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Changing Teacher Practice through the National Literacy Strategy:  
A Micro-Interactional Perspective\*

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*Abstract*

How and why is national policy translated into interactions between teachers and pupils? This article examines the enactment of the English National Literacy Strategy (NLS) in a case study of two consecutive Year 6 literacy lessons, which are drawn from a year long ethnographic study of the NLS in one school. Although the teacher taught directly from and adhered closely to the prescribed materials, curricular contents were recontextualised into the interactional genres habitual in that classroom, and the open questions that constituted the primary aim of the lesson were suppressed. In explaining these patterns of enactment, I supplement analysis of teacher knowledge and policy support with consideration of conditions of teacher engagement with the curricular materials and the durability of interactional genres, rooted in pupil collusion and *habitus*.

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This article is about teaching, classroom interaction and the enactment of instructional innovations. Research into educational policy implementation has shown that instructional reforms rarely influence classroom practice as envisaged. Teachers ignore, resist, subvert, misinterpret, selectively adopt, or otherwise distort reformers' intentions. Changes tend to be superficial, seldom penetrating the core of instructional practice. Even in cases of relatively high fidelity, teachers commonly cobble new ideas onto the existing practices reformers are attempting to supplant (Cohen, 1989; Cuban, 1993).

What are the principles governing the formation of such hybrids of old and new teaching practices? In other words, why do some aspects of reforms take hold while others are displaced or distorted? Likewise, why are some aspects of existing practice readily set aside while others persist despite repeated attempts to eradicate them? Answers to these questions should facilitate a more complete understanding of the difficulties entailed in changing instruction, and of what can be done to improve reform efforts.

The recent English National Literacy Strategy (NLS), an ambitious, national reform of literacy education, presents a rich and important case for the study of this problem. In particular, since the NLS is part of an international wave of standards-based reforms, which it implements in a relatively favourable policy environment, its enactment provides a good opportunity to probe both the prospects and limitations of many of the strategies associated with the standards agenda. Generally speaking, the NLS has penetrated into the vast majority of English primary

classrooms, modifying curricular content and lesson structure (Fisher, 2002; Earl et. al., 2003), but has had little discernible effect on patterns of teacher-pupil interaction (Smith et. al., 2004).

This article examines that mixed outcome, and how and why this particular combination of reform policy and traditional practice may have emerged. Through systematic comparisons of prescribed and enacted curricula in two consecutive literacy lessons, I trace the trajectory of policy into practice, from curriculum text into instructional activity. And, through close analysis of classroom interaction, I identify the main paths of the prescribed curriculum's subversion.

This analysis has implications for two interrelated problems. First, it offers an opportunity to assess the NLS reform strategy. In particular, the study suggests that NLS attempts to micro-manage instruction have backfired: the Strategy's ineffectiveness at changing classroom interaction undermines its successes in the areas of curricular content and lesson structure. Second, the study calls into question widespread assumptions about teaching and educational change. In particular, I highlight the critical role of interactional genres in shaping the enactment of educational reforms, and the limitations of rationalist models of teacher action.

I begin with a brief introduction to the National Literacy Strategy and discussion of its impact on classroom practice. Next I review the two theoretical traditions that frame this article: school reform research and micro-analyses of classroom interaction. Third, I discuss the study design and methods for case selection, data collection and analysis. Fourth, I present and discuss findings from a case study of NLS enactment in two consecutive lessons. The teacher taught from NLS curricular materials, following them closely. However, though he adopted the topics and questions suggested by the lesson plan, he recontextualised these contents into the interactional patterns customary in that classroom. Furthermore, while he posed most of the questions prescribed by the lesson plan, those questions' intended educational significance was

transformed by the way they were developed in subsequent classroom interaction. I discuss possible explanations for the patterns of enactment observed, suggesting that the theoretical frame developed in policy research is relevant but insufficient, and that a more complete understanding of the case is made possible by attending to the social conditions of teachers' work and the durability of interactional genres.

### The English National Literacy Strategy

In 1998 the newly elected New Labour government established the “National Literacy Strategy” (NLS) in order to “raise standards of literacy in all primary schools in England” (DfEE, 1998: 2). This Strategy deepened centralisation processes initiated by the previous Conservative governments, a tightening of controls over primary instruction that proponents justified as necessary in the face of a “crisis” defined primarily in terms of perceived teacher weaknesses. For example, Michael Barber (2002), a central architect of the NLS, later explained, “the government led from the centre and on key issues – literacy, numeracy or school failure for example – was unapologetically prescriptive... [The teaching] profession itself was uninformed.” Major components of the programme included<sup>1</sup>:

- A list of 808 teaching objectives, distributed in a term-by-term progression and divided into word, sentence and text levels. These objectives are intended to direct and focus literacy teaching, and teachers are encouraged to share them with their pupils.
- A definition of “successful teaching”, which includes discursive (“characterised by high quality oral work”), interactive (“pupils’ contributions are encouraged, expected, and extended”), well-paced, confident and ambitious.

- A highly structured, daily “Literacy Hour”: 15 minutes of shared reading or writing, 15 minutes direct teaching of skills to the whole class, 20 minutes of individual study while the teacher engages a small group in guided reading or writing, and a 10 minute concluding plenary session with the whole class.
- Lesson plans and related resources to guide teachers in integrating the objectives, teaching strategies and literacy hour structure into a coherent curriculum. Some of these materials are highly detailed, including for example a “transcript” of a teacher delivering the curriculum (pupils’ responses omitted).
- Professional development support through workshops for school-based literacy coordinators, on-site support by literacy consultants, and multi-media “best practice” demonstrations.
- Intervention programmes to support pupils not meeting the standards.

The NLS was introduced against the backdrop of an accountability regime that critically shaped the way it was interpreted and implemented. This regime included yearly standardised testing at ages 7 and 11, publication of schools’ test scores in league tables, performance management and high stakes, on-site inspections every four years.

To understand the impact of the NLS on instructional practice, I find it helpful to distinguish three levels of analysis, corresponding to three different time-scales: *macro-level* refers to the selection and organisation of curricular content over the course of the term or year; *meso-level* refers to the selection and organisation of texts and activities in a single lesson; and *micro-level* refers to the moment-to-moment interaction of pupils, teacher and materials.<sup>2</sup> At macro and meso levels, the NLS appears to have been relatively successful at securing its intended changes. For example, one study found that “of the 158 hours... observed in the first

year, 126 had each element of the whole class parts of the hour in place” (Fisher, 2002: 35; *cf.* Fisher et. al., 2000).<sup>3</sup> However, at the micro-level, Hardman, Smith and colleagues (Hardman et. al., 2003; Smith et. al., 2004) found that official endorsements of “interactive, whole class teaching” were largely ineffective in changing patterns of classroom discourse. Based on systematic observations of a national sample of 72 primary teachers, focussing in particular on teacher elicitation and feedback, they conclude that “traditional patterns of whole class interaction persist, with teacher questioning only rarely being used to assist pupils to articulate more complete or elaborated ideas as recommended by the [Literacy and Numeracy] strategies” (Smith et. al., 2004: 409).

The challenge of changing the micro level of classroom activity is especially acute in large scale reforms such as the NLS. Practitioners and researchers have of course successfully enacted instructional innovations and transformed interactional patterns, in their own and colleagues’ classrooms, but these are generally resource-intensive and small scale ventures (e.g. Mercer & Littleton, 2007; Wells, 1999). How can such changes be produced at large scale, for example, in over 18,000 schools as in the case of the NLS?

The current article examines this problem. In so doing, I anchor my analysis in the logic of the NLS reform strategy – assessing, for example, the extent to which classroom activity is faithful to curricular designers’ intentions. I should clarify, however, that this analytic stance is not intended as an endorsement of NLS goals or approaches to learning, literacy, teaching and its regulation. I ask the reader to suspend judgement on normative questions regarding NLS educational values in order to afford an opportunity to understand the dynamics of its enactment, and to derive lessons more generally about teaching and improvement strategies.<sup>4</sup>

### Theoretical frames

My analysis of the enactment of the NLS draws upon scholarship on school reform and classroom interaction. These two research traditions have rarely intersected in past, perhaps on account of their different aims, methods, and theoretical assumptions. School reform research tends to adopt, at least implicitly, reformers' agendas, while micro-interactional research typically seeks to deconstruct dominant discourses and associated policies. In school reform research, quantitative methods are generally preferred, both for their capacity to cover a broad swath of the population, and on account of their authority with policy-makers. Classroom interaction research, on the other hand, is characterised by "smallness" of scope and method: researchers typically collect a great deal of data about a small number of people, and subject brief stretches of interaction to detailed analysis. Most crucially, whereas much policy research is premised on a rationalist model of teaching, which privileges teachers' motivations, knowledge and understanding, the micro-interactional perspective highlights the importance of social norms, interdependence and tacit knowledge. Though these differences make conversation between these two perspectives challenging, they are also a source of insight as each tradition highlights dimensions neglected by the other.

#### *School Reform Research: the Problem of Improving Classroom Practice*

I opened this article with an enduring theoretical and practical problem: Why is school teaching so resistant to change, and how can this problem be overcome? Three dimensions figure prominently in the school reform literature: environmental factors, policy instruments and teacher characteristics. The interactions of these three dimensions give rise to three potential pitfalls in the enactment process: problems of will, sense-making and/or capability.<sup>5</sup> In the

following discussion I outline issues endemic to educational policy environments, briefly review these pitfalls, probe potential blind spots in this theoretical frame, and discuss recent advances in the conceptualisation of instruction as interaction.

*Environmental factors.* Current educational governance structures and policy environments, especially in the United States, pose numerous impediments to large-scale change. First, education is organised into what sociologists call “loosely coupled systems” (Weick, 1976), meaning that the technical core – what teachers do in the classroom – is separate from and largely independent of institutions of formal authority (state, district and school administration). While loose coupling may have advantages (e.g. it allows for local adaptation, is inexpensive to administer), it renders teaching resistant to change from the centre, since administrators lack basic tools for managing classroom activity. Moreover, since managers are incapable of overseeing teachers’ work, they often serve to shield it (and, by extension, themselves) from external intervention and accountability (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). A second, related issue is the fragmentation of and lack of coordination among actors at each level of the system. Teachers typically work independently of one another, often in competitive cultures that discourage mutual learning and collaboration. Likewise, policies for resource allocation, curriculum, instruction, assessment, and reporting are often poorly aligned, resulting in conflicting messages to schools and teachers.

*Teacher will and policy enforcement.* Loose coupling focuses attention on the interaction of teacher motivation and compliance with policy enforcement. Teachers may resist, oppose or lack the will to carry out an instructional innovation – in part or in its entirety – selectively



adopting only those aspects of the policy to which they are most committed.<sup>6</sup> Common reasons for low teacher compliance include disagreement with the reform's goals, philosophy and/or method; reluctance to give up the security of the old order; and concerns about professional autonomy, status, resources and/or power. In contrast, teachers are expected to be more favourably disposed to innovations that they perceive to address their own problems and concerns (Cohen & Ball, 2006). Reform policies can manipulate incentives to maximise teacher cooperation – rewarding effective enactment and/or punishing non-compliance – though their utility is largely dependent upon mechanisms for monitoring implementation and holding teachers accountable (i.e. the strength of couplings in the system).

*Teacher sense-making and policy intelligibility.* The way an instructional innovation is understood by agents in the reform process crucially shapes its implementation. In cases of misinterpretation, teachers may adopt topics, activities and texts recommended by the new policy, but enact them in ways that negate the purposes for which they were designed. Cohen (1990) describes this phenomenon in his classic discussion of “Mrs. Oublier”, a second grade teacher who maintained that California's mathematics reforms had revolutionised her teaching. However, though Mrs. Oublier adopted the innovative learning activities designed to facilitate understanding of relationships and problem-solving, she used them to teach “old” mathematics through traditional recitation and drill pedagogy.<sup>7</sup>

Cohen (1989, 1990) links such misunderstandings to fundamental differences between traditional conceptions of knowledge, teaching and learning on the one hand, and the approaches advanced by intellectually ambitious instructional innovations on the other. In the former, knowledge is composed of established truths, which are transmitted from an authoritative teacher

to receptive pupils; in the latter, knowledge involves open questions and conceptual understanding, constructed by pupils in an interactive process facilitated by teachers. The former, traditional conceptions are shared by teachers, pupils and the wider public, and also underlie many other practices of teaching and learning outside school. Such entrenched belief systems cannot simply be replaced by edict, upon the publication of a reform policy. Rather, teachers interpret and judge new policies in light of prior knowledge and beliefs, unconsciously adapting innovations so that they can be easily assimilated into existing ideas and practices (Spillane et al., 2002).

Teacher sense-making may be facilitated or frustrated by the relative intelligibility of reform policy instruments and by environmental factors. The greater the clarity, elaboration and coherence of policy messages, the more likely it is that teachers will accurately make sense of them. Highly fragmented policy environments, in which schools are bombarded, for example, by conflicting guidance for curriculum, instruction, assessment, and reporting, are likely to thwart those efforts. Similarly, Spillane (2004) found that deep teacher understandings of an instructional innovation were positively correlated with a school culture that enabled and encouraged teacher collaboration.

*Teacher capability and policy supports.* Teachers can only successfully enact those parts of instructional innovations for which they have the necessary knowledge and skills. Teaching is a complex and demanding activity, and intellectually ambitious innovations intensify that complexity and multiply demands on teacher knowledge and skill. Consider, for example, a central component of the innovation in the case study examined in this article: teaching stories in primary school through discussion of open-ended, interpretive questions. In traditional literacy

lessons, pupils read a text, prepare written answers to literal comprehension and recall questions, and are orally examined in teacher-led recitation. Such lessons are relatively predictable, in terms of the content covered, likely pupil responses and the ways in which the teacher is expected to cope with them. In contrast, the instructional innovation opens up the range of relevant and legitimate content to include not only what appears in the text, but also the responses and ideas it evokes from pupils. Whereas in a traditional lesson pupils bid for turns to answer a pre-established question, in a discussion-based lesson they may pose their own questions, build on one another's ideas, share their feelings, disagree with one another, etc. Likewise, rather than evaluating pupil responses as either correct or incorrect, the teacher-as-discussion-facilitator is expected to probe understanding, open questions, challenge arguments, provoke debate, etc.

In order to cope with the complexities of this innovation teachers must be able to flexibly draw upon a broad range of knowledge and skills, including content knowledge – e.g. of critical perspectives, literary concepts; pedagogical content knowledge – e.g. rich points of access into texts, identifying fruitful lines of inquiry for young pupils; and discussion facilitation skills and judgement – e.g. how to maintain conversational coherence and fluidity, and how and when to probe pupil thinking.

Policy instruments shape teacher capabilities through the opportunities and support for teacher learning embedded within curricular materials, organisational structures and professional development activities. As in the case of interpretation, teachers' learning is facilitated by participation in a collaborative, professional community.

*Blind spots?* This theoretical frame highlights necessary conditions for the success of instructional innovations, and indeed explains many of the shortcomings of current educational

systems and attempts to reform them. However, like all theoretical frames, in drawing attention to some aspects of experience it shifts attention away from other aspects. In particular, by focusing almost exclusively on individual teachers' goals, desires and actions, this frame tends to overlook how interactions with students and curricular materials enable, constrain and direct activity.

What we call teaching in common parlance is not what teachers do and say and think, which is what many researchers have studied and many innovators have tried to change... What we often mistakenly refer to as the practice of teaching is a collection of practices, including pedagogy, learning practices (individual and collective), the design of instruction, and the management of instructional organization. There are more instructional practitioners than teachers, and more practices than pedagogy. (Cohen & Ball, 2000, p. 5)

Cohen and Ball's conceptualisation of instruction as interaction of teacher, students, materials and environments, which the current article seeks to build upon and extend, helpfully highlights the complexities of instruction and its transformation. They emphasise the mutual interdependencies that constitute "instructional capacity" – not only what the teacher knows and can do, but e.g. how that knowledge and skill mediate students' interactions with the learning opportunities embedded in curricular materials.

However, while Cohen and Ball explicate the mutual dependence of each actor's motivations, interpretations and knowledge, the contribution of the *interaction* itself remains undertheorised. In other words, their analysis overlooks the ways in which classroom interaction is governed by its own principles and dynamics, which often elude participants' control.

### *Classroom Interaction as Social Practice: a Micro-Interactional Perspective*

While interactional dynamics have received little attention in educational policy research, they have been a major focus of research in interactional sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology. The following section builds upon these and related traditions in outlining a

*micro-interactional* perspective, which emphasises that (1) social interaction is characterised by more or less predictable patterns, or “interactional genres”, which frame participants’ understanding about what is and should be happening, how to act and what can be expected from others; (2) routine genres are embodied as *habitus*, which enables participants to act intuitively, without consciously attending to all aspects of the social situation; (3) genres do not dictate meaning or action, which are necessarily indeterminate, emergent and open to improvisation; and (4) genres are implicated in broader ideologies, institutions and cultural traditions.

*Interactional genres.* The term “genre” reminds us that there is a large degree of predictability in human affairs, and that everything we do is based upon or refers back to what has come before.<sup>8</sup> Thus, our writing and reading a work of literature is shaped by our experiences with previous texts. “Once upon a time...” tells us that we are about to read a fairy tale, and we interpret what follows according to what previous readings of fairy tales have taught us to expect. Though writers sometimes flout generic conventions, such defiance is also a way of responding to and manipulating readers’ expectations (Rabinowitz, 1987).

Recent research has productively applied the principle of genre to social interaction (e.g. Hanks, 2005; Rampton, 2006; Sawyer, 2003). Just as movie-goers have different sets of expectations for the plot and cinematic devices typical of a comedy, mystery or Western, so participants in social interactions orient themselves toward and act upon different sets of expectations regarding acceptable roles, contents, sequences, settings and manner for different events such as buying a pair of shoes, riding a bus, or participating in a classroom literacy lesson.

Teachers and pupils – through repeated interaction, implicit negotiation, and mutual adjustment – develop predictable ways of conducting classroom life: different interactional

genres for e.g. starting the day, checking homework, mucking about (and disciplining trouble-makers) or reading a story. For example, one widespread classroom interactional genre is the recitation lesson, or Initiation-Response-Evaluation/Feedback (IRE/F) format (Cazden, 2001; Mehan, 1979; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). In this pervasive pattern, the teacher *initiates* discourse, usually by posing a question; pupils *respond* with brief answers to the teacher's question, and the teacher provides *feedback* on student responses, usually in the form of *evaluation*.

Recitation is constituted by implicit rules regarding who may legitimately say what, how, when and where. Teachers' initiations are expected to be "closed" questions, usually requiring recall of previously transmitted information. Pupils are expected to raise their hands in a bid for the floor, and only speak when nominated by the teacher. Pupil answers to teacher initiations are expected to be salient and brief: not only generally "correct" but in many cases specifically what the teacher had in mind (Hammersley, 1977).

*Routine genres are embodied as habitus.* Through repeated participation in interactional genres we develop routine ways of acting and an implicit "feel for the game". Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) call this practical sense "*habitus*", which they define as a "system of schemes of perception, thought, appreciation and action".<sup>9</sup> *Habitus* normally operates below the level of active awareness, in the realm of preconscious, embodied habit – e.g. how we hold our bodies, modulate our voices, control our facial expressions, etc. Consider, for example, walking down a crowded street: we coordinate our movements with others, thereby avoiding collisions, through minute gestures and bodily orientation. Likewise in conversation, we coordinate turn-taking through an array of signals related to posture, gesture, tone, timing and syntax (*cf.* Erickson,

1996, on cadence and rhythm in classroom turn-taking, and Erickson, 2004, on the relationship between timing and *habitus* in interaction). And, just as we may bump into people, or at least are made aware of our awkwardness when walking in a foreign city, so we may experience unfamiliar interactional genres as confusing or unnatural.

*Indeterminacy, emergence and improvisation.* Interactional genres do not dictate behaviour any more than literary genres dictate authors' expression: the rules discussed above are *used* by participants, not necessarily *obeyed*. Participants always have the possibility of improvising, both within the bounds of generic expectations and also by stretching or breaking out of them, e.g. by importing resources from other communicative genres, rejecting role expectations, or otherwise attempting to redefine the situation. Thus, for example, a student in a recitation lesson may respond to a teacher's question by questioning its importance, by commenting on the teacher's hair cut, by complaining about the assignment, or by silently refusing to participate. How significant these deviations from generic expectations may be depends upon how the interaction unfolds. Every utterance can be responded to in more than one way, and every response retroactively impacts upon the way its predecessor is interpreted by participants. Meaning in interaction, and the meaning of an interaction, are co-constructed and emergent, and each "social actor changes the game subtly through each reanimation of it" (Erickson, 2004: 139).

*Interactional genres are implicated in broader ideologies, institutions and cultural traditions.* Interactional genres emerge in the daily to-and-fro of teachers' and pupils' joint activity. But they do not emerge onto a blank slate. Participants bring with them cultural and historical resources and models regarding what it means, for example, to be a "pupil" or

“teacher”, and what a “classroom” and “lesson” should look like. These models are shaped by the institutions in which they are embedded. For example, pupil participation in school is mandatory, and teachers are required by contract – and by law – to deliver a curriculum. Teachers administer tests, are authorised to mete out punishments and rewards, and submit formal and informal reports about the pupils in their charge. These institutional factors reinforce current teacher and pupil roles, and constrain possible alternative roles.

Classroom interactional genres are also intertwined with educational and political ideologies. For example, the recitation format can be seen as an oral variation of the written examination, which initiates pupils into appropriate question-answering practices and enables teachers to monitor their progress. Similarly, the current emphasis on whole class teaching in recent English educational policy is at least partially motivated by political concerns with social order, anti-social behaviour and “youth today”.<sup>10</sup> Hence, tensions in the classroom interactional order are imbued with moral significance. Interactional trouble that might be interpreted as social clumsiness or misunderstanding in other settings is often classified by educators as a serious transgression: an affront to the authority of the teacher, school and social order.

### Research Context and Method

The data discussed in this article is drawn from an extended case study (Burawoy, 1998; Mitchell, 1983) of the enactment of the National Literacy Strategy in one primary school conducted over the course of the 2003-2004 school year. This study’s primary aim was to probe and extend theories about the role of curricular materials in teaching and its improvement. Data collection included participant observation in the school, formal and informal interviews, audio-recording of lessons, and individual and group feedback conversations. The theoretical frame,



methodology and outcomes of the broader study are reported elsewhere (citation deleted); here I elaborate methods directly relevant to the data and analyses discussed in this article.

Two methodological traditions informed this study: the extended case study method and linguistic ethnography. The extended case study method uses ethnographic engagement with a social situation as a means of probing and extending theory. In the current study, the case was selected because it appeared to exhibit conditions that challenge many of the predictions of the policy research theoretical frames outlined above (esp. environmental issues, teacher will and policy intelligibility).

Linguistic ethnography is an emerging school in UK social science that seeks to integrate ethnography's openness and holism (among other advantages) with the insights and rigour of linguistics (Rampton et. al., 2004; special issue of the *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, vol. 11, issue 5, 2007). In a sense, this synthesis constitutes a move to "tie down" ethnography (and "open up" linguistics), "pushing ethnography towards the analysis of clearly delimitable processes, increasing the amount of reported data that is open to falsification, looking to impregnate local description with analytical frameworks drawn from outside" (Rampton et. al., 2004: 4). Linguistic ethnographers draw upon and combine analytic techniques from a variety of approaches to the study of language, communication and society, including the ethnography of communication, interactional sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, conversation analysis, critical discourse analysis and multi-modality.

### *Research Site and Case Selection*

The research site, which I call "Low Tide Primary School", is a relatively large (almost 400 pupils) community primary school serving a village which has for all intents become a

suburb of a Southern English city.<sup>11</sup> The majority of the pupils come from working class backgrounds, and the ethnic background of over three quarters of them is White British. 80% of the pupils in the classroom discussed in this article were born in the same local hospital.

The school's confidential "PANDA" (performance and assessment) report issued by the Office of Standards in Education (OfSTED) at the beginning of the study portrayed a gloomy picture of the school's achievement standards (according to national tests). Compared to similar schools (with between 8-20% eligibility for free school meals), pupils' attainment was in the bottom quartile (but not the bottom five percent) for all subjects at both Key Stages, with the exception of Key Stage 2 English, which was in the bottom 40 percent. Moreover, whereas the five-year national trend reflected a slight rise in scores, the school trend exhibited a downward trajectory. In January 2004 the school received the (failing) inspection grade of "severe weaknesses".

The main advantage of Low Tide Primary School as a research site was that it embodied the conditions with which the National Literacy Strategy was developed to cope. While it should not be considered to be representative of these conditions – there is undoubtedly more than one way to become labelled a "failing" school – it can at least provide insight into how one school with substandard attainment levels enacted the prescribed curriculum and responded to the accountability regime. Moreover, since most studies of teacher-curricular interaction and the NLS have focused on "best practice" research (citation deleted), in which cases are selected precisely because they are perceived to be successful, the case of Low Tide Primary School has potential to offer an important, under-documented perspective.

In this article I report on part of the analysis of two consecutive literacy lessons taught by Mr. Thompson in his Year 6 class (11 year olds). At the time of the study Mr. Thompson had

been teaching continuously for 31 years, the last 17 of which were at Low Tide Primary School. In addition to teaching Year 6 he also served as upper school (Years 5-6) Coordinator, ICT Coordinator and acting Deputy Headteacher.

I have chosen to focus on these particular lessons for several reasons. First, Mr. Thompson reported viewing these curricular materials favourably, and relied heavily upon them. Second, the curricular materials associated with these lessons are highly detailed, thereby affording systematic analysis of their uptake. Third, as in other NLS-authored lesson plans, most of the prescribed activities diverged from the interactional genres typical in Low Tide classrooms, thereby bringing the tension between different sets of generic expectations into sharp relief.

#### *Data Collection and Analysis*

Investigation of curricular enactment involved collection and analysis of data at three levels: national policy, school culture and classroom interaction. The historical development of national literacy policy was investigated through analysis of policy documents and secondary sources. At the school level, I participated in and observed life in the school 2-3 days a week for one year, including participation in teacher professional development sessions and staff meetings; teaching one hour a week; conducting interviews and feedback conversations; and collecting policy and curricular documents. At the classroom level, lessons were observed in four Key Stage 2 classrooms (including 65 literacy lessons that were audio-recorded), teachers were interviewed on the basis of lesson transcripts, and artefacts were collected. A major aim of the data analysis was to integrate findings from these three levels, tracing the movement of ideas and forces between national policy, local implementation and classroom activity.

Lessons were analysed as follows: (1) Recordings were transcribed in detail (using fieldnotes to fill in non-verbal activity) and segmented into bounded units (Gumperz, 1999) according to transitions between activity structures and/or topics, and also by means of boundary marking cues (Bloome et. al., 2005). (2) Lesson stages (e.g. shared reading, independent work, plenary) and activity structures (e.g. teacher-led recitation, partner talk, cf. Levinson, 1979) were coded and characterised, and these units were used to organise the data and investigate interactional genres. (3) For each of the segments I searched for patterns, both in terms of the interaction (e.g. turn-taking, timing) and the logical progression of ideas (e.g. the sequence of steps undertaken each time a particular problem is encountered). (4) I also interrogated the lessons with regard to academic task requirements (cf. Doyle & Carter, 1984): I asked, “What are pupils being required to do? And how are they being taught to do it? (i.e. What explicit and implicit guidance, resources, and/or operations are provided?)”. (5) I slowed down my reading (and listening) and used conversation analysis techniques as a discovery method to analyse particularly intriguing events (asking at each turn, e.g., “What is the speaker doing?” “Why that, now?” “What else might have been done here, but wasn’t?”) (Rampton, 2006).

(6) Lesson activity was contrasted with curricular prescriptions with regard to structures of activity, questions posed, themes pursued, and approaches to reading comprehension (only the first two dimensions are presented here). I examined which elements of the curricular materials were selected for enactment, how those elements were shaped in the interaction, how they were supplemented by other (extra-curricular) contents and means, and what – if any – patterns of enactment emerged. These results were tabulated, and where appropriate (e.g. in the case of open vs. closed questions), frequencies were calculated. (7) Emergent understandings were checked systematically against other sections of the lesson and/or corpus. (8) Finally, I speculated about

possible reasons for those patterns, and looked for evidence in the interactional and ethnographic data to support and/or refute those hypotheses.

## Results and Discussion

In the following section I examine the ways in which the NLS was enacted in two consecutive literacy lessons, and discuss possible explanations for the patterns that emerge. I begin with a description of the relevant curricular materials, followed by analysis of their enactment in terms of prescribed vs. enacted interactional genres and the frequencies of open and closed teacher questions in the lessons.<sup>12</sup> I then revisit the theoretical frames outlined at the article's outset in order to discuss possible explanations for the observed patterns of enactment.

### *The Curricular Materials*

The two case study lessons were based upon the NLS *Year 6 Planning Exemplification Narrative Reading Unit* (DfES, 2002).<sup>13</sup> The *Planning Exemplifications* are among the most highly elaborated curricular materials in the NLS corpus. Although they are ostensibly intended “to provide suggestions, ideas and materials to support teachers”, they also contain “all the resources the teacher needs to teach” (Introduction, p. 2).

The *Narrative Reading Unit* consists of ten consecutive Literacy Hour lessons. It is structured around a series of engagements with short stories, designed to encourage and develop “higher order reading skills”, to enable children “to probe beyond the literal.” Key to this process, the designers explain in the introduction to the *Unit*, is “the teacher’s skill in questioning. All children need frequent exposure to ‘open’ questions that allow and encourage deduction, speculation, prediction, inference and evaluation” (p. 3).

Each planning exemplification includes a one-page “Unit plan” which outlines all ten days’ lessons according to the four-part structure of the Literacy Hour. The Year 6 teachers at Low Tide Primary School photocopy these unit plans (pencilling in class title and dates of instruction) as an expedient solution to the administrative requirement to submit weekly Literacy plans to the Headteacher.

The text at the centre of the case study lessons is George Layton's “The Long Walk”, a short story about a boy who is taken by his beloved Grandfather for a walk in the country. The object of the walk, which is initially understood by the boy to be an exciting secret, turns out to be the Grandfather's intended burial plot, and the announcement that he will die soon. The curricular materials provide detailed, step-by-step instructions on how to teach the lesson. Also included are overhead transparencies, a photocopyable booklet for pupils, and an annotated copy of the text complete with over 25 questions and comments to guide the teacher in his/her exposition of the text.

The instructions for shared reading are to “model for the children how to text mark key words, phrases, sentences and passages for closer scrutiny”. After demonstrating how to annotate a text, the teacher is to “encourage the children to make their own notes”. Teacher modelling should be interspersed with “opportunities for the children to read short passages independently before annotating them”. On the second day, after completing the story, pupils are to discuss in pairs a set of questions regarding the grandfather’s motivations (e.g. “Why do you think Grandad took his grandson to the graveyard?”) and elements of the author’s craft (e.g. “In the story, we don’t know the boy’s name. Why do you think the author chose not to tell us?”).

Independent work on the first day involves two tasks to be performed in pairs: to annotate a paragraph describing the boy and Grandad and to create a chart or matrix comparing the two

characters, and to highlight all the boys' speech and respond to the question, "What do they notice?" The task for the second day is to "compose individual journal entries of Grandad's thoughts and feelings at each or some of the key moments identified in shared reading." Each day concludes with a plenary discussion that builds upon pupils' independent work.

These instructions, especially for shared reading, diverge from the interactional genres customary in Mr. Thompson's classroom both in terms of the structures of activity and the types of questions discussed. I elaborate on these two issues below.

### *The Enacted Curriculum*

Mr. Thompson based his teaching on the *Narrative Reading Unit*, literally grasping it in hand as he worked, and employing all the various resources provided by it for these lessons. At the *macro* level he employed NLS guidance for objectives and curricular organisation as given, and at the *meso* level he largely adhered to the prescribed lesson plan (with adjustments of time allotments, supplementation of additional topics and omission of the independent work in the second lesson).

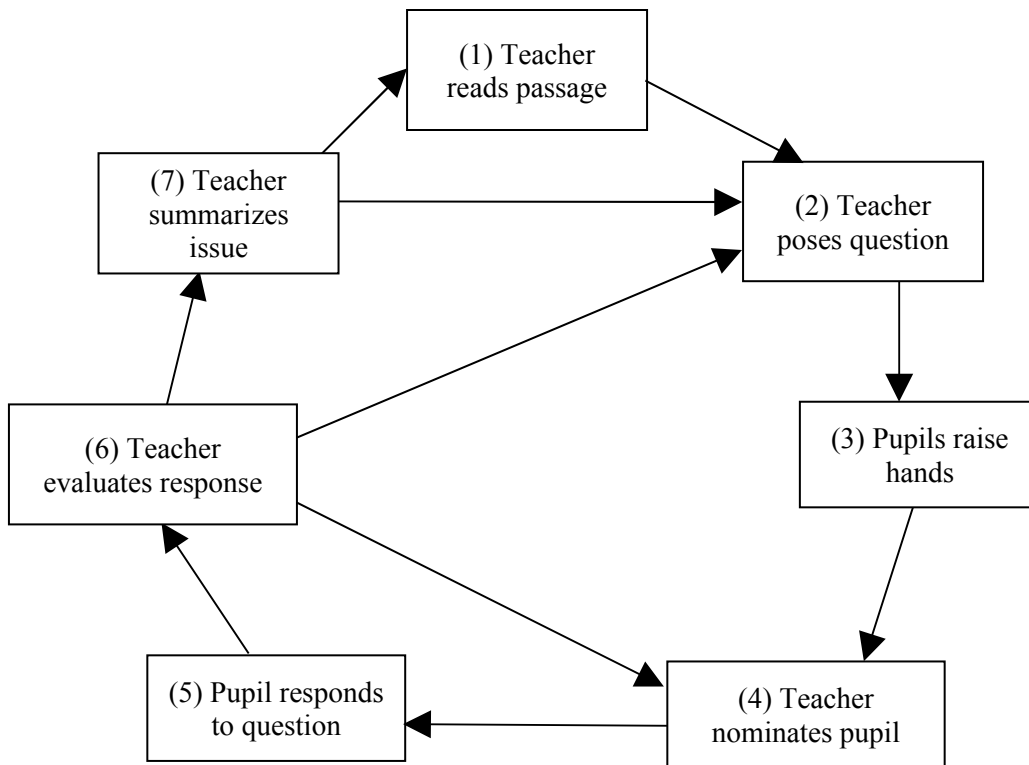
At first glance, the *micro* level of classroom interaction also appears to be dominated by the prescribed lesson plan: Mr. Thompson used 17 out of the 29 questions contained in the lesson notes and made either verbal or graphic note of all the other textual features highlighted in the annotated copy of the story text. However, although Mr. Thompson posed – often word-for-word – most of the prescribed questions, he and his pupils incorporated these questions into their habitual interactional genres, thereby subverting the predetermined educational aims of the lesson set by the NLS. In the following discussion I focus on this micro level, analysing interactional genres and the teacher's use of open questions.

*Prescribed vs. enacted interactional genres.* The lesson plan prescribes a variety of activities and associated interactional genres: reading passages aloud, reading independently, teacher demonstration of annotation, pupils annotating the story text independently, discussing questions in pairs, whole class discussion, extended writing, and pupils reading aloud their written responses to the story. Only a few of these structures appeared in the enacted lesson: typically, the teacher and pupils recontextualised the prescribed contents into the interactional genres conventional in that classroom: teacher-led question-and-answer recitation and independent (individual or pair) work on brief tasks.

Consider, for example, shared reading in Mr. Thompson's classroom. The structure of this interactional genre, as it appeared in this and other lessons observed, included the following iterative sequence (see figure 1): (1) Mr. Thompson reads a passage out loud, (2) Mr. Thompson poses a question, (3) pupils raise their hands, (4) Mr. Thompson nominates a speaker, (5) the speaker responds with a short answer, (6) Mr. Thompson provides feedback and (usually) encouragement, and then either (4) nominates another pupil to respond or (7) summarizes the issue and (2) poses a new question or (1) reads a new passage.<sup>14</sup> The communicative pattern at the core of this interactional structure is of course the recitation format (IRE/F) discussed above.<sup>15</sup> There were some variations on and deviations from this basic structure. Occasionally a pupil was called upon to read the passage in the first stage, or Mr. Thompson launched into a monologue. Sometimes, pupils deviated from the structure's expectations, either by not raising their hands (leading to Mr. Thompson's prodding and/or chastising) or by not answering the question appropriately (e.g. asking to go to the toilet, changing the topic).

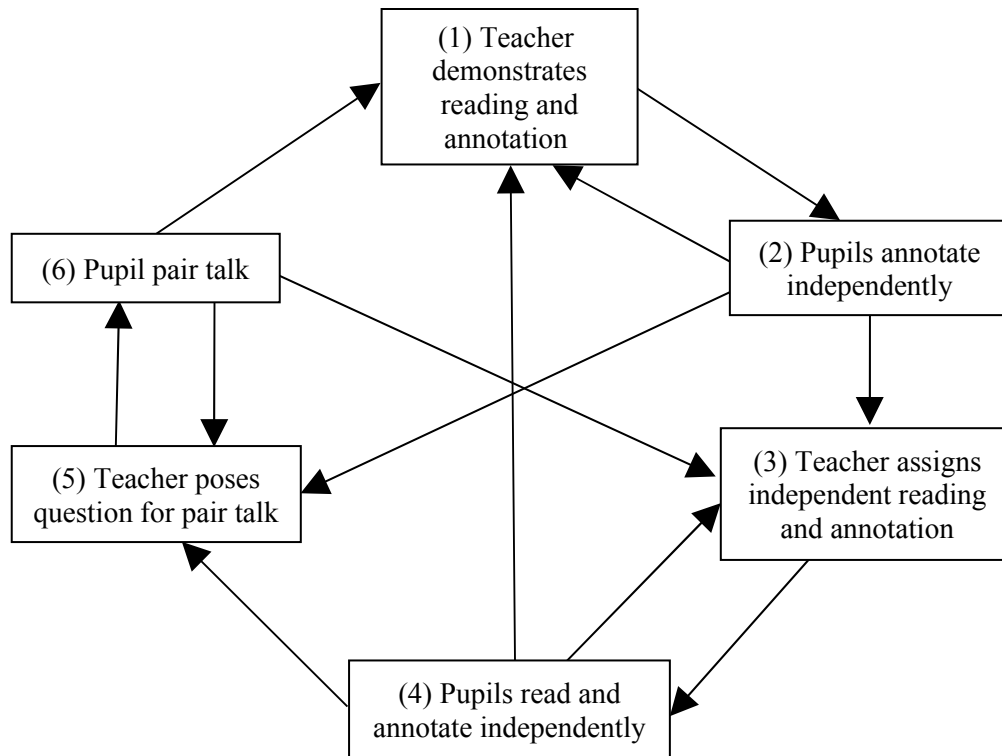


Figure 1 – Structure of shared reading in Mr. Thompson’s class



The structure for shared reading prescribed by the *Narrative Reading Unit* differed from this pattern (see figure 2). It involved the flexible integration of the following components: (1) teacher demonstration of reading and annotating (including encouragement of pupil annotation), (2) pupil independent annotation (during teacher demonstration), (3) teacher assignment of a short passage for independent reading and annotation, followed by (4) pupils independent reading and annotation, (5) teacher assignment of a question for pupils to discuss in pairs, followed by (6) pair talk about teacher questions.

Figure 2 – Structure of shared reading prescribed by Lesson notes



Mr. Thompson did not adopt this format, but rather incorporated the prompts and questions from the teacher’s resource sheet (annotated copy of the story) into his classroom’s usual shared reading structure (except for one prompt, which he moved to the independent work section of the lesson).<sup>16</sup> Likewise, he modified the prescribed structure for independent work on the first day, by breaking up pupil independent tasks and following each with a collection and evaluation of pupil answers.

These shifts from prescribed to habitual interactional structures amount to a reduction in pupil autonomy, in terms of the nature of tasks, and the amount and durations of pupil independent work. Whereas the lesson plan prescribed encouraging pupils to read and annotate independently (without specifying precisely how), Mr. Thompson assigned the class highly structured tasks, i.e. to highlight the boy’s speech, to find examples of Grandad’s memories, to draw a table comparing the descriptions of the boy and his grandfather. On the first day, rather

than releasing the pupils to work independently for 20 consecutive minutes, Mr. Thompson punctuated their independent work with frequent interventions, collecting answers to one task and assigning a new one. The longest period of uninterrupted pupil work is 5 and a half minutes. On the second day, Mr. Thompson skipped the independent task altogether, instead continuing whole class teaching until the end of the lesson.

Similarly, after completing reading the story, the lesson plan instructs the teacher to “use the questions on Resource sheet 1d to reflect on the story as a whole, giving children time to discuss and prepare oral responses with a partner.” What transpired in the lesson is related in extract 1 below.<sup>17</sup>

**Extract 1.** (20.1.2004, 13:04-14:28)

1 Mr T: what do you think of the (1.5) ending (.) to the story? (3)  
 2 anything occur to you? (2)  
 3 Seth (.) what occurs to you straightaway  
 4 when you've read a story like that? (.)  
 5 all the way along we've read it quite happily  
 6 and then we turn that last page (.)  
 7 and the end of the story is there (1)  
 8 which is strange (.) isn't it? (.)  
 9 you think it's going to go on a bit, don't you? (.)  
 10 go on Seth what occurs to you?  
 11 Seth: uh?  
 12 Mr T: what occurs to you about the story?  
 13 what sort of (1) goes through your mind?  
 14 what were you going to say? (.)  
 15 (you were going to something)  
 16 (3) Nothing yet? (1)  
 17 [Seth screws his face and shakes his head]  
 18 anybody else want to share  
 19 any of their ideas about the story?  
 20 [the room is unusually quiet; children avoid eye contact]  
 21 remember what we said right at the beginning (1)  
 22 a story writer (.) often starts with things familiar  
 23 so you're thinking of familiar things (.)  
 24 I think the theme of this is familiar (1)  
 25 you all have a granddad  
 26 you could know about a granddad  
 27 I had a granddad (1)  
 28 what were you going to say Chris?  
 29 you were going to say  
 30 [Chris shakes head]  
 31 oh, you had your hand  
 32 -: ( )  
 33 Mr T: sorry (.) I'm jumping the gun a bit (.)  
 34 OK (.) let's think about (2)

35           erm (.) things that the story brings out (1)  
 36           why why do you think Grandad (1.5) took his gra-his son  
 37           his grandson to the graveyard? (.)  
 38           why do you think he did that? (2)  
 39           any idea? (1.5) Kevin?

Mr. Thompson asks a series of general questions, which openly probe children's responses to the story as a whole and to the story ending in particular. He poses these questions in the context of a whole class discussion, without giving pupils an opportunity to discuss their feelings (or "prepare oral responses") in the intimacy of a dyad. The children are uncharacteristically reticent: even Seth and Chris, who invariably participate in whole class discussions, decline comment though they are called upon personally. Finally (line 33), Mr. Thompson says, "Sorry, I'm jumping the gun a bit," and moves to the more specific questions from Resource sheet 1d, again in whole class recitation mode.

I have shown that Mr. Thompson did not assign tasks or engage in activities precisely as instructed by the NLS curricular materials; rather, he recontextualised the curricular contents into the interactional genres customary in the classroom. How significant is this difference between prescribed and enacted curricula? Is it a difference that makes a difference educationally? I have suggested that its cumulative effect amounted to a reduction in pupil autonomy, but what – if any – was its impact on pupils' opportunities to learn? After all, Mr. Thompson taught the story provided and posed the prescribed questions. In the following section I look more closely at the way those questions were instantiated in the ebb and flow of classroom interaction.

*Open and closed questions.* A major aim of these lessons, as set out in the Introduction to the *Narrative Reading Unit*, is the cultivation of "higher-order reading skills" through exposure to "open" questions. To what extent did Mr. Thompson expose the children to open questions to encourage higher order reading?<sup>18</sup> How did the curricular materials shape his practice in this

regard? And how did he mould the materials in his enactment of them?

One way to address this question is to look at the frequency with which open and closed questions are posed throughout the lesson. In order to facilitate comparisons, I analysed Mr. Thompson's questions according to the scheme employed by Smith and colleagues (2004) in their analysis of a nationally representative sample of Literacy and Numeracy lessons. They coded questions according to five categories: *open* (a question for which the teacher appears willing to accept more than one answer), *closed* (a factual question, demanding recall), *probe* (further exploration of a pupil response), *uptake* (incorporation of a pupil response in a question to the entire class), and *repeat* (of a question previously posed).<sup>19</sup> The results of this comparison are displayed in Table 1.

*Table 1 – Frequency of question types*

Question types	In case study lessons	Proportion of total questions	National sample (adjusted to duration of case study: 1.75 hours)	Proportion of total questions
Open	78	36%	22	11%
Closed	67	31%	120	57%
Repeat	27	12%	27	13%
Uptake	10	5%	9	4%
Probe	37	17%	32	15%
Total	219		210	

In contrast to the national sample, the rate of open questions in the case study lessons is remarkably high: whereas nationally, closed questions outnumbered open questions by over 5:1, in these lessons Mr. Thompson posed more open than closed questions. How can this result be accounted for? One possibility is to attribute the relatively high rate of open questions to the influence of the prescriptive curricular materials, which were specifically designed to promote open questions and indeed tried to put such questions directly into the teacher's mouth. To explore this hypothesis, I isolated the questions from the exchanges that involve the use of

prompts prescribed in the lesson notes and compared the frequencies of question types in this sub-group with those of the remaining questions:

*Table 2 – Frequency of question types in exchanges emerging from prescribed questions and prompts*

Question types	Exchanges rooted in prescribed questions	Proportion of prescribed questions	Other questions (not prescribed)	Proportion of other questions	Entire case study	Proportion of total questions
Open	37	40%	41	32%	78	36%
Closed	23	25%	44	35%	67	31%
Repeat	16	17%	11	9%	27	12%
Uptake	4	4%	6	5%	10	5%
Probe	12	13%	25	20%	37	17%
Total	92		127		219	

Table 2 demonstrates, indeed, that the prescribed materials have directly contributed to the high rate of open questions posed in the lesson, though the ratio of open to closed questions is still relatively high with regard to questioning exchanges that do not directly emerge from Mr. Thompson's use of the curricular materials. Based on this measure, one might conclude that the curricular materials have achieved their aim. This measure, however, may be misleading, since it says nothing about what the pupils and Mr. Thompson did with those open questions in the ensuing interactions. How did pupils respond, what feedback was provided, and what did the further initiations consist of?

To address this issue I examined exchanges of questions and responses, bounded by common topic and/or boundary marking cues (Bloome et. al., 2005), not individual utterances. Isolating the 39 exchanges including one or more open questions, I coded them according to the number of interpretations that emerged in classroom discourse in response to the open questions posed (Table 3).

*Table 3 – Single vs. multiple interpretations in response to open questions*

Interpretations emerging in classroom discourse	Exchanges rooted in prescribed questions	Proportion of prescribed questions	Entire case study	Proportion of total questions
Multiple	8	42%	16	41%
Single	6	32%	12	31%
None (unanswered, factual or recall)	5	26%	11	28%
Total	19		39	

In over half of the exchanges involving open questions, the questions were suppressed in the ensuing interaction, yielding either one or no public interpretation of the text. This finding is constant throughout the lesson, regardless of whether the questions were prescribed by the curricular materials or not.

The suppression of potentially open questions was the joint accomplishment of both Mr. Thompson and his pupils, and may be related to the interactional genres customary in the classroom. In the following three extracts I illustrate some of the ways in which questions were suppressed, focusing on questions prescribed by the curricular materials. I identify four processes: *narrowing* the scope of a question, usually through indication of the type of response intended; *hinting* how the answer may be divined; *sufficing* with one (or no) answer, thereby foreclosing further discussion; and *breaking down*, when the teacher breaks a potentially challenging, open question down into a series of easier, closed questions.<sup>20</sup>

Extract 2 exhibits sufficing and narrowing. Prior to this episode, Mr. Thompson read the first page of the story out loud. In the margin of the teacher's annotated copy, the following prompt appears to the right of the first paragraph: "What do we find out from the first 3 sentences? What impression do we form of how the boy feels about his grandad?" This question is theoretically open: impressions are necessarily subjective, and different readers may respond to the text in different ways. For example, consider the unexpectedness of Grandad's visits – he would show up, unannounced, and take the boy out. This detail could suggest that the boy lacked

autonomy – adults came and took him places with no advance warning, or that his life at home was marked by boredom, or that he enjoyed the old man’s company so much that he would drop everything to be with him (or some combination of the three). Mr. Thompson and the pupils suppress this open question by sufficing with a single interpretation:

**Extract 2.** (19.1.2004, 7:22-7:55)

1 Mr T: right (.) (what were some) (.)  
 2 what do the first three sentences  
 3 in the story (1) tell us?  
 4 (2) "I loved it when my grandad took me out,  
 5 just me and him (.)  
 6 I never knew when I was going out with him (.)  
 7 it just happened every so often" (2)  
 8 does that tell anything about (.)  
 9 his relationship (.) with his grandad? (4)  
 10 doesn't it tell you anything about (.)  
 11 his relationship with his granddad? (.)  
 12 Charles  
 13 Charles: he liked him really  
 14 Mr T: he really loved his granddad  
 15 he really liked (.) his granddad  
 16 it's told you in those first two sentences

Mr. Thompson initially poses only the first part of the question, a general query about what can be learned from the first three sentences, and then pauses briefly. At this point the question is wide open, i.e. it lends itself to a broad range of possible answers. After not receiving any responses, Mr. Thompson rereads the first three sentences, and narrows the question to focus on the boy’s relationship with his grandfather (invoking the second half of the prescribed question). He waits for 4 seconds, but receives no response. He continues to insist upon a pupil response, now using a reproachful, negative construction (“doesn’t it”), as if to say, “these sentences must tell you something”. Charles suggests the obvious interpretation (“he liked him”), which Mr. Thompson accepts, and finds sufficient in order to progress to the next question.

It is important to emphasise that this suppression is the joint accomplishment of both pupils and teacher. Mr. Thompson only narrows the question (lines 8-9) after not receiving a pupil response to his initial formulation (lines 2-3), pausing for two seconds twice (lines 4 & 7) and



rereading of the first three sentences of the story (lines 4-7). Moreover, Charles' answer emerged only after an additional four-second pause (line 9) and further begging for cooperation (lines 10-11). Mr. Thompson's sufficing with this one response and moving on to the next topic may reflect an understandable unwillingness to subject himself and the class to more lengthy pauses and reformulations.

To illustrate the process of breaking down consider extract 3. Mr. Thompson raises a potentially challenging issue from the lesson plan and, even before pupils attempt to address it, he breaks it down into a series of less demanding, closed questions. This episode is also extracted from the discussion of the first page of the story at the beginning of the first lesson. In the lesson notes (the annotated story) the words "I hated [those clogs]" are highlighted, and in the margin the teacher is instructed to "contrast with first three words of the paragraph". The first three words of the paragraph, which are also the first three words of the story, are "I loved it [when my granddad took me out]". The point of contrasting these two sentences is not explained, but one can imagine a number of potentially open lines of inquiry: e.g. the rhetorical effect of the love-hate opposition, or about the complexities of love, which can include also elements of hate.

Neither of these possibilities is entertained in the class discussion.

**Extract 3.** (19.1.2004, 10:41-11:16)

1 Mr T: OK (2)  
 2 a::and (.) what was a contrast  
 3 do you think (.)  
 4 between::n u::uh (1)  
 5 loving his granddad (.)  
 6 is there something opposite to that (.)  
 7 that he mentions (.)  
 8 in that first bit? (.)  
 9 is there something  
 10 [rapidly] what's the opposite of love? (1)  
 11 Laura: [under breath] hate  
 12 Mr T: yeah (.) who said that? (1)  
 13 what is the opposite of love?  
 14 Hugh: hate  
 15 Mr T: hate (.)  
 16 is there something he hated (.) that's mentioned?  
 17 you should be listening (.) looking

18            Laura?  
 19 Laura: wearing his clogs  
 20 Mr T: wearing the clogs (.)  
 21            so we've got a contrast there  
 22            we've got a love (.)  
 23            and a hate (.) from this boy  
 24            we're already learning about this boy (1)  
 25            things he likes  
 26            things he doesn't like

Note that the prompt from the lesson notes is phrased as a directive to the teacher in his/her explication of the story, not necessarily as a question to be posed to the children. Mr. Thompson initially prefixes “what was a...” to the directive in order to turn it into a question, but checks himself and reformulates this question in a way that might make more sense to the pupils. At this point (lines 1-4) his speech is slow and faltering. He seems to be trying to buy time in order to digest the lesson notes and figure out how to translate them into an intelligible question. This process involves a series of simplifications: from the vague “What was a contrast?” to a question demanding literal recall from the text (“Is there something opposite to [loving his Grandad] that he mentions?”), and then to the very basic and straightforward vocabulary question, “What’s the opposite of love?” After obtaining an answer to question version #3 (establishing that the opposite of love is hate, line 14), he returns to version #2, “Is there something he hated that’s mentioned?” (line 16). In a mixture of encouragement, goading and admonishment he indicates that answering this question is not complicated (it certainly does not require “higher-order reading skills”) – it’s merely a matter of “listening, looking” (line 17). Finally, he summarises this series of closed questions by noting that “we’ve got a contrast there”, and concludes the exchange with the observation that “we’re already learning about this boy, things he likes, things he doesn’t like”. Thus, a potentially rich and challenging inquiry is broken down into a series of closed questions leading to a rather banal conclusion.

A similar dynamic is apparent in extract 4, which takes place in the discussion after

completion of the story on the second day. The prescribed question (from the pupil worksheet) is “In the story, we don’t know the boy’s name. Why do you think the author chose not to tell us?”

**Extract 4** (20.1.2004, 23:56-25:31)

1 Mr T: in the story, though (.)  
 2 you don’t get to know the boy’s name (2)  
 3 at all (.) have you noticed that? (1)  
 4 why do you think the author chose (.) not to tell us::s  
 5 the boy’s name? (1)  
 6 he chose that (.) he could have told us  
 7 why do you think he told us (.)  
 8 he didn’t tell us sorry (3)  
 9 come on (.) the same hands  
 10 come on you think why (.) if you were the author  
 11 put yourself in the place of the author (.)  
 12 you want people to read your story (2)  
 13 Charles: is it a true story?  
 14 Mr T: could have been (.) it could have been  
 15 when I answer that question with  
 16 it could have been  
 17 what do I mean it could have been? (4)  
 18 [slowly] try and read into my:y (.)  
 19 answer to Charles’ (.) question (1) Brad?  
 20 Brad: that it could (.) be (.) possible  
 21 Mr T: good boy that’s a very good answer (.)  
 22 it could be possible  
 23 for who? (1) for who?  
 24 Terry: for all of us  
 25 Mr T: for all of us (.)  
 26 well done Terry  
 27 it could have been possible for all of us (.)  
 28 this could be something (.) that could have happened  
 29 in real life (.) in your life  
 30 it could happen to everyone  
 31 so anybody reading this story (.)  
 32 he’s succeeded (.) as a writer (.)  
 33 in what he set out to do (.)  
 34 which was to (.) get you interested in the story (.)  
 35 make it familiar to you (.)  
 36 if it’s already experienced by you  
 37 have people in it that are familiar to you  
 38 like a granddad and a mum (.)  
 39 no need for names  
 40 because it could apply to all of us (.)  
 41 good answers there

At first Mr. Thompson poses the question from the lesson notes almost entirely verbatim: “In the story, though, you don’t get to know the boy’s name at all, have you noticed that? Why do you think the author chose not to tell us the boy’s name?” This open question is suppressed through hinting and breaking down. Shortly after posing the question, Mr. Thompson expresses

exasperation that so few children have volunteered to respond, and that the few who have are the 4-5 “regulars” who commonly dominate class discussions. He urges the others, “Come on, the same hands. Come on...” Next, he hints that the answer has something to do with the author wanting people to read the story. Then, after answering Charles' question by saying that it could have been a true story, he directs the children to try to figure out what he has in mind by reading into his answer. Over the course of this exchange, Mr. Thompson breaks the original question down into smaller, more manageable problems: "What do I mean, it could have been [true]?" (line 23) and "For who [could it be possible]?" (line 17). Having received answers to those closed questions, Mr. Thompson proceeds to answer the original question himself (“No need for names, because it could apply to all of us”) and congratulates the pupils: “Good answers there” (lines 39-41).

### *Explaining the Patterns of Enactment*

The preceding section offers a mixed account of NLS enactment in Mr. Thompson's class. On the one hand – at the macro and meso levels of curriculum and lesson structure – Mr. Thompson adopted the objectives and content advanced by the Strategy, and relied heavily on the materials provided, including texts, tasks and discussion prompts. On the other hand – at the micro level of teacher-pupil interaction – the prescribed tasks and questions were assimilated into the class's habitual ways of interacting. Moreover, macro level goals regarding the use of open questions were often subverted by micro level processes.

How can these patterns of enactment be explained? In addressing this question I revisit the theoretical frames outlined at the beginning of the article. First, I examine in turn issues related to the interaction of teacher characteristics and policy levers: teacher will and policy

enforcement, teacher sense-making and policy intelligibility, and teacher capability and policy supports. I find teacher knowledge and professional development to be central to understanding the case, though argue that the enactment patterns cannot be explained by these issues exclusively. I then complement these explanations with consideration of the conditions of Mr. Thompson's interaction with policy and the durability of interactional genres.

*Teacher will and policy enforcement.* Enforcement has been a major thrust of recent reforms of UK education, which have tightened the couplings between policy and practice. The combination of national standardised tests, inspections and public accountability exert considerable pressures on schools. The Headteacher of Low Tide Primary School focussed and amplified these pressures through a demanding performance management regime for teachers, which included ambitious pupil attainment targets and weekly monitoring of literacy plans.

In interviews with me, teachers were generally positive about the NLS curricular materials. They welcomed the ease with which the materials could be enacted, especially in light of intensifying workloads. Mr. Thompson cited the short stories supplied with the *Narrative Reading Unit* as particularly good, but had misgivings about the *Unit's* emphasis on annotation:

MR THOMPSON: I do worry about overdoing the annotation, I do worry about annotation in general, really, because I can remember my own school life when texts were destroyed for me by the fact that I had to break them up in pieces and I wasn't able to appreciate just the text as it stands and get out of it what I got out of it, basically, and the enjoyment of reading it. So, I'm very wary of doing too much of that sort of thing, but I realise the need to do that, to actually enable them to be better writers and readers, in a sense. That's something I worry about quite a bit, actually.

AUTHOR: So why do you do it?

MR THOMPSON: Because of the constraints of the SATs [standardised tests] and actually, as we've spoken before, it's what they need to achieve a certain level is maybe something that I've got to help them with and, as a teacher, it's my teacher [job] to do that, I feel. But, if I were given the choice, I would do less of that.

Later in the interview Mr. Thompson returned to this point, reiterating that he must “do [his] job as a teacher and take on board what has been agreed nationally.” Thus, Mr. Thompson sought to comply with NLS prescriptions even with regard to aspects with which he disagreed.

*Teacher sense-making and policy intelligibility.* It could be argued that these lessons reflect a misunderstanding on the part of Mr. Thompson. He appears to have focussed on curricular contents – getting through the story, making sure it was being adequately understood, and covering the key questions and themes set out in the lesson notes – rather than on the purpose for which those contents were prescribed: the development of “higher order reading skills”. Perhaps he felt that his pupils were incapable of engaging with the story: he sometimes expressed a low estimation of their academic abilities. It may also be attributable to the way the materials were structured: separation of the sections on aims and rationale from the instructions for actual conduct of the lessons facilitated such an instrumental reading.

On the other hand, in his many conversations with me and in the lesson itself Mr. Thompson espoused an interpretive approach to reading. For example, in the first lesson Lucy and Chris disagreed on a fine point concerning similarities and differences between the boy and his granddad, prompting Mr. Thompson to explain:

Right. So, Lucy, I’m not going to say you’re wrong, alright, but you’re making an interpretation, which is good, you should always do that with reading, and often, as long as you can qualify, that is to say, explain why you think that, then who’s to say you’re wrong? I’ve read books and other people have read books and we’ve both got different meanings out of them. So, we’re saying, neither of you is wrong, but both of you have a valid point there, I think.

At other times in the lesson he talked about the importance of predictions in making sense of the story, and constantly encouraged the pupils to look for clues as to what was going to happen.

Again, one might argue that although Mr. Thompson appropriated the rhetoric of open

questions and interpretive reading, his enactment of these ideas belied a misunderstanding of them, evidenced by his suppression of open questions throughout the lesson. However, this line of reasoning raises further problems. First, what are the limits of this explanation? What would a case of problematic enactment that is not a problem of interpretation look like? Once it is assumed that action flows from beliefs and interpretation, any activity that deviates from the analyst's expectations appears as either misunderstanding or resistance.

Moreover, and most crucially, how relevant is this question of teacher interpretation? Based on my observations of Mr. Thompson's teaching, I would argue that it imposes an alien analytical frame onto this case. Mr. Thompson did not appear to go through a conscious, interpretive process in which he first made sense of the policy and associated materials and then decided how he was going to use them in conducting the lesson. Rather, he entered the classroom, pulled out the relevant sheaf of papers and began to teach. A busy man, he seemed to rely more on habit and intuition than on conscious, cognitive processes, especially with regard to micro level interactions with pupils. A smart man, he was perfectly capable of justifying his actions *ex post facto*.

Roth (2002) argues that such reliance on *habitus* in teaching is necessitated by the pace and complexity of classroom activity, which rarely allow teachers time to pause and reflect. Mr. Thompson expressed a similar view toward the end of a feedback conversation with me on the lessons analysed in this article:

I mean it's nice to hear these things because you actually – when you're doing this, you're not – you are actually doing it almost instinctively. It's really weird. And I've not got a script or anything that I'm working by, in that sense. And I'm sort of thinking – well, I don't know – you know you're almost unaware of what you're thinking. And I – it's a skill you're learning, you're always doing it, but maybe because you do it enough, you probably are doing it, and you, you know, looking at it like that, is very interesting to hear actually.

It is important to place these comments in context in order to appreciate their significance. They arose spontaneously – not in response to an interview question – at the end of a long discussion about the lessons, in which I probed a number of the decisions made by Mr. Thompson in light of his pedagogical beliefs and aims, and also offered what I hoped were constructive criticisms (e.g. about different types of open questions). Mr. Thompson responded intelligently and articulately, but seemed uneasy about the course of the conversation. I interpret his observations about the role of thinking, instinct and awareness in teaching as an attempt to come to terms with the problem of trying to rationalise largely intuitive “decisions” after the fact. Analysing the transcript of a lesson and actually participating in it are very different practices, which call upon different types of knowledge and different sets of skills.

*Teacher capability and policy supports.* Frequently in these lessons, including in the extracts analysed above, Mr. Thompson appears to lack the knowledge and skill to initiate and facilitate the sort of interpretive discussions envisaged in the curricular materials. His content knowledge – in this case of literary criticism and the author’s craft – seems relatively weak (see e.g. my remarks on his readings in extracts 2 and 3). Although Mr. Thompson occasionally offered insightful comments, for example in his gloss of Layton’s decision to not give the boy a proper name (in extract 4), and found ways to connect the story to pupils’ own life experiences, his pedagogical content knowledge – for example, about a range of reading comprehension strategies and how to model them – seems similarly thin. It is further possible to interpret the narrow range of interactional genres manifested in the lessons as evidence that Mr. Thompson had a limited repertoire of teaching skills and styles at his disposal. Indeed, Mr. Thompson rarely deviated from whole class recitation; it is plausible that he lacked the requisite knowledge and



skills to successfully teach any other way.

To what extent did NLS policy and related curricular materials provide opportunities for teachers to learn such knowledge and develop such skills? The *Narrative Reading Unit* offers little elaboration of the theories upon which it is based, and is conspicuously silent on the different ways in which it may be employed, problems that are likely to arise, pedagogical principles, etc. The professional development opportunities provided by the NLS were based largely on a demonstration and imitation model, in which the teachers observed live or video demonstrations, which they were then expected to emulate. None of the complexities or problematic aspects of such teaching were explored, nor did teachers receive feedback on their own teaching.

Moreover, this professional development model was rooted in the very conceptions of teaching and learning that the NLS attempted to transform. While the NLS explicitly espoused discursive, interactive and ambitious teaching practices, including e.g. the use of open questions to provoke pupil critical thinking, its professional development programme employed a transmission pedagogy that positioned teachers-as-learners as passive, uncritical recipients of a tightly closed lesson plan. This contradiction is not merely an issue of logical consistency: the professional development's hidden curriculum communicates ideas about teaching and learning that undermine its explicit curriculum (cf. Alexander, 2005).

In short, Mr. Thompson appears to have lacked knowledge and skills necessary for teaching the *Unit*, and the NLS provided little support for facilitating their acquisition by him. Instead, it reinforced traditional conceptions of teaching through a tightly prescribed professional development model.

But would increased support for teacher learning have resolved the problems in enactment

discussed above? And precisely what kind of support for what kind of learning would have been necessary? Above I allude to some of the major themes emphasised in the research literature: content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, general teaching skills. While these issues are clearly salient, and are arguably necessary conditions for successful enactment of the *Narrative Reading Unit*, it would be a mistake to reduce the challenges faced by Mr. Thompson to them. In what follows I seek to complement these issues with two further considerations: the conditions of Mr. Thompson's interaction with the curricular materials, and the durability of interactional genres.

*The social conditions of teacher-curricular interaction.* Above I mentioned that Mr. Thompson and the other teachers adopted the *Planning Exemplification* Unit plans as their weekly literacy plans, photocopying and submitting them without change. Likewise, they rarely modified the lesson notes prior to enacting them; indeed, often Mr. Thompson appeared to read the notes for the first time during the lesson itself (e.g. see the beginning of extract 3). In these circumstances, deeper knowledge of pedagogy and content would not have offered much leverage.

It would be a mistake to conclude on the basis of this description that Low Tide Primary School teachers were apathetic or lazy. I was privy to numerous staff meetings and informal discussions in which teachers exhibited deep concern about their pupils' academic achievement and general well-being. They worked long hours: teaching, attending to pastoral issues, and complying with the many administrative requirements of the accountability regime. However, these long hours and bureaucratic pressures were anathema to meaningful pedagogical planning and reflection. The year 5 teachers normally planned two weeks of teaching in all subjects in

under two hours. The year 6 teachers often divided the subject areas between them, such that Mr. Thompson's Literacy planning was done for him by his counterpart in the other year 6 class.

Weekly staff meetings were well attended, and usually focussed on issues of pupil attainment. However, standards and assessment dominated the agenda, not pedagogy. Many of the teachers were demoralised by the constant pressure, and at a loss as to how to raise pupil test scores. One spoke bitterly to me about the coping strategy implicitly adopted by her and others: comply with the prescribed programme, so that the blame for failure would fall on the materials, rather than on the teachers. Much of her and other teachers' practice was geared toward creating evidence of such compliance, rather than pupil learning. Moss (2004) comments on teachers' work post-NLS:

The lesson plan becomes a way of demonstrating that the teacher has covered the relevant topics within the relevant time period. The question of what children will have learnt as a result ends up taking second place...

These dilemmas become more acute when the local accountability culture stresses compliance with the central direction of the Strategy and meeting its apparent demands over and above problem-solving the specific set of conditions that arise in local settings as implementation occurs. Under these circumstances, the policy levers designed to standardise curriculum delivery and monitor performance can get in the way of thinking through how things need to adapt in the light of the specific requirements of this school, this teacher and these children. (pp. 129-30)

Different policy levers exert opposing forces upon teachers: the limited opportunities for learning from the curricular materials and professional development resources are stifled by enforcement mechanisms.

*The durability of classroom interactional genres.* The primary pattern of enactment in the two lessons was the recontextualisation of prescribed curricular contents into the group's existing interactional genres for shared reading. While the above discussions of teacher knowledge and the conditions of engagement with the curricular materials explain why the materials were not

enacted as intended by the designers, they do not explain why these particular patterns of enactment emerged. One possible explanation is that part of the problem lies in the durability of classroom interactional genres themselves. To what might classroom interactional genres owe their durability? In what follows I discuss three factors: pupil collusion, *habitus* and framing.

First, classroom activity is an ongoing, joint accomplishment of all the participants, not solely a product of the teacher's will, as is often implied in current policy discourse. I highlighted this co-constructed nature of interaction in my discussion of extract 2, in which pupil reluctance to participate may have led to Mr. Thompson's sufficing with a single, banal answer. Similarly, after the class finished reading the story out loud (extract 1), Mr. Thompson initiated whole class discussion with an open question, "What do you think of the ending to the story?" – rather than a closed, recall question as might have been expected based on recitation lesson conventions. However, his attempt to open discussion about pupils' feelings – potentially, a shift of interactional genres – is rejected by the pupils. Mr. Thompson spends over a minute trying to find someone who will answer his open questions, including multiple reformulations and direct nomination of two pupils (lines 1-33). It is only in the face of their unwillingness to cooperate that he apologises for "jumping the gun a bit" and reverts back to more typical, recitation-style questioning.

It is plausible that the class has settled into these particular interactional genres in part because participants' strategic action melded together in that way. For example, recitation allows the teacher to maximise control over the interaction, and closed questions minimise pupils' risk of offering a wrong answer. Likewise, consider the way the pupils and Mr. Thompson enacted independent work in the first lesson. Mr. Thompson assigned the task of creating a chart of similarities and differences between the boy and his granddad. Many pupils stalled at the

beginning of the task: they drew a chart, but only minimally filled it in, if at all. After five and a half minutes Mr. Thompson interrupted the independent work and returned to whole class recitation, in which he collected and recorded on the board pupil answers. The pupils then copied these now-legitimated answers into their notebooks. This interactional dynamic serves a variety of interests. The stalling pupils avoid investing effort in the task and risking the embarrassment of incorrect answers, and Mr. Thompson ensures that pupil notebooks, which are externally monitored, contain evidence of “successful learning”. Each party’s strategic actions reinforce the other’s: the pupils appear “stuck” on the task, thereby requiring teacher intervention; Mr. Thompson’s intervention in turn rewards pupil inaction.

These interactional dynamics recall McDermott and Tylbor’s (1983) analysis of “collusion”: “how members of any social order must constantly help each other to posit a particular state of affairs, even when such a state would be in no way at hand without everyone so proceeding” (p. 278). In their analysis of a reading lesson they show how teacher and pupils colluded to “protect” a struggling student by preventing her from taking a turn at reading out loud (and thereby displaying her inability), while at the same time allowing her ample opportunities to assert her ability. In the lessons analysed here, the pupils and teachers similarly “played into each other’s hands”, jointly constructing instructional activity that “protected” both parties from failure, and sustained the illusion of “doing” the NLS *Narrative Reading Unit*.

A second factor that potentially contributes to the durability of interactional genres is the way in which routine genres are embedded in participants’ *habitus*. Above I discussed Mr. Thompson’s experience of teaching the lesson, and the centrality of intuition and habit in the way he conducted the lesson. Breaking out of habitual genres would necessitate that he actively attend to aspects of classroom interaction which he normally relegated to the margins of

consciousness, thereby increasing cognitive burden. Moreover, when participants' *habitus* is closely aligned with unfolding social interaction, they feel "at home" in the situation and "free to be themselves". In contrast, when participants find themselves in an alien interactional genre, the situation feels "unnatural", they don't "fit in". For this reason, it is expected that teachers and pupils may avoid interactions that significantly deviate from the comfort of established genres.

A third possible reason for the durability of interactional genres is related to the way they frame participants' understandings about what is and should be happening, how to act, and what can be expected from others. Deviations from well-established interactional genres may frustrate these expectations, and in such a way may lead to uncertainty, confusion and misunderstandings. Moreover, since generic frames do not normally operate on the level of consciousness, teachers and pupils may assume that they are implementing an activity as prescribed, but in actuality adapt it to their routine ways of working. Deeply rooted interactional genres may become naturalised as "common sense" such that it is difficult for participants to imagine the activity otherwise. Thus, for example, pupils may misperceive their teacher's open questions as closed on the basis of the regularities of previous experiences (Smith & Higgins, 2006).

### Conclusion

In this article I have described how a Year 6 teacher and class enacted two NLS *Planning Exemplification* lessons. Curricular contents were incorporated into conventional classroom interactional genres, and most of the open questions that served as the primary objective of the *Unit* were suppressed. I have discussed possible explanations for this outcome, highlighting in particular three factors which seemed most significant: teacher knowledge and policy support, conditions of teacher engagement with the curricular materials, and the durability of interactional

genres.

That teacher knowledge and support for teacher learning were seen to be crucial in this case should come as no surprise, as previous research has demonstrated the centrality of these factors in instructional innovations. However, I have suggested that conventional categories of teacher capabilities appear to have been necessary but insufficient conditions for successful enactment in this case. First, the conditions of teachers' work in Low Tide Primary School militated against the development and application of teacher knowledge. Second, instruction is not the exclusive product of the teacher's will and capabilities: pupils collude in construction of the lesson, constraining possible teacher actions and – in the case analysed here – contributing to the persistence of interactional genres. Finally, successfully shifting one's pupils and oneself into a new interactional genre undoubtedly requires teacher capabilities, including e.g. tacit understanding and awareness of social dynamics, self-knowledge and control, and the development of this knowledge and skill may be supported by policy documents, curricular materials and professional development. But it is important to note that these are a different set of capabilities than those commonly discussed in connection with content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and general teaching skills.

Moreover, the knowledge reflected in such capabilities is primarily tacit, more a function of *habitus* than active, conscious cognition. In order to address what I perceive to be imbalances in current conceptualisations of teaching, I have emphasised this facet of teachers' activity, and downplayed conscious, cognitive factors. However, the critical question is not which of these factors is most important, but how do tacit and explicit knowledge interact. For example, to what extent, and under what conditions, can teacher reflection transform *habitus* (see Roth, 2002)? What types of learning experiences would be most productive in helping teachers to come to

terms with interactional genres in their classrooms? And how can educators work with pupils in transforming classroom culture?

A limitation of this study is its small sample size: What can be learned from just two lessons in one classroom? To what extent may the findings be generalised more broadly? While Mr. Thompson's classroom and Low Tide Primary School should not be taken as necessarily representative of other schools and classrooms, their study has afforded the development of a set of theoretical insights that shed new light on the way we think about and study instructional innovations and their enactment in schools. The case study offers plausible explanations for the widely-documented failures of attempts to transform classroom interaction at large scale, and a theoretical perspective and set of methods for examining the issue further.

This article has brought a micro-interactional perspective to bear on a perennial problem in school reform policy and research. As I noted in introducing these two research traditions, they have rarely interacted in past, in part on account of their differing aims, methods, and assumptions about social action. I hope that this article will serve as a catalyst for further conversations between micro-interactional and school reform research, and that, in such a way, the micro-interactional perspective – which has heretofore proven to be a good position from which to criticise policy – may become a position from which to contribute to positive change.



## Notes

1. See Stannard & Huxford (2007) for descriptions of the NLS and a first-hand account of its development. See Fisher (2002), Earl et. al. (2003), Moss (2004) and Ofsted (2002) for studies of its implementation.
2. Compare with Wells (1995) and Remillard (1999).
3. Guided reading/writing and the plenary were found to be more problematic, and teachers used them less frequently.
4. For discussions of these normative questions and NLS assumptions about literacy, teaching and its reform see (citations deleted).
5. My discussion heavily draws upon David Cohen, Deborah Ball and colleagues' practice-centred approach to the issue of educational policy enactment (Ball & Cohen, 1996, 1999; Cohen, 1989, 1990; Cohen & Ball, 1990, 1999, 2001, 2006; Glazer, 2005; Spillane, 2004; and Spillane et. al., 2002). My treatment of this large body of scholarship is of course necessarily selective and incomplete.
6. See Gitlin and Margonis (1995) for a useful review and critique of the literature on teacher resistance. One of their major points, which I do not discuss here, is that resistance is often a rational response to poorly conceived interventions.
7. The case study described below is in many ways similar to the case of Mrs. Oublier: both studies look closely at the enactment of a reform policy in one classroom, and both recount teacher appropriation and implementation of a reform such that its educational objectives are undermined. And, indeed, this article builds on many of the insights developed in that earlier

study. However, it is worth noting the points of divergence between the two cases. First, they differ considerably in terms of their policy, cultural and historical contexts. Second, the analyses of the two cases differ with regard to (a) their approaches to teacher cognition and *habitus*, (b) their treatment of the role of pupils and classroom interaction in sustaining teaching practices, and (c) their methods of data collection and analysis.

8. For helpful reviews of relevant theoretical approaches to genre, upon which much of my account is based, see Bauman (1992), Briggs and Bauman (1992), and Kamberelis (1995).

9. *Habitus* in Bourdieu's system is a person's subjective internalisation of his/her objective position in society. I have not delved into that and related aspects of his theoretical frame here, focusing instead only on those aspects of it that are relevant to the current purpose. See Hanks (1987, 2005) for discussions of the relationship between genre and *habitus*.

10. I'd like to thank Roxy Harris for this interpretation (unpublished correspondence; see also Rampton, 2006).

11. The names used for the teacher, school and pupils are pseudonyms.

12. Note that examination of these two dimensions is not offered as an exhaustive analysis of curricular enactment in these lessons. A more complete account of Mr. Thompson and the pupils' enactment includes, for example, analysis of extra-curricular topics discussed, the selection of themes, and the various ways in which teacher and pupils engaged with the story (citation deleted). I have reduced the scope of analysis here in order to focus on those aspects of the enactment that are most relevant to the article's theoretical aims.

13. These materials are available on-line at

<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy/publications/planning/63389/y6narrative1.pdf>.

14. My perception as participant-observer in dozens of lessons in this classroom that this structure was routine was checked systematically against shared reading segments in two additional lessons, which had been previously transcribed for other purposes.

15. Initiation, Response, and Evaluation are stages 2, 5 and 6 respectively. Compare Figure 1 with Lemke's (1990) "triadic dialogue" structure (an elaboration of IRE to include teacher calls for bids to answer, pupil bids, nomination of speakers and teacher elaboration on pupils' responses).

16. Mr. Thompson did occasionally make notations on the OHT – underlining phrases that were the object of questioning. However, it is a stretch to regard this activity as a demonstration of how to annotate a text. He never explained it as such; indeed, from the pupils' perspective this "annotation" was not at all different from the way teachers use visual aids (the OHP, white board) to focus attention while teaching.

17. Transcription notations include:

- (        )        - Transcription uncertainty (including blank space in parentheses for inaudible utterances)
- (.)             - Brief pause (under one second)
- (1)             - Longer pause (the number indicates length in seconds)
- [     ]         - Description of prosody or non-verbal activity
- :              - An unidentified pupil speaker
- a::and         - Stretched sounds.

18. There are good reasons to doubt the widespread assumption, which underlies this *Narrative Reading Unit*, that open teacher questions lead to higher order pupil thinking (cf. Dillon, 1982).

My analysis is offered as an interpretation of the *Narrative Reading Unit*, not its evaluation.

19. I have misgivings about Smith and colleagues' definition of "open" questions, which is based upon Galton et. al. (1999), and have chosen to use it here primarily in order to afford comparison with previous studies. I believe that this and similar systems problematically elide together a number of senses of openness: epistemological vs. social, pluralistic vs. competitive (see citation deleted for explication of this problem and an alternative taxonomy). Moreover, my below description of the way Mr. Thompson and the pupils elaborated upon the questions posed raises doubts about the adequacy and appropriateness of the question as unit of analysis.

20. These categories overlap with previously developed frameworks. French and Maclure (1981) showed how infant school teachers signalled to pupils how to appropriately answer their questions through a variety of "preformulations" and "reformulations"; hinting is an example of a preformulation, while narrowing and breaking down are reformulations. Re breaking down, Heath (1982, p. 126) notes that school language remediation typically involves "breaking the pieces of work into smaller and smaller units..." and "emphasized the use of recall questions, Q-I types for those of low achievement" (p. 126; Q-I questions are defined as "those in which the questioner has the information being requested of the addressee"). Skilton-Sylvester (2003) observes the common practice of breaking tasks into smaller, supposedly more "manageable" units among both managers in low-paying jobs and teachers in urban elementary schools. See also Hammersley (1977).

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