STORYTELLING ENGAGEMENT IN THE CLASSROOM: OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOURAL CUES OF CHILDREN'S STORY EXPERIENCES

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

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SIGNATURE: …………………… DATE: ……..

This thesis is dedicated to

my parents

Jim and Elaine Morrison,

who filled my mind with stories and my

childhood with magic

ACKNOWLEGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

The value of storytelling in a busy world, awash with multiple sound bites, myriad visual grabs and a seemingly endless input of information, is recognized and utilized in an increasing number of areas in modern society, including in all levels of education. Narrative is used in all cultures to give meaning to the human experience. When narrative is presented in the form of oral storytelling this meaning making and relevance are enhanced by focused listening and people are captivated by the shared experience that storytelling provides. This thesis addresses a gap in the literature about how children in particular engage with storytelling.

In an innovative approach to storytelling research, this thesis systematically examines the observable responses of a group of primary school aged children to a long term programme of storytelling. 88 children across the school grades of Kindergarten, Third and Sixth class participated in 6 storytelling sessions each. This thesis places 12 of the videotaped storytelling sessions under critical scrutiny and analyses every verbal and physical response made by each child in order to measure both their individual and collective engagement with storytelling.

In so doing, the thesis canvasses the challenges encountered in conducting such systematic research and utilises action research (Bryman, 2004; Gray, 2004) in the structure of the storytelling project and grounded theory (Dey, 1999; Glaser, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Tuetteman, 2003) in the analysis of the collected data. Storytellers who wish to conduct similar research are provided in this thesis with a replicable method and a project template they can adapt to suit their own particular needs.

The third part of the thesis is devoted to a detailed examination of what happened to the child participants as they listened to a wide variety of stories. Five clusters of Indicators of Engagement grew out of this research and they are employed as a means of measuring the individual responses to storytelling. The thesis establishes, in an academically rigorous manner, that there is indeed a means of measuring a listener's engagement with storytelling.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

1.1   Our story begins

This study is a story. That is not to say it is untrue, or in any way a fabrication of events or data. Rather, it is a narrative of a journey that unfolded as I, confronted with an ethical and professional dilemma, sought to unravel the mystery of how a storyteller can gauge if their child audience is engaging with a story. How does a storyteller capture children's imaginations and enable them to enter the story realm and thereby immerse themselves completely in the world of that particular story? These questions were the initial motivation for the research journey but other questions emerged as the road opened before me.

All effective stories begin with an exposition, a setting for the initial action of the story. This story's exposition was the active career of a freelance professional storyteller, commissioned by individual schools and kindergartens to share stories with their children. Like the typical protagonist in a quest tale, I found myself embroiled in a crisis, in which a story I was sharing with young children was stopped partway through by a kindergarten staff member because it did not conform to the "proper way to tell stories to young children."

Therein I thought lay my quest: what type of story form is the 'proper one' to tell to children of differing ages; to ensure that their attention is captured by the storytelling? I searched the research citadel but could find no parchment or kindly wizard who could provide the answers I sought. The answers, if indeed they existed at all, were to be found outside the walls of the fortress of established knowledge and in the outlying lands where story listening children roamed.

Like protagonists in favourite tales therefore, I set about gathering up a satchel of tools and equipment that I believed would be required for the journey ahead. Considering myself well prepared, I set off on what I perceived to be a straight-forward journey of discovery, completely convinced that the road was a well sign-posted one, leading to a village of eager story listeners who would assist in determining the 'proper way' and ending in a place of knowledge and enlightenment. Establishing a means of measuring children's engagement in storytelling would be a straight-forward task and I would thereafter return to my cosy cottage, wiser and with an increased collection of storytelling accoutrements at my disposal.

Such is the folly of the journeying hero. The rising action of this particular story involved many unforseen challenges and incidents and the research path was convoluted and complex. Just as protagonists in quest tales have done before, I called upon my avatars; heroes who had bravely ventured into the land of story and described their quests and research. Using the advice and knowledge of avatars such as Chambers, Harley, Lipman, Saxby, Sturm and Zipes[1], I repeatedly entered the village of story listening children in search of the definitive means to measure their involvement and engagement with storytelling. Each time I entered the village I was greeted by increasingly eager children who enthusiastically accompanied me on the journey into the story realm.

Key to the thesis, my sojourn in the village of child listeners disclosed implements called Indicators of Engagement that every storyteller would be wise to carry in their satchel. These Indicators proved to be tools that enable the storyteller to observe, evaluate and adjust storytelling programmes to ensure that listeners truly are engaging with the story; embracing the myriad aspects of the storytelling event.

The falling action of the story, in the form of data analysis, was littered with the usual challenges of false starts, wrong turns and apparently insurmountable barriers. Having journeyed back from the village to the supposed safety of the research citadel, the imps of discourse/narrative analysis and video transcription lay in wait, while the gorgon of NVivo, with its tendrils of coding, loomed over them all. This thesis provides a description of how each of these challenges was tackled and overcome and how the QUEST was finally concluded, with the satchel now bulging with useful storytelling implements and a far greater store of knowledge about storytelling to utilise in future research and practice.

1.2   Background to the current study or, "How Half-chick got burned."

After more than a decade working as a Children's Librarian in New South Wales and Victoria, where storytelling was a central aspect of my job, I left the Public Library system and became a freelance storyteller. It was in this role that I encountered my theoretical and professional crisis. In a storytelling session in the midst of a booked out season of Easter storytelling appointments at schools and kindergartens, I began to tell

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[1] Numerous citations to these authors will occur throughout the thesis. As several works of each of them assisted in scaffolding different aspects in the current research, it is a considered decision not to include citations at this point in the Introduction.

the story of "The Little Half chick" (1962), [2] using numerous illustrations added to a felt board as the story progressed. I was confident in telling the story as it had already been well-received at three childcare centres in the days prior to this particular booking, one of which booked an extra day based on the positive response of their children to the storytelling. In the middle of the story, just as poor little Half-chick was about to reach his destination of the grand city of Madrid, the director of the kindergarten asked me to stop telling the story. I politely asked why and was told "the children aren't enjoying the story and they don't understand it." This came as quite a surprise to me, and to some of the children I suspect, as they had appeared to be listening as well as a group of three and four year olds can be expected to, according to my understanding of audience response at that time.

Rather than discuss this in front of an audience I asked if the director and I could go to another room to discuss the issue. The director explained that in her centre the style that "everybody" knows works best with young children was adhered to, where every section of a story must have an accompanying illustration. When I explained that my storytelling style for this particular story was to use some illustrations but to also use refrains and dialogue to encourage children to use their own imaginations, the director reiterated her preferred method for storytelling. I was given a choice; either continue with the storytelling session using her presentation style or discontinue the session. Unwilling to compromise and not a little angry that my ability to gauge the attention levels of a storytelling audience could be so resoundingly called into question, I decided not to continue and left the centre.

I spent the next months researching the storytelling literature for a definitive answer to the question that had been raised by this incident: how can children's engagement with storytelling be reliably measured? I particularly sought a systematic study that focussed on children's responses to oral storytelling. I was fortunate by that time to be working in a university library and had a wealth of information resources at my disposal. My search proved fruitless however and academic colleagues were also unable to shed any light on the problem. In the spirit of another character from early childhood literature therefore, I decided like the Little Red Hen, that I would "just do it myself."

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[2] A note on individual stories referred to in the thesis: All stories specifically mentioned in the thesis are referenced from a published source. However, in the true nature of oral storytelling, each story actually used in the storytelling project was an adaptation created by me, after numerous sources of the story were researched. Therefore, transcripts of stories may differ markedly from the published sources.

Thus the research began with a straightforward plot: how can children's engagement with storytelling be measured? The review of the current storytelling literature had identified a need for storytelling research that provided academic rigour, an applicable and productive analysis method and systematically collected data. The research journey was about to begin. The following section will outline the research questions for the current thesis and discuss the study's inclusions and exclusions.

1.3   The Research Questions

Amongst the wealth of valuable research literature on storytelling, there has been very little systematic investigation of the factors associated with effective storytelling for children. Out of the initial quest, several research questions evolved and guided the project:

What is an appropriate, academically rigorous methodology for investigating engagement with storytelling?

How can children's engagement with storytelling be defined and measured?

How do children experience story based on observable, behavioural cues?

1.3.1   Methodological considerations in the approach to research

The current study was instigated by an authentic problem that occurred in my practice as a freelance storyteller. It was therefore important that the research examine an authentic storytelling situation (in this case, as a visiting professional storyteller in a government public school) and gather data that would explore the practical research questions outlined above. The research needed to have access to a stable participant cohort, be conducted in a receptive venue and atmosphere and provide a well-defined cross-section of ages relevant to the stated aims of the study. In the Australian context, all of these determinants were met by conducting the research in a primary school, where the ages of children range from four to thirteen. Both a government primary school and a Catholic primary school in the Central Coast region of New South Wales, Australia, expressed interest in participating in the research. I had previously conducted several storytelling programmes at both schools and key staff at both locations were keen to be involved in research about storytelling. The Catholic school

unfortunately faced significant delays in obtaining permission for the research to occur and so the government primary school was selected as the participating school.

As a reflection of authentic practice and with an action research approach, it was determined at the commencement of the research that the study would not explore aspects that a visiting professional storyteller would be unlikely to know. The study therefore did not determine the individual socio-economic or cultural background of the research participants, their individual storytelling experience, their exposure to traditional literature or their individual literacy levels although as noted below, there were some general features of the school that can be offered as proving general context. Rather than have a preconceived notion of what the participants' responses would be based on such knowledge, it was determined that grounded theory would be applied to the collected data to reveal emerging patterns in the participants' behaviour. An increasing amount of research (Grove, 2005; Lyons & Mundy-Taylor, 2012) is being carried out on the value of storytelling as an activity with people with severe and multiple disabilities. While I have been privileged to share stories with groups of listeners with various disabilities, and it has been a profoundly enjoyable activity for the listeners and me, this aspect of storytelling is beyond the scope of the current study. Behavioural or learning difficulties, or other categories of audience diversity, were not determined before the research commenced.

1.3.2   Plotting the journey

The section above broadly outlines what the declared limits, exclusions and inclusions of the research were. Having established these determinants it was crucial to establish, just as any traveller does, the general direction of the journey. The journey required the establishment of a 'base-camp', a point to return to when aspects of the research needed assessment or if there was a need for regrouping. This base-camp was the adoption of a process for storytelling research, labelled QUEST. The accepted process for qualitative research (Creswell, 2009, Flick, 2009) was adapted to meet the specific needs of research about storytelling and in this thesis was rebranded as the QUEST method to enhance clarity. Establishing the QUEST process enabled me to have a map for the journey that could be consulted as the research project was carried out; to ensure that I did not stray too far from the research path. Utilisation of the Quest process aligns with the need, identified through a thorough review of the storytelling

literature, for a systematic and rigorous means of investigating children's engagement with storytelling.

Simultaneously there was a need to determine what constituted 'engagement with storytelling' for child listeners [3] as signposted by the second research question. It is the contention of this thesis that even very young children are capable of engaging with oral storytelling, given that the correct factors are present in the programme: familiarity, security, trust, audience preparation, and stories with emotional impact and a strong element of audience inclusion. Using various styles of storytelling exposes children to the art in an inviting way. Therefore a wide variety of stories were included in the schedule that were considered, based on over 20 years of practical storytelling experience, to have appeal to child listeners.

The third research question dictated that the final direction for the journey was certainly to explore how children's engagement with storytelling could be measured in an appropriate, academically rigorous manner by observing the behavioural cues that they presented. Through the application of grounded theory in the analysis of the data, patterns emerged in the participants' observable responses to storytelling, thus linking what I had previously seen as discrete elements in storytelling audience behaviour. This thesis unlocked the phenomenon of children's engagement with storytelling for examination and discovered that it is comprised of numerous elements that can be identified and measured through the use of a newly created set of measurements known as Indicators of Engagement.

1.3.3 Companions on the journey

I was fortunate to be accompanied at different times on this research journey by interested and supportive companions. Input from the staff of the participating school was actively sought in the preparation stages of the research to ensure that the school community viewed the research as a worthwhile activity and gave it their support. The support of individual teachers was crucial to engendering a sense of security and familiarity for the participants and ongoing communication with every member of school staff involved in the study was a priority of the research.

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[3] A concise definition of what is meant by 'engagement' in terms of this thesis is provided in section 2.1.2 of the following chapter.

There was absolutely no hesitation on the part of the school approached to take part in the study. The Assistant Principal who became the school's defacto project manager was already convinced of the educational benefit of storytelling for students and the professional development value of a long-term storytelling programme for the teaching staff. Open lines of communication between me as the storyteller and the parents of the research participants were established and maintained throughout the project. Their support was evident in their continuing questions about the progress of the research. The participating teachers were also companions on the research journey through their practical support and enthusiasm for the storytelling project in their classrooms.

1.4   Organisation of the thesis

The thesis has been structured in a way that reflects the flow of a typical storytelling programme, while taking into consideration and incorporating the requirements of a doctoral thesis and depicting the journey undertaken as the research continued. There are typically three stages for a storytelling programme: Planning; Preparation and presentation; and finally Reflection and evaluation. The thesis is similarly divided into three parts that echo the storytelling programme structure.

Part I reflects the planning phase of a storytelling programme where the context of the proposed booking, the theme of the programme and the likely audience and venue should all be considered. This section of the thesis therefore highlights the need for undertaking research about how children engage with storytelling. The apparent gap in the storytelling literature on this particular topic was identified by Isbell, Sobol, Lindauer and Lowrance in 2004, the year after my fruitless search for systematic research focussing on how to measure children's responses to storytelling. Chapter 2 of the thesis presents an extensive review of the literature as it pertains to storytelling with children. Chapter 2 also describes the justification for pursuing this line of research and outlines the value of storytelling.

Part II of the thesis mirrors the preparation phase of a storytelling programme where the stories are selected according to the agreed-upon theme. The selected stories are prepared in a way that is suitable for the age group of the intended audience. The venue is determined and the presentation styles of the stories are adapted to suit the storytelling space. This section of the thesis accordingly contains the chapter that

outlines the research process adopted for the storytelling project; namely, the QUEST process and how it aligns with both action research and grounded theory research. Chapter 3 indicates how the process was developed and details the challenges that were encountered in preparing and conducting the research, as described in the following two sections.

To begin, Chapter 3 describes the qualitative research method, adapted and labelled as the 'QUEST process' for the current study in order to explore and query experiences that arose in the course of the research. The chapter continues with a description of the research participants and the research venue. Chapter 3 also provides a template for selecting and preparing stories for telling that was used in the current research and may be utilised by other researchers with similar projects.

Chapter 3 goes on to describe the nine distinct challenges that were encountered during the course of the research and outlines the steps that were taken to overcome these challenges. The particular challenge of fulfilling a dual role during the research was addressed in this chapter. Adhering to the ethics and practices of a research student and an established freelance storyteller occasionally resulted in a potential conflict of interest as the storytelling project continued. The challenges involved in this dual role and the solutions used to counter them form a large part of the discussion.

Also in Part II, and firmly related to the first research question is the discussion which centres on the utilisation of grounded theory in the analysis of the large amount of data collected. This section of the thesis deals with the mechanics of data collection, the challenges encountered with transcribing video footage and how computer software was utilised to meet the demands of analysing and presenting the data. The qualitative analysis computer software program NVivo 9 was selected to assist with the task of incorporating grounded theory in the coding aspect of the research. This section describes how the application of NVivo 9 software was an innovative approach to analysing research on storytelling and therefore a detailed description of how this was carried out is incorporated in the chapter. This thesis demonstrates the value for practising storytellers and storytelling researchers that can be found in embracing new technologies to examine, explore and explain the ancient and respected art of storytelling.

Part III aligns with the third phase of a storytelling programme where the storyteller takes time to reflect on the recent storytelling session and assess whether it was successful. Was the reaction of the audience favourable to each story shared? Were there sections in a story that indicated that members of the audience were uncomfortable, bored or frustrated? What did the observed responses of individual audience members convey to the storyteller about their presentation of each story? How could the presentation have been improved?

In a similar way, Part III immerses the thesis in the world of story, or rather in the combined worlds of a collection of stories that were the resource for the current research and the observed responses of the research participants to these stories. Following on from the methodological aspects of the research discussed in Part II, Part III invites the reader back into the world of story as it closely examines the response of three classes to the five-month long storytelling project that took place in their own classrooms. The storytelling project undertaken for the current research was recorded on video to allow extensive and detailed observation of each participant in the Kindergarten, Third Grade and Sixth Grade class involved in the research.

Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 describe an innovative tool, the Indicators of Engagement, that was devised during the current research and which enables storytellers to assess how their audiences are engaging with stories and immersing themselves in the story realm. Using NVivo 9 as a tool to apply grounded theory to the analysis of the data, each verbal and physical response to a story by a research participant was coded. These codes were then further analysed and grouped into themes. The most prominent themes became the five clusters of Indicators of Engagement: Entering the Story Realm; Collaborative Engagement; Trancelike State Engagement; Language Engagement; and Group Dynamics Engagement. Deeper analysis of these five clusters revealed that they could be divided into two distinct patterns of storylistening behaviour: Individual Familiarisation and Relational Effects. Chapter 5 concludes with a model which visually depicts how these two strands of storylistening behaviour, each made up of threads of clusters of Indicators of Engagement, together form the tapestry that is the essence of engagement with storytelling.

1.4.1　Presentation style of the thesis

The writing style used in the thesis reflects the "meta-dilemma" (Mockler, 2007) encountered by me, in the often conflicting demands of a practising storyteller and an academic researcher. Higher research degree theses require a formal language style that represents the serious and academically rigorous nature of the research undertaken. However the research was immersed in story and records its effects on not only the research participants, but also on my responses to the challenges and experiences encountered, as recorded in the field notes.

It is a journey that uncovered a new means of exploring the vast and challenging research terrain of oral storytelling. The thesis reflects the queries and unexpected results that I encountered as I shared a repertoire of personally selected stories with the research participants. While the thesis describes and applies the QUEST process of systematically analysing listeners observable responses to oral storytelling that can be replicated by future researchers, it also reflects the particular situations that arose as a result of sharing my own selection of stories. Another storyteller, faced with the same dilemma, would most certainly have selected different stories for their programme of tales. Their story presentation would have been uniquely their own and each storytelling session would have played out in a different manner to the ones I experienced. That is, after all the very essence of storytelling, that each telling of a tale is unique.

It was therefore thought to be important and highly relevant that the thesis reflect the narrative nature of the research. Creswell (2008) has supported the notion of incorporating a "qualitative storytelling structure" when writing a report that is a highly personalised account. While presenting an academic analysis of the research, the thesis will therefore also reflect a narrative writing style in some sections where this is appropriate. This duality of writing style has previously been used by Lewis (2000) in his doctoral thesis, which is a moving and powerful example of academic writing expressed in a narrative manner. A later work by Lewis (2011) highlights the prominent place that story should have in research. Fisher and Phelps (2006) have also supported the use of narrative in thesis writing. Interestingly, these two examples have emerged from Australian universities. While the majority of the thesis employs a narrative form, use of analysis software, modelling and some quantitative material have

necessitated the use of numbers, tables and headings in some sections of the thesis to present the material in the most appropriate format.

1.5   Conclusion

The thesis finishes with a section that is nominally termed 'The conclusion,' but can the story about storytelling ever really end? This thesis has provided future researchers with additional tools with which to explore the valuable and intriguing realm of storytelling. The QUEST process and the Indicators of Engagement enable those interested in studying listeners' observable responses to storytelling and storylistening behaviour to apply measures to those responses and gauge the effectiveness of a particular story or an entire storytelling programme.

Storytelling is sometimes viewed, occasionally by well-respected storytellers, to be of value akin to any other craft; worthy of a place in the culture but kept to the fringes of educational research. Even the renowned storyteller Sawyer appeared to be arguing that storytelling should be kept in its 'artsy place' when she stated:

> Storytelling is a folk-art. To approach it with the feeling and the ideas of
> an intellectual or a sophisticate is at once to drive it under the domination
> of mind and critical sense. (Sawyer, 1962, p. 17)

While the individual act of storytelling certainly has a place in the 'arts', carried out with passion and respect, the practice of storytelling deserves to be the subject of academic interest and study. Through these means, storytelling gains the scholarly respect to which it is entitled. This thesis aims to place storytelling firmly in the focus of systematic academic study. The following chapter will place the current study within the context of the literature pertaining to storytelling.

PART I. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Part I of the thesis establishes the need for undertaking research about how children engage with storytelling. A gap in the literature is revealed that highlights a lack of systematic research focusing on how to measure children's engagement with storytelling. The justification for pursuing this line of research is supported in this chapter which outlines the value of storytelling.

CHAPTER 2. A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ABOUT ORAL STORYTELLING, WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON CHILD LISTENERS

For several decades there has been an international debate in storytelling circles about what constitutes an effective and engaging storytelling session for children. Each storytelling programme or session is unique and each audience member brings to the session their own experience, expectations and understanding of the art of storytelling, and their individual ability to engage with the storytelling. The level of this understanding and the ability of the storyteller to "read" the responses of an audience will dictate the style of storytelling best used for that particular group.

The current study was conducted utilising a wide range of oral storytelling presentation styles involving many story genres. As the data was collected and the level of 'understanding of the art of storytelling' of each listener was gauged through their observable responses to each story, the research focus emerged, and can be expressed in the following questions. How do children demonstrate their immersion in the story realm and exhibit their active engagement with a story? How can this observable engagement with the story world be measured? These questions were refined and placed in a more logical order in the research questions as expressed in Section 1.3 and repeated here:

What is an appropriate, academically rigorous methodology for investigating engagement with storytelling?

How can children's engagement with storytelling be defined and measured?

How do children experience story based on observable, behavioural cues?

The primary focus of the current study therefore became the observation of the participants' engagement with storytelling and the development of a reliable means of measuring that engagement. As the concepts of engagement with storytelling and of storytelling itself are crucial to the understanding of the current research, definitions of the terms, as they were applied in the study, are provided in the following section.

2.1 Definition of terms

2.1.1 What is storytelling?

Storytelling can be defined as the act of an individual verbally recounting to one or more listeners, without the use of written text, a plausible account of an event or series of events. The story structure is arranged in a logical (most often chronological) sequence, incorporating plot, characters, context, motivating factor (such as a problem to be solved) and perspective for the narrator. Unlike a simple retelling of a series of facts or events, a storytelling episode should also contain emotional content that conveys the personal meaning the story has for the teller. It is this interpretation of storytelling that is utilised in this research. An exhaustive examination of what defines story, as opposed to narrative, is provided by Boyd (2009) and is a valuable resource for anyone interested in the art of storytelling.

The interplay between the teller and the listener is highlighted as one of the most crucial elements of a successful storytelling event by the majority of authors who write about storytelling. Respected American storyteller Joseph Sobol (1999) described storytelling as a living art, which can only exist in an exchange between several people. Lewis (2006) has stated that story has a life that is given to the storyteller in the form of a gift, which is then passed on to the listeners. A storyteller will commence a story, observe the listeners' responses and adapt the telling to meet their responses. It is this process that makes each storytelling event unique.

2.1.2 Engagement with storytelling

It is common to hear practising storytellers discuss how well (or not) their audience 'engaged' with a particular story. All of the storytellers involved in the conversation will nod their heads in tacit understanding of what is meant by 'engagement'. Their understanding will be formed by discussions with storytelling colleagues and references to the term in the storytelling literature such as that written by Grove (2005), Lordly (2007) and Sipe (2002).

The term 'engagement' and its derivatives are central markers or signposts for the journey in this thesis, so a precise definition is essential. The term "engagement" has applications and differing definitions in the field of education where the specific term

"student engagement" is more commonly used. Vibert and Shields (2003) for example defined student engagement as not only involving academic participation in the school curriculum but also being involved in the extra-curricular activities of the school such as participation in the cultural, social and political life within and external to the school. Bruner (1996) discussed the place of cultural psychology in education, where learning should not be a "one-way street" (Bruner, 1996, p. 21), but rather a place where both teacher and students are actively involved in the learning process. Coil (2003) discussed student engagement from the perspective of learning "that is meaningful and personal" (Coil, 2003, p. 5) that occurs when students are in an environment that allows risks and failure. Willms and The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2003) discussed student engagement in terms of participation in academic learning and a sense of belonging in the school.

In a study related to the issue of storytelling engagement, Vieira and Grantham's study of elementary school children (2011) that measured the relationship between loci of control over choices and the engagement with reading, showed that those children who perceived that they had personal control over the choices they made in life developed greater emotional involvement (engagement) in reading. Those study participants who perceived that they had little or no control over choices in their life, that is, others made choices for them, tended to go through the mechanics of reading with little emotional involvement (engagement). Extending Vieira and Grantham's definitions for reader engagement to storylistener engagement, engagement with storytelling could involve: enjoyment of storytelling, a general interest in storytelling, an openness to diverse content in stories, and an immersion in the world of the story.

El′Koninova (2001), used the findings of an experiment conducted in 1998 in which children from three to seven years old were asked to act out the plot of a well-known story that they had just had read to them. El′Koninova then outlined the ways in which the children played out the plots of the stories and compared their play depiction with expected responses to listening to stories as described in the research literature. This study described the involvement of children in the world of the story through the methods they chose to depict the actions of the plot in their playacting. While this study is a systematic observation of children's dramatic response to story, it did not analyse the engagement with the act of story listening itself.

The definition of engagement as it applies to oral storytelling differs from the perspective of educational research in specific ways. From the beginning of the current research, engagement with storytelling was considered to be an individual response to hearing a story that required the audience member to be actively listening to a story and that prolonged attention was being given to the story. More than this however, engagement required that the listener was experiencing an emotional response to the story. This response may be enjoyment, concern, dismay or dislike amongst other reactions, depending on the individual listeners' understanding of the story and the meaning they derived from it. Engagement was also considered to be a listener's willingness, demonstrated through appropriate body language, to enter into the world of the story and create the images inspired by the story in the listener's imagination.

Engagement with a story can be expressed as a committal of consciousness, where the individual listener surrenders themself to the experience of the story and shares their responses to the story with the storyteller and the rest of the audience, what MacDonald has termed "breakthrough into play" (MacDonald, 1999, p. 412). Therefore, in the context of this thesis, engagement with storytelling is the observable emotional responses, expressed verbally and physically, that a listener reveals as they attentively listen to a story. These performative aspects of engagement, called the Indicators of Engagement, are unpacked in Chapters 4 and 5 which detail the classroom storytelling data.

When storytellers speak of 'reading the audience' they are in essence observing the indicators of this storytelling engagement. For most storytellers, reading the audience involves looking for the anticipated responses at a given section of the story from the majority of the audience members. When these anticipated responses to a section of the story are not observed, the storyteller gauges that the audience members are not sufficiently 'engaged' with the story and adjusts their presentation accordingly.

To date no definitive study could be located that investigated the elements of a prolonged storytelling programme that provided evidence of the crucial factors that must be present for children to engage effectively with storytelling. Isbell, Sobol, Lindauer and Lowrance (2004) recognised this lack of literature regarding an "engagement" study and specifically identified the need for further research. They concluded their study by outlining a similar question to the one initially proposed for the current study; "Do children pay better attention to one medium of story presentation

than another?" (Isbell, et al., 2004, p 162)   An earlier study by Smardo (1983) examined the effectiveness of three different modes of public library storyhour delivery on preschoolers' receptive language, that is, their listening skills. While story reading and storytelling were one mode of delivery, and were shown to be more effective than film presentations or video recordings of the "live" presentations, the published study did not detail the aspects of engagement that the 437 child participants displayed while listening to the stories.

While this lack in the research literature was identified, the wide spectrum of material available on storytelling that has been located and evaluated in the current review of the literature did provide a range of assumptions and theories that proved useful in building the method and research pathways for the current study. This study therefore aims to add academic rigour, an applicable and productive method of analysis and systematically collected data to the research literature on engagement with storytelling.

2.1.2.1 The Sense of Story

One descriptor of engagement with stories often referred to in the research literature is the identification of an audience 'sense of story', sometimes referred to as story schema (Daniel, 2007; Isbell, et al., 2004) or anatomy of story (Barton & Booth, 1990; Livo & Rietz, 1986). The literature on this issue makes for intriguing reading and should be considered by practising storytellers. It is an area of research worthy of systematic study and the data collected for the current study may be utilised for this at a future time. A review of the literature about the phenomenon of a sense of story is included here as a reflection of the current thinking about this issue.

Storytellers and academics such as Applebee (1978), Farrell (1994), Mandler (1978), Roney (1989), and Stadler and Ward (2005) have used the various terms "story schema", "story sequencing" and "sense of story" to describe the level of understanding that is required to completely comprehend a story. A search of the relevant literature would indicate that the term "sense of story" was first used by Applebee in 1977, although he does refer to the earlier work of Vygotskii (1962) on the language and intellectual development of children and its influence on meaning making. Farrell (1994) described the components of the phenomenon by stating that a child who is acquiring a sense of story increasingly recognises narrative organisation, protagonists,

character types, an initial conflict or problem, the rise and fall of the plot, metaphor, dialogue, the solution of a problem and a satisfying conclusion that ties up loose ends.

Applebee (1977) stated that children begin using the conventions of story such as structured beginning "once upon a time" and conventional closing statements from the age of two and like Farrell later, argued that children continue to develop this sense of story, what he also referred to as the "conventions of the spectator role" of language (Applebee, 1977, p. 343). Roney also discussed this developmental aspect when he described how exposure to many kinds of stories through storytelling develops an understanding of different types of narrative. As children listen to a story, they engage in "predictive-creative thinking" (Roney, 1989, p. 522).

Barton and Booth (1990) expressed the view that exposing children to a variety of story styles and types develops a sense of story, in what they term the 'anatomy of story', by allowing children to experience a variety of patterns in language, including those they have not previously encountered. Zipes (1995) provided a strong argument for enabling children to develop a sense of story when he argued that an ability to create and tell a story provides children with empowerment. They are able to express their own view of their life experience and apply meaning to it. He stated that the years between seven and ten "are crucial for giving children a sense of story" (Zipes, 1995, p. 5) and instilling in them the ability to recognise narrative structure, genres and conventions which is markedly older than Applebee's age of two to five. The age group identified by Zipes was represented in the current study and the participants' responses to a sustained programme of storytelling will be examined in Part III of the thesis.

Amaro and Moreira (2001) however suggested that story sequence is more complex and layered than the ability to tell a simple narrative or to acquire knowledge of the sequence of events in a typical story. Acquiring narrative skills engenders an appreciation of the different genres of story types; it is building an expectation of how the characters, both good and evil, are likely to behave in a folk or traditional tale; it is anticipating that the hero in a myth or legend will ultimately act in a noble manner, even if he or she has displayed flaws along the way.

Exposure to many varieties of stories enables the listener to develop an important component of a sense of story: to recognise and compare story types, genres and plot devices. When this knowledge is gained through exposure to stories from different

cultures and lands, the listeners (and teller) find satisfaction in recognising the similarities and unique differences in human behaviour and across cultures. Recognising that other people have the same fears, hopes and experiences is very comforting for storytelling audiences and particularly children. At the same time, learning that there are distinct differences across cultures can engender tolerance and acceptance of other cultures. As a sense of story develops for listeners who are exposed to a wide variety of stories, listeners acquire an ability to predict what will unfold in a story and how characters will react to common plot devises.

From the citations above it can be argued that children who are exposed to a regular serving of storytelling acquire a well-developed sense of story. They gain an understanding of what a story consists of; the patterns it may take, the characters they may encounter and the plot twists that may engage them. In essence children with a sense of story, "get it"; they understand and enjoy what storytelling is all about. In addition to knowing what elements or factors to expect in a story, children who are regularly exposed to storytelling know that they will 'usually' be satisfied at the conclusion of a tale and that they will derive a personal meaning or at least a pleasurable memory from the story. They perceive storytelling as an activity that they will enjoy and one in which they willingly participate. They become active and engaged members of a receptive audience.

2.1.2.2 Engagement with language

Children begin to acquire language from the moment they are born (Boyd, 2009) and language acquisition is an ability that is encouraged in every culture in the world. Surrounded by people who express themselves largely in narrative, children also learn narrative skills in order to communicate their own needs. Stadler and Ward (2005) assert that children first use storytelling from the age of three. This builds on the work of Vygotskii and Applebee discussed earlier and of Mandler (1978) who stated that story schemata are acquired through experience with listening to stories and other everyday narratives. Mandler asserted that children develop an understanding of the units or elements that are contained in a story and the sequence that they can expect these units to follow.

Furthermore, exposure to different styles of language enables children to become familiar with the vocabulary of story and formalised storytelling language. Oral

storytelling, and particularly traditional tales, use a more formalised and structured style of language than colloquial speech. As Grainger asserts:

> The language of traditional tales abounds with symbol, metaphor, imagery, intertexuality and oblique meanings, and is a rich contributor worth savouring. Set openings and endings, rhythmic and repetitive refrains and repeated phrases often mark the pattern of events, and please the ear, evoking a physical response, a strong sense of structure and vivid images. (Grainger, 1997, p 29)

Through storytelling children are exposed to words not normally used in colloquial speech or even many forms of written language and they hear the rhythmic patterns that are so evocative of stories from other cultures and lands.

2.1.2.3 Receptive audience and engagement

A further benefit of a developed sense of story is that a receptive audience, one with a developed sense of story as described here, creates a more satisfying experience for all involved. It allows the storyteller to relate a tale in much more detail, with more energy or perhaps with finer nuances. When an audience anticipates a pleasurable experience and is familiar with the activity of storytelling, if not the minutiae of each story about to be told, they are willing participants in the event and display behaviour that benefits and enhances the experience. Storytellers who ensure that their listeners identify the storytelling event as something different to everyday activities have already prepared their listeners to enter the story realm. Strategies such as moving each class away from their desks and to the storytelling area set the venue for the storytelling event as different from normal classroom routines.

Storytelling is effective in enabling children to develop the ability to visualise the story settings, characters and actions (Cooper, Collins & Saxby, 1994). The crucial role of the storyteller is the ability to encourage listeners to willingly leave "the here and now" and enter into the world of the story, the story realm. Listeners must be convinced that hearing a story is going to be enjoyable and worth their time. For listeners to be prepared to give their time and attention to subsequent story events, their experiences with a storyteller must be positive ones. Developing a sense of story can only come from experiencing a variety of stories, and building an expectation of what will be

revealed, and how the story will play out. Of course, the real delight with storytelling comes when a story contains a surprise or plot twist that skews this expectation but without this Sense of Story, the surprise is not fully appreciated.

2.2   Storytelling as an area of academic study

Although a large number of aspects of the activity of oral storytelling have been explored there is a case for a more academically focussed, more rigorously defended analysis of storytelling. A survey of the general storytelling literature revealed that a large number of aspects of the activity of oral storytelling have been investigated. Method (both for preparing and presenting stories), the history of storytelling, and the purpose and value of storytelling, have all featured as the focus of attention in hundreds of books written on the topic. One of the early prominent books of the twentieth century was published by Bryant (1910). Didactic and moralistic in tone as was typical of the time, her work nevertheless promoted the worth of traditional storytelling as an effective educational tool and presented theories about the use of storytelling in schools that were developed by later writers. Renowned storytellers such as Cather (1919), Bailey (1925) and Sawyer (1962) continued throughout the twentieth century to describe how storytelling should be conducted, each adding their own personal practices to the mix.

In 1998 the first Storytelling Café email conference hosted by the Society for Storytelling in the United Kingdom (Storytelling Cafe, 1998), sparked a spirited debate about the nature of storytelling. Numerous storytellers and authors contributed to this debate, stating that rather than having a formulated set of guidelines for what storytelling should entail, whatever works for a particular teller, with a particular audience, at a particular time, is acceptable. Birch and Heckler also responded in this manner when they stated:

> If the plasticity of storytelling has been one of its strengths, setting out to establish a rigid set of guidelines and rules would be antithetical to the very way storytelling brought us forward in evolution. (Birch & Heckler, 1996, p. 13)

The debate about the definition of terms for storytelling continued in the United Kingdom via the formats of email conferences, forums and symposiums, discussing

such topics as the authenticity of storytelling resourced from oral or written materials, ownership of adaptations of stories and the morality of using another's personal story. The issues were picked up in Australian storytelling circles, with numerous professional storytellers publishing material in the later years of the twentieth century. Dudley and McKay (1998) provided the storytelling community with a thorough "how-to" book, while Bell and Barnes' (1999) article about the health of storytelling in Australia in 1999 discussed the activity of the various Australian storytelling guilds.

While these writers provide the view of practising storytellers, only a handful of Australian academics have written specifically about storytelling. Saxby, in addition to a wealth of books, articles and conference papers focussing on children's literature, in collaboration with Cooper and Collins (Cooper, Collins & Saxby, 1994) wrote about the value and educational application of storytelling. Saxby added to the storytelling literature in 1997 and emphasised the importance of children continuing to hear the spoken word in the form of stories. Poston-Anderson and Redfern (1996) conducted a literature review of the status of "oral" storytelling, in conjunction with a series of interviews with 24 practising Australian storytellers. Poston-Anderson (2000) has also published a paper that was highly valuable to this thesis about the place of story in research, particularly as an aid to meaning making. A later work by Poston-Anderson and Potter (2003) returns to the world of practising storytelling itself and reported on a course of storytelling training undertaken by four public library staff. Mallan (1991) has written about the art of storytelling from the perspective of children as storytellers and highlighted the importance of storytelling in the school curriculum, In Mallan's later work (1998), highly relevant to this thesis, she described how the emotional content of stories enables children to engage with stories and make the meanings they convey memorable. This work of Mallan's also highlighted the significant role storytelling can play in building trust and rapport between teachers and students. Mallan's (2003) work focusses on the storytelling activities of children themselves. The views of these individual scholars on what storytelling is and how it should be conducted make for fascinating reading, highlight the flexible nature of the art of storytelling and help identify areas in need of further research including methodological approaches to these studies.

2.2.1 Methodology of previous studies of children's engagement with storytelling

Most published works about storytelling were based on the writer's years of experience in working with children and using storytelling in the classroom or library setting. Cooper (2005), in a paper that looks at the integrated activities of children's storytelling and play based on Paley's storytelling curriculum work (1992), specifically states that the teachers and children referred to in the paper are an amalgam of people she has encountered throughout her research. Other published works were largely presented as an observation of the nature of storytelling as it was currently practised and accepted. Little research could be located that reported on a systematic study of the impact that a sustained programme of storytelling had on a group of children and how they engaged with the stories. A study that analysed the relationship between narrative and play however was published by Lindqvist (2001) in which she argued that for preschool children, play is linked with art and narrative to form an imaginative whole. Young children create meaning through play:

> Play is a dynamic meeting between a child's inner life (emotions and thoughts) and its external world. When children play, they create a fictitious situation and perform actions (Lindqvist, 2001, p. 8).

One study that approached the aims of the current research was conducted by Mallan (1997) in a Brisbane School over a period of ten weeks. One class of Year 3 students were involved in weekly storytelling activities, which included Mallan telling a story and the students retelling the previous week's story in groups. The purpose of the sessions was to use storytelling as a means of developing communication skills, self-esteem and a sense of community. It was a valuable addition to the investigation of the value of storytelling, provided empirical data that could be analysed and outlined a replicable method, thus assisting to clarify some of the methodological issues for this current study where I am measuring children's engagement with storytelling.

Another of the few practice-based studies that could be located was conducted by Trostle and Hicks (1998). This was a comparative study of comprehension and knowledge of vocabulary gained from storytelling versus story reading. While their study showed that students who were told stories achieved better scores in the subsequent comprehension test than did those students who had been read to, it did

not give any indication of what factors were required for the students to engage with the storytelling in the first place. In a later work, Trostle-Brand and Donato (2001) argued that storytelling has three main purposes; to entertain, to provide a means of nature-related explanations (pour-quoi tales) and as a projection of possible life experiences. They believed that storytelling is more dramatic, colourful and active than story reading, thus inferring increased engagement due to these factors, and their observations of children's different responses to storytelling and story reading supported this:

> As a result, children are more likely to tune into a story well told than a story well read. This storytelling attention advantage is especially true for children who have short attention spans (e.g., slower academically, attention deficit, etc.) (Trostle-Brand & Donato, 2001, p. 10)

Kuyvenhoven (2007, 2009) explored the impact that sustained exposure to storytelling had on a combined fourth and fifth grade class she observed over five months. Kuyvenhoven listened to and observed the students during their school day as they told narratives to each other and took particular notice of their posture as they listened to extended stories told by their storyteller teacher. While Kuyvenhoven's work provided valuable information about the children's posture as they listened to storytelling, her work did not examine the specific individual responses, including non-postural responses, of each child as they listened to stories. The lack of literature available on studies that particularly analysed children's responses to different styles of storytelling gave further impetus to the need for the current study.

2.3   Audience preparation and audience behaviour

Gathering data for the current research in a systematic method relied heavily on consistently presenting what in storytelling circles is termed "a successful event." This involved preparing and sharing the stories effectively in a way that encouraged audience attention and the willingness of the research participants to continue to be involved. There are several components to a successful storytelling event and they will be discussed below.

In order to present what would be considered by practising storytellers as a successful event, the storyteller needs to acquire a strong working knowledge of audience

behaviour and the skills needed to prepare an audience. Dudley and McKay (1998) stated that room preparation is a crucial part of a successful storytelling session. Renowned storyteller and educator Barton (1990) advocated regrouping the class into "theatre mode" to ensure the strongest possible delivery of the story. This enables the teller to always be aware of how the audience is reacting (externally) to a story. Barton described this theatre mode as standing in clear view of every audience member and ensuring that each listener is seated within the area of his arms held out at forty-five degrees. Ideally there should be no distracting activity going on behind the teller and the audience should be facing away from any strong light source, such as sunlight through a window. McWilliams (1998) also favoured the theatre mode and explained that storytelling should ideally be carried out in an atmosphere free of distractions with the audience comfortable and close. Cooper, Collins and Saxby called this "tuning the hall" and pointed out that it is vital for teller's to "gauge the appropriateness of the telling in each particular space" (Cooper, et al., 1994, p. 36). The challenges of accommodating all of these suggested components of room set-up in the confines of a classroom are outlined in Chapter 3.

The other value of the proper set-up of the storytelling area is that it allows the teller continual eye-contact with the audience. Barton and Booth emphasised the importance of visual contact with the audience when they stated that: "Storytelling is an audience-valuing situation. The storyteller should feel the audience response throughout and continually modify the delivery accordingly" (Barton & Booth, 1990, p. 45). In other words, the storyteller should always be in a position to 'read the audience.' As McKay (1999) pointed out, the signals that an audience sends back to the teller are a vital part of the storytelling process and indicate to the teller that the story is being received. These signals also indicate that the listener is engaging with the story and the storyteller familiar with the elements of listener response will be able to determine if their listeners are acquiring this capacity and how they may modify their programme to further facilitate this acquisition. The ability to be able to make eye contact with every audience member is crucial to a successful storytelling event, as each listener receives the story differently and the teller needs to be able to gauge each response and react accordingly. Birch supported the widely acknowledged essential interactive element of storytelling when she said:

A storyteller needs to acknowledge and adjust to, with some immediacy, the audience's responses, which provide a fresh and limitless source of energy, making each telling of a story a unique event. (Birch, 1996, p. 107)

Storytellers worldwide acknowledge this essential interactive element in a storytelling session. Isbell, Sobol, Lindauer and Lowrance described the different dynamics of story reading and storytelling:

When a story is read, the primary reference for the communication event is the text, as fixed upon the page. In a storytelling event, the words are not memorized, but are created through spontaneous, energetic performance, assisted by audience participation and interaction. (Isbell, et al., 2004, p. 158)

Brown (1997) expanded on the idea of the storytelling event as an interactive activity in which the storyteller and listeners should be "present to each other". In doing so, they have a mutual responsibility for the story and the making of meaning. The reluctance of practising storytellers to adopt digital storytelling as a primary means of relaying their stories, (although they may do it as an adjunct to their in-person storytelling events) as reported at conferences, storytelling guild meetings and on social media, is understandable in light of the teller-audience feedback interaction described above.

The preparation of the audience is vital to the group dynamics of a storytelling session. Storytelling is a communal event that becomes more energised as more than several people take part. Storytellers of old knew the value of preparing their audience for the storytelling session. As McWilliams (1998) described, the rituals that opened every storytelling session served to let the audience know that it was time to let go of the everyday world and enter the story realm and accept its different environment and rules.

Cooper, Collins and Saxby (1994) described the importance of the introductory banter between teller and audience at the beginning of a storytelling session that should establish the mood, clarify unfamiliar words and stimulate audience interest. Data from the project showed that the time spent in the introduction to each storytelling session helped to re-establish group dynamics and prepared the class for something different to the usual lesson.

2.3.1 The trance-like state

In effective storytelling sessions, when the audience has been prepared and the venue is appropriate, the listener may enter what writers such as Bauman (1986), Sturm (1999) and Abrahamson (1998) have termed an 'alternate state of consciousness'. The success of storytelling also relies on the state of consciousness of the teller and their ability to enter into the realm of the story. Cooper, Collins and Saxby (1994) emphasised the importance of the teller being able to 'see' the story as it is told. Bauman stated that stories have two existences – the events in which they are told and the events they relate to. Therefore, Bauman seemed to be saying, the teller also needs to deliver the story as though they are present in that story world, for the subsequent storytelling event to be successful. Livo and Rietz also talked about this phenomenon when they said: "The rules of the storying have to do with transporting participants from one time and space into another, in which a different but equally valid truth pertains – the truth of 'story' " (Livo & Rietz, 1986, p. 187).

Writers such as El′Koninova (2001) have explored the trancelike state that listeners may enter into when listening to storytellers. Abrahamson (1998) built on the work of Erickson and Rossi (1976) in examining how listeners unconsciously suspend their belief systems and normal frames of reference when listening to stories that relate in some way to their own life experience. Abrahamson then described the five-stage process of the conversational trance induction that listeners go through as they immerse themselves completely in the story realm. These stages, as discussed by Abrahamson, are: fuxiation of attention; depotentiating habitual frameworks and belief systems; unconscious search; unconscious process; and the hypnotic response.

Sturm (1998) researched the phenomenon of trance inducement through storytelling and its significance to storytelling programmes. He interviewed 22 participants at a series of eight storytelling festivals to determine if they perceived an altered state of consciousness either during or immediately after listening to stories. Sturm's analyses proved very influential on this study with elements of the trancelike state being examined closely to ascertain its role in engaging with story. It appears from further literature on the trancelike state (Gawler-Wright, 2002; Hsu, 2008; Kuyvenhoven, 2007; Lipman & Cleveland, 2006; Stallings, 1988; Sturm, 1998, 1999, 2000; Sturm, 2002, 2007) that one of the most useful techniques a storyteller can master to enhance this entry into a storytelling trance is the ability to be in complete control of the presentation of the story. An effective means of doing this involves the use of the fourth wall.

2.3.2 The Fourth Wall

The 'fourth wall' is an imaginary barrier between the audience and the actors in a conventional drama. This barrier enables the actors on the stage to create the world of the play, without acknowledging the existence of the audience. Only at the end of the play during applause (hopefully) will the actors face the audience and acknowledge them. The term was first mentioned by Andre Antoine (cited in Styan, 1983) in the early years of the twentieth century and is now a concept that is increasingly discussed in storytelling circles. For example, two-time Grammy Award winning storyteller Bill Harley (1996) discussed at length the concept of the fourth wall as it applies to storytelling. Harley borrowed the concept of the fourth wall from traditional western theatre and adapted it to devise a method of deconstructing a story into the elements of interaction and non-interaction with the audience.

Elements of the fourth wall concept are also incorporated in the work of McWilliams (1998), who referred to the process as the Storytelling "V", whereby the teller shifts their posture as they assume the dialogue of each character. The work of Cooper, Collins and Saxby also related to the concept of manipulating the fourth wall, with their "Four circles of awareness" (Cooper, et al., 1994, p. 37) on the part of the storyteller. The first circle is the storyteller themselves and the audience's attention to them. This first circle is very important for setting the scene and establishing rapport with the audience. [see Appendix 1 List of Terms for a definition of "rapport".] This first circle should only be used briefly and should only be re-used when necessary to re-establish rapport or shift the audiences' attention. The second circle of awareness is of the characters and their place in the story realm. This circle of awareness is vital to the success of the storytelling event and must never lapse throughout the telling. The third circle of awareness for the teller involves making eye contact with a few audience members. Experienced tellers know that the positive energy in a storytelling event as described by Birch (1996) previously can be most quickly achieved when the teller locates listeners who are actively listening and showing positive body language. The fourth circle of awareness for the teller is to make eye contact with each member of the audience, to make them feel part of the group experience and to gauge responses. A strong knowledge of how to manipulate the wall ensures that all four circles are utilized at appropriate times in the story.

The work of Bauman (1986) on metanarration in storytelling also related to the theories of the fourth wall and the four circles of awareness, particularly the first circle. Metanarration is the term used to describe the teller's dialogue with the audience, referring directly to awareness of the story itself and alluding to elements in the story such as the characters or events. An example of this would be to address the audience directly and say: "That must have made quite a noise when Goldilocks broke Baby Bear's bed. Do you think that's what brought the three bears back to the cottage?"

Mastering all the techniques of storytelling such as utilising a particular storytelling style, manipulation of the fourth wall, preparing the audience and preparing the venue will still not result in a successful storytelling event if the storyteller does not know how to present themselves. Knowing where the teller should 'stand' in relation to each story is crucial if the audience is to be effectively engaged.

2.3.3   The role of the storyteller

Birch firmly believed that the personality of the storyteller should be noticeable as this adds a unique flavour to each storytelling event. "A good part of a storyteller's effectiveness is his ability to speak from a recognizable point of view" (Birch, 1996, p. 117). Bauman (1986) also believed that the storyteller should create and manage a narrative persona through utilizing metanarrative. This, he argued, assists those audience members unfamiliar with traditional storytelling to move into the story realm. Bryant (1910) pointed out that for the listener; the enjoyment of the told story comes filtered through the personality of the storyteller. Roney (1994) also asserted that the personality of the teller should show through.

Conversely, Cooper, Collins and Saxby stated that the teller must always stand behind the story and that their personalities must not be obvious. "Without the trappings of performance, the teller becomes invisible and the story becomes the most important" (Cooper, et al., 1994, p. 33). As noted earlier, Livo and Reitz (1986) also believed that the listener should see the story, not the person of the teller. Harley (1996) goes further and argues that it is essential that the teller stay behind the characters in some sections of a story, in order for the story to be truly effective and engaging. In spite of their different perspectives on the 'place' of the storyteller, all of the authors mentioned previously agreed on the importance of trust in the role of the storyteller.

2.3.4 Building trust and familiarity

Zipes (1995) supported the use of a long-term storytelling programme in building up the audience's trust and familiarity with the storyteller. The audience should be able to feel at ease with the teller, in order to listen attentively. Zipes recommended conducting the storytelling in the usual classroom, as this is a venue that the children are also familiar with. Both of these recommendations were adopted in the method developed for the current study. Zipes' whole approach to storytelling in schools was of great value in the application of the study. Built up over twenty years of storytelling in various schools, Zipes work is informative and analytical. His published work however does lack empirical data and the current study aims to fill the gap in the evidence available on what factors are involved in enabling children to engage with storytelling and thereby providing effective storytelling programmes.

In relation to the building of trust and rapport, the analysis of data obtained from the current study utilised Doherty-Sneddon's (2003) research on 'equilibrium theory' and intimacy distance. Essentially, Doherty-Sneddon has postulated that the more familiar we become with people, the less the distance between us needs to be. We feel comfortable in reducing our personal space. When intimacy distance is reduced, eye-contact and group dynamics are improved, which is highly beneficial in storytelling. Doherty-Sneddon referred to this benefit when she stated that "... being able to look you in the eye is often a sign of self-assertion and confidence. It can also mean that whatever you are discussing has real importance for the child" (Doherty-Sneddon, 2003, p. 136).The building of trust and rapport was a significant aspect of the current research and its impact on engagement with storytelling is discussed in detail in Part III.

This chapter so far has reviewed the work published by academics and storytellers on what is currently understood by the term 'storytelling'. There is also a rich literature on the value of storytelling, both to communities and cultures as a whole, and the benefits to children in particular. In the next section the value of storytelling in general and the particular benefits to children are explored. This discussion sets the context for the entire thesis and declares the motivation for the research project.

2.4 The value of storytelling

Early twentieth century advocates of storytelling such as Bryant and Cather referred to their own mentors who provided them with first-hand evidence of the worth of storytelling. Baker and Greene (1987) were unwavering in their support of storytelling as a valuable activity. They argued that storytelling was becoming even more important as children were exposed to increasing amounts of technology in their everyday lives.

For example, oral storytelling requires active listening (Bauman, 1992; Livo & Rietz, 1986) and is an activity that brings an immediate reward for the listener (and the storyteller). In addition to this, storytelling builds critical thinking skills (Spaulding, 2004), as listeners compare different versions of traditional tales, or the responses of numerous characters to similar situations. Through exposure to storytelling, children can develop a strong sense of values. As Lewis (2007) has stated when referring to the work of El'koninova on folk and fairy tales:

> These stories have an allegorical affective quality which imparts the notion that if you make a decision to act, initiate correctly – with love, morally, nobly – regardless of the tasks, you will meet with some kind of success. (Lewis, 2007, p. 14)

As they begin to understand the ethical layers of stories children develop an understanding of and empathy with others and, other cultures. Spaulding (2004) pointed out that this empathic element of storytelling enables children to resist peer pressure and make independent decisions. The value of storytelling as a tool for 'meaning making' was also frequently discussed in the storytelling literature.

2.4.1 Storytelling as an activity accessible by all

Boyd (2009), Haven (2007) and Lipman (2003a) amongst many others agree that storytelling has value to people of all ages and cultures. Grove has convincingly argued that storytelling can also be highly valuable to people with multiple disabilities and my experience working with young people with intellectual disabilities certainly confirms that. This section will focus on the value of storytelling to children in general. My experience, gathered over more than two decades of storytelling, is that people of all ages, socio-economic status, educational levels and as current research is showing,

intellectual levels (Grove, 1998; Lyons & Mundy-Taylor, 2012) enjoy storytelling, sometimes in spite of their initial reluctance to become part of the audience.

The storyteller and storytelling coach Lipman (2011), explained that storytelling has been such a valued experience, it has not only survived and even thrived for thousands of years but has also contributed greatly to the achievement of civilisation. There is a significant list of educators, academics, medical practitioners, neurological researchers, knowledge managers and practising storytellers, many of whom are referred to in seminal works by Boyd (2009) and Haven (2007), who assert that oral storytelling has immense value for human beings, particularly for children. Amongst the benefits to children exposed to storytelling on a regular basis are: enhanced listening skills, strengthened comprehension, broadened vocabulary, increased imagination, improvement in group dynamics and social skills, higher level reasoning, thinking and logic skills, and increased empathy and moral reasoning (Bauer, 1993b; Kuyvenhoven, 2007; Mallan, 1991; Martin, 1996; Speaker, Taylor, & Kamen, 2004). Extended exposure to storytelling also models for children the structure and rhythm of language, particularly narrative, and enables them to experience and develop an appreciation of formal language (Barton & Booth, 1990; Boyd, 2009; Cooper, et al., 1994; Egan, 1989; Rosen, 1988). The current study certainly provided evidence for many of the benefits mentioned, particularly in its valuable inclusion in education.

2.4.2 Storytelling requires no pre-requisites

Storytelling is a non-evaluative activity that requires no assessment of children's written language skills. The skilled storyteller will tell stories that may challenge listeners with less advanced language development, but not overwhelm them or make them feel that they are failures. Skilled storytellers know that orality precedes literacy (Barton & Booth, 1990), and ensure that their selected stories are language and image-rich. Barton and Booth described how storytellers can enhance the overall 'literacy experience' of children, including those children who have yet to learn to read. Poston-Anderson (1996) referred to the universal accessibility of storytelling when she asserted that listeners of stories all have access to the same ideas, regardless of their individual literacy level. All that is required for this communal experience to take place is a willingness to listen.

In the current study numerous children visibly relaxed when they realised that their literacy levels were not going to be tested or assessed. All that they were required to

do was listen and enjoy the story. That is not to say that listening to a story is a passive activity. Engaging with a story, as will be described in detail later in this chapter, involves substantial mental activity on the part of children - and indeed of the storyteller. Barton alludes to this mental activity required of listeners, when he describes how the essential elements of telling a story; intonation, pacing, expressions and gestures, all help the child listener to build an image of the story in their mind, what Barton referred to as "think the pictures" (Barton, 1986, p. 9).

As organisational storyteller Denning (2001) pointed out, storytelling is non-adversarial. The listener is not forced to agree with the teller or to interact in any way that they are not comfortable with. Listeners are not forced to look at a teller, or even to listen for any sustained period. The wonder is that they so frequently do. The value of storytelling as a 'legitimate' classroom activity, accessible to all children is further supported by Trostle-Brand and Donato:

> Storytelling as an extension of children's literature is one means by which children with diverse literacy levels and educational needs achieve unity of ideas and establish harmony, both within and among themselves. (Trostle-Brand & Donato, 2001, p. 10)

They further assert that storytelling is a more dramatic, interactive and lively activity than story reading. They pointed out that the storyteller is free to add or reduce words in response to the reactions of the audience, add gestures and facial expressions to convey meaning and emotion, and maintain eye contact with the audience. This heightened interaction with the audience that occurs with a well told story has greater appeal to children who may have short attention spans than listening to a book reading, where the reader is forced to concentrate on a physical artefact and a set text. The meaning-making that occurs in the mind of the listener through storytelling is another strength that can be utilised by storytelling teachers in the classroom.

2.4.3   Storytelling is an aid to meaning making

There appears to be universal agreement that storytelling has been recognised as a highly valued commodity since ancient times (Kearney, 2002). In all civilizations, a place was reserved at the fire, banquet table or council of war for the storyteller. It was the storyteller's role to gather the history and maintain the collective memory of a people. The recent, fascinating work of Boyd (2009) has examined in great detail the

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evolutionary aspects of story and storytelling and its value as an essential tool for meaning making.

People have always had a need to make meaning of their lives and experiences. This is particularly important for children. Barton and Booth claimed that stories provide "a living context for making meaning" (1990, p. 13). The work of Bruner (1996) on culturalism and more specifically cultural cognition and its place in education, suggests that the age-old tools that we have in our societies that pass values and cultural mores along through generations, storytelling amongst them, have a pivotal role in developing our ability to make meaning. Organisational storytellers such as Kahan (2001) and Denning (2001) agreed about the value of storytelling to meaning-making. Denning's statement below highlights the appeal of storytelling that can incorporate a wide range of structures, characters and plots, yet still provide meaning for its listeners:

> We have used the narrative language of stories as the most appropriate instrument to communicate the nature and shape and behavior of complex adaptive phenomena. Stories capture the essence of living things, which are quintessentially complex phenomena, with multiple variables, unpredictable phase changes, and all of the characteristics that the mathematics of complexity has only recently begun to describe. The fact that narratives are not mathematically precise, and in fact are full of fuzzy qualitative relationships, seems to be a key to their success in enabling us to cope with complexity. (Denning, 2001, p. 113)

Poston-Anderson and Redfern also referred to the complex nature of stories when they asserted that: "Overall, research suggests that to be human is to be entangled in stories and that it is in stories that human 'meaning making' resides" (Barbara Poston-Anderson & Redfern, 1996, p. 242). Social commentators like Australian psychologist Stephanie Dowrick (2006) recognise the value storytelling has for meaning making. She stated that relating experiences, whether personal or which have happened to others, is how humans make sense of them.

Groce (2004) argued that storytelling provides both teller and listeners with the opportunity for higher-order thinking and explains that this provides children in particular with an activity that enhances theory-building, perspective and analytical observation. It is from this vital element of meaning making, so crucial to understanding

our own experiences and those of others, that affinity with, or an innate response to story stems.

2.4.4 Innate love of story: The sixth sense

Another value of storytelling discussed here is that it keys into the deepest layers of our humanity. Although he was discussing the use of storytelling in the tertiary education sector, Abrahamson's description of students as "homo narrans," (Abrahamson, 1998) or story-loving creatures, typified how many writers of the storytelling literature have depicted human beings. Much of the literature read for the current study referred to the human ability to immediately relate to the story form; to an innate love of story. Livo and Reitz, in their authoritative work *Storytelling: Process and Practice*, (Livo & Rietz, 1986) state that all humans have the ability to distinguish between narrative that is a story from that which is only a string of facts.

In her introduction to the 1978 Australian National section of the International Board of Books for Youth (IBBY) conference, Norst stated that not only did our creation and use of symbolic codes for language mark us as human, but our "successful communication of systematically shaped and formulated fantasies is also unique to our species" (Norst, 1979. p. 25). This she argued can be viewed as an explanation for human beings' need to tell and hear stories. In an academic paper nearly a decade later, Norst expanded on this statement:

> In short, *narrative is essential to our existence as human beings.* No people living anywhere on our planet can resist the urge to communicate in story or be immune to the lure of a tale well told. The sense of story, that sixth, most quintessentially human sense, marks us out from all other species. (Norst, 1987, p. 312)

At the same time, the American educator Egan was also describing the innate nature of the response to story. He made the bold statement that "everyone everywhere enjoys stories." He further stated that stories are how humans make sense not only of their own experience, but of the wider world. This, he argued is why "children are readily and powerfully engaged by stories" (Egan, 1989, p. 2). It is this universal appeal of stories that can be used to build relationships within the classroom, in schools and in the community. How to measure this ready engagement with stories is the focus of this thesis.

If all people, from all walks of life and all cultures, enjoy listening to a story, what is it that creates what has been identified as an "innate love of story"? What is it in human makeup that makes listening to a story irresistible to unruly kindergarten children, frantically busy teaching staff, child carers, school volunteers, and others, just in one venue alone? Several explanations have been put forward by many people, and it is the contention here that they all play a significant part in creating, as Norst (1987) has so eloquently stated, the "lure of a tale well told." Grainger (1997) acknowledged the vast array of thinkers and writers who have described the irresistible pull of narrative for people. He asserted that humans learn narrative competency early through a recognition that others communicate in stories and a desire to participate in this social activity.

Abrahamson (1998), Boyd (2009), Hardy (1968), Rosen (1985), and others all strongly support the innateness of the familiarity with, and love of, story. As early as 1919, Cather described the innate love of story found in all mankind. "There is no age or racial limit to this story love. Representing as it does an emotional hunger that is the human heritage, it is universal" (Cather, 1919, p. 30). King (2004) describes the essential place of storytelling for the First Nations people of the United States and Canada and analyses the different structures of First Nation stories and those from the Judeo-Christian canon. He particularly focuses on creation stories and states that they help cultures to understand the world in which they live.

This 'universality' of love of story can be demonstrated by examining the importance storytelling has in the Australian Aboriginal culture. Storytelling has played a pivotal role for over 40,000 years in the Aboriginal culture where knowledge transition traditionally occurred through the sharing of stories (Isaacs, 1980). Storytelling was and is, a means of educating children about the environment, the respective roles of males and females, social expectations and taboos, and the spiritual aspects of Aboriginal society. McLeod stated in an interview for the Australian Storytelling Guild that Aboriginal storytellers often inherited the role, although others who showed a talent for storytelling were given the opportunity to hone their skills. McLeod stated that the "true role of the storyteller is to pass on the lessons from the beginning of time" (McLeod & McKay, 1998). Further, Helen McKay has described the pivotal role of the Dreaming stories in Aboriginal culture thus:

> The stories of the Dreaming are more than myths, legends, fables,
> parables or quaint tales. They are definitely not fairytales for the

amusement of children. Down through generations, the Aboriginal people's stories, told, but never written down, were the oral textbooks of their accumulated knowledge, spirituality, and wisdom, from when time began. (McKay, 2001, p. xvi)

In a conversation with Elaine Chapman, (Elder in Residence, Gibalee Centre, University of Newcastle), the value of storytelling to Australian Aboriginal people, both in a traditional and contemporary setting, was discussed (E. Chapman, personal communication, August 18, 2011.) In the Australian Aboriginal context, the ancient practice of storytelling had a holistic application that reached across all aspects of life. Chapman explained that traditionally, the same stories were often told many times during the course of a person's life. For example, a story would be told to a toddler about the dangers of a particular plant as he or she walked with their mother or aunties while they gathered food. As the child grew older, the same story would be told about the plant, teaching the child about history and culture while placing it in the context of the whole environment, and perhaps also pointing out its medicinal value. In this way, children were handed knowledge in the form of story as their ability to comprehend it developed.

Chapman and I discussed that the urbanisation of large numbers of Aboriginal communities and the restrictions imposed on them about using their own unique languages, resulted in many of the stories from the Dreaming being lost. There is a current recognition of the importance of preserving the stories that still exist and events such as NAIDOC Week (National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observation Committee) are utilised to share the 'public' stories with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in schools across Australia. ("Public" stories in this context are stories that have no restrictions or taboos on them about who can listen to them. Permission has been granted by Aboriginal elders for these stories to be shared with all listeners). In schools on the Central Coast of New South Wales, Australia, Aboriginal elders are regularly invited to share Dreaming stories with primary school children in addition to personal stories of the Stolen Generations with older secondary school students.

In a wonderful anecdote towards the end of our conversation, Chapman highlighted the important role that storytelling still plays in Aboriginal communities in contemporary Australia. Chapman's son was working in a remote community, as a teacher at Hart's

Range School in the Northern Territory, where four different Aboriginal languages are used in addition to English. During the prolonged drought of 2009, several teenage students were brought in by elders from an outlying area. Part of the policy for the community was that children must attend school if other members of the community were to be provided with food and resources. These new children spoke none of the five languages used at the school and no interpreter could be found. Communication and connections were soon established however when the new children and the school's children began exchanging sand stories, where the emblems and symbols for geographic and environmental items were used in common. Story thus had the ability to transcend linguistic boundaries with ease due to the ongoing important role of storytelling in each Aboriginal community. This 'practice in common' of storytelling resonates throughout the literature on storytelling.

As Polkinghorne (1988) has observed, humans live their lives immersed in narrative, in the stories that they hear around them and the stories that they tell to others and themselves. . It is an accessible activity, requiring no pre-requisites, where humans transmit and make meaning. Children's acceptance of storytelling and their ready willingness to partake in it as an activity then is not surprising. What benefits can therefore be expected to flow from regular exposure to storytelling and stories of different styles? One of the most readily observable benefits pertains to the skill of listening.

2.5   Benefits of storytelling to child listeners

It would appear from the review of the literature that it is often children who are targeted in storytelling research. However, an increasing amount of research is being conducted on the value of storytelling for adults, particularly in the area of organisational storytelling (Denning, 2001; Gabriel & Connell, 2010), storytelling in tertiary education (Abrahamson, 1998; Coulter, Michael, & Poynor, 2007) and storytelling as therapy in the health field (Burns, 2001; Reich & Michaels, 2012). This thesis acknowledges the undeniable value of storytelling for adults and that many of the benefits listed in this section can be applicable for adult listeners as well as children. This section will however focus on the literature that pertains particularly to child listeners.

2.5.1 Storytelling as an educational tool

American children's literature consultant, librarian and professional storyteller Rockman (2001) outlined the benefits that exposure to storytelling can bring to children: improved grouped dynamics, increased attention spans, greater self-confidence and improved creative writing skills. Dyson (2001) argued that lessons on literacy should encompass the naturally story-rich world of children's play, drawing and dramatisation. She stated that story is a potent part of children's imaginations and should be incorporated into educational practices. Indeed the inherent connection between storytelling and play and its logical place in the education of children has been the focus of recent research (Fein, Ardial-Rey & Groth, 2000; Hall, 2000). Farrell (1994) believed that storytelling is crucial to an understanding of literature as a whole. By mining the wealth of oral folktales, myths and legends, children are exposed to the values, character traits and plot lines of many different cultures. Mallan had earlier linked this belief of the value of storytelling to the development of literacy and empathy and argued that children who are not exposed to storytelling are disadvantaged educationally. "They find it difficult to listen to and understand the points of view of others." (Mallan, 1991, p. 2)

Mallan explained that exposure to storytelling also extends children's life experiences and develops their imagination. As they hear stories, children internalise the different features of narrative, including sequencing, plot ideas and character types (Mallan, 1991). While some children may not have been exposed to performance or 'scheduled' storytelling, all children are familiar with story in some form or another, either through person to person narrative in the family home or school playground, even if they do not recognise it as 'storytelling'. Mallan stated that precisely because story is a familiar form of communication, storytelling can be used as a non-threatening tool for learning in the classroom.

Farrell stated that: "storytelling provides the model of immediate connection that stirs primary students in their first sense of language" (Farrell, 1994, p. 40), but we must go deeper than that to understand the impact storytelling can have. For as long as people have had the ability to talk, they have engaged in narrative; describing the day's events, the excitement of the hunt, or the sadness of a death. As these experiences were related to others over time, they developed a story form. The evolutionary need to do this has been explained thoroughly by Boyd:

I will suggest that this is one function of storytelling: that it makes us more expert in social situations, speeding up our capacity to process patterns of social information, to make inferences from other minds and from situations fraught with difficult or subtle choices or to run complex scenarios. (Boyd, 2009, p. 49)

Abrahamson (1998) asserted that students respond to, and remember for longer, stories that have an emotional impact on them. Moir supported this when he stated that "When we bring storytelling to young people in schools, we join an ancient, honourable and respected tradition of cultural enlightenment through stories" (Moir, 1994, p. 59). This innate acceptance of story, as described in the previous section, means that storytelling can be readily used in schools as an easily accepted learning experience.

Storyteller and educator Barton has been influential in America in promoting the use of storytelling in classrooms. His belief in the value of storytelling to children was unshakeable and he and Booth (Barton & Booth, 1990) described the positive response children have to storytelling in very convincing terms. They detail the instinctual affinity children have with storytelling when they discuss how readily children move to a group situation to listen to stories. Barton and Booth highlighted the benefit of storytelling in acquainting young children (even pre-literate children) with the rich patterns and structure of language. The recognition of these patterns later assists children in developing their reading and writing skills. In a report on her research, Johnson highlighted the role of storytelling in enhancing the learning experience of students through fostering a skill she terms 'wide awakeness' (Johnson, 2007, p. 312). While Johnson does not give a definition of the term, the context in which she uses it implies a developing openness and interest in issues, experiences and learning on the part of listeners.

There is overwhelming support, as previously discussed, from numerous sectors of human knowledge and research, for the benefits of storytelling and its use as an educational tool. Speaker, Taylor and Kamen (2004) for example, reviewed the storytelling literature as it stood in 2004 and summarised the findings of the language development to be gained through storytelling. Speaker, Taylor and Kamen (2004) referred to the studies of Roney (1989) and Phillips (2000) which indicated that oral language skills are more advanced in children who are exposed to a variety of stories.

They also reviewed the work of Reed (1987) and Davis (1982) who argued that storytelling also enhances the recall and sequencing skills of children.

Finally, the work of Egan, Farrell and Poston-Anderson, all discussed earlier, also reinforce the willingness of children to engage in storytelling as part of the learning experience. This willingness is reflected in the data of the current study, when not a single child amongst the 88 participants[4] showed any reluctance to attend the storytelling sessions, (even if their audience behaviour skills were only beginning to develop), during the five month duration of the programme. On the contrary, many of the children approached the teller outside of their classrooms to request either additional sessions or longer sessions as illustrated by the incident described in Figure 2.1 below.

Figure 2.1 *Extract from Field Notes, referring to willingness to participate in the storytelling project*

> Several of class 6G saw me on Tuesday in the playground and asked if I was coming to tell them stories. When I said no, they asked if I was coming in again on Monday.
>
> When I said I wasn't due again for another fortnight, they asked if I could just come in again anyway. They wanted to know who I'd been telling stories to today and were they 'good' for me. They seemed very proprietorial. They even wanted to know what stories I had told today.
>
> J. Mundy-Taylor, Field notes, (August 2, 2004.)

The comments from the research participants above show the value that they were already beginning to place on the activity of storytelling and the enjoyment they derived from it. The following sections describe some of the specific benefits for child listeners in particular.

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[4] The actual number of participants who were included in the analysis of the study will be explained in Chapter 3.

2.5.2   Listening skills

From an increasingly early age children are bombarded with visual and sound stimulation that moulds them into expecting stimuli to come from many different sources at once. The practice of listening for sustained periods of time is no longer experienced in the majority of home environments. Maguire (1985) succinctly described the impact of this current visual environment for children as having a disastrous effect on their listening skills and ability to imagine. The psychologist Christakis (2011) goes further and states that the failure to provide very young children with cognitive and sensory stimulation has a detrimental impact on their brain synapses and can result in increased attentive problems in later life. This can have a significant impact on the ability to listen well in the school environment as discussed in the following section.

Due to the changing home-listening situation, when children encounter the school environment many of them struggle with the requirement to listen to one voice, often for a considerable length of time, without a myriad of visual images (Saxby, 1997). This may present a challenge for children who experience oral storytelling for the first time in the classroom. Children who have not previously been exposed to oral storytelling need to learn that the activity is something they will enjoy. As discussed above however, the recognition of the story form and hardwiring of our brains to respond to stories are so entrenched that children do not have to be convinced to listen to storytelling (Boyd, 2009, Haven, 2007, Kearney, 2002, Lipman, 2008,). MacDonald (1999), one of the most internationally respected storytellers and culturally aware collectors of stories, has pointed out that listening to a story requires no special skills or experience. Therefore, storytelling is welcomed by children in a class who have yet to reach well-developed reading or comprehension skills. MacDonald points out that as children are exposed to stories of increasing complexity, their attention spans increase, and their ability to listen more acutely and actively is enhanced. In her study that examined children's self concept of storytelling, Mello (2001), sought children's opinions of their role as story listeners. Mello found that children who had been exposed to storytelling believed that their role as listeners was powerful and important and therefore listened with even greater intensity and with recognition of the value of story content.

Strong listening skills can be developed through a steady exposure to storytelling. Bauer (1993b) commented that a graduated programme of storytelling teaches children

to listen to ever more complex stories. The idea that the more stories children are exposed to of increasing complexity and sophistication, the greater their listening skills will become (MacDonald, 1999), was one premise upon which the current study was based and was supported by other research. For example, through her study of student teachers at the College of New Jersey and their storytelling work with local elementary school students, Speaker (2000) confirmed what teachers have long known. Through exposure to storytelling, children's cognition is enhanced, listening skills and sequencing abilities are improved and the children exhibit a greater appreciation for language. Denman (1994) also stressed the value of storytelling to developing children's listening skills as they hear the richness of language through a variety of stories.

Birch (1996) stated that it is not just the audience who gain enhanced listening skills through storytelling but also that the storyteller themselves can learn more about the events and characters in the stories they tell if they listen to and observe the responses of their audiences. "It does not denigrate the richness of stories nor the effectiveness of the tellers to suggest that a great deal of this power to see what is not there lies with the listener" (Birch, 1996, p. 120). When these aspects of storytelling are observed and combined, children begin to gain an understanding and an appreciation for story, in all its myriad forms and genres.

Learning to listen well can be a challenge for children and storytellers can help the process by encouraging the skill in a warm and inviting atmosphere. Malo and Bullard (2000) state that storytellers help with this through adapting a story to suit a group's comprehension level, maintaining eye contact and encouragement through gesture and change in voice and pace that maintains interest. Storytelling to a group of children who have not been used to the activity requires techniques to encourage children to listen for a sustained period. Capturing and maintaining the attention of children through storytelling shows them that the activity can be a pleasurable one, what Malo and Bullard (2000) describe as a reward for listening well. The initial stories should be short and encourage audience interaction in some form. I would add that humour is a good "icebreaker" and the use of a visual aid to capture initial attention can also be useful.

Spaulding (2004) contended that the ability to listen effectively is a life-long skill that is most easily learned in childhood, while engaged in a pleasurable activity. Storytelling

can fill the niche as a means of enhancing children's listening skills while taking part in an activity that requires some effort from them. Storytelling is beneficial to the growth of imagination and active listening. The listener is required to create the story in their mind's eye, to visualise the action and the characters. The more actively a child can listen, the more cues and details they pick up as they hear a story, and the picture in their own imagination becomes more complete. Story listeners actively exercise their imaginations as they become engaged with the story. As already noted, storytelling not only aids in developing listening skills, but through prolonged exposure to stories of different styles and complexity, can also enhance children's literacy skills. The following section describes the particular components of literacy development that can be improved through storytelling.

2.5.3   Improving literacy skills

Prolonged exposure to storytelling that utilises a range of story genres, language patterns and complex vocabulary and dialogue, can reveal to children how rich and aesthetically satisfying language can be. In addition, storytelling can demonstrate to children how plots, characterisation and problem solving can be adapted to suit a particular story.

Grainger (1997) recommended storytelling as an encouragement and aid to reluctant or struggling readers by providing them with stories that make demands on their imaginations, while not asking too much of their still developing literacy skills. Likewise, Grier (1997) also emphasised the value of storytelling in introducing students to literacy and encouraging them to view story as an enjoyable experience, by sharing stories that have predictable structures that they become comfortable with.

The literature on early childhood literacy reviewed for the current study was unanimous in its recommendation of storytelling as an enjoyable and effective means of introducing children to reading. In addition Dailey argued that as children internalise the stories they hear, their mental capacity for language increases. Further, exposed to a wide variety of stories, "they develop a repertoire of abstract symbols (words) that correspond to their internal experience of things" (Dailey, 1994, p. 38). The richer the language experience, the stronger and more effective this process is.

Moir described how storytelling reveals the patterns of language to children in an enjoyable, but concrete way. "Storytelling is the act of crafting a literary document in

public and in the process making language patterns and literary structures visible in ways no other experience can" (Moir, 1994, p. 57). Every practising storyteller knows that each time a story is told, it changes to suit the audience, the telling environment or even the mood of the teller. Moir argued that this mutability of storytelling has great benefit to children's literacy skills. It expands the range of language patterns children are exposed to and gives them greater choices when it comes to doing their own story composition.

Barton and Booth pointed out the necessity for positive experiences of storytelling in the process of gaining literacy skills. "Children who have not as yet been awakened to literacy must be drawn to it, so that they feel they want it and need it" (Barton & Booth, 1990, p. 25). The work of Booth and Barton is also valuable because it lists the actual elements of listening to a story that contribute to children's literacy development:

> By listening to intonation, pause, pitch, rhetoric, and the sympathetic response of the human voice to the rhythms of language, children are extended well beyond their personal reading capacity. (Barton & Booth, 1990, p. 35)

The work of professional storyteller and academic Denman (1994) detailed the pathway that storytelling can make towards greater literacy skills. In defending the use of storytelling in classrooms, he argued that it is easier when beginning readers have heard words in oral form previously and that storytelling increases their vocabulary and introduces them to the patterns of language. Trostle-Brand and Donato (2001) described the non-threatening nature of storytelling as a group experience, which can bolster a child's confidence and lead them to attempt reading with a more positive attitude. In the relative anonymity of a group, a child listener feels comfortable to join in with refrains, or to utter responses. The concern that they will be judged or corrected over mispronunciation or incorrect grammar, or even ridiculed over any speech impediment is removed, at the same time as they are learning correct pronunciation and grammar.

Cooper stated that storytelling shows children the beauty and rhythm of language. "Think about the range of language students encounter in a story – unfamiliar words, archaic expressions, puns, words and phrases used in unique ways" (Cooper, Collins & Saxby, 1994, p. 10). Zipes supported this view when he argued that one of the roles of the storyteller is to inspire children to want to read and to create their own stories

(Zipes, 1995). Activities that broaden the vocabulary of children, that enable them to express themselves more eloquently and effectively, enhance not only their literacy skills but also their self-esteem. The ways in which storytelling can effectively broaden the vocabulary of children are outlined below.

Simmons (2006) maintained that in order to encourage children to take part in a storytelling activity or programme, the storyteller needs to create curiosity; to inspire children to spend the intellectual energy required when listening to a story and encountering new words and rhythms of language. Maguire (1985) argued that children's listening vocabulary is greater than their reading and writing vocabulary. He contended that children also have a greater acceptance for ambiguity than adults. Therefore, stories that not only meet but expand their vocabularies create interest for children. Numerous stories were utilised in the project that incorporated vocabulary beyond the reading level of the grade they were told to.

As has been mentioned, there is great value in sharing a story with children that uses words that are more sophisticated than those they would regularly use or even perhaps hear, but that they can understand through the context of the story. This broadening of vocabulary, particularly with 'literacy-challenged' children, can be very empowering (Zipes, 1995). Children who have been fed a diet of simple words and sentences in an attempt to assist them in developing reading skills, relish a story that is brimming with interesting plots, dashing heroic characters, and perhaps a villain or two.

Experienced practising storytellers know that they should never "dumb-down" the language used in a story (Lipman, 1999). To do so detracts not only from the enriching experience of expressing unusual words and speech patterns for the teller, but also the opportunity for the listener to hear words not usually used in everyday speech. Including unfamiliar words in a story is a perfect opportunity to introduce them to children in a non-threatening environment, where the meaning of the words can often be gleaned from the context of the story. The storyteller can assist with meaning making through inference, gesture and facial expression. I overheard numerous instances in the playground, following a storytelling session, of unusual or archaic phrases being incorporated into games by the children as shown in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2 *Examples of children incorporating vocabulary obtained in storytelling sessions into games.*

"Te he he" Third grade boy to a classmate, echoing the laughter of the Sky God Nyame, from the Anansi creation tale of *A story, a story*. (Hailey, 1990)

"Would you like a drink from my *calabash*?" Sixth class girl to a friend, from the tale of *A story, a story.*

"And he *strutted* on down the road" Kindergarten girl showing off her school cardigan to playmates, following the story of *The tailor*. (Schimmel, 1982)

"Aye, we're *flitting*." Sixth class boy to teller as he entered the classroom as the bell rang, following the Irish folktale *The boggart*. (Mayne, 1969)

Oral storytelling not only offers the opportunity to introduce a collection of new words to children, but may also introduce them to new structures of language or unfamiliar phrasing or rhythms of language. During the storytelling project, children were given the opportunity to hear stories that originated in the Caribbean, such as the story "Fee Fee Foo" (Benjamin, 1984) that used uncommon phrasing (for Australian children) and were highly influenced by particular rhythms in relating the stories. Grainger (1997) maintained that storytelling has a highly valued place in building vocabulary with children. He contends that this is particularly true for reluctant readers, who are able to hear and absorb complex plots and new words that would be far beyond their own reading ability.

2.5.4   Fostering a love of literature

The current research provided evidence that prolonged exposure to storytelling can help foster a love of literature. Children who hear a series of stories on a particular theme or culture are often encouraged to seek out similar stories. Introducing new words and complex storylines in the pleasurable and non-threatening context of an oral story can and does encourage children to seek out and read written versions of the tale. This was certainly reported as happening during the current project, in a conversation between the school librarian and me. The school librarian commented that her collection of folk and fairy tales were in much higher circulation once the storytelling project commenced and children would enquire about specific tales to

borrow (Participating School librarian, Personal communication, July 21, 2005). By sharing stories with children that are humorous, have a strong sense of the ridiculous, are exciting, or have a obvious sense of justice, children discover that stories have a strong appeal for them and they naturally want more.

2.5.5 Building social skills

By its very nature, storytelling is a social activity. The storyteller must be willing to share a story that has personal meaning and to reveal their own beliefs or values in a very exposed format. The listener chooses to accept the story by listening and only they are aware of the effect that the story has on them. Yet in spite of this individual aspect of engaging in a story event, storytelling is also an opportunity to share in a collective experience with others. A storytelling audience comes to the event on a level playing field, where literacy levels do not impede the enjoyment of a story (Zipes, 1995). Trostle and Hicks (1998) highlighted the way in which storytelling enables children of different literacy levels to share equally in a communal experience.

2.5.5.1 Building a community

One of the most frequently encountered themes in the literature on storytelling was its ability to build relationships. Organisational storytellers such as Kahan (2001), Lipman (2003a), Denning (2001) and Simmons (2006) praised storytelling as a method of engendering trust between management and workers and amongst work colleagues. Baker and Greene (1987), Bauer (1993), Harley (1996), and Pellowski (1984) number amongst the practising storytellers who work with a variety of groups and describe how sharing a story can bring a group of strangers together in a mutually experienced event. In a statement typical of these authors, Baker and Greene wrote that:

> Enjoying a story together creates a common experience. Storytelling, properly done, produces a relaxed, restful feeling. It establishes a happy relationship between teller and listener, drawing people closer to one another, adult to adult, child to child. This rapport carries over to other areas as well, for children tend to have confidence in the person who tells stories well. (Baker & Greene, 1987, p. 18)

A prolonged programme of storytelling allows students to share a cultural experience with their classmates that will enhance their sense of community. Writers such as

Barton (1986), Colwell (1992), Moir (1994), Sawyer,(1962), and Zipes (1995) described how storytelling creates an expanding sense of community, first in the classroom, then throughout the school and the wider community. The building of relationships that stems from storytelling between teacher and students, classmates and the entire school community enhances a child's learning experience and the professional satisfaction of school staff. Poston-Anderson and Redfern reported that:

> Our research supports the view that storytelling is a means of relating, entertaining, educating and sharing. By listening to a story, people learn in a relaxed way about story, expression and structure. Stories provide frames from within which we can interpret experience, allowing us to make connections, and through these, create community. (Barbara Poston-Anderson & Redfern, 1996, p. 246)

From her own experience as a primary teacher in New South Wales schools, Mallan described how, when a "class comes together to share stories, a common alliance is created" (Mallan, 1991, p. 15). Storytelling is a means of strengthening social skills in a non-threatening environment, where children are not forced to outwardly relate to each other. Further, as Moir pointed out, as they listen to a story in common, the storytelling becomes an "intimate literary encounter that creates a sense of community among individuals who may otherwise feel isolated or disconnected from others" (Moir, 1994, p. 55). Significant data that related to this community aspect of storytelling will be detailed in Part III of the thesis. Mallan (1991) highlighted several advantages of storytelling including enhancing oral language, fostering a sense of community, an empowering of both listener and teller, and sharpening of perspective. The community-building benefit of storytelling also naturally leads on to enhanced group dynamics and improved social skills, as will be outlined below.

The social skills of taking turns, empathising, accepting other viewpoints, and willingly sharing a common experience are all heightened as groups of students come together to listen to storytelling. Lipman has highlighted the importance of this communal experience when he stated:

> When you listen with others, you share the experience with them, even as each listener's experience is unique. This creates a sense of tolerant connection among you. (Lipman, 2008)

Regular exposure to storytelling that highlights the cultures and behaviours of diverse sets of characters enhances children's sense of fair play and values. An appreciation for the difference and similarities with cultures other than their own can also be fostered. Chapman for example, believed that sharing "public stories" from the Aboriginal Dreaming can be a positive step in reconciliation and encouraged non-Indigenous storytellers to share Dreaming stories that have been collected and published with the appropriate permission from the traditional owners of the stories. (E. Chapman, personal communication, August 18, 2011.)

Sharing a story with an audience requires the storyteller to be actively present (Lipman, 1999). That is, the storyteller must not only be physically present, but mentally present also. Each phrase, expression and gesture must be carefully considered and presented. Audiences at different levels understand the effort required to tell a story and appreciate that someone is prepared to go to that effort to share a story with them. Realising that an adult will put so much effort in to sharing stories with them can assist in raising the self-esteem of a listener, particularly a child listener. This is often reflected in the improved group dynamics of a class and also in the social interaction displayed. Storytelling can assist in creating an environment where children learn the skill of being an appreciative, respectful and engaged audience, as outlined below.

2.5.5.2 Audience behaviour skills

Children may have little or no experience of being part of an audience; what is termed in theatre studies as possessing positive 'audience behaviour' (Auslander, 2003; Davis, 1988; Sauter, 2000). Conversations with practising storytellers at conferences, Australian Storytelling Guild meetings and in personal correspondence reflect that lack of audience skills is a challenge for most, if not all storytellers. Practising storytellers have begun to proactively address this issue. Storytellers such as Clifton (2004) now send out instructions on how to be a good audience member to each client who books them. Davis (1988) has written an entire book on audience preparation and behaviour. Much of the challenge occurs when a storytelling session is going to be a one-off event. A prolonged programme of storytelling however, enables the storyteller to teach and encourage positive audience behaviour in a friendly and welcoming environment.

In a five-month ethnographic study of a grade four/five class in which the teacher, a professional storyteller, frequently told stories, Kuyvenhoven (2007) reported that

children listened more attentively to each other and engaged in behaviour that improved the storytelling experience for themselves and others. Although they were sitting in close proximity, they rarely spoke to or touched each other during a story. Experience had taught this class of children that storytelling was a worthwhile and enjoyable activity and they were reluctant to engage in behaviour that would impede this. The impact that a prolonged programme of storytelling can have on audience behaviour will be highlighted in Chapter 5, with particular reference made to Sixth Grade (6G), who participated in the current research.

2.5.5.3 Developing skills as social beings

Boyd (2009) has taken an evolutionary approach to the human affinity for storytelling. His work highlighted the immense social benefit that storytelling brings to children in particular. Boyd argued that both storytelling and play were essential to the development of the social skills of humans:

> Childhood play and storytelling for all ages engage our attention so compulsively through our interest in event comprehension and social monitoring that over time their concentrated information patterns develop our facility for complex situational thought. (Boyd, 2009, p. 49)

Boyd's assertion that storytelling aids in the development of "complex situational thought" echoed Spaulding's earlier work on the social value of storytelling. While primarily discussing the benefits of storytelling in organisations, Spaulding also highlighted the benefits to children of developing the imagination through storytelling, and its subsequent effect of being able to imagine consequences of actions. This in turn, Spaulding argued, enables children to begin to:

> make ethical decisions and resist peer pressure and for the ability to cope with change or to grow spiritually. This makes the development of imagination important to not only the individual but also to society as whole. (Spaulding, 2004, p. 53)

The increasingly sophisticated verbal responses to stories that were observed in the classes as the project continued, and their heightened interest in the opinions of others, are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

2.5.5.4 Storytelling as a tool in values education

Storytelling can be a means of introducing the social expectations of the class, the school and the wider community to children. Moir (1994) describes the ability of storytelling to reveal values and to enhance social skills through the modelling of good morals and actions in stories and building positive audience behaviour. Without using didactic methods, stories can reveal to students the consequences of actions and the responses of imaginary characters that reflect how people in their own community feel about concepts or actions. By sharing these values in a social situation, each listener is drawn into the group as an accepted member of the community.

Storytelling can be a highly effective tool in teaching values and empathy in a classroom. Sharing stories of other cultures, of characters who may think or act in a way that is different to what children are used to, can introduce and foster a belief that it is not only acceptable but a commendable quality to embrace difference in others. Stories that show a different way of resolving problems, in the context of another culture for example, provide an opportunity for children to begin to think laterally and accept that perhaps "theirs" is not the only way to fix problems.

Martin pointed out that: "The more we know about different storytelling traditions and cultures, the less likely we will be to misread or ignore key images and clusters" (Martin, 1996, p. 148). Shirley (2005) argued that teachers can use storytelling to teach empathy in their classrooms. He believed that by using storytelling for this purpose, children gain a greater self-awareness and have stronger decision making skills. Spaulding (2004) and Egan (1989) also advocated the use of storytelling as an effective method of developing empathy in children. As a means of building relationships, a sense of community and social skills, storytelling therefore has immense value in the educational setting. Part III of the thesis will examine the ways in which the storytelling project of the current study assisted in building numerous relationships.

Katherine Paterson, award winning author of children's books, has been attributed as saying, "I never met a bigot who was an avid reader as a child" (J. Mundy-Taylor, personal communication, Children's' Book Council Australia, 2nd National Conference, Melbourne Australia, 1994). Exposing children to a wide range of stories through storytelling, that reflect different cultures and ways of experiencing the world, also engenders an acceptance of all races and differences. The storyteller however, must

do their homework in selecting appropriate stories and creating an environment in which to share them. It is vital that stories selected for storytelling sessions are culturally appropriate and do not exploit the sacred stories of other cultures. These issues were given considerable thought in the current research and are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

2.6   The benefits for and of storytelling teachers

The immense value of the application of storytelling to teaching, to students and their teachers, has been highlighted by Barton (2000), Egan (1989), Roney (2009), Rosen (1988) and Zipes (1995) amongst others. From a review of the literature it has been convincingly argued that storytelling by teachers rather than visiting storyteller can be both a benefit to teachers and to their students. The most pertinent of those benefits are described below.

2.6.1   Making a connection

Cooper, Collins and Saxby (1994) believed that amongst the many other benefits of storytelling, paramount is the creation of a unique relationship between the teller and the listeners. Storytelling is a means of connecting. Effective storytellers only tell stories that have already spoken to, or have meaning for them and they pass this powerful experience on to their listeners.

> Stories are sacred as is the space created through the sharing of stories. When we share our stories, they come to life through the telling, however, the story has a life of its own and that life is given through the spirit of story and the storyteller. (Lewis 2011, p. 507)

In a successful storytelling event "the storyteller has an open, benevolent relationship with the listeners as they come together as a shared experience of a story" (Cooper, et al., 1994, p. 37). Amaro and Moreira (2001) also suggested that storytelling is important in teaching children how to gain emotional knowledge; of themselves and those around them.

When an activity is accepted so readily by students, it makes sense for teachers to adopt it for educational purposes where possible. Daniel (2007) suggested that rather than simply using storytelling in the classroom, the teacher should establish

themselves as a storytelling role model. The teacher is in the position to know the language levels of his or her class, their likes and dislikes and can adapt stories to suit, rather than being bound by the constraints of the written word. Effective storytelling allows for interplay between teller and listeners, and Daniel argued that this allows children to become co-creators of the imaginary world of the story and to build a positive relationship with their teacher. Providing teachers with models of effective storytelling should be one of the roles of the visiting storyteller. The New South Wales public primary school that was involved in the current research certainly viewed the project as a valuable staff development opportunity. The evaluation comments of the participating teachers at the conclusion of the project supported this view and will be discussed in Part II.

As has been discussed previously, storytelling is a shared experience. There is no successful storytelling session that does not involve participation from both the storyteller and the listeners. Sharing a story gives the storytelling teacher and the students an experience in common, that involves both intellectual and emotional content. When teachers encourage students to tell a story themselves, students recognise the effort that is involved, in addition to the sense of satisfaction that comes with sharing a story. They then appreciate the experience even more each time their teacher shares a story. As Lowe (2002) has pointed out, sharing stories nurtures a feeling of connectedness.

As noted previously, storytelling involves sharing a story that has emotional meaning for the teller. A willingness to reveal their own feelings in such a vulnerable manner elicits trust in listeners, as discussed by Simmons (2006). Building a sense of trust in a classroom provides teachers with a more conducive atmosphere for learning. MacDonald pointed out that by listening to a story, an audience member is forced to see an experience through another person's eyes, which MacDonald argued, "functions to foster intergroup understanding and caring" (MacDonald, 1999, p. 412). The group dynamics can be improved across the entire class as teachers not only model good storytelling practice, but also encourage children to tell their own stories.

The physical aspects of storytelling also help to foster a closer relationship between the storytelling teacher and the students. As Doherty-Sneddon (2003) has pointed out in her fascinating work on storytelling and equilibrium theory, the more comfortable humans are with someone, the more eye contact they are prepared to make and the

closer physically they will allow that person to be. When teachers establish a regular storytelling space away from desks in their classrooms that enables all listeners to be seated comfortably, in a tighter configuration than when at desks, with a good view of the storyteller that allows for strong eye contact, improved equilibrium can take place.

2.6.2   Storytelling to enhance a love of reading and stories

One reason that teachers cite for not using storytelling in school is that storytelling is just a fun pastime, purely for entertainment, and does nothing to assist teachers in adhering to curricula or prepare students for national competency tests and exams. Zipes (1995) addressed this concern; in particular with regard to the test-based schooling that is occurring in the United States which he believed stifles children's imaginations. Further, he argued that the benefits that come from storytelling may in fact make children better learners:

> Moreover, storytellers can improve and strengthen the literacy of children, and by this I do not mean that the storyteller can turn children into "better" readers or "get them" to read, but that the storyteller can animate them so they feel a *desire* to read, write, act and draw, so they want to express themselves critically and imaginatively with techniques they may learn from the storyteller and teacher. (Zipes, 1995, p. 7)

Just as Hakkarainen (2004) believed that basic educational skills could be developed through the use of technologically-enhanced play and narrative activities and developed the Fifth Dimension computer-mediated activity, so children have a crucial need for positive experiences of story, without tests, interviews or comparison evaluation. Children need to identify stories with pleasure and to be accorded the time to reflect on them, to enable them to discover their own meanings for the stories they hear and experience. Harley has persuasively addressed this need for reflection and the individual search for meaning without the hindrance of comprehension tests and other evaluation tools in his blog (Harley, 2010, May 29).

2.6.3   Uniting the 'difficult class'

Storytelling can be used as an effective strategy to combine, or create a rapport with a difficult class. Numerous storytellers such as Lipman have described how they used

storytelling when trying to communicate with 'difficult classes'. Storytelling can to be an effective means of communicating with students whose experience of schooling had previously not been positive. Lipman explained that:

> Living together is vital to our species. That doesn't mean it's easy! Storytelling helps bind us together, appreciate each other, mediate disputes, and create a common identity. (Lipman, 2011)

By uniting a class through a shared experience of storytelling, a positive atmosphere is created that is more conducive to open communication, respect for others and enhanced learning opportunities. When students have built up a trust and rapport with their storytelling teacher, they are more likely to engage with other classroom activities. Chapters 4 and 5 will highlight evidence from the current research that convincingly showed a positive effect storytelling had on the project's 'challenge' class, 6G.

2.7   The cognitive benefits of storytelling: Engaging the whole brain

Haven (2007) has carried out an extensive review of the storytelling literature on the innateness of a love of story. He cites the work of various neuroscientists and evolutionary biologists who show that this propensity for story as meaning making is "hardwired" in the human brain. Examining this neurological phenomenon is beyond the scope of this thesis as it would have required medical imaging expertise, but Haven's work is a very useful layperson's account of the neuro-biological reasons behind the universal acceptance of story. This "hardwiring of the brain" is what makes humans so receptive to stories. This hardwiring enables the listener to recognise a story form and to search for the elements of a story structure in the narrative that is being told. Haven further contends that it is this search for the story structure that motivates listeners to "pay attention, process, absorb, and remember the incoming information" (Haven, 2007, pp.6-7).

This love for story and inbuilt recognition of its form may explain why we find some conversations more interesting and memorable than others if they have a recognisable story structure. It may also explain why we ask for more details in a conversation and indeed at the end of some stories, as we are trying to find the information to fill the gaps in the story that our mind is trying to construct. Rosen (1985) referred to the human predisposition for story and further argued that this is a strong case for story

being used in education, on the basis that it is a form of meaning making to which we as humans are already inherently inclined.

The continuing research in this area will no doubt provide more evidence of the value of storytelling and will be warmly received by many practising storytellers. Aside from the work of Haven discussed above, Gawler-Wright has argued that storytelling is one of the few human activities that utilises both hemispheres of the brain simultaneously:

> Storytelling links patterns and sense impressions (right brain) with linear, sequential narrative (left brain). Therefore to tell or respond to a story we need to use both hemispheres of our brain in tandem. The right brain processes the sensory language for us to create events and things in our imaginations, and the left brain links them up with chronology and reason, and translates the "sense language" into verbal language. (Gawler-Wright, 2002)

The material on the developing pathways in the brains of young children, particularly the immature prefrontal cortex, was discussed by Gopnik (2009) who described how the mature prefrontal cortex acts as an inhibitor for other parts of the brain, helping adult humans to focus on essential tasks. The immature prefrontal cortex is free to pursue avenues of imagination and uninhibited mental exploration, building pathways of imaginative thought in the process. Exposure to storytelling at a young age develops the narrative and language-based pathways that are evident in story-loving adults.

At the opposite end of the life spectrum, Young and Saver (2001) highlighted the role of storytelling in creating memory and provided a thorough description of how the human neural network functions to create and accommodate narrative. Their discussion of four cases of dysnarratavia, states of narrative impairment, caused by discrete focal damage are at once enlightening and disturbing. The importance of narrative and storytelling to the creation and maintenance of memory, and indeed of the sense of self is poignantly described in this work. Future research in the area of cognitive science will enable practising storytellers and storytelling researchers to more completely understand the role of storytelling in cognition, the neural network and the essence of being human.

2.8   Summary

The review of the literature on storytelling established for this thesis the current view of what defines a story and how it is presented in the context of storytelling. Much of the literature located was anecdotal in nature, collated by practising storytellers, and suggestions for improvement in storytelling presentation or conducting storytelling events were based on 'tried and true' methods, rather than evidence gained through systematic studies. Thus, significant gaps in the way storytelling is studied and investigated have been identified and begin to be addressed in the current study.

There is certainly a need for a practical method for analysing storytelling, which not only encompasses the personal investment that practising storytellers bring to research, but also elevates the reputation of research in storytelling. While much debate about the 'best' style of storytelling has occurred over the last forty years at least and while beginner storytellers are still encouraged/pressured to adopt one style rather than another, the inability to locate systematic and academically rigorous studies that investigated how to measure engagement with storytelling was surprising and of concern. The lack of literature available on studies that particularly analysed children's responses to storytelling and the relationship between these responses and engagement gave further impetus to the need for the current study.

Storytelling as an educational tool and an enhancement to learning in the classroom has been discussed by many writers, but it can perhaps be best summed up by professional storyteller and academic Sheila Dailey:

> Story is often an effective way of showing relevance for student learning. It can be the bridge between theory and practice. If students have a well developed sense of story, they can take meaning from a variety of stories and storytelling styles. The teacher/storyteller can use narrative to explain, enhance and expand on the facts that need to be imparted. (Dailey, 1994, p. 38)

The richer the language experience, the better the process of building relevance can be. By exposing children to a wide variety of storytelling styles, genres and tales from different cultures we engage their thinking skills, capture their imaginations and present them with a form of learning that is highly enjoyable and in which they feel comfortable. More importantly, as Dailey alludes to above and this thesis focuses on, enabling

children to develop storytelling engagement is vital to meaning making and providing them with a means to utilise storytelling as a tool to engender communication, literacy and social relationships. This comprehensive account of factors that validate the worth of storytelling gave the raison d'être for the storytelling research project. The thesis now moves on to Chapter 3 which outlines the development of the method for conducting the research.

PART II. FINDING THE WAY

Part I of the thesis positioned the current research about storytelling and extensively argued the value of storytelling as particularly beneficial for children. It established the rationale for the research and identified engagement with storytelling as a vital aspect of oral storytelling and established a gap in the research literature pertaining to systematic studies about how children engage with story and how this engagement can be measured.

Part II of the thesis canvasses the challenges encountered in conducting the research and a storytelling research method, the QUEST process, adapted from various well known methodologies for this project, is outlined. Details of how the stories used in the research project were selected, prepared and presented are provided. The grounded theory method was utilized to analyse the data collected during the storytelling research project. A justification for using the software analysis program NVivo 9 and an explanation of the steps undertaken in transcribing and coding the data, as per grounded theory, is given. This establishes a clear context for the analysis of the data to follow in Part III. Storytellers who wish to conduct similar research are thus provided with the template they can adapt to suit their own particular needs.

CHAPTER 3. FORGING A RESEARCH METHOD STAGE 1: QUEST (QUERYING UNEXPLORED EXPERIENCES IN STORY TELLING)

This chapter describes the QUEST process that was adapted for the current study which enables the storytelling researcher to apply a systematic tool to observing and analysing aspects of storytelling.

QUEST - Querying Unexplored Experiences in StoryTelling – can be defined as applying the following steps to storytelling research:

Step One: Apply open-minded observation of an accepted and established cultural activity; namely, storytelling.

Step Two: An exploratory research design is prepared and applied to the storytelling activity based on grounded theory research methods. Stakeholders in the activity are identified and collaborated with throughout the data collection process. A method for selecting, preparing and presenting scheduled stories is established.

Step Three: Data is systematically collected from the observation of body language, verbal responses and spontaneous dramatisation of the research participants as they listen to storytelling.

Step Four: Reflective practice and aspects of action research are adopted to ensure the needs of the participants are met and the effective collection of data with regard to responses to stories.

Step Five: The collected data is critically analysed using grounded theory and patterns sought.

Step Six: Both expected and unexpected patterns in the data are Queried, utilising computer analysis software (such as NVivo but other programs are useful) now available to the researching storyteller.

Step Seven: Patterns of responses in storylistening behaviour over time are investigated to enhance the understanding of storytelling phenomena.

The following outlines how the QUEST process was named and adapted especially for the current research, in conjunction with grounded theory and action research, which together enabled the investigation of children's engagement with storytelling in a systematic manner. The QUEST process was applied in designing and carrying out the current research to ensure that it met the objective of academic rigour. The following section will outline how the QUEST process was applied in practice while undertaking the long-term storytelling project. Each step will be discussed below, beginning with Step One – the research journey begins.

3.1   QUEST Step One:
Open-minded observation. Apply open-minded observation of an accepted and established cultural activity; namely, storytelling.

3.1.1   Setting out on the QUEST – Unexplored Experiences

Research has been likened to a quest[5]; an intellectual journey that may have challenges and pitfalls, before we (hopefully) reach a position of greater knowledge and understanding and new ways of observing phenomena and experiences. Further, the notion of the quest is a familiar one to anyone involved in storytelling. The research quest here was to identify a method of measuring children's engagement with oral storytelling. This chapter outlines the development of what I termed the QUEST process – an acronym for Querying Unexplored Experiences in StoryTelling - which enabled the exploration of these so far unexamined realms in story telling research.

The plan of the storytelling project consisted of two main sections. In the first section a variety of evidentiary elements commonly found in qualitative research were gathered and created: field notes, conversations, video footage and memos to self; in order to establish, in the second section, a grid of storytelling response indicators that enabled the gathering of statistics of these occurrences. From this data, I was able to ascertain the external markers or as I have labelled them, Indicators of Engagement, that measured the engagement responses of the child listeners when exposed to a varied and long-term programme of storytelling.

The quest for a rigorous research design outlined in the study is a means of theorising children's experiences of oral storytelling. The following section discusses how the research questions led to the current research design.

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[5] A basic Boolean search on Google Scholar in November 2012 using the keywords "research" and "quest" retrieved over 1.5 million results

3.1.2 Research design drawn from the research questions

As already discussed, this study aimed to fill a gap in the literature concerning effective storytelling. It seeks to answer the questions: what is an appropriate, academically rigorous methodology for investigating engagement with storytelling? How can children's engagement with storytelling be defined and measured? How do children experience story based on observable, behavioural cues?

The following section summarises the components of the research design that were applied to resolve these questions.

Research design component 1: Preparation factors

As has been flagged previously, the extended length of the storytelling programme in the project required an experienced storyteller who was able to design and conduct a long-term storytelling programme; one who was practised in selecting and preparing a large number of diverse stories to tell and who had shared stories with audiences of varying ages. Since the research sought to identify the Indicators of Engagement in children's responses to storytelling, it was important too that, through the honed skills of a practised storyteller, the child audience had the best opportunity to exhibit engagement in successful storytelling events. Using only one storyteller also ensured that there were not multiple variables in storytelling presentation styles, that each story was told to a number of classes in a similar way, while acknowledging that every story event is unique.

The ability to select a large number of stories for an extended storytelling programme is also a skill that comes with experience. The stories selected for the study had to be appropriate to the emotional and literary development of participants ranging from four to thirteen years old. The stories, while challenging and interesting, could not contain elements that would cause distress to the participants. All of the stories selected, while adapted to "make them my own", had at least one published source and were in the public domain. Furthermore, it was also important to select stories appropriate to the stage of the storytelling programme; that is, complex stories or stories of extended duration were scheduled for the later weeks of the programme, when the children were more experienced story listeners.

Familiarity was seen as a vital component of the research design. It was anticipated that the structure and content of the storytelling programme would result in building a

sense of being comfortable with the storyteller, gaining a knowledge of what storytelling is; becoming familiar with the particular storytelling presentation style of the teller and be exposed to a variety of story genres and types, through a long term, regular storytelling programme. It was also envisaged that the research participants would gain a sense of security through being in the company of their own classmates, whom they had known for a minimum of six months when the storytelling programme commenced. To facilitate this all storytelling sessions were conducted in the participants' home classroom and in the presence of their regular teacher. Use of the classroom as a venue for storytelling was encouraged by Zipes (1995), who emphasised its importance in enabling the building of relationships with all stakeholders in a school community. Scheduling of regular storytelling activities could also be accomplished relatively easily in a school setting, through the conduit of the Assistant Principal.

The active support of the teaching staff in the participating school was essential to the success of the study. All participating teachers submitted an expression of interest in taking part in the study and viewed the storytelling sessions as a worthwhile activity in their classrooms. Remaining consistent with the policies of each classroom was viewed as a means of not only maintaining a sense of security for the participants but of retaining the support of the teachers. Therefore I familiarised myself with the set of behaviour guidelines on display in each classroom. I referred to these guidelines as necessary when managing classroom behaviour during a storytelling session in conjunction with my own established audience management strategies.

Research design component 2: Types of data collection
The most immediate means of collecting data was through observation of each storytelling audience. During each storytelling session, I maintained regular eye-contact with the listeners and continually "read the audience" to note their responses to stories and adjusted the storytelling style as appropriate. By observing the immediate responses to stories, I was able to gauge what the particular class enjoyed and what aspects of the activity they found confusing.

In addition to my own observations of the audience members, the storytelling sessions were recorded with video camera, in order to be analysed in detail at a later date. The recording capacity of the video was enhanced by an external microphone, which enabled the comments of the participants, made before, during and after each story, to

be recorded. The spontaneous responses of participants to each story could therefore be captured.

The field notes were a useful set of data generated throughout the storytelling project: extensive field notes were written after each storytelling session, detailing observations, queries and conversations conducted with teachers and school staff away from the classroom. These notes often provided a context for responses observed during a storytelling session and served as a source of feedback and recordings of ongoing consultation with the school staff.

Research design component 3: Developing a measurement tool: The Indicators of Engagement

Grounded theory methods (Dey, 1999; Cresswell, 2008; Glaser, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Tuetteman, 2003; Wildy, 2003) were utilised throughout the study, particularly in the collection and analysis of the data. Cresswell (2008) described *grounded theory* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) as utilising a systematic approach to researching the activities of a group of individuals, where data is collected directly from the participants. In this project responses to the long-term programme of storytelling by a group of primary school children at a government school in New South Wales were observed. Data was collected in the form of spontaneous verbal responses and recorded physical responses to storytelling from the child participants, field notes of ongoing conversations with teaching staff, and personal observations and reflection by me.

Another aspect of grounded theory is to generate theory from the analysis of the collected data, rather than being influenced by preconceived notions or expectations. The data is analysed for themes or categories and from these themes, theory emerges that explains the activity that can be used to predict future experiences of a similar nature (Cresswell, 2008). The measurement tool of the Indicators of Engagement developed during the current study was formulated as the collected data was analysed using the open coding feature of grounded theory.

Four storytelling sessions for each of the three classes of participants were transcribed from the video footage. All of the orally presented stories in each of the selected sessions were transcribed in their entirety in addition to every comment or utterance from either the participants or the storyteller. All facial expressions, body movements

and gestures made by the participants were noted on the transcripts. From the 267 pages of transcripts, every comment or physical gesture made by any of the participants in the selected storytelling sessions was coded using open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) in the qualitative analysis software NVivo 9. In all 95 codes or categories were created as they became relevant to the material being analysed. When every transcript had been coded, these free codes were grouped into common themes, or tree nodes. From these groupings, prominent or frequently occurring Indicators of Engagement were identified. The Indicators of Engagement thus acquired constitute an innovative measurement tool, developed especially in this research, to enable the measurement of the large number of engagement responses displayed by the research participants.

3.1.3   Academic rigour

The study had the aim of being an explanation of an occurrence (engagement with storytelling) which could thereafter be used to predict the effectiveness of comparable storytelling events. The research sought to introduce academic rigour to a specific field of activity within the storytelling canon that appeared, from an extensive literature search, to have very little. However, as the research was carried out in a common place of practice for storytelling, that is, a school, action research was deemed a suitable research method. Action research involves investigating a common-place activity, conducted in a consistent environment in which the activity occurs (Bryman, 2004; Gray, 2004). It requires the researcher to revisit the activity over time and allows the opportunity to be responsive to changes that may be required (Elliot, 1991). The research was conducted in the same manner that a long-term residential storytelling programme would be, including no formal interviews or surveys of the child participants. It also acknowledged that the qualitative research process (Flick, 2009) and grounded theory were relevant to the study.

In order to claim academic rigour, the research needed to be able to withstand the scrutiny of critical review, incorporating such aspects as: applicability, replicability, study population representativeness, data collection, study design and critical scrutiny of results. Each of these elements was addressed in the current study, reflected in the explanations below. In acknowledging the fluid nature of the storytelling event, where each telling of a story is unique, the "generalisability" of the findings is noted. While the research occurred in one school, across three classes at one time period, there are

observations that can be generalised for the practice of storytelling.

- *1. Applicability*: It is envisaged that this research will be of interest to, and have application for, storytellers in Australia and internationally. Australia hosts eight State and Territory Storytelling Guilds and a national storytelling network was established in 2012. Practising storytellers commonly work in the fields of education, health, religion and business, and may regularly use storytelling as a means of communication in their respective fields. These areas of storytelling application and practice are reflected across the world. There is no estimate of how many practising storytellers there are internationally.

- *2. Replicability*: By providing a detailed description of how the storytelling project was conducted, other interested storytelling researchers will be able to replicate the study, taking into consideration that each storyteller will have their own unique style and use stories that have particular meaning for them. Storytellers from different communities of practice will be able to utilise the grid of Indicators of Engagement to measure the engagement levels of their storytelling audiences. A disciplined academic approach has been applied to the investigations into storytelling that can be adopted (and adapted further) by other researchers and practitioners to improve their understanding of the storytelling event. What is often implicit behaviour by storytellers and their audiences has now been couched in explicit methodological terms.

- *3. Study population representativeness:* The study aimed to include a valid representation of the participating school population. The inclusion of a Kindergarten, Third and Sixth grade class was considered by the School's Project Officer and me to be a good representation of students that captured the literacy and age range of students typically found in a public school in Australia. The participation rate of each class involved in the study was 100%, (that is, all students in each class, through their parents' permissions and in many cases their own signatures, consented to be involved in the study) and no participants withdrew from the study. No composite classes of mixed grades were involved in the study to ensure clarity of ages when analysing the results

- *4. Data collection:* An extensive amount of data was collected during the study, including field notes, literature reviews, and 17 hours of video. (One session with

Sixth Grade was not videotaped due to equipment failure.) The storytelling sessions consisted of 18 storytelling sessions to three classes where 29 stories were presented. A total of 12 sessions to the three classes were chosen as best fitted to indicate a change over time in the area of study. 16 different stories, most told multiple times across the grades, were transcribed and coded. The list of stories shared in each session is provided in Appendix 3. Triangulated data analysis was carried out by working with the primary data, utilising the evidence-based research literature, and the reflective observations of the teller. This depth of data has not previously been collected in any published research that analyses children's engagement with storytelling.

- *5. Study design*: The study followed a logical set of preparatory steps, in adherence with HREC guidelines and drawing on 25 years of experience as a practising storyteller, who regularly visits schools. It is envisaged that other storytelling researchers would be able to apply the design, incorporating their own selection of stories.

- *6. Critical scrutiny of results:* NVivo (Versions 7-9) (QSR International) was used as the qualitative research software analysis tool. The transcripts were coded in NVivo and themes and categories established, utilising the open coding feature of grounded theory. The software enabled queries to be conducted on the extensive data, which revealed patterns of distinct Indicators of Engagement. Observations were critiqued and queried in different ways through the utilisation of the charts, models and 'Queries' applications in NVivo, to ascertain how best to analyse the material thereby ensuring the results were closely scrutinised. The results from these multiple means of scrutinising the observations are provided in Chapters 4 and 5.

3.2   QUEST Step Two: Exploratory research.

An exploratory research design is prepared and applied to the storytelling activity based on grounded theory research methods. Stakeholders in the activity are identified and collaborated with throughout the data collection process. A method for selecting, preparing and presenting scheduled stories is established.

The current study provided an innovative approach to examining a particular aspect of storytelling. Numerous methods were examined in the planning stage of the research

for their applicability to the study. Upon reviewing the methodological literature, establishing the research questions and mapping the structure of the research to be undertaken I determined that the focus of the study, how to identify children's engagement with storytelling, was served best by grounded theory research. My own experience as a storyteller, who regularly visited schools in this capacity, was also incorporated in the form of action research.

The QUEST approach occurred in two stages. The first stage, outlined in this section, was the storytelling research design and project planning, where the journey of the research was mapped out. The second stage of the research, occurred at the primary school selected for the study, where the experience of storytelling came under the spotlight.

The current study is qualitative and the overarching narrative of the QUEST emerged as the dominant research thematic. Within that encompassing narrative were a number of stories; the actual stories themselves that I shared with the research participants, the story of the participants' responses and developing engagement with these stories, the story of the school community's involvement with and acceptance of, the storytelling project, and the story of my own journey as a practising storyteller. Lewis (2000) argues that story is an essential aspect of any qualitative research, as it is our way of seeking meaning and knowledge. The study also incorporated Glaser's (1992) view that qualitative research, and particularly grounded theory research, explores people's experiences and perspectives.

The issue for practising storytellers who wish to pursue systematic grounded research is defined by the nature of storytelling itself. Storytellers in the twenty-first century are itinerant by nature, visiting various institutions and venues for widely varying timeframes, from one hour to several months. Storytellers go where they are invited, accepted and welcomed and rarely have the luxury of returning to the same venue on a continuing basis. However, to establish a systematic research method a site which could be revisited was essential. Therefore the selection of a government primary school – a typical site of action for the practising storyteller and increasingly for the academic researcher – was decided upon as the locale for the study. To ensure validity of the data collected and replicability of the process used, the study required stability of audiences, venues and programming, which meant that venues frequented by storytellers such as museums, public libraries or festivals, were not suitable. These

venues have a fluid audience and involve bringing audience members into a venue with which they are not familiar.

By conducting the data collection in a school, consistency factors could be addressed. The groups of child participants remained relatively static, taking into account illness and out-of class activities that occasionally occurred. The possibility that some purely voluntary participants would withdraw from the study was also considered, although none did in this particular study. The consistency of the research environment and research population had value for the current study and were incorporated into the QUEST approach. The current research was conducted in adherence to a tight schedule of stories and the established design of the storytelling programme was maintained throughout the project.

In order to ensure that the quality of the storytelling programme was maintained at a high standard, I utilised the reflective practice aspect of action research in the form of field notes while the storytelling project was conducted and memos while analysis of the data was undertaken. Impressions of each storytelling session were detailed, analysing elements that I considered to be of limited success, or of actual concern. These elements were reflected upon, researched if necessary and storytelling techniques amended where the programme allowed, while still maintaining a consistency of style and storytelling presentation. The limitations of reconciling reflective practice with ethics requirements will be detailed further in the Ethical Challenges section of this chapter. The QUEST process needed to accommodate these conflicting requirements.

3.2.1 Participants in the current research

The research project was conducted in 2004 in a government primary school in the Central Coast region of New South Wales, Australia. Total enrolment at the school in 2004 was 729 students, with a gender ratio of 55% boys to 45% girls. The school's percentage of students who had a language background other than English was 8.5% and 10% of students were of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent. In consultation with the Assistant Principal (the self-appointed Research Project Officer at the participating school), one Kindergarten, one Third and one Sixth grade class were selected because they represent a cross-section of the range of literacy skills, both oral and textual found in primary school children. The refined purpose of the work was to

chart the Indicators of Engagement with oral storytelling among primary school aged children.

The research was conducted in the three target classes' own classrooms, with their regular teachers being present during the storytelling sessions. The codes used for each of the participating classes are listed in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1 *Class groups, exposure level and teachers involved in the research*

Class Groups	Number of storytelling sessions	Class Teacher code
Kindergarten Grade class (KG)	6 sessions	**TKG** Teacher of KG
Third Grade class (3G)	6 sessions	**T3G** Teacher of 3G **RT3G** Relief Teacher of 3G
Sixth Grade class (6G)	6 sessions	**T6G** Teacher of 6G

Table 3.1 outlines that the group of participants had a total of six storytelling sessions each involving between two and four stories in each session. While these three classes each had a total of six storytelling sessions, the amount of data generated was managed by selectively analysing certain points in the storytelling programme. The thesis thus explores the storytelling sessions in detail in Week One, Week Two, Week Four and Week Six. A comprehensive view of four storytelling sessions therefore provided information about engagement with storytelling and increased familiarity with the activity of storytelling. A total of 88 participants provided data for the current thesis.

A strong element of the project was to build a rapport with all the groups as swiftly as possible as discussed previously in the Literature Review. Practising storytellers know that it is important for the storyteller to make the audience feel welcome and content to be in the presence of the storyteller, who they perceive as a friendly person. Storytellers call this essential beginning to any storytelling programme "building rapport", and believe that it is vital to listeners being prepared to enter the story realm, or the world of the story.

There needed to be a growing sense of familiarity with me for the child participants in each of the three classes; in my storytelling style, my demeanour with the children, my classroom management strategies, and my regular presence in their classrooms. It

was important to the success of the study that the children viewed me as other than a teacher in their classroom. By ensuring that the participants saw me as a visitor to their school and their classroom, they understood that they volunteered to take part in an enjoyable, extra activity than what usually occurred in their classroom. It was important for the building of the familiarity aspect of the storytelling project that the students not expect that I would be "just like any other teacher." It had been my experience that when audiences of school children perceived me as someone other than a teacher, they were more readily responsive and less inclined to think they should "be quiet and behave."

I was a guest in the classroom who would not be setting tasks or assignments, or assessing their work and who provided an enjoyable activity. Participating teachers were asked to introduce me by my first name, to further differentiate me from a teacher and this was reinforced at the beginning of each session when I greeted the children and corrected them in a friendly manner if they responded with my surname. The continued presence of the teacher in the classroom while the storytelling was conducted also emphasised that I was not a replacement teacher. This rapport-building aspect of the study has not been extensively explored in previous storytelling research. The ways in which this *unexplored* aspect was *queried* during the current study will be outlined in Chapters 4 and 5.

The research, through dialogue with key stakeholder groups, incorporated elements of the collaborative nature of qualitative research, as described by Babbie, (2007) and Brown and Dowling (1998). This was most evident in the planning stages of the project, when the Assistant Principal and I met numerous times to discuss the nature of the project, the timetable, and what the respective responsibilities of the school community and I would be. Ongoing meetings with the Assistant Principal were conducted while the University of Newcastle Human Research Ethics Committee (hereafter referred to as HREC) and New South Wales Department of Education and Training (hereafter referred to as NSW DET) ethics documents were being written and amended. The parent and wider community were also consulted at the beginning of the research. A general meeting was held with parents to discuss the research and explain the process of informed voluntary consent. Questions were invited and an open invitation issued to approach me at any time over the course of the project with feedback or concerns. A meeting of the Parents and Citizens (P & C) Association committee was addressed, where the research was also outlined and questions answered. Finally, an ongoing

dialogue was conducted between the Assistant Principal and me for the duration of the research at the school, discussing individual class issues or challenges. I maintained an ongoing dialogue with the school community, with participating teachers at the beginning and conclusion of individual sessions, and with other interested teachers in the staffroom or in the playground. Ongoing discussions with the students of the school were an unexpected but pleasing outcome. The conversations, additional stories and ongoing interaction with students outside the classroom will be highlighted in Chapters 4 and 5.

Teacher participation in the project was completely voluntary and they were expected to take no active role in the storytelling sessions. The teachers were expected to remain in the classroom along with me to ensure NSW DET "duty of care" conditions were in place. They therefore had to agree to have their class involved. The research project was viewed as a valuable professional development opportunity for teaching staff by the entire school. Following discussions with the Assistant Principal, expressions of interest were sought by her from the teaching staff for Grades Kinder, Third and Sixth class (See Table 3.1 above). A meeting was conducted before the project commenced with the teaching staff who expressed interest. The purpose of the project, ethical considerations, (including my own values as a practising storyteller), a draft timetable of the storytelling programme and an outline of the type of stories to be told, were all presented. I discussed what level of participation was expected from the teachers and it was emphasized that the participation of both teachers and individual students would remain voluntary. The issue of voluntary participation was discussed in detail at this meeting with the teachers agreeing that any child could withdraw from the research project at any time without the need to give a reason. The voluntary participation aspect of the project was also highlighted on the consent forms that had space for both parent/guardian and child participant signatures. Ongoing interest by the teachers for the project was seen as vital to the success of the research project. I also emphasized at this meeting that my personal view of storytelling was that it should always be an enjoyable experience for the listener and that this would remain a priority throughout the project. This is discussed further in the Ethics section of this chapter.

3.2.2 Stage one: A storytelling research design - Equipping the journey

The current research was divided into three phases, as represented by the structure of the thesis and outlined in Chapter 1: the background to the study; finding the way by establishing an appropriate research method; and finally in phase three analysing the data obtained during the storytelling project. The storytelling project itself reflects the stages that a visiting storyteller must undergo in preparing a storytelling programme. The first stage involves the administrative aspects of organising a programme; negotiating a fee, structuring a suitable timetable and establishing a suitable theme for the programme. All of these aspects require ongoing consultation with the person making the storytelling programme booking. The first stage of the storytelling project underwent a similar process that involved utilising my storytelling experience to inform and negotiate with the school community, in order to clarify for them exactly what the storytelling project would involve, although of course there were no fees negotiated! A thorough working knowledge of what is involved in a storytelling programme was also required in order to navigate the ethics clearance maze. This *Stage one* section outlines the steps that were taken to design and organise the placement of the storytelling project in the selected school.

3.2.3 Ethics clearance process

In the current study I operated simultaneously under four sets of ethical guidelines. The first set of guidelines was those that were presented to and approved by the HREC. The second set of ethical guidelines was those submitted to NSW DET[6], in a format largely similar to the HREC application and subsequently approved once HREC approval was obtained. Both of these applications placed an emphasis on protecting the rights and privacy of research participants, in this case, primary school children. The DET application also required a very detailed description of the structure of the research being undertaken, to determine if it had enough validity to warrant a substantial disruption to class schedules for 88 children. Because they were so similar in scope and expectations, I came to view the two formal ethics approvals as one set.

The third set of guidelines was the informal ethics present in the school and observed by the school community. These were known to me through school newsletters, discussions with staff, displays of classroom rules and previous storytelling visits to a

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[6] Since the data was collected for the current research, the Department of Education and Training (DET) has undergone a name change. It is now known as the Department of Education and Community (DEC.) However, as the documentation for the current study reflects the former name, the acronym DET will continue to be used throughout the thesis.

class not involved in the project. The fourth set of ethics was those voluntarily adopted many years ago by me in my practice as a storyteller and subsequently encouraged and developed through my involvement with the Australian Storytelling Guild. The school's ethics and my personal ethics were mostly complementary and were considered as the second set of ethics. This thesis reflects the first person focus of the journey and occasional struggle, between an academic researcher and a practising storyteller. While I was always mindful of adhering to the first set of ethics the second set, my personal ethics, provide my moral and professional compass and it was that set that had priority. The challenges that this presented for me, what Mockler (2007) would term a "meta-dilemma", will be discussed later in this chapter.

3.2.4   Ethics for practising storytellers

There are no official ethical guidelines that storytellers in Australia must adhere to and only rare occurrences of them internationally. Rather each storyteller, in Australia at least, constructs their own guidelines, hopefully with the mentoring and encouragement of the members of their state Storytelling Guild and through reading the work of nationally and internationally respected storytellers. The storytelling community in Australia is a relatively small one, with professional and practising storytellers being aware of each other's work and reputations. Were a storyteller who is a member of their state Storytelling Guild begin to behave unethically, it is certain that one or more members of that Guild would guide the storyteller to more appropriate behaviour, or face censure. The New South Wales branch of the Australian Storytelling Guild is the only one in Australia to currently have an Accreditation process. The accreditation provides storytellers with a certificate "which recognised their skills and abilities in the art of Storytelling" (Alvarez, 2011. p. 10). In order for a storyteller to apply for accreditation, the Guild's guidelines state that:

> It is important that the candidate is known and recognised within the Guild as a person of integrity as they will be recommended to go into schools and other places where they are trusted to behave in an appropriate manner. (Alvarez, 2011. p. 10)

Writers such as Cooper, Collins and Saxby (1994), Lipman (1999) and Zipes (1995) have informed my ethical position on storytelling, as have the many mentors I has been fortunate to have encountered in the Australian Storytelling Guild (both New South

Wales and Victorian Branches). The study was conducted with a very ethical and values-aware approach, in keeping with the ethos of professional storytelling. The personal set of ethics that were observed during the current study and have been termed "The Four R's on the QUEST, consisted of:

- Respect the audience

The basic ingredients of respect for the audience are that they should always be treated with courtesy; the storyteller should consistently pay fair attention to listeners' responses; the storyteller must recognise the validity of the role of the audience. The professional and ethical storyteller is always punctual and is thoroughly prepared for each storytelling session.

In order to engender an atmosphere of equality between the storyteller and the child listeners, the storyteller should endeavour to diminish the adult's position of power. The wellbeing of the audience always remains the top priority in every storytelling session. (For example, if the audience were obviously disturbed by a story, I would not continue telling it just to acquire evidence.)

- Respect the host

In the current study, the host of the project encompassed a number of people; the Principal, the Assistant Principal, the classroom teachers, the school support staff and the school community. It was a point of ethics and common courtesy as a research student permitted to conduct research at an educational facility to acknowledge the right of members of the host community to ask questions. It was also incumbent on me to ensure that the school staff and community knew that their questions were encouraged.

- Respect the community you are in

A further element of my set of ethics was to make myself aware of school timetables and observe them, to allow for out of class activities with good grace and humour and to observe and promote classroom rules of behaviour.

- Respect the culture

I believe very firmly in observing copyright legislation and acknowledging the work of others. Consequently all the stories selected were literature-based (i.e. published versions of the story were available upon request). However it should be noted that

respect for all cultures was a priority of the research. Each story told during the research was my adaptation of a tale, based on research that located various versions of the story. Every effort was made to ensure that the selected stories were 'public' stories in that particular culture, that is, that they were not sacred stories that had been misappropriated. The Reference List of stories utilised each week was presented to the classroom teachers, the School project manager and the school librarian and contained full citation details.

3.2.5   Story selection and preparation

The selection and preparation of the individual stories was vital to the success of the research project. This section indicates how the stories utilised in the research project were selected, prepared and presented. This establishes a clear context for the analysis of the data to follow. Storytellers who wish to conduct similar research are provided with the template that they can adapt to suit their own particular needs.

There is no prescribed method that a storyteller must follow to select or prepare a story for telling; although there are a large number of storytellers who have published guides to the method they have adopted (Baker & Greene, 1987; Barton & Booth, 1990; Bauer, 1993b; Bryant, 1910 ; Chambers, 1971; Egan, 1989; Harley, 1996; Lipman, 1999; Maguire, 1985; Sawyer, 1962; Simmons, 2006). Each storyteller finds a method that works best for them, often over years of trial and error. The following descriptions detail the processes for selecting and preparing stories that I have devised. They detail the processes that were utilized for the current research, incorporating a new method for story preparation that was devised during the course of the research.

3.2.5.1 The story selection process

The importance of devoting care and time to the selection of stories for a storytelling programme cannot be underestimated. The success of the current project relied on the acceptance and enjoyment of the stories by both the research participants and me. The participants needed to be drawn to the practice of storytelling as an enjoyable activity that aroused their interest and made them keen to hear more. The selected stories also needed to be accepted by the participating teachers and not engender any concerns for them. While I had a large number of stories already in my repertoire, not all of them met the criteria for the current study, as described in Table 3.2 below. Therefore more

stories needed to be selected and prepared. A total of 114 stories were selected for possible inclusion in the study.

The process of selection is a time-consuming one and in this case took a period of eight months before the actual storytelling programme commenced in the school. Suitable collections and sources of stories must be identified and accessed. I read through numerous stories, discarded many and re-read several, before a story was selected as a possibility. It is not uncommon for me to read and discard 10 to 15 stories before one "chooses me." I say that deliberately, as often it is not immediately obvious why a story has appeal. It may be the underlying rhythm of the story, a trait in one of the characters that piques interest, or the satisfaction of the resolution of the story that marks it as a possibility. What follows is an outline of the criteria used for selecting the stories that were used in the research project.

Table 3.2 *Inclusion criteria for selected stories*

Published sources	At least one version of the story must be available in a published source
In the public domain	The story must originate from a folktale, myth or legend that is in the public domain, to avoid impinging copyright
Avoid sacred stories	Through research, identify any impediment to telling the story, due to sacred or cultural taboos
Age and content appropriate	The story must be appropriate to the participant age group of 4 to 13 years old The story content should not be expected to cause undue concern or upset in any listener
Appeal to the storyteller	The story must have great appeal for the storyteller.
Suit the presentation style of the storyteller	The story must be able to be adapted to suit the particular storytelling style.

The first criterion was that all of the stories should be available as published sources. The modern storyteller is fortunate to have a wealth of material available to them, from which to select suitable stories. Collections of folk and fairy tales, published specifically for children, and collections of folktales and traditional stories of specific cultures or

world regions all provided a wealth of material. Publications of individual stories were also considered where these were based on folk or traditional tales and the alternate sources of the story could be located. These stories in addition to suggestions of individual stories from fellow storytellers were further researched, using such internet resources as *Story Lovers World* (www.story-lovers.com) and *Tim Sheppard's Storytelling Resources for Storytellers* (www.timsheppard.co.uk/story/index.html). Stories that already existed in my repertoire were researched more thoroughly to ensure that they incorporated sufficient cultural background. All the stories selected came from multiple sources, to avoid collector or translator bias or error and the version told during the project was the one that most closely reflected the cultural context of the society that it came from.

All the stories that were used in the storytelling project required at least one version of the story to be in published form. This was to ensure that a copy of the story could be given to any concerned adult should a complaint arise during the project. Adherence to the policy of a published source did result in some favourite stories being rejected when a printed version could not be located in time.

The next criterion was that all of the stories should have at least one source that can be found in the public domain. While they have a great child appeal, and can be adapted well to the storytelling style, original literary works of individual authors were not selected for the storytelling project. Apart from copyright issues, I believe that a storyteller must obtain permission from a living author before using their original work. Obtaining permission is a time-consuming process, and one which the current study did not allow. Also, as mentioned previously, no oral story is ever told the same way twice, and the very nature of storytelling would result in an original work being adapted or altered in some way to suit the particular audience. Therefore, stories that originated from folktales, legends or myths that were in the public domain were selected. This often included what are commonly referred to as traditional tales.

Traditional tales are those stories that are well known within a particular culture and that usually have no identifiable author. They may be folk tales, fairy tales, myths or legends that have been passed down through generations, and are often so well known within a society that elements of them form part of everyday speech. Apart from being free of copyright and ethical-use restrictions, traditional tales have other positive attributes for a storytelling programme. As noted by Grainger (1997), traditional tales often contain rich and unusual vocabulary, rhythms and appealing refrains. Grainger

further pointed out that because traditional tales were created for oral telling, their language patterns are quickly recognised by children who have the opportunity to hear them. They frequently contain chants and refrains that invite participation by audiences. They provide the child listener with strong imagery and plot structure. With these language and participation benefits it can be argued that these traditional tales should be introduced to a new audience early in a storytelling programme, to prompt participation and encourage familiarity and engagement.

The third criterion was that sacred stories, where identifiable, would be avoided. All efforts were made to avoid telling sacred stories or stories that were inappropriate to the cultural situation or audience, even though they are often classified as traditional tales.

The next criterion was that all of the stories selected for the storytelling programme were to be age and content appropriate. Great care was practiced when selecting stories that while challenging listeners and exposing them to new ideas and vocabulary, they did not deliberately upset or provoke them. The age ranges of the participants and their likely emotional maturity was also taken into account when selecting stories. I prefer not to tell simplified versions of traditional tales and dismissed many traditional tales that had great appeal to me as an adult but were not suited to a primary school audience. Several stories that could have been potentially disturbing were included in the list of scheduled stories, but were only included in the weekly schedule of stories actually told in the latter part of the project, when the maturity of a class had been assessed.

The fifth criterion was a personally important one, but relevant to the success of the programme and that was that all of the selected stories had to appeal to me. Experience teaches the storyteller that only stories that have a deep personal appeal are effective when told. For me, those stories tend to have a strong emotional content. Preparing a story for telling is a long and involved process and only a story that has appeal is worth spending that much effort on. The majority of the stories selected were told multiple times, so their appeal to me was very important. While it is very satisfying for an audience to express their appreciation of a story, it must give the storyteller pleasure to tell it for its own sake. As Hamilton has so succinctly expressed it, "You must love the story enough to enjoy telling it even without your favourite responses" (Hamilton, 2002). That is, the storyteller must enjoy a story enough that even when an

audience does not laugh, gasp or respond as expected, the storyteller still enjoys sharing the tale. As Heckler (1996) has pointed out, it is the storyteller's job to build a personal relationship with the story in order to be able to tell it with conviction. This is not possible with a story that does not have appeal.

Another criterion was that the selected stories need to suit the storyteller's particular style, in addition to having a personal appeal. Every experienced storyteller recognises the type of story that they tell most effectively. As the stories used in the project were to be a mix story presentation styles, the type of props that could be feasibly used in a school setting also needed to be considered. Transport, size and visualisation elements of props all needed to be factored in when selecting stories.

3.2.5.2 The story preparation process

The presentation of a successful storytelling programme relies not only on the careful selection of stories, but also on the meticulous preparation of each story. When the research project commenced, the **ten step preparation process** detailed below was the method I had adopted over a number of years as one that worked for me when preparing storytelling programmes. The process below is deliberately set out in a numbered style to reflect its intent as a set of instructions and which may in this format assist other researchers or others conducting storytelling programmes.

Step One: Write out the story so that the structure and characters begin to take shape in my mind. As I research the story, I add or adapt elements to the story until it reflects a tale that has a culturally-sound base.

Step Two: Read the story several times quietly to myself over the course of several days or even weeks, depending on the time-frame

Step Three: Become familiar with the structure of the plot. What are the causal factors for what happens when and why?

Step Four: Learn the characters, and imagine what their traits and voices are like. As I become more familiar with the structure of the story and the sequence of the plot, I concentrate more on the characters, until I can visualise them, and hear them in my mind.

Step Five: Visualise the environment of the story setting. Imagine the scenes of the story; what are the sounds that would be heard, the odours the characters can smell, even if I do not describe them in the story? I want to feel like I have been there and come back to tell the tale. I do more research if necessary, to find out what was that country or culture was like at that particular time.

Step Six: Retell the story to myself. I need to tell it out loud as it seems to cement it in my imagination better if I actually hear the rhythm of the words. It helps to identify any problem sections with regard to fluid pacing or pitch. I avoid taping the retelling because I discovered that I then became locked into that version of the story, and found it difficult to adapt sections where necessary.

Step Seven: Rework the story if necessary. Having told it aloud, I rework any sections that do not flow properly, or that I became stuck on for some reason.

Step Eight: Retell the story to a small group. My family and work colleagues have become used to being my preliminary audience for new stories, and I value their honest feedback.

Step Nine: Memorise only opening lines and any refrains.

Step Ten: Write out a prompt card. Details such as story title, source, appropriate age, appropriate props, country of origin, theme, introductory and concluding sentences, list of characters and refrains are included on filing cards. These serve as a prompt in the quiet moments before a storytelling programme.

As the research project continued an adapted method, labelled by me as the Chamber/Harley diagram, was developed that incorporated a number of theoretical insights from the literature. What resulted was a more robust and nuanced story preparation process. In July 2004, I encountered the work of Chambers (1971), in which she described the structural breakdown of stories and how these could be represented in a diagram. Chambers explained that each story has the basic elements of an exposition, a problem, a series of rising actions, a climax, a series of falling actions, and a conclusion. Each of these elements can be plotted on a diagram to represent the plot of the story. This appeared to me to be a very effective way to cement the structure of the story in my mind as I prepared the story, but also was an

aid in visualising the story as I was telling it and so I incorporated it into Step Three, devising a structural diagram for each story that I was preparing.

Several weeks later I read about a concept of storytelling that was to radically change the way I prepared and presented stories. Harley (1996) wrote about the concept of the fourth wall as it applies to storytelling. He suggested that the storyteller should always be aware of the invisible fourth wall that exists between them and the audience and manipulate it to bring the audience in, or distance them, at relevant sections of the story. When the storyteller is being a narrator, the wall should be down, and the storyteller can make eye contact with listeners and encourage interaction. When characters are being directly presented through dialogue or gesture, the wall should be up, with the storyteller looking only in a consistent direction that has been established for that character. At this point in the story, the storyteller must remain "in character" and not acknowledge the responses of the audience. In this way, Harley stated, the audience feels that the storyteller is addressing them individually during the narrative, that they are important to the success of the storytelling, and that the characters have their own reality when a consistent form of dialogue and positioning is used in those sections of the story. By 'playing with the wall' in this way, Harley contended that a more intimate atmosphere is created between the storyteller and the listeners. It also allows the storyteller to "be inside" the story more, and have increased control over its telling.

Harley's concept of playing with the wall relates to the four circles of awareness work of Cooper, Collins and Saxby (1994). As discussed previously in Chapter 2, these circles involve the first circle of the storyteller themselves, and the audience's attention drawn solely to them; the second circle of awareness of the characters, and their place in the story realm; the third circle of the teller making eye contact with a few audience members; and the fourth circle of awareness is for the teller is to make eye contact with each member of the audience, to make them feel part of the group experience and to gauge responses. From this point on, I prepared stories always with the circles of awareness, and the storyteller's position in relation to the fourth wall constantly in mind. These positions were incorporated into Chambers idea of a structural diagram, and each story was plotted onto a detailed diagram. An example of this revised preparation technique, using the story of *How frog lost his tail,* (Cooper, Collins, & Saxby, 1994) is provided as Appendix 2.

Devising a combined diagram for each story became Step Three of the story preparation process. "*Become familiar with the structure of the plot*" was replaced by "*Prepare a structural diagram of the story and plot the appropriate positions of the Fourth Wall within the structure, according to the Chambers/Harley process.*" Using this adapted method not only enabled me to get a stronger concept of the structure of a story and much quicker than previously, it also made what became Step Six, the telling and retelling of the story to myself, much more focused in how I should present that section of the tale. It made me more confident that I had prepared a story thoroughly and I had the impression that story presentation had more impact. The adoption of this modified story preparation method after the project had commenced was considered a legitimate aspect of both action research and grounded theory research. Future chapters will examine any perceived difference in audience responses when stories prepared using this adapted ten step process were presented.

3.2.6   Story presentation for the study

3.2.6.1 Room preparation

Experienced storytellers know that the suitability of a venue for storytelling can greatly contribute to the success of a storytelling session. A familiar venue that is comfortable and removed from any high traffic area is important. Unfortunately ideal storytelling venues rarely exist. While the teachers involved in the storytelling project were extremely welcoming and accommodating, I was reluctant to disturb their classrooms by rearranging furniture excessively. Setting up the storytelling area in the current project occurred during the first few minutes of the session in Week One. The classroom was surveyed and a suitable area assessed very quickly, and adopted as the 'storytelling area' for each subsequent session. While this was done in consultation with the classroom teacher, in each case they left the final decision to me.

The least ideal set-up was in KG's classroom, with the storytelling space right at the entrance to the room, and with the children side-on to it. This area was already established as the activity area however, and would have involved moving the majority of the furniture to change it. It was also one of the few areas in the room with a power outlet for the video camera. Fortunately, all of the rooms were carpeted, and enough space was available for everyone to sit comfortably.

3.2.6.2 Audience preparation and classroom management

One of the most frequent comments heard at gatherings of storytellers is that children often do not know how to behave as part of an audience. They rarely have experience of attending live theatre and the situations where they are in a group, such as watching a sports game, do not require sustained listening skills. This is not just pedantic nitpicking on the part of fussy storytellers. The quality of audience behaviour can have a direct impact on the quality of the storytelling experience. When a storyteller is challenged by a group with poor audience behaviour, their energy and attention is spent on trying to create a positive atmosphere that it conducive to storytelling. When a class displays positive audience behaviour and is eager to participate in the storytelling, the storyteller is able to immerse themselves in the world of the story and bring their listeners along with them. The following section will detail the steps used in establishing audience preparation and classroom management during the storytelling sessions that facilitated positive audience behaviour. This positive audience behaviour encourages a receptive audience experience, as has been discussed previously and about which the following chapters provide evidence for.

For most children in my study the closest they had come to an audience experience was in the weekly school assembly, where teachers regularly patrolled the student groups and kept behaviour under strict control. One of the values of storytelling therefore is in presenting children with an audience experience. They learn when it is correct to be respectfully quiet, when it is appropriate to interact and respond, and how to show appreciation. Livo and Rietz (1986) state that together, the storyteller and the audience negotiate a story into being. Obviously, this negotiation can only be successful if both parties have an understanding of the situation and their respective roles. Audiences therefore need education and preparation.

In the research storytelling project, the teachers all handed classroom behaviour management almost entirely to me and only intervened on very rare occasions. It very quickly became apparent to me that my classroom behaviour management skills needed some enhancing and in line with action research, this was investigated and incorporated into future storytelling sessions. Interestingly this was not the impression the classroom teachers had of the situation, as reflected in the Field notes of the final meeting between the Assistant Principal and I, presented in Figure 3.3 below.

Figure 3.3 *Participating teachers' feedback regarding the need for classroom intervention*

The Assistant Principal explained that the teachers involved in the project didn't feel a need to interfere in the sessions because they felt that I handled any behavioural problems really well. They were all surprised to learn that I wasn't a trained teacher.

J. Mundy-Taylor, Field Notes, December 6, 2004.

The comment by the teachers alluded to in Figure 3.3 served to reinforce my impression that the responses storytellers anticipate from their audiences and the behaviour teachers expect from their students are often markedly different. In order to address my own perceived need I researched current strategies for establishing positive behaviour in the classroom. The works of Australian teachers Miles (2003) and Rogers (1997) provided good material, written with the relief teacher in mind but easily adaptable to the uses of visiting storytellers.

The majority of effective classroom management occurs in the audience preparation stage. By enabling students to have a clear idea of what is about to occur and what behaviour is expected of them, instances of inappropriate behaviour are minimised. Giving the students permission to respond to the stories and informing them that there will be opportunities for them to interact, enhances the enjoyable aspects of a storytelling event. Table 3.4 below summarises the steps for audience preparation and classroom management that were developed during the current research followed by an explanation of each step.

Table 3.4 *Steps for audience preparation and classroom management*

Action	*Aim*
Step 1. Greet the class warmly	Audience preparation
Step 2. Establish identity	Audience preparation
Step 3. Establish what the session will entail	Audience preparation
Step 4. Recap existing classroom rules or guidelines for behaviour	Audience preparation
Step 5. Establish storyteller's expectations of the audience	Audience preparation

Step 6. Wait for quiet before commencing story	Audience preparation
Step 7. Introduce the story and provide any interaction information	Audience preparation
Step 8. Look directly at any student acting inappropriately	Classroom management
Step 9. Pause the story and wait for inappropriate behaviour to cease	Classroom management
Step 10. Speak directly to student	Classroom management
Step 11. Move the student	Classroom management
Step 12. Ask classroom teacher to intervene	Classroom management

The first step in audience preparation for storytellers is to greet the class warmly. Ideally I was given an opportunity to greet the class outside the classroom, and was able to greet each student as they filed into the room. This established contact with each individual in a non-threatening, pleasant manner. When this was not possible, I waited until I had been introduced by the teacher, and smiled warmly at the class as I greeted them. If the greeting occurred inside the classroom, when the class was already seated at their desks, I invited them to move to the storytelling area. The storytelling area was quietly set-up as the students settled. I then smiled and made eye contact, taking care to respect spatial boundaries and allowed the students to move closer as they became more comfortable with me. Information about spatial boundaries as they apply to storytelling was discussed in Chapter 2, in reference to Doherty-Sneddon's "equilibrium theory" (2003).

An important second step for storytellers when preparing an audience is to establish identity. In the first session with a class, I explained who I was, and why I was in the classroom. We are always more comfortable with people we can 'place' or account for.

The third step in audience preparation aligns very closely with step two and is to establish what the sessions will entail. I gave a brief explanation of what the storytelling session would involve, including an approximate timeframe or number of stories to be shared, and any theme that the stories may follow. When this was other than a first session, a short chat about the stories heard previously helped to re-establish the storytelling atmosphere and built on the rapport already established between the storyteller and the audience.

Visiting storytellers may be reluctant to engage the fourth step of audience preparation. They may consider that recapping existing classroom rules or guidelines for behaviour begins the storytelling session in a negative way. However, done in friendly manner this step serves as a gentle reminder that the students are still in their classroom and there is a level of behaviour that is expected of them.

The fifth step relates closely to the previous one in preparing the audience when the storyteller's expectations of the audience are established. I added any guidelines for behaviour that would enhance the storytelling experience. I did not want to discourage spontaneous verbal responses, so I asked the students not to have conversations with their classmates rather than ask them not to speak while the story was being told. I asked them to respect their classmates and listen while they were talking at appropriate times in the session. This step was also crucial in informing the teacher that my expectations of what was allowable may have been different to theirs. The value of a long-term programme of storytelling becomes evident here, when an audience becomes familiar with the behavioural expectations of the storyteller.

The sixth step is to simply wait for quiet before commencing the story. I announced my attention to begin the introduction to a story and waited for them to settle before I began. This sometimes involved using a strategy of finger clicking, clapping or gesture to get their attention initially. The novelty of someone sitting quietly in front of the group for a sustained period is often enough to encourage a class to settle quickly. Often students quickly asked their classmates who continued to talk to be quiet.

The seventh step is where the essence of storytelling actually begins where the story is introduced and the storyteller provides any interaction information. Explaining that there was a section of the story where responses were encouraged granted the students permission to become more involved in the storytelling. It also encouraged them to listen carefully for the section where they could respond. This step again informed the teacher that a certain level of noise from the audience was anticipated and permissible in the story. I agree with Livo and Reitz (1986) when they stated that all audiences other than the very youngest expect to help to tell the story. This should be encouraged, as it enables children to feel that they also own the story. It is the job of the storyteller to ensure that this assistance is done in a controlled manner.

At this eighth step the storyteller moves from the area of audience preparation and into classroom management. When a group learns that storytelling is an enjoyable activity the following five steps are less frequently required. When the storyteller becomes aware of an audience member acting inappropriately they should look directly at the student. Without breaking the flow of a story, looking at a student for a sustained period let them know that I was aware of their behaviour. Once I had their attention, a small frown or shake of the head was often enough to make them cease the behaviour.

If the disruptive behaviour continues step nine should be employed where the storyteller will deliberately pause in the story and wait for inappropriate behaviour to cease. When subtlety did not work, I brought attention directly back to me as the storyteller by putting an obvious pause in the story. Often classmates would ask the student to cease the behaviour.

With groups who regularly participate in storytelling activities, step ten is rarely required. When it is, the storyteller should speak directly to student. If the previous steps did not work, it was sometimes necessary to stop the story and speak quietly to the student directly, preferably using their name when known. I was specific about the behaviour I wanted stopped. If the behaviour did not cease immediately I repeated the request, using the same volume of voice. I repeated the request only once more if the behaviour continued*.

Step eleven involving classroom management requires the storyteller to move the student, but not remove them from the classroom. Exuberant behaviour can sometimes be a response to encountering a style of storytelling for the first time. Removing the student completely from the classroom would be counter-productive to familiarising them with a wide range of stories and styles. On very rare occasions, I asked the student to move to a different part of the group to move them away from their 'personal audience.'

Step twelve of asking the classroom teacher to intervene should only ever be used as a last resort, as it directs control of the activity away from the storyteller and onto the teacher (Livo & Rietz, 1986). Fortunately it was not necessary to use this step in the research project.

Apart from these classroom management steps as listed above, much audience preparation and education also happens in the act of sharing a story itself. Western

cultures are accustomed to hearing typical story beginnings, such as "Once upon a time". Hearing this or a similar beginning indicates to the audience that the everyday experience is about to be halted, and the world of the story is opening up. As children are exposed to more storytelling, this response to hearing a story opening becomes more powerful and the willingness to enter the realm of the story is enhanced; what Livo refers to as placing the audience in the story "frame of reference" (Livo & Rietz, 1986, p. 5).

3.3 QUEST Step Three: Data collection.

Data is systematically collected from the observation of body language, verbal responses and spontaneous dramatisation of the research participants as they listen to storytelling.

3.3.1 Stage two: A storytelling research design - The storytelling experience in the spotlight

Stage two of forging a research method involved presenting the five month long programme of storytelling in the school utilising the QUEST research method. The purpose of such a long programme was to "immerse" the participants in a large number of told stories, consisting of a wide variety of genres, while at the same time observing all of the participants' responses via video recording. The project put the art of storytelling and the individual storytelling style of one storyteller in the spotlight. Neither the school, nor the children had previously been exposed to such an intensive programme of storytelling. This section of the thesis will outline the structure of the programme, describe who the participants were, and highlight some of the challenges that were encountered during the course of the storytelling programme.

3.3.2 The structure of the storytelling programme

The structure of the storytelling programme is outlined in Table 3.5 below highlighting the contents of each storytelling session. The first session (hereafter referred to as Week One) lasted for an hour. These sessions enabled me to determine the participants' initial level of engagement with storytelling and provide data with which to compare the participants' level of engagement as the project continued. Two stories were told in common to each class.

In Weeks Two to Six the Kindergarten Grade class (KG), the Third Grade class (3G) and the Sixth Grade class (6G) each had five, fortnightly hour-long storytelling

sessions, comprising three or more stories in each session. The emphasis in this phase of the project was for the children to enjoy the storytelling experience and to become comfortable with various types of storytelling (genres, presentation methods, various props etc.) and with me. The stories were age-appropriate to the grade. During this phase, the children were observed through the use of video recording, but no follow-up activities were conducted although several impromptu retellings of stories by the participants were observed.

Table 3.5 *The structure of the storytelling project analysed in this thesis*

Phase	Description
Week One or Introduction week	All three participating classes had one session with the storyteller, which comprised two stories The engagement level of each class was observed by the storyteller. This introductory week is analysed in the thesis.
Weeks Two through to Six	All three participating classes had five, hour-long storytelling sessions, scheduled on a fortnightly basis. Weeks Two, Four and Six are analysed in the thesis.

Overall the participants shared a total of 58 stories (KG = 19; 3G = 18; 6G = 21). As described previously Weeks One, Two, Four and Six only were transcribed and analysed to reveal the levels of engagement across each of the three classes. During these focus weeks a total of 37 stories were shared (KG = 13; 3G = 11; 6G = 13). A schedule of stories told during Weeks One to Six is provided in Appendix 3 while more detailed descriptions of the transcription process will be given later in this chapter in 'The data analysis process'.

3.3.3   The importance of familiarity between the teller and the listener

The study had a strong focus on the concept of familiarity as discussed. The sooner a rapport can be established between the teller and the listeners, the sooner engagement in the storytelling experience can commence. Each of the classes involved had an average of 29 students. This number of students provided a good

audience dynamic for storytelling, being small enough to maintain the sense of intimacy so crucial to effective storytelling, yet large enough so that individuals did not feel exposed. Further, as Bauman states, audiences of strangers tend "to be more passive, less inclined toward active participation" (1986. p. 104). Through keeping the participants in groups of peers and friends, the willingness to be active participants was unlikely to be impeded.

In addition to maintaining class groups, familiarisation was enhanced by 'warming up' the audience, including discussions between stories. Each session began with a warm greeting from me and a general 'catch-up' discussion with the students. There was also a brief reflection on the stories that had been told previously. There were also impromptu conversations with participants in the playground or on way to other classes and in the staffroom with the teachers. Observations on the growing sense of familiarity and rapport will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

Doherty-Sneddon's work on intimacy distance influenced my understanding of the need for building rapport. It was crucial that each class become comfortable with me as quickly as possible, in order to engage and participate in the storytelling experience. Doherty-Sneddon stated that every human has an established intimacy relationship with other people that dictates how they will respond using both non-verbal behaviours and verbal communication:

> Essentially equilibrium theory proposes that every social relationship has an unspoken intimacy distance. The better we know someone, the 'closer' the relationship. This intimacy distance is kept in 'equilibrium' by balancing a number of factors. Every channel of non-verbal behaviour has a part to play in establishing and maintaining this intimacy distance, for example, we are far more comfortable making eye contact with, touching and standing closer to people we know than those we have just met. (Doherty-Sneddon, 2003. p. 11)

As Doherty-Sneddon points out, the good news, (especially for storytellers) is that people are social animals and have a natural tendency to want to build closer intimacy relationships with others. One of my roles in this project was to encourage that growth between the teller and audience. Much of the impact of storytelling comes through facial expression, gesture and pauses - which is why it is such a powerful tool in building relationships and developing meaning-making. Indicators of growing intimacy,

such as increased eye contact, were observed and analysed as the storytelling programme progressed and the results of these observations will be outlined in Chapters 4 and 5. Adams, Smith, Pasupathi and Vitolo (2002) also state that familiarity with a teller increases the listener's ability to recall a story. Instances of story recall were observed during the course of the project and were often spontaneously offered by participants.

A developing familiarity with different genres of story and different storytelling types was also an aspect of the project. The stories covered a range of genres, from myths and legends, to fairy tales and folk tales, tall stories, pour quoi tales and cumulative stories. The participants were exposed to numerous ways of presenting storytelling using traditional stories in addition to stories told using puppets, origami, felt boards, musical instruments and other props.

3.3.4   Determining the length of project

The work of Jack Zipes (1995) was utilised in the structure of the study with regard to timeframes. It is Zipes' belief that storytelling should be told over a sustained period of time to build a sense of community; that it should not just be for entertainment. Zipes advocated long-term programmes when working in schools and this belief assisted in forming the following research protocols. First it was necessary to observe the changes in the children's responses after sustained exposure to storytelling. Second, a sustained period of time was required to build rapport with the child participants and the classroom teachers. An excess of two sessions with the same audience are usually considered necessary by practising storytellers before the listeners are comfortable with the style of the teller and the storyteller has established expectations of audience responses and behaviours. Finally, a sustained period of time would enhance familiarity with the storyteller and the activity of storytelling and facilitate honest responses and feedback.

I spent a total of 40.5 hours in the school, over a period of five months. There were 18 hours of actual storytelling and 22.5 hours were spent with various members of the school staff, either in administrative tasks relating to the project, or discussing the progress of the project. Additional hours were spent conversing with students and staff in the school playground during recess and lunch breaks and occasionally as students saw me leave the school at the end of the day. This casual exchange with students outside of the classroom was seen as a legitimate aspect of building rapport and trust

between the participants and me. It was also viewed very favourably by the school staff as a way of their students learning from a visiting storyteller.

3.4 QUEST Step Four: Reflective practice.

Reflective practice and aspects of action research are adopted to ensure the needs of the participants are met and the effective collection of data with regard to responses to stories.

3.4.1 Challenges in the QUEST process

All quests or journeys of discovery involve challenges and the QUEST process entailed a number of significant challenges in its evolution. These included using video in the classroom and being a researcher in the school environment. The ethical considerations encountered were not issues that normally confront practising storytellers. Quite often I was the only one who felt that an ethical dilemma even existed. Resolving them in a manner that was appropriate for all the stakeholders involved in the study required constant reflection, reading the storytelling and methodological literature for possible solutions, occasional compromise, creativity and innovation in story presentation. The QUEST approach recognises that there are many unexplored aspects of storytelling in the research that currently exists and gives space for querying not only the nature of the unexplored aspect, but also querying the existing solutions and possible innovative solutions.

Planning the five month programme in the participating school involved deconstructing the process of being a visiting storyteller in a school and incorporating all of the ethical requirements of the various authorities involved in the research. These elements formed the following considerations.

The first consideration comprised the ethical challenges I confronted during the research. As mentioned previously in this chapter the dual role of academic researcher and practising storyteller was a significant hurdle that became an ongoing challenge for me. I was aware of the competing roles of a postgraduate researcher, representing both my university and fulfilling the obligations of NSW DET and HREC ethics and of my ongoing role as a practising storyteller, who was known and respected in the wider community and wanted to maintain my professional reputation. In addition, there was the role of a guest in the school and observing and respecting the practices of that particular organisation.

It was necessary to convince members of the HREC that it was appropriate for the researcher to also be the storyteller. Apart from the horrendous cost of employing an independent professional storyteller to be engaged in a five month programme of storytelling, the challenge of finding a storyteller who had an appropriate repertoire of stories that met the ethical demands of the study, who could commit to a five month long programme, and who had the ability to tell vastly different types of stories, would be an almost impossible one to overcome. Selecting and preparing a repertoire of stories that met all of the ethical requirements and then engaging a storyteller was not an option. As Roney points out:

> Certainly, the stories selected should be ones which the tellers truly enjoy
> - how else to excite children and help them develop lasting positive
> attitudes towards literature. (Roney, 1989. p. 523)

No two storytellers will enjoy the same set of stories, although they may have some in common. In order for the storytelling programme to be presented in an enthusiastic manner, it was crucial for the dual role of researcher and storyteller to be accepted. It was also critical that the storyteller in the project be highly experienced and comfortable in the role of teller, if rapport with the participants was to be established. This belief is supported by Baker and Greene's comment that "children tend to have confidence in the person who tells stories well" (Baker & Greene, 1987. p. 18).

The second consideration was encompassed in how to deal with adverse effects during research. Elements of the dual role were harmonious, such as a commitment to address any adverse effects on the child participants of the study that may have arisen from a particular story. All staff involved in the study, including teaching staff, the school librarian, and administrative staff, were encouraged to inform me of any negative feedback or indications of distress as a result of a storytelling session. Parents who attended information sessions were also encouraged to contact me. Procedures had been devised where, in the case of a child becoming distressed, the teacher and the parent of the child concerned would be provided with a written version of the story that caused distress and I would meet with the parent if desired, to discuss the story and its content and context. If necessary, in consultation with the parent, the Assistant Principal and I, a course of action would then be prepared and followed; either a meeting with me to explain the story and reassure the child, an invitation to the child to withdraw from the project, or for the parent to be present at the next storytelling

session. This process was fortunately never required, as there was no negative feedback reported to me.

Consideration Three was encountered early in the research process and concerned the deliberate absence of formal interviewing of participants. It was intended that the whole study would be a pleasant, non-invasive experience for the child participants. This personal priority however again conflicted with the views of some members of the HREC. It is common for qualitative research to involve interviews with participants. I felt very strongly that this would create the impression that involvement was just another assessment "chore". One of the greatest benefits of storytelling is as a personal experience. Every child in a class will hear the same story, but each will take something different from it. The challenge of this study was to elicit responses from the children that did not damage that personal experience, nor interfere with personal meaning making, whatever that may be. As the storytelling project continued, numerous students volunteered verbal responses at the conclusion of a story, and this data is incorporated in Chapters 4 and 5.

Numerous writers have emphasized the importance of allowing listeners the "space" to consider the meaning of a story (Bettelheim, 1991; Cooper, et al., 1994; Stallings, 1988). Bettelheim in particular was emphatic about children needing ample time to reflect on a story. In order for the research to meet the aims posed in the research questions, the responses made by the children needed to be unmediated, genuine and voluntary. The decision not to include formal interviews was clearly written into the ethics applications. Therefore, no questionnaires or formal interviews were conducted and I did outline how responses to the stories would be elicited from the participants, drawn from extensive video footage, casual group discussions, retellings of stories and dramatizations. This method was approved by both ethics committees.

Cultural considerations were the fourth aspect in this group of challenges. The ethical requirements of the two authorities (HREC and NSW DET) and my personal ethics also acknowledged the importance of being mindful and respectful of cultural beliefs and personal feelings. This was ensured in the selection of the stories to be told during the project, which deliberately avoided sacred stories or age-inappropriate stories. Extreme care was taken in the selection of the stories to be used, incorporating such aspects as copyright, age-appropriateness and story content. (See Table 3.2)

The relationship with the school community was the fifth consideration. There was no

conflict about the importance of maintaining a positive and respectful relationship with the administration and community of the participating school. Obtaining informed consent from the parents of the participating children was a requirement of HREC approval. My personal ethics dictated that this needed to go further and required consent from the child participants themselves. The consent forms provided space for the children to supply their signatures and the project was explained to each class in the initial session with them. Their right to withdraw from the project was also explained again to them and to their teachers. This was felt to be a crucial step in building rapport with the students.

A dialogue was maintained between the teller and the Assistant Principal for the course of the project, and any concerns or issues for either party were discussed and resolved in a timely manner. I ensured that I greeted the office staff upon entering the school every day of the project, rather than walking directly to a classroom. During breaks I either made myself available to discuss the project with teaching staff in the staffroom, or in the playground to build rapport with the students. Evidence of this positive relationship between the school community and the teller was provided in the final meeting with the Assistant Principal at the end of the project as described in Figure 3.6 below.

Figure 3.6 *Extract from Field notes, referring to rapport with school community*

> The Assistant Principal thanked me sincerely for allowing their school to be part of the project and assured me that all of the teachers and students involved gained a great deal from it. The Assistant Principal was also aware that I shared stories with other classes and students in recess and lunch breaks in the playground and heard very positive things back about it.
>
> (J. Mundy-Taylor, Field notes December 6, 2004)

Videoing each session was vitally important in capturing the responses of each of the participants and while it is listed here as the sixth consideration it was actually one of the greatest challenges. In addition to the verbal responses of the child participants, their body language as they listened to stories was also a crucial means of ascertaining their level of engagement with stories. Obtaining video footage of the audience was the method used to gather the important data of the participants' responses. This enabled

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me to have a permanent record of the storytelling sessions and provided primary data for analysis.

The video equipment was purchased by me specifically with the current project in mind. There were no research assistants in the project, so all equipment needed to be easily portable by one person. A small digital camera[7] was selected, due to its compact size, reasonable cost and ease of use, both in filming the footage and downloading the memory cards. Although the digital camera had a good inbuilt microphone, an extension microphone was purchased to ensure that the participants' voices were captured in a classroom setting. To keep rearrangement of furniture to a minimum in each classroom, a camera tripod was used to set the camera up in front of each audience, rather than resting it on a table.

The video footage provided useful data for the project, but there were various issues with the use of a camera in the classroom, such as power blackouts, which unfortunately prevented the recording of one session. A back-up rechargeable battery was eventually purchased and recharging became a priority task throughout the project.

In an attempt to keep the participants in frame and to capture as many students as possible on film during the storytelling sessions, the initial sessions were conducted with the camera viewfinder pointed towards the audience. The participants were encouraged to look at the viewfinder from where they were seated. If they could not see themselves, they were asked to move slightly so that they were in view. They were asked to look at the viewfinder occasionally during the storytelling session to ensure that they were still in frame.

I greatly underestimated the length of time it would take all classes to overcome the 'novelty' of seeing themselves on film. After several sessions the participants were still greatly distracted by the viewfinder, frequently waving to themselves or making faces. Several children even mouthed comments directly to camera. Prior to a session with 3G in Week Two, the teacher of the class and I discussed the value of having the viewfinder facing the audience. It was decided that after initially ensuring that the participants could all see themselves in the viewfinder, it would be turned so that only I could see it. This had a dramatic effect on the level of camera-related distraction in the

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[7] Panasonic NV-GS50

group and was adopted as a filming method for all classes for the remainder of the project.

While this method resulted in better attention, I was completely involved in the storytelling process and sometimes failed to notice that several of the students in a class moved positions (for reasons such as better viewing of story props, being closer to friends etcetera) and were consequently out of frame. This repositioning was often not noted until I viewed the footage later. There were also several occasions when the camera tripod was knocked either as children were moving into the storytelling area, or during a storytelling session. This resulted in some sections of the audience then being out of frame. These problems were noted during the analysis of the data and were incorporated in the NVivo code of *Filming framing problem.* It was noted as an issue a total of 24 times, across six of the analysed sessions.

The seventh consideration of adhering to the schedule of stories as required by HREC and NSW DET ethics was one that was highlighted early in the storytelling project itself. The class teachers, the Assistant Principal and the school librarian were all provided with a complete list of the stories, with bibliographic details of published sources selected for the project and a weekly schedule of stories, at least one week in advance. In order to maintain continuity of exposure to different styles of storytelling, at the same time in the project, it was necessary for the researcher to adhere to the scheduled stories. The schedule of stories is included as Appendix 3.

Adherence to this schedule provided a personal ethical dilemma for me during the project. One of the first skills that a practising storyteller should learn is how to "read the audience". This is a term that exists in the storytelling vernacular to describe the ability to observe an audience of any age and gauge what their responses are to a particular story or series of stories. The storyteller observes through elements such as movement in the audience, body language, comments and facial expressions, whether audience members are receptive to a story. If the storyteller perceives that the audience is not enjoying a story, they will adjust their storytelling style, or change the programme of stories to better suit the particular audience. The current research focussed on developing a means of measuring children's engagement with storytelling as a way of systematically capturing the process of reading the audience. Experienced practising storytellers know to always prepare more stories than are required for any particular programme; so that they can replace one story with another if it would better suit the audience. On some occasions, particularly with very young children, a

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storyteller will know when an audience has reached the limit of their attention and will end the session.

There were instances in the current study where classes had clearly had enough storytelling for one day, or the scheduled story was obviously not appropriate for that particular class. The adherence to the scheduled list of stories diminished the usual spontaneity of a storytelling event. Neither options of replacing a story, nor halting a storytelling session, except in extreme circumstances, were available to me due to adherence to the schedule. I am unaware of any other research in storytelling that dealt with this issue of adherence to a strict schedule of stories. No model of overcoming this dilemma was available in the research literature and I was again required to devise an innovative solution to the problem. I resolved to adjust my storytelling presentation techniques in some instances in order to overcome these challenges. Techniques such as metanarration, increased or decreased audience participation and making repetitive refrains more prominent were all utilised while still adhering to the schedule of stories and are discussed in greater detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

The eighth consideration of fitting in with school timetables and activities and the need for adaptability aligned with my personal ethics of respecting the research host and the community you are in. I was aware and appreciative of the time allocated to the project by the school. A great deal of attention was given to timetabling by the Assistant Principal and me in the planning stage of the project, to ensure that the storytelling sessions caused the minimal amount of disruption to classes and did not conflict with other scheduled activities. At the initial meeting with teachers to discuss the project, a timetable was distributed and details provided of the exact time commitment that would be required from each class. Consent forms were distributed to each class teacher involved in the project, which also outlined the time commitment required. Signed consent forms were collected by me over several occasions from the Assistant Principal, the Principal, or office staff and times of commencement were always mentioned on these occasions. Three weeks before the Introduction phase of storytelling commenced, the schedule of stories for first week was provided to the school. Each of these weekly schedules clearly outlined day, date and times for each class, in addition to the list of stories that would be told to each class.

The Assistant Principal and I believed that sufficient notice had been given to the teachers involved to prepare their classes for the storytelling project. However, two

teachers had forgotten completely that I was coming on a particular day. Both teachers were very gracious however, apologised and immediately ceased the activity they were engaged in and introduced me.

Other activities at the school obviously continued over the months of the storytelling project and the Assistant Principal and I tried to factor them in as far as possible when preparing the timetable. Unforseen activities often interrupted the scheduled sessions however, or resulted in students being absent from the class during all or part of the session. The school had an active Reading Recovery programme at the time of the project and this activity took precedence over the storytelling project. If individual students were scheduled to spend time with the Reading Recovery teacher, they were collected from the class, regardless of what other activity was taking place. The school participated in the Junior Rock Eisteddfod[8] for the first time during the year the project was conducted. None of the school staff realised what a huge time commitment was involved in this activity, or how much it would impact on the storytelling project. Students were either missing from the entire session, or came and went as the rehearsal schedule dictated. This happened very frequently with 6G in particular in the latter sessions of the project. In a meeting with me at the end of project the Assistant Principal acknowledged the interruption caused by rehearsals and other activities to the storytelling project as detailed in Figure 3.7 below.

Figure 3.7 *Extract from Field notes referring to flexibility with school activities*

> All the staff were impressed by how flexible I was with the timetable and the things that crop up in a school day. From the whole school's point of view, the project was a huge success and was very productive and the Assistant Principal felt that was due as much to my wonderful personality and friendliness as much to my skill as a storyteller. ... The Assistant Principal apologised for the amount of time the Rock Eisteddfod took up for the whole school. They had no idea it would be such a huge undertaking and thanked me for the understanding and flexibility I always showed when rehearsals etc conflicted with the project. (J. Mundy-Taylor, Field notes, December 6, 2004.)

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[8] The Junior Rock Eisteddfod is an event designed for primary schools in Australia that promotes healthy living and being active through dance, song and performance staging skills. More information about the event can be found at http://www.rockchallenge.com.au/j-rock/j-rock-faqs

Consideration nine involved the issue of classroom management. With three different grades involved in the project, different teaching styles and classroom management strategies needed to be taken into account and prepared for, as discussed in the 'Audience preparation and classroom management' section earlier in this chapter. Issues such as acceptable levels of noise - severely tested for some teachers during the telling of "How to turn a small house into a large one" (Bauer, 1993b) - usual seating patterns and ongoing classroom management all had to be determined and accommodated. For instance, the Sixth Grade teacher insisted on the students remaining seated at their desks for the first storytelling session. This negatively affected the group dynamic for storytelling and the establishment of rapport with me. The strategies that were employed to meet these challenges are described in Part III of the thesis.

In the initial meeting with teachers, it was emphasised that they would be required to remain in the classroom during the storytelling sessions. This was in line with the project being viewed by the Assistant Principal and I as a staff development opportunity. The presence of the teacher was also an ethical issue. The teachers were responsible for the ongoing management of students in the classroom, even while there was a guest in their classroom.

A communication gap that occurred during this initial meeting however and that was not identified until the project actually commenced was that the level of active involvement by teachers was not adequately discussed. For the majority of classes, this resulted in me being solely responsible for controlling student behaviour during the course of each storytelling session, with minimal or no involvement by the teacher. This created a wonderful learning opportunity for me and the implications of this for data collection and rapport with the participants will be discussed in Chapter 6.

The challenge of maintaining rapport and mutual respect was tested when teachers asked me to do things that were against school policy and ethics guidelines. There were two occasions when teachers left the classroom for extended periods, leaving me in charge of the class. This invariably happened when I was in the middle of telling a story and was left with the choice of either continuing the story, or chasing after the teacher. Rapport between the participants and I was also disturbed on a few occasions when teachers used me as the focus for their disapproval for the behaviour of a class. Several teachers claimed that I had expressed to them that I was disappointed in the behaviour of a class, (which was never the case) and then spent several minutes

reprimanding the class and telling them how they must respond to me. This presented me with a challenge; how to rebuild rapport with participants who now believed that I disapproved of them, without denying what the teacher had just stated and thus damaging the relationship between the teacher and me.

Mockler uses the term 'meta-dilemma' for describing or narrating critical incidents in research. For Mockler, these incidents involve three phases: "a description of incident that raised the ethical dilemma; an explanation of the incident in an ethical context; and teasing out the implications of the dilemma and their application to the wider research community."(Mockler, 2007, p. 89) This approach of describing meta-dilemma seemed very appropriate to the current study and has been adopted when discussing ethical issues. There were several ethical and pragmatic dilemmas in the current study, as already mentioned and they are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 in the context of individual class observations. Having described in detail the research design and challenges, the thesis will now examine how the collected data was analysed.

3.5   QUEST Step Five: Critical analysis of data.
The collected data is critically analysed using grounded theory and patterns sought.

3.5.1   Data analysis

A major innovative aspect of the current research and of the QUEST process in particular was the application of a computer analysis software program to investigate data derived from a storytelling research project. Co-creator of the NVivo software, NVivo consultant and trainer, Pat Bazeley was unaware of the software being used in relation to storytelling research and was greatly interested in the way the transcripts of the storytelling sessions were formatted and how the software was being applied. This section will discuss the use of the qualitative analysis software package NVivo 9, as it was applied within the current research. The first aspect of incorporating NVivo software into the research design was in determining how the video footage should be transcribed to meet its full potential.

The five month long storytelling project in the school produced a substantial amount of data. In applying academic rigour to the research it was acknowledged that the data not only needed to be collected systematically but also analysed systematically and critically, in accordance with grounded theory. Ensuring anonymity of the research

participants was a priority throughout the study but particularly at the analysis stage which negated any of the video footage being made available for public viewing. A means of conveying the data in a way that as closely as possible reflected the vital and lively responses of the participants to stories needed to be determined and adopted. The following sections outline how the current study approached these challenges.

3.5.2 Transcribing: "Handling your own rat"

The issue of transcribing recorded data is one filled with conflicts, challenges and decisions for the researcher that ideally should be considered before research is commenced. Likely questions include who should do the transcribing, what inclusion criteria should be established, how much should be transcribed and what format should transcription take? All of these questions were considered, the relevant literature consulted, opinions of research and academic colleagues sought and decisions made that best suited the particular circumstances of the current research when preparing the exploratory research design that forms a crucial element of the QUEST method.

Proponents of grounded theory support the practice of researchers transcribing their own data. Bazeley put forward the case in a very descriptive fashion when she said, "there is also real value in doing your own transcribing, if at all possible - building knowledge of your data through what Frost and Stablein (1992) referred to as "handling your own rat" "(Bazeley, 2007. p. 44). By frequently revisiting my own data, the material became even more familiar; aspects that were not apparent at the time of collection became clear and aspects that needed further teasing out became obvious.

It was recognised from the beginning of the project that no level of transcript, no matter how meticulous, could ever completely capture the true essence of a storytelling event. It is a complex experience shared between a teller and a number of listeners, which involves far more than an exchange of words, and while transcribing what is captured by video footage helps to bridge the meaning gap, it can never do true justice to the actual experience. The limitations of transcribing oral storytelling are compellingly described by British teacher and storyteller Betty Rosen:

> the printed text of any talk wipes out all speech rhythms, tone, pitch, variation of pace, all eye-contact, actions, gestures, mannerisms, physical jerks, quirks, twitches, fleeting grins, frowns, gleams, glares. Indeed, it strikes out completely that entire enigmatic, dynamic container of infinite mysteries - the visible human form. (B. Rosen, 1988. p. 71)

Further, transcribing oral storytelling strikes out the most essential element of a storytelling event, the dynamic exchange between a teller and the audience. Storytelling is a cycle of the teller sharing a story, observing the response of listeners, adapting the telling in response and observing the listener again. Observations in the transcript of listeners' physical actions and physical and verbal responses were captured to a comprehensive extent but the actions and responses of me as the storyteller were only captured in a limited way as my back was always to the camera or out of frame completely. In the case of this particular study the physical responses of the participants were crucial to the research questions and so it was not as critical to capture the storyteller on video.

Knowledge of this storyteller/listener dynamic was a convincing argument for me to do my own transcribing but there was another issue that could not be ignored. Conducting research that involved videoing child participants precluded anyone else assisting with transcribing due to confidentiality issues. Only the supervisor/s and I had ethics clearance to view the video footage. The option to edit the footage to separate out the audio files and then engage another transcriber was considered. It was decided that this would not only be very time-consuming in locating and learning appropriate software, but it would also involve me later matching children's voices to the transcript. It was also essential that the transcripts be written in a way that was compatible with the analysis software that would be used later in the process, and this was more productively determined while in the process of transcribing. It was recognised that the complexity of the storytelling event would require several viewings of the video footage to transcribe it properly. For all of these reasons, it was determined that the sessions would be transcribed solely by me.

3.5.3   What was transcribed?

It is envisaged that the thesis will be a valuable tool for practising storytellers and storytelling teachers. It therefore needed to be transcribed in a way that gave the maximum clarity to readers who would not be able to view any of the actual storytelling sessions. Deciding how much of the video footage and other data should be transcribed was also important. Grounded theory advocates such as Glaser (1992. pp 19-20) argue that more is better. Therefore, all of the field notes were transcribed, using terminology and identifying tags in line with the transcripts of the video footage.

Each of the 12 focus storytelling sessions went through the following transcription process.

In the first run transcription the video footage, already transferred to DVD, was viewed to hear every verbal exchange between the listeners and me (the storyteller). All the stories were transcribed in their entirety and all comments made by me and the listeners, including lead-ups to stories and subsequent conversations following the stories, were transcribed. All participants, including class teachers and significant school staff members, were assigned unique code names to protect their anonymity and to aid in individual identification. Screen dump images of each class were used to aid with coding individual participants, and the class images were labelled accordingly for future reference.

In the second run transcription all physical responses, movement around the class and facial expressions made by each individual participant in each of the sessions as caught on video, was described and included in the transcript. Coding of the participants was checked against the labelled snapshots to ensure continuity of identification.

The markers and symbols used for transcription are as follows:

- Teller/researcher (including comments and storytelling narrative/scripts) – plain font
- Participant/listener (children's' and teachers') comments - Italic font
- Description of physical action or response observed - Green font
- It was decided not to use the label of "Teller" constantly, and to put listeners' code names at the end of lines to try to minimise disruption to the flow of the session.
- Rather than use square brackets [ ] to indicate an action made by a listener, they were transcribed in green font in order to differentiate them from the spoken word events.

An example of the transcript utilising the various fonts and markers is provided in Figure 3.8 below.

Figure 3.8 *An extract from the research transcript illustrating the markers used*

1.38.25 Little Half-chick

There was once a Spanish hen,

Bridget looks at Arthur

Perry looks down at floor

and she hatched out a brood of beautiful chicks.

Arthur looks at teller

Bruce puts chin in hands

Bridget looks at teller

Leanne plays with fingers

Ruby looks at teller

Gold and brown and black; all of them lovely; all of them healthy; except for one. And he was a half-chick.

Jarrod sits up straight

Celia has mouth open

Grant frowns

Linda pulls face

Arthur looks worried

Georgia has mouth open

Brenda looks worried

He only had one wing,

Matt throws head back

Celia gasps

and one leg,

Bruce gasps

half a head

Oh poor thing - Lennon

Extract from "Little Half-chick" Week Four, 3G

3.6   QUEST Step Six: Data interrogation.

Both expected and unexpected patterns in the data are Queried, utilising computer analysis software (such as NVivo but other programs are useful) now available to the researching storyteller.

3.6.1   The coding process and NVivo software: Grounded theory in action

Having transcribed 12 storytelling sessions, there were documents that totalled over 200 pages and an analysis tool needed to be used to determine themes and patterns in the data. Several research colleagues had recommended the software NVivo, developed by QSR International and upon investigation at the beginning of the project and anticipating how much data would be generated, it was determined that NVivo (Version 7) (QSR International) would meet the analysis needs of the current study. As the analysis continued, versions 8 and 9 were also utilised.

NVivo is a software program that provides the researcher with a set of computerised tools with which to analyse qualitative data (Bazeley, 2007), and is applicable to the grounded theory approach to research. It enables data to be classified, sorted and arranged in a structured way that then allows for queries to be run across the data. It was envisaged that graphs and models would be used to indicate the changes in responses to storytelling. The capacity to do this is one of the particular strengths of the NVivo program. Bazeley provides a succinct justification for using NVivo when she states:

> The use of a computer is not intended to supplant time-honoured ways of learning from data, but to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of such learning. The computer's capacity for recording, sorting, matching and linking can be harnessed by the researcher to assist in answering their research questions from the data, without losing access to the source data or contexts from which the data have come. (Bazeley, 2007. p. 2)

The current study, as mentioned previously, was immersed in story. Rather than collecting a questionnaire or set of survey responses from participants that could be transcribed and analysed using themes generated from the questions, the responses of the participants in this research were entrenched in the context of the stories

themselves. The actual stories therefore had to be incorporated into the transcripts, in order to give meaning to the responses of the participants.

I am unaware of NVivo software being used as a tool for analysing any type of storytelling programme and Bazeley was intrigued by its use in this context.[9] The capacity to identify useful research tools, enhanced by developing technologies such as NVivo, and adapt them to previously unexplored aspects of research in storytelling, has emerged as one of the many advantages of the QUEST approach

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NVivo met the analysis needs of the current project extremely well. It enabled me to construct research queries that arose from the original research questions and apply these queries directly to the data. NVivo enabled me to analyse the responses of the participants individually, and in groups (called "Sets" in NVivo) according to class, age and engagement cluster as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. Responses could also be analysed across individual stories, to measure how different age groups engaged with the same story. This level of analysis has not previously been applied to storytelling, possibly due to the fact that without a tool like NVivo, it is an overwhelming task.

However, there were formatting requirements in the NVivo software that had to be taken into account when transcribing. For example, text boxes located at the side of the verbal record could not be used as originally intended to show the physical responses of students. An alternative method of writing the responses in green font and placing them in the body of the transcript was adopted.

It is possible to view video footage within NVivo and code it directly from there. However, while this would have been useful, there were obstacles to classifying the video footage in this way. The 12 focus sessions that were transcribed were selected from 17 hours of video footage. The laptop computer used during the project did not have enough memory to store all of this data. The footage had been transferred from digital camera cartridges to DVDs, and these were used as external sources of data. As described previously in this chapter, ethics issues prevented anyone other than the

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[9] Pat Bazeley is one of the creators of the software, originally called NUDIST, and what is now known as NVivo, and is an internationally respected consultant and trainer in the software. Bazeley and I discussed the creative and innovative use of the NVivo software in storytelling research during a residential workshop conducted by Bazelely in 2010. Bazelely requested permission to use the format of the transcripts as devised by me in her forthcoming book on research design.

teller and the supervisor/s from viewing the footage, so all observations of children's responses needed to be incorporated into the actual transcripts.

However, NVivo is not an intuitive program to use and required a significant amount of training and familiarisation. This high time commitment to learning new software may also have been an impediment to previous researchers in storytelling. Training took the form of a two day workshop early in the project process, and a three day retreat with Bazeley. The early workshop enabled me to recognise what the capabilities of the software are and to understand the requirements of structuring the data resources in a way that was compatible with the software. The retreat, attended when the transcripts were complete and coding had commenced, enabled me to understand the deeper analytical tools and capabilities of NVivo. Familiarisation with the software occurred between these two training sessions and subsequently and consisted of reading numerous software manuals, watching online tutorials, attending online training sessions, discussing the software with research colleagues who were also using it, and continually applying this knowledge to the research data.

These reflections are not intended as a user-guide for NVivo. Researchers contemplating using the software are better advised to consult Bazeley's book (Bazeley, 2007), and attend training workshops and utilise the numerous online tutorials now available. It was useful for me however to understand how the coding process involved in NVivo linked to the open coding concept of grounded theory as this is an important aspect of the current research.

Glaser (1992) discussed the concept of "open coding" being an important element of grounded theory. Open coding occurs when the researcher begins to analyse the data with no preconceived codes or themes. As the data is viewed, codes become apparent to the researcher. Strauss and Corbin have succinctly defined the idea of open coding thus: "Broadly speaking, during open coding, data are broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, and compared for similarities and differences" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 102). As the discrete part, (the concept that is the event or phenomenon), is identified, it is given a representative name. As the data is further analysed, similar events are assigned the same representative name. Concepts that are linked in meaning are grouped in categories. In the current research, this aspect of grounded theory was applied using NVivo. The transcripts were read and instances of different

types of responses as displayed by the participants were catalogued as free nodes (codes.)

Glaser further described coding, or classifying data, as consisting of several parts, two of which are accommodated easily by NVivo. The first is substantive where conceptual meanings are derived from categories and their properties. These are the initial codes that are identified in data and in the current research, these were the simple categories that were assigned to individual responses of the participants, such as "smile at story", "frown", or "echo teller's words". In NVivo, these were termed 'free nodes' or 'child nodes'.

The second part of classifying data is theoretical, where conceptual models of relationships are built that relate to substantive codes. They are the logical groupings of free nodes that begin to form themes or related concepts, or the connectors between conceptual ideas. In the current study, these were the Indicators of Engagement that consisted of initial codes that had similar relationships, or linked in an obvious way. In NVivo, these relationships are called "tree nodes" or "parent nodes". The above free codes for example, became a conceptual model, or tree node, of "Collaborative Engagement," which became one of five Engagement clusters. (See Chapters 4 and 5).

I was aware of what I expected to happen as children were exposed to a substantial body of stories over five months, based on my long experience as a practising storyteller. However, I wanted to take a "fresh look" at what happens when children are exposed to storytelling, and this required grounded theory (the 'open-minded observation' aspect of the QUEST process). By applying the rigour of coding in NVivo, I was forced to look at each response, in each individual story, as a unique element in the data, and assign it a code of its own. This was done without the pre-conceived ideas about what *should* happen in a story having an influence. By using NVivo to first build these sets of free nodes and then tree nodes, I was able to establish which responses to storytelling by the participants revealed engagement with the stories. Further, running queries across these nodes showed how levels of engagement develop and thereby enabled me to build theories around the relationship between the clusters of engagement indicators. These nodes will be described and examined in detail in Part III of the thesis, in a descriptive analysis of each class.

When the transcripts were complete they were read through repeatedly and nodes were assigned to words, phrases or entire sections as they were identified as fitting into a category or classification. As a new concept was identified, a free node was created for it. Only when all of the transcripts had been analysed were free nodes grouped into tree or parent nodes as appropriate. In some instances, free nodes had no obvious relationships with any other and they were left on their own.

The tree nodes became the basis for a chart of Indicators of Engagement and enabled the measurement of the participants' engagement with story. Using NVivo query capabilities, I was able to determine what responses (coded as nodes) occurred when children were strongly engaged with a story. The results of these queries will be explained using tables, graphs, models and prose in Part III of the thesis. The grid of Indicators of Engagement will be discussed in detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

3.7 QUEST Step Seven: Investigation of patterns

Patterns of responses in storylistening behaviour over time are investigated to enhance the understanding of storytelling phenomena.

In the process of conducting the analysis of the data, a chart of Indicators of Engagement was developed that can be used as a model to analyse the effectiveness of the storytelling event in engaging an audience in story. While this chart has been applied to a primary aged audience, it has applications for listeners of all ages, and could feasibly be utilised in the analysis of the effect of storytelling in the tertiary sector, and organisational storytelling. A complete model depicting these Indicators of Engagement is shown in Figure 6.35.

The data gathered through the QUEST method outlined above has been analysed to reveal the impacts, if any, of a storytelling programme on the participants' ability to engage with stories. Factors such as listening and conversational manners, spatial relationships, acceptance of other points of view and verbally expressed empathy for others were noted and analysed. Having thus outlined how the data was organised and analysed, the thesis will now move on to Part III where an account is given of the analysis outcomes. In this part, entitled 'Class Journeys: On the road to the Indicators of Engagement' the research participants come firmly into view as their engagement with the storytelling realm yielded rich insights into the effects of storytelling at both the individual and group levels.

PART III. CLASS JOURNEYS ON THE ROAD TO ENGAGEMENT WITH STORYTELLING

Part I of the thesis provided the rationale and the antecedents for research on ways children engage with storytelling. It identified key aspects of audience response to stories that have not been investigated in a systematic manner. It further identified a significant gap in the research literature on how engagement can be measured in children exposed to storytelling. Part II canvassed the challenges encountered in conducting such research and a new storytelling research approach was outlined and identified under the rubric of the QUEST process. This section addressed research question one.

The thesis now returns in essence to the story realm itself, to detailed observations of storytelling in practice and the physical and verbal responses of listeners to the storytelling process. Part III is devoted to a detailed examination of what happened to the child participants as they listened to a wide variety of stories. Indicators of Engagement are employed as a means of measuring how children experience story based on observable, behavioural cues.This section of the thesis addressed research question two and encompasses an in-depth analysis of the responses to storytelling in the three focus classes and maps the resulting engagement with storytelling in a new and methodologically rigorous manner.

Chapters 4 and 5 addressed the third research question and reveal the five Clusters of Engagement incorporating the Indicators of Engagement within each of the clusters. These chapters describe the most frequent and significant Indicators of Engagement; how they are grouped in clusters and how they can be divided into two distinct strands of responses to storytelling: the Individual Familiarisation strand and the Relational Effects strand. These two chapters will examine how the Indicators, Clusters and Strands were presented by the participants in the current study.

CHAPTER 4. INDICATORS OF ENGAGEMENT PART ONE: INDIVIDUAL FAMILIARISATION

It has been established in the literature review, that children with experience of story will expect that a story will not only have certain elements, plots and characters and follow a logical sequence of events but that it will also have an emotional content that enhances the meaning of the story for them. While young children who are experienced story listeners may not be able to articulate this definition of story in such precise terms, they will certainly express disappointment if their expectations of a story are not met. If storytellers are motivated by a desire to bring the most pleasurable and meaningful storytelling experiences to their audiences, then a means of observing and measuring the engagement with storytelling is a highly valuable commodity that can be applied across all storytelling events.

In the current research the three focus classes of participants were videoed as they listened to eight separate storytelling sessions. Their verbal and physical responses to all of the stories were captured on video. From the plenitude of data, four of these sessions for each class – weeks 1, 2,4 and 6 – were strategically chosen and transcribed, and these participants' responses were coded as Indicators of Engagement; that is, they depicted a specific response by individuals that represented how they were involving themselves, or participating in, the storytelling experience, at each stage of the story. These individual responses to stories, that experienced storytellers subconsciously use to read their audience, have been labelled as Indicators of Engagement in this current research. When they are examined collectively and used as a measurement tool, the Indicators of Engagement provide a means of determining the level and extent of responses to storytelling in story listeners.

Many of the children who took part in the study reported verbally at the beginning of the project that they had never listened to a storyteller. On further discussion, this was mostly revealed to be a lack of understanding of what storytelling actually is. They did not identify as storytelling the occasions when their teachers related a tale, either traditional or personal, or when their family members shared a piece of family history, or even when their peers shared a story that they may have read or heard. For example, the teacher of KG revealed in a preliminary discussion with me that she often told stories to her class, but that she would welcome the opportunity to "hear a real storyteller". It is not surprising therefore that her class expressed in their own terms that only a visiting storyteller could share storytelling with them. A number of the

teachers also displayed a lack of understanding of storytelling. Two teachers asked at the beginning of the project if they could send some students out to my car to help me carry in the books I would be reading from. They did not have the concept of storytelling as a purely oral form of story sharing. Therefore, a crucial part of the project initially was to define to the teachers and the students what storytelling is and what they could expect.

Utilising the Indicators of Engagement that were identified and developed as an instrument of measurement for this project the evidence revealed that the children's familiarity with oral storytelling was initially undeveloped. Indeed their growing ability to make meaning of stories, to identify what stories are and what they should be, was observed throughout the course of the project and will be examined in detail later this chapter. The rich language of the various styles of stories used in the current study provided ample opportunities for discussion and as the study continued often provided points of comparison across stories. In the current study comments received from numerous participants revealed that the rich vocabulary and content of the stories added to their enjoyment and interest in the stories.

In the main however this thesis critically analysed physical and verbal responses systematically obtained through personal observation and closer analysis made possible through video footage.[10] This thesis will now set out on these class journeys, following a path that leads to the Indicators of Engagement.

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Oral storytelling is a cyclic activity between the storyteller and the audience. The storyteller begins to tell the story and as they receive the story each audience member begins to respond. The storyteller uses recognition of facial patterns and body language that all humans begin to acquire from childhood (Boyd, 2009) to determine how well the story is being received. Positive responses may include smiles, sitting forward or perhaps frowns depending on the context of the story. Wriggling, distracted looks, or even utter boredom are also legitimate, although undesirable, responses that the storyteller learns to look for and utilises as they read the audience.

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[10] It is probable that there are neural responses that occur as people listen to stories that would signpost further Indicators of Engagement. While neurological research of this kind would no doubt be invasive in nature, it would certainly add to the significant findings established in the current research.

The experienced storyteller is able to adapt the story to either encourage more of the responses they have perceived, or change the presentation of the story to gain more positive responses. Changing the pace, the amount of description or dialogue, repeating refrains or increasing the energy of a telling are all methods that may be used to adapt a telling to make it more palatable to an audience. Livo and Rietz (1986) pointed out that even becoming more conscious of not mixing up a story's sense of time can help an audience to ease into a story. This cycle of telling the story, receiving responses, and adapting the story continues for the duration of each tale. Therefore a means of being able to identify the physical responses displayed by an audience is useful for the storyteller. The indicators identified in the current study provide storytellers with a means to measure audience engagement in the stories that they share.

Overall, observation of the child participants during the course of the current research project and later analysis of the visual data, led to the identification of five clusters of Engagement Indicators. By using open coding through the facilitation of NVivo, 267 pages of transcript were critically analysed to reveal 95 codes or categories as they became relevant to the material being analysed. The full list of Indicators is provided in Appendix 4. These free nodes are indications that listeners are engaging with storytelling in some way. When every transcript had been coded, these free codes were grouped into 24 common themes, or tree nodes. Using the queries and models functions in NVivo, prominent or frequently occurring Indicators of Engagement were identified and further grouped in to the five Clusters of Engagement, the five areas of responses that listeners in the current study most consistently demonstrated as they listened to stories.[11] Only the five most frequently occurring Indicators within each Cluster were subjected to further scrutiny using the query function in NVivo. It is these 25 Indicators of Engagement, within the five Clusters of Engagement that are the focus of the following two chapters. Two broad processes, called here 'strands', were discerned to be at work in the process of the children's developing engagement with storytelling: one, based on the individual participant's reactions, and the second invoking a relational aspect. The chapter now turns to the first three Clusters of Engagement that were grouped together in what has been identified as the Individual Familiarisation strand.

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[11] For a description of the participants refer to Table 3.1: Research Participants in Chapter 3.

4.1   Indicators of Engagement as Individual Familiarisation

Chapter 4 examines the three engagement clusters that have been grouped together in colour in the "Individual Familiarisation" strand in Figure 4.1 below. The responses within these three clusters occur on an individual basis as listeners learn to internalise the storytelling experience. These three clusters occurred in a lineal development. That is, **Entering the story realm cluster** occurred when listeners are given the tools and the invitation to enable them to enter into the story realm. When listeners have gained the ability to enter the story realm they then become **Collaborative listeners** who discover that storytelling is a two-way activity that relies on the participation of the listener to bring enjoyment/meaning to the story. When these two clusters have occurred, and if other favourable factors are present, then the **Trancelike State Engagement** may take place. The favourable conditions required for the Trancelike State will be discussed later in the chapter.

The second strand, the "Relational Effects" strand is discussed in Chapter 5. This strand occurs as listeners derive personal meaning from stories that they then express to others, whether to the storyteller or other audience members. At the same time listeners display more positive audience behaviour and a greater empathy and respect for their fellow listeners.

The analysis of the engagement indicators showed that distinct patterns emerge as listeners hear a series of stories. If behaviours or responses differed from expected patterns, those divergent elements were queried to determine if there are identifiable factors that impacted on the responses of listeners during the storytelling project.

The chapter now turns to the first three clusters as depicted in Figure 4.1, namely **Entering the Story Realm Engagement**, **Collaborative Engagement** and **Trancelike State Engagement**. Each of the principal indicators of engagement will be discussed for the three classes that took part in the storytelling research project. Tables present the indicator name alphabetically in each cluster together with a description of each of the indicators and the total number of occurrences for the storytelling research project. Tables that number of indicators in each cluster for individual classes are also presented. Three dimensional models that illustrate each of the clusters for each class are also presented as a visual representation of the listeners' responses to the stories that they heard. Extracts of transcripts of storytelling sessions are presented in boxes

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and are shaded in pink. Extracts of field notes are also presented in boxes and are shaded in blue.

Figure 4.1
The Engagement with storytelling process: highlighting in colour -
The Individual Familiarisation strand
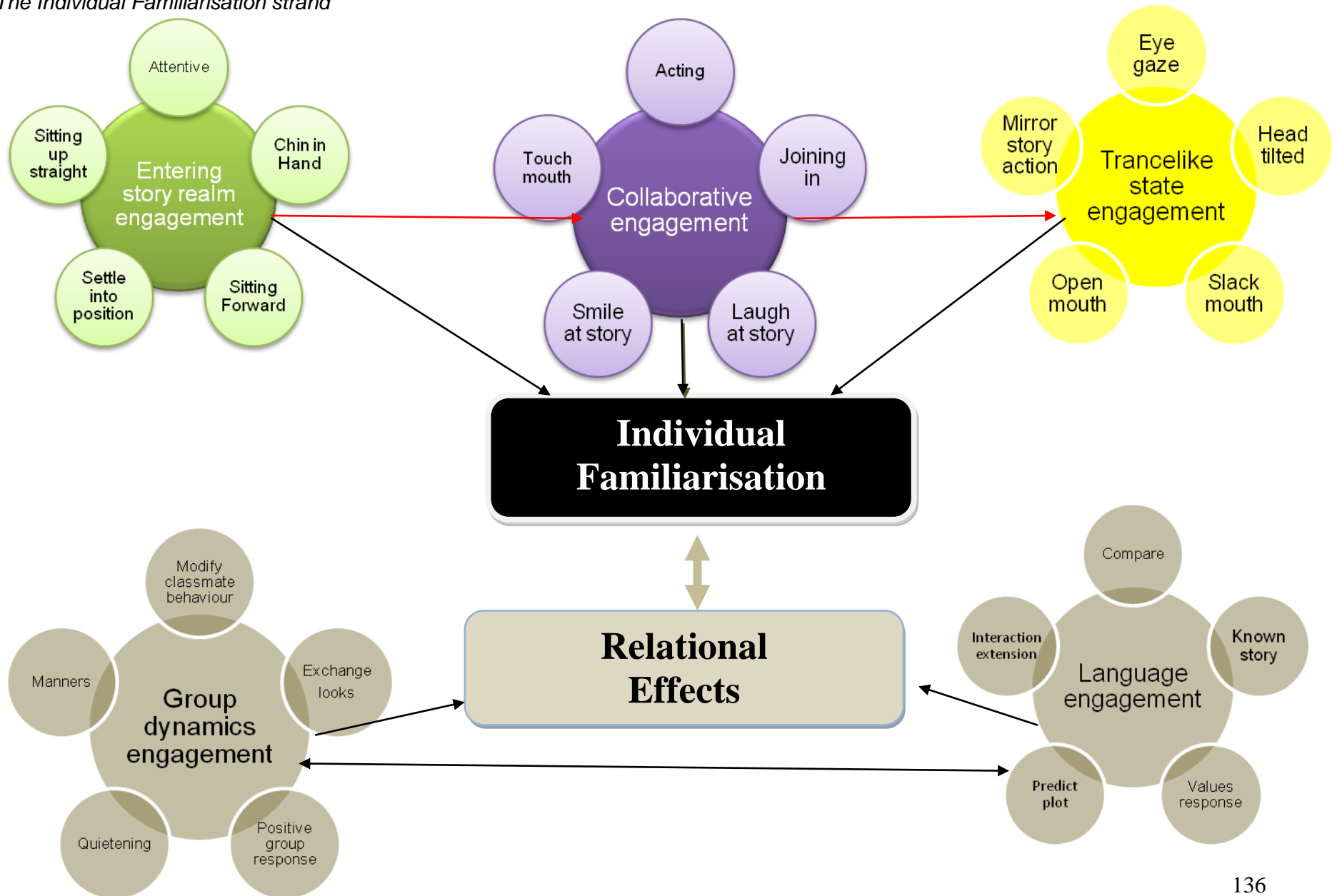
Figure 4.1 is a representation of the principal indicators that manifested frequently and in thematic clusters in the Individual Familiarisation strand in the current study and subsequently established a clear illustration of what constitutes 'engagement' with story. It is not an exhaustive list of indicators that were observed in the current study. A complete list of indicators (coding nodes) is provided as Appendix 4. What follows is an explanation of the clusters of principal Indicators of Engagement and corresponding evidence derived from the research data. As shown below, for the purposes of clarification each week of the storytelling project is represented by a different colour in all tables: Week One, yellow; Week Two, pink; Week Four, purple; and Week Six, green. [12]

Week One	Yellow
Week Two	Pink
Week Four	Purple
Week Six	Green

4.2   Entering Story Realm Engagement cluster

It is common within different cultures for the storytelling event to commence with a common chant or opening. In storytelling events in the Caribbean for example, the start of the session is announced by the storyteller calling "CRICK". The audience responds with "CRACK" and the story begins. In western storytelling circles, the phrase "Once upon a time" is perhaps the best well-known opening for a story, but there are others that are common and can welcome listeners into the story realm. As listeners become accustomed to these common openings to storytelling they are able to determine when a story has commences as opposed to the storyteller's introductory banter. Examples of story openings used in the research project are provided in Figure 4.2 below.

The ability of a storyteller to convey a story convincingly and with enthusiasm is crucial in engaging a listener in a story. Recognising when a story is about to begin is an essential element in entering the story realm and beginning to engage with a story. As

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[12] NVivo 9 will allow for user colour selection in column charts but applies its own colour selection to 3D column charts which are utilised in this thesis. It should also be noted that NVivo 9 does not allow for modification of intervals in charts and appears to apply uneven intervals across charts.

stories were introduced with a wide variety of lines other than the traditional "once upon a time" as shown above, the children developed other ways of identifying the start of a story. Familiarity with my personal style of storytelling assisted the listeners in identifying when a story had commenced. I sat up straighter as I began each story, my pauses and pace of speech was more measured as I spoke the opening lines and the volume of my speech was raised slightly. I also discovered after listening to the videos for many hours that I lower the pitch of my voice when beginning a story to differentiate it from conversational speech. As each class became more familiar with my storytelling style they began to identify and anticipate certain body language, verbal directives or changes in voice pitch that indicated that a story was commencing. This recognition of the start of a story was measured through several Indicators of Engagement that will be discussed in the present section.

Figure 4.2 *Story openings from transcripts*

KG, Week Five

There was once a little old woman and a little old man

Transcript from KG "The gingerbread man" Week Five

3G, Week Six

This is one of my favourite stories, so I thought I would tell it to you.

6G, Week Two

Once, when wishing still helped,

There was a king.

3G Week Four

I've heard tell, that when the world was much, much younger than it is now

The storyteller's apparent eagerness to also enter into the world of the story has an influence on an audience's willingness to enter into the story realm. As has been discussed previously in the thesis, storytelling is a cyclical activity. The teller relates the story, receives feedback from the audience, adjusts the telling accordingly (by altering the pace, adding more detail, repeating a well-received refrain or similar), receives audience feedback, adjusts the telling and so on. When the feedback from an audience is positive as indicated by smiles, laughter or positive body language and the like, a

storyteller will enhance those well-received elements in a story and feel confident in moving on with the tale. As Georges (1979) points out the storyteller responds to their emotions as they relate the story and constantly adjusts the telling accordingly. The audience also receives feedback from the obvious enjoyment and involvement that the storyteller is experiencing in telling the story and the audience enjoyment is also enhanced.

Figure 4.3 *Entering story realm engagement cluster*
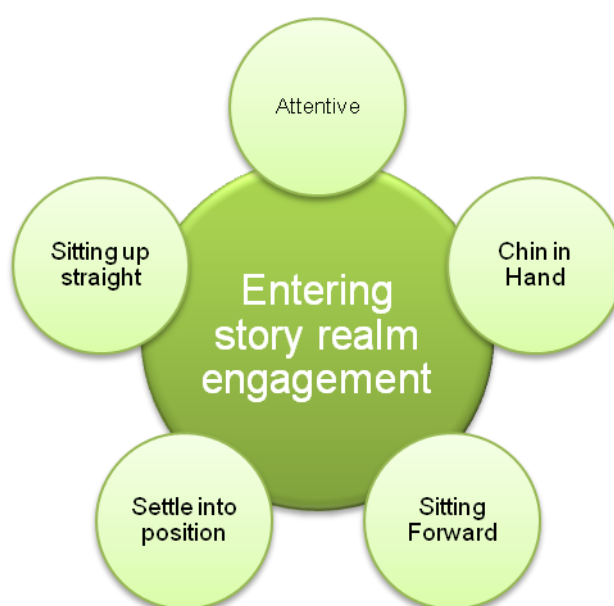
As they were exposed to an increasing variety of stories, the participants, across all three grades, began to be able to discern when the actual story had commenced. They were able to differentiate between the introductory conversation between me (the teller) and the class, and the beginning of the actual story. The influential work of Abrahamson (1998), Bauman (1986) and McWilliams (1998) regarding the components necessary for listeners to Enter the Story Realm, as discussed in Chapter 2, were considered when determining what behaviours should be coded and therefore what indicators should be established for the current study. These, along with behaviours that may not have been previously flagged were noted and coded in NVivo. The most frequent physical behaviours associated with this were taken as key indicators. There were five indicators that most clearly illustrated the willingness and ability to enter into the world of the story, the 'story realm' as listed in Table 4.4 below. The indicators are listed alphabetically with their accompanying coding description and the number of instances of the indicator observed in the storytelling project. By far the most commonly displayed indicator of entering the story realm was attentiveness characterised by an

alert expression. Other important responses were when children held their chin in their hand and leaned forward. The forward or upright positioning of their seated bodies also frequently indicated that the children were Entering the Story Realm.

Table 4.4 *Principal Entering Story Realm Engagement indicators*

Entering Story Realm Engagement indicator	Coding description	Number of instances
Attentive	Listener gives teller their full attention	525
Chin in hand	Listener deliberately places chin in hand while looking at the teller	152
Settle into position	Listener finds a more comfortable way to sit on floor	122
Sitting forward	Listener moves their body forward as they listen to the story	102
Sitting up straight	Listener straightens back and lifts head	72

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As the storytelling sessions progressed the children displayed a growing eagerness to Enter into the Story Realm. They no longer displayed unsettled behaviour for long periods of time at the beginning of a session or between stories and spent less time in physically settling into the storytelling space. The students displayed attentive behaviour quicker in facing towards me, not bringing items to the storytelling area that they could fiddle with and engaging only very briefly with their peers in non-storytelling related conversations. Their introductory questions to me were increasingly solely about the stories they had already heard, about other storytelling sessions I may have conducted with other classes in the school, or about what the current session with them would involve. Each of the three classes involved in the storytelling project will now be discussed in relation to their indicators of Entering the Story Realm. As will be shown, each class exhibited a different pattern of Entering the Story Realm. The oldest group, 6G, showed how quickly they began to display indicators of Entering the Story Realm when they discovered that storytelling was going to be an enjoyable activity and

perhaps more importantly for this class, one that would require no assessment or classroom work for them.

4.2.1   Sixth Grade (6G)

Table 4.5 *Table showing occurrences of principal Entering Story Realm Engagement Indicators for 6G*

Storytelling Week	Attentive	Chin in hand	Settle into position	Sitting forward	Sitting up straight	Total cluster indicators
Week One	0	0	0	0	0	0
Week Two	42	19	2	4	7	74
Week Four	59	15	8	3	6	91
Week Six	80	18	12	7	3	120

There were no indicators of Sixth Grade (6G) Entering the Story Realm or recognising the beginning of a story noted in the Field notes for Week One. (As mentioned previously there was no recording of this session due to equipment failure but extensive Field notes were captured to compensate for this.) By Week Six however there were 20 indicators of Entering the Story Realm within two minutes of the first story commencing. More interesting for this class however was their growing intolerance of classmates not settling into the story quickly. Within two minutes of the tale "The fairy crane" (Sakade, 1964) commencing the following exchange took place between classmates when Rosie returned to the classroom after the story had begun.

Figure 4.6 *Extract from transcript showing eagerness to Enter Story Realm for 6G*

Are we still waiting on anyone else? - To T6G

Teacher: "Is [Gwen] here?

Several students chorus no.

Is she coming [Rosie]? - T6G

Rosie nods

Here she is - Billy

Gwen then enters class, and moves with hesitation to the circle.

Come on, don't dawdle - Tony

Hurry up. - Edmund

Gwen sits at back of group behind Ophelia

Extract from Transcript Week Six in 6G

This extract highlights that for listeners in 6G storytelling had been recognised as an enjoyable experience and they were keen to settle in and Enter the Story Realm. This was a significant breakthrough for this particular class. As has been noted several times previously 6G were the 'challenge' class. They were described by their own teacher as 'horrible' and "rude and unco-operative" and I made a note following my first session with them that they would be a challenge based on their poor audience behaviour. The Assistant Principal, aware of their reputation as the most poorly behaved class in the school, made the extraordinary decision to include them in the research project based on her own interest in seeing what effect a sustained programme of storytelling would have on their behaviour.

The significant point for me in the extract above is that from the very first session, Tony was identified as the ringleader of the class. His **attentiveness** and intent to listen to the story and corresponding correction of his classmate's inappropriate audience behaviour during the latter sessions of the storytelling project was indicative of his developing engagement with storytelling. Figure 4.7 below charts the increase in **attentiveness, settle into position** and **sitting forward** shown by 6G across the entire storytelling project. **Sitting up straight** actually declined as the project continued as 6G became more relaxed as they Entered the Story Realm. The **chin in hand** indicator remained relatively constant across the project for this class.

Figure 4.7 *3-D Chart showing principal Entering Story Realm Engagement Indicators for 6G*
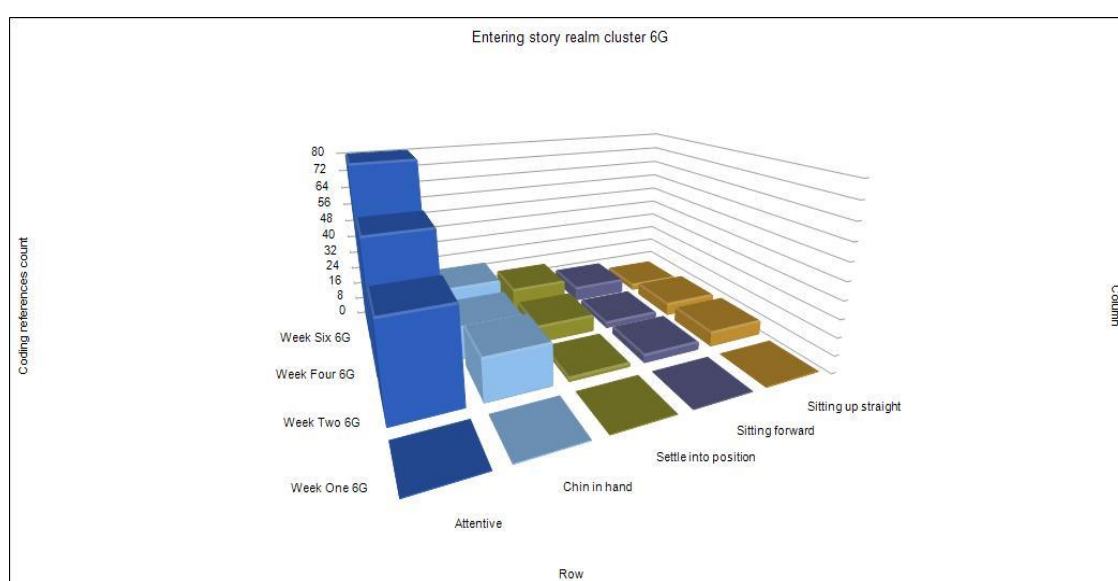
The 'challenge' in sharing stories with 6G was amply rewarded. By Week Six they were a class who were eager to listen to stories, to comment about them honestly and display their individual responses openly. They developed from a class who greeted me in Week One with crossed arms, bodies slumped back in their seats, scowls on their faces and an unwillingness to look at me, to a class who were eager to Enter the Story Realm, who urged 'dawdlers' to move into the storytelling space quickly and were exceptionally *attentive*. Similarly the third grade class showed a striking development in Entering the Story Realm.

4.2.2 Third Grade (3G)

Table 4.8 *Table showing occurrences of principal Entering Story Realm Engagement Indicators for 3G*

Storytelling Week	Attentive	Chin in hand	Settle into position	Sitting forward	Sitting up straight	Total cluster indicator
Week One	41	13	10	0	2	66
Week Two	58	11	10	0	3	82
Week Four	31	15	5	2	15	68
Week Six	65	36	15	8	16	140

There were several instances of indicators of Entering the Story Realm with 3G in the initial session but only from a few children and sporadically. In the first story of the project, only three children were immediately *attentive* as the session commenced. One child *sat up straight* as the story commenced and five children put their *chin in their hand*. As the session continued other children became *attentive* throughout the telling of the stories but may only have remained *attentive* for a short period of time, hence the high incidence of the *attentive* indicator in the first session.

There was a marked increase in indicators of Entering the Story Realm by Week Six. Within the first two minutes of "The fairy crane" commencing, there were 26 occurrences of Entering the Story Realm across the whole scope of indicators. In the final storytelling session, 3G immediately recognised when a story had commenced and were almost universally willing to Enter the Story Realm. Each principal indicator in the Entering Story Realm cluster increased in frequency across the storytelling project as illustrated in Figure 4.9 below.

Figure 4.9 *3-D Chart showing principal Entering Story Realm Engagement Indicators for 3G*
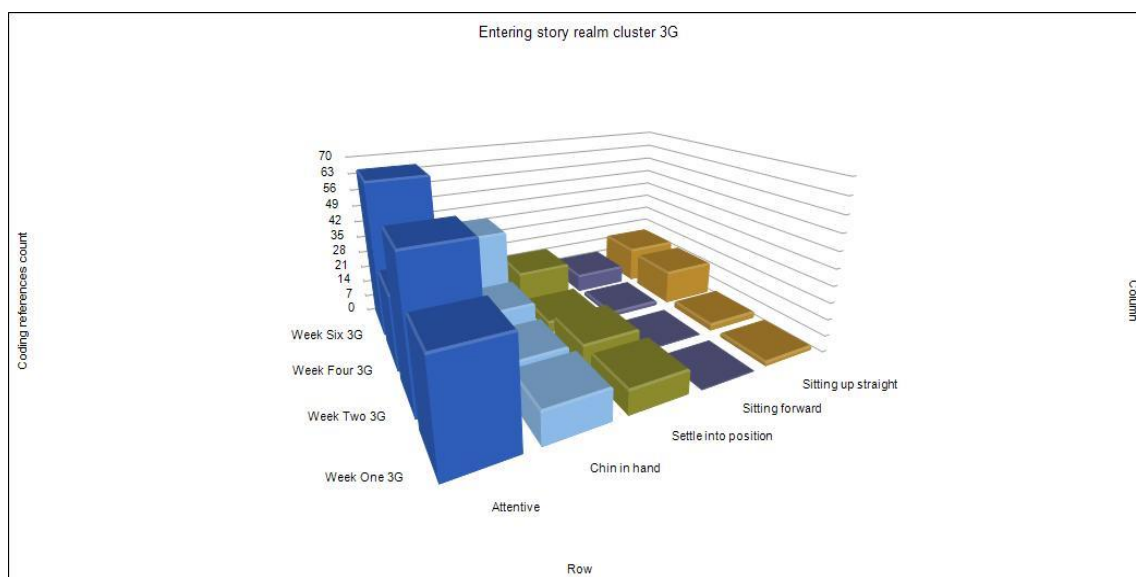
Listeners such as Bessie were so determined to Re-enter the Story Realm when distractions occurred that she displayed several indicators together. This was noted more in Week Six in several listeners than in any other storytelling session for this class. 3G had recognised the enjoyable nature of storytelling and were determined to embrace their role as story listeners. Bessie's determination to Re-enter the Story Realm during the telling of the "Fairy Crane" is illustrated in Figure 4.10 below.

Figure 4.10 *Extract from transcript illustrating determination to Re-enter Story Realm in 3G*

And so the hunter let her in,
Stop being annoying - Bessie to Robert
and she never left. He became her husband…
Whoa – Perry (drawn out sound)
…and she became his devoted wife.
Demoted? – Robert
Devoted – Bruce
She looked after him very, very well,
What does devoted mean? – Bruce quietly
Loved - Perry
but they didn't have much money,
Bessie looks at teller
Bessie puts chin in hand

In the extract above, Bessie displayed the combination of *attentive*, *chin in hand* and *sitting forward* in a deliberate attempt to Re-enter the Story Realm. It became evident as the video footage for 3G was viewed that there were always indicators for Entering or re-entering the Story Realm following any form of distraction. By the sixth week of storytelling 3G had certainly established for themselves that storytelling was a worthwhile experience that they were keen to become engaged with. Meanwhile the kindergarten class were 'story-ready' and Entered the Story Realm with facility, although they too exhibited a growing capacity for Entering the Story Realm.

4.2.3   Kindergarten Grade (KG)

Table 4.11 *Table showing occurrences of principal Entering Story Realm Engagement indicators for KG*

Storytelling Week	Attentive	Chin in hand	Settle into position	Sitting forward	Sitting up straight	Total cluster indicators
Week One	37	3	9	30	1	80
Week Two	17	1	7	2	5	32
Week Four	43	8	16	17	4	88
Week Six	52	13	28	29	10	132

At the Information session with participating teachers at the beginning of the research the teacher of Kindergarten Grade (KG) reported that her class "loved stories" but that they would gain a lot from hearing a 'real storyteller'. It was anticipated therefore that due to this prior experience with story this group would readily Enter the Story Realm quickly. In Week One as soon as I mentioned that I was in their class to tell stories two children *settled into position*. Within the first two minutes of the first story there were eleven indicators of Entering the Story Realm displayed. The occurrences of Entering the Story Realm indicators are surprisingly high in Week One because while they were eager to hear the stories listeners in KG were easily distracted. They therefore displayed a high number of indicators in this cluster as they repeatedly attempted to Re-enter the Story Realm.

In Week Two listeners in KG were fascinated by the drawing story of "The black cat" (Pellowski, 1984a) and sustained their *attention* throughout this story. The sheer

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mayhem of the highly interactive story of "How to make a small house into a large one" (Bauer,1993) ensured the enthusiastic engagement of listeners in KG but prevented many opportunities to put their **chin in their hand** for example. These two factors account for the dramatic drop in indicators for the Entering Story Realm cluster in Week Two. There was a noticeable increase in indicators of quickly Entering the Story Realm as the research progressed, illustrated in Figure 4.12 below.

Figure 4.12 *Chart showing principal Entering Story Realm Engagement Indicators for KG*
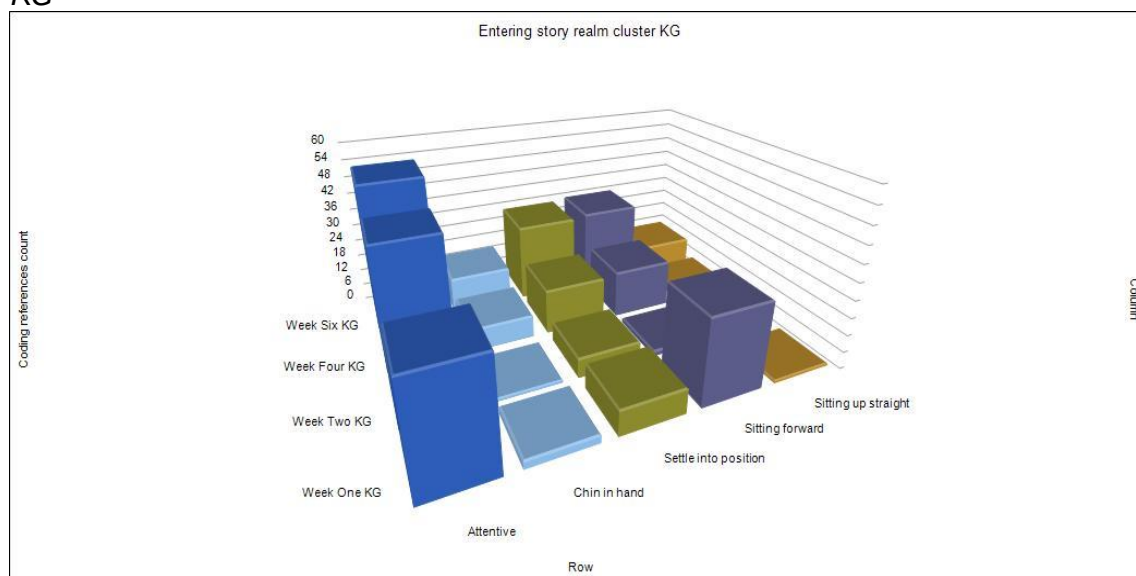
In the first story of Week Six there were eight Entering Story Realm indicators following my initial greeting. There were a further 25 indicators within the first two minutes of the initial story "The wild bird" across the entire Entering Story Realm Engagement cluster. This final session contained a total of 132 indicators of the Entering Story Realm cluster which occurred at the beginning of each of the three stories shared in this session.

Students **sat forward** or **sat up straighter** often during the storytelling project, particularly following a distracting event such as someone entering the room. When stories had commenced KG remained very still and displayed a number of indicators combined to show that they were immersing themselves in the world of the story as highlighted in Figure 4.13 below.

Figure 4.13 *Extract from transcript showing several indicators grouped together after distraction for KG*

And there must have been quite a bit of rain

around near where the old man and the old woman lived, because the pond was full

of water. And in the pond full of water, there were always some fish swimming along.

Yeah there's always fish - Mike

Can you draw fish? – Odette to Ray

She's a good drawer – Ray nodding his head enthusiastically

Ray smiles

Odette smiles

Stella smiles

Bill has mouth open

18.25

Well this was such a lovely pond,

Odette looks at teller

Marcel sits up straight

Stella puts thumb in mouth

with so many fish in it that two men decided they would camp down near the pond.

Marcel puts chin in hand

Bill sits forward

Transcript of extract from "The wild bird" Week six for KG

The extract above highlights Marcel's determination to Re-enter the Story Realm following the ***talking over text*** by Mike, Ray and Odette. Within a few seconds Marcel ***sat up straight*** and put his ***chin in his hand***. Stella was one of the few children who indicated her determination to enter or Re-enter the Story Realm by firmly putting her ***thumb in her mouth***. For other children in the storytelling project, even in Sixth Grade, placing the ***thumb in the mouth*** was an indicator of total immersion in the story and was often accompanied by Trancelike engagement indicators.

4.2.4 Outcome of Entering the Story Realm indicators: Defining story exit indicators

Analysis of the video data revealed that each listener displayed different behaviour or posture as they each adopted their own unique process of 'settling in' to the storytelling experience by Entering into the Story Realm. There was evidence of a change in body language as the opening sentences of a story were uttered. For some it was determinedly finding a comfortable sitting posture, others, such as Stella in the Kindergarten Grade deliberately put their thumb in their mouth or touched their lower face and others visibly relaxed and smiled. For all listeners a willingness to Enter the Story Realm was accompanied by looking at me within the first few minutes of a story. It was an acknowledgement of a mutual experience about to begin as the story was shared.

The importance of giving the audience 'permission' to enter and leave the story realm through the use of opening and closing patterns became evident as listeners more rapidly settled into stories as they recognised the actual beginning of a story. Examples of story openings used in the storytelling project were provided in Figure 4.2. Of equal importance is the ability to leave the story realm and reconnect with the everyday. Story exit indicators such as ***wriggling***, ***stretching*** or ***chatting to classmate*** that demonstrated recognition of the end of a story were more frequent as the storytelling project continued. For all groups the closing of a story signalled that they could engage verbally with classmates and me. For KG these indicators were physically moving around, having been still for the entire story and making comments about the story or adding to it. An example of this was displayed at the end of the story of "The Snooks family" (Wiiliams, 1983).

Figure 4.14 *Extract from transcript showing recognition of story endings in KG*

And do you know, I don't know if they ever got to sleep that night, because I don't think they ever worked out how to blow out that candle.

They could take it to the baby and she could work it out – Ray

Extension of story as baby is never mentioned in this version

How about you spit on it - Ray

Extract from transcript of "The Snooks family" Week Six for KG

3G displayed their recognition of story endings by *wriggling*, *looking at classmates*, *smiling* or *applauding*. For several children in this group the opportunity to 'relive' scenes from stories was very important, as though they were reluctant to leave the story realm. Other students in 3G waited until they were certain a story had finished before asking questions about it or expressing their comprehension.

6G allowed themselves on several occasions to reflect on a story before responding to it. For students who were in the so-called 'worst class' in the school this was a significant change in behaviour and revealed one of the important strands of a developing engagement with storytelling; the ability to contemplate and reflect on the meaning of a story. This change in behaviour was most pronounced in their collective response to the conclusion of "The fairy crane" highlighted in Figure 4.15 below.

Figure 4.15 *Extract from transcript showing responses to story endings for 6G*

She stepped back out of the door, opened her arms, and turned into a beautiful crane.

She flew away

Rosie turns to looks at Rian

Clarissa puts chin in hands

and he never saw her again.

1.41

Reflective pause

1.41. 13

Can we have it again? - Billy

Tony claps

Sylvia claps

Clarissa claps

Rosie claps

Edmund claps

Roger claps

Rachel claps

Billy claps

Can we have it again - Billy

That's a sad story – Rachel

Got what he deserved – Tony

Leave several seconds pause for other comments, but 6G unusually quiet.

The period of reflection depicted above was significant for 6G. Initially they were a very vocal class in between stories therefore this universal silence from all of the listeners was indicative of their immersion in this particular story; of being present in the story realm. As Kindergarten Grade, Third Grade and Sixth Grade became accustomed to Entering the Story Realm another set of indicators began to emerge. This cluster of indicators was labelled as **Collaborative Engagement** and is discussed in the following section.

4.3   Collaborative engagement

Figure 4.16 *Collaborative Engagement cluster*

The **Collaborative Engagement** indicators were developed from Sipe's term of "performative engagement" (Sipe, 2002) that occurred as children became active participants in a story sharing experience. While Sipe's work examined children's responses to story read-aloud experiences it was evident that many of his labelled responses also apply to the storytelling experience. Sipe identified five responses from children during his research that indicated that children were actively engaging with the stories that were read to them. These responses are listed here with my adaptive form indicated in brackets: dramatising the actions expressed in the story (acting); talking back (address character directly); critiquing/controlling (commenting about story detail

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and talking over text); inserting oneself or friends into the story (inserting self into story); and taking over.

However, while Sipe's terms effectively described the responses of children to the stories that were read to them a more complex pattern of behaviour occurs during a storytelling event. As described previously in this chapter storytelling is a cyclical activity. When listeners have willingly entered the story realm they also respond to the storyteller as the tale unfolds. Different facial expressions, body gestures and vocal responses indicate the reactions of listeners to the events in a story. The storyteller recognises these responses and adapts the story accordingly, what is commonly known in storytelling circles as 'reading the audience.' This pattern of telling, response, adaptation and telling continues until the conclusion of the story. This pattern is clearly a collaborative effort between the storyteller and the listener/s. Therefore this engagement cluster was labelled the Collaborative Engagement cluster rather than the active participation cluster as suggested by Sipe's work.

While all of Sipe's responses with the exception of 'taking over' found equivalents in my additional Collaborative Engagement indicators as listed in Table 4.18 below, only one, "dramatising the actions expressed in the story" (Acting) had significant occurrences to be included in the principal Collaborative Engagement cluster as listed in Table 4.17 below. The table of Principal Collaborative Engagement indicators shows a broad array of phenomenological indicators not mentioned in Sipe's work.

Table 4.17 *Principal Collaborative Engagement indicators*

Principal Collaborative Engagement indicator	Coding description	Number of instances
Acting	Extend action as suggested by story detail to a physical interpretation	276
Joining in	Listener spontaneously joins in refrain or repetitive phrase, either verbally or through action	334
Laugh at story	Listener laughs out loud at an action in the story	248
Smile at story	Listener smiles in response to event in the story	485
Touch mouth	Listener subconsciously places fingers on or in mouth as listens to a story	234

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The indicators listed in Table 4.17 are the most significant and more frequent indicators in this Collaborative Engagement cluster and it will be these principal indicators that this section will focus on. However, there were actually 21 indicators in this cluster that demonstrated that listeners were collaborating in a story. Other indicators in this cluster are listed in Table 4.18 below. Talking over text – usually uttering one word – was the most frequent indicator in this subgroup.

Table 4.18 *Additional Collaborative Engagement Indicators*

Additional Collaborative Engagement indicator	Coding description	Number of instances
Address character directly	Spontaneous verbal or non-verbal response to a character in the story eg, reaction to an action or a word, or as a warning to the character	22
Applause - spontaneous	Listener claps hands	31
Classmates discuss topic	Classmates discuss a topic that occurs in the story	96
Commenting about story detail	Unsolicited comment about a detail in the story	154
Detail request	Listener requests more details or clarification of story	65
Additional Collaborative Engagement indicator	**Coding description**	**Number of instances**
Frown - story	Listener frowns in response to something in story	46
Gasp	Listener gasps in direct response to the story	15
Inserting self into story	Listener retells the story, placing themselves within the action	27
Kneeling up	Kneeling up in enthusiastic response to story	53
Nod head	Nod head in response to an event in the story	16

Perceived personal ownership of story	Listener doesn't want to share interactive strands of story with classmates	6
Shakes head	Listener shakes head to demonstrate a response to event in story. It may be disbelief, disapproval or shock.	26
Surprised look	Listener uses a facial expression indicating surprise or puzzlement at a detail in the story	35
Talking over text	Listener responds verbally to events in the story, usually only one word.	216
Thumb in mouth	Listener places thumb in mouth	27
Worried or sad look	Listener appears to be concerned by action of story	24

In the following section provides an account of the five principal Collaborative Engagement indicators as they occurred in the participating classes, beginning with Sixth Grade.

4.3.1   Sixth Grade (6G)

Table 4.19 *Table showing occurrences of principal Collaborative Engagement indicators for 6G*

Storytelling Week	Acting	Joining in	Laugh at story	Smile at story	Touching mouth	Total cluster indicators
Week One	0	6	0	0	0	6
Week Two	8	11	13	26	8	66
Week Four	8	18	7	13	15	61
Week Six	37	44	21	70	29	201

There were no reported instances in the Field notes of *Acting* in Week One for 6G and nor would it have been expected. As mentioned in Chapter Four this class were seated

at their individual desks in the first two sessions of the storytelling project, at the teacher's request:"You can control them better when they're sitting apart from each other." (J. Mundy-Taylor, Field notes. July 21, 2004.) While this seating arrangement may be beneficial for classroom management it has a significant detrimental effect on the audience experience and will be discussed further in the group dynamics engagement section of Chapter 5.

There was also a reported equipment failure in the first session resulting in only observations in the Field notes being available for week One. 6G fidgeted with items on their desks and were very vocal throughout each of the two stories in this first session. There were few *smiles* during either of the two stories and no *laughter* in response to either story. The Field notes did report however that several students *joined in* the later refrains in the story of "The tailor" (Schimmel 1982). The Collaborative Engagement cluster increased in instances across the storytelling project, with all principal indicators showing a significant increase by Week Six, as illustrated in Figure 4.20 below.

Figure 4.20 *Chart showing increase in principal Collaborative Engagement Indicators for 6G*
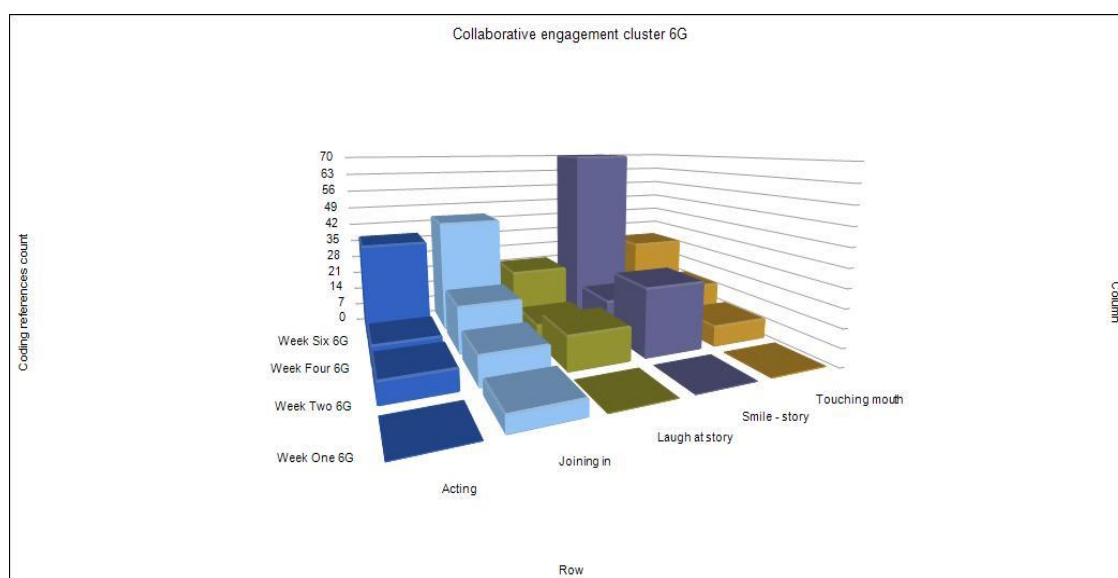
Week Four shows a comparative dip in the indicators of *acting* and *laugh at story*. This may be accounted for by story selection. The previous session, that is, Week Three which was conducted for each of the three classes but not transcribed or coded as discussed in Chapter 3, consisted solely of stories devoid of any props, which appeared to intrigue 6G who asked numerous questions and often required clarification

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of strands of the stories. When the session in Week Four included two more stories without props, "Pot cook" (Zezulkova, 2005) and "How Frog lost his tail" (Cooper, Collins & Saxby,1994) listeners in 6G were very attentive and did not respond by **acting** in the few opportunities that the stories provided but rather listened in a much quieter manner. The more exuberant indicators of **joining in** and **laugh at story** occurred during the story of "Little Half-chick" (Little Half-Chick, 1962) during which several students in 6G **joined in** with the refrain of "Help you indeed?" and **laughed** at the outrageous accent of the French chef.

Another significant factor in the storytelling session of Week Three was the adoption of what has been identified in this thesis as the Chambers/Harley method of preparing and presenting stories. This method will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter but suffice it to say here that presenting the stories in this way captured the attention of listeners in 6G. Their comprehension of stories, as evidenced by the calibre of the questions they asked and the discussions they carried out, improved and led to the appearance of the next engagement cluster of the Trancelike State. In Week Four 6G began to display a significant increase in Trancelike State indicators which appear to occur as a replacement for Collaborative Engagement indicators. For example when listeners have their mouths ajar, termed **slack mouth,** they no longer **touch their mouths**, **laugh at the story** or even **smile**. The Trancelike State will be discussed in much greater detail in the following section.

By Week Six there was a much higher incidence of Collaboration. There were 37 occurrences of **acting**, particularly in the story "The fairy crane." 6G responded very positively to this highly descriptive story. They mimicked actions of the flight of the bird, curled their bodies up following descriptions of the snow surrounding the cottage and several students **acted** weaving motions in the sections of the story relating to a loom. The third story in this session was the Scottish folktale of "The Selkie girl" (Cooper, 1986) which relied on song to give it atmosphere. Several students in 6G swayed their bodies in response to the song and **acted** sound effects during dramatic events in the story.

Also noticeable in this storytelling session was the frequent occurrence of **joining in**. There were 44 incidents of listeners spontaneously joining in with a story in this session. These **joining in** incidents had grown steadily over the course of the storytelling project for 6G as they learned that it was acceptable to interact in a story in

this way and that it heightened their enjoyment of the story to actively participate in it. This reflects Barton's statement that:

> Far from being passive, the listener is extremely busy participating in the recreation of that story; for a successful listener needs to be a storyteller too. And this becomes an important reason for presenting stories out loud to children; it helps them to comprehend the role they are expected to play in the story game. (Barton, 1986, p. 9)

What Barton has described above is the Collaborative Engagement cluster of the storytelling process. **Joining in** for 6G changed from six instances of tentative adlibbing in "The tailor" in Week One, to **predicting** (correctly) the dialogue of a story character in Week Four and to the high level of interaction and **joining in** already detailed above in Week Six. This high level of Collaboration, of being willing to 'play the story game', was noteworthy for students of this age. Previous experience of storytelling with this age group has shown me that they are reluctant to respond physically to stories for fear of what their classmates will think, particularly in 'one-off' events. The willingness of students in 6G to participate so actively in the stories showed a high level of feeling safe in the storytelling experience and a preparedness to immerse themselves in the story.

Laughter, the third main indicator of Collaborative Engagement, was a strong indicator that the listeners felt comfortable in the storytelling environment and were able to express their responses to the stories. It also indicated a growing familiarity with story plots and characterisations with a subsequent appreciation of how humour is conveyed in stories. As mentioned above 6G did not **laugh** at all in the initial storytelling session. As with the **joining in** indicator, incidences of **laughing at a story** built up in 6G as the storytelling project continued. In Week Four there were seven instances of laughter which increased to 21 in Week Six. It should be noted here that a distinction was made when observing the participants of laughter at a story and laughter as a response to audience conversation. Therefore it was the phenomenon of laughing at a story that increased in frequency for 6G as the storytelling project continued.

Laughing also indicated a growing sophistication of appreciating humour in stories. Initially for 6G the laughter was prompted by funny voices or very dramatic events such as throwing the chicken out of the palace window in the story "The little half-chick" in

Week Four. By Week Six, 6G had developed a sense of the ridiculous and laughed often at the outrageous antics of the Snooks Family.

Smiling at a story was a highly interesting indicator to observe in 6G. Initially *smiling* occurred in 6G accompanied by looks at other classmates. Of the 26 occurrences in Week Two half of them happened after they looked at a classmate, rather than *smiling* directly at me. Three other *smiles* occurred in relation to a comment made outside of the actual story. That is, they were *smiling* at the reaction of fellow classmates rather than their own responses to stories. By Week Six there were 70 instances of *smiling*. This followed interesting behaviour at the beginning of the session. My notes from that session state that the teacher had already moved the class to the designated storytelling area and was yelling at the class to move in together and sit up. As I entered the classroom many of the students were still lazing on the floor and the teacher's volume was increasing. She apologised to me for what a "horrible class they are – rude and uncooperative." (J. Mundy-Taylor, Transcript 6G Week Six, September 13, 2004).

Once I seated myself in the storytelling chair however, a dramatic change came over the class. They became attentive and our initial chat in which we recapped what had happened previously was reported in the field notes for the day as "quiet and conversational". The majority of the class were keen to commence the storytelling as demonstrated by Billy requesting that I instruct Frank to be quiet (Sense of Story: Element Seven). I began to recap stories told in previous sessions. The class very tentatively offered story titles they recalled until I laughed at Roger's recollection of the very first story told in the project. My laughter re-established the rapport built up in previous sessions and appeared to give the class permission to interact with me in an enjoyable and relaxed manner. Our subsequent recap of stories prompted laughter and smiles and the class became united in a common experience. Even when Sylvia (the 'othered' girl in 6G discussed in the following chapter) entered the group there was only minimal disruption as some of the boys moved away from her but the story recollections continued.

This rapport was again disturbed however when the teacher reprimanded one of the students. I was unaware of any disruption by this student but the reprimand had a dramatic, immediate impact on the class, as shown below in Figure 4.21.

Figure 4.21 *Extract from transcript showing change in body language in 6G*

T6G [Without any eye-contact from me. I had been unaware of any disruption, and none appeared to be disturbing class]

[Boys name, boy's name, boy's name]. Move back into the circle and close your mouth. No-one wants to hear you carrying on every single day." – T6G

(Student doesn't move, **but dramatic change in students' body language here – no longer relaxed, some droop shoulders, and some sit up straighter. Many stop eye-contact with me.)**

Extract from transcript Week Six for 6G

The body language of the class continued to be tense until I smiled at a relevant comment by Tony during the introduction to the first story, see Figure 4.22 below.

Figure 4.22 *Extract from transcript showing effect of smiling on rapport for 6G*

It's called the "Fairy Crane", the "Crane Wife", the "Repaying Crane", and its Japanese name is "Tsuru no On-gaeshi."

Is that like Shusi?- Tony

Several students laugh.

Teller smiles

6G body language relaxes a little.

Extract from transcript of "The fairy crane" Week Six for 6G

The high incidence of *smiles* in this session that commenced with such a negative tone is evidence of the enjoyment that 6G knew could be derived from storytelling. They settled into the first story "The fairy crane" immediately and six *smiles* were directed at me in the first five minutes until the class realised the inherent sadness of the story. The majority of the *smiles* in this session occurred during the story "The teeny tiny woman" (The teeny tiny woman, 1962) and at the beginning of "The selkie girl" and were in direct response to the story rather than to a comment or action by a fellow classmate. These 70 *smiles* were a convincing indication of collaboration in the storytelling as well as a potent indicator that students were enjoying the stories. Smiling as an individual response rather than in conjunction with another listener also revealed the personal meaning making that was occurring in 6G and fits in well with the Individual Familiarisation strand of the storytelling process.

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The significance of listeners **touching their mouth** as they listen to a story did not become evident until some way into the project. As the coding progressed while viewing the video footage it became evident that listeners only **touched their mouths** when they were actively involved in listening to a story. It did not appear to occur during conversations between stories or when listeners were chatting to a classmate. While putting their **chin in their hand** indicated that listeners were preparing themselves to enter into the story realm, touching the face indicated a deliberate attempt to actively listen to a story. **Touching the mouth** area had no common time duration and was broken and commenced by the same listener several times throughout the course of a story as they made a comment, became distracted or **acted** an event in the story. Each time the **mouth was touched** the listener quietly listened to the next section of the story. The frequency of **touching mouths** steadily increased in 6G across the storytelling project. As will be seen in the data below 3G displayed a similar significant increase in Collaborative Engagement indicators from Week One to Week Six with a similar dip in occurrences in Week Four.

4.3.2 Third Grade (3G)

Table 4.23 *Table showing occurrences of principal Collaborative Engagement Indicators for 3G*

Storytelling Week	Acting	Joining in	Laugh at story	Smile at story	Touching mouth	Total cluster indicators
Week One	16	45	10	36	17	124
Week Two	19	39	36	71	17	182
Week Four	19	32	41	61	15	168
Week Six	43	54	49	35	14	195

3G were a class who eagerly embraced the storytelling sessions. They moved readily to the storytelling area in Week One and actively Collaborated more noticeably in this session than 6G discussed above. This may be due to the age of the class where storytelling was still viewed as a 'cool' activity to show interest in, or it may have been led by Perry, one of the students in the class who was an active participant from this very first session and featured in every transcript of every session throughout the storytelling project. **Acting** was a strong indicator of collaborating in storytelling for 3G.

Figure 4.24 *3-D Chart of principal Collaborative Engagement cluster for 3G*
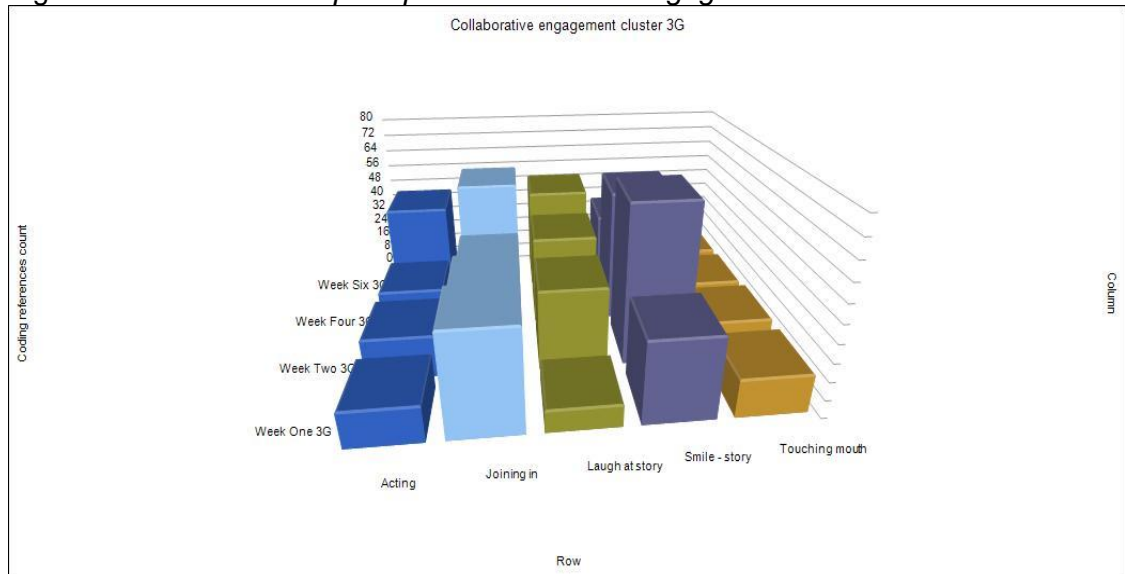
There were 16 instances of **acting** in this first session with the majority occurring in the second story and six of which belonged to Perry. My positive response to **acting** (smiling and nodding my head) encouraged the class to respond in this way in subsequent storytelling sessions, with a wider representation of the entire class participating. In Week Six there were 43 instances of **acting**, most noticeably in the story of "The Fairy Crane." Bessie in 3G was so entranced by the story that she spontaneously performed a mime at the conclusion of the tale, shown in Figure 4.25 below.

Figure 4.25 *Extract of transcript showing example of Acting indicator in 3G*

And she gave the hunter the last piece of cloth she would ever make,

Bessie sits up straight

Bessie gazes at teller

Bruce puts fingers on mouth

Phillip sits forward

Derek tilts head

spread her arms and in front of his very eyes, turned into a beautiful white crane,

Ohh - Perry

and flew off into the blue sky.

Bruce starts to flap his arms.

Indistinct - Perry

And he never ever saw her again.

And that's the story of "Tsuru no On-gaeshi."

Bessie incredibly gracefully moves her arms as though unfolding wings

55:50

Grant looks puzzled

Silence for several seconds before applause.

Bruce smiles

Sophie smiles

Perry claps

Trevor claps

Phillip claps

Bruce begins to say the refrain again, in perfect rhythm.

Phillip says refrain

Perry says refrain

Extract of transcript of "The Fairy Crane" Week Six for 3G

At first glance it would appear from Figure 4.25 above that 3G had already developed a strong engagement with story if their level of *joining in* during the very first storytelling session was any indication. By utilising Step Six of the QUEST process however, on closer inspection the majority of the 45 instances were more cases of "one-upmanship" than actual *joining in*. The most vocal student in 3G was certainly Perry and he appeared to take 'ownership' of the story "The tailor". At one point in the story he even discouraged other students from *joining in* in what he considered to be "my lines" as illustrated in Figure 4.26 below.

Figure 4.26 *Extract from transcripts showing 'ownership' of story for 3G*

And everyone who saw the tailor in his jacket said…

That's a very nice jacket. Perry (emphasising by shaking his finger.)

That's a very nice jacket - Steven

That's a very nice jacket - Robert

Join in refrain very enthusiastically.

Linda smiles

Gus has fingers in mouth

Willow has chin in hand

Willow gazing at teller

Missie has fingers in mouth

Missie gazing at teller

"Thank you. I just finished it."

***Stop copying my line* - Perry** *(instructs 3G not to join in his line*)

And he did the vest up with one button,

Lennon looks at teller

Checked that the sleeves came just on the shoulders there and came down in a very smart "V" at the front.

Trevor makes v shape on chest

Gus has mouth open

Willow pokes Perry

It was all worn out - Willow mouths this to Perry

Perry sits up straight

Perry smiles

No-one is going to copy my line OK? – Perry *(to rest of 3G)*

So the tailor opened up the door of his shop, walked

out

Tailor, that's a very nice vest! – Perry

Very nice vest - Missie

Very nice vest - Robert

I haven't even got out of my shop yet.

Extract from transcript from "The tailor" Week One for 3G

Closer observation of this session revealed that many of the other instances of ***joining in*** during this particular story were deliberate attempts by classmates to annoy Perry and be in competition with him as shown by the inappropriate timing of responses or guessing what the correct phrase would be in that particular part of the story.

Table 4.23 and Figure 4.24 reveal a significant dip in the Collaborative Engagement indicators in Week Four similar to that displayed for 6G. This warranted further querying. Several factors were responsible for this decrease in the indicators of joining ***in*** and ***smiling at stories***. ***Joining in*** was lower as Perry had begun to realise that there were other means of Collaborating in stories than calling out or acting in ways that were irrelevant to the story. Other listeners in the class no longer therefore felt the

need to be in competition with Perry and were able to focus on their own responses to stories. Perry and others had learned that listening to a story and finding meaning in it on an individual basis also brought enjoyment to the storytelling experience. This is shown by the much higher occurrence of *smiling* during a story in Week Four and like the experience of 6G, this indicator of *smiling* was an individual response to a story rather than a response to the action or comment of a classmate. There was also a growing incidence of Trancelike State indicators in Week Four. As has been described previously with regard to 6G, as Trancelike State indicators begin to occur there is a corresponding decrease in Collaborative indicators that are naturally incompatible with them. For example as listeners *open their mouths wide* or have a *slack mouth* they are not able to be *laughing* or even *smiling* at the same time.

Story selection also played a role in the decrease of the *joining in* and *acting* indicators in Week Four as did the adoption of the Chambers/ Harley method. This was particularly observed in the story of "How Frog lost his tale." This story was presented with distinct differences in the position of the fourth wall. That is, sections that belonged to the narrator, to Frog and to Nyame were all presented with varied postures, vocal tones and inflections. This resulted in 3G listening to a story more intently than they had done previously and the incidences of the more extrovert indicators were significantly lower during this story. The story of "Pot Cook" was also presented using this method and resulted in the same response of listeners responding in a more subdued, individual manner. The story of "Lazy Tok" (Skipper, 1983) that utilised a progressively inflated balloon to represent the growing girth of the central character provoked the most occurrences of *acting*, *joining in* and *laughing* during this session.

The 54 instances of *joining in* during Week Six were authentic indicators of listener's engagement with the story. Any attempts by Perry to overdramatise his instances of *joining in* during this session were quickly discouraged by the class who wanted to immerse themselves in the story of "The fairy crane." Their success at doing so was demonstrated by their unanimous decision not to *join in* with the refrain at the most poignant point in what had obviously become a tragic tale.

Figure 4.27 *Extract from transcript showing effect of immersion in story on Joining in for 3G*

Tonk ka ri.

Tonk ka ri.

Perry immediately starts to say it louder

Joined by Robert

Hayden looks at Robert

Hayden frowns

Shush – Hayden to Robert very emphatically

Shush - Bessie to Robert

And for three more days she still stayed in the hut,

Shush - Bruce to Robert

Shush - Bruce to Phillip

and then finally, the hunter couldn't take it anymore,

Bessie puts fingers in mouth

and he had to have a look to see what was happening,

Hayden puts chin in hand

Sophie has eyes wide open

Trevor puts chin in hands

and when he opened up the door,

Bessie puts chin in hand

Jerrod gazes at teller

there was no sign of his wife.

Bessie looks worried

[Indistinct]on the ground – Perry

Instead, standing at the loom,

Derek sits up straight

and plucking out a feather and weaving it into the cloth, was a beautiful white crane.

Bruce has mouth wide open

Tonk ka ri.

Tonk ka ri. Tonk ka ri.

No children join in

Ow – Bruce

All class very quiet now and not joining refrain

Extract from "The fairy crane" Week Six for 3G

The indicator of **laughing at a story** demonstrated the development of engagement with story in 3G. As the children became more familiar with their role in the process of storytelling, they relaxed and the chart in Figure 4.23 clearly shows that they increasingly laughed at the stories.

In Week One there were 10 instances of **laughing at a story** and each of these occurrences were prompted by an exaggerated event in the story. Most of the **laughter** was in response to the ridiculous and over dramatised voices I adopted for the character in "Naught Marysia" (Pellowski, 1984d). Other **laughter** in this story was in response to me very unexpectedly standing and walking away from the group to place a prop in another part of the classroom. In the story "The tailor" two of the three instances of **laughter** were prompted by me addressing a student while still in character; the unexpected phenomenon of the character stepping out of the story realm.

By Week Six there were 49 instances of **laughter**. Not only were 3G more comfortable in responding to stories in this way but their appreciation of humour within stories had developed. They **laughed** at a variety of factors in the stories: amusing props such as the character of the Teeny Tiny Woman drawn and dressed on my thumb; funny facial expressions and sounds effects in the story of "The Snooks family"; and the unexpected development of story elements in the drawing story of "The wild bird" (Pellowski, 1984). Also notable in the indicator of **laughing at stories** in 3G was the growing incidence of laughing individually in response to a story rather than laughing at a comment about the story by a classmate. 3G developed as story listeners who took meaning for themselves from each story.

It has been noted earlier in this chapter that 3G were eager participants in the storytelling project and their **smiles** during the sessions were indicative of that. There were high instances of **smiling** at a story in the first session of the storytelling project where there were 36 occurrences and these high occurrences increased throughout the project. There was initially a surprisingly low rate of **smiles** in Week Six, with only 35 occurrences; a session when each of the classes typically demonstrated that they were developing a strong familiarity with storytelling. This low rate may be explained however by the fact that this session contained the most tragic story of the whole project "The fairy crane." 3G responded to this story with uncharacteristic silence and sensitivity and the rate of **smiling** at the story was very low at only seven instances.

3G were eager participants for the duration of the storytelling project and this is reflected in the indicator of **touching the mouth**. It has been stated previously that listeners **touched their mouths** when they were deliberately attempting to listen to a story. This indicator, more than any other, remained relatively consistent across the sessions for 3G. It can be convincingly argued that 3G displayed consistently higher rates of other indicators in the Collaborative Engagement cluster that left them 'too busy' to **touch their mouths** often.

Kindergarten Grade, unlike Sixth Grade and Third Grade displayed a continuous increase in total indicators in the Collaborative Engagement cluster and their responses to specific stories and in various weeks of the storytelling project will be discussed in the following section.

4.3.3   Kindergarten Grade (KG)

Table 4.28 *Table showing occurrences of principal Collaborative Engagement Indicators for KG*

Storytelling Week	Acting	Joining in	Laugh at story	Smile at story	Touching mouth	Total cluster indicators
Week One	7	15	8	23	15	68
Week Two	3	25	3	38	20	89
Week Four	14	12	15	56	49	146
Week Six	102	33	45	56	35	271

KG were an exceptionally well-behaved class whose teacher consistently spoke with them in a quiet and calm manner and who responded best initially when addressed in this manner by me. They were willing listeners from Week One but were the slowest of all the groups to display significant frequencies of the **acting** indicator in the Collaborative Engagement cluster.

Figure 4.29 *3-D Chart of principal Collaborative Engagement cluster for KG*
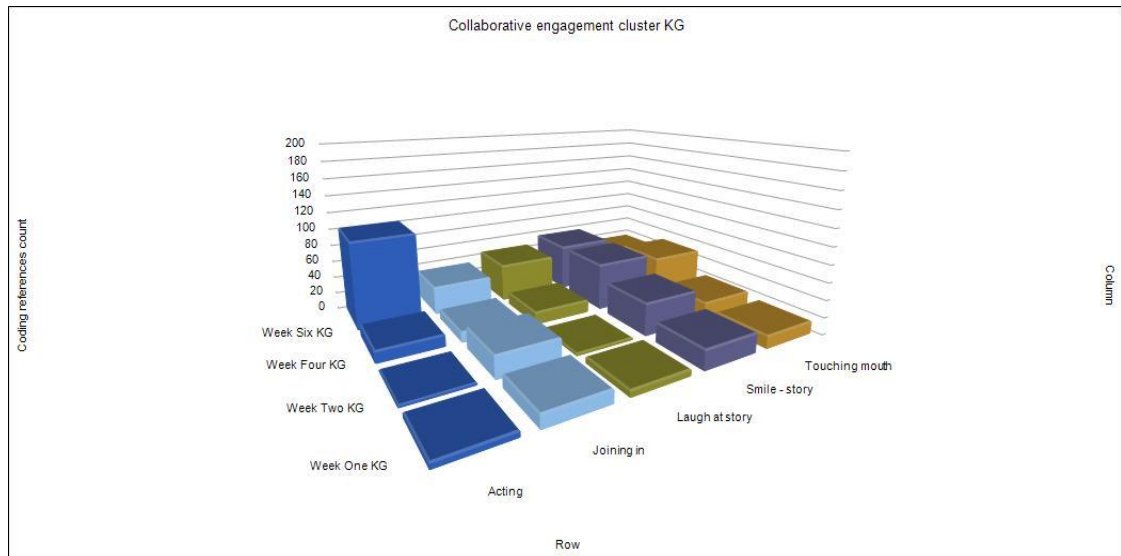
There were few instances in the data of ***acting*** during the stories until Week Four when there were 14 instances and a peak of 102 in Week Six when KG showed the highest incidence of ***acting*** of all the classes. The slow adoption of the indicator of ***acting*** may be due to the age of the students in KG and their previous storytelling experience. ***Acting*** during a story is a highly individualised response that reflects the meaning that a listener has gleaned from a story. Displaying such a personal response in front of a 'stranger' and in the relatively unknown setting of the storytelling audience can be intimidating for young listeners. Listeners in KG were initially very concerned about what the response of their teacher was, both to the stories and to their behaviour. There were 19 instances of listeners in KG seeking ***teacher reassurance*** in Week One; that is they looked to their teacher to ensure that their behaviour or response to a story was approved by her. As KG became more familiar with me and the storytelling experience the occurrences of ***acting*** increased while the occurrences of seeking ***teacher reassurance*** decreased. KG learned that responding to stories was acceptable and indeed approved of by both their teacher and me.

The data shows that contrary to the delayed appearance of the ***acting*** indicator with KG this class readily ***joined in*** with stories where appropriate from the first storytelling session with 15 occurrences in Week One. This figure jumped to 25 occurrences in Week Two as KG learned that ***joining in*** was not only acceptable but encouraged in a storytelling session. ***Joining in*** is a group response and KG appeared more comfortable to respond to stories initially in this collective manner. Sessions such as Week Four that showed lower than expected occurrences of ***joining in*** contained

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either stories that relied on a high level of props such as "The Little Half-chick" or elicited high occurrences of trancelike indicators in stories like "How frog lost his tail." *Joining in* does not appear to occur when there is a high incidence of trancelike indicators and this will be discussed later in the chapter.

KG's enjoyment in storytelling was apparent from Week One where there were eight occurrences of *laughter*. Initially these eight responses of laughter were accompanied by at least one classmate glancing at the teacher to ensure that the behaviour was acceptable. The first *laughter* responses were actually giggles which developed into full *laughter* as the class discovered that I encouraged that response with my own smiles. There were only three occurrences of *laughter* in Week Two but this was due to the intensity of concentration that the students in KG displayed while listening to the stories in this sessions rather than any lack of enjoyment. The first tale was the drawn story "The black cat" and the students in KG were intrigued by the unfolding of the story as the drawing was done in front of them. This story relies on the visual component as much as the oral and KG were intent on the drawing aspect of the story rather than recognising the humorous strands of the told story.

The next story in Week Two was equally intriguing for KG with its intricate string patterns that form the illustrations as the story is told. "Grandmother's candles" (Pellowski, 1984b) contains five distinct string patterns that captured the attention of the listeners in KG who listened and watched with a high degree of seriousness. This story elicited the question "*How do you do all that with the string?"* from Stella as soon as the story finished. There were numerous requests to repeat the string patterns at the end of the session and in the following weeks when students saw me in the playground during recess or lunch.

Laughter increased across the project for KG with 15 occurrences being noted in Week Four and 45 occurrences in Week Six. The overt humour in "The teeny tiny woman" and "The Snooks family" told in Week Six appealed to KG's sense of humour and prompted the most *laughter* of the whole storytelling project for them.

KG indicated their eagerness to participate in the storytelling project with high occurrences of *smiling at the stories* across all six storytelling sessions. There were 23 occurrences of *smiling* during stories in Week One and occurrences of 56 in both

Weeks Four and Six. The occurrences of smiling across all weeks of the storytelling project were indicative of KG being active participants in the storytelling activity.

Putting fingers in or on the mouth was a regular indication that students in KG were actively listening to a story. There were 15 occurrences of the indicator of **touching the mouth** in Week One. This increased to 20 in Week Two and the occurrences often followed a distraction or other collaborative activity such as **laughing** or **joining in** and demonstrated the listeners' deliberate attempts to actively listen again. By Week Four these occurrences had doubled again to 49 instances of **touching the mouth.** Instances of this indicator lessened slightly in Week Six but were replaced by higher occurrences on trancelike behaviour. As mentioned previously it appears that when indicators of the Trancelike State occur Collaborative Engagement indicators lessen.

4.3.4   Outcomes of Collaborative Engagement

Once listeners have been given permission and clues of how to enter the story realm, it is the storyteller's responsibility to encourage listener collaboration in the storytelling event. This can often be a challenge for students who have been taught that they must be quiet during a lesson or presentation from a visitor to the school. Storytellers should also discuss with classroom teachers that collaboration is encouraged in a storytelling session so that teachers do not feel compelled to remind their class to be quiet during the activity.

Through encouraging smiles, beckoning gestures, explicit instruction and the correct selection of interactive stories, the storyteller can not only encourage good listening but also active participation in the form of facial gestures, body language and appropriate verbal responses. The increased occurrences of indicators in the Collaborative Engagement cluster as the storytelling project progressed showed that participants were developing their active listening and imaginative skills. Data gained during the storytelling project that revealed that students found alternate means of responding to stories even after being reminded (unnecessarily) to be quiet shows that they had begun to appreciate the heightened enjoyment of storytelling that occurs when a listener Collaborates in the telling.

The more rapid adoption of some indicators such as **smiling** and **joining in** rather than others highlights the need to build familiarity and trust with the storyteller. The indicator of **acting** for example requires the listener to convey their own interpretation of what they are hearing in a story. This can be quite intimidating for a listener to display in front of a relatively unknown storyteller and in a group of people unfamiliar with the storytelling experience. This indicator was the slowest to be demonstrated across all classes with only 3G displaying a high instance of this indicator during Weeks One or Two. MacDonald has described the listener's growing affinity with storytelling and willingness to engage with the story realm as "the breakthrough into play" where the listener loses their self-consciousness. As has been described above in this section listeners in the current study engaged in increasingly collaborative behaviour that included "a stream of injected comments, unself-conscious body language, and laughter" (MacDonald, 1999, p 412). This unselfconsciousness can lead to even deeper trancelike levels of engagement. Trancelike State Engagement is for me the most intriguing element of the storytelling process and it was with great interest that I analysed the data for occurrences of it, as described in the following section.

4.4   Trancelike State Engagement

Figure 4.30 *Trancelike State Engagement cluster*
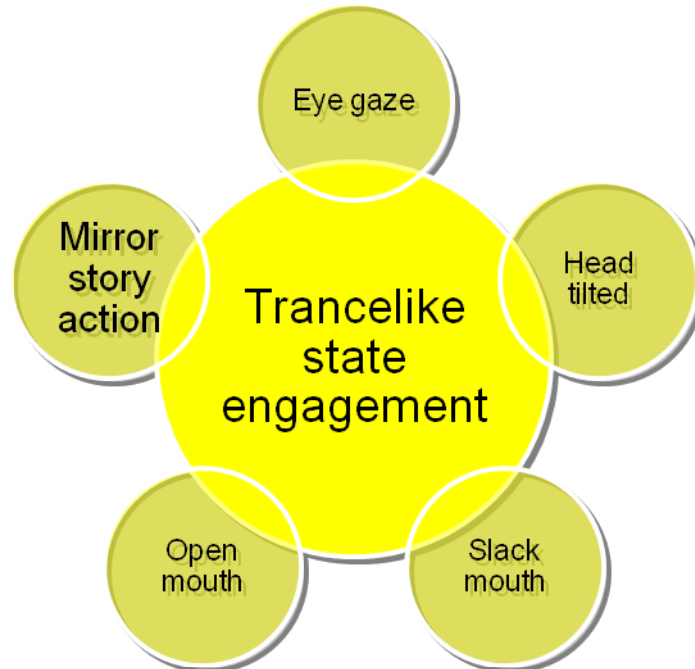
Numerous storytellers have reported on the total immersion in the story realm that they have observed in their listeners as they tell a story. Researchers have also begun to explore the Trancelike State aspect of the storytelling experience. Kuyvenhoven (2007), Stallings (1988) and Sturm (1998, 1999, 2000) have provided rich material for this element of the current thesis and helped to underpin the development of the Indicators of Engagement structure. My observations from the current study indicate that this Trancelike State only begins to occur when a listener has become familiar with the experience of storytelling. The evidence from the current study also indicates that the Trancelike State only occurs during stories told using the traditional style that is, using only voice and gesture. It would seem that stories that rely heavily on augmentation, using props and storytelling aids, while enjoyable for listeners and facilitating engagement, distract the listener from complete immersion in the story experience. This theory is worthy of further investigation and research. In the children that were observed in the current study the key indicators of engagement that pointed to a Trancelike State are outlined in Table 4.31 below.

4.4.1   The key indicators of a Trancelike State

Table 4.31 *The key indicators of a Trancelike State as derived from the literature*

Eye gaze	What Kuyvenhoven refers to as looking at the teller but not really seeing her.
Head tilted	To either side but still facing forwards.
Mirroring story action and storytellers expression	For example if the protagonist was sad the listener would also have a sad expression.
Open mouth or slack mouth	Distinguished by mouth being slightly or widely open to express surprise.
Picking nose	This only occurred when the listener was completely immersed in the story and social inhibitions were forgotten
Thumb in mouth	Usually after the hand had hovered around the mouth for some time.
Relaxed posture	Slumped forward or leaning back on the hands.

The indicators of engagement listed above are a means of measuring the Trancelike State as displayed by listeners in a physical sense. Taken together they represent the phenomenon of a trancelike state as described by the authors below.

Stallings explains the total immersion in a story as occurring when "certain stories, told by some tellers, can induce an altered state of consciousness verging on hypnosis: the "storylistening trance" (Stallings, 1988, p.1). Stallings uses synonyms such as entranced, complete absorption, captivated, total attention, completely enthralled, mesmerizing and hypnotic when referring to the trancelike state. I have also heard practising storytellers use these terms to describe how audience members became immersed in the world of the story, oblivious to distractions occurring around them, and responding to the events in a story as though they were actually happening directly in front of them. In addition to these descriptors of the Trancelike State, Stallings also listed sitting quietly, relaxed breathing, luminous eyes, parted lips, the absence of blinking, flattening of the facial expression, and slowed respiration, as characteristics that are frequently observed in listeners who are identified as being in trancelike state.

In her ethnographic study of storytelling in a primary school classroom, Kuyvenhoven (2007) reported numerous instances of the listeners being rapt or in a trance during the storytelling. Kuyvenhoven provided descriptions of the listeners' facial expressions and body postures that conveyed this impression of being "stilled by the story." (Kuyvenhoven, 2007, p 96) She reported listeners as being in turn motionless, quiet and limp, looking at the storyteller but not really seeing her.

In his article "The enchanted imagination: Storytelling's power to entrance listeners" Sturm has described this phenomenon as a "trancelike state" (1999). In this article he further explored his doctoral research (1998), using the responses of storytelling event attendees, over eight different events. He observed the responses of listeners who appeared interested in the storytelling and then asked them to describe their experiences as they listened to a story. From their responses, Sturm uncovered similar characteristics in the storylistening experience that occurred when people became completely immersed in a story. Sturm also examined what storyteller and storytelling experience traits needed to be present for this to occur for these participants.

Sturm's systematic interviews of storytelling audience members, immediately after the storytelling event, are the only ones of their type that I am aware of. His subsequent work in this area, formulating a diagrammatic representation of what facilitates the trancelike state in storylisteners, provided rich material for the current thesis (2000). The elements of the Trancelike State, as indentified by Sturm are:

- *Realism*: the sense that the story environment or characters are real or alive.
- *Lack of awareness*: of surroundings or other mental processes.
- *Engaged receptive channels*: visual (both physical watching and mental visualization); auditory (both physical hearing and mental "chatter"); kinaesthetic, and emotional.
- *Control*: of the experience by the listener, or someone or something else.
- *"Placeness":* the sense that the listener "goes somewhere" (often "into") another space.
- *Time distortion*: the sense that subjective time moves at a different speed than objective, clock time (Sturm, 1998, 1999).

These traits were self-reported by storytelling festival participants. Sturm conducted the research as an observant participant and noted the physical responses of various participants. He then interviewed 22 audience members who had displayed an altered state of consciousness and recorded these interviews for later analysis. Sturm's observations and subsequent interviews provided fascinating and valuable data, but did not provide a means of measuring engagement and the possible trancelike state in a long-term storytelling programme involving a large number of participants. Sturm concluded that effective storytelling that totally engages the listener results in a whole body experience.

The challenge in the current study was to devise a means of observing the responses of the child participants and creating a set of observable indicators that would measure the level of engagement with each story. It is unlikely that most children would have such self awareness to be able to describe their storylistening responses in the terms reported in Sturm's thesis. Interviewing the current study participants was also outside the remit of the project as explained previously. All the Trancelike State elements listed above were considered when building a list of indicators to look for when measuring engagement in the current study. Those traits that can only be assessed from a personal perspective were unable to be included in the list of indicators. Filming each of the storytelling events in the current study enabled repeat observation of each participant's responses.

It was not the declared aim of Sturm's study to explore what type of story would elicit the storytelling trancelike state, and therefore he did not reveal what particular stories were told as he observed the listeners. Differences in storytelling styles used in the current study were examined to see how they influenced the Trancelike State as ascertained through the indicators of engagement and will be described in the following chapters.

4.4.1.1 Factors of the storytelling event that facilitate the trancelike state

The Trancelike State was observed several times during the course of the current study. Common factors in these occurrences were that they most often occurred later in the project, when trust and familiarity had been established and an understanding of storytelling had developed. The participants were aware of what the storytelling event would involve, and were prepared to participate willingly in it. Instances of the Trancelike State occurred when there had been minimal disruptions either within the

classroom, or immediately outside, so that immersion in the story realm had been allowed to occur for the listeners. This minimal distraction was a combination of positive audience behaviour and effective venue setup. Specific examples of the occurrence of the trancelike state will be further explored in detail in the following section.

Once storytelling listeners have developed an ability to immerse themselves in the storytelling experience and become active listeners demonstrating Collaborative Engagement, they are then ready to become so involved or engaged with certain stories that they enter the Trancelike State. This is an important factor in the listeners' engagement with stories and the analysis of my data will highlight instances of the children experiencing this Trancelike State through the occurrence of the set of principal indicators given in Table 4.32 below.

Table 4.32
Principal Trancelike State Engagement indicators

Principal Trancelike State Engagement indicators	Coding description	Number of instances
Eye gaze	Listener's gaze is fixed on the teller for a sustained period of time	125
Head tilted	Listener has head tilted to side, listening intently	98
Mirroring story action or storytellers posture	Copy in a subconscious manner an action, expressions or phrase that is described in the story	79
Open mouth	Listener opens mouth wide in surprised response to event in the story	56
Slack mouth	Mouth falls open as listener is fully engaged in the story	94

These five indicators were the most consistent responses displayed by listeners as they became completely immersed or "enchanted" by the story realm. They were often displayed in combination with each other. The indicators within the Trancelike State Engagement cluster were a strong illustration of the increased engagement with stories for the storytelling project participants. Eye-gaze was a particularly strong indicator that

listeners were comfortable in the storytelling environment and had immersed themselves in the story realm. Doherty-Sneddon states that particularly for a child "being able to look you in the eye is often a sign of self-assertion and confidence. It can also mean that whatever you are discussing has real importance for the child" (Doherty-Sneddon, 2003, p 136). Listeners who displayed the eye gaze indicator were universally noted to blink less than normal as they concentrated intensely on the story being shared. Other indicators that were also noted in the Trancelike State Engagement cluster are listed in Table 4.33 below.

Table 4.33 *Additional Trancelike State Engagement indicators*

Additional Trancelike State Engagement indicator	Coding description	Number of instances
Biting fingernails	Listener begins to subconsciously bite fingernails while gazing at the teller	4
Jerk back or jump	Listener moves back or jumps suddenly in direct response to event in the story	16
Picking nose	Listener picks nose while gazing at the teller	14
Silence at end of story	Listeners remain still and silent at the end of a story	3
Wide-eyed	Listeners eyes open wide in response to event in the story	14

4.4.1.2 Impact of the Chambers/Harley diagram

It was noted that there was a significant increase in the occurrences of principal Trancelike state cluster indicators across all grades in Week Four. As is common in an action research project, the decision to apply the Chambers/Harley approach to storytelling to clarify its effect on enhancing attention was an integral part of the QUEST to establish factors to better facilitate storytelling with children. The increase in Trancelike state indicators coincided with the adoption of Chambers/Harley diagram for preparing stories for telling discussed in Chapter 3. When this method is applied the storyteller gains significant control over both the preparation and presentation of stories and delivers them in a way that is much more effective in attracting and maintaining the

attention and engagement of listeners. This method enables listeners to distinguish different elements in the story such as narrative and dialogue and to differentiate between the dialogues of numerous characters within a story. It proved to be a very useful adaptation. It can be argued that by presenting a story in a more accessible manner for listeners their ability to make meaning of the story and enter into the story world more easily enhances favourable conditions for the Trancelike State to occur. The occurrences of the Trancelike State indicators with specific examples of how these occurrences were displayed will form the content of the following section.

4.4.2   Sixth Grade (6G)

Table 4.34 *Table showing occurrences of principal Trancelike State Engagement indicators for 6G*

Storytelling Week	Eye gaze	Head tilted	Mirroring	Open mouth	Slack mouth	Total cluster indicators
Week One	0	0	0	0	0	0
Week Two	0	4	0	0	3	7
Week Four	18	9	2	2	13	44
Week Six	51	14	11	5	8	89

As illustrated in Table 4.34 above there were no reported instances of indicators in the Trancelike State Engagement cluster for Sixth Grade (6G) during the first week of the storytelling project. Only the indicators of *head tilted* and *slack mouth* appeared in the second week of the project. It should be recalled that in this storytelling session the class teacher was still insisting on the students being seated at their individual desks and there was no positive audience behaviour being encouraged. There were no instances of *eye gaze* in the first two storytelling sessions with 6G but by Week Four there were 18 instances of listeners being so engaged with the story that they maintained unbroken eye contact or *eye gaze* with me for significant periods of time. All five indicators of Trancelike State Engagement occurred in this storytelling session.

Figure 4.35 *3-D Chart showing Trancelike State Engagement indicators for 6G*
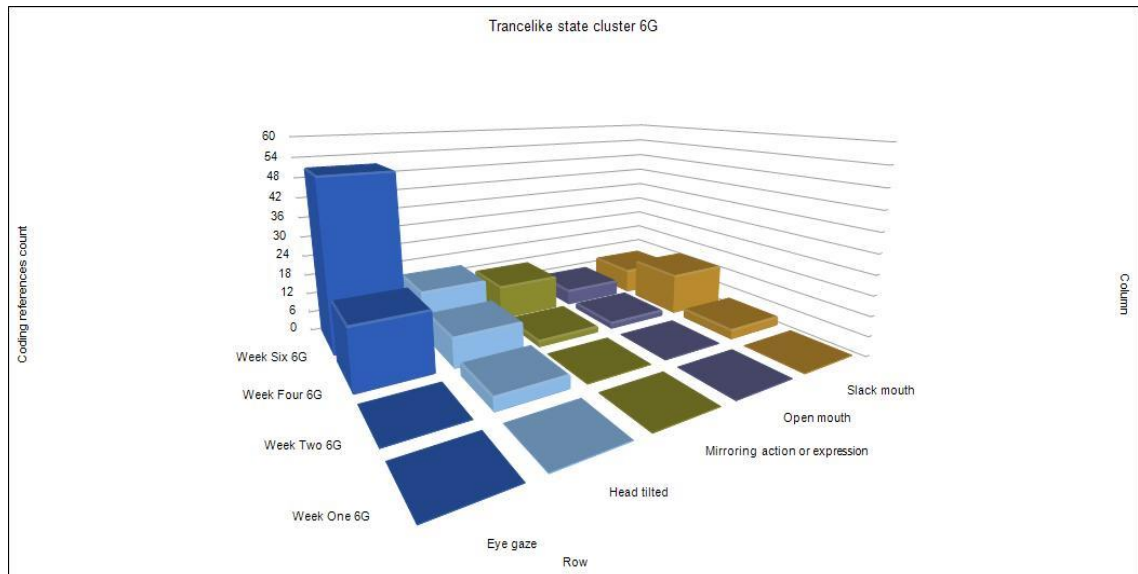
Prior to the data being coded or analysed my response as a storyteller to Week Four with 6G was much more positive. The field notes for this session indicate my recognition of the class becoming story listeners as illustrated in Figure 4.36 below.

Figure 4.36 *Extract from Field notes showing positive storyteller response in Week Four for 6G*

Class becoming more attentive.

Very welcoming – remembered what today's theme was to be.

*6D are definitely starting to show a 'sense of story' – they are trying to predict the outcome of the story from other stories they have experienced.

The 'Fourth wall' was really down during the episode of the mother trying to use the pot [in the story "Pot cook".] Many of the class were calling out the right words for her to use. There was a great deal of engagement with this story.

J. Mundy-Taylor. Field notes August 17, 2004.

The extract above illustrates the effectiveness of the fourth wall in convincing listeners of the "reality" of a story and its characters. Even though I maintained my imagined stance during the sections of dialogue used by the mother in the story, several listeners in the class called out suggestions to help her. The ability of listeners in 6G to immerse themselves so completely in the story realm that they entered a Trancelike State was demonstrated in Week Six where 51 instances of **eye gaze** were noted. There were

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eight instances of *slack mouth*, five of *mouths wide open* and 14 of heads *being tilted*. It should be noted that unlike indicators such as *touching the mouth* which occurred frequently throughout a story, the Trancelike State indicators tended to last for significant periods of time as the listeners were immersed in the story. When this immersion was interrupted collaborative listening indicators such as *touching the mouth* were detected as listeners attempted to Re-enter the Story Realm. The Trancelike State indicator of *mirroring* the action in a story, or the storyteller's expressions, was a subconscious response; in comparison to *acting* which was a deliberate response to an action in a story. The *mirroring* indicator only occurred in relevant parts of a story where significant action was taking place. There were two instances of the *mirroring* indicator in Week Four and 11 in Week Six. These ranged from instantly checking their own fingers when a character in "The selkie girl" was described as having webbed fingers, inhaling immediately after a story character did so, or shaking their head in response to a question directed to a story character.

Numerous listeners indicated the Trancelike State by relaxing their facial muscles to the point of having their mouths slightly open, which in this research was termed *slack mouth*. The indicator of *slack mouth* almost tripled in 6G from three in Week Two to eight in Week Six. All of these indicators occurred during traditionally told stories. Related to the Trancelike State Engagement indicator of *slack mouth* was the indicator of listeners *opening their mouths wide* in response to an event in the story that caused surprise or awe. *Open mouth* began to occur in Week Four when there were two instances and rose to five instances in Week Six. The *open mouth* indicator was carefully examined to ensure that it was not merely an illustration of *acting*. *Open mouth* occurred in the presence of at least one other Trancelike State indicator, such as *head tilted* to the side or *eye gaze*. *Tilting the head* was an indicator that increased across the project for 6G as shown above in Figure 4.35. Interestingly some of the listeners in 3G displayed Trancelike State indicators from the start of the storytelling project.

4.4.3   Third Grade (3G)

Table 4.37 *Table showing occurrences of principal Trancelike State Engagement indicators for 3G*

Storytelling Week	Eye gaze	Head tilted	Mirroring	Open mouth	Slack mouth	Total cluster indicators
Week One	5	5	1	4	8	23
Week Two	4	7	5	5	14	35
Week Four	10	2	11	17	7	47
Week Six	11	9	7	2	6	35

It has been noted previously that the majority of students in 3G were eager participants in the storytelling project. Table 4.37 above illustrates that for some students at least a story heard in the first storytelling session engaged them so thoroughly that they displayed Trancelike State Engagement indicators.

Figure 4.38 *3-D Chart showing principal Trancelike State Indicators for 3G*
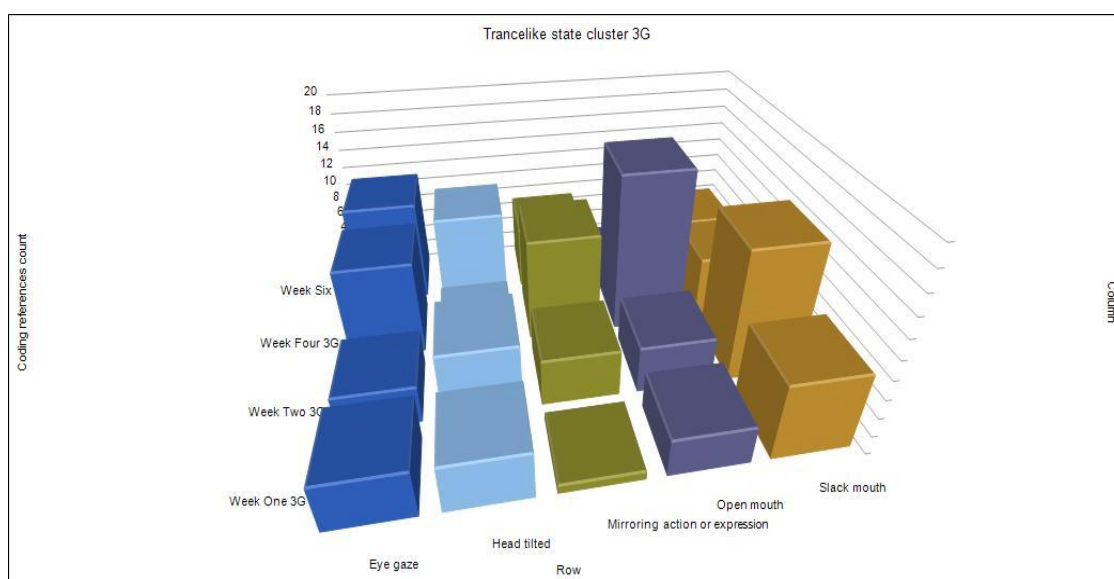
Two students in particular, Willow and Robert, displayed three different Trancelike indicators numerous times throughout this introductory session and continued to be collaborative listeners throughout the remainder of the project, often displaying trancelike state behaviour. It would have been interesting to learn what experience these two students had previously had with storytelling but interviewing them was not part of the method for the research. As the storytelling project continued there were several students: Bessie, Missie, Matt and Linda, who in addition to the two students mentioned previously frequently displayed Trancelike State behaviour.

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I was initially disappointed to see the figures in Table 4.37 as it did not reflect the expected steady growth in all indicators in the Trancelike State Engagement cluster. While the indicators of *eye gaze* and *mirroring* increased across the project, the remaining three indicators fluctuated. Upon reflection and utilising Step Six of the QUEST process, it was noted that while the occurrences of indicators in this cluster appear to depict a relatively low instance of Trancelike State behaviour, when viewed in context they were an encouraging indication that the majority of students in 3G were thoroughly engaged with storytelling.

As noted previously, 3G were a class that demonstrated their enjoyment of storytelling through the high occurrences of Collaborative Engagement indicators. Participants such as Perry relished every opportunity to *join in* with a story and often encouraged others to do the same. The growing sense of themselves as story listeners and their contribution to the enjoyment of stories was evident in 3G during the story of "The fairy crane." As mentioned before, numerous students insisted on Perry and others being quiet during this story and their absolute silence in the most poignant section of the tale demonstrated their engagement with the story. The ability of classmates to immerse themselves so effectively in a story in the midst of such enthusiastic audience behaviour that they entered a Trancelike State, is encouraging evidence of a well-developed engagement with storytelling. Trancelike State indicators were also observed in the first storytelling session with KG.

4.4.4 Kindergarten Grade (KG)

As noted previously in this chapter the teacher of KG informed me prior to the commencement of the storytelling project that she had told stories to her class quite regularly even though she did not identify as a "real storyteller". KG's experience with storytelling was evident from the first storytelling session of the project. They were eager and able to immerse themselves in the story realm and as the data in Table 4.39 below shows, displayed Trancelike State Engagement indicators in the initial storytelling session.

Table 4.39 *Table showing occurrences of principal Trancelike State Engagement indicators for KG*

Storytelling Week	Eye gaze	Head tilted	Mirroring	Open mouth	Slack mouth	Total cluster indicators
Week One	11	24	3	1	9	48
Week Two	1	9	9	6	6	31
Week Four	6	9	14	9	8	46
Week Five	8	6	16	5	12	47

The introductory session was conducted in an (unusually) quiet tone as I had noted during the equipment set-up and introduction by the teacher that she spoke to KG very quietly. The storytelling area was obviously familiar territory for KG and they quickly assumed quiet listening behaviour. Unusual storytelling behaviour by me, such as funny voices for the story characters or moving around the classroom resulted in quick looks at the teacher for reassurance then quiet listening resumed. As the project continued my storytelling style became more animated and active participation was encouraged. KG eagerly embraced this new aspect of story listening and became active partners in the storytelling experience. Their enthusiasm to *join in* during stories however may have been detrimental to the more frequent instances of Trancelike behaviour.

Figure 4.40 *3-D Chart showing principal Trancelike State Engagement indicators for KG*
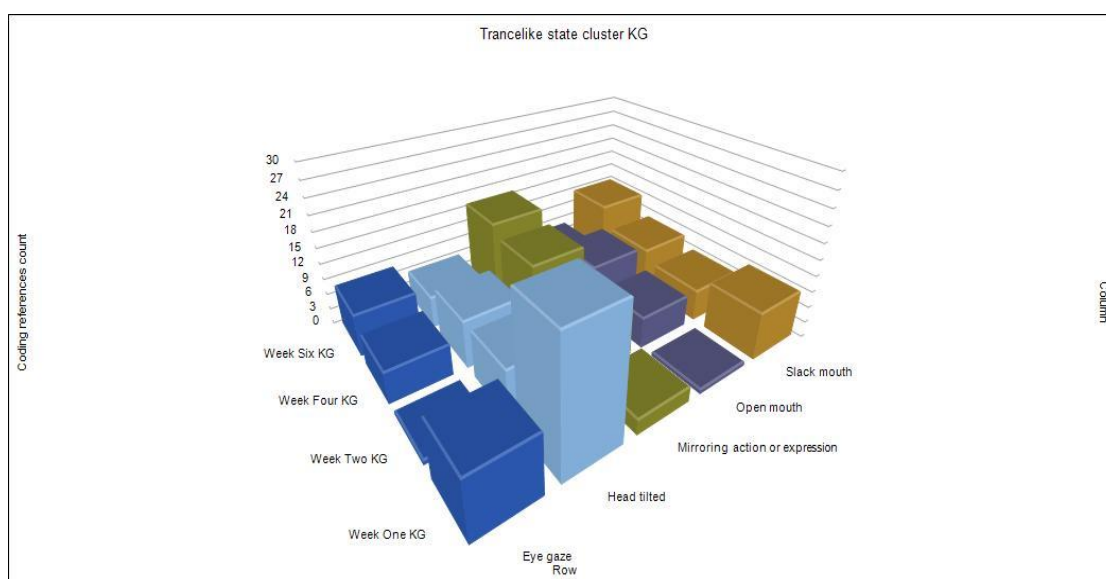
Figure 4.40 above illustrates that two Trancelike State indicators increased across the storytelling project. Several listeners in KG became so absorbed during a story in Week Six that they began to subconsciously *mirror* actions or expressions expressed in the tale. The majority of these *mirroring* indicators occurred during the story of "The Snooks family". This story was labelled as an augmented tale in the storytelling schedule but only has a candle as a simple prop. The power of the story relies on exaggerated facial expressions and the cumulative nature of the plot. Listeners in this story *mirrored* both the contorted facial expressions of the story characters as they attempted to blow out the candle and their distinct breathing patterns as their attempts failed. Interestingly as this pattern was repeated throughout the story the *mirroring* became *acting* as the listeners in KG joined in with the exaggerated breathing.

The indicator of *slack mouth* also increased across the storytelling project for KG. Within two minutes of the story "The teeny tiny woman" commencing, as shown in Figure 4.41 below, two listeners were immersed in the story with their mouths open and the following two minutes revealed another two instances of *slack mouth* in addition to seven instances of other indicators in the Trancelike State cluster.

Figure 4.41 *Extract from transcript showing combinations of Trancelike State indicators for KG*

Put it in her teeny tiny pocket and continued on her teeny tiny way.
Stella makes walking motion
Ray looks at Odette
Odette looks at Ray
Ray whispers to Odette
Odette smiles
Tiri has **head tilted**
Bill has fingers on mouth
When she got home, she put the teeny tiny bone in a teeny tiny cupboard and then feeling a teeny tiny bit tired she went up her teeny tiny stairs to her teeny tiny bed
TKG laughs
Odette looks at TKG and smiles
Florence looks at TKG and smiles
and laid down her teeny tiny head
Stella puts her head in her hands and puts her head on the side, mimicking sleep

For a teeny tiny sleep.

Florence puts head against clasped hands

Odette laughs

Florence laughs

Susan laughs

Marcel smiles

Clay smiles

She had been asleep for a teeny tiny time

Odette looks at teller

Florence looks at teller

Florence sits forward

Ray slumps forward

when out of the teeny tiny cupboard

Marcel is picking nose

she heard a teeny tiny voice say,

"Give me my bone."

She was a teeny tiny bit frightened,

Liz sits forward

so she pulled the teeny tiny covers over her teeny tiny head

Claire puts fingers in mouth

Fiona has fingers on mouth

and closed her teeny tiny eyes.

Tiri has **head tilted**

Tiri gazes at teller

Marcel has fingers on mouth

25.24

After a teeny tiny time, from the teeny tiny cupboard,

Odette has **mouth open**

Clay has fingers in mouth

Ray has **mouth open**

Florence **gazing** at teller

Claire **gazing** at teller

Bill **gazing** at teller

came a teeny tiny voice,

Extract from transcript for *"The teeny tiny woman"* Week Six for KG

There was an extremely high incidence of **head tilted** in Week One for KG which was not repeated in other weeks of the storytelling project. While **head tilted** was certainly an indicator of Trancelike State behaviour in the older groups and was accompanied by other indicators in the cluster, this may not be the case for children as young as five years old. Only Stella in this class displayed other trancelike indicators while **tilting her head** and only on one occasion. For other listeners in this class **tilting their head** occurred following an unexpected event in the story, such as when I stood up to move a nesting doll to another part of the classroom or when classmates had laughed or made a comment. In this context **head tilting** for some young children may be more closely aligned with Entering or re-entering the Story Realm and only becomes an indicator in the Trancelike cluster as they become older. This query is worthy of further investigation which the time constraints of the current research unfortunately did not allow for. If the re-alignment of **head tilting** for KG with the Entering Story Realm cluster rather than the Trancelike State cluster is indeed the case however then the pattern of occurrences of the Trancelike State in KG more closely resembles the continuous increase that was observed in the other groups.

KG displayed Trancelike State indicators across the entire storytelling project. They were certainly eager storytelling participants who discovered that they could be active collaborators in a storytelling event. This new aspect to storytelling caused some conflict for KG who struggled between the total immersion in the story realm and the desire to actively participate through Collaborative Listening.

4.4.5   Outcome of Trancelike State Engagement indicators

As analysis of the data continued a significant pattern began to emerge. Trancelike State Engagement indicators overwhelmingly occurred in stories told in the traditional manner or with minimal props rather than augmented stories. Augmented stories that relied heavily on visual props provided a diversion for the attention of listeners that prevented them from concentrating on creating the story images in their own minds. For 6G only a few listeners such as Sylvia and Edmund were able to immerse themselves so completely in a story, regardless of the presentation style, that they were able to slip into a Trancelike State during an augmented story such as "Little Half Chick". In 3G Bessie, Robert and Matt were able to display Trancelike indicators in the midst of highly interactive stories such as "How to make a small house into a large one." In KG both Stella and Odette regularly displayed an ability to immerse

themselves in a story that was told in the augmented style. The relationship between these two different styles of presenting stories and the Trancelike state is intriguing and worthy of further study. It is envisaged that data obtained during the research project will be utilised at a future time to investigate this relationship.

The individual storytelling experience prior to the current research project of those listeners in Kindergarten Grade and Third Grade who displayed Trancelike State indicators in Week One is unknown although the teacher of Kindergarten Grade did disclose that she regularly shared stories with her class prior to the project commencing. It was beyond the scope of the current research to determine previous storytelling experience in individual participants but the ability to Enter into the Story Realm, Collaborate in the storytelling and even display Trancelike State indicators certainly leads to an assumption that these particular listeners had previous enjoyable experiences with storytelling.

The occurrence of the Trancelike State also relied on a storytelling environment free of other distractions. Movement by the teacher or classmates around the class, conversations or other nearby noise like printing from computers during a story, distracted listeners and brought them out of the story realm. Interestingly, noise outside the classroom did not appear to have a great impact on successful immersion in the story realm. This was demonstrated by KG during Week Four when they continued to listen attentively and in several cases display Trancelike State indicators even though the teacher in the class next door continued to yell at her class so loudly that it was picked up clearly by the video microphone.

The contributing factors of story type, noise and movement distraction should be taken into account by storytellers who wish to transport their listeners into complete immersion in the story realm and induce a Trancelike State. While immersion into a Trancelike State by no means needs to be the aim of every storytelling event it can be a powerful outcome of a storylistening experience.

4.5   Summary

Chapter 4 has presented a means of observing and analysing the first strand of the Indicators of Engagement. Figure 4.1 presented a model of clusters of principal Indicators of Engagement in the Individual Familiarisation strand and provided a visual description of the indicators that can be observed as audience members listen to a story.

The storytelling experiences of the participants in the storytelling project described in numerous extracts above and the empirical data of the indicators show that the Individual Familiarisation strand of the storytelling engagement process is a lineal one. Listeners must first gain an ability to Enter into the Story Realm before they become Collaborative Listeners. This process does not follow a uniform pattern for all listeners. That is, individual listeners will gain the ability to Enter the Story Realm at different rates to others. Individual listeners will also gain the ability to remain in the story realm for longer periods of time at different rates to others and all individual listeners will adopt their own preferred means of settling themselves into the world of the story.

As the first strand of the storytelling engagement process was adopted instances of distractions lessened and listeners began to respond to the stories they heard in various ways, as shown in the Collaborative Engagement cluster. It is during this stage of the storytelling process that individual responses to stories begin to be displayed. Rather than smile, laugh or act out the events in a story simply because a classmate is doing it, listeners who have reached this phase begin to respond to stories in an individual manner. They laugh or smile at a story without the need to look at their classmate for approval and their facial expressions begin to reveal that they are finding their own meaning within the story.

As these first two clusters are encountered listeners discover that listening to stories and indeed being Collaborative Listeners has value for them. At this point of the process listeners begin to 'want more' from the storytelling experience and they develop an ability to immerse themselves so completely in the world of the story that they are no longer aware of outside noise or distractions and they display Trancelike State indicators. Stories told in the traditional manner, using only voice and gesture appear to be the type of story that most easily and often elicits the Trancelike State. Evidence from the current research showed that the props and visual distractions of

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augmented stories prevented total immersion in the story and indicators in the Trancelike State cluster occurred less frequently. That is not to say that listeners can never enter into the Trancelike State when hearing an augmented story. Rather it would appear that the content, plot and character presentation in an augmented story must be so strong that it over-rides the distraction of the props for an individual listener. The meaning that an individual listener can derive from a particular story also plays a role in whether a Trancelike State occurs.

In the Individual Familiarisation strand of the storytelling engagement process the Collaboration in the storytelling event becomes focussed for the listener on the relationship between the storyteller and themselves. While the storyteller must read every member of the audience and gauge their responses to the story, for the individual listener at this point in the process the focus is on their own personal response to what the storyteller is sharing with them. It has also been noted that the lower portion of the face, that is, the chin, the mouth, and smiling and laughing are all prominent indicators in this first strand of storytelling engagement. It is suggested that this is a result of the audience mirroring the storytelling event as a speech act. Is this a subconscious understanding by child listeners of the primarily oral nature of storytelling and how meaning is expressed initially through language? This element of storytelling is worthy of further investigation.

However the thesis will now move on in the next chapter to an examination of the second strand of the storytelling engagement process called here Relational Effects. In this strand participants in the current research began to progress from singular collaboration with the storyteller to collaboration within the group where individual meanings derived from the stories were shared with others.

CHAPTER 5. INDICATORS OF ENGAGEMENT PART TWO: RELATIONAL EFFECTS

5.1   Indicators of engagement: The Relational Effects strand

While listeners are developing the Individual Familiarisation strand of the Engagement with storytelling process their responses and behaviour are beginning to have a growing impact on the Relational Effects strand of the process. It is the contention of this thesis that these two strands continue to interweave and impact on each other as storytelling events and experiences continue.

This chapter will examine the "Relational Effects" strand of the Indicators of Engagement, given in Figure 5.1 below, consisting of the **Group Dynamics Engagement** and **Language Engagement** clusters. These two clusters develop together as listeners begin to express the meanings that they have gleaned from a story and find enjoyment in being part of a group that displays positive audience behaviour and response to storytelling. Rather than a linear progression as revealed in the Individualisation Strand, these two clusters develop in a reciprocal relationship. As the Group Dynamics improve and the audience experience becomes more positive, individual listeners become more comfortable in expressing their individual responses through effective Language while simultaneously engaging more readily with stories. These two distinct clusters of engagement continue to affect each other throughout the process, resulting in a strong storytelling communal activity.

The format of Chapter 5 will follow the format of the previous chapter. The chapter will explore the two engagement clusters that form the Relational Effects strand as depicted in colour in Figure 5.1 below. Each of the principal Indicators of Engagement will be discussed for the three classes involved in the study.

Figure 5.1
The Engagement with storytelling process: highlighted in colour - The Relational Effects strand
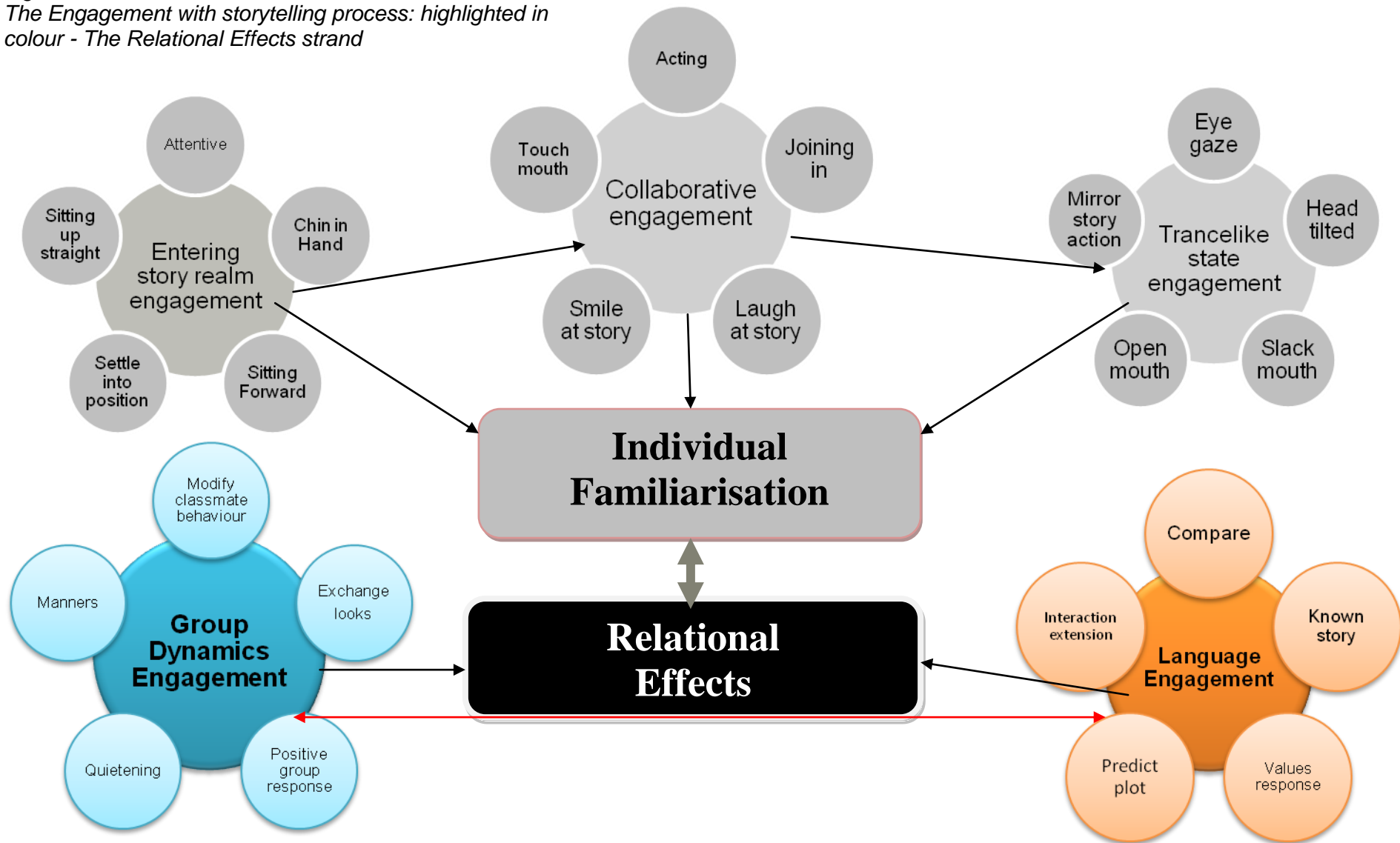
5.2   Language Engagement

The clusters discussed in the previous chapter that formed the "Individual Familiarisation" strand illustrated the immediate individual responses of listeners to the stories that they heard. The indicators in all three clusters relied heavily on observations of body and facial gestures. The two clusters in the Relational Effects strand - the **Language Engagement** and **Group Dynamics Engagement** clusters - relied predominantly on the verbal responses of listeners and observational interaction with classmates, their fellow audience members. The first indicators to be discussed below fell within what is termed here 'the Language Engagement' cluster. The current research focussed on those aspects of language that related specifically to elements of narrative construction that regular story listeners become familiar with.

Figure 5. 2 The Language Engagement cluster

Amaro and Moreira (2001) discussed the importance of sharing stories with children in order to build both their linguistic and literacy skills. Building on the work of Polkinghorne (1988) they stated that children build the skills to identify the structure of narrative between the ages of two and ten. This assertion supported the inclusion of kindergarten children in the current research as a group who were capable of listening to and responding to oral storytelling. Third and Sixth Grade children provided two other groups of children to observe whose capacity to respond to storytelling in a verbal

way should have been successively more developed. A set of indicators that would assess the language responses to storytelling was therefore required.

The work of Grainger contributed to the formulation of indicators in the Language Engagement cluster, particularly his thoughts on children's developing ability to predict plots as they are exposed to an increasing variety of stories:

> Once children have become familiar with such plots, they can use them to predict the nature of other tales and the action within them. This structuralist perspective also proposes that it is not only the plots of traditional tales which remain relatively constant but also the kinds of characters that exist within them. (Grainger, 1997, pp. 27-28)

Grainger further noted that a focus on storytelling enabled children to build an ability to predict and hypothesise but also to be able to compare and see connections across stories and this ability is incorporated in the indicators used in the current research. It was noted as the storytelling project continued that the verbal responses to stories became more frequent and articulate. The Language Engagement cluster discussed here therefore relies more heavily on the verbal responses of listeners to reveal the indicators in this group. These indicators occurred both during a story and immediately following a story when the participants spontaneously discussed the tale just heard. The indicators in the Language Engagement cluster are outlined in Table 5.3 below.

Table 5.3 *Principal Language Engagement Indicators*

Principal Language Engagement indicators	Coding description	Number of instances
Compare or critique	Listener mentions another story/film/book that is similar or reminds them of the current story or Listener indicates with actions or comments on how the story is wrong, or could be better. Listener wants to know about an aspect of storytelling	56
Interaction extension	Answer direct questions or participate in conversations but add details about their own interpretation of a story	101
Known story	Listener believes they know story or recalls earlier story	66
Predicting plot or style	Anticipating the action or event about to happen in the story or anticipating the type/genre of story about to be told	190
Values response	Listener places own values on action in story - physical or verbal response	60

The indicators in the Language Engagement cluster revealed not only a developing recognition of the components that make up a story but also highlighted the numerous benefits that a prolonged programme of storytelling can bring to children. As mentioned in Chapter 3, oral storytelling can enhance and broaden the vocabulary of listeners (Grainger, 1997; Maguire, 1985). Storytellers should not "dumb down" the language they use in telling stories as by sharing an oral story, where the language is in context with the culture, age and genre of the tale, unfamiliar words and modes of expression can be understood. By using the appropriate language, the story becomes the central focus, with all its richness and novelty. Terms and phrases such as 'calabash', 'Oh most honourable mother', 'Festival of the Eighth Moon', 'You aint got the brains you was born with', and 'May your tail wither and disappear', were used across all grades, with no interruptions for explanations made according to age group.

As mentioned in the previous chapter there was a spike in the Language Engagement cluster indicators in Week Four across all classes. I believe this is again due to the adoption of the Chambers/Harley diagram in the preparation stage of storytelling

project. This method of preparing and presenting stories highlights the place of dialogue in a story and makes it easier for listeners to distinguish the dialogues of different characters. Using this method the storyteller knows when to adopt the stance and directional view of different characters and the narrator thus giving the audience visual clues about which character is prominent. By highlighting the dialogue in a story, listeners can recognise it as an important element and can utilise it in meaning making and recognising the structural elements of stories. A worked example of the application of the Chamber/Harley method is contained in Appendix 1.

Given that I drew the stories that I told from a vast array of resources and have a fondness for unusual and very old tales, it was not surprising that there was a relatively low occurrence of the *known story* indicator compared to others in the Language Engagement cluster. The storytelling project was designed to expose participants to a wide range of oral stories encompassing a wide variety of genres and content. It was interesting to note therefore the growing tendency in all classes involved in the research to attempt to link these new stories with ones that they were already familiar with. The chapter will now proceed with an examination of the responses of individual classes and how they were observed using the Language Engagement indicators, commencing with Sixth Grade.

5.2.1   Sixth Grade (6G)

Table 5.4 *Table showing occurrences of Language Engagement Indicators for 6G*

Storytelling Week	Compare or critique	Interaction extension	Known story	Predicting plot or style	Values response	Total cluster indicators
Week One	0	0	0	0	0	0
Week Two	2	2	9	4	1	18
Week Four	7	14	7	11	4	43
Week Six	13	8	11	13	6	51

As noted earlier Sixth Grade was of interest not only to me as my 'challenge class' but also to the Assistant Principal who selected the class as participants in the study based on their reputation as the worst behaved class in the school. Their response to a prolonged programme of storytelling, particularly in the areas of language engagement and group dynamics was a source of anticipation for both of us. 6G demonstrated increases in the three indicators of *compare or critique*, *predicting plot or style* and *values response* in the Language Engagement cluster across the storytelling

programme but increased across the total Language engagement cluster as shown in Table 5.4 above.

The ability of listeners in 6G to *critique* a story in meaningful ways, to identify a ***known*** or similar story and to ***predict the plot*** of a story, were all heightened during the project as illustrated in Figure 5.5 below.

Figure 5.5 *3-D Chart showing principal Language Engagement Indicators for 6G*
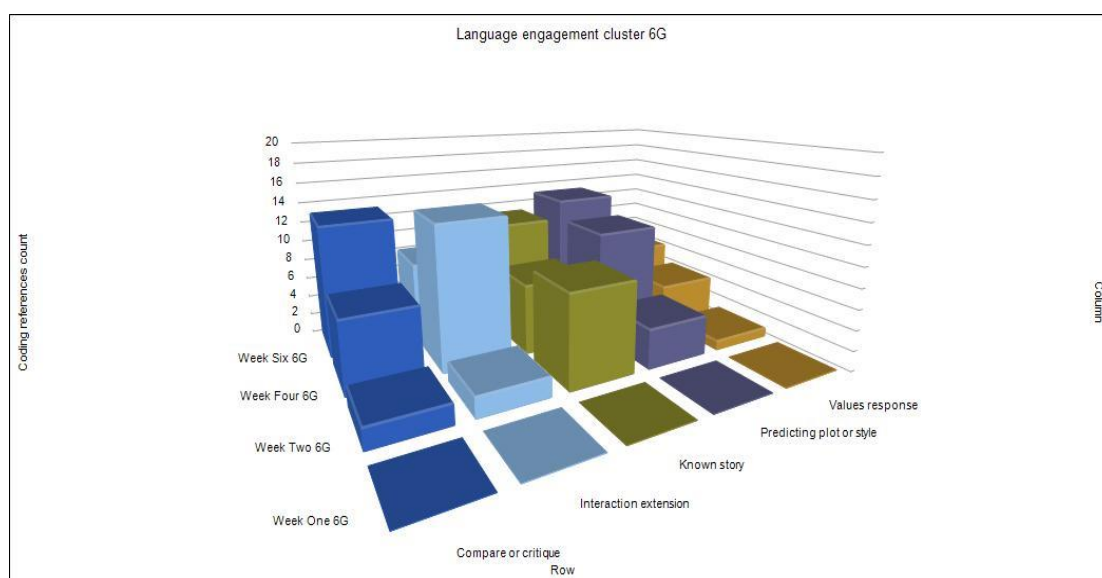
Several listeners in 6G such as Billy and Tony revealed a strengthening appreciation of language when they expressed an interest in the methodology of storytelling; of how the complex components of a story could be memorised and retold. Several students initiated conversations with me in the playground or travelling between classrooms to ask about how stories can be learned and told. The interest shown by listeners in 6G in the rich language and unusual speech patterns found in storytelling was evident in the latter stages of the project in stories such as "The selkie girl" (Cooper, 1986) illustrated in Figure 5.6 below.

Figure 5.6 *Extract from transcript illustrating developing interest in language for 6G*

And so they stayed together, and after a few years had a family of their own. And they were beautiful babies; healthy and beautiful. And if any noticed the webbing between the fingers of the children, none said anything.

Tony looks at teller and frowns

Patricia puts fingers in mouth

Clarissa puts finger on mouth

Rian puts chin in hand

Tyson looks at his own hand and splays his fingers.

Roger looks carefully at his hand

Tony leans forward

Extract from "The Selkie girl" Week Six for 6G

The example above highlights the increased tendency of listeners in 6G to quietly consider the language they heard in the context of stories. They no longer displayed a need to discuss it with their classmates or announce their thoughts to the class in order to validate their response to a story, while increasingly being prepared to share their thoughts with classmates when appropriate. Listeners in 6G were seeking their own meanings in stories; an appreciation of the complex layers that may be found in a tale that only occurs with an increased knowledge of storytelling. The quiet consideration and reflection on stories was particularly obvious when compared to the ongoing disruptive response to a story in Week Two as illustrated by the extract in Figure 5.7 below.

Figure 5.7 *Extract from transcript showing undeveloped individual response to storytelling language in 6G*

On really hot days, the youngest daughter loved to go into the dark forest where it was cool. She particularly liked to go and sit near an old cool well.

Megan is making dramatic movements to suit the narrative.

Freddy has chin in hands

Ethan looks at teller

Leigh sits forward

And that's where she would play with her glowing ball.

Megan mimes throwing ball into the air

One day,

She fell over - Frank

as she threw the ball up, she failed to catch it, and the ball rolled along the ground and into the water of the well.

Frank raises hand

I know this - Ophelia whispered

She looked at the water and it was so deep and dark that she couldn't even see the bottom.

"Oh my ball. How am I going to get back my ball? What am I going to do?"

And she began to cry.

Get a frog - Frank making hopping motion on desk

Megan makes sobbing sounds.

Then she began to sob.

Patricia leans forward to whisper to Rian

"Why are you crying so, beautiful princess?" said a voice beside her.

"What could possibly be making you so sad?"When she turned around making its way out of the water was a..

A frog – Megan

A frog.

Megan raises arms in the air in a victory salute.

Acknowledge her non-verbally

"Oh old water-splasher, what would you know? I've lost my ball, and I can't get it back.

This is on an old fairytale show – Frank

Do you watch that show? – Megan

Frank nods head

It's a good show – Frank

Extract from "The frog king" Week Two for 6G

The extract in Figure 5.7 was an example of one of the low points of the storytelling project for me. This particular version of the Grimm's fairy tale of "The frog king"

(Grimm & Grimm, 1992) is usually one of my favourite stories to tell. It contains poetic language that evokes the earthiness of the original tale. The inability of 6G to engage with the language of the story and their constant poor audience behaviour throughout the story were extremely challenging. One particularly disruptive student was asked to move to the back of the class and was promptly taken outside by the teacher. I continually paused throughout the story to regain the attention of the class. My field notes for this session state that they were the noisiest and rudest class I had ever told stories to and I wondered what criteria had been used to include them in the research project as I did not know at that stage about the Assistant Principal's private research agenda.

As the storytelling project continued however the language expressed by students in this class became more sophisticated and appropriate and listeners in 6G began to constructively **critique** the stories they heard. They suggested shortening some stories such as the "Teeny Tiny woman" (The teeny tiny woman, 1962) or queried the details in a story that they did not believe were consistent such as the physical description of the "Little Half-chick" (Little Half-Chick, 1962) or the actions of the old woman and the girl in "Pot Cook" as illustrated by the questions asked at the end of the story as shown in Figure 5.8 below

Figure 5.8 *Extract from transcript showing critiquing response to story plots in 6G*

Now, you had some questions about that story. Someone had asked a question as I was first telling it.

Billy raises hand.

Yep?

If she was so hungry, and the girl had strawberries, why didn't she just go and find the strawberries? – Billy

Do you think she really wanted the food?

No. – Billy

She wanted the other pot? – Edmund

Do you think so? Why do you think she asked for the food from someone who's poor?

Clarissa raises hand.

Yep?

I think it was so she would have an excuse to give away the pot. – Clarissa

> Umm. I think it was a test.
>
> Tony raises hand
>
> Don't you?
>
> *Yeah, cause if she was hungry she would have just put the pot on the table and said 'Pot cook.' – Duncan*
>
> Extract from "Pot cook" Week Four for 6G

The exchange depicted above was a very encouraging one. Students in 6G had begun to look for meanings in the stories they heard and to **compare** the actions of character in stories with their own life experiences and expectations. This particular comparative and reflective ability aligns with Amaro and Moreira's observation that:

> Children learn to produce and understand causal and temporal structured plots that are organized around a variety of themes and involve certain characters. Besides that, they also learn to develop the necessary skills to recognize when a plot makes sense or not. (Amaro & Moreira, 2001, p. 6)

The instances of **comparing and critiquing** increased from seven in Week Four to 13 in Week Six. In recalling stories told previously in the storytelling project at the beginning of the session listeners in 6G gave their opinions of stories they had heard. The story of "The severed head" (The severed head, 1998) gained the approval of Frank who declared it "a really good story," accompanied by the nods of several heads. This story was the one most heavily requested for a retelling by 6G following the inclusion of it as an additional story at the end of Week Three. Edmund stated that he really enjoyed the Cornish story of "Beth Gellert" (Beth Gellert, 1994), told in Week Five, even though it was so sad. Upon hearing the musical refrain in "The fairy crane" (Sakade, 1964) Tony immediately **compared** it to the refrain in the Caribbean story of "Fee Fee Foo" (Benjamin, 1984) also told in Week Five, declaring it to be "weird" which I assumed at the time to refer to the fact that two stories in two weeks had contained prominent musical refrains.

The different rate at which listeners reach or adopt the varying steps of the storytelling process was highlighted by Rachel during Week Six. At the conclusion of "The fairy crane" Rachel stated that it was a sad story while Tony believed that the hunter in the story "got what he deserved." The comment from Rachel was significant because while she had been an attentive listener in previous sessions, the instance above was the

first time she had volunteered a comment in the entire project but was only the beginning of several throughout this session. Rachel had become a listener who was prepared to share the meaning she had found in a story with her storytelling community.

As noted above, at the beginning of the storytelling project, 6G would resume private conversations with classmates in between stories. As the project continued however, 6G became very demonstrative at the conclusion of stories and wanted to share their responses with me as the storyteller and the rest of the class. They would either offer spontaneous applause or give their honest opinion about a story (which is very refreshing for a storyteller). This honest opinion was expressed at the conclusion of a nonsense story "The teeny tiny woman" as illustrated in Figure 5.8 below.

Figure 5.9 *Extract from transcripts showing honest opinion of stories*

but she threw off the covers, sat up in her teeny tiny bed, and said, in her teeny tiniest loudest voice,

"TAKE IT!!!"

Scared me. – Roger

Rosie jerks her head

Patricia sits up straight and smiles

Clarissa opens her mouth wide and puts hands to mouth

Stacey laughs

Rachel smiles

OK - Duncan

Tyson smiles

Jeez Julie – Tony

You know that was getting a teeny tiny bit annoying. – Billy

It does doesn't it?

Christine smiles

Patrica smiles

Sylvia smiles

When my father used to tell that story, he would go on and on,

It was just a teeny tiny bit sus. – Tony

up and down the stairs, and in and out the door.

You have a funny father - Rachel

> *It would be better if she died! – Tyson*
>
> *That story was funny but just a bit too long – Billy.*
>
> *My bum's a teeny tiny bit sore. – Tony*
>
> Extract from "The teeny tiny woman" Week Six for 6G

The comments depicted above were presented in the form of good-natured banter which was received by me with a smile. This good natured exchange indicated to me that 6G felt comfortable enough to express their honest opinions of a story, to offer a considered *critique* and to confidently comment on stories and to utilise story phrases in personal contexts.

Numerous students in 6G displayed a strong recall of the wide range of stories that they had heard over the course of the storytelling project, coded as *known stories*. They were keen to name their favourite stories during the recapping period at the beginning of sessions and often approached me outside of their classroom during recess or lunch to mention stories that they recalled. Reports received from several students in 6G that they had shared the story of "Little Half-chick" at home to explain to their family why they had a weather vane at their house, were even more rewarding. There were requests for certain stories to be repeated as the project continued and as mentioned the story of "The severed head" had more than one telling by request.

Comparison to, or recall of, *known stories* was not restricted exclusively to tales that had been shared during the storytelling project. Listeners in 6G also identified connections to movies or television shows that had used adaptations of the stories they were hearing. While this ability and willingness to recall previous stories was displayed in the *known story* indicator it also assisted in the growth of the ability to *predict* events in stories. Students in 6G certainly recalled other stories that the current story reminded them of so much that they thought it was 'their' story about to be told. For example in Week Four the story of "How frog lost his tale" (1994) was instantly (if erroneously) identified as the Australian Aboriginal story of "Tiddalik the Frog".

The *values* indicator, which increased steadily across the storytelling project, was perhaps the hardest Language Engagement indicator to measure as it is a highly personal response to a story. Only those facial expressions such as shaking the head or frowning, or verbal expressions that were clearly a response to the action of a character in a story, were counted as *values* indicators. This indicator was certainly

one of the most emotive responses to stories and occurred when listeners had been thoroughly immersed in the story realm. The *values* indicator always implied that the listener had a personal response to the actions of a character. There may have been other *values* indicators that were conveyed with nodding or opening the mouth or eyes wide but without actually questioning the listener this could not be confirmed. The character of Little Half-chick presented in Week Four was so outrageously selfish and proud that he prompted several outbursts and shakes of the head from listeners in 6G who clearly disapproved of his actions. The husband/hunter character in "The fairy crane" also met with the disapproval of listeners in 6G and prompted Tony to declare that "he got what he deserved" as mentioned previously.

The *values* expressed by listeners in 6G changed in tone and frequency as the project continued. In Week Two the only *values* response came from Frank who disparagingly judged the old man in the story of "How to make a small house into a large one" (Bauer, 1993) as an 'idiot' as he followed the advice of the Rabbi. As the project progressed however the *values* responses of listeners in 6G were prompted by the anti-social or selfish acts of characters and reflected the developing social stance and sense of fair play in the students. This was epitomised for me by the simple statement made by Tony during the story of "The fairy crane" in Week Six. At the beginning of the story a hunter discovered a beautiful crane caught in a trap and rather than capturing the bird for himself, released it. Tony responded to this act by stating "*He let it go*" and nodded his head. Had this story been told early in the project, I have little doubt that Tony, like Frank, would have declared the character to be "an idiot" for missing an opportunity at another's expense.

The indicator termed *interaction extension* was an example of listeners attempting to express their interpretations of a story. The complexity of these interactions increased as the storytelling project progressed. In Week Two the two responses were matter of fact answers to direct questions from me. Nathan responded that he had "seen the movie" when asked if anyone had read the story of "Alice in Wonderland" while Rachel answered succinctly that "he's a priest" to the question of "What is a rabbi?"

As the project continued the nature of *interaction extensions* became more complex and increased in length. In Week Four the *extensions* were predominantly about a personal story the boys were keen to share concerning an incident during a school football match. Listeners in 6G had begun to recognise that storytelling was an

acceptable form of communicating life events, at least during the sessions with me. Students had also begun to recognise the important role of dialogue in storytelling as highlighted by Jason in the example in Figure 5.10 below.

Figure 5.10 Extract from transcripts showing recognition of the role of dialogue in storytelling in 6G

Someone was telling me a tale before about what happened at sport earlier. It sounded to me like a bit of a tall story. You know how we had tall stories last week?

No it wasn't - Tony

No, it wasn't. It was all true – Jason - grinning

You should have seen it, the whole footy team was in it, and they were throwing punches everywhere. – Tony

Wow

And if there was one more punch, the ref would have called the game off. – Tony

I'll call the game off it happens again – Jason **in a high voice**

I hit [?] by accident - Duncan to Jason

It sounds very dramatic

[Indistinct] - Duncan to Tony

I hit the ref – Tony

Charlie turned to face Tony

Rian smiling

Extract from Week Four for 6G

The written extract above fails to do justice to the story incident described. Each of the boys was animated in the telling of their communal tale and the interchange between them was seamless. Jason's timing of his impersonation of the referee was perfect and every participant in the story knew which character the dialogue came from. Even those students not directly involved either in the football game itself or the narrating of the tale were interested listeners, as illustrated above by the responses of Charlie and Rian. More importantly however for themselves as storytellers, was the boys' recognition of me as their audience. Each of the boys involved in the story deliberately maintained eye contact with me as the story was related. The Relational Effects aspect of the Engagement with storytelling process had well and truly begun for listeners in 6G by Week Four.

The recognition that they could be storytellers and have someone respectfully listen to their tale had a dramatic effect on 6G. Later in the same session following the story of "How frog lost his tail" we discussed how several of the class had initially mistaken the story for the Aboriginal story of "Tiddalik the frog." Billy immediately informed me that he is Aboriginal and knew the story of Tiddalik. Tony immediately responded by respectfully asking Billy "Can you tell us one day?" which highlighted for me the enhanced prestige storytelling had assumed for listeners in 6G.

Interaction extensions following the story "How frog lost his tail" were much longer than previous instances and were an indication of listeners in 6G attempting to deliberately find meaning in the story. Another interesting aspect of the *interaction extensions* that occurred from Week Four onwards was that they often incorporated personal information. Students in 6G had begun to bring their own life experiences to the meaning making of stories. For example several students volunteered that they or close family owned weathervanes following the story of "The little Half-chick" while Tony volunteered that his aunty was from "Czechoslovakia" as soon as he heard the title for the story of "Pot cook: a Czech tale" and he displayed rapt attention as the story was told. The story of "Pot cook" prompted a great deal of discussion and was an indication that listeners in 6G were truly immersing themselves in the world of the story. This seemingly simple folktale stirred concern, judgement and debate amongst 6G, most often about the motivation of the old woman in the story. During the course of the story Tony *predicted* that the old woman who gave the gift of a magical cooking pot to a poor girl was actually a witch and his shouted warnings directly to the girl were heartfelt as illustrated in Figure 5.11 below.

Figure 5.11 *Extract from transcript showing prediction of plot in 6G*

She looked hard and far in the wood, and finally she had strawberries to fill the pot.
She sat down by a well to eat her lunch,
Christine sits up straight
Christine frowns
but suddenly, out of nowhere, was an old lady,
Billy makes a face
Billy looks at Edmund
coming towards her carrying a pot.
A fairy - Jason in a high voice
Yay - Edmund

> "Hello little girl."
>
> **It's a witch. – Tony**
>
> *Tony looks at teller*
>
> "Pretty, pretty little girl."
>
> **Don't. Don't fall for it. –Tony waving his arms about wildly**.
>
> "I am so hungry. Can you spare some food? I have not had anything in my stomach for days and days."
>
> **Don't fall for it. Don't fall for it. – Tony, still waving arms about.**
>
> ....
>
> "Here, take my pot"
>
> Billy opens mouth wide
>
> and when you want something to eat, it will cook up the most wonderful gruel."
>
> **It's a trick – Tony, *putting his head in his hands again.***
>
> "All you have to do is put it on the table,
>
> **Don't be stupid girl - Tony**
>
> Extract from "Pot cook" Week Four for 6G

Tony's immersion in the story of "Pot cook" was absolute, as his direct warnings to the character of the girl show. It is the contention of the thesis that tales told in a manner that utilises the fourth wall effectively, can capture a listener's imagination so completely that for the duration of the story, the listener inhabits the story realm.

There were fewer instances of ***interaction extension*** in Week Six which I believe was a direct result of me asking fewer questions during the stories. One of the tools that storytellers use to encourage engagement in stories is to ask relevant interaction questions of the audience at suitable points in the story. This encourages listeners to think about the story they are hearing and to build a relationship with the storyteller. By Week Six of the storytelling project 6G were displaying such sustained interest and enthusiastic responses to stories that interaction questions became unnecessary. The eight ***interaction extensions*** that did occur were thoughtful, relevant and stated in the spirit of wanting to share their meanings of a story.

As the storytelling project continued 6G began to *predict* aspects or actions in the plot of stories, particularly in the complex story of "The Selkie Girl." Often these *predictions* were said very softly just to themselves in stark contrast to the calling out that occurred in Week Two during "The frog king". It was highly satisfying to see 6G become sophisticated and eager collaborators in storytelling who were keen to share their responses respectfully with their classmates.

A similar development occurred for listeners in 3G who adapted from listeners who initially spontaneously yelled out during stories in a competitive manner to listeners who found meaning in the stories that they heard and were keen to share it with their storytelling community. The indicators in the Language Engagement cluster displayed by 3G will be discussed in the following section.

5.2.2   Third Grade (3G)

Table 5.12 *Table showing occurrences of Language Engagement Indicators for 3G*

Storytelling week	Compare or critique	Interaction extension	Known story	Predicting plot or style	Values response	Total cluster indicators
Week One	3	6	0	34	1	44
Week Two	4	7	3	25	1	40
Week Four	7	5	4	22	24	62
Week Six	5	9	7	43	7	71

The listeners in 3G revealed a developing sense of story through the Language Engagement indicators which increased in total across the entire storytelling project. It should be noted however that I believe the occurrences of *predicting plot or style* are exaggerated in Week One. During the story of "The tailor" Perry and several other listeners frequently called out what item of clothing they *predicted* the tailor would make from scraps of material. This interaction in the story was motivated by a spirit of competition rather than Collaborative Engagement, as discussed previously. These occurrences were often incorrect but were still counted as *predictions*. When the 13 erroneous *predictions* in this story are discounted the 21 actual predictions are a more feasible figure than those displayed below in Figure 5.13.

Figure 5.13 *3-D Chart showing principal Language Engagement Indicators for 3G*
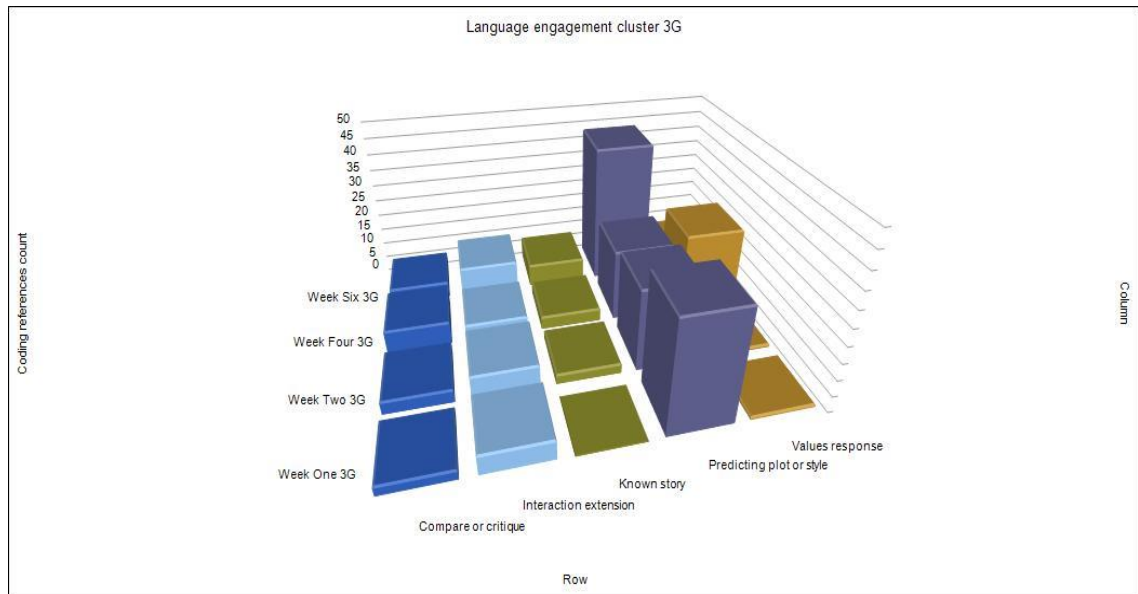
The instances of **compare and critique** indicators in 3G followed a similar pattern as the instances for 6G, as has previously been discussed. In Week One the three instances of **compare and critique** were very abrupt or only marginally on topic. The first instance was an observation by Lennon that a classmate had chosen the wrong section of a nesting doll when asked to retrieve a character from the story of "Naughty Marysia" (Pellowski, 1984d). The second occurrence was a vague **comparison** made by Perry to Humpty Dumpty when the story of "The tailor" was described as being very old. The third comment in this initial session with 3G was a **critique** from Robert about the length of "The tailor" story. During the second storytelling session the comments that fell within the **compare and critique** indicator became more focussed and relevant. The first two comments were **critical** comments by Perry about the complexity of the string pattern in the story of "Grandmother's candles" (Pellowski, 1984b). The other two were statements of approval of the same story by Celia and Trevor. These four **compare and critique** indicators in the second session were immediately relevant to the stories being told.

Listeners in 3G by Week Four and Week Six began to **compare and critique** the stories that they heard in a more focussed manner. Stories or characters within them were considered to be funny, scary or in one brutally honest assessment, boring. By Week Four Perry felt comfortable enough with me as a storyteller to give me an honest opinion of the story "How frog lost his tale": "That was boring." This was in spite of the fact that during the story Perry had **smiled**, **laughed** and maintained **eye gaze**.

Perhaps the lack of opportunities for active interaction or *joining in* was a disappointing aspect of the story for Perry at this stage of the storytelling project and was an indication that he was not yet ready to move into the Relational Effects strand. The second story in this session met with more approval from Perry and elicited a favourable *critique* of the prop used at the end of the story to represent the character of Little Half-chick. Other students in 3G also approved of the prop. Other *critiques* in this session were acknowledgements that a story was funny, "Lazy Tok" (Skipper, 1983), or that a character was "creepy" in "Pot Cook". There were brief *comparisons* made between elements in the story of "Pot Cook" and "Strega Nona" (De Paola, 1975) but all of the *compare and critique* indicators in this fourth session of the storytelling project were relatively simplistic even though they were more relevant to the stories told.

The instances of *compare and critique* indicators lessened slightly in Week Six from seven to five but were more pertinent and displayed a more complex understanding of storytelling and the meanings derived from it. Upon hearing the description of the Teeny Tiny Woman Perry *compared* her to magical dwarfs that had appeared in earlier stories. When the policeman in the story of "The Snooks family" inquired if anything has been stolen, Perry immediately replied "Only their brains." Rather than a cheeky or frivolous comment this response was an apt *critique* of the ridiculous behaviour of all the Snooks characters in the story. The numerous requests for the story to be immediately repeated may also be viewed as a positive *critique* and appreciation of the pure fun element of the story.

The indicators of *interaction extension* increased in frequency for 3G over the entire duration of the storytelling project with a dip noted in Week Four as illustrated in Table 5.12 above. The teacher of 3G had warned me as I entered the room for this session that the class was very unsettled that day for some unknown reason. While they were certainly attentive and collaborated well during the actual stories they were very distracted in between stories. I commented about the distracted behaviour in the field notes for that day as noted in Figure 5.14 below.

Figure 5.14 *Extract from Field notes showing distraction in 3G*

Hear T3G reading riot act to the class as I leave the room.

This class very attentive when listening to stories, but not very attentive in class discussion.

J. Mundy-Taylor. Field notes August 17, 2004.

Those students who responded to ***interactive invitations*** or questions in between stories gave very abrupt, direct answers rather than more complex answers that would have been coded as ***interaction extension***. The field notes further reveal that I later had a discussion with the teacher and it was decided that stretching activities should be included for 3G in future storytelling sessions if they appeared as restless again. This highly restless state seemed to be a 'one off' however, as far as the storytelling sessions were concerned and stretching exercises were not required for the remainder of the storytelling project.

The willingness and ability of listeners in 3G to engage in story-related conversations developed throughout the course of the storytelling project. Students in this class lengthened their replies to my ***interaction questions*** from simple yes or no answers and Perry's succinct answer of "A dude that believes in God" in response to the question of "What is a rabbi?" in Week Two to more complex answers and conversations, coded as ***interaction extensions***, as the project progressed. In Week Six of the project students in 3G were contributing their own relevant stories at the conclusion of a tale as illustrated by Marlee in Figure 5.15 below.

Figure 5.15 *Extract from transcript showing interaction extension in 3G*

When I was a kid, in preschool, these two boys were chasing a peacock. – Marlee

Oh were they?

And it was running through the trees – Marlee

I hope it didn't turn around and start chasing them; they have sharp beaks.

Robert raises hand

And some of its feathers came off. – Marlee

Extract from "The wild bird" Week Six for 3G

The short story related by Marlee in the figure above followed the drawn story of "The wild bird" (Pellowski, 1984f) which prompted an enthusiastic discussion about what the drawing resembled at different stages of the tale. It was interesting for me to hear Marlee extend on that discussion and draw on her own life experience to tell her storytelling community a short story.

For listeners in 3G the actions of characters that had a negative impact on other characters elicited the most *values response* indicators. In Week Four the selfishness of Little Half-Chick (Little Half-Chick., 1962) prompted several values responses including those of Bruce and Perry in Figure 5.16 below.

Figure 5.16 *Extract from transcript showing values responses in 3G*

Well he hadn't gone very far when he came to a stream and the stream called out to him,

"Oh little Half-chick, help me, help me, I'm all tangled in the reeds. "

"Help you indeed," said little Half-Chick.

Grace runs fingers over lips like teller did

"Do you think I have nothing better to do than to help people? Tsk, tsk, tsk."

Linda smiles

"I'm on my way to Madrid, to meet the King."

And on he hopped, leaving the stream all tangled in the weeds.

Bruce raises eyes and shakes head

.....

And the fire had burned down and was almost all burnt out and it called out to little Half-Chick,

"Oh little Half-chick, please help. Throw on some more wood so I don't die out. Help!"

"Help you indeed. Tsk, tsk, tsk."

Perry looks at teller

Tsk, tsk, tsk - Jerrod

 "As if I've nothing better to do with my time than to help people. I'm on my way to Madrid to meet the King."

And off he hopped.

He's pretty mean – Perry

"Little Half-Chick" Week Four for 3G

The emotional response by listeners in 3G to the behaviour of Little Half-Chick was also evidence of being able to immerse themselves in the world of the story and suspend disbelief. Rather than scoff at the introductory description of the horribly deformed chicken, which in reality would not survive, Lennon epitomised the **values response** in the form of sympathy initially shown by several classmates when he said "Oh poor thing."

Many more **values responses** occurred during the following story of "Lazy Tok" (Skipper, 1983) whose laziness and greed prompted outbursts such as: "*She's a lazy pig* – Perry*"; "Huh* – Marlee shaking head in disgust*"; "Oh how lazy* – Perry*" and "Oh my lord* – Jerrod*"* amongst others. 3G were unanimous in their disapproval of the laziness and greed displayed by the character Tok which was shown by them in verbal responses, eye rolling, gasps and vehement shaking of the head in the relevant sections of the story. Listeners in 3G showed a strong ability to suspend disbelief again in this story which relies on a magical basket undertaking missions to secure food for Tok.

The relatively low occurrence of the **values response** in Week Six may be in part due to the level of emotional maturity of 10 year old children. While 6G responded with emphatic disapproval during the story of "The fairy crane" to the selfishness of the hunter in sending his obviously ailing wife in to weave more cloth and the consequences of breaking a promise, 3G were struck by the wonder of the wife magically turning into a beautiful crane. The only **values response** to occur during this story with 3G were expressions of concern by Perry and Bruce at the description of the wife becoming pale and thin. Other stories in this session relied on a strong sense of the ridiculous for their humour which understandably elicited few **values** responses from listeners in 3G. Therefore story selection had a distinct impact on the anticipated growth of the **values response** for 3G.

There were fewer instances of **known** stories in 3G than for 6G which may be due to a decreased exposure to stories because of their younger ages but may be due to the rarely heard stories that I selected for the research project. Listeners in 3G however did draw on other media to link the stories that they heard during the storytelling project. The drawing of the house that occurs early in the story of "The wild bird" reminded Steven of Luke Skywalker's house on the planet Tattoine in the *Star Wars* films. The name of the "Snooks Family" prompted Robert to recall the Snoopy cartoons, while Millie volunteered that she had read and enjoyed the book *Strega Nona* as I was

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introducing the story. As mentioned previously Perry recalled similar characters from earlier stories as I described the character of the Teeny Tiny Woman in Week Six and earlier Arthur had referred to a story called "Old Tom" that he was reminded of as I introduced a story that had a connection to Lewis Carol. Numerous references were made to television programmes such as *Get Smart*, *Dad's Army* and to other fairy tales such as "Snow White" at relevant times in the storytelling project as listeners in 3G attempted to draw meaning from the stories that they heard.

The Language Engagement cluster did not result in a strong sense of storytelling community for 3G as a group in the distinct way that it occurred for 6G. This I believe is due to the fact that moving through the strands of the storytelling process does not happen at the same rate for all listeners. The level of maturity and psychological development may play a strong role in how listeners move through the strands.

The power of one or two individuals to disrupt the group dynamics of an entire class should also be considered. Perry, Robert and Steven in particular were extremely disruptive in Week Six with Perry alone attracting 15 instances of ***classmate behaviour modification*** and four instances of the ***teacher behaviour modification***. This disruptive power should be considered by storytellers when they present their programmes and they should separate disruptive audience members where necessary. However, as one of the stated goals of the current research was to observe the impact that a prolonged programme of storytelling would have on group dynamics, letting this disruptive behaviour play out naturally was a necessary evil of the research, except in extreme circumstances. It is the contention of this thesis that the Group Dynamics Engagement cluster and the Language Engagement cluster have a direct effect on each other. Therefore this disruption in the group dynamics described above had a negative effect on the Language Engagement for 3G.

There were certainly encouraging signs that numerous listeners in 3G had begun to derive personal meaning from the stories that they heard and were prepared to share their experiences with their classmates. Other students in the class appeared to be lagging in the Language Engagement area. While Perry was undoubtedly an enthusiastic collaborative listener, he appeared to be content to stay at the individual familiarisation aspect discussed in the previous chapter, rather than move on to the relational effect aspect of the storytelling process. As has been shown above, stories that contained little opportunity to interact failed to elicit approval from Perry as his

comment that "How frog lost his tail" was boring reveals. Steven responded well to highly visual stories such as the drawn story of "The black cat" (Pellowski, 1984a) but responded to complex stories like "Pot cook" that required well developed listening skills by trying to distract fellow classmates by poking them or distracting them by fiddling with an object. Steven's particular case and his response to the stories will be further examined in the Group Dynamics Engagement section. Developmental delays and/or learning disabilities were not discussed with the teacher but they may have had an effect on this area of engagement with storytelling. The ability to build community through storytelling will be further explored in the Group Dynamics Engagement section of this chapter.

The Language Engagement cluster did however reveal a unique pattern for listeners in Kindergarten Grade who appeared to have a distinct spike in indicators in Week Four. The possible reasons for this spike and their growth in this cluster of the Relational Effect aspect will be discussed in the following section.

5.2.3 Kindergarten Grade (KG)

Table 5.17 *Table showing occurrences of principal Language Engagement Indicators for KG*

Storytelling week	Compare or critique	Interaction extension	Known story	Predicting plot or style	Values response	Total indicator cluster
Week One	0	6	0	2	1	9
Week Two	1	6	2	4	0	13
Week Four	4	16	14	14	13	61
Week Six	10	22	9	18	2	61

As previously noted in this chapter KG had been exposed to storytelling by their teacher before the storytelling project commenced. Their teacher not only read to them regularly but also told them oral stories even though she did not consider herself a 'real storyteller.' It is therefore not surprising that listeners in KG displayed several Language Engagement indicators in the first session as illustrated in both Table 5.17 above and Figure 5.18 below.

Figure 5.18 *3-D Chart showing principal Language Acquisition Engagement Indicators in KG*
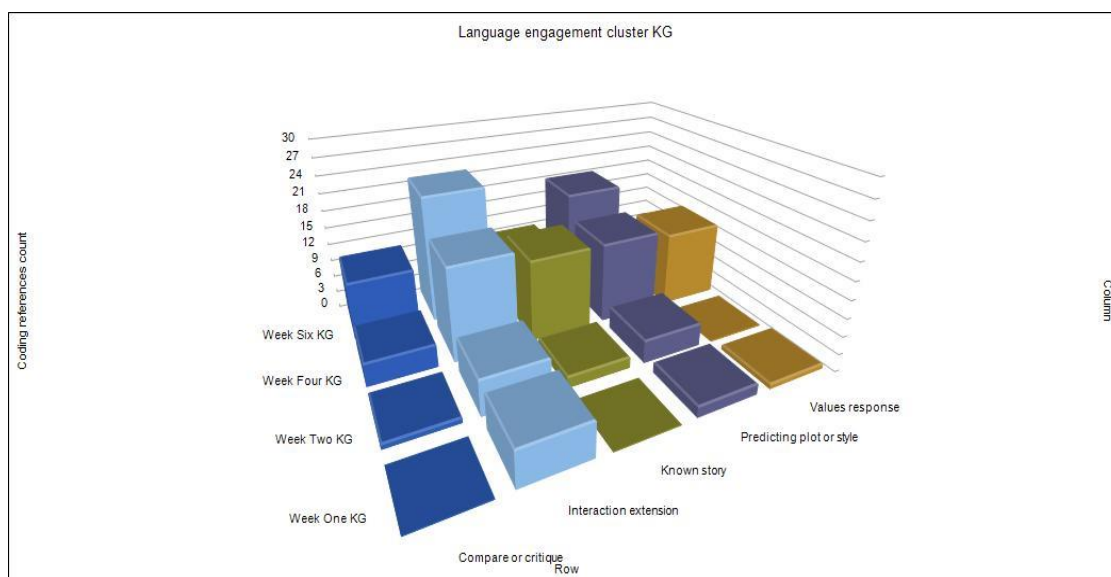
In the initial session with KG their ***interaction extension*** responses were prompted by a discussion about good hiding places during the story of "Naughty Marysia." Ray was particularly keen to share his views about good hiding places and did not let reality stand in the way of a great anecdote as shown in Figure 5.19 below.

Figure 5.19 *Extract from transcript showing interaction extension by Ray in KG*

Play hide and seek?

Yes - Susan

I know what would be a good hiding place – Bill

Do you miss out on lunch when you play hide and seek though? Do you hide so well that no one can find you?

***Yes, I hide up, sometimes I hide up on the roof, but then they come up on the roof -* Ray**

You hide on the roof!?

***Yeah, in my poppies car but when they come near the car I jump in on the house, but when they go there I jump in the trees.. –* Ray**

Ah, you sound like you're very good at hiding.

"Naughty Marysia" Week One for KG

This willingness to express themselves following stories was displayed later in Week Four when listeners in KG were eager to share their thoughts about the character of "Lazy Tok." These comments were often coded under both *values responses* and *interaction extension*. Amber expressed her interpretation of the character of Tok as "*She didn't want to do anything for herself,*" while Stella believed that *"She just wanted to be bossy."* Not to be outdone by this interpretation Amber then added that *"She just be mean".* The individual meanings that children in KG were beginning to find in the stories they heard was demonstrated by Catherine's interpretation of the character of Tok: *"She thought it would be yummy things, but it was disgusting things".* It was interesting to see the different interpretation that KG had of Tok compared to listeners in 3G who viewed Tok as lazy and fat.

Interaction extension responses in KG were always highly entertaining for me. Various students in this class appeared to relish the opportunity to tell their own short stories. Following the tale of "The wild bird" in Week Six Ray again regaled us all with the following story which continued interspersed by comments from other listeners as shown in Figure 5.20 below.

Figure 5.20 *Extract from transcript showing interaction extension by Ray in KG*

> **Roosters have to have tails like that – Ray indicating a full tail out the back**
> **I used to have a rooster and it had a tail at the back – Ray**
> Was it a Rhode Island Red rooster?
> Stella is patting the top of her head, indicating a rooster's comb
> Ray shakes his head
> *My dad raises chickens - Liz*
> **I had a white rooster, and it used to attack me. I had on a white t-shirt with a black shark on it, and it kept on attacking it. – Ray**
> Odette smiles
> Stella smiles
> Claire is playing with wrist band
> It didn't like your t-shirt?
> **No, it didn't like the white ones, cause it was the same colour as it. It just didn't like the white one and kept picking it.**
> Maybe it thought you were another rooster.
> **Yeah, just the white one, and when I put on a black t-shirt, the black one would**

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> *come after me. – Ray* *(TKG later said that she didn't think Ray's family actually have poultry.)*
>
> Goodness me.
>
> Susan shakes her head and raises eyes
>
> *I don't have any more – Ray*
>
> You don't have any more roosters?
>
> *Nah, I kicked 'em - Ray*
>
> Odette laughs
>
> Stella laughs
>
> Marcel smiles
>
> *I kicked them into the house and put burgers on 'em and ate them – Ray*
>
> *For dinner? – Susan* turning around to Ray
>
> *Yum, I love chicken pies – Liz*
>
> *I ate the eyes - Ray*
>
> *Ewww – Odette,*
>
> *Ewww - Stella*
>
> *Ewww - Susan*
>
> *Did you eat the bottom? – Phil*
>
> *Yeah – Ray* grinning
>
> Extract from "The wild bird" Week Six for KG

The extract above demonstrated Ray's flair for the dramatic and his developing enjoyment as a storyteller as he grinned at the response of his listeners. This particular group of five year olds had certainly developed an engagement with storytelling as their complex and lengthy *interaction extensions* clearly show. The above extract also clearly demonstrates the relational effect that storytelling was having on the entire class as various students joined in with Ray's highly entertaining story.

The indicator of *values response*, that had appeared in the initial session as a response to the poor manners of the central character in "The tailor" and was so high in Week Four, was comparatively low in Week Six due to story selection. While the selfishness of Little Half-chick and the laziness of Tok in the stories shared in Week Four prompted the frequent *values* responses, all of the stories in Week Six were tales that were accompanied by props such as drawing, fabric and candles. All of the stories were 'fun' stories; that is, they were told purely for enjoyment and contained no

deliberate deeper meanings, although a storyteller can never be sure what meaning an individual listener may take from a story. The few *values responses* in this week stemmed from a listener's squeamishness at a bone found in the forest being used for soup as happened in "The teeny tiny woman" and another listener's disapproval of a characters thoughtlessness that resulted in the loss of a beloved pet in "The old woman and her pig." Querying this result in the data, as appropriate to grounded theory and action research led to a change in perspective. Rather than be concerned by this lack of *values responses* I consider it a strong indication that listeners in KG were able to distinguish between stories that held a deeper meaning and were worthy of an emotional response and those stories that had a simple entertainment value. While they would have struggled to explain it in such terms, this behaviour I believe showed an ability in KG for listeners to distinguish between story genres.

Listeners in KG also displayed two *predicting plot or style* indicators in the initial session of the storytelling project. While these were very simple predictions of what the weather would be like in the next story and what would happen to the cloth in the story of "The tailor" it did reveal willingness by the two listeners to participate in the story and be thinking about what might be coming next in the plot. Instances of *predicting plot or style* trebled in Week Four. In the introduction to the story of "How frog lost his tale" Ray immediately *predicted* that the story would involve a mosquito, drawing on earlier stories about the insect and a hungry frog. Later in Week Four Claire predicted that the Gingerbread man (The gingerbread man, 1962) would meet a fox; drawing on her recollection of what had befallen Henny Penny only the previous week. Later in the story when the Gingerbread man did indeed meet a fox, there were five dire *predictions* of what his fate was about to be. Odette was so certain that the Gingerbread man was going to meet a terrible end that when he jumped on the fox's tail she curled herself into a ball in response. Other *predictions* in this session occurred during the story of "Lazy Tok" and listeners in KG delighted in *predicting* what food would appear in Tok's basket next and what her actions would be when asked to do something. In Week Six of the Familiarisation Phase there were 18 instances of *predicting* an action in the story. "The Snooks family" prompted numerous *predictions* from KG who had learned that some stories have repetitive patterns of actions. The ability to predict the actions in a story increased steadily over the storytelling project for KG.

It was noted that for KG *predicting* what would happen in a story was often combined with recognising similarities to another story, coded as *known* stories. As mentioned previously, the introduction to "How frog lost his tail" prompted Ray to recall the string story of "The mosquito" (Pellowski, 1984c) told in Week Three. Like 3G however KG also utilised their experience with other media to notice similarities in stories. In Week Two Ray used the name of a popular children's television character to give a name to his pet snake that he referred to following the story of "How to make a small house into a large one."

There was a noticeable spike in the instances of the *known story* indicator in Week Four when most of the instances were due to the inclusion of the popular and often told story of "The gingerbread man". The majority of the children were familiar with this story and perhaps it was one that their teacher had shared with them prior to the storytelling project commencing. Other instances of the *known story* indicator occurred at the beginning of the session during the recapping of stories told in the earlier weeks of the project. Ray also announced that he *knew* the story of "How frog lost his tail" within a few minutes of it beginning. It is not a commonly well-known story but rather than assume that he did not know it, Ray's comment was acknowledged by me saying "Do you? Well you see if this story is exactly like the one you know, OK?" This proposal suited Ray, who nodded and we continued on with the story.

The majority of the nine instances of the *known story* indicator in Week Six were due to an unexpected issue that arose during this session. Stella became very upset at the conclusion of the story of "The Snooks family" when she was unable to reach the front of the audience quickly enough to join her classmates in blowing out the candle that was used as a prop. Several of her classmates made an effort to comfort her but she moved to the back of the group and turned her body away from me. Reluctant to finish the session on such a negative note for several of the listeners in KG I decided to tell an unscheduled story plucked from my repertoire. In deciding which story to tell I named a number of very interactive drawing stories and the *known story* indicators arose from listeners informing me that they knew these stories. We finally settled on a story that I have been telling for so long that its origin is very vague but I suspect it is one told to me by my maternal grandmother and known to me only as "The old woman and her pig". [13]

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[13] I was unable to locate any published version of this story and I have been telling it for so long that I no longer require a printed version of it to prompt recall. It may be that my grandmother created this story herself.

The ability to *critique* a story involves several factors; the listener needs to feel confident enough in their own understanding of a story to declare their thoughts publicly, they need to be able to have the vocabulary to express those thoughts and they also need to feel comfortable or familiar enough with the storyteller to believe that their opinion will be respected. It is therefore understandable that there were no instances of the *compare or critique indicator* observed with KG until Week Four. Storytellers also need to be receptive to accepting *critiques* of their work in whatever form that may come. Following the story of "Little Half-chick" several students in KG gave me advice on how I could improve my colouring in of the felt-board pieces to make the illustrations for the story even better. This advice was accepted by me with due seriousness and I thanked the students for giving me great colouring tips. The other *critique* received during this session was a positive one expressed by Bill who declared the story of "Lazy Tok" to "be a very funny one".

The instances of *compare and critique* doubled by Week Six as KG developed as story listeners and became increasingly comfortable in expressing themselves in the group situation. The first four instances occurred during the story of "The wild bird" as students gave both their opinion of the drawing as it progressed and my ability to draw. The next six instances of *critiquing* occurred at the end of "The Snooks family" as several students quickly realised that the ridiculous behaviour of the family members was about to be repeated and declared variations of "Oh no, not again" with accompanying disgusted looks.

Listeners in KG had learned to draw parallels from stories they had experienced previously to build expectations of what the current story may contain. Listeners in KG displayed more Language Engagement indicators than 3G appeared to do. While they were certainly at an earlier developmental stage than students in 3G, the recent experience of storytelling that students in KG were exposed to through their teacher had a dramatic impact on their progress through the Engagement with storytelling process.

5.2.4 Outcome of Language Engagement cluster

The increasingly sophisticated verbal responses to stories that were observed in all of the classes as the project continued and their heightened interest in the opinions of others, were key elements of the growth of Language Engagement. The Language Engagement cluster emerged most significantly as listeners individually began to take meaning from the stories they heard and gained the confidence to be able to express their thoughts, responses and impressions of stories to their fellow audience members and to me as the storyteller.

As listeners in all of the classes became more familiar with me and with the shared activity of listening to stories they began to participate in more conversational discourse, voluntarily discussing their interpretations of the stories, often using story grammar and vocabulary, rather than merely asking questions about the story. This behaviour aligns with Amaro and Moreira's observation of what happens as children are exposed to extended experiences of storytelling:

> Studies have demonstrated that conversations between children who know each other are longer. This suggests that intimacy, shared experience and knowledge lead to greater levels of conversational skills (Engel, 1999). One of the ways by which children develop this intimacy is through the narratives they share (Amaro & Moreira, 2001).

The comment above was stated in the context of a research project which aimed to identify the narrative structures that children use when constructing stories in order to create digital storytelling software. Yet it still has resonance with what occurred in the current research that centred on face-to-face oral storytelling. The data presented in this and the preceding chapter convincingly show that the conversations between story listeners did indeed change and embraced story grammar and vocabulary, not only in the classrooms during the storytelling sessions, but also in the playground as they incorporated phrases from the stories they heard into their play.

The element of enjoying storytelling is crucial to the success of any storytelling event. Both the storyteller and the audience must enjoy the experience if true engagement, as defined throughout the thesis, is to take place. An ongoing enjoyment and indeed anticipation that the storytelling event will be enjoyable enables listeners to immerse themselves in the world of the story and allow the engagement with storytelling process

to occur. Pivotal to the enjoyment of storytelling is the positive audience experience. When a listener believes that they are with a community of like-minded people who also enjoy storytelling and who have the ability to immerse themselves in the story realm, they are far more likely to be able to experience all of the engagement clusters discussed so far.

The Collaborative nature of storytelling also has a reciprocal effect on Group Dynamics as was observed throughout the current research. Their recognition that collaborating in stories through becoming active participants, and sometimes entering the Trancelike State as they became completely immersed in the world of a story, was also reflected in the increasing role that individual listeners took in managing the inappropriate audience behaviour of their classmates. The impact that a sustained programme of storytelling had on the Group Dynamics within each class will be discussed in the following section.

5.3 Group Dynamics Engagement

Figure 5.21 *Group Dynamics Engagement cluster*
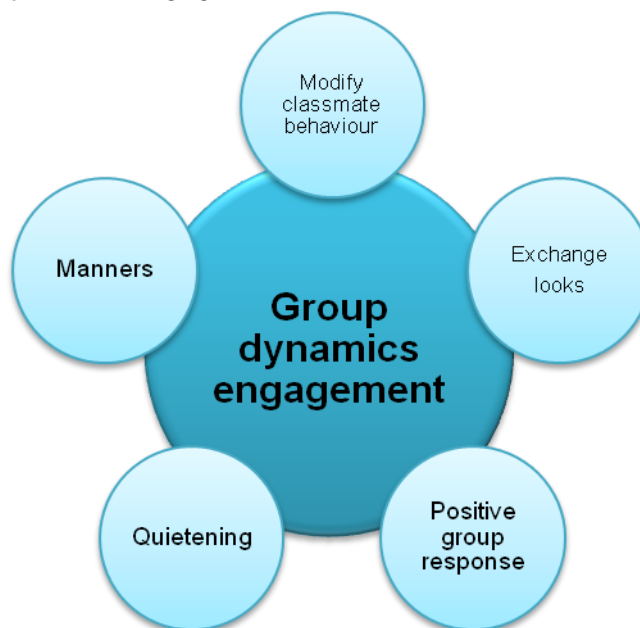
Every storyteller need to be aware of how negative or positive Group Dynamics can affect the outcome and success of a storytelling event. Practising storytellers should be familiar with how venue set-up, proximity to the audience and physical position in comparison to the audience can all affect how an audience responds to a storytelling event. Storytellers should learn enough about group behaviour management to feel confident in being in a position to lead the collaborative efforts of the audience.

Numerous authors provided the underlying theories for the Group Dynamics and audience preparation and management aspects of the current research and their valuable contributions to the field will be discussed in this section.

I believe that the most effective and memorable storytelling comes about when it is a sharing of stories between equals. One person (the storyteller) may have a greater store of tales or a stronger ability to vocalise, but that does not mean that they should be in a position of power over the audience. Individuals within the group should also be equal with the opinions and feelings of each audience member being respected. The greatest interaction between storyteller and listeners occurs when they are all comfortable enough to sit in close proximity, make eye-contact frequently and be at ease enough to express their responses openly. It is the responsibility of the storyteller to equalize any perception of power between teller and audience and to provide premium conditions for positive group dynamics.

In the current research study, this was achieved by insisting on being introduced by my first name, by establishing an agreed guideline for class behaviour, by not asserting any sense of authority in insisting on where children should sit, by never raising my voice, except in the context of a story, and by being friendly and approachable, both in the classroom and the playground. Doherty-Sneddon (2003) has published interesting work on the proximity relationship between teller and audience. Her table on 'Non-verbal signals of liking and dominance' (Doherty-Sneddon, 2003, p. 29) adapted in turn from Argyle and Dean (1965) is particularly interesting and provided valuable material on teller/audience relationships for the current study. Doherty-Sneddon's findings are reproduced below in Table 5.22.

Table 5.22 *Non-verbal signals of liking and dominance*

Non-verbal channel	Liking/friendliness (proximity)	Dominance
Proximity	Closer, forward lean.	Raised position; takes up more space.
Orientation	More direct.	Direct.
Gaze	More gaze and mutual gaze.	In established hierarchy less gaze (relatively more while talking); when establishing dominance more gaze.
Facial expression	More smiling.	Non-smiling, frowning.
Gesture	More lively, similarities.	Pointing at the other or their property.
Posture	More open, similarities.	Full height, hands on hips; relaxed in established hierarchy posture.
Touch	More touching (appropriate).	More touching of other.
Tone of voice	Higher pitch, upward pitch contour.	Loud, lower pitch, greater pitch range.

The channels of proximity, orientation, gaze, facial expression, gesture and posture were of particular interest in the current research and were incorporated when establishing Indicators of Engagement. In an ideal storytelling environment where the event is a collaboration between equals, the signals outlined in the "Liking/friendliness (proximity)" column are the favourable responses for both storyteller and listeners.

The ongoing highly informative and practical articles published by storyteller Doug Lipman (Lipman, 2012) on his website 'Story Dynamics' provided extensive insights on how to engage with and prepare an audience for a storytelling event. These articles provided suggestions of what to look for when gauging if an audience is interested in the story and relating well to both the storyteller and each other. The seminal work by Zipes (1995) regarding how to build communities through long term programmes of storytelling also informed and influenced the construction of the indicators for the

Group Dynamics Engagement cluster. Renowned storyteller MacDonald stated that positive Group Dynamics are crucial to a fulfilling and satisfying storytelling experience for individual listeners (MacDonald, 1999) and her work influenced the emphasis placed on this aspect of the current research. Harley's work on the application of the fourth wall theory (Harley, 1996) was also pivotal in establishing the Group Dynamics and audience behaviour aspects of the current research.

A description of the principal indicators in the Group Dynamics Engagement cluster and an analysis of how these indicators were observed in the Kindergarten, Third and Sixth grades will form the content of the current section. The indicators in the Group Dynamics Engagement cluster are outlined in Table 5.23 below.

Table 5.23 *Principal Group Dynamics Engagement indicators*

Principal Group dynamics engagement indicators	Coding description	Number of instances
Classmate behaviour modification	Listener responds to classmate disruptive behaviour and comments, either through verbal exchange or body language	151
Classroom management manners	Showing positive classroom manners, raising hands etc	213
Exchange looks	Listener exchanges looks with other audience member	225
Positive group spatial & behaviour response	Listeners display positive behaviour towards one another as an audience including moving closer to each other	75
Quietening	Group becomes quiet as story commences	57

The Group Dynamics Engagement indicators in the Relational Effects strand of the Engagement with storytelling process build on the engagement clusters that occur in the Individual Familiarisation stage. Group Dynamics Engagement in particular is strongly linked to the Entering Story Realm cluster (as indicated by the red arrow in Figure 5.36). As discussed in the previous chapter, the ability of listeners to recognise the story realm was identified by an increased attentiveness, quiet listening and more importantly for this second stage of the storytelling process, an increased irritability with classmates who continued to chatter. Some students showed a sense of embarrassment on behalf of their classmates who did not display what they considered to be the appropriate level of attention. The instances where listeners attempted to

control or improve the audience behaviour of their classmates were coded as ***classmate behaviour modification***.

It was anticipated that as participants in the study became familiar with the audience experience that is part of the storytelling activity and more familiar with my expectations of audience behaviour, that the manners displayed by students would improve in an identifiable way. Wherever possible the accepted classroom manners of each individual class were reinforced. As these invariably included 'respect for others' and 'listen to others' they aligned positively with appropriate audience behaviour for storytelling. The instances of manners were therefore coded at ***classroom management manners***.

While participants certainly ***exchanged looks*** from the first session of the storytelling project the nature of these exchanges appeared to change. Where they were initially often accompanied by quizzical expressions or snide comments, they changed to become a genuine expression of wanting to share a thought or meaningful moment in a story with a friend. The context of the ***exchange of looks*** was therefore also examined in the current research and will be discussed as it relates to each class.

The ***positive group spatial and behaviour response indicator*** was the most interesting indicator for both the Assistant Principal and I to observe. I have always believed that storytelling can enhance the relationships within a group, enabling them to feel more comfortable with each other and treat each other with greater respect, having shared a common experience in a positive atmosphere. The Assistant Principal hoped that this would be a result of the storytelling project. The instances of ***Positive group spatial and behaviour response*** indicators (hereafter labelled ***positive group indicators***) were therefore keenly observed within each class.

It should be noted that the ***positive group indicators*** were different to the similar indicator of ***settling into position*** discussed in the previous chapter. While these instances were often dual-coded at both nodes, in accord with grounded theory systematic scrutiny of data, the ***positive group indicator*** focussed on instances where the listener either moved closer to a classmate, closer to the storyteller or moved so that they could see the storyteller better. Other physical behaviour that was positive in relation to another listener was also coded at the ***positive group indicator*** node.

There was an expectation by me that as the storytelling project continued and respect for each other and enjoyment of the storytelling activity increased, classes would settle down and become *quiet* more quickly as they anticipated and prepared to hear a story. It was noted in each session when the entire class became quiet, rather than individual listeners and these instances of *quietening* will be discussed for each class in their individual sections below. Each of the principal Group Dynamics Engagement cluster indicators will now be examined in relation to the three classes involved in the current research, commencing with Sixth Grade.

5.3.1   Sixth Grade (6G)

Table 5.24 *Table showing occurrences of principal Group Dynamics Engagement indicators for 6G*

Storytelling Week	Classmate behaviour modify	Classroom manage manners	Exchange of looks	Positive group response	Quiet	Total cluster indicators
Week One	0	0	0	0	0	0
Week Two	20	23	17	0	3	63
Week Four	1	8	14	6	5	34
Week Six	18	6	34	19	6	83

The less than promising beginning with 6G has already been discussed in this and the previous chapter and I was very discouraged by their poor audience behaviour in the first two sessions of the project. Being seated at individual desks discouraged the development of positive Group Dynamics and I was dismayed to discover at the conclusion of Week One that their teacher was reluctant to allow the students to move to a designated storytelling area which would enable them to sit with their friends rather than in assigned seats. In the words of the teacher, "You can control them better when they're sitting apart from each other" (J. Mundy-Taylor. Field notes. July 21, 2004). The positive influence of allowing students to voluntarily position themselves had been highlighted by the work of Woodhead and Faulkner (2008), based on earlier work of Faulkner and Meill (1993). They established that children who are allowed to sit beside a companion of their choosing (typically their best friend) work better. When this is applied in a storytelling context, listeners are able to exchange glances, share laughter and make quiet comments with people they are already familiar with. Interestingly, Kuyvenhoven (2007) noted during her ethnographic study of storytelling practices in a grade four/five classroom over five months that while the majority of children chose to

sit next to their friends, some children deliberately chose to sit apart from friends so that they would not be distracted during the stories.

Further, this assigned seating arrangement for 6G meant that there was an immediate barrier between me as the storyteller and each individual audience member as they sat behind very sturdy wooden desks. There were inevitably items on the desk that could be fiddled with and there was a wide space between each audience member that negated the sharing of a communal experience. At the beginning of Week Three, I asked the teacher if we could attempt conducting the storytelling session with the participants seated together on the floor, outlining several of the benefits discussed in previous chapters. I was delighted when the teacher agreed and the behaviour was so markedly different with just that positional change that she agreed to allow the remainder of the sessions to be conducted in the designated storytelling area. I was aware however that there were in effect two weeks lost of the opportunity to build effective and positive group dynamics and audience behaviour. The apparent haphazard development of the Group Dynamics Engagement cluster as illustrated in Figure 5.25 below may be a result of this late change in seating.

Figure 5.25 *3-D Chart showing principal Group Dynamics Engagement Indicators for 6G*
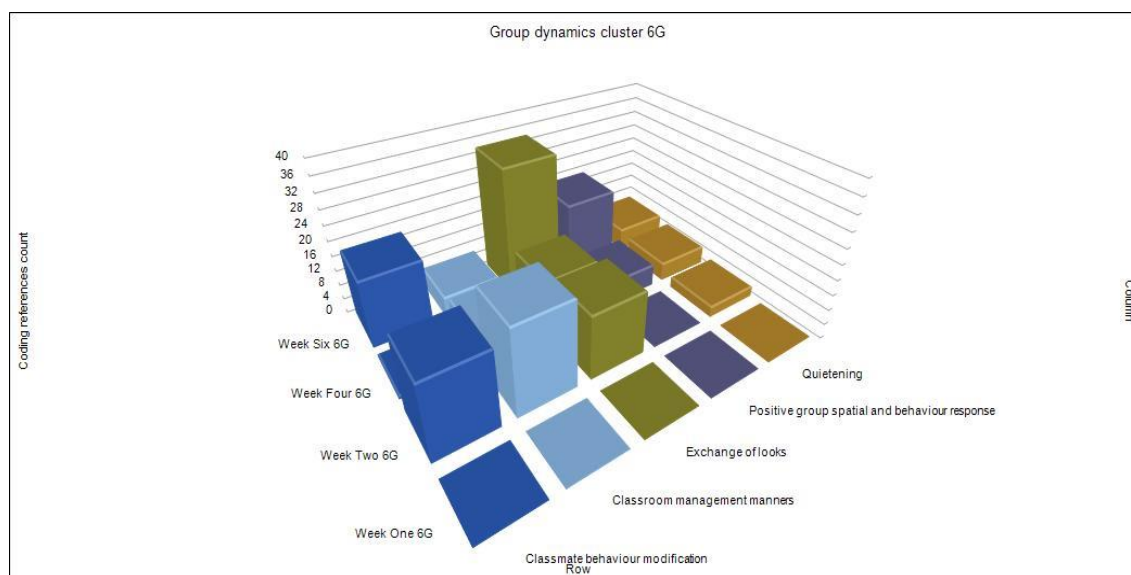
As the storytelling project continued 6G displayed a greater willingness (and ability) to listen and more importantly respond respectfully and appropriately to the stories they heard. Related to the issues of respect, the indicator of **classmate behaviour modification** followed an interesting pattern for 6G. There were 20 instances in Week

Two and many of these were directed at students from another class who were required to spend the morning with 6G for an undisclosed reason. These students, allowed to sit together, continued to talk throughout my greeting and recap of the previous week with 6G and showed no signs of stopping as the stories began. Within two minutes of the session starting two students from 6G told the visitors to be quiet. It was noted that the majority of the *classmate behaviour modification* in this session were delivered in a very hostile tone with demands to "Shut up," "Go out if you want to talk; you're not even in this class," "Get away, get lost" or insults if listeners attempted to contribute to the story discussion.

In stark contrast, with the students now seated on the floor and next to companions of their choice, there was only one instance of *classmate behaviour modification* in Week Four. When Edmund told Billy "Teacher's talking" at the beginning of the first story, Billy immediately turned around with a good natured grin and was attentive to the story. There was still some chatting throughout this session but it was mostly on topic or conducted so quietly that it did not disturb other listeners. When participants commented about the stories they were not ridiculed and their comments were listened to respectfully and corrections offered good-naturedly where necessary.

There were a surprisingly high number of instances of *classmate behaviour modification* in Week Six. I was expecting that the number would have decreased substantially as students in 6G became better audience members and more engaged story listeners. The 18 instances in the sixth week of storytelling therefore required closer examination in line with the QUEST process and grounded theory.

The first important difference between the instances of *classmate behaviour modification* in Week Six and those of Week Two was the noticeable lack of malice or hostility that was such a disturbing factor in Week Two. The first instance in Week Six was directed as a request to me to ask a classmate to be quiet, rather than a direct demand to the person concerned. Two other similar requests to me were made later in the session. Four instances were said in a very light-hearted tone when students returning to the classroom following J-Rock rehearsals were not fast enough for several students waiting to resume the story. For example, as Gwen entered the room Tony told her "Come on, don't dawdle," while Edmund beckoned to her and encouraged her to "hurry up."

Other students used non-verbal means to get their classmate's attention back to the story. Tyson looked at Freddy and put his finger on lips and shushed him while Billy tapped Tony on the shoulder to get his attention back to the story. There also appeared to be a change in motivation for *modifying classmates' behaviour*. In Week Two the demands to fellow students to be quiet or "shut up" appeared to be prompted by a concern to avoid 'getting into trouble'. I was an unknown quantity in a class whose teacher yelled at them frequently. In Week Six the motivation was purely so that the delaying behaviour would stop and the story would continue. It was clear that the majority of students in 6G had learned that storytelling was an enjoyable activity and they encouraged good behaviour in their classmates rather than criticising or denigrating them as had occurred previously.

The indicator of *classroom management manners* again followed an interesting pattern for 6G. There were 23 instances of raising hands and similar indicators in Week Two. Perhaps the fact that the students were still seated at their desks prompted such a high occurrence of hand-raising in this session as they viewed the storytelling session as 'just another lesson'. There was no reason for them to assume otherwise as my notes following that session state, "The students were very vocal – they did not seem to be very aware of the project at all. Doubt whether [teacher] had spoken to them much about it" (J. Mundy-Taylor. Field notes July 21 2004).

Of the occurrences of *classroom management manners* in this second storytelling session 19 of the 23 were in direct response to a question from me. Two others were seeking permission to ask a question while the remaining two preceded comments about a story. As the storytelling project continued and I gauged that 6G was hardly the type of class who required interaction questions to engage them in stories, the occurrences of raising hands in response to a question lessened dramatically throughout the remainder of the project. In Week Four the majority of the eight occurrences were students seeking permission to ask a question or make a comment about a story. Another instance was noted for spontaneous applause at the end of the session.

A complete change of attitude had occurred by Week Six which epitomised for me the equalisation of levels of power in the storytelling event as was discussed at the beginning of the Group Dynamics Engagement section of this chapter. During this session there were only six occurrences of *classroom management manners*. Rather

than being interpreted as a negative sign that the behaviour of listeners in 6G had worsened, the data shows that the exchanges during this storytelling session were extremely friendly; where every participant, including me as the storyteller, was just as important as the rest. The following exchange in Figure 5.26 at the beginning of the session illustrates the relaxed atmosphere that had settled on the storytelling sessions with 6G.

Figure 5.26 *Extract from transcript showing relaxed atmosphere in storytelling with 6G*

Rian looking at teller

Tony looking at teller

Rachel looking at Tony and smiling

Who can remember what stories we've had so far?

Roger raises hand

Naughty Marysia - ?- Roger

Naughty Marysia?

Teller laughs softly

That's the first one I told you, just about. You must have remembered it well.

Billy raises hand

The tailor - Frank

The tailor. Yes

The spaghetti dude one? - Edmund

The spaghetti dude. *(Laughing)*

Yeah, that's it. - Edmund

Tony waves hand in the air

I remember one - Tony

Are you remembering "The pasta pot" or you're remembering "The porridge pot" or are you remembering "Strega Nono"…?

That guy that went up - Edmund

…and Big Anthony?

The one about the leprechaun that didn't get caught. – Roger

(Demonstrating tying a knot, as the character in the story did to help him locate the leprechaun's treasure.)

"The field of bouillons"

Yeah – Charlie

The severed head – Tony (with a wide grin)

The example provided above shows that while there were several instances of raising hands the relaxed atmosphere that 6G and I had created together in our storytelling sessions soon took over and our exchanges became more like conversations between colleagues. The only other instance of classroom management manners in this session occurred during the very complex story of "The selkie girl" when Tony sought clarification of an unusual name. This is I believe how a storytelling event should be conducted, where the experience is relaxed and one person shares, not tells to, a group of like-minded listeners. The danger of course is that listeners may become so relaxed that they recline on the floor as several students did in this session. While I never worry about this in a community setting I did remind students in 6G that they were still at school and it was not appropriate, nor could I see them in the video footage if they did that.

The ***exchange of looks*** between classmates in 6G also underwent a dramatic change over the course of the storytelling. There were 17 ***exchanges*** in Week Two that unfortunately were often accompanied by smirks, rolling of eyes or other facial expressions that portrayed contempt or discomfort with the storytelling experience. Each of Megan's ***looks*** to classmates either preceded or followed a disparaging remark about the story as if she were seeking approval. Rachel and Freddy were the only students who ***looked*** at a classmate and smiled at an event in a story.

There was a dramatic change in the context of the 14 ***exchanges of looks*** that occurred during Week Four. None of the ***exchanges*** preceded or followed a negative comment or were accompanied by a negative expression. Six of the 14 instances were accompanied by smiles while several others were accompanied by worried looks or shakes of the head when a story character said or did something that the listener disapproved of. In sharp contrast to the negative atmosphere of Week Two, listeners accepted the comments that fellow listeners made about the stories as shown by the

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response to Edmund's comment about Frog's new tail in the story of "How frog lost his tail" illustrated in Figure 5.27 below.

Figure 5.27 *Extract from transcript showing positive exchange of looks in 6G*

And so, having received the promise from Frog, Nyame sent him the most beautiful tail, unlike any tails that we've seen today.

A special one - Edmund softly to himself

Edmund puts chin on hands

Billy turns to looks at Jason

"Beautiful tail."

Jason smiles and looks at Tony

Extract from "How frog lost his tail" Week Four for 6G

The looks that Billy, Jason and Tony ***exchanged*** could most accurately be described as "indulgent" as they all heard Edmund's whispered and heartfelt comment about Frog's tail). There was no sign of being critical or negative and Edmund's response was accepted respectfully. There was a sharp increase in ***exchange of looks*** to 36 instances in Week Six as listeners in 6G wanted to share their experience of the storytelling event in a positive way. 22 of the ***exchanges*** were accompanied by smiles or laughter and another four were following by the listener ***acting*** in response to the story and wanting to share that with a classmate. One exchange of looks between Tony and Stacey was accompanied by eye-rolling from Tony in response to the deliberately exaggerated vocabulary in the story of "The teeny tiny woman". The indicator of ***exchange of looks*** was a clear illustration of the vastly improved Group Dynamics in 6G by the sixth week of the storytelling project.

The positive impact that storytelling can have on Group Dynamics was illustrated most convincingly by the dramatic change in 6G and in the ***positive group*** indicator in particular. The storytelling sessions with 6G in the first two weeks of the storytelling project were the most hostile I have ever encountered in over 25 years of storytelling and it is therefore no surprise that there were no instances of the ***positive group*** indicator in either of these first sessions. By Week Four however there were definite indications that the storytelling experience was not only having an effect on individuals but also on how they interacted with each other.

From being the most hostile group 6G became the only group in my storytelling experience where the boys sat in a group in the front of the audience. That is not to say that the girls in 6G were disinterested in the storytelling. Ample evidence from previous sections in the thesis showed that the girls in 6G were also willing participants and collaborators in the stories in the latter stages of the storytelling project. In Week Four there were six instances of the *positive group indicator*. These included moving closer to the group in contrast to being spread out across the whole storytelling area in earlier sessions, politely asking another student to move their leg and facing towards the front as soon as the storytelling session commenced. By Week Six of the Familiarisation Phase this figure had more than trebled at 19 instances of *positive group behaviour.*

The most common behaviours that were coded at the *positive group indicator* in this final session were moving closer to me as the storyteller, deliberately moving closer to a classmate, politely waiting for me or a classmate to finish speaking or encouraging positive behaviours in others, such as Tony urging classmates to sit up when I had asked them to. Aligned with this dramatic increase in positive behaviour was the phenomenon that was labelled as '*othering*.' Just as I had never encountered such hostility in a storytelling audience as I had in the early sessions with 6G, neither had I ever encountered what I termed institutionalised othering. It became obvious to me that a student [Sylvia] in the class was being deliberately ostracised by her classmates and when I voiced my concern to the teacher I was surprised to learn that she was aware of it and was prepared to let it happen as the boys "were just sick of the way she speaks to them". This attitude and the behaviour of the class did not sit well with my HREC ethics or my personal ethics as a storyteller as the following section will explain.

During a storytelling session, children are not *forced* to outwardly relate to each other. The emphasis is on each listener's relationship with the teller and the story. One of the great strengths of storytelling however is that as children listen to a story in common, the storytelling experience has the potential to become an "intimate literary encounter that creates a sense of community among individuals who may otherwise feel isolated or disconnected from others" (Moir, 1994, p. 55). If this group cohesion is one of the goals of storytelling and I firmly believe that it is, then the adverse behaviour that Sylvia was being subjected to on a continual basis was not acceptable.

Sylvia was continually ostracised and isolated by everyone in her class over several weeks of the project. When Sylvia first came to my attention, her body language

conveyed disinterest. During Week Two I noted that she was slumped in her chair and uninterested in what was going on with the storytelling. Her interaction with classmates during this session consisted solely of telling them to be quiet. No friendly eye contact was made with any classmate and on one occasion she was discouraged from looking anywhere as the comment highlighted in Figure 5.28 shows. Her response of putting her thumb in her mouth was extremely disturbing for me to observe.

Figure 5.28 Extract from transcript showing othering of Sylvia 6G

What are you looking at? - Tony (said in very nasty tone to Sylvia)
Sylvia faces the front and continues to listen to the story with her thumb in her mouth.
Transcript Week Two for 6G

It was clear when viewing the video footage that there was a strategy-in-common within the class to not sit anywhere near Sylvia, which became obvious as soon as the class moved to the storytelling area. Anyone who sat too close to Sylvia was nudged, or advised to move away by a classmate. This behaviour was categorised as "othering" when analysing the data.

As mentioned previously, the storytelling sessions were a time of encouraging positive group behaviour, of building a sense of community and mutual trust and respect. Many of the selected stories incorporated values of tolerance, kindness and inclusion. As the storyteller, I worked to include everyone in the storytelling sessions, through making eye contact with every participant, listening to each verbal response, and treating every comment and question with respect. Rather than criticise poor or negative behaviour, I tried to acknowledge and encourage positive behaviour. This was particularly true in the situation with Sylvia. Rather than draw attention to the fact that she was sitting on her own, I encouraged the whole class as a group to sit closer together, often citing the necessity to get everyone in camera shot as a reason.

I made it clear that I was including Sylvia in the group interaction; making regular eye contact with her, smiling at her, listening to her questions or comments and asking for her participation at appropriate times. Sylvia's response to being actively included in the group activity was to become much more attentive to the stories and to the responses of those around her. She made more eye contact with me as the storyteller but more

importantly, by Week Four she was exchanging looks with female classmates at significant points of a story and smiling at their responses.

By Week Six it was obvious that the girls' attitude to Sylvia had thawed, while some of the boys maintained their *othering* behaviour. When Sylvia came to the storytelling area a little later than the class after talking with the teacher, Patricia smiled at her and made room. Later in this same session, Sylvia began chatting with two female classmates about a story event. At this point however, any male student who attempted to move near Sylvia was pressured not to by the other boys. When Charlie later during the same story of the "Teeny Tiny Woman" moved into the centre of the circle to be more in front of me and consequently closer to Sylvia, he then looked behind him and apparently catching a glimpse from one of his disproving male classmates, reluctantly moved back to his original position. More promisingly however, as the long story "The selkie girl" *(Cooper, 1986)* in this session continued, several female participants became immersed in the story realm and moved closer to the storyteller, and without being conscious of it also moved closer to Sylvia, who was listening intently. When they did realise how close they were to Sylvia they merely smiled at her and stayed where they were. This increasing indicator of *positive group behaviour* in relation to Sylvia was heartening to observe.

The change in Sylvia over the course of the project was dramatic, at least in regard to her attitude to taking part in the storytelling sessions and with me as the storyteller. Her rapport with me changed as she realised during the storytelling she was an accepted and welcome part of the audience and her input and responses were valued. Sylvia also recognised that she had an ally in a safe and welcoming environment. From being morose, disinterested and hostile to her classmates in the first sessions, Sylvia became one of the first to greet me upon arrival in the classroom and always sat close to the front, rather than at the back and away from the group. She began to exchange looks with other classmates, mainly the girls, at interesting points in the stories. For Sylvia, the victim of blatant *othering*, storytelling had a remarkable and positive impact. By sharing a common experience with her classmates, in an environment where tolerance and respect was not only encouraged but expected as normal behaviour, Sylvia felt safe enough to lower the protective barriers she had built for herself and participate completely in the activity. This was the power of building positive Group Dynamics in action and was an extremely satisfying outcome of the storytelling project for me.

The final indicator in the Group Dynamics Engagement cluster was another indication

that 6G had come to thoroughly enjoy the storytelling sessions and were eager for them to start promptly. While instances of *quietening* increased over the course of the storytelling project I was realistic enough to realise that 6G were never going to be an extremely quiet class. 6G also became *quiet* at the commencement of a story much quicker as the storytelling project progressed. More importantly, the class became *quieter* immediately following a period of interaction as they were keen for the story to continue. While 6G were enthusiastic listeners and became thoroughly engaged with the stories they were still quite vocal and keen to share their thoughts and responses. I was content to let this occur as the atmosphere in the class during storytelling sessions had changed completely from hostility to friendliness, acceptance and a strong sense of community. No storyteller can ask for more than that.

It was anticipated that the indicators for the Group Dynamics Engagement cluster would gradually increase in 3G as the storytelling project progressed in a similar pattern to 6G. When the data shown in Table 5.29 and Figure 5.30 below revealed that this was not the case the QUEST process was utilised and a deeper analysis of the data was undertaken, what Charmaz (2006) discusses in terms of reflecting on the research process in grounded theory research. The Figure 5.30 below illustrates that the data for 3G was extremely scattered and showed no obvious pattern of growth. Encouragingly the *positive group indicator* showed an increase if only a slight one. The chapter will now continue with an analysis of how the Group Dynamics Engagement indicators occurred in Third Grade, as highlighted in Table 5.29 below.

5.3.2   Third Grade (3G)

Table 5.29 *Table showing occurrences of principal Group Dynamics Engagement indicators for 3G*

Storytelling Week	Classmate behaviour modify	Classroom manage manners	Exchange of looks	Positive group response	Quietening	Total cluster indicators
Week One	18	14	13	2	2	49
Week Two	37	34	12	6	14	103
Week Four	13	13	25	7	12	70
Week Six	33	2	15	7	8	65

The Figure 5.30 below highlights the scattered data of the Group Dynamics Engagement in a more obvious pattern.

Figure 5.30 *3-D Chart showing principal Group Dynamics Engagement Indicators for 3G*
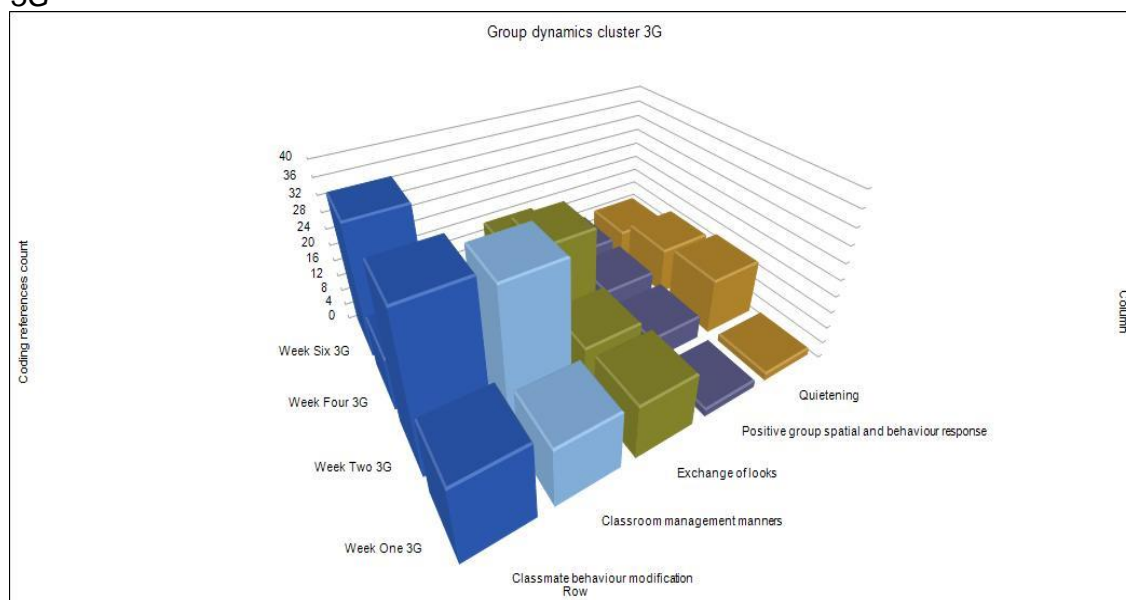
It was anticipated that as the storytelling project continued that the indicator of *classmate behaviour modification* would decrease as the students in the class settled more rapidly into listening to stories and maintain positive listening skills. As Figure 5.30 above reveals however, there was a dramatic increase from Week One to Week Two and the occurrences of the *classmate behaviour modification* indicator increased from 18 in the first week to 33 in Week Six.

In Week One there was a significant level of disruptive or extremely vocal behaviour from students such as Perry, Steven and Robert at the beginning of the first story "Naughty Marysia" that went unchecked by any *classmate modification*. This may be due to participants in 3G being unfamiliar with storytelling and unaware of what the acceptable level of interaction and noise was. I paused several times during the first storytelling session to regain the attention of the class but did not directly ask any student to be quiet. The majority of the instances of *classmate behaviour modification* in the first storytelling session occurred during the second story of "The tailor" and were by Willow, Linda and Sophie who gave the direction to "Shh" to the boys around them when they became too loud. The only boy to *modify a classmate's behaviour* was ironically Robert, the target of much modification himself, who pulled Perry's arm to make him sit down each time he knelt up.

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Week Two revealed a dramatic increase to 37 occurrences of the **classmate behaviour modification** indicator. It is unknown if the teacher of 3G had reprimanded them for what she believed to be disruptive behaviour following the first storytelling session or if 3G were simply eager to listen to more stories as indicated by the increase in the **attentive** indicator in Week Two. Whatever the cause, students in 3G very quickly began to **modify** the disruptive behaviour of their classmates in Week Two. Within two minutes of the story "The black cat" commencing, there were four instances of the **classmate behaviour modification** indicator. The instances of **modification** during the entire session occurred when students were chatting to another student or when they interjected too often during the story. This high level of interaction, encouraged by me during this story through **interaction invitation** questions was perceived by several students such as Bessie and Matt as disruptive and prompted them to insist that their classmates become quiet. This discomfort with disruptive behaviour became very apparent during the introduction to the second story as illustrated in Figure 5.31.

Figure 5.31 *Extract from transcript showing irritation with disruptive behaviour in 3G*

What kind of story are you going to tell, 'cause he was talking and I couldn't hear what you said?- Robert, very annoyed look on his face, pointing to Grant**.**
1.11.23
String – Perry to Robert
A string story.
Oh, string story. - Robert
Can you ask him to move forward 'cause my legs are suffocating. - Grant referring to Robert
Tit for Tat?
Matt turns to look at Grant
Arial turns to look at Grant
Arthur waves arms in the air
Celia puts head in hands as though exasperated
Can you tell them to be quiet, 'cause I can't hear anything - Bessie

Extract from Week Six, 3G.

Robert's accusation that he could not hear the type of story due to Grant talking too much followed a quite lengthy chat between Robert and Grant that was only interrupted

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by another student, Gus, asking Robert to be quiet. The exchange illustrated in Figure 5.31 above was followed by a request from me for the students to observe their class rules and listen to each other and be fair to each other. The first three sessions with 3G were typified by lots of chatter between stories and attentive, if often interactive, listening during stories. As the storytelling project progressed, the majority of students in 3G became eager to collaborate in meaningful conversations with me about the stories about to be heard or those just experienced, rather than chat to their classmates about unrelated topics.

When the transcripts for the entire project were analysed it became apparent that the level of frustration shown by numerous students at disruptive behaviour had increased as these students developed an appreciation and enjoyment in storytelling. This frustration was expressed through the indicator of *classmate behaviour modification* as they urged disruptive students to cease their behaviour in order for the stories to be heard and enjoyed. In this respect the indicator of *classroom management modification* in 3G adapted in a similar way to 6G, in that it became a means of discouraging disruptive Group Dynamics. This expression of frustration was particularly evident in Week Six when there were 33 instances of the *classmate behaviour modification* indicator. 18 of these occurred during the story of the "Fairy crane." It has been mentioned previously that this is a solemn story that depicts the tragic consequences of failing to keep a promise. Numerous students in 3G, sensing the serious nature of the story, became highly agitated by the insistence of classmates such as Perry and Robert to *join in* over-enthusiastically to the story's rhythmic refrain.

In utilising grounded theory and the QUEST approach and querying unexpected data results of the increased occurrences of the *classmate behaviour modification* indicator, the behaviour revealed a desire by the majority of students in 3G for improved Group Dynamics and a frustration with and less tolerance of disruptive behaviour by a few students in the class. It would be logical to expect that *classroom management manners*, in contrast to *behaviour modification*, would increase over the course of the storytelling project if Group Dynamics improved. Again, the data flew in the face of expectation and the occurrences of *classroom management manners* declined dramatically over the course of the project, decreasing from 14 to two, with a peak of 34 in Week Two. While the analysis of the *classroom management manners* for 3G supported a decrease in occurrences as listeners became more familiar with the teller and the activity of storytelling, and they realised it was not a class lesson but a

mutually shared activity, the spike in Week Two required investigation. Such an uneven pattern of occurrences required deeper analysis of the data.

The dramatic increase in Week Two, like the increase in **behaviour modification**, strengthened my suspicion that the teacher of 3G reminded the class of expected levels of behaviour prior to my arrival for the second storytelling session. Were there additional reasons for the increase in **classroom management manners**? Deeper analysis of the data would certainly indicate that there was.

After reflecting on the disruptive behaviour in the first session, as appropriate to action research, I had determined that a different strategy was required to attract and maintain the attention of students in 3G. A common strategy used by storytellers is to ask questions about the story of the audience and incorporate the answers into the story. By this means inexperienced story listeners are drawn in to the story and gain a sense of contributing to it. By carefully analysing the transcript it was revealed that I asked 12 interaction-invitation questions during the introduction and story of "The black cat." All 33 occurrences of **classroom management manners** were in direct response to these questions and all 33 were instances of listeners raising their hands. Thus was the high incidence of this indicator in Week Two explained.

The indicator of **exchange of looks** remained steady in the first two weeks of the storytelling project, increased in Week Four, then dropped significantly in Week Six. In contrast to the derogatory **exchanges of looks** that were observed in the first two sessions with 6G described above, the majority of **exchanges of looks** in 3G in Week One were accompanied by smiles and were in response to unexpected elements in the stories. The students in 3G appeared to be seeking reassurance from their classmates that they heard correctly or that they too appreciated the novelty of what they were hearing. The use of the term 'mama' in the story of "Naughty Marysia" prompted Willow to look at Sophie, mouth the word 'mama' and raise her eyebrows. Several minutes later the sing-song voice I used for the character of Mama when she was calling for her daughter caused Arthur to complete the call in a similar tone and sing "where are you?" This unexpected response by Arthur in the first story of the entire programme prompted Lennon to look at Trevor in surprise, who in turn looked at me for reassurance that Arthur's call was acceptable. The final surprise of the tiny nesting doll emerging at the end of the story prompted an exclamation of "Oh" from Robert who then hurriedly looked at Perry to see if he was also surprised.

The individualisation of the story listening experience was apparent during this first story of the project. Only events that prompted surprise caused the students in 3G to *exchange looks* with each other. The listeners were internalising their responses to the story and had not yet become collaborative listeners prepared to share their responses with others. The few *exchanges of looks* in the second story of "The tailor" were in response to the unexpected garments the tailor made with ever-diminishing pieces of cloth. As the tailor became more inventive, Willow, Linda and Robert *exchanged surprised looks*. Robert also looked at Perry after he adlibbed a few interactive lines in direct response to the dialogue of the teller.

The 24 instances of *exchanges of looks* that occurred in Week Four in comparison appeared to be in response to elements within the stories that delighted the listeners rather than surprised them and they wanted to share their pleasure with their classmates. The list of non-threatening animals that appear in the story of "How Frog lost his tail" caused several smiles and the naming of monkey prompted a beaming smile and *exchange of looks* between Sophie and Linda, while the sky god Nyame's gift to Frog of a beautiful tail prompted Grace to look at Bessie and smile. Interestingly, as the story took a more serious turn following Frog's betrayal of both Nyame and the other animals there were no *exchanges of looks* between the listeners in 3G. Every student was still and focussed on the unfolding events that were playing out in their own imaginations. The next story of "Little Half-chick" prompted another six *exchanges of looks*, each one accompanied either by a smile or a mimicking of Half-chick's lines. These exchanges appeared to be a relief to the listeners following the tension of the first story. There were several more *exchanges* during the following story prompted by the outrageous behaviour of Lazy Tok and all accompanied by smiles or laughter. The enjoyment of sharing a story experience with classmates and expressing that through *exchanges of looks* enabled listeners in 3G to also share the tension of the plot in the last story of "Pot cook." Unlike the internalisation of their response to the story of "How Frog lost his tail" the listeners in 3G now *exchanged looks* during the tense scenes in the last story. This appeared to often be a means of releasing tension or anxiety as several listeners overdramatised some of the scenes portrayed in the story as they looked at their classmates.

There was a decrease to 14 instances of *exchange of looks* during Week Six. The five genuine *exchanges of looks* in the first story of "The fairy crane" were prompted by the refrain. Two other looks were actually accompanied by frowns in an attempt to

discourage the disruptive behaviour of Perry and Robert who were overenthusiastically *joining in* with the refrain. The seriousness and complexity of the Japanese story assisted the listeners in 3G to immerse themselves in the story realm and rely on the images in their own minds. There was a high incidence of Trancelike State Engagement indicators during this story which precluded the *exchange of looks*. The following story of the "Teeny tiny woman" was deliberately jaunty in delivery to break the tension of the previous story. It was highly interactive and participatory and only two *looks were exchanged* at the beginning of the story as classmates acknowledged the change of pace with smiles. Only four *exchanges of looks* occurred during the drawing story of "The wild bird" as the majority of the class focussed intently on the constantly changing image in front of them. Their Collaboration during this story was vocal rather than visual as they called out suggestions of what the creature may be. The remaining *looks were exchanged* during the highly ridiculous story of "The Snooks family" and all were accompanied by smiles and laughter. For 3G the indicator of *exchanging looks* had adapted during the course of the storytelling project. It had changed from a means of seeking reassurance from classmates in response to unexpected events in stories to a way of sharing delight and enjoyment, or releasing tension during more serious moments. The 14 instances of *exchanging looks* in Week Six were therefore a true indicator of a developing positive Group Dynamic where sharing a common experience was valued.

The improvement in the Group Dynamics in 3G was reflected in the indicator of *positive group dynamics* which increased across the storytelling project. While not as dramatic as the change that occurred in 6G, the growth in the occurrences in 3G was still pleasing to observe. As the storytelling project continued it was noted that students moved closer to classmates voluntarily. There were two instances of this in Week One, increasing to six in Week Two then seven in both Week Four and Six. It was further noted that, like students in Kuyvenhoven's 2007 study, students in 3G were moving closer to students they had not previously sat next to and away from students who were often disruptive during the storytelling sessions. For example Trevor, Phillip, Bessie and Jarrod, who were extremely attentive listeners, had moved away from Perry and Robert by Week Six.

Steven's movement around the audience during the course of the storytelling project was particularly interesting and revealed a developing Group Dynamic and illustrated the value of storytelling for listeners of all literacy levels. At the beginning of Week One

the teacher identified Steven as a new student from Malaysia who had limited English. The teacher placed Steven at the front of the audience and stated that she would be interested to observe how he 'coped' with the storytelling session. Steven was attentive during the actual stories and intrigued by the nesting dolls used for "Naughty Marysia" but was easily distracted during the introduction and conversations between the two stories. He smiled and repeated the lines called out by other students as they joined in during "The tailor". The teacher however was concerned by how distracted he had been by Robert and Perry during the session and without commenting on it decided to place Steven at the back of the group in Week Two.

As the first story began in Week Two Steven moved himself over to the centre of the group and watched the drawing story of the Black Cat intently. He repeated phrases called out by his classmates as they were asked questions about the drawing. He was again easily distracted during the breaks between stories and talked to those near him, poking them if they did not respond. By Week Four Steven showed *positive group behaviour* as he had seated himself halfway to the front of the group and interacted with his classmates and by *acting* an event in the story of "Lazy Tok," smiling and *exchanging looks*. There were no instances of distracted behaviour by Steven noted in this session. In Week Six Steven had again placed himself at the front of the group and was seated at my feet and made several quiet but relevant comments throughout the stories. He was occasionally distracted by Perry who was seated near him but actually looked relieved when the teacher moved Perry following the second story. Like the children in Kuyvenhoven's study (Kuyvenhoven, 2007) referred to previously, Steven displayed *positive group behaviour* in positioning himself at the front of the group and where possible away from distracting influences. He was eager to engage with the stories vocally where possible and particularly enjoyed augmented stories.

The indicator of *quietening* showed an unusual pattern for 3G across the storytelling project which may also be explained by my increased use of interaction-invitation questions which went from 14 in Week One to 24 during Week Two when the *quietening* indicator peaked at 14 instances. While asking these questions certainly captured the attention of students in 3G, it had the unexpected result of encouraging others in the class to chat to classmates. The high number of instances of *quietening* was a result of students such as Bessie firmly asking classmates to be quiet, the teacher asking the class to *quieten* down and by me raising my voice in the context of the "Black cat" story in order to regain the attention of the class. Unlike other indicators

of engagement, **quietening** should be at a moderate level as an engagement with storytelling develops. Audiences of experienced story listeners quickly adopt an expectant silence as a story commences, and this silence should continue throughout the telling apart from individuals talking over text or joining in. A storytelling session that has a high incidence of **quietening** reveals that some form of intervention was often required to regain the quiet attention of listeners. Equally a very low instance of the **quietening** indicator usually reveals that the audience was rarely quiet throughout a storytelling session. In light of this the low number of only eight instances of **quietening** in Week Six was a positive result that displayed a growing positive Group Dynamic in 3G.

The following section will examine the indicators in the Group Dynamics Engagement cluster that were observed in KG. It was anticipated that the Group Dynamics of this class would be very positive because the teacher had informed me that the class had participated in storytelling with her previously. As the teacher had stated that she enjoyed storytelling my assumption was that it had been an enjoyable experience for the entire group.

5.3.3 Kindergarten Grade (KG)

Table 5.32 *Table showing occurrences of principal Group Dynamics Engagement indicators for KG*

Storytelling Week	Classmate behaviour modify	Classroom manage manners	Exchange of looks	Positive group response	Quietening	Total cluster indicators
Week One	1	27	2	1	5	36
Week Two	4	27	20	4	3	58
Week Four	3	47	30	9	6	95
Week Six	4	12	43	15	4	78

Table 5.32 above and the chart in Figure 5.33 below illustrate that KG were indeed a class who showed very positive Group Dynamics from Week One. It was interesting to note however that even this class showed a positive development in Group Dynamics over the course of the project.

Figure 5.33 *3-D Chart showing principal Group Dynamics Engagement Indicators for KG*
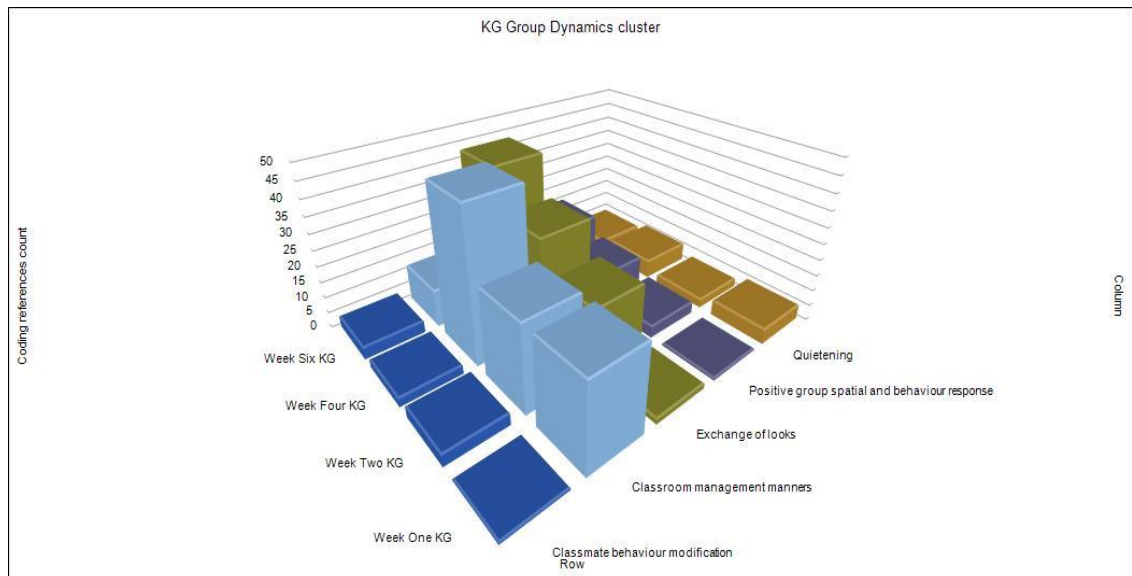
The low incidence of ***classmate behaviour modification*** was expected for KG. It has been my experience that children in kindergarten grades tend to view visiting storytellers as authority figures on a par with their teachers. The frequent challenge with kindergarten classes for storytellers is to build a rapport with their young audience and establish themselves as someone who wants to share an enjoyable experience rather than teach a lesson. The behaviour of kindergarten children is usually very positive and while listeners may be distracted it is done very quietly, such as fiddling with an object or allowing their attention to wander and does not disturb those around them. This was the case with KG which was an exceptionally well behaved class and therefore had very little need to correct the behaviour of classmates. In Weeks Two and Six when the indicator of ***classmate behaviour modification*** was the highest, these were also the weeks when classmates were displaying negative audience behaviour such as Mike and Tiri in Week Two, or there was the highest incidence of the chatting indicator at eight in Week Six.

In contrast to the often spiteful, vocal ***classmate behaviour modification*** displayed by 6G in the early weeks of the storytelling project, KG used a gentler approach as displayed below in Figure 5.34.

Figure 5.34 Extract from transcript showing classmate behaviour modification approach in KG.

Mike tries to gain Tiri's attention by leaning into him and poking him in the side
Claire raises hand
Florence looks down at Susan's shoes
Mike links arm through Tiri's and pulls him to the side
Well, that man had this story in one of his diaries.
Tiri looks at camera and waves
Mike waves
Bianca looks at Tiri and Mike and purses lips in annoyance

Extract from Week Two, KG.

This non-vocal approach by Bianca to *classroom behaviour modification* was typical of participants in KG, who only displayed three instances of asking classmates to modify their behaviour, all of which occurred in Week Six. This non-vocal approach may have been a reflection of the classroom management techniques modelled by the teacher who never raised her voice at any time I was in her classroom over the entire storytelling project.

The appreciation for positive behaviour in KG was most succinctly displayed by Tiri in Week Six. Tiri developed from being one of the most distracted participants, as displayed in Figure 5.34 above, to one of the most avid and Collaborative listeners in KG. He quickly became able to Enter the Story Realm, displayed Collaborative engagement and on numerous occasions entered the Trancelike State. When Susan snatched the drawing composed during the story of "The wild bird" from my hand in Week Six, Tiri looked appalled and stated "That wasn't nice!" Other listeners in the class nodded their heads in agreement.

The indicator of *classroom management manners* in KG followed a similar pattern to the other two classes when it decreased overall from 27 in Week One to 12 in Week Six. This decrease occurred due to a lessening of interaction invitation questions from me at the end of the project which in turn led to less hands being raised in response to the questions. The spike of 47 instances of *classroom management manners* in Week Four however warranted further analysis and I was surprised to note that the data showed that I asked 86 interaction invitation questions during this session. The

transcript revealed that I asked 17 questions just in the introduction to the session in an attempt to gain the attention of the class who appeared quite unsettled. Most of the questions in the introduction were prompts to recall stories that we had shared in earlier sessions to re-establish rapport with the class.

Few questions were required in the introduction to the story of "Little Half-chick" as the felt-board illustrations that accompanied the story quickly captured the attention of the class. KG was keen to discuss the illustrations at the end of the story and I asked 17 questions before the next story commenced to settle them sufficiently to begin the story. It was interesting to note that when questions were asked in the context of a story the listeners in KG were more likely to give an answer without raising their hands. Thus there was also a decrease in the instances of the **classroom management indicator** as listeners in KG ceased viewing me as another teacher in their classroom and identified me as 'the storyteller' who encouraged participation and collaboration without the necessity of raising hands before contributing.

Unlike the first two indicators in the Group Dynamics Engagement cluster discussed above, the **exchange of looks** did follow the expected pattern of increasing over the course of the storytelling project. In Week One the participants in KG displayed an individualised response to the storytelling activity. They were intrigued by the new visitor to their classroom who came carrying a mysterious basket and even more interesting video equipment. When not looking at the exaggerated gestures as I told the story of "The tailor" or walked around their classroom with different section of the nesting doll during "Naughty Marysia", they amused themselves by waving at their image in the camera view finder. Only Ray looked for a classmate's response to the antics of the tailor and Stella and Catherine actually looked at each other and smiled as the garments described in the story of "The tailor" became ever smaller.

The viewfinder of the camera proved to be less of a distraction in Week Two after the first few minutes and the participants were more comfortably familiar with what the storytelling session would entail. As a result there were 20 instances of listeners **exchanging looks** with each other as the class began to share their responses with their classmates. The 43 instances of **exchanging looks** observed in Week Six was an encouraging indication that KG students were eager to share their experience and responses with their storytelling community. They had developed from listeners who

needed to internalise their responses in order to find meaning in the stories to listeners who were confident in collaborating with the group.

This development of group collaboration was also evidenced by the increasing instances of the *positive group response* indicator across the storytelling project. There was a steady increase over each week of the project, from only one instance in Week One to 15 in Week Six. In Week One Catherine moved closer to the front of the group as soon as the second story began. In Week Two three listeners moved forward while Susan hugged Florence at the happy conclusion to the very rowdy but highly interactive story of "How to make a small house into a large one." Six listeners moved their position in Week Four in order to be either closer to classmates or closer to the front of the group. Another student, Mike moved closer to the front after each story until he was sitting on my feet by the fourth story.

Of the 15 instances of *positive group response* in Week Six the most poignant were those surrounding Stella. Upset at not being close enough to blow out the candle at the conclusion of "The Snooks family" Stella had moved to the back of the group and was crying softly as the story of "The old woman and her pig" commenced. To my horror I did not realise that Stella was upset to the point of tears until I viewed the footage that evening. However, Stella was surrounded by a group of friends who tried to comfort her. As the story continued, Amber noticed that Stella was upset and moved to sit beside her and began to rub her back. At this physical comfort, Stella put her thumb in her mouth, a sure sign as noted previously that she was determined to listen to the story. Two minutes later, with Amber still beside her, Stella wiped her eyes and looked at me, listening intently to the story. While I certainly regret that Stella became upset in my storytelling session, observing the very *positive group responses* that had developed and the power of story to cut through distress was very heartening.

As discussed previously the indicator of *quietening* should be at a moderate level in a successful storytelling session. It should reflect that the audience settled quickly as the story commenced and lasted for a sustained period of time until some form of collaborative listening occurred. It was anticipated that KG would show an appropriate level of the *quietening* indicator which is indeed reflected in the data. As soon as I spoke the words "The story I would like to tell you today" at the beginning of Week One, the whole class became *quiet*. The interaction invitation questions that were

scattered throughout the stories prompted appropriate vocal responses but the class became *quiet* again as soon as the story continued.

KG was intrigued by the drawing story of "The black cat" that began the storytelling session in Week Two and seemed compelled to make comments about it. Therefore the *quietening* indicator did not occur until several minutes into the story. The *quiet* listening was maintained for the duration of the story however until the students began to make comments about the drawing at the conclusion of the story. Due to a series of interaction invitation questions at the beginning of the story "Grandma's candles" the listeners in KG did not *quieten* down until several minutes into the story but again, once they had they remained extremely *quiet* for the whole story apart from several laughs and mutters to themselves in response to an event in the story. KG's ability to settle into a story quickly was illustrated by the rapid way they became quiet at the beginning of "How to make a small house into a large one." This is highly unusual for this story as the audience had already been given prompt cards at the beginning of the story and instructed to make the noise of the particular animal named on their card in appropriate sections of the story. It has been my experience that children cannot resist the urge to rehearse the noise of their animal as soon as they are handed a card. As Figure 5.35 below will show, the students in KG were the exception to this behaviour.

Figure 5.35 Extract from transcript showing quietening indicator in KG

53.50 How to make a small house into a large one.
Ok, so this story was about a man and a woman,
Stella smiles
Ray smiles
Florence smiles
and they lived in a small one-roomed house.
Ray sits down having been on knees
Kate has head down, looking at card
Marcel smiles
Florence has head tilted
Susan looking at teller
Stella makes a surprised look
There was a table, some chairs, a stove
Stella opens her mouth

and a bed, and it was very, very crowded.

Class very quiet (unusual for this story when children usually rehearse their animal sounds.)

Well, one day,

Marcel tilts head

their daughter sent a letter, asking if she and her husband and the baby could come and live with them.

Extract from "How to turn a small house into a large one" Week Two, KG

In Week Four KG again became *quiet* immediately following the opening line of "Little Half-chick" and then following a series of questions from me about the character as the story continued. Each story was met with expectant silence from KG and they continued to *quieten* after every interactive section in a story. The only stories that broke this pattern of behaviour for listeners in KG were drawing stories. The story of "The wild bird" in Week Six prompted numerous comments about the illustration developing before their eyes. Their comments were made to me and their classmates and occurred each time a significant part of the drawing was composed. The residual excitement from the drawing story delayed their *quietening* for the story of "The teeny tiny woman" but even so they were all quiet within three minutes of the start of the story. The steady pattern of the *quietening* indicator across all weeks of the storytelling project revealed the enjoyment listeners in KG knew could be derived from storytelling.

The instances of *classmate behaviour modification* and *classroom management manners* revealed an unexpected pattern for KG which was unexplained until the QUEST process was applied. When the pattern was queried and other impacting influences examined, a logical reason for the pattern emerged. The *positive group response* and *quietening* indicators formed the expected pattern across the storytelling project for a class that had been identified as previous story listeners.

The ability and willingness of KG to settle into stories quickly was an indication of their enjoyment of the activity which had an immediate positive impact on the entire class. Everyone was able to hear the stories well and no one felt compelled to modify disruptive behaviour of a classmate. These factors led to an extremely positive group experience for all of us, including their teacher who at the conclusion of the storytelling project asked for a list of all the stories prepared and shared by me.

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5.3.4 Outcome of Group Dynamics Engagement

The importance of positive Group Dynamics on the success of a storytelling event cannot be underestimated. The enhanced enjoyment that comes from sharing a mutual experience with friends is a pleasure that all humans benefit from. Not only can they exchange looks with their fellow audience members, share laughter and smiles as a story unfolds, but they can also relive the experience later as they retell the story or use phrases from it during play. The importance of a positive group environment was reflected in the growing intolerance for disruptive behaviour that would delay or impact negatively on the storytelling.

A study of the ability of listeners to recall stories when the story has been related to either a focussed listener or a distracted listener led Adams, Smith, Pasupathi and Vitolo (2002) to conclude that the behaviour of the listener impacts on the quality of the storytelling. This is due to the fact that a distracted audience, be it one or many listeners, necessitates the storyteller utilising strategies to retain the attention of the listener, rather than focusing on relating the story in finer detail. When the audience displays positive group behaviour, the experience is more enjoyable for everyone, including the storyteller.

Conducting all of the storytelling sessions in the participants' own classrooms ensured a non-threatening environment for the majority of the students which also assisted in building positive Group Dynamics. In a setting where peers are known, and the layout is familiar, social skills can be strengthened more easily. Children, just like adults, enjoy sharing an experience with people they have already established some relationship with.

The storytelling area should be a place where, through the behaviour expectations of the storyteller, good manners are encouraged, and respect for others is expected. During the storytelling project, no participant was allowed to push or shove another listener, and it was emphasised that when someone was speaking, the rest of the group should listen quietly. The choice of stories reflected a belief in tolerance, respect and positive values that further emphasised the established guidelines for behaviour.

Miles (2003) has stated that the classroom should be a 'put-down free zone' and I believe that this is particularly true of the storytelling area. Every listener interprets a story in a unique way and brings his/her own meaning to it. When the participants were

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brave enough to voluntarily voice their interpretation of a story, it was important that other participants did not belittle or criticise that opinion. The evidence of the current research reveals that the storytelling area increasingly became a place where students felt comfortable to express their views in relation to the stories.

The teller's growing knowledge of the Group Dynamics of each class was also valuable to the success of the project, such as awareness of "pack leaders" in each class, students with issues, such as the "othered" girl Sylvia in 6G, and an intimate knowledge of what had occurred in previous sessions and how to build on that. This rapport-building aspect of the study has not been extensively explored in previous storytelling research. The indicators in the Group Dynamics Engagement cluster were analysed using grounded theory and the QUEST process, where the unexpected and *unexplored* aspects of the listeners' responses and behaviour were *queried* in order to identify mitigating factors.

5.4   Summary

The preceding two chapters have examined in detail five engagement clusters of indicators that occurred in significant frequency to warrant further investigation to determine if patterns of engagement with storytelling could be identified.. For the child participants in the current research the clusters of engagement followed an identifiable progress, a journey, through an engagement with storytelling process. The overarching pattern of these clusters and how they relate to each other is illustrated in Figure 5.36 below.

The Individual Familiarisation strand and the Relational Effects strand are symbiant elements in the storytelling event, that is, they have an ongoing relationship where the development of one strand strengthens and improves the other. Successful storytelling events are those where both the Individual Familiarisation strand and the Relational Effects strand are active and working in harmony with each other as the listener continues their storytelling journey. As more listeners Enter the Story Realm, become Collaborative partners in the story and perhaps, (but not always), enter into a Trancelike State, the Group Dynamics of the audience are strengthened and enhanced. Each participant in the storytelling event is with like-minded colleagues who are mutually enjoying a story even though they may derive different meanings from it. Just like tourists travelling in a group across a country, each person is exposed to the same experience, but they will all take home different memories and personal meaning

from it. So it is with individual listeners on a storytelling journey. Positive Group Dynamics and the ability of all audience members to articulate appropriate responses in a respectful manner using Language Engagement behaviours, enable individual listeners to more easily Enter the Story Realm and Collaborate with the storyteller and the rest of the audience in a satisfying and enriching manner.

The rate at which the two strands of the storytelling process influence and impact on each other may differ according to the age and storytelling experience of individual listeners and the whole group. Factors such as inappropriate story selection, outside distractions or even the level of group interaction encouraged in a story may have an effect on how an individual or a group responds to a given story. Distracting elements will certainly have an impact on the ability of the majority of the audience to enter into the Trancelike State, although some listeners will still be able to.

Figure 5.36
The complete Engagement with storytelling process revealed through Indicators of Engagement

Chin in hand

Attentive

Sitting forward

Entering Story Realm Engagement

Settle into position

Sitting up straight

Joining in

Acting

Collaborative Engagement

Laugh at story

Touch mouth

Smile at story

Eye gaze

Mirror story action

Trancelike State Engagement

Head tilted

Open mouth

Slack mouth

Individual Familiarisation

Relational Effects

Modify classmate behaviour

Manners

Group Dynamics Engagement

Exchange looks

Quietening

Positive group response

Compare

Interaction extension

Language Engagement

Known story

Predict plot

Values response

For the participants in the current research there was an observable journey through the storytelling process. The participants had to learn how to Enter the Story Realm in a manner that suited them individually. They had to learn how to be Collaborators in the storytelling event through active participation and a willingness to immerse themselves in the world of the story. When these listeners were capable of and willing to Enter the Story Realm and be active participants the Trancelike State was more likely to occur if the right conditions were present in the storytelling event. This certainly did not happen with every story nor was it expected to and happened to different degrees depending on the appeal of a story to an individual listener.

When the first three clusters of **Entering Story Realm Engagement**, **Collaborative Engagement** and **Trancelike State Engagement** are present (or in the case of the Trancelike State the *potential* to be present) then the indicators in the clusters of **Language Engagement** and **Group Dynamics Engagement** begin to appear more frequently. These last two clusters in particular lead to skills that are transferable to other activities and situations in the school environment and elsewhere.

Through observing, recognising and analysing the 25 Indicators in the five engagement clusters a pattern of a developing engagement with storytelling began to emerge. This complex process contributes to the ongoing cyclical nature of storytelling where understanding and familiarity lead to enhanced enjoyment and collaboration which leads to further meaning making and an even greater understanding and appreciation of the art of storytelling.

The model the storytelling process proposed in the last two chapters provides storytellers with a tool to analyse the responses of their audiences to different storytelling events. They enable storytellers to see if the expected pattern of enhanced engagement with storytelling is emerging in their audience members and equally as important, provide signposts for areas that may require reflection and evaluation.

The concluding chapter will tease out how these Indicators of Engagement can provide a valuable tool to researchers and practising storytellers who seek to know more about storytelling audiences and further strengthen the assertion that storytelling is indeed a highly valuable human activity, not only to children, but to people of all ages.

CHAPTER 6. THE JOURNEY CONCLUDES

This thesis has postulated that research about a central aspect of storytelling, namely engagement with storytelling, has not often been previously systematically scrutinised and therefore offered an opportunity for further appropriate and adaptable research methods. The research questions developed were:

What is an appropriate, academically rigorous methodology for investigating engagement with storytelling?

How can children's engagement with storytelling be defined and measured?

How do children experience story based on observable, behavioural cues?

For the first research question, a means of closely observing and thereafter analysing the multiple interactions that take place during a storytelling event was required. This method needed to have the capacity to analyse the constantly adapting interplay between the storyteller and the story listener, between the story listener and the story itself, and between the individual story listener and his/her classmates. Action research using a grounded theory approach was identified as the research method best suited to such a study. This thesis has utilised these in a research approach, labelled the QUEST process, to conduct the current research. The QUEST process provides storytelling researchers with a replicable means of querying unexplored aspects of storytelling in a structured manner. The seven steps of the QUEST method are:

Step One: Apply open-minded observation of an accepted and established cultural activity; namely, storytelling.

Step Two: An exploratory research design is prepared and applied to the storytelling. Stakeholders in the activity are identified and collaborated with throughout the data collection process. A method for selecting, preparing and presenting scheduled stories is established.

Step Three: Data is systematically collected from the observation of body language, verbal responses and spontaneous dramatisation of the research participants as they listen to storytelling.

Step Four: Reflective practice is adopted to ensure the needs of the participants are met using action research strategies and the effective collection of data with regard to responses to stories is conducted.

Step Five: The collected data is critically analysed using grounded theory and patterns sought.

Step Six: Both expected and unexpected patterns in the data are Queried, utilising computer analysis software (such as NVivo but other programs are useful) now available to the researching storyteller.

Step Seven: Patterns of responses in storylistening behaviour over time are investigated to enhance the understanding of storytelling phenomena.

The application of the qualitative analysis software NVivo to storytelling data has been utilised here for the first time. Utilising such technologies enables the researcher to see nuances in the art of storytelling only assumed previously and enables researchers to apply stronger academic rigour to a worthy field of study. The use of such sophisticated software technology enabled a depth and rigour of analysis, incorporating grounded theory, to reveal insights into a well-known, but little explored aspect of storytelling with children.

The second research question was addressed through the use of the NVivo software, whereby 95 different behaviour responses were identified from the research data. When these were analysed further in terms of frequency and relevance, 25 Indicators of Engagement were identified and it has been shown in this thesis that these Indicators of Engagement can be grouped into five thematic clusters of Engagement; namely Entering the Story Realm Engagement, Collaborative Engagement, Trancelike State Engagement, Language Engagement and Group Dynamics Engagement.

The second research question was further addressed when these five clusters were grouped into two distinct strands of the Engagement with storytelling process. Entering the Story Realm Engagement, Collaborative Engagement and Trancelike State Engagement form a lineal pattern of development within the Individual Familiarisation strand of the process. In this strand, story listeners encounter the different aspects of storytelling and learn to be attentive and involved listeners who are able to immerse themselves in the world of the story being shared. The second strand of Relational Effects, the Language Engagement and Group Dynamics clusters, impact on each other as storytelling audience members become more sophisticated listeners who increasingly identify and appreciate the nuances and elements of storytelling and are keen to share the experience with their storytelling community.

This thesis has demonstrated that the use of the measurement tools of the Indicators of Engagement enables storytellers and researchers to observe and measure in a consistent manner the way in which child listeners engage with storytelling. The Indicators of Engagement have provided a means of systematically analysing what was previously a theoretical phenomenon, a thing posited but not proven.

This thesis has taken a "warts and all" approach to examining what happens in an authentic long-term storytelling project. As an experienced storyteller, I had expectations of the patterns that the behaviour of the participants would follow. Using the QUEST process unexpected responses or behaviours were queried, reflected on and evaluated in an honest appraisal of what can happen in a "real life" storytelling event. When the Indicators of Engagement (my concrete evidence) did not reflect the pattern that I expected, I looked for the factors that had impacted on it.

The third research question goes to the essence of the storytelling event itself. Practising storytellers know that a storytelling session or programme will never go completely as planned. The very nature of the storytelling activity predicts that a story listener will not always embrace the meaning of a story that the teller wishes to impart or respond in the expected way. The Indicators of Engagement provide storytellers with a pathway from which they can observe the rocky terrain of the storytelling event, littered with possible pitfalls, unexpected behaviours and responses. Ideally a storytelling event is meticulously planned, the audience preparation is perfect, the presentation of stories is flawless and the

listeners respond exactly as anticipated. The Indicators of Engagement when applied to this situation will measure the engagement with storytelling in the optimum pattern, following the process of the clusters perfectly. For those other times, when human nature and behaviour takes its unpredictable stance, the Indicators of Engagement can be used to effectively survey the storytelling terrain.

In the current research, the fact that there were identifiable factors (story choice, venue, outside distractions, etcetera) observed when the Indicators of Engagement were applied, is a positive outcome of the research and one which storytellers can use to their advantage. The application of the Indicators of Engagement do not supply the researching storyteller with excuses for what 'didn't work' in a storytelling programme but rather provide a useful tool for identifying the true level of engagement displayed by story listeners. The Indicators of Engagement also provide a tool that storytellers can use to reflect and enhance their future programmes. In other words, 'if it didn't work, why didn't it?' The Indicators provide a means of signposting the elements that work/do not work for the effectiveness of a storytelling event.

In contrast to the rocky terrain of the challenging storytelling event, the successful storytelling event can be likened to an expansive vista, where the storyteller and the audience travel together on an exciting journey, where each traveller encounters a mutually enjoyable experience. Just as ongoing exercise develops muscles and benefits the body, ongoing storytelling journeys enable listeners to nurture and engagement with story and benefit the mind and the imagination. The Indicators of Engagement can be used as signposts along the path of the successful storytelling journey, enabling storytellers to map successful elements of their programme and presentation for use in future events.

As listeners in all of the classes who accompanied me on the storytelling journey became more familiar with me and with the shared activity of listening to stories they became more sophisticated and collaborative travellers. Analysis of their responses revealed that they began to participate in more conversational discourse, voluntarily discussing their interpretations of the stories, often using story grammar and vocabulary, rather than merely asking questions about the story. As their familiarity with storytelling developed they demonstrably began to enjoy the experience more, comprehending more of the storytelling landscape they experienced on their journey.

The application of grounded theory, open coding and qualitative analysis software has enabled an 'open-minded' systematic study, couched in academically rigorous terms to be conducted on an age-old activity. The application of a suitable storytelling research process and consistent tools of measurement have added to the research arsenal for future researchers. Therefore the logical question to be asked is "To what extent can the journey of this storyteller be relevant to storytellers in other areas of the storytelling experience and application?"

The study makes a contribution to the conceptual frameworks around the analysis of stories and storytelling. Future researchers can use the QUEST approach and the Indicators of Engagement to advance the investigation into the value of storytelling. While Zipes is correct in stating that the best scenario for storytelling programmes in schools is an extended period, one-off visits by professional storytellers also have value and are a far more common occurrence in the Australian storytelling landscape. They provide students with an experience of storytelling that can be built on by subsequent visits, either by the same teller, or another. They may also provide the impetus for teachers to begin a storytelling programme in their own classroom. The knowledge gained in the current study about how children engage in the story realm and how this can be measured effectively can certainly be utilised by freelance storytellers in schools and storytelling teachers to evaluate their own storytelling programmes.

While the current study has direct relevance to the educational setting, the findings can also be applied to other areas of storytelling. The Indicators of Engagement have further application in the analysis of the effect of storytelling in the tertiary sector and in organisational storytelling. There is real value for example in organisational storytelling, in knowing what type of story has more impact on a listener. It is hoped that researchers in these areas of storytelling will apply the tools created for this thesis and adapt and enhance them further in their own areas of practice. The methods and procedures used to collect, observe and analyse the data have been described and carried out in a way that enable replication of a similar study. Any storyteller who wished to carry out similar research would be able to select stories that had meaning and resonance for them and utilise them in a study involving the QUEST process.

For any practitioner in any area of storytelling, knowledge of how listeners respond to storytelling and of how they encompass an understanding of the art of storytelling is invaluable. All storytellers, whether they practice in the area of education, health, business or religion, amongst others, have the ultimate goal of connection with their audience, of building a relationship based on a shared experience. The current research shows that in this central aspect of storytelling, Zipes (1995) is correct. Storytelling does build communities. Furthermore storytelling has the capacity to teach children to be more fully human by providing them with a values framework and effective communication tools. Through navigating their way through a new adventure and experience of storytelling all of the participants in the current research quest became reflective members of their community and arrived at a more sophisticated understanding of storytelling; a place where the method met the meaning.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. LIST OF TERMS

There are a number of terms and abbreviations utilised in the research that require some explanation. In the Table that follows I summarise the main ones in alphabetical order required to understand the QUEST method and the larger study.

AP   The Assistant Principal was the school's Project Officer for the storytelling research.

Augmented storytelling   Alternately called "storytelling with props", assisted storytelling, performance storytelling, illustrated storytelling and aided storytelling. The term used for this study is "augmented storytelling" as it seemed to encompass all of the components of this style of storytelling.
 Augmented storytelling utilises stories that are accompanied by such aids as flannel-boards, musical instruments, puppets, drawings (completed during the course of the story), origami and string patterns. The definitions of each of the two styles are outlined below within a review of the proponents of each style.

Classes   One class in each of the Kindergarten, Third and Sixth grades participated in the storytelling programme on a regular basis over the duration of the project. They each participated in seven storytelling sessions: one Introduction session, five Familiarisation sessions, and two Comparison sessions.

HREC   University of Newcastle Human Research Ethics Committee

Metanarration   Metanarration is the term used to describe the teller's dialogue with the audience, referring directly to awareness of the story itself, alluding to elements in the story such as the characters or events.

NSW DET	New South Wales (NSW) Department of Education and Training (This has since become the Department of Education and Community – DEC)
P & C	Parents and Citizens (P & C) Association
Participants	Individual research participants will be referred to by the code names they were assigned during transcribing of storytelling session videos.
Practising storyteller	The term 'practising storyteller' was used in preference to the term professional teller, in recognition that many highly experienced and well-respected storytellers operate on a voluntary basis and do not accept payment for their storytelling skills.
Professional storyteller	Where the term 'professional storyteller' is used, it is in reference to an individual who is paid for their storytelling services.
QUEST	Querying Unexplored Experiences of StoryTelling. This is the name given to the research design developed for the current study.
Rapport	This is the sense of being comfortable with and of trust that is established between the storyteller and the audience. The audience is made to feel welcome, establishes an affinity and builds a relationship with the storyteller through sharing a common enjoyable experience.
Reading the audience	When telling a story, a storyteller will be aware of the responses of audience members. They may adapt the way a story is being told in order to increase the attention, enjoyment, or engagement of audience members, by using such storytelling devices as changing the pace of the telling, increasing gestures or facial expressions or making the story

more dramatic, or softening the pitch. This observation and adjustment to the story will continue until the conclusion of the tale.

Story

Story in this current study represents far more than simply telling a series of chronological events. It is one person, sharing with at least one other person, a series of scenes which form a cohesive plot that has a recognisable beginning and ending. These scenes contain characters and conflicts drawn either from personal experience or created in the mind, that has meaning for the teller and represents something that has value for the teller.

Storytelling

The verbal exchange of a story, between a teller and one or more listeners. The story is told orally without the use of written text.

Styles of storytelling

Two styles of storytelling have been identified for the current thesis: augmented storytelling and traditional storytelling

Teachers

In accordance with provisions for anonymity each of the participating classroom teachers was given a code.
TKG = Teacher Kindergarten class
T3G = Teacher 3rd Grade class
T6G = Teacher 6th Grade class

Teller

To facilitate consistency of terminology across the content of the thesis, transcripts of the actual storytelling sessions, and references to field notes, the researcher/storyteller is referred to as the "teller."

Traditional storytelling

Sometimes referred to in the literature as pure, genuine or oral storytelling. It is more commonly described as traditional

storytelling, and in recognition of its wider use it is this term that has been adopted for this study. Here the term "traditional" is used to mean storytelling which involves the use of no props, where the storyteller's voice, gesture and facial expression convey the meaning of the story.

Types of storytelling   Types of storytelling refer to the various modes of delivering a story within the 2 styles of storytelling.

A note on individual stories referred to in the thesis:

All stories specifically mentioned in the thesis are referenced from a published source. However, in the true nature of oral storytelling, each story actually used in the storytelling project was an adaptation created by me, after numerous sources of the story were researched.

APPENDIX 2 THE CHAMBERS/HARLEY DIAGRAM: WORKED EXAMPLE

How Frog lost his tail
A Nyame story (African -Ashanti)

Story text

a) I've heard tell that a long time ago when the world was very, very young, all the animals would gather at the end of the day to drink from the waterhole. One evening Frog noticed that all of the animals around him had tails of all shapes and sizes: Monkey, Tiger, Lion, Lizard, even Elephant. He alone seemed to have no tail. This made Frog very unhappy and he began to croak mournfully.

b) "No tail!" he croaked, "No tail."
a) It wasn't long before Nyame came down to the waterhole to see what all the noise was about.

b) "Lion has a tail. Tiger has a tail. Elephant, Monkey, why even Elephant has a tail! They all make fun of me. Please great Nyame; grant me a tail of my own!"

a) Nyame looked at Frog. He hated to see anyone unhappy and so, after some time, Nyami said,
b) "I will grant what you ask Frog and give you a tail. But in return you must promise to look after the waterhole. Take care of it so that all the animals may gather here of an evening to drink.
b) "Of course I will", croaked Frog eagerly.

a) And so, having received the promise from Frog, Nyame sent him the most beautiful tail, unlike any tails that we've seen today.
a) For a time, all was well; until the rains refused to fall and a terrible drought came upon the land. All of the waterholes, streams and rivers began to dry up; all except Frog's waterhole, And sadly, when the parched animals came to the waterhole, Frog turned them away, saying
b) "There's no water here!"

a) All of the animals were turned away no matter whether they were large or small. Even the smallest of Lizards, who hardly drank anything were sent away by Frog. Nyame heard all of the animals as they despaired of thirst, and suspecting that a promise had been broken, he came down once more to the waterhole. As he approached the waterhole, he heard a voice croak:
b) "Go away. There's no water here for you!"
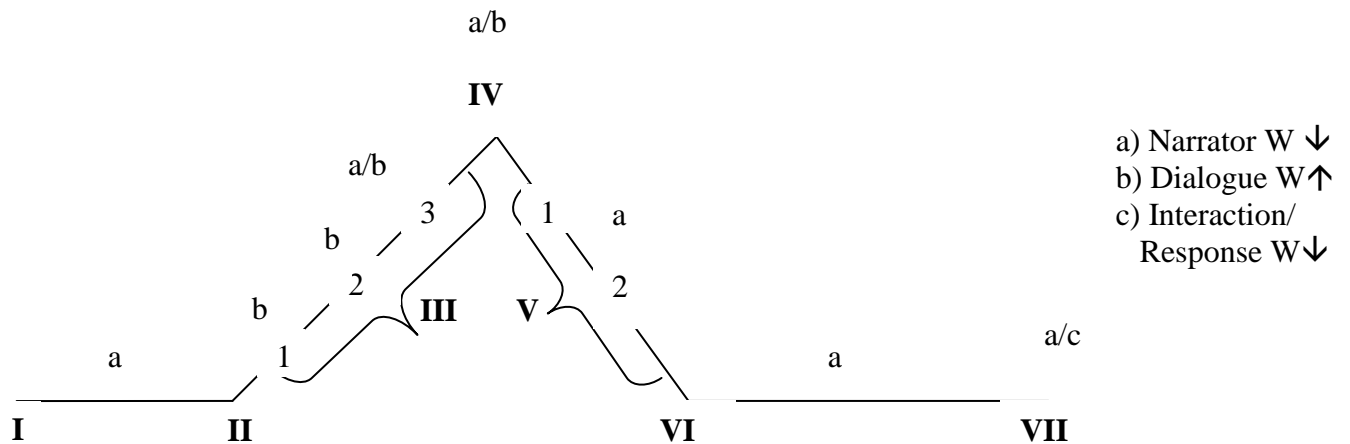
a) Furious, Nyami roared,
b) "Frog, I take away your tail. Let it disappear this instant. You have broken a promise and so you will never forget from this day on, all frogs will be born with tails, but they will wither and disappear as they grow."

a) So it is to this very day, helping us to remember that which Frog discovered long ago:

a/c) A good tale is meant to be shared!

a/b

IV

a/b

a) Narrator W ↓
b) Dialogue W↑
c) Interaction/
   Response W↓

b   3   1   a

b   2   2

a   **III**   **V**   a/c

b   1   a

a

I   **II**   **VI**   **VII**

 Chambers structural diagram with Harley 4th wall notation added

Summary of structural diagram points

I Introduction9	Setting of the waterhole
II Problem	Frog has no tail
III Incidents	1) Frog mourns lack of tail 2) Nyame gives conditional consent
	3) Animals denied water
IV Climax	Nyame denied water
V Falling action	1) Tail withers & disappears 2) All frogs born with tails
VI Conclusion	Still this way
VII End	End/moral

The worked example above shows how the story is deconstructed into the essential plot elements. Each element in the plot is then noted on a structural diagram. When the diagram has been constructed the actions of the wall can then be determined in the story and transferred to the diagram, as shown above.

APPENDIX 3 SCHEDULE OF STORIES FOR THREE FOCUS CLASSES.

- Weeks marked with an * were not analysed in the thesis, although they may have been referred to briefly.

- Stories within each week are listed in order of presentation in the storytelling session

- Bibliographic details are provided in the Reference List for each story referred to within the thesis

- Stories are marked with (T) for Traditional or (A) Augmented.

"TRADITIONAL STORYTELLING VERSUS PERFORMANCE STORYTELLING" WEEKLY STORY LIST			
DATE	TIME	CLASS	STORY
Week One Theme: None			
TUES 20/7/04	9.45 - 10.45	Sixth grade	Naughty Maryssa (A) The tailor (T)
TUES 20/7/04	11.45 - 12.45	Kindergarten	Naughty Maryssa (A) The tailor (T)
TUES 20/7/04	2.00 - 3.00	Third grade	Naughty Maryssa (A) The tailor (T)
Week Two Theme: Home			
MON 26/07/04	9.45 -10.45	Sixth grade	The black cat (A) The frog prince (T) How to make a large house into a small house (A)
MON 26/07/04	11.45 - 12.45	Kindergarten	The black cat (A) Grandma's candles (A) How to make a large house into a small house (A)
TUES 27/07/04	1.30 - 2.30	Third grade	The black cat (A) Grandma's candles (A) How to make a large house into a small house (A)
Week Three Theme: Tricksters *			
MON 02/08/04	9.45 - 10.45	Sixth grade	Clever Gretel (T) The field of boulians (T) The ogre, the sun and the raven (T) The severed head (T)
MON 02/08/04	11.45 - 12.45	Kindergarten	Henny penny (A) The mosquito (A) The cunning tortoise (A)
TUES 03/08/04	1.30 - 2.30	Third grade	The boggart (T) The field of boulians (T) The ogre, the sun and the raven (T) The mosquito (A)

Week Four Theme: Just desserts/greed				
Mon 16/08/04	9.45 - 10.45	Sixth grade	How frog lost his tail (T) Little half-chick (A) Pot cook (T) Strega Nona (A)
Mon 16/08/04	11.45 - 12.45	Kindergarten	Little half-chick (A) How frog lost his tail (T) The gingerbread man (A) Lazy Tok (A)
Tues 17/08/04	1.30 - 2.30	Third grade	How frog lost his tail (T) Little half-chick (A) Lazy Tok (A) Pot cook (T)
Week Five Theme: Magic words *				
Mon 30/08/04	9.45 - 10.45	Sixth grade	Ali Baba (T) Fee Fee Foo (T) The fisherman and his wife (A) Bedd Gelert (additional) (T)
Mon 30/08/04	11.45 - 12.45	Kindergarten	Rabbit & Hyena play the sanza (A) Fee Fee Foo (T) The fisherman and his wife (A)
Tues 31/08/04	1.30 - 2.30	Third grade	The fisherman and his wife (A) Fee Fee Foo (T) Rabbit & Hyena play the sanza (A)
Week Six Theme: Changelings				
Mon 13/09/04	9.45 - 10.45	Sixth grade	The fairy crane (T) The teeny tiny woman (T) Selkie girl (T) The Snooks family (A)
Mon 13/09/04	11.45 - 12.45	Kindergarten	The wild bird (A) The teeny tiny woman (T) The Snooks family (A) Old woman & her pig (A)
Tues 14/09/04	1.30 - 2.30	Third grade	The fairy crane (T) The teeny tiny woman (T) The wild bird (A) The Snooks family (A)

APPENDIX 4 LIST OF INDICATORS (CODING NODES) USED THROUGHOUT THE STUDY

- The format of the table shows the **Tree node** (thematic grouping) **/ Free node** (open coding).
  Single elements displayed in the Name column indicate that the code was not grouped with any other codes in a thematic node.

- The 25 codes that became the Indicators of Engagement are highlighted using the colours that correspond with the Engagement cluster colours used in the Storytelling process diagrams throughout the thesis.

Name	Engagement cluster
Active participation\Acting	Collaborative
Active participation\Address character directly	
Active participation\Applause - spontaneous	
Active participation\Classmates discuss topic	
Active participation\Commenting about story detail	
Active participation\Detail request	
Active participation\Frown - story	
Active participation\Gasp	
Active participation\Inserting self into the story	
Active participation\Joining in	Collaborative
Active participation\Kneeling up	
Active participation\Laugh at story	Collaborative
Active participation\Nod head	
Active participation\Perceived personal ownership of story	
Active participation\Shakes head	
Active participation\Smile - story	Collaborative
Active participation\Surprised look	
Active participation\Talking over text	
Active participation\Thumb in mouth	
Active participation\Touching mouth	Collaborative
Active participation\Worried or sad look	
Assisting class mate	
Audience behaviour management\Audience behaviour preparation	
Audience behaviour management\Change volume	
Audience behaviour management\Class Management direct	
Audience behaviour management\Pause in telling to regain attention	
Audience behaviour management\Raise volume of voice	
Audience behaviour management\Teacher classroom management	

Name	Engagement cluster
Distraction (lessening of engagement)\Chatting to classmate	
Distraction (lessening of engagement)\Distracted	
Distraction (lessening of engagement)\Fiddling with object	
Distraction (lessening of engagement)\Frown - distraction	
Distraction (lessening of engagement)\Off task comment	
Distraction (lessening of engagement)\Teacher distracts class	
Distraction (lessening of engagement)\Teacher reasurrance	
End of story - non-recognition	
Entering story realm\Attentive	Entering Story Realm
Entering story realm\Chin in hand	Entering Story Realm
Entering story realm\Settle into position	Entering Story Realm
Entering story realm\Sitting forward	Entering Story Realm
Entering story realm\Sitting up straight	Entering Story Realm
Familiarity with teller\Additional story request	
Familiarity with teller\Initiate conversation	
Familiarity with teller\Listener story	
Familiarity with teller\Repeat story aspect request	
Familiarity with teller\repeat story request	
Familiarity with teller\Smile - conversation	
Group dynamics\Classmate behaviour modification	Group Dynamics
Group dynamics\Classroom management manners	Group Dynamics
Group dynamics\Exchange of looks	Group Dynamics
Group dynamics\Positive group spatial and behaviour response	Group Dynamics
Group dynamics\Quietening	Group Dynamics
Interaction\Incorrect answer	
Interaction\Interaction invitation	
Interaction\Interaction response negative	
Interaction\Interaction response Positive	
Interaction\Metanarration	
Interaction\Metanarration (2)	
Interaction\Non-verbal negative response	
Interaction\Non-verbal positive response	
Interaction\Seek Comprehension	
Interaction\Verbal response	
Language engagement\Compare or critique	Language
Language engagement\Interaction extension	Language
Language engagement\Known story	Language
Language engagement\Predicting plot or style	Language
Language engagement\Values response	Language
Laughing	

Name	Engagement cluster
Limited comprehension	
Methodology challenges\Filming framing problem	
Methodology challenges\Storyteller technique error	
Methodology challenges\Videoing limitation	
Narrative organisation\End of story - recognition	
Narrative organisation\Recognition of story start	
Narrative organisation\Smile - start of story	
Narrative organisation\Stretching	
Narrative organisation\Wriggling	
Negative audience behaviour\Negative audience behaviour	
Negative audience behaviour\Negative group spatial response	
Negative audience behaviour\Othering	
No response	
Prop prominent	
Rocking back and forth	
Smile prospect of another story	
Trancelike state\Biting fingernails	
Trancelike state\Eye gaze	Trancelike State
Trancelike state\Head tilted	Trancelike State
Trancelike state\Jerk back or jump	
Trancelike state\Mirroring action or expression	Trancelike State
Trancelike state\Open mouth	Trancelike State
Trancelike state\Picking nose	
Trancelike state\Silence - end of story	
Trancelike state\Slack mouth	Trancelike State
Trancelike state\Wide-eyed	
Yawning	