What are we doing when we read novels? –

Reading circles, novels & adult reading development

Samantha Duncan
Institute of Education
University of London
Doctor in Education

Abstract

Adult literacy teachers search for effective, engaging and distinctly 'adult' ways to develop adult emergent reading. Reading circles are used in adult English Language Teaching to develop a range of reading and other linguistic skills, and for at least the past two hundred years adults have formed themselves into reading circles to read and discuss novels on a weekly or monthly basis. Why then are reading circles rarely used in formal adult literacy provision? This thesis uses a case study of a reading circle within a London adult literacy workshop to investigate what a reading circle approach can offer adult emergent reading development, as well as what adult literacy learners can tell us about novel reading and the reading circle experience. A qualitative analysis of individual interviews, focus groups and taped reