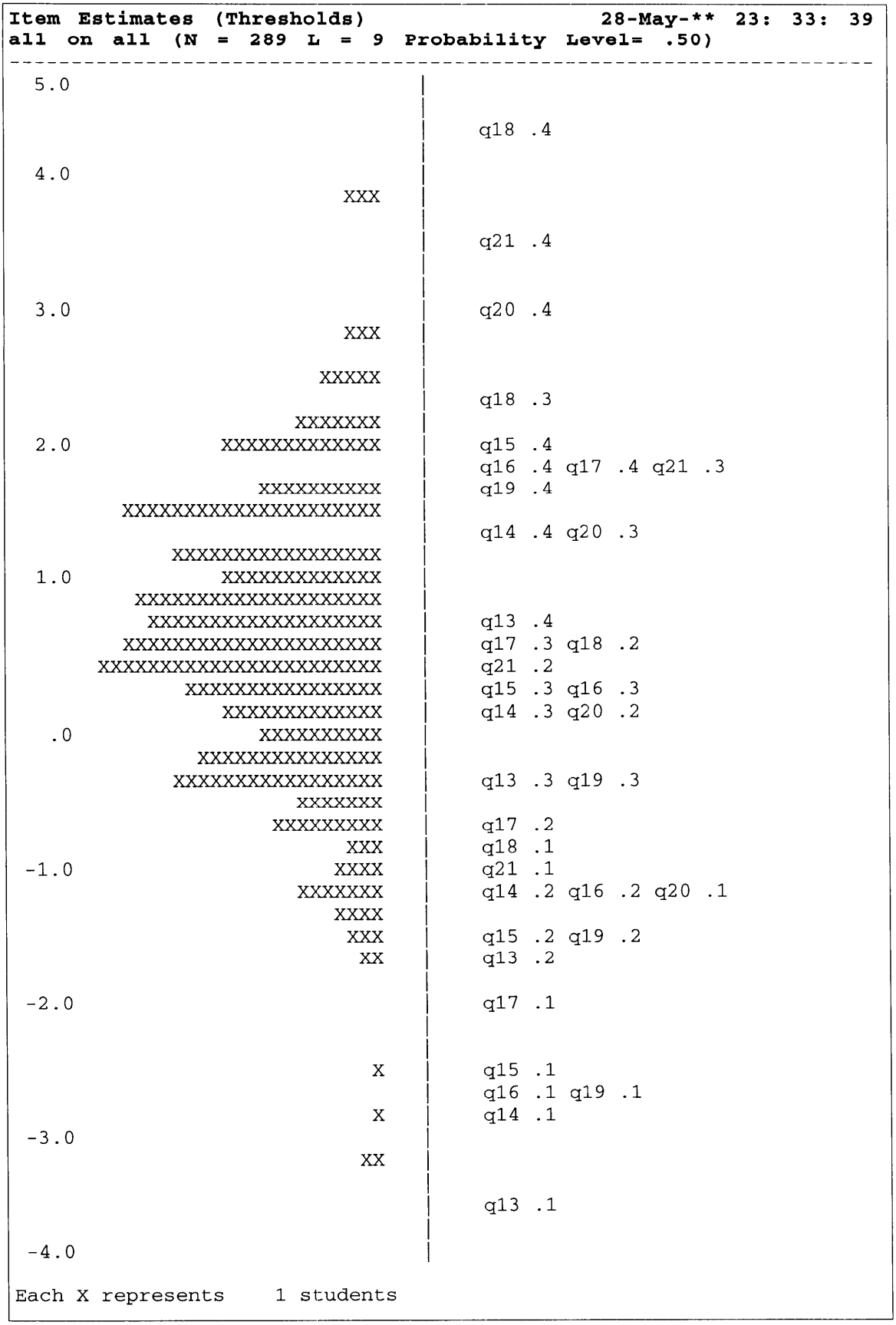

Figure 3.3: Item estimates thresholds (items 13–21)

Item difficulty is shown in figures 3.3 and 3.4 represented by the thresholds. Figure 3.3 represents the items related to attitudes to reading and literature (items 13–21). Item 13 of the survey is shown as 1, Item 14 as 2 and so on.

The cases tend to form a bell curve centring around 1.0–0.0, showing a high reliability and separation, suggesting positive attitudes of most students to reading and literature. There is a clear spread in level of difficulty of questions. Item 18 (shown as 6.4 in Figure 3.3) *Is one of your primary interests in reading literature to learn about different genres*? is considered the most difficult to answer. Given that this item deals with an abstract concept related to literary theory, this is understandable. Item 13 (shown as 1.1 in Figure 3.3) *How much do you enjoy reading literature?* is considered the easiest with which to agree. The items easiest to agree with tend to focus on enjoyment—of reading, of literature, of plot. The items most difficult to agree with challenge the reader to do more than enjoy: to respond to literature through either literary criticism or sociocultural perspectives. The transference is more demanding and requires higher levels of interaction.

Figure 3.4 represents the items related to the roles of children's literature in the classroom (items 22–48). The cases again form a bell curve centring around 1.0 to show a high degree of reliability and separation suggesting a valuing of children's literature's roles in the classroom. Again, there is a clear spread in level of agreement to questions. Item 23, step 4, (*Children will become good readers if they are given comprehension tests on material they have read)* is seen as the most difficult with which to agree. It can be speculated that possibly this reflects personal dislike of comprehension tests together with studies of reading theory. Item 34, step 2, (*to stimulate intellectual growth)* is seen as being the easiest with which to agree. Again, it may be surmised that this response was due to accepted community opinion and/or respondents' own experiences.

It is interesting to note that the 4th step tends to be clustered in the top half of the maps and the 1st step in the bottom half, confirming that step difficulties are ordered within items, that is, step 4 of any item must be equal to or greater than step 3. The items most easy to agree with tend to be child-centred focussing on the needs of the child, including enjoyment, interests, intellectual growth, resources, reading skills and literacy skills in that order. The items most difficult to agree with tend to involve adult-centred, externally driven influences such as recommendations from prepared commercial teaching units, teacher's enjoyment, children's book awards, recommendations from book reviews and the least acceptable, comprehension tests.

In general, the item difficulty maps provide confirmatory evidence of the scaled nature of the set of items used in the questionnaire.

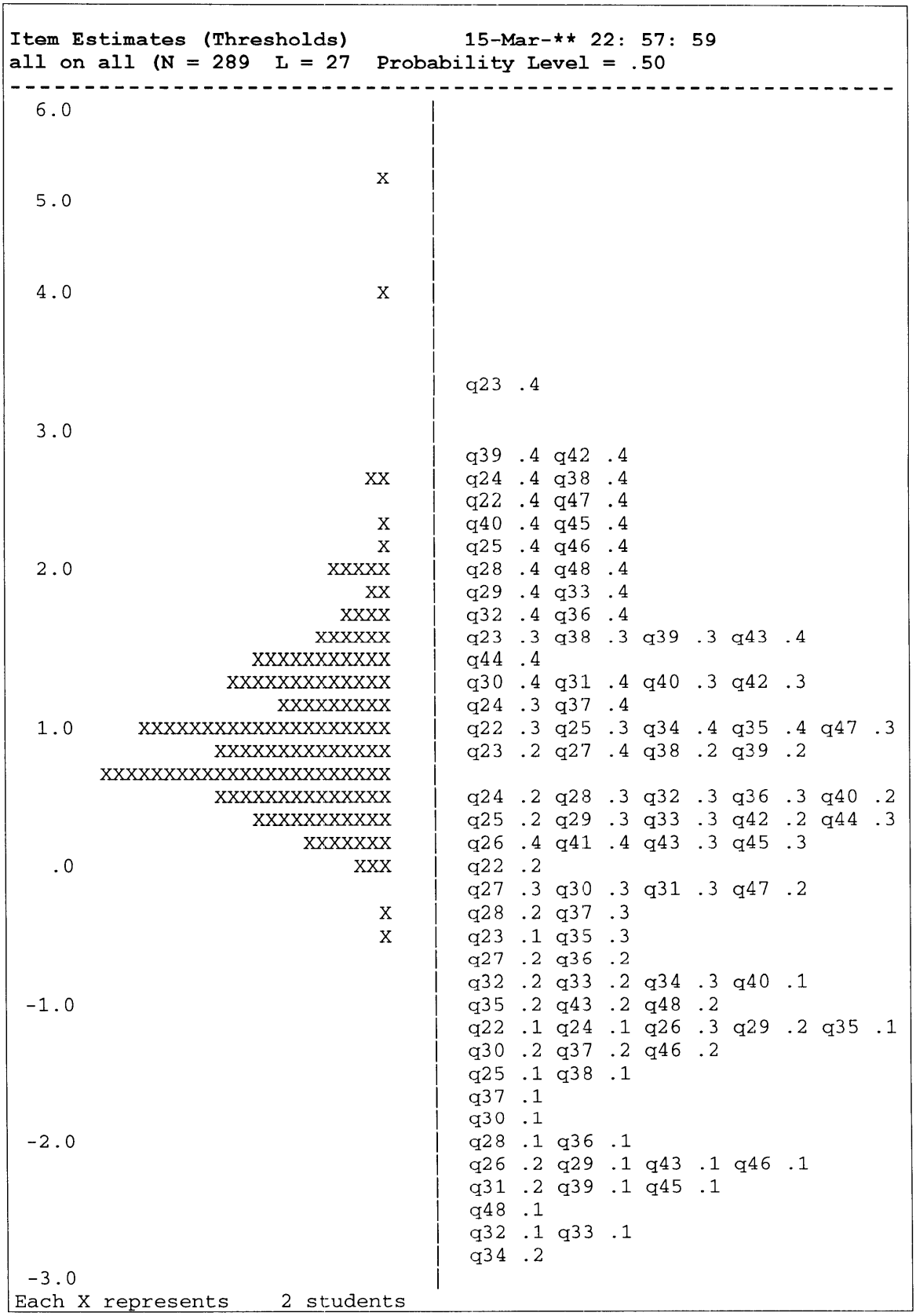

Figure 3.4: Item estimate thresholds (items 22–48)

3.2.3 Cases

Cases can be effectively examined using case estimates and sorted data.

The reliability of case estimates for Construct 1 (items 13–21) was 0.84 and for Construct 2 (items 22–48) was 0.85, suggesting that the cases formed a homogeneous group where the instrument adequately separates them. The analysis of Construct 2 into its sub-components of case estimates revealed that for items 22–28 the reliability of case estimate was 0.36, a result that was to be expected given the diverse nature and complexity of underlying ideologies that might influence opinion. The rest of the case estimates were acceptable. Items 29–34 showed a reliability of case estimate of 0.72, items 35–43 a reliability of 0.74 and items 44–48 a reliability of 0.65.

Both the sorted data tables (Appendix C) and the infit mean square maps of case fit (Appendix D) revealed some data about individual cases showing a number of cases lying well outside the dotted lines. This information should be valuable in understanding the nature of student thinking.

Sorted data (Appendix C, Tables 1 and 2) of Construct 1 and Construct 2 reveal some interesting patterns.

For Construct 1, attitudes to reading and literature, items 13–21, the responses to the 9 items were scored from 'not at all' achieving 1 point to 'a great deal' as achieving 5 points. 'No response' was recorded as 9. The maximum genuine score a person could make was 45 and the minimum was 9. A high score was achieved by answers 'a great deal' to most of the statements. Agreement with items and a high score shows a positive attitude towards reading and to the influence of reading and literature.

An examination of some of the response vectors of the sorted data tables of Construct 1 (Appendix C Table 1), revealed that Cases 219, 249, 276 and 66, 74 and 178 represented extremist views. The responses of Cases 154 and 161 were mostly recorded as 3 on the Likert scale. Cases 220 and 241 showed responses which appear chaotic in comparison to the responses of others. The infit mean square map of case fit of Construct 1 (Appendix D, Figure 1) also identified Cases 220 and 241 as showing reversals, to the right of the dotted lines. The explanation for these responses might be found in the raw data which revealed that Case 220 enjoyed reading but not literature and did not feel that s/he was influenced by it. Yet s/he recognised the importance of developing children's interest in literary style. Case 241 enjoyed reading and literature but did not believe s/he responded to literature or was influenced by it. To the left of the dotted lines some examples of perfect fit emerged namely Cases 20, 102, 258 and 287. Whilst the fit statistics suggested

some cases did not fit, they showed an important dimension of the diversity of the respondents.

For Construct 2, the roles of children's literature in the classroom, items 22–48, the responses to the 27 items were scored from 'strongly disagree/very unimportant' as achieving 1 point to 'strongly agree/ very important' as achieving 5. 'No response' was recorded as 9. The sorted data for Construct 2 (Appendix C, Table 2) showed the maximum genuine score a person could make was 135 (excluding a score of 9s) and the minimum was 27. Aggregation was not appropriate in this case but the ordering of responses and the impact of certain questions was examined.

An examination of some of the response vectors of Construct 2 (Appendix C, Table 2), again reveal some interesting points. Cases 149 and 148 did not answer most of the items including the simple ones. Cases 127 and 128 strongly agreed with most of the items (a response of 5 on the Likert scale) making it difficult to measure their views. Case 174 scored a 3 (a middle view) for 18 out of a possible 27 responses and omitted one response. Curiously, the only items (items 23 and 24) on which s/he had given a strong agreement response were two items with which the other cases found it difficult to agree thus showing that s/he was in poor accord with the statement score ordering.

The infit mean square map of case fit for Construct 2 (Appendix D, Figure 2) shows two interesting groups of cases. To the left of the dotted lines, there appeared a number of cases of perfect fit (Cases 32, 51, 101, 161, 205 and 217) which offered 'ideal' responses. To the right of the dotted lines were a number of reversals. These were Cases 8, 177, 219, 220 and 241 which were interesting for a variety of reasons. Cases 8 and 241 showed extremist views. The sorted data (Appendix C, Table 2) also showed that Case 8 tended to focus on extremist responses such as 'strongly disagree' and 'strongly agree' with few other responses except four noncommittal ('uncertain') responses. Case 241 also reflected a similar pattern of extremist responses and 3 noncommittal responses. Case 177 disagreed with items that were largely agreed with by other respondents and agreed with those items other respondents largely disagreed with. Case 219 had an irregular pattern, agreeing with the most difficult to agree with questions and Case 220 again offered a chaotic response.

For this study, while the relative homogeneity of the cases is of interest, it is the identification of cases which do not conform that can also be informative.

3.3 Importance of the data

Such data suggest that teacher education students hold a diversity of opinions as they struggle to respond to the many influences that might impact on how they see the role of

children's literature in the classroom. Such diversity, it would seem, needs to be considered carefully when planning course units of study for such students. Their characteristics will now be reported. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number to simplify analysis.

3.3.1 Characteristics of student sample

Demographic information is included to give a sense of the cohort but was not used for quantitative analysis to identify any subgroups of respondents.The year of study of students is shown in Table 3.3. 69% of the cohort was made up of first, second and third year students currently enrolled internally in a full time Bachelor of Education degree (for First and Second Year students) and a Bachelor of Teaching (for Third Year students). 14% of the students were in their fourth year (enrolled either internally or externally) who may or may not be presently teaching. A further 18% of the students was made up of those returning to study and undertaking units either to upgrade their qualifications or to work towards a postgraduate degree.

Table 3.3: Year of study

Program	**Frequency**	*%*
First Year B.Ed	97	*34*
Second Year B.Ed	86	*30*
Third Year B.Teach.	14	*5*
Fourth Year + (nonprimary)	7	*2*
Fourth Year + (primary)	34	*12*
Further study	51	*18*
Total	289	*99*

* percentages given to the nearest whole number

Other demographic features of the sample closely reflected the figures for the overall Faculty concerned. The study included 74% internal and 26% external students, 18% male and 82% female with an age frequency dominated by 74% being under 25, 6% in 25–30 year age group, 13% in 31–40 year age group and 8% being over 41 years.

Table 3.4: Tertiary program in which students currently enrolled

Program	**Frequency**	*%*
B.Ed	185	*64*
B.Teach	13	*4*
Grad. Dip. Ed(internal)	12	*4*
M.Ed	4	*1*
Grad.Dip. Ed(external)	25	*9*
B.Ed/B.Teach (external)	48	*17*
BA	2	*1*
Total	289	*100*

* percentages given to the nearest whole number

The majority of student respondents were enrolled in the full-time internal Bachelor of Education program (64%) or the Graduate Diploma of Education program (either internal or external)(13%). However, there were also students enrolled in other programs (Table 3.4).

In terms of professional qualifications already completed, a total of 196 respondents had no professional qualifications including the 39 students who identified HSC as a professional qualification (Table 3.5). Other qualifications were diverse ranging across the sciences, arts and business as well as education. The highest percentage (12%) had the Bachelor of Arts degree as their highest professional qualification.

Table 3.5: Highest professional qualifications completed

Qualifications	Frequency	%
HSC *	39	*13.5*
B.Teach	23	*8*
Ass.Dip. Child Studies	1	*.3*
B.Sc	9	*3*
BA	35	*12*
B.Ed.	6	*2.1*
Dip.Teach	11	*3.8*
B.Bus.	1	*.3*
Dip.Steiner	2	*.7*
Dip.Speech	1	*.3*
Grad.Dip. Ed,(Asian Ed)	2	*.7*
B.Speech Therapy	1	*.3*
B.HSc (Nursing)	1	*.3*
No qualif	157	*54.3*

Table 3.6: Tertiary level units completed in English

Value	Frequency	%
1	116	*43*
2	106	*39*
3	22	*8*
4	9	*3*
5	9	*3*
6	6	*2*
7	1	*0*
10	1	*0*

'Value' represents the number of units completed in English

Missing cases: 19

* percentages given to the nearest whole number

Respondents were asked to list the tertiary level units they had completed in English which might include curriculum, literature or media studies (Table 3.6). 82% of students had

completed at least two units, 6% had not completed any units in English while 5% or 17 respondents had completed five or more units in English. A rather disturbing finding was that only 39 students (13.5%) across all programs had undertaken a unit in children's literature and only 6 of those (2.1%) had undertaken two or more units offered either by the Faculty of Arts or the Faculty of Education. Only 13 of those students were enrolled in the internal Bachelor of Education program. The majority were enrolled across a range of external programs.The current professional position of the respondents is reported in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7: Current professional position

Value	Frequency	%
Student teacher	243	*84.1*
K–2 teacher	9	*3.1*
3–6 teacher	11	*3.8*
Administrator	0	*0*
Education consultant	1	*0.3*
Specialist teacher	7	*2.4*
Others #	18	*6.2*

#Others included:

Casual teachers	4
Correctional counsellor	1
Librarians	4
Speech pathologist	1
Graphic designer	1
Teacher's Aide	1
Co-ordinator Homework Centre	1
Adult Educator	1
Literacy teacher (secondary)	1
Non teaching	3

* percentages given to the nearest whole number

The respondents' years of teaching experience is noted in Table 3.8.

Table 3.8: Duration of teaching

Value	Frequency	%
Not yet	248	*86*
< 1 year	14	*5*
1–10 years	19	*7*
11–20	4	*1*
>21	4	*1*

* percentages given to the nearest whole number

3.3.2 Attitude: interest and transference

It is important to establish a definition of 'attitude'. Although published almost half a century ago, Edwards'(1957: 2) *Techniques of Attitude Scale Construction* still offers a

useful definition of attitude where 'an attitude is the degree of positive or negative affect associated with some psychological object'. 'Psychological objects' in this study refer to feelings such as enjoyment, sympathy, empathy, motivation and interest and their reverse. 'Affect' or feelings may be favourable or unfavourable. The definition also stresses that there are 'degrees' of positive and negative affect, which suggests that there are more than two responses to any one psychological object, that there is a continuum along which responses might be plotted.

The questionnaire items 10–21 were designed to explore the respondents' attitude to reading and literature. As was discussed in Chapter 2, this bank of questions had been included assuming that there was a positive relationship between attitude to reading and literature and the approach a teacher took to using literature in the primary classroom. The items that considered interest in reading and literature (items 10–14) reflected a sense of enjoyment. Items that considered transfer (items15–21) assumed that readers bring their literary experiences to their ordinary life and as a corollary, they bring their life experiences to an interpretation of literature, and that it is possible to empathise and analogise from the experience.

In order to establish a sense of preference for leisure-time activities, the question *If you had to choose between a novel and a film which would you choose?* was put to the respondents. *Film* rather than *television* was chosen to draw comparisons between methods of conveying a narrative message, as television was seen to represent a broader range of genres. The responses were almost equally divided with 131 or 47% preferring the novel and 140 or 51% preferring film.

Table 3.9: Reasons for choice

Value	Frequency	%
Time	55	*24*
Enjoyment	50	*22*
Visual impact	28	*12*
Imagination	41	*18*
Interpretation	18	*8*
Relationship	13	*6*
Achievement	9	*4*
Entertainment	11	*5*

* percentages given to the nearest whole number

Note: a third category had to be added as 6 of the respondents (2%) showed an equal interest in both. 12 people did not choose. When asked to justify their choices, the respondents' answers fell into eight categories: time, enjoyment, visual impact, imagination, interpretation, a study of relationships, achievement and entertainment (Table 3.9).

Some 64 respondents did not offer a reason for their choice. The most popular reasons for the choice of film were the importance of *time* (24%) and *film's visual impact* (12%). Time constraints imposed by study loads were stressed as a factor in preferring film to novel to gain a message quickly. As one participant put it, 'It takes one-and-a-half hours to watch a film and forever to read a book'. There were those who enjoyed the visual dimension of film and identified themselves as 'visual learners'. Many selected film as an alternative on the basis that they disliked reading or were, on their own admission, too lazy to read. Typical comments were 'Books bore me', 'Reading makes me sleep' and 'Reading is too strenuous'. For some, the great advantages of film were passive ones: 'You don't have to think' and 'Films are easier to comprehend'. There were, however, those who saw real value in film in terms of appreciating the acting and admiring special effects. The supporters of the novel (N= 131) saw its most valuable qualities were *the stimulation of imagination* (18% of the total number of respondents), the offering of *opportunities for interpretation* (8%) and the providing of a *sense of achievement* generated by an interactive process with the author (4%). Typical comments were 'Novels are thought provoking', 'Words express more', 'More detailed' and 'Novels have more impact and feeling'. The remaining reasons of *enjoyment* (22%), *a study of relationships* (6%) and *entertainment* (5%) were given for both film and novel.

While this item provided valuable information about respondents' reasons for selection, it tended to polarise choices unnaturally and suggested that respondents had to choose between the two forms of novel and film when, in fact, they may have valued both.

Table 3.10: Categories of texts often read

Value	Frequency	% of 289
Fiction	216	*74.7*
Nonfiction	164	*56.7*
Poetry	58	*20.1*
Newspapers	206	*71.3*
Magazines	196	*67.8*
Articles on the Internet	84	*29.1*
Other	23	*8.0*

Other text types were identified by 23% of respondents (see Table 3.11)

Respondents were asked to identify the categories of texts they often read (Table 3.10). They, of course, could nominate more than one. The most preferred texts were fiction (74.7% respondents), newspapers (71.3%) and magazines (67.8%). Only 20.1% of respondents read poetry regularly.

Table 3.11: Others text types

Value	Frequency	% of people who responded
Autobiography	4	*1.4*
Comics	2	*.7*
Journals	2	*.7*
Textbooks	6	*2.1*
Signs	1	*.3*
Plays	2	*.7*
Children's Writing	3	*1.0*
Work documents	3	*1.0*

In response to questions on time spent reading, only 25% of students spent more than two hours per day reading for study purposes (Table 3.12). Yet most claimed that they did not have time for leisure reading as they needed to study.

Table 3.12: Time spent reading: study

Value	Frequency	%
< 1 hour	115	*40*
1–2 hours	102	*36*
2–3 hours	42	*15*
3–4 hours	19	*7*
> 4 hours	9	*3*

2 respondents did not respond.

* percentages given to the nearest whole number

Only 15% spent more than two hours per day reading for leisure purposes (Table 3.13).

Table: 3.13: Time spent reading: leisure

Value	Frequency	%
< 1 hour	149	*55*
1–2 hours	78	*29*
2–3 hours	24	*9*
3–4 hours	9	*3*
> 4 hours	9	*3*

20 respondents did not respond.

* percentages given to the nearest whole number

While many instruments for both children and adults have been designed for measuring attitudes to reading, it was necessary to find a way of gaining some sense of attitude with the minimum number of items rather than a complete questionnaire. To this end, questions were devised that reflected the importance of *enjoyment* (items 13,14,19*), insight* (15,16,17,20) *and utility* (18, 21) in reading literature (Table 3.14).

Table 3.14: Frequency of responses to attitudes to reading and literature

Item 13–21	1	%	2	%	3	%	4	%	5	%
13. How much do you enjoy reading?	2	*1*	16	*6*	54	*19*	88	*30*	129	*45*
14. How much do you enjoy reading literature?	5	*2*	27	*9*	73	*25*	96	*33*	88	*30*
15. In reading a novel, to what extent do you ever identify with one of the characters?	6	*2*	20	*7*	98	*34*	114	*39*	51	*18*
16. To what extent do you think your understanding of other people has increased from reading literature?	6	*2*	30	*10*	88	*30*	106	*37*	59	*20*
17. Has any literature ever influenced what you believe in?	13	*5*	42	*15*	96	*33*	81	*28*	56	*19*
18. Is one of your primary interests in reading literature to learn about different genres?	55	*19*	96	*33*	103	*36*	32	*11*	3	*1*
19. To what degree is your primary interest in reading literature to enjoy the plot?	5	*2*	16	*6*	57	*20*	141	*49*	70	*24*
20. To what degree is your primary interest in reading literature to explore an author's view of society?	37	*13*	73	*25*	96	*33*	66	*23*	17	*6*
21. To what extent do you focus on what is distinctive about the author's literary style?	42	*15*	88	*30*	106	*37*	45	*16*	8	*3*

1 = Not at all
2 = A little
3 = Some
4 = Quite a lot
5 = A great deal

* percentages given to the nearest whole number

Item 17: 1 missing case

For the two combined highest levels of response on the Likert scale, *enjoyment* rated most significantly with item 13 (75%), item 19 (73%) and item 14 (66%). Items relating to *insight* were considered the next most important with items 15 and 16 (57%), item 17 (47%) and item 20 (29%) and those relating to *utility* the least important with item 18(12%) and item 21 (19%). For all but items 13, 14 and 19, some 30% or more of respondents offered a noncommittal response of 'some'. The 'not at all' and 'a little' responses to items 18, 20 and 21 are quite graphic, suggesting that some 52% of respondents do not consider learning about different genres as significant, some 38% do

not value literature as presenting an author's view of society and some 45% place little value on literary style.

3.3.3 Approaches to teaching English: theoretical influences

It is likely that assumptions are made in teacher education institutions that recent developments in language and literary theory, which are the focus of study, will be evidenced in the students' classroom practice. However, in The Children's Choice project's (Bunbury[ed]1995: 178) view 'English teaching proceeds in a climate of ignorance concerning the developments in language and literary theory'.

The questionnaire items, items 22–28, selected for this section reflect either some elements of language or literary theory (Table 3.15).

Table 3.15: Frequency of responses to views on teaching English

Item 22–28	1	%	2	%	3	%	4	%	5	%
22. Children have not been given a comprehensive education in English until they have come to appreciate literature	10	*3*	46	*16*	97	*34*	103	*36*	31	*11*
23. Children will become good readers if they are given comprehension tests on material they have read.	33	*11*	95	*33*	76	*26*	72	*25*	11	*4*
24. A teacher should encourage children to a read a few good quality books rather than large quantities of other literature	15	*5*	76	*26*	75	*26*	95	*33*	27	*9*
25. A teacher should encourage children to read in great quantities, irrespective of the type of reading material.	10	*3*	75	*26*	67	*23*	91	*32*	43	*15*
26. Teachers of all primary grades should read stories to the class regularly.	-	-	1	*0*	10	*3*	78	*27*	199	*69*
27. A comprehensive library is necessary to support effective English teaching in the classroom	-	-	15	*5*	25	*9*	95	*33*	153	*53*
28. English can be taught effectively even where library resources are poor.	3	*1*	29	*10*	63	*22*	137	*48*	56	*19*

1 = Strongly disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Uncertain
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly agree

Item 22: 2 missing cases
Item 23: 2 missing cases
Item 24: 1 missing case
Item 25: 3 missing cases
Item 26: 1 missing case
Item 27: 1 missing case
Item 28: 1 missing case

* percentages given to the nearest whole number

However, it was only the most straightforward items that received strong support where 96% of respondents thought that reading stories regularly to the class (item 26) was important and 86% saw a library as necessary (item 27). The majority of responses either

were 'uncertain' or 'disagreed' with the premises related to the theories. Only 47% saw an appreciation of literature as 'important' or 'very important' to a comprehensive education (item 22). In response to item 23, 44% of the respondents 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' with the statement that comprehension testing is a means of developing good readers. Items 24, 25 and 28 do not fit the construct and do not offer meaningful results.

3.3.4 Goals for using children's literature

As was explained in Chapter 2, the questionnaire items (29–34) for this section, goals for using children's literature, were adapted from Purves, Forshay and Hansson's cross-national survey (1973) and the Children's Choice project (Bunbury [ed]1995). For this study, the eight identified goals (four extrinsic and four intrinsic) in the Purves and Bunbury studies were reduced to six, deleting the items ranked last in their surveys. The wording of some items was modified to reflect the language of the current K-6 English syllabus but in essence it matched that of the two earlier studies (Table 3.16).

Table 3.16: Goals for using children's literature

Items 29–34	1	%	2	%	3	%	4	%	5	%
29. To develop a sense of cultural heritage	1	*0*	10	*4*	77	*27*	130	*46*	67	*24*
30. To develop literary appreciation	1	*0*	4	*1*	49	*17*	121	*42*	112	*39*
31. To develop literacy standards	-	-	3	*1*	54	*19*	112	*39*	117	*41*
32. To help develop moral values and standards and civic virtues.	1	*0*	19	*7*	76	*27*	116	*41*	72	*25*
33. To foster emotional growth	1	*0*	20	*7*	66	*23*	132	*46*	67	*23*
34. To stimulate intellectual growth	-	-	1	*0*	25	*9*	122	*43*	139	*48*

1 = Very unimportant
2 = Moderately unimportant
3 = Necessary
4 = Important
5 = Very important

Item 29: 4 missing cases
Item 30: 2 missing cases
Item 31: 3 missing cases
Item 32: 5 missing cases
Item 33: 3 missing cases
Item 34: 2 missing cases

* percentages given to the nearest whole number

All goals were considered important but there was a distinct ranking of those goals that were seen as 'important' or 'very important'. To stimulate intellectual growth (item 34) was seen as the most important purpose for using children's literature. Developing literary appreciation and literacy standards were also seen as important. The least value was found in literature developing moral values and standards and civic virtues, and emotional growth.

3.3.5 Text selection

The data for questionnaire items 35–43 which explored the basis of teachers' text selection for classroom teaching (Table 3.17) revealed that there was a great difference between what was considered valuable and what was not.

Table 3.17: Basis of text selection

Item 35–43	1	%	2	%	3	%	4	%	5	%
35. Children's interests	2	*1*	2	*1*	23	*8*	114	*40*	146	*51*
36. Literary merit of text	2	*1*	19	*7*	76	*27*	118	*41*	71	*25*
37. Reading skill(s) to be developed	1	*0*	2	*1*	35	*12*	118	*41*	130	*45*
38. Children's book awards	14	*5*	110	*38*	83	*29*	59	*21*	21	*7*
39. Recommendations from book reviews	6	*2*	124	*43*	82	*29*	56	*20*	18	*6*
40. Teacher's enjoyment	20	*7*	71	*25*	86	*30*	74	*26*	35	*12*
41. Child's enjoyment	-	-	-	-	14	*5*	74	*26*	198	*69*
42. Recommendations from prepared commercial teaching units	14	*5*	67	*24*	93	*33*	90	*32*	21	*7*
43. Teachable texts	1	*0*	11	4	66	*23*	122	43	86	*30*

1 = Very unimportant
2 = Moderately unimportant
3 = Necessary
4 = Important
5 = Very important

Item 35: 2 missing cases
Item 36: 3 missing cases
Item 37: 3 missing cases
Item 38: 2 missing cases
Item 39: 3 missing cases
Item 40: 3 missing cases
Item 41: 3 missing cases
Item 42: 4 missing cases
Item 43: 3 missing cases

* percentages given to the nearest whole number

The combined scores of 'important' and 'very important' showed a range from 95% to 26% across the items. For the respondents, the most meaningful basis on which texts should be selected related to the child's enjoyment (item 41), and children's interests (item 35) (yet teacher's enjoyment received little support). The third basis was that related to reading skills to be developed (item 37) and a fourth related factor was the selection of 'teachable texts' (item 43). External 'expert' recommendations such as book awards (item 38), book reviews (item 39) and prepared commercial teaching units (item 42) were seen as relatively unimportant influences.

3.3.6 Responses to literature

It is assumed that expected student responses to literature are driven by philosophical perceptions of literature, which have developed over time (see Chapters 5 and 6 for further discussion). Items 44–48 were designed to reflect particular discourses of English (Table 3.18). These discourses identified by Morgan (1997) as ethical, rhetorical, aesthetic

and political were introduced in Chapter 1 and are further discussed in Chapter 5. It is acknowledged that the descriptors for each discourse and the items that were created to reflect the discourses are simplistic and incomplete. However, they provide a guide to how education students might expect the children they teach to respond to text.

Table 3.18: Discourses reflected in items

Discourse	Approach	Theory	Item
ethical	personal growth	reader response	44
rhetorical	text-centred	functional linguistic	45
aesthetic	cultural heritage	Leavisite/New criticism	47
political	critical deconstruction and reconstruction	critical literacy, poststructuralism	46,48

No item appeared clearly 'important' or 'very important' with only slightly identifiable preferencing of items 44, 45 and 48 suggesting that no one discourse dominated (Table 3.19) within the study's population.

Table 3.19: Children's desired responses

Children must be able to:

Item 44–48	1	%	2	%	3	%	4	%	5	%
44. bring their own experiences to a reading of the text	-	-	14	*5*	67	*23*	113	*39*	94	*33*
45. recognise language features of texts	1	*0*	11	*4*	73	*26*	153	*53*	48	*17*
46. see literature in a social context	1	*0*	8	*3*	83	*29*	138	*48*	55	*19*
47. know the fixed concrete meaning of a text	9	*3*	37	*13*	94	*33*	113	*40*	32	*11*
48. realize that multiple meanings exist in a text	1	*0*	16	6	74	*26*	134	*47*	62	*22*

1 = Very unimportant
2 = Moderately unimportant
3 = Necessary
4 = Important
5 = Very important

Item 44: 1 missing case
Item 45: 3 missing cases
Item 46: 4 missing cases
Item 47: 4 missing cases
Item 48: 2 missing cases

* percentages given to the nearest whole number

It was seen to be important to encourage children to bring their own experiences to reading. It was also seen to be important to have children recognise language features of texts. Item 47 was seen as the least important response. It might be assumed that respondents would choose between item 47 or 48, as each item reflects diverse approaches to text, but the results suggest that some respondents consider both approaches as significant.

3.3.7 Teacher education students' knowledge

This section, items 49–51, probed two main elements: respondents' knowledge of children's texts and the knowledge they felt they needed to develop. While the majority of respondents did not see any of the items of knowledge as 'very important' and gave least importance to a knowledge of current theoretical approaches (Table 3.20), most saw such knowledge as valuable.

Table 3.20: Teacher education students' knowledge

A knowledge of:

Item 49–51	1	%	2	%	3	%	4	%	5	%
49. a body of texts	2	*1*	6	*2*	68	*24*	132	*46*	78	*27*
50. current theoretical approaches to children's literature	3	*1*	18	*6*	84	*29*	120	*42*	61	*21*
51. the field of children's literature	1	*0*	4	*1*	60	*21*	118	*41*	103	*36*

1 = Very unimportant
2 = Moderately unimportant
3 = Necessary
4 = Important
5 = Very important

Item 49: 3 missing cases
Item 50: 3 missing cases
Item 51: 3 missing cases

* percentages given to the nearest whole number

Items 52 to 55 invited open-ended responses on qualities of good children's literature, naming a favoured picture book and identifying a piece of children's literature which respondents would rate highly. The number of missing respondents (Table 3.21) can be variously interpreted. It perhaps suggests that there was either an ignorance of children's texts or an inability to recall titles, or on the other hand, that the respondents had 'lost interest' as the items were towards the end of the questionnaire.

Table 3.21: Number of responses to items 52–55

Item	Frequency	%	Missing	%
52	200	*69.2*	89	*30.8*
53	191	*66.1*	98	*33.9*
54	154	*53.3*	135	*46.7*
55	145	*50.2*	144	*49.8*

Knowledge of children's texts

Knowledge of children's texts was examined from three perspectives: an identification of the qualities of good children's literature, the naming of a picture book the respondents had liked and the naming of a children's book the respondents would rate highly.

Samples of responses are listed in Appendix E Figure 1, which reflects the responses but omits duplication. It appeared that most students saw that the main qualities of children's literature related to at least one of three constructions that might be grouped under *realism*, *formalism* and *moralism*. Some saw that the most important aspect was to offer realistic texts that were mimetic models of life and had relevance and interest to the readers. Most stressed the importance of imaginative, enjoyable texts which reflected imaginary or real life experiences. Humour was seen to be a valuable quality of appeal. Those who saw the main value of texts as functional, focused on formal values related to text such as plot, characterisation and choice of language to provide models of appropriate structures and style. A third group saw the value of literature as offering patterns on which to model one's life and respond to a message emotionally, as well as intellectually. Internal and external student responses were recorded separately to see if diversity of experience had any impact on choices. The patterns for internal and external student responses were similar although more internal students emphasised the need for enjoyment and simplicity than did the external students.

A list of picture books named by respondents is included in Appendix E, Figure 2. Most picture books selected were published during the 1970s and 80s. Very few texts were recent and no Australian or international award winners from the past eight years were selected. Jeannie Baker's *Window* (1992) was the most recent award winner. The most popular texts, shown in Table 3.22, are at least thirteen years' old. The majority of books selected were Australian, authors such as Jeannie Baker, Mem Fox and Graeme Base being mentioned several times and most, including the Little Golden books, were aimed at the very young. There seemed to be a lack of awareness of the expanding boundaries of the picture books for older readers or of experimental texts. Many titles were from reading schemes or many were incorrectly given. Some responded with 'Don't know a lot' and 'Been too long'.

Table 3.22: Student choice: most popular picture books

Year	Title
1963	Where the Wild Things Are
1970	The Very Hungry Caterpillar
1970	There's A Sea in My Bedroom
1984	Wombat Stew
1987	Where the Forest Meets the Sea

Item 54 invited respondents to identify a children's text they rated highly and, more importantly, to give reasons for their choice (Appendix E, Figure 3). The reasons, it was hoped, would give insight into what respondents value in children's literature. Several respondents chose to identify an author rather than an example of a text. The most

consistently mentioned were Paul Jennings, Robin Klein and Roald Dahl for their humour, accessibility and enjoyment, C.S.Lewis who was seen 'to expand the imagination' and Margaret Wild and John Marsden who 'deal with sensitive issues' and write with energy 'to appeal to all sorts of people'. The reasons for choices tended to fall into categories of stimulating imagination, offering mirrors of the world or offering a notion to which the reader responds. The books are thus grouped in the list in Appendix E, Figure 3 under the headings of *imagination, realism* and *personal response.* A few respondents saw texts simply in terms of a stimulus for another purpose. As external students undertake different English units to internal students and therefore might require differently structured units, responses were recorded from external and internal students separately in order to consider if there were differences in their knowledge of children's literature. External students tended to favour books that stimulated imagination and offered some useful insights into their reasons for text choice, while internal students tended to focus on personal response (often their own). The external students drew from a variety of cultures and periods to include texts as diverse as *My Girragundji* (1998) and *The Hobbitt* (1937).

Knowledge requested to be developed

Item 49–51 had offered opportunity to focus on facets of knowledge respondents might consider important. Items 56 and 57 now invited opportunity to distinguish personal needs and consider possible classroom applications. Item 58 offered space for any further thoughts. Table 3.23 shows the number of responses to these questions.

Table 3.23: Number of responses to items 56–58

Item	Frequency	%	Missing	%
56	103	*35.6*	186	*64.4*
57	77	*26.6*	212	*73.4*
58	43	*14.9*	246	*85.1*

The responses tended to fall into three main areas: those who desired more knowledge of children's literature; those who wished to gain a deeper critical understanding of texts and those who wished to know how to use literature in their classrooms (Appendix F, Figure 1). Of the 103 respondents to item 56, 49 were external students and 54 were internal students. The knowledge that external students highlighted as being important was of children's books, while internal students were more concerned with knowledge on the uses of children's literature in the classroom. Few students saw a need to enrich their understanding of children's literature. The remaining responses 'Up to the teacher' and 'Not needed' suggested either great confidence or great ignorance.

Item 57 asked *How would you use this information in your teaching in the classroom?* 44 of the 77 responses came from external students. Again the responses were grouped under the headings of *A Knowledge of Children's Literature, Understanding of Children's Literature* and *The Use of Children's Literature*, the last category being the one that attracted most interest although the internal student responses tended to be in broad terms, rather than specific applications (Appendix F, Figure 2). Again, the miscellaneous responses especially those from two internal students ('I wouldn't' and 'I don't know') are of interest.

Item 58 invited final comments (Appendix F, Figure 3). The comments which were grouped under three headings—*Reading*, *Children's Literature* and *University Programs*—speak for themselves. While the responses were few in number (43), they offer some important points for consideration.

An important revelation to come from the open-ended responses was a sense that while most respondents adopted at least one of the four key discourses identified by Morgan and listed in items 44–48, several suggested a fifth discourse, a sociocultural discourse reflected in such comments 'encourage children to examine text from their cultural, social perspective and challenge their ideas' (see Appendix E).

3.4 Individual cases

Eight respondents who had completed the questionnaire who were practising teachers were selected at random and asked to describe and analyse their reading program in terms of its philosophical underpinnings, strategies and resources used to implement it. The cohort included both beginning and experienced teachers of grades K-2 and 3–6 (see Table 3.24).

While seven of the eight teachers in the questionnaire categorised children's literature as 'important' or 'very important' in developing literacy standards (item 31), the actual usage of literature demonstrated in the reading programs was less meaningful. Seven of the eight teachers, regardless of personal philosophy of English teaching and years of teaching experience, drew on programmed and graded reading resources as foundational to their programs. At least six added children's literature for enrichment. The reasons for this emphasis on programmed resources were variously given as the only means to individualise reading instruction given the limited time available, a lack of sufficient children's literature texts and teachers' lack of confidence in being able to grade texts or select on some other basis.

Table 3.24: Resources identified to support reading programs

Case Number Years of Teaching	Grade Taught	Purpose of Children's Literature (Item 31)	Quality of Children's Literature (Item 52)	Philosophy	Strategies	Resources
222 1 year	Primary	Important	No response.	Developmental based on skills, comprehension	Class groups Text studied for 4 weeks—activities rotated. Individual reading contract.	Limited grade readers.
226 1 year	Infants	Important	Bright pictures, humour.	Developmental based on skills	Whole class textcentric teaching of semantic, syntactic and graphological skills.	Programmed reading. Foundation Publications
227 1 year	Primary	Important	No response.	Developmental based on skills Reading to class to develop imagination	Class groups, graded activities. Modelled reading. Reading at home.	Programmed reading (text & activities). 'Old' readers. Chapter book e.g. Blyton.
245 1 year	Infants	Very Important	Captures imagination, relevant.	Explicit instructions. Whole Language approach.	School-based literacy groups. Class based reading groups. Whole class program based on integrated unit. Independent reading (DEAR).	SWELL. Eureka Treasure Chest. Texts related to unit of work. Children's literature.
250 11–20 years	ESL Infants	Important	Enjoyable, enriching experience.	Whole Language. Skills-based, phonics.	School-based literacy groups linguistics program. Shared reading. Independent reading. Home reading.	Jolly phonics. Big books. Core library Fitzroy 1–10 Story Box, Sunshine, Eureka.
254 2–10 years	Primary	Very important	Captures imagination.	Reading for meaning and enjoyment.	Literature-based. Class ability groups. Whole class-contract of activities. Independent reading.	Eureka Treasure Chest. Theme books e.g *Charlotte's Web.* Children's literature.

Table 3.24: Resources identified to support reading programs continued ...

275 2–10 years	Primary	Necessary	High interest	Interaction of strategies with past experience.	School-based literacy groups. Shared reading-comprehension task. Independent reading.	Text based on theme.
249 21+ years	Infants	Very Important	Repetition	Building on skills. Encourage responsibility. Guided Reading.	School-based literacy group.	SWELL, Eureka, Language Program. Independent reading. Programmed graded materials. Activity sheets.

The teachers' own knowledge and understanding of what reading is, and a fear of giving a child a text that was not appropriate to his/her reading level, seemed to dominate the focus on programmed reading. Most teachers, however, were aware that this process offered little choice to young readers. Some tried to compensate for this by independent reading sessions where children were free to select children's literature. Case 222, for example, saw the weakness in his/her program was the limited range of texts available 'to benefit the readers and the levels that they are responding to'.

A number of common features could be identified as impacting on the choice of resources:

- a whole school literacy program generated by the Board of Studies
- an emphasis on skill development fostered by the NSW English K-6 syllabus
- a policy of home-school reading encouraged by the Board of Studies.

Firstly, whole school literacy programs were seen as offering continuity across the grades. To ensure this continuity teachers tended to use programmed reading material. This material was not connected to other KLAs nor was it reinforced outside the school-based groups so that reading was being seen as a discrete set of skills not integrated into the whole teaching program. As one teacher expressed it, 'the students view English to be over by 11.10am and they do not have to worry about it for the rest of the day'.

Secondly, the philosophical underpinnings identified by the teachers tended to be developmental, based on skills, or involved a somewhat eclectic drawing on Whole Language and skills. Programs such as SWELL which focuses on skill development were seen to establish confidence in decoding skills but as Case 245 pointed out, it failed to teach 'the skills of being able to use contextual, semantic and grammatical information in comprehending the meaning of text' and did not offer exposure to a variety of texts.

Thirdly, it seemed to be a common practice to encourage reading at home. However, the value of this might have been counter-productive, as suggested by several teachers, in that the resources sent home were old and unimaginative readers including *Ladybird, PM Readers* and *Sunshine Readers*.

3.5 Discussion and conclusions

'[H]orizons of possibilities'(Langer 1995: 26)

3.5.1 Attitudes to reading and literature

It had been hoped that those questions which asked about the time spent reading and the responses to reading, in general, and literature, in particular, would give some insight into the respondents' ideological perspectives on which they might build their approach to the use of children's literature in the classroom. Table 3.14 had shown data from which three key points emerged. Firstly, the amount of time spent reading for study and leisure appeared low where 40% of respondents spent less than one hour a day reading for study and 55% spent less than one hour a day reading for pleasure. Secondly, while 75% of respondents acknowledged an interest in reading (*quite a lot* or *a great deal* on the Likert scale), the figure fell to 63% for an enjoyment of reading literature. Thirdly, disappointingly, transference was seen as important by only about half of the respondents (57% on items 15 and 16 and 47% on item 17).

While it might be considered acceptable that only 7% of respondents claimed they did not enjoy reading and 11% did not enjoy reading literature, it must be a matter of concern that these respondents are at present or soon to be teachers of reading! It raises questions about the role tertiary programs should take to enhance an enjoyment and understanding of reading and literature.

The categories of texts often read showed a diversity of interest but highlighted the relative unpopularity of poetry. Given that the Children's Choice project (Bunbury [ed] 1995) had found that poetry was a popular genre with Year Five primary children (21% boys and 43.8% girls), it is disturbing that the future (and present) teachers of primary age children seem to have far less interest in the genre. The Children's Choice project had acknowledged that teachers needed to become 'more comfortable with poetry for

themselves' (Bunbury [ed]1995: 53) suggesting that the way forward was through preservice and inservice training, a suggestion that still holds relevance, given this study's findings.

3.5.2 Approaches to teaching English

Three main observations might be made from the responses to items (13–21) on teachers' attitudes to reading and from the responses to items (22–28) on views on teaching English. Firstly, in spite of the current emphasis on testing of comprehension in New South Wales through the Basic Skills Tests, there was little support for testing as a means of developing readers. Secondly, the Children's Choice project had found that for Year Five, the most class time was spent in oral reading by the teacher and in language related exercises and silent reading, a little time was spent in group discussion of literature and very little attention was given to literary interpretation or criticism (Bunbury [ed]1995: 179), responses which seem to be borne out in this study, particularly when the eight individual cases'data is considered. Thirdly, questions 18, 20 and 21 were related to various theories of literary criticism, based on structuralism, narratology, post-structuralism, and in turn, phenomenology. The lack of support for these questions by most respondents perhaps *does* confirm The Children's Choice (Bunbury [ed.]1995: 159; 161) project's view that most teachers do not have clearly articulated theories (see 1.4.1.)

Some interesting comparisons can be drawn with the Australian UNESCO survey questions from which items 22–28 were drawn. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, Australian UNESCO had commissioned a survey of teachers' current (1970) approach to English. From this survey, questions were selected that related to the roles of literature in the primary school. While the UNESCO survey offered Australia-wide data, results were selected only from New South Wales (N=111) to draw comparisons with this survey of teacher education students some thirty years on in a regional part of New South Wales. The five point Likert scale of this study was reduced to three categories to simplify results: 'agree' includes 'strongly agree' and 'disagree' included 'strongly disagree'. While it is acknowledged that there are differences in both the size and purpose of the surveys and a higher proportion of respondents in the present study offering a response of 'uncertain' to many questions, there were some remarkable similarities in the two sets of data.

Both studies suggested that there was by no means general acceptance that all children need to appreciate literature (Table 3.25). The reasons for the higher degree of uncertainty evident in this study can only be speculated upon. Perhaps it was related to many of the respondents' inexperience as teachers or perhaps to their own lack of a thorough appreciation of literature as was demonstrated in the responses to items 13–21. It might also relate to broader issues of curriculum overcrowding and an emphasis on skills and

measurable outcomes. Finally, recent theoretical controversies may themselves have led to uncertainty in the current professional ideology.

Table 3.25: The need for children to appreciate literature

Item 22 (This survey)	%	Item 64 (ACER survey)	%
Agree	*47*		*58*
Uncertain	*34*		*11*
Disagree	*19*		*31*

* percentages given to the nearest whole number

Both studies showed that respondents tended not to agree that comprehension tests make good readers (Table 3.26), although a higher percentage of respondents were *uncertain* in this survey.

Table 3.26: The significance of comprehension tests

Item 23 (This survey)	%	Item 14 (ACER survey)	%
Agree	*29*		*37*
Uncertain	*26*		*8*
Disagree	*44*		*55*

* percentages given to the nearest whole number

While items 24 and 25 do not fit the construct, it is still valuable to compare the responses from the two studies (see Tables 3.27 and 3.28). Both studies showed that the items were not mutually exclusive as the percentage of respondents who disagreed with item 24 was larger than the percentage who agreed with item 25 in both studies. The ACER survey showed teacher preference for quantity over quality, while this study showed a slight preference for quality. As the Children's Choice project pointed out: 'There is no definitive research that shows that one approach is better or more effective than another' but that 'wide reading, which includes pupil choice, needs to be given a more substantial portion of the English/language curriculum' (Bunbury [ed]1995: 63). It may be argued that if teachers are to be able to offer informed choices for wider reading, they need to read widely themselves and with understanding.

Table 3.27: The importance of quality of literature

Item 24 (This survey)	%	Item 21 (ACER survey)	%
Agree	*31*		*37*
Uncertain	*23*		*7*
Disagree	*47*		*56*

* percentages given to the nearest whole number

Table 3.28: The importance of quantity of literature

Item 25 (This survey)		Item 58 (ACER survey)
	%	%
Agree	*29*	*49*
Uncertain	*23*	*9*
Disagree	*47*	*42*

* percentages given to the nearest whole number

In both studies, as it might be expected, agreement was strong for items 26 and 27, respectively, about reading to the class and the need for comprehensive library resources (Tables 3.29 and 3.30).

Table 3.29: The importance of reading stories to the class

Item 26 (This survey)		Item 18 (ACER survey)
	%	%
Agree	*96*	*93*

* percentages given to the nearest whole number

Table 3.30: The importance of a comprehensive library

Item 27 (This survey)		Item 15 (ACER survey)
	%	%
Agree	*86*	*90*

* percentages given to the nearest whole number

There was a degree of ambiguity with the responses to items 27 and 28 (Tables 3.30 and 3.31) where most agreed that a library was an essential resource but that it was still possible to teach English without it. This survey suggested respondents had greater confidence than ACER respondents in their ability to teach without effective library resources. It can only be speculated as to whether this is because teachers of 21st century have more confidence in their own skills, have developed more resources of their own including their own class library, rely on the current English K-6 syllabus or commercial packages or see libraries as unimportant.

Table 3.31: The significance of poor library resources to teaching English

Item 28 (This survey)		Item 42 (ACER survey)
	%	%
Agree	*67*	*61*
Uncertain	*22*	*8*
Disagree	*11*	*31*

* percentages given to the nearest whole number

3.5.3 Goals for using literature

As was discussed in Chapter 2, the Purves, Foshay and Hansson (1973) study had been useful to this study in providing items on the goals teachers might identify for using literature. Beyond the adaptation of the goals to this study, the Purves study is unhelpful to compare with the results of this survey as it focuses on teachers of secondary students. However, the Children's Choice project offers some useful comparisons for this study (Table 3.32) although the only relevant data is that of the responses of Year Five teachers.

Table 3.32: Comparison of two study's goals of teaching literature

Children's Choice Project	Rank	This Study	Rank
Language ability (extrinsic)	1	Item 31. Literacy standards (extrinsic)	3
Self understanding (extrinsic)	2	Item 33. Emotional growth (extrinsic)	5
Analytical skills (extrinsic)	4	Item 34. Intellectual growth (extrinsic)	1
Response to events (extrinsic)	5	Item 32. Moral standards (extrinsic)	6
Literary taste (intrinsic)	3	Item 30. Literary appreciation (intrinsic)	2
Cultural heritage(intrinsic)	5	Item 29. Cultural heritage(intrinsic)	4
Literary forms (intrinsic)	7	Deleted	
Literary history (intrinsic)	8	Deleted	

Both the Purves, Foshay and Hansson (1973) and Bunbury ([ed.1995]) studies ranked language ability and literary appreciation (taste) in the first three goals. If, as this study shows, intellectual growth and literary appreciation are seen as the two most important goals, it raises questions about what teachers see these comprise and what knowledge teachers need to implement them. The interviews reported in Chapter 4 attempt to find some answers.

3.5.4 Text selection

While many respondents saw the importance of considering children's enjoyment and interests in text selection, there is a need to develop expertise to select books that will also encourage growth in their readers. Suggested solutions may be found in two ways: teacher education students extending their own responses to literature before they can extend those of their students and the development of a balance between student and teacher selection which might offer a range of texts to be used for a variety of purposes including leisure and close reading. Luke (1994: 33) believes that teachers need to be aware of the social and literary criteria for the selection of children's literature. He criticises teacher education and inservice programs that 'expound the glories of "quality" children's literature without mentioning, much less exploring, how children's literature constructs versions of cultural contexts and social possibilities'. This raises an important point to be considered in the development of teacher education courses.

The reasons for the lack of interest in 'expert' recommendations such as book awards is unclear but is considered further when discussing data from the interviews with teachers (Chapter 4).

3.5.5 Responses to literature

Theoretical influences were reflected in two sets of items (22–28) on approaches to teaching English and items (44–48) on responses to literature. Excluding items 24, 25 and 28, which did not fit the construct, the responses given, suggested a high level of uncertainty and a lack of clearly articulated theories. Most seemed unaware of ways English could be theorised.

The data have suggested that no one discourse of English obviously dominated in the respondent's answers, although ethical and rhetorical discourses were given most support. The reasons for these preferences might be speculated. The ethical discourse is what influences a Whole Language approach to teaching, while it is the rhetorical discourse which influences the current primary syllabus, emphasising the importance of identifying the language features of text (see Chapter 7 for a full discussion of the syllabus). Chapter 4 considers how these theoretical influences are seen in practice.

3.5.6 Knowledge of children's texts

While there were some perceptive choices, on the whole the responses on selecting picture books were dated. The lack of recency of choice of texts perhaps reflects texts that the respondents would have experienced themselves as children rather than as teachers.

The choices of external students, many of whom are practising teachers, perhaps reflects, for some at least, their greater exposure in the workplace to children's literature than the preservice respondents. Yet, overall the choices were disappointing, given the diverse quality literature that has been published in the last ten years. The Children's Choice project (Bunbury[ed] 1995) had found in 1981 that teachers nominated the following as being successful in Year Five classrooms (see Table 3.33).

It is somewhat remarkable that, in spite of the fact that almost twenty years separate the data collection for the two studies, many of the same titles still appear on the list for this study. The notable exceptions are 'classics' such as *Treasure Island* and *Robinson Crusoe* and the novels of Australian authors, Colin Thiele, Ivan Southall, and S.A. Wakefield, all popular in the 1970s and 80s. Could they be replaced by Klein, Marsden, Jennings and Wild? While it is commendable to have an established core of valued texts, perhaps a canon of literary heritage, it is also important that teachers explore new and

unknown books. As many respondents have noted in item 56, there is a need to help teachers enhance their knowledge of both titles and the qualities of literature.

Table 3.33: Comparison of teachers' selection of texts

Children's Choice Project 1981	**This Study 2000**
Blue Fin	
Bottlesnikes and Gumbles	
The Cay	The Cay
Charlotte's Web	Charlotte's Web
Emil and the Detectives	
Hill's End	
The Hobbitt	The Hobbitt
I Am David	
The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe	The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe
The Silver Sword	The Silver Sword
Storm Boy	
Treasure Island	
Robinson Crusoe	
	Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

It is also useful to ask whether teachers' choices of books for classroom use are similar to children's choices. The Children's Choice project had found that Year Five popular books were Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964), Farley's *The Black Stallion* (1944) and Lewis' *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* (1950).

As Thomson (1987: 246) puts it so well: 'It is essential that teachers are well acquainted with children's and adolescent literature, as well as the reading tastes and development stages of their students, so they can help them to find books that will be read with pleasure and promote growth'. Chapter 4 takes up this discussion in interviews held with teachers to see how teachers meet these demands.

3.5.7 Implications for teacher education

This phase of the study raises questions about the availability and accessibility of tertiary level course units on children's literature and what should be the content of those courses.

The Children's Choice project had found that only 31.3% of practising primary school teachers had received any training in children's literature during their undergraduate programs. Only 13.1% had received any inservice training in children's literature since graduating. In this study only 13.5% of respondents had undertaken a course unit in children's literature. Given that students are still working within their programs and will have opportunity to select additional units, it might be assumed that those statistics could alter. However, better outcomes are unlikely, given that units in children's literature remain

electives and that teacher education programs are constantly becoming more inflexible as more mandatory units are included. Questions must be raised about the amount and level of training in children's literature available for preservice and inservice teacher education students. It may be claimed that, as this is only a small survey at a local site, that this is not a problem beyond this site. However, it should be remembered that 32% of respondents involved in this survey have tertiary qualifications from another Faculty and/or another institution, suggesting that the problem is broader than the local site.

The results of this questionnaire raise two important points to be considered: the nature of the students and the content and structure of teacher education programs. Firstly, the diversity of the nature of the students, demonstrated in 3.2.3, needs to be considered in any planning. For example, in Construct 1, the responses of Cases 154 and 161 suggested a lack of discriminatory thought while Cases 20, 102, 258 and 287 revealed responses that one might expect from informed, motivated teacher education students. In Construct 2, the lack of responses of Cases 148 and 149 suggested a lack of enthusiasm for the task while Case 174's 'middle' view responses may have suggested a lack of a sound ideological and pedagogical base from which to draw opinions. Secondly, questions must be raised about the level of understanding that it is important for primary school teachers to have to meet the needs of their students and prepare them for secondary education and beyond. It is a matter of concern that there was such a low percentage of responses to questions 56 to 58 (Table 3.2), perhaps suggesting a lack of certainty about what knowledge is needed. The respondents' answers to item 58 offered some important directions for the future of course units where there were requests for greater knowledge of children's literature as a genre and a knowledge of the literary. Their requests largely emphasised the gaining of knowledge of classroom application of children's literature. Little mention was given to an *understanding* of children's literature, perhaps reflecting a common perception that it does not need close study.

Respondents' comments on choices of texts tended to reflect their recognition of literature as creative and imaginative but they also tended to see the potential of intellectual growth that literature offered. On this basis, they would agree with Langer (1995: 158) when she says that 'although literary reasoning is both creative and imaginative, it is also intellectual in a particular kind of way'. This particular way, Langer (1995: 56) says, involves readers gaining 'envisionment', that is, an understanding about text and developing the ability to explore 'horizons of possibilities' (1995: 26) where literature and life meld. If respondents, as teachers, are to achieve this in their classrooms, they must first explore the ethos that literature is thought-provoking, a view that was not clearly supported in the responses to items 15–21. If they are to offer meaningful literary studies, they need to understand the significance of social context and multiple perspectives of interpretation

(Langer 1995: 56). Perhaps a starting point is a theory of literature, as Willinsky suggests in the quote that began this chapter.

CHAPTER 4

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE: TEACHERS AND THE SCHOOL

I think it [the role of the teacher of English] is to show all how to develop an understanding of how fulfilling it is to be a literate person and to develop a lifelong love of good literature (Helena).

4.1 Introduction

This chapter offers an indepth exploration of the data collected in the 'field' research. This involved interviews, described in Chapter 2, of the eight practising teachers. All the teachers agreed to their profiles being published (Appendix B) but pseudonyms have been used throughout the discussion. The interviewees are Ellen, Sally, Gloria, Sandy, John, Kay, Kirsty and Helena. The chapter addresses the broad research question together with secondary questions A and B outlined in 1.1. These interviews were constructed and administered in order to amplify issues raised by the questionnaire survey. The chapter informs two aspects of professional practice—that of the teacher and of the teacher-educator. It explores the relationship between the reader, the 'read' and reading that teachers identify as significant, thus providing information about the roles teachers perceive children's literature to play in the primary classroom and what might influence their thinking. In turn, this chapter considers to what extent teachers theorise their own practice in English teaching at the primary school level and what implications this has for tertiary teaching.

As was explained in Chapter 2, discourse analysis has provided a useful tool for this study in that it offers opportunities to explore how discourse is implicated in relations of power. The framework for the analysis has drawn on Fairclough's (1992, 1995) textually oriented discourse analysis (TODA) of textual and social practice where there are three dimensions of discourse analysis, which describe the texts, interpret them, and offer some explanation of social practice. Through presenting discourse analysis of the interview data, this chapter attempts to answer the question 'How does the discourse mean?'

4.2 Impressions: describing the texts

[Literature] makes reading make sense (Ellen).

At a macro level, text production of all the teacher interviews reflected interdiscursivity and intertextuality, drawing on the discourse of the NSW *English K-6 Syllabus* (1998). As will be explored later in this chapter, whilst the Syllabus appears to be the dominant discourse that influences how children's literature is discussed, there is evidence in the data that this is contested by other discourses.

At a micro level, interactional controls were relatively uncomplicated in that topics were introduced by key questions but the interviewees developed the direction of each topic—at times only touching on the original topic as other ideas took over in their interpretations of the question. However, in order to minimise bias, the interviewer refrained from comment.

4.2.1 The special role of the English teacher

The survey had established that participants did not consider an appreciation of literature of paramount importance in English teaching. The task of the interviews was to establish what, then, teachers *do* see as important. All participants, not surprisingly, agreed that the foundational role of the teacher of English was to develop his/her students' functional literacy skills of reading and writing in order for them to be able to communicate effectively for both pleasure and purpose. Only one teacher saw the preparation of students for the workplace as a significant task of the primary English teacher. Parallel to the mastery of skills, a love and enjoyment of learning and of language and literature were seen to be important. All interviewees saw English as both integral and central to the whole primary curriculum.

How the teacher should expand on the development of functional literacy skills was perceived in a number of ways. All acknowledged the significance of the teacher as a model of good reading. Some (Kay, Sally) saw that it was important to explore a range of literacies identified as 'visual literacy' and 'media literacy', and to broaden the child's experiential base. Others (John, Ellen, Kay) emphasised the importance of developing a critical awareness so that the child might be able to analyse his/her own work as well as that of others. Such critical awareness was seen to empower students for a variety of audiences and purposes. Four teachers (Gloria, Ellen, Sandy and Kirsty) saw the development of an awareness of cultural heritage as an important goal of English, yet Gloria felt that it was difficult to develop critical analysis about culture at the primary level:

> 'Children tend to be very happy that their culture is right and it's probably only towards the end of primary school that I find that you can actually do very much questioning of whether the culture is appropriate or it isn't. I

> found particularly that children's literature actually helps children to focus more on what happens in their homes or what happens in their particular situation and compare it with what happens in others within the classroom'.

There was a general feeling that, in such changing times, students needed a value system to deal with new technologies and to make the transition to secondary education easier. Ellen felt that the English curriculum could provide this support.

4.2.2 Identified roles of children's literature

The survey had shown that intellectual growth and literary appreciation were seen to be important goals in using children's literature in the classroom. How these might be achieved was explored in more depth through interviews. While the teachers were not asked to define children's literature, their perceptions of what they saw it to be are clearly identifiable in the texts they listed as appropriate. A pattern emerged along two lines: those who included a range of text types and 'tool' books and those who listed only children's literature. Not surprisingly, this division was along pedagogical lines as will be shown in 4.2.5. Literature identified included picture books and junior novels. Only two teachers mentioned plays, poetry or short stories. All the teachers saw that children's literature played a part in the English program. However, the purposes for which it was seen to be significant varied greatly. It was seen either as a linguistic or literary exemplar for both knowledge and entertainment. All teachers saw that children's literature could be used both to develop students' ability in the use of language and to understand themselves and the human condition: the emphasis given to each varied from teacher to teacher.

All teachers distinguished between 'literacy' texts and 'literary' texts. Literacy texts were texts used as *tools* to develop elementary reading strategies, focused mainly on the code breaker role. They were used either with beginning readers or reluctant readers, to develop skills, to model language or to demonstrate features of a text type. Literary texts were seen as those used for the enhancement of literary knowledge and the development of understanding of the reader's self and his/her social context. The basis on which texts were selected seemed to group under *pedagogical* and *response* goals, the former grounded in the teacher and the latter in the reader. For pedagogical purposes, all teachers agreed that the text choices should not be driven by children's choices, which tended to favour texts as entertainment only. Selection based on *pedagogical goals* related to texts being used for one of two purposes: as *tools* for the development of reading skills, or as a source of specific *content*. All teachers agreed that, to meet the needs of the current Syllabus, texts should be selected from a wide range of genres. To ensure exposure to a diversity of texts, there should be, Sally noted, texts selected from 'high' and 'low cultures', classical texts and recent publications. The significance of selection based on

ability levels was variously perceived. Kirsty felt that texts needed to be selected based on ability level, while John believed that one text could be shared across levels so long as the expected outcomes were distinguished. A second criteria for selection was based on *content,* where a text related to a topic or a theme or where a text purposefully integrated areas of study across Key Learning Areas (KLAs). Sue added that the text should 'complement children's areas of interest' and should broaden 'their knowledge base'.

Response goals could involve both enjoyment and learning. All teachers emphasised the importance of texts offering 'pleasure'. Selection of texts for pleasure could follow student interest and draw on children's choices, but could also focus on teachers' choices. Sandy saw value in acknowledging student interest. 'I often follow the boys' interests,' she said, 'when choosing books. Paul Jennings is still a most popular author. His stories appeal to a boy's sense of fun.' Most teachers also favoured not being constrained by sets of texts available in the school but acknowledged that the reality was different to the ideal. It was important, all agreed, that for a response to be effective, there needed to be a careful matching of reader and text. The criteria to be considered should include use of language (appropriateness to audience in terms of understanding and maturity), past experiences with text in that text form, and level of text difficulty. Thought also needed to be given as to how a text might extend a specific student. Two teachers, Gloria and Ellen, considered that texts should provide an emotional experience, could provide ways to explore sensitive areas, and could offer 'bonding' experiences among readers. Ellen summed up this view:

> 'I've always looked for texts which bring about an emotional response in a child, whether it is humour or whether it's a sad story...I found that using literature is a very good way of opening up discussion about very difficult subjects with children-death, illness, physical disability, loneliness. Those sorts of topics were easily discussed and children empathised so much with characters in a story who are experiencing difficulty in their lives'.

Kirsty suggested that, preliminary to student response, they had to be helped to see the relevance. In answer to children's questions 'Why do we have to do this? and 'How is it going to help me?' she suggested that texts should allow students to look at what she called 'the story of people and how people's stories in the past and the present can help us to understand ourselves and others, and the complexity of human relationships'. To illustrate her point, she showed the variety of ways of response to Jackie French's *Soldier on the Hill* that were adopted in her classroom 'through reliving it in drama, writing newspaper articles, poems, making comparisons with other novels on a similar theme and analysing French's style and themes'.

Kirsty summed up what she saw as the complementarity of pedagogical and response goals in that children's texts were 'models for understanding style, themes and characters', and yet at the same time could instil in children 'a love of literature and an ability to distinguish between literature that is effective and that which is not so effective'.

A number of factors emerged as being significant in influencing these teachers' text selection. For the eight classroom teachers, colleagues' advice and that of librarians ranked highly, together with texts recommended in published planned units of work. Ellen commented on the importance of sharing thoughts about books with like-minded colleagues. Librarians were seen as those who researched books, and offered informed suggestions for classroom use. Gloria, as a librarian, commented that she was called on to make recommendations to teachers. Concerned that some teachers read 'the same books to their children year after year after year, which many of them do because they've got a good program that goes with it', she tended to find something new for those teachers. Three teachers identified shortlisted books, publications like *Magpies, Scan,* and PETA as important sources of information. Several teachers saw that they needed to take responsibility for text selection through keeping themselves informed, visiting bookshops, libraries and websites. The teachers seemed to draw more on 'expert' recommendations of reviews and book awards than did the respondents in the questionnaire perhaps because, for many undertaking the questionnaire, the exercise is still hypothetical and has not had practical application.

Text selection posed problems for some teachers who felt unsure of appropriate criteria for selection or felt constrained by time. Other constraints on text selection were noted by both Kirsty and John; they felt that they had no say in the text selection of class sets but, rather, had to design units of work around the allocated texts. Previous staff members or more 'senior' staff had made this allocation. Kirsty and John's only opportunities for text selection were in three areas: in choosing chapter books to read to the class daily, in guiding their students in their bulk borrowing from the library, and in selecting texts related to a particular unit.

4.2.3 Constraints and influences in the use of children's literature in the classroom

Constraints

The questionnaire had identified a number of roles of children's literature that teacher education students thought were important. This led to an exploration in the interviews of what constraints and influences impact on teachers in developing priorities regarding these roles.

Extrinsic constraints, both practical and political, included limited budgets; a range of student abilities; limited time; competing media; the NSW *English K-6 Syllabus* (1998) and the Basic Skills Tests.

Limited budgets and a *range of student abilities* put pressure on resources. All but one teacher commented that it was difficult to provide adequate numbers of high quality texts to meet the needs of all students. Limited budgets were further stretched by the demands of information technology resources. The only teacher who did not appear to have a resource problem was Sandy, who taught in a nongovernment well-funded school.

Limited time and *competing media* were also identified as constraints. A lack of time was seen as a major constraint. Teachers found it difficult to find time to keep current with new publications of children's literature, to read professional journals on new books, to find books that did more than entertain, and then to match children to books. A crowded school curriculum was seen to take time away from reading for pleasure. A further constraint on the use of children's literature was that it was seen to be competing with multimedia. Two outcomes of the impact of multimedia identified were that teachers believed that children found it difficult to sit and listen rather than view and that it was perceived by them that stories must entertain rather than inform or challenge. The constraints identified here were similar to those that had been listed in the Children's Choice project of the 1980s although the impact of television was seen as a much greater threat in the earlier study than in this study. In the 80s, teachers had seen television as being in direct conflict with reading, a problem which is still apparent but somewhat clouded by the diverse forms of multimedia that are now part of the classroom. A further challenge, Kay suggested, came from publishing houses who pushed for text book use. 'Teachers,' she said, 'struggling with taking on board the good practices of the English Syllabus are being led to using text books which "cover" all the expectations of the Syllabus'.

While the NSW *English K-6 Syllabus*(1998) and the *Basic Skills Tests* were seen to have positive values, many teachers saw them as imposing policy and political constraints. The concerns raised about the Syllabus related to the fact that, while the Syllabus recognised literature and multimedia as vital, it did not give emphasis to children's literature as a useful starting point. Ellen thought that the Syllabus lacked balance, in 'that there is too much emphasis on the teaching of the skill of reading and not enough on *why* we learn to read and the necessity of high quality literature in the classroom'. As Gloria pointed out, the emphasis of the syllabus on teaching children to write in different genres encouraged teachers to use extracts rather than whole texts for modelling: 'Skills,' she said, 'are becoming the focus and the literature is there to serve the development of those skills', a view that reflects the findings in the questionnaire. The new Syllabus, she believed,

suggested a greater differentiation between instructional and recreational reading than had the 1985 Syllabus. While all teachers agreed that the Basic Skills Tests (BST) offered a broad view of levels of reading abilities, several questioned the BST as indicative of critical reading skills and some felt that children's literature was acknowledged in a tokenistic way. More emphasis on nonfiction and visual literacy had forced teachers to teach to the tests, both Sally and Kay suggested. All teachers noted that children's literature used in the classroom was unrelated to the tests. Ellen was more definite in her criticism:

> 'I think the Basic Skills Test includes children's literature in a very tokenistic way. I think whoever writes the tests knows that reading should be embedded in some sort of a story or a text that makes sense to children, but I don't think that the Basic Skills Test addresses children's literature in any sort of meaningful way. And by virtue of that, teachers therefore belittle the importance of children's literature.'

Intrinsic constraints concerned teachers' own *lack of confidence* in the selection of texts and their own admitted *lack of clear understanding* of their purpose. As a Deputy Principal, Ellen was concerned that many teachers in her school read to a class to fill in time, *not* to develop discerning, critical readers.

In spite of both extrinsic and intrinsic constraints, all teachers offered solutions to deal with those constraints. They saw their goals as introducing students to a wide range of texts and integrating across the curriculum. To do this, they each used a number of texts for different purposes. John, for example, found the School Magazine, a monthly publication issued by the NSW Department of School Education, useful for modelling text types, as the texts were brief and the characteristics of the text type readily identifiable. In his teaching program, the text selected for class reading was limited to a theme and/or text type study, and skills of reading were enhanced through programmed and sequenced readings for those who needed it. For independent reading, children had opportunities to read their own selections. To deal with resourcing constraints, Sally suggested a whole-school plan of budgeting and purchasing should be developed.

A solution to an overemphasis on programmed reading and teachers' lack of confidence in their skills was offered by Kirsty, who suggested that there should be 'a balance between supporting teachers with literature resources and programs, but also I guess providing the professional development for teachers to feel confident to identify good effective classroom literature for their particular grade'.

Influences

The teachers interviewed identified a number of influences, both explicit and implicit, on the roles that children's literature plays in the classroom. These included:

- professional colleagues,
- professional inservice,
- programmed materials and
- the Syllabus.

Colleagues were seen as an immediate and important influence, especially in team teaching and programming across a grade. Librarians were seen as a specialised source for text recommendation. *Inservice* in the forms of short courses and publications such as those of PETA were generally considered valuable in providing activities and strategies but not significant in changing teachers' ideological perspective. Yet, most teachers commented on the fact that there were inadequate opportunities for inservice training. The only teacher to identify an inservice program as providing an ideological framework was Sandy who believed that the Early Literacy Inservice Course (ELIC) she had undertaken in 1989 had been central to her teaching to the present. Two teachers cited children's authors who had visited schools as important and inspirational. Other influences identified were ideas that children had developed in discussion, the teachers' own desire for specific knowledge, and a need 'to be creative with literature in the classroom'.

Programmed materials were seen as both supportive and limiting. Yet, there was general agreement that teachers who lacked confidence in their teaching of reading found support and direction in such programs. However, such programs, most agreed, tended to marginalise the use of 'quality' children's literature. Helena went so far as to say: 'These programs end up pushing the use of literature in the classroom out'.

The NSW *English K-6 Syllabus*(1998) was identified by all teachers as a key influence, especially in identifying text types, distinguishing a range of factual and literary texts. As Kay put it, 'the Syllabus formalises the importance of teaching, exposing students to a range of texts. It allows students to learn *about* the texts as well as learning to read the words'. She added that the way the Syllabus had been introduced had killed the true success of it—'teachers were fed up with the work load of learning all over again'. Sandy found that the Syllabus' more detailed guidance and support documents were valuable. She approved of its emphasis on silent reading, which she believed offered an opportunity to use literature frequently. A less positive view was taken by Helena who believed that there was less emphasis on the child and more on the curriculum, and that there was a danger of focusing on structure of text rather than on critical literary response, on proformas rather than planned, challenging lessons. It must be said that the claimed

influences of curriculum on teachers' use of literature were difficult to distinguish and tended to blend or at times contradict.

4.2.4 Knowledge

The questionnaire had identified a certain reluctance to acknowledge in the importance of extending knowledge of children's texts and theoretical approaches to text. The interviews showed a more positive attitude overall but still lacked a depth of understanding as is evident in the following responses. In considering what knowledge teachers felt would enhance their teaching of literature, most felt that it was important to understand text types. Most thought that a knowledge of literary theory might be helpful but did not see it as vital for a primary teacher, especially if s/he did not see the English program as literature-based. Some seemed unsure as to what a literary theory might be and directed their responses to discussing theories of literacy or reading—a telling strategy in itself.

For Sally, a theory of literacy was paramount:

> "I need to know how children learn to become literate. If teachers are sound in this area, the choices they make for students are likely to be more sound. I need to know what component or reading skill is impeding process? What do I have to do to assist? What resources, texts, demonstrations are required? Without the knowledge of theory, teachers are operating on gut instinct and do not know where to go'.

She saw it as the 'impact/ importance of literature in learning literate skills'. Kay, too, saw literary theory as complementary to a functional view of language: 'We are all given a 'theory' of the functional view of language but we all need more knowledge of how the different literary texts and factual texts work.'

John valued knowledge about text types. However, he was unsure of the importance of literary theory and whether it had links to reading theory:

> 'It depends if your reading program is going to be based on a more analysis point, like if you're going to use a lot of analysis, a lot of picking apart when you're just reading. Then it should be linked to your literary theory.'

The three teachers (Gloria, Ellen and Kirsty) who had recently undertaken postgraduate studies in children's literature, not surprisingly, supported the need for knowledge of children's literature. Having completed library studies and formal studies in children's literature, Gloria believed she had 'widened her appreciation' of the ways in which literature could be used but also 'the importance of it and ... the diversity of it'. However, she added that the real value of these postgraduate courses was in showing how little she had known prior to her studies. Yet, she acknowledged that,

> 'It is really difficult for teachers to get back to theory. They don't have the time. They are constantly being given new Syllabus documents and there's usually a little bit of theory attached to it but it's usually tacked on as an afterthought and realistically, most teachers get the document to find out what they have to teach rather than the theory which underlies it'.

While Ellen acknowledged that a literary theory was helpful, she added it was also confusing in that 'there seems to be a lot of different theories coming from a lot of different parts of the world and in much the same way as the pendulum has swung on curriculum change, it seems to me that the pendulum swung quite a lot on literary theory as well'. To try to clarify her thoughts, Ellen drew links between theory of reading and literary theory:

> 'Literature is man's attempt to record, explain and control experience and because of that, it meets young children's needs so very well because that is what they are doing. They are trying to understand the inexplicable, they are trying to make sense out of chaos and it is through literature that they are able to do that. And I think it's important that literature should be a part of a reading theory because it's such a wonderful vehicle for meeting children's needs. It makes reading make sense, it stops children from barking the print, it helps them to realise that within the world of print and, now obviously other literacies, it is possible to make sense out of what is happening in the world. And I think that is a very reassuring thing for children and gives them the motivation to want to learn to read'.

Kirsty saw value in a knowledge of literary theory, illustrating that her Diploma in Professional Children's Writing had allowed her to critically analyse children's literature. She went on to comment that 'what teachers mainly struggle with is creative ways of incorporating effective teaching of children's literature under such constraints of time and, I think, knowledge and ideas'.

For Sandy and Helena, literary theory was seen as a useful tool although Sandy did little to elaborate on the point. For Helena, knowledge of literary theory was seen as helpful in teaching English: 'It is important to blend theory and practical teaching methods...I can't recommend enough doing some extra study to help you to think about new aspects of children's literature, as it undoubtedly enhances your teaching'.

4.2.5 Dominant discourses

Discourses, Morgan (1997: 3) argues, do political work, promoting a certain ideology in preference to another. Such discourses have emerged from models or approaches over time to become recognisable as a set of ideas that become a defence of a particular way of teaching English. As indicated in Chapter 1, Hunter (1997) and Morgan (1997) had identified a number of discourses. While their interest might have been more directly applied to secondary English, elements of the four discourses, identified *as aesthetic,*

*ethical, rhetoric*al and *political,* can be found in primary English as is evidenced by the teachers' responses in the interviews. An emerging fifth discourse, it can be argued, is also evident. Ideological perspectives dictated the roles the teachers saw children's literature playing. Those who adopted an *aesthetic* or cultural-heritage approach (discussed in Chapter 5) saw literature as providing a rich foundation of knowledge of the past that could give a reader a sense of his/her place in society. Those teachers who saw literature as a means of promoting an understanding of oneself and the world adopted an *ethical* or personal growth model (explored in Chapter 5) reflected in Whole Language and Reader Response pedagogy. Those who adopted a *rhetorical* or functional linguistic approach saw children's literature, not surprisingly given the influence of the current Syllabus, as a useful tool to demonstrate text types and analyse language and structures of text. Those who drew on a *political* discourse explored notions of critical literacy and poststructuralist thinking, considering how texts construct readers and readings. An emerging fifth discourse which offered a sociocultural perspective, with echoes of critical cultural literacy could also be identified in the interview data.

Overarching and interacting with these discourses of the roles of children's literature, were the pedagogical roles teachers saw themselves adopting. Three discourses were identifiable. Firstly, that which draws on the Arnoldian concept, reflected in the Newbolt Report (1921: 25), of teachers as missionaries of English literature or as 'preachers of culture' as Mathieson (1975) called them, where teachers are seen as the catalyst for introducing quality literature to develop enthusiasm and a love of literature (see Chapter 5 for a more thorough examination of this view). Secondly, and closely aligned with the first, were those who saw a need to provide vicarious experiences to enhance knowledge and understanding and to develop moral values. Such a perspective, as Chapter 5 reveals, reaches back to the eighteenth century to the Romantics and forward to the 1960s to the legacies of Dartmouth. Thirdly, were those who saw themselves as primarily explicit instructors of reading skills, casting back to behavourist theories of reading and forward to functional linguistic theories.

An analysis of individual cases attempts to identify the ideological and pedagogical forces that appear to have influenced each interviewee.

Ellen

The theme of Ellen's text was that literature makes reading make sense. For her, there was an assumption that literature offers purposeful reading. The metaphors she chose reflected a sense of transmission. She spoke of using literature 'as a *springboard* for reading, writing, listening and speaking' about a book. She also saw it as a '*vehicle* for meeting children's needs'. Those needs, she explained, were 'to make sense of the world':

> 'Children's literature was always a wonderful vehicle for teaching children about the way the world is, for giving meaning to reading, for helping to develop understanding about the way people live their lives, the way people interact and why it may be that people make the choices and decisions that they do'.

Ellen echoed Paulo Freire's notion of 'reading the world' when she said, 'Literature helps children make sense of the world'. In elaborating on her English program, Ellen said of knowledge and understanding:

> 'Some children were able to take an idea and really explore it in depth and write or read at a very high level about the text, other children would do so at a very basic level, but we were all able to enjoy together, and I think that's the importance of a literature base for an English program is that it's based on enjoyment together and a uniting purpose'.

For Ellen, the major discourse was an ethical one of a 'personal growth' model. Her comments reflected a very personal approach to her work. The use of active voice and verbs that reflected behavioural or mental processes (Halliday 1985) suggested that Ellen felt a sense of control and power over her role ('I looked for texts'). Her examples of the use of Reader Response reflected her valuing of this theory. Her discourse also suggested a Leavisite/ cultural heritage approach where she adopted a pedagogy which reflected something of 'a preacher of culture'. As she said:

> 'there's a vast difference between reading high quality children's literature and reading often what the children would like you to read to them, and I think it's really important that teachers understand the difference.'

Yet, there were also elements of a sociocultural discourse, embracing literacy as 'cultural capital', cultural literacy and the relations of meaning and power:

> 'Children who are not literate have no future, have no power, and are at great risk. So, of course becoming literate is a very important objective of our education. Yes, we prepare students for the workplace and I think that making students aware of their cultural heritage is enormously important. I think it's important that primary school teachers realise that the teaching of English is something that takes place in every lesson, every day and at every level in the primary school and that there are a myriad of opportunities to teach children to become critical readers and writers and to realise the power of language, oral and written, in being able to shape their future'.

For Ellen, her pedagogical approach focused largely on showing how literature could provide vicarious experiences of life but should not be seen as a tool for moralising. She saw literature very much as something to be shared with her class. She used the word 'children', not in the sense of being the disempowered but rather as ones with whom it was important to share aspects of life. Her focus, in the use of the term 'text' in a literary sense rather than a broader view, reflected the emphasis she gave to literature, for example,

'I've always felt that the reading of a text to groups of children is a very great motivating experience and a bonding experience'.

Sally

Literacy, Sally suggested, was a *sealed container* which must be unlocked so that all participants—teachers, parents and children—could participate skilfully. The key, she suggested, to unlock this container, was a common theory of literacy, to avoid what she called 'the guessing game' of how to teach literacy.

Sally's response to the question 'What do you see as the role of the teacher of English in the primary school?' revealed much of the dominant discourses that influenced her thinking:

> 'To provide a basis in communication—in all forms for our own purposes and for social purposes. More specifically it involves a number of aspects. Firstly, the development of skills of functional literacy for all students (that is, a basic understanding of reading, writing, talking and listening). Here the teacher needs to teach skills of transference across mediums. Secondly, the teacher's role involves teaching a love of learning and a love of literature. Mechanisms need to be explored to use literacy skills to access knowledge through a variety of mediums such as books, libraries, computers etc. Thirdly, the teacher should recognise the home/first language of a child and the home learning experiences and note the appropriateness of language to the situation. The teacher should also use and recognise the use of language for a variety of purposes such as persuasive writing, speech, exposition and argument. Fifthly, it is the teacher's job to assist students' literacy development at the level of need. By this I mean that the teacher should deal with all areas as well as specific needs such as remediation or extension. The teacher should also show children how to develop information skills—how to access information from a variety of texts and text forms. This also involves developing technological skills across a range of literacy choices (research, word processing, editing, and so on). Ultimately, she should broaden children's experiential base.'

Sally's emphasis on 'the teacher' when discussing ideological or pedagogical issues perhaps suggested a rather academic approach to these issues—a distancing from emotional responses. For her, the teacher was perceived as the pivotal force between the child and literacy. Pedagogically, Sally saw the teacher's role as one of offering explicit instruction. Her use of the term 'teacher' suggested a formality of learning and the power of the learned over the learner. The verbs selected took on an instructional function of material processes ('the teacher should recognise', 'should show the students'). A secondary discourse of pedagogy was that of the teacher seen as 'a preacher of culture', 'exposing children to classic as well as modern [literature]' and using bibliotherapy: 'It [literature] is also useful in moral and ethical teaching'.

Consistent with these views of the role of the teacher, was Sally's formalist perception of the role of children's literature, which she saw as one of usage. While she acknowledged the importance of using literature to demonstrate enjoyment and a love of reading and how it might develop life skills, her emphasis was largely on utilitarian aspects of literature. Firstly, it offered models for the development of literacy and life skills. Literature, she said, 'is used to model the skills of proficient literacy users'. and to 'demonstrate to students how language gets a particular message across'. Secondly, she saw literature was valuable to integrate across KLAs 'to enhance knowledge of area being studied in other KLAs'. Thirdly, it offered moral and ethical teaching. For her, its value was extrinsic and quantifiable (language development, level of difficulty of text) rather than intrinsic (emotional value). Sally showed strong support for a rhetorical discourse based on functional linguistics as reflected in her use of terms such as 'explicit', 'systematic', 'text types' and she saw value in using literature to model text types and explore language.

While Sally spoke several times of the importance of enjoyment and love of literature, she offered no strategies for how this might be achieved. For her, there were clear distinctions between instructional and recreational reading. In the new Syllabus she pointed out 'There is a greater differentiation between instructional and recreational reading for students'. The latter she suggested was not the prime concern of the teacher. By implication, the classroom had become the place for instructional reading while reading for enjoyment should be relegated to home.

The contrast between Ellen's and Sally's perspectives is significant as Ellen appears to take what the philosopher Popper (1959) would have called 'the searchlight approach' and Sally adopts 'the empty vessel to fill' approach.

Gloria

The theme of Gloria's discourse suggested that she saw her role as offering children a great diversity of literature, especially that which evokes an emotional and intellectual response. Her pedagogical approach could be summed up in her metaphor of using *manageable steps*:

> 'Some classes respond better to certain types of books than others and I think you can take children in small steps but I don't think you can take them in large ones, so that if you choose something which is totally outside their experience or totally outside their interest level, then all you are going to do is actually turn them off literature and not focus them in on something new which is probably what you're trying to do. So I guess I try to take little steps sideways rather than big steps forward'.

By this, she was not alluding to language development or level of difficulty of text but rather to the children's interests and experiential levels.

For Gloria, *reader response* was important. She believed that 'some children were able to take an idea and really explore it indepth and write or read at a very high level about the text.' She stressed the importance of the diversity of levels of response—one text could serve different levels. For younger readers, she saw response in terms of predicting, identifying characters, exploring structure; for older readers, exploring themes, personal responses, empathising, and so on. Gloria's discourse was marked by first-person singular pronouns and personal anecdotes, changing to plural form as she discussed the literature program and activities, where 'we' equals self and children, thus providing a sense of sharing of literature. The tone of the text was contemplative, with the verbs focusing on mental processes ('I think', 'I find', 'I realise') showing reflective, experiential aspects of meaning (Halliday 1985: 101). Consistent with this approach, Gloria saw value in emotional responses:

> 'I find it's great to actually read older children's books which deal with emotional issues such as coping with the death of someone who is close to them, coping with handicapped children, things like Robin Klein's *Boss of the Pool*. I find very good some of the books of Morris Gleitzman which again are easy to read but actually relate to situations which children find themselves in. I tend not to use it [literature] to teach moral values. I think that's a fairly dangerous thing to do because I think in many ways you're pushing your own moral values onto children and I don't think you should do that, but I do think that literature can actually expose children to differing ideas about morality and spark discussion on that, and I think that's a very valuable thing to do'.

For Gloria, the role of children's literature drew on traditional notions of the importance of an understanding of our cultural heritage through literary study, but took on new dimensions including sociocultural perspectives whose organising principles are meaning and power, critically interpreted:

> 'I think it's really important,' she said, 'that children are aware of their cultural heritage and I think we can best do that by exposing children to a whole range of literature which is appropriate to their culture but which also reflects the cultures of others. I found particularly that children's literature actually helps children to focus more on what happens in their particular situation and compare it with what happens in others within the classroom. I guess I've perhaps had more success with this because it's an area which I am particularly interested in. However, I haven't noticed that children particularly change their attitudes because of that exposure, the attitudes seem to be fairly well ingrained within the home situation. So whilst they may think about it and analyse it, I have my doubts about the reshaping of it at primary school, but then who knows?'

Gloria, too, provided an interesting contrast, particularly to Sally, as the former's discourse shows a strong theme of child-centredness and an interest in child development.

Sandy

Sandy acknowledged that, while the foundational aspect of her English program was functional, she saw the overall English program as literature-based as distinct from literacy-based, a distinction she emphasised as important. 'I hope to help my boys develop a love and enjoyment of language' she said, 'and that they will become confident and independent users of language. They develop skills of listening, talking, reading and writing by using a wide range of texts both factual and literary.'

Sandy's role, as she saw it, was a rather mixed one in that she reflected something of an aesthetic approach in attempting to select the 'best' children's literature, drawing largely from the canon (that is, if those books favoured by parents can be called a 'canon'—for example, *Winnie the Pooh*, Classic fairy tales, etc) together with texts that have been established as having credibility in Australia (for example, *Possum Magic, John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat).* A second identifiable discourse reflected a personal-growth model. She saw it was important to give independence and responsibility to her children to create their own literary responses. Both silent reading and discussion of individual choice of texts were encouraged. Of silent reading, Sandy commented: 'My boys appear to enjoy this activity which provides the opportunity to use literature frequently.' The selection of texts for silent reading was also seen as the students' responsibility, albeit with some guidance from Sandy. 'When choosing a book,' she explained,' they are asked to apply 'the rule of five' which involves reading the first page; if they find five words that they do not know then they return the book to the shelf for later in the year.' Such a practice allowed a sense of freedom of choice on the part of the reader, but the original selection of texts for the classroom was still controlled by Sandy.

The theme of her discourse was to provide as many and diverse opportunities to use literature, for example, silent reading of books of the boys' own choice, discussion of literary texts read, library sessions to discuss the latest publications as well as whole class sessions involving Big Books, picture books and junior novels. Diversity was achieved through individual choice followed by sharing. The entire mood of her text was one of sharing. Most of her text used 'we' as in herself and her students, whom she referred to as 'my boys', suggesting a sense of intimacy.

John

In response to the question of what special role teachers of English had, John offered the following:

> 'To train students to become literate, to prepare students for the workplace. Is it to make students aware of their cultural heritage, becoming critically aware and contributing to reshaping their culture?'

His response showed an awareness of the many roles that English might play, even if he couched some of them as a question.

John's metaphor of seeing himself as a *guide* who provided the *tools* 'to create and make their [children's] own learning' exemplified the role that he saw himself playing as a teacher of literature. He believed that through multiple instances of experiences with literature, children would become critically aware. The theme of his discourse was that the teacher needed to offer different types of literature and to use a variety of pedagogical approaches. The tone of his text was one of sharing, drawing on first-person plural pronouns to discuss the classroom activities ('we all write') and using 'children' and 'kids' to describe his students. His text was dominated by doing and creating verbs of material processes (for example, 'give', 'put up', 'introduce', 'implement'). Pedagogically, John focused on offering the children vicarious experiences, developing knowledge, understanding and moral values.

Elements of a rhetorical discourse could be detected in John's description of classroom activities and his acknowledgement of the importance of studying text types, where the school program identified specific text types which had to be taught. The choice of literary texts was linked to other teaching of specific text types. In selecting texts, John said, 'I want to link it [the text] to a particular text type. For example, for next year, I've decided that I'm going to start with the book *Thing* and I'm going to concentrate on the text type of recount'. The power of the rhetorical discourse was also evident in a negative way, in that John felt compelled to omit a text on the basis that it did not fit the list of text types to be studied. 'We want to read *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe,*' he said, 'but I know that it's probably not an appropriate text type for them to do as a class text.' Yet his main emphasis tended to reflect an ethical discourse in his valuing of reader response and the development of moral values through literature. A further discourse John mentioned but did not elaborate on was a sociocultural one, where the reader became critically aware of meaning and power: 'I believe they start, they look at it, they become critically aware. And through multiple instances of doing this, they improve.'

Kay

The mood of Kay's text offered a contemplative, somewhat academic argument where the verbs reflected largely mental processes (for example, 'think', 'believe', 'feel'). It moved between impersonal 'you' in responding to questions on the role of English and children's literature, to a more personal 'I' and 'we' to respond to questions on influences and knowledge of children's literature. She talked of 'students' rather than 'children'.

For Kay, the teacher of English had a complex role to meet the diverse elements that have become English—linguistic and literary skills, critical and vocational skills, personal and social skills:

> 'It is to enhance all aspects of communication—talking/listening, reading and writing. It is to ensure language is not just restricted to classrooms but allows opportunity for students to explore and be critical of a range of language use... English should empower students with skills to manipulate language for a variety of audience and purpose'.

Reflecting elements of rhetorical and political discourses, the theme of Kay's text stressed the importance of learning and thinking about texts, not just 'reading' them:

> 'The K-6 English changes have formalised the importance of teaching/exposing students to a range of texts—not just reading a story. It has brought a new expectation that students will learn *about* the texts not just learn *to read* the words. It also expects teachers and students to *think* about the texts that are being read.'

Kay's discourse was strongly influenced by the language of the current Syllabus:

> 'The goals, I believe, are to teach children to read/write in a stimulating environment by using systematic and explicit modelling of skills and strategies to become independent learners and to have students love and look forward to engaging with texts.'

Kay, too, focused on the linguistic significance of literature as a valuable device for 'learning about language across the curriculum' and providing models—'Literature is used for learning about language' (for example, structure, time, characters, settings, grammar, etc). Kay's focus on language reflected elements of poststructural thinking, where critical literacy was seen to be significant to 'explore and be critical of a range of language use of media, literary and factual texts, computers'. Perhaps echoing the thoughts of Freire (in Freire & Macedo 1987), she sees her role as an English teacher 'to empower students with skills to manipulate language for a variety of audiences and purposes'. Disappointingly, she seemed unwilling to elaborate on the ways this might be achieved.

Kay's response to the question of what she looked for in selecting books, suggested a functional approach:

> 'I look for books that have a particular purpose, books related to unit studies, books with particular language patterns, books of different ability levels—matching texts and students for guided reading.'

While her pedagogical approach largely supported explicit instruction, Kay concluded her interview by saying that she was critical of problems generated by the current English Syllabus. Her concern for greater teacher understanding of literary and nonliterary texts

was expressed in her metaphor 'The textbook is becoming the teacher'. This attack on teaching pedagogy was based on the fact that she thought that many teachers were ignorant of the power of text and lent on the crutch of textbooks and programmed materials to compensate for this ignorance. Teaching of reading, she believed, had been eroded where 'children are merely filling in the gaps on a work sheet'.

Kirsty

In response to what she thought was the special role of the teacher of English, Kirsty identified ideological notions based on the aesthetic, the ethical and the sociocultural:

> 'Exploring their culture, understanding other cultures, understanding our heritage and understanding your own story and other stories.'

The theme of Kirsty's discourse was that literature needs to be relevant. It needs to be looked at against 'the story of people'. She stated it was important for us to explore our own culture and the culture of others and added the importance of 'understanding our heritage and understanding one's own story and others' stories in the midst of all'. Pedagogically, she supported the notion of a 'preacher of culture'. 'I believe,' she said, 'the special role of the teacher of English is to incorporate the joy of the story of people, the story of past and present that really shapes the future for generations to come.'

Ethical and sociocultural ideologies were embedded in her response to the role of children's literature in the classroom:

> 'We try to make it relevant to look at the complexity of relationships, to look at again the story of people and how people' story in the past and the present can help us understand ourselves and others, and the complexity of human relationships. So I guess it is to teach moral values, but it's also just I think about the story and understanding your own story as well and seeing how they can relate to what the author is talking about and the variety of literature that we look at'.

The tone of Kirsty's text was contemplative, the verbs reflecting mental processes ('think', 'wonder'). While there was a sense of joy in the use of literature, there was also a sense of frustration. Her use of metaphors reflected constraints where she saw other aspects of English *pushing* children's literature out, where teachers were *locked* into certain programs and other programs *stole* English time.

Kirsty echoed one of Kay's concerns of control over programs through published materials. She criticised the school prescription of reading schemes and literature resources. The argument for their inclusion was often given that some teachers felt that they lacked skills to select and use their own literature. For her the answer lay 'in

providing the professional development for teachers to feel confident and identify good effective classroom literature for their particular grade'.

Helena

The theme of Helena's discourse was reflected in her reply as to what she saw as the special role of the teacher of English—'to develop an understanding of how fulfilling it is to be a literate person and to develop a lifelong love of good literature'.

Helena's enthusiasm for children's literature was exemplified in that she saw it as the centre of her entire school program. Her role, she said, was to find active, imaginative uses for children's literature. Her metaphor reflected her thinking—'to switch kids on'—to focus on stimulating interest in reading through literature. Her tone reflected her contemplative approach of verbs of mental processes ('think', 'share', 'believe').

Pedagogically, she saw it was important to offer opportunities for children to develop knowledge and understanding and, above all, enjoyment:

> 'I also fear at times that we are forcing children into "acquiring skills" and forgetting to let them enjoy reading. I want reading to be a pleasure, not a chore.'

For Helena the most dominant discourse was an ethical discourse as she reinforced the emphasis on the English teacher 'being able to open doors for the individual to a sense of fulfilment'.

The curriculum, she thought, should be 'child-centred'. She felt that while the current curriculum was valuable in that it 'highlighted the skills which need to be developed', there was also a danger. This was not so much in the curriculum itself, but how it was emphasised:

> 'Unfortunately, experts who "sell" curriculums to us engage in so much jargon that the true meaning of English teaching is often lost. There seems to be more emphasis now on the curriculum than the child.'

4.2.6 Dimensions in teaching literature

As outlined in Chapter 2, interviewees were asked to complete a teacher version of the Purves and Rippere (1968) Response Preference Measure (RPM) which asked them to select from twenty questions the five preferred questions they would ask about a literary text. The value in this task was that it offered opportunity to confirm (or refute) those attitudes and values expressed in the interviews. The RPM in this study, while using a very small sample, does provide a useful tool which tends to offer triangulation regarding the

teachers' statements on their ideological and pedagogical approaches to children's literature, few having a clear, singular ideological perspective.

The Children's Choice project (Bunbury [ed]1995), an extensive Australian study, had also drawn on Purves and Rippere's (1968) study so, together, they provided points of distinction and comparison that could be directed at this study. It is obvious that there are differences in the size of the studies, the grade focus and the instruments themselves, together with contexts of time and place. The Purves study had focused on teachers of secondary and tertiary levels and did not include an Australian sample. The nearest comparison had to be taken from responses of teachers of students 14.00–14.11 years old in England. The Bunbury study drew on Australian national data and extended to teachers of Grade 5 but detailed responses in the report is only available for teachers of Year 7 and above. The present study was much more modest, considering a small sample of teachers of Years K-6 within one state, New South Wales. All studies, however, asked teachers to identify the five questions they most preferred to ask about a literary text.

Table 4: 1 shows the teachers' five preferred items

Table 4.1: Australian primary teachers preferred items on RPM

Choose FIVE of the twenty questions you would consider important for your class (or a sampled class) to be able to answer. **Participants: Ellen (A); Sally (B); Gloria (C); Sandy (D); John (E); Kay (F); Kirsty (G); Helena (H).** **Questions and Response Type**	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	**F**	**G**	**H**
ENGAGEMENT-INVOLVEMENT **Reaction to literature** 1. Is it proper for an author to write a story about such a subject? (Response: Content Knowledge)								
Reaction to form 2. What emotions or feelings does the work arouse in you? (Response: Involvement)	√	√	√	√			√	√
Reaction to content 3. Did you find that any of these people are like people you know? Did anything like this happen to you? (Response: Involvement)	√		√	√	√			√
PERCEPTION **Perception of language** 4. How would you describe the language of this work? (Response: Aesthetic Knowledge)						√		√
Perception of literary devices 5. What literary devices did you notice in the work? (Response: Aesthetic Knowledge)	√	√					√	
Perception of content 6. What happens in the work? Who is narrating it? What is the setting? (Response: Content Knowledge)				√	√	√		√
Perception of the relationship of technique 7. How is the technique related to what it is about? (Response: Aesthetic Knowledge)		√						
Perception of structure 8. What is the structure of the work? How is it organised? (Response: Aesthetic Knowledge)		√			√	√	√	
Perception of tone 9. What is the tone?(Response: Content Knowledge)								
Perception of generic classification 10. What is the genre of the work? (Response: Aesthetic Knowledge)						√	√	
Perception of contextual classification 11. How is the work related to the time in which it was written? (Response: Aesthetic Knowledge)	√		√	√				
INTERPRETATION **Interpretation of part as key to the whole** 12. Is there any one part of the story that explains the whole work? (Response: Content Knowledge)								
Interpretation of form 13. Do any of the formal devices sound, structure, syntax) have any significance? What symbols do you find in the work? (Response: Aesthetic Knowledge)		√						

Table 4.1: Australian primary teachers preferred items on RPM continued

Interpretation of content 14. How would you interpret the character of this person? (Response: Content Knowledge)			√		√	√	√	
Mimetic interpretation 15. Does this work describe the world as it is? (Response: Involvement)								
Typoligical interpretation 16. Is the work symbolic or allegorical? What is the theme? (Aesthetic Knowledge)			√					
Hortatory interpretation 17. What is the author teaching us? What is the work criticising? (Response: Content Knowledge)	√			√	√			
EVALUATION **Affective evaluation** 18. Does the work succeed in getting you involved in the situation? (Response: Involvement)								√
Formal evaluation 19. Is the work well written? Is it well constructed? (Response: Aesthetic Knowledge)								
Evaluation of the author's vision 20. Is the work about significant things? (Response: Content Knowledge)								

√= selected items

Purves (1981: 38) had identified two major patterns of response, questions that focused on *aesthetic knowledge* which was seen as impersonal, formal knowledge dealing with 'literary devices, language, the relation of technique to content, structure, evaluation of craft, symbols, genre and tone' and *involvement* which explored the reader's emotions and responses. Mindful of the fact that Purves coined these definitions some thirty years ago before some current theories of response were developed, it is important to further distinguish between these terms as they might relate to the twenty-first century. *Aesthetic knowledge* has come to emphasise focus on the text, while *involvement* is concerned with personal interaction with text. It is interesting to note that those who support 'cultural heritage' and 'functional linguistics' views find themselves as bedfellows in selecting common questions of aesthetic knowledge. As Hunter (1997: 318) puts it, 'what distinguishes aesthetic pedagogy is not the use of literary texts *per se* but a particular way of deploying texts (of whatever kind) in the classroom'.

Based on a factor analysis of the items, Bunbury [ed](1995: 157) had identified items 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 16 and 19 as reflecting *aesthetic* knowledge and 2, 3, 15 and 18 as reflecting *involvement.* Questions 1, 6, 9, 12, 14, 17 and 20 were not considered, as they did not clearly reflect either factor but rather related to *content.*

In the present study, the teachers' responses closely corresponded with the pedagogical and ideological views they conveyed in their interviews. For Ellen and Gloria, both a personal growth model and an aesthetic approach were important as is reflected in their selection of questions in *aesthetic knowledge* and *involvement* categories. Sally and Kay both emphasised the importance of a rhetorical approach accompanied by explicit instruction, as strongly reflected in their preference for aesthetic responses. Although motivated by different ideological approaches, Kirsty's responses showed a similar pattern reflecting her preference for an aesthetic approach. Finally, Sandy, John and Helena showed an interest in both sets of responses but shared a favouring of *involvement*, a view consistent with their personal growth approaches. Each expressed interest in other discourses, which was reflected in their inclusion of a selected question relating to *aesthetic knowledge.*

In the Bunbury (1995: 158) study, teachers of Year 7 (the lowest grade considered) highly valued *involvement* but placed little value on *aesthetic knowledge*—a pattern reversed in senior secondary teaching. In the present study, (Table 4: 2), no clear pattern emerged: both aesthetic knowledge and involvement were rated by the group as of value, where four teachers showed a slight preference for questions that generated *involvement*, three emphasised *aesthetic knowledge* and one saw both of equal significance. Individual preferences seemed not to relate to the age of children taught.

Four of the five questions (questions 2, 3, 14 and 6) were common to all studies (Table 4: 3). In spite of the very small sample in this study and the difference in the age groups that teachers were targeting in the Purves and Bunbury studies, there was a strong similarity of questions identified as important. The commonality of teacher responses across tertiary, secondary and, in this study, primary, suggests that the same questions are valued across the grades.

Table 4.2: Responses questions seek: involvement and aesthetic knowledge

Teacher	Age	Qualifications	Literature Training	No. of questions relating to Involvement	No of questions relating to Aesthetic knowledge
Ellen	30+	DipTeach	Yes	3	2
Sally	30+	BA	No	1	4
Gloria	30+	MEd	Yes	2	2
Sandy	30+	BEd	No	2	1
John	-30	BTeach	Yes	2	1
Kay	30+	DipTeach	No	0	3
Kirsty	-30	BEd	Yes	1	3
Helena	30+	BEd	Yes	2	1

Question 18, selected in both the Purves and Bunbury studies relating to affective evaluation (*Does the work succeed in getting you involved in the situation?),* was not preferred in this study. The only teacher to include this question in her selection taught kindergarten—which seems rather puzzling, given the nature of the cohorts in the other studies.

Question 8, relating to the perception of structure (*What is the structure of the work? How is it organised?*), was significant only in this study. This is understandable, given the current English K-6 Syllabus' emphasis on functional linguistics. It is interesting to note that, in all the studies, questions relating to *involvement* were seen as valuable (Purves study 3: 5 questions: Bunbury study 3: 5 and this study 2: 5 questions). However, in this study one question on *aesthetic knowledge*, question 8, became important. In all studies, a third factor, *content* (questions 6 and 14), was seen as very important.

Table 4:3 Comparison of RPM studies

Purves (UK Sample)		**Bunbury (Australian National Survey)**		**This study**	
Teachers of 14.00–14.11 year olds Question	%	**Teachers of Year 7** Question	%	**Teachers of Primary** Question	%
2 (I)	66.1	3 (I)	64.3	2 (I)	85.7
18 (I)	61.9	2 (I)	63.2	3 (I)	71.4
14 (C)	59.7	6 (C)	60.9	8* (A)	57.1
6 (C)	55.1	18 (I)	54.4	14 (C)	57.1
3 (I)	53.7	14 (C)	46.7	6 (C)	57.1

I = involvement: A= aesthetic knowledge: C=content

* = Important in this study only

The Bunbury study attributed teachers' preferences to their age, experience and training, where she observed that there was a significant correlation between an emphasis on *aesthetic knowledge* in the teaching of literature and young, lesser qualified, less specifically trained in literature teachers (1995: 158). While this study did not show such clear-cut groupings, there was a suggestion that those with no specific training in literature tended to favour aesthetic responses (see Table 4: 2 above).

4.3 Discussion and interpretation: understanding the texts

> *English has maintained a steady focus in terms of pedagogy while appearing to undergo regular—even radical—change in the form of different models (Patterson 2000: 266).*

The nature of the questions selected in the RPM not only reflected the ideological preference of the teacher, but, in turn, demanded a response of a particular kind from

readers. If, as Patterson (1997: 434) argues, 'response is a type of training in a particular set of procedures for reading', it follows that the choice of questions will affect student development as readers.

To reveal the changing and multiple discourses that influence the teachers interviewed, the texts of their interviews were explored. Aspects of their language were considered that reveal both how they positioned themselves and how they were positioned by these discourses. Whether the teachers were experienced or in their first years of teaching, their views on the roles of children's literature in the classroom drew on many discourses, and in some cases, were dominated by one discourse. For some, one or more discourses were contestatory. From such a small sample of teachers, came diverse responses on what they perceived English to be and what they saw as their roles as English teachers. In spite of the widespread use of the NSW *English K-6 Syllabus* (1998), there was also much diversity in how it is perceived, interpreted and implemented in teachers' programs. All of these factors impacted on the roles teachers see children's literature playing. No matter what their ideological stance, all teachers' pedagogies were driven by a sense of 'transformation', that from illiteracy to literacy, from socially inept to socially acceptable, from ignorance to moral rectitude, and so on.

Not surprisingly, strong elements of intertextuality were evident as all acknowledged the existence of a rhetorical discourse, which largely reflects the notions of the NSW *English K-6 Syllabus* (1998). Not only the language but the thinking of the Syllabus was echoed in the interviewees' definitions of terms such as 'language', 'social purposes', 'text' and 'text types'. The Syllabus was understandably influential as it was embodied in a policy document that all teachers had to address, yet, not all saw this as a dominant discourse. Response to this discourse varied from resistance, to tolerance, to enthusiastic acceptance.

There seemed to be a mismatch between the demands of parts of the Syllabus and teachers' interpretation of it. While all embraced the outcomes that relate to language structures and features of reading (Outcomes RES1.8, RSI.8, RS2.8, RS3.8), there seemed to be a lack of understanding of how written language works in context (Outcomes RES1.7, RSI.7, RS2.7 and especially RS3.7). The latter outcomes focused on the critical practices of the reader, where the reader finds alternative reading positions and practices to critique text (Luke & Freebody 1997). While some teachers in the interviews alluded to 'taking an idea and explaining it in depth' (Ellen), 'becoming critically aware' (John) and 'empowering students with skills to manipulate language' (Kay), there was little attempt to explain how pedagogical routines would be established to achieve these outcomes. Power was seen in terms of knowledge (of skills, of self and of the larger world). None of the teachers seemed to have a clear notion of poststructural views or an

understanding of how to develop critical and resistant readings. While all saw the importance of showing how text types served a variety of purposes, none seemed to understand the broader notions of how texts construct 'subject positions' and 'reading positions' (Kress 1985). Literature, then, was seen in a social context to have a formative role in developing self and relationships to the world.

If the situational context is central to the process of interpretation (Fairclough 1992, 1995), it is necessary to consider the impact of current elements in that context. The texts of most of the teachers' discourses could not have been recorded before 1998, as they are of a time and place. The NSW *English K-6 Syllabus* (1998) and technological changes, on the one hand, and changes in print culture of children's literature and programmed reading materials, on the other, were all influential. These factors affected what kind of knowledge these teachers believed they needed. The rapid changes created a need for instant knowledge of how to develop a pedagogical framework for new curricula and to develop some criteria for selection of print materials. Such urgency has the potential to cloud the significance of developing a knowledge of literature and literary theory.

How literary theory might amplify teachers' understanding and use of literature was vaguely understood by most teachers, as was witnessed by such statements as:

> 'I think a knowledge of literary theory is helpful because it helps you to understand why authors use children's literature as a vehicle for their writing rather than any other kind of literature. But by the same token I found it very confusing' (Ellen).

In contrast to the responses to the survey, the teachers in the interviews demonstrated a knowledge of a range of children's texts, many of which were recent and some award winning. There was, however, a sense of uncertainty for most of the teachers as to what activities, linguistic or literary, might be developed to enhance understanding. Those who had undertaken postgraduate studies in children's literature or writing (Kirsty, Ellen and Gloria) felt more confidence but noted that there was little time or opportunity for teachers to undertake inservice courses or research children's literature adequately.

Both the survey and interviews showed that teachers see literature as serving a diversity of purposes in the classroom. Both also revealed that teachers saw the discourse of literacy development as a fundamental value of children's literature. It focused on offering meaningful reading, the introduction of a diversity of texts, and an understanding of text structures. Intellectual growth and literary appreciation were seen to be important but were variously interpreted. These goals were seen as being conveyed through an aesthetic discourse where literature provided models of text, of effective language use, of social interaction and of how life should be lived. Yet, goals of emotional growth and moral standards, which had ranked lower in the survey, seemed to be noticeable in the interviews,

reflected in the favouring of an ethical discourse of personal growth and supported by the data in the RPM study where questions of *involvement* were favoured in the teaching of literature.

Notions of agency varied from those who saw the teacher as dominant, those who saw literature as offering a shared experience and those who aimed to give children responsibility for developing their own learning and response to texts.

4.4 Conclusion

> *Curriculum development must rest on teacher development (Stenhouse 1975: 24).*

As it was noted in Chapter 2, it was necessary to recognise that data analysis attempted to explore a number of discursive truths that develop particular views. These data have been constructed where the transcribed extracts have been removed from their contexts and transferred into print, omitting the semiotics of spoken and nonverbal language. Each interview has become a bounded text. As Bourdieu (1992: 44) would say 'lots of things have been systematically destroyed, lots of things are secret'. Yet such an approach to research has offered opportunities to deal with difference in social practice and to explore the powerful forces that contest the educational site.

In attempting to answer the question 'How does it mean?', this study has explored some discourses that are identifiable in a time of change. The key point that emerges is identified in Stenhouse's quote above. If curriculum development is to be meaningful, there must be a professional development of teachers. Stenhouse's simple truism of a quarter of a century ago still holds significance.

The two chapters in Part B have focused on two groups: teacher education students and primary classroom teachers. Through 'lab' and 'field' research, some understanding of the participants' attitudes, concerns and knowledge of children's literature and its roles in the classroom emerges.

Part C looks for explanations of how these perceptions may have developed. It explores both subject English and children's literature from historical and contemporary perspectives to try answer questions 'How are primary English teachers "formed"?' and 'How have they come to these views'? It considers the influences that may have impacted on their thinking and those that perhaps should be considered as important to and for the primary teacher.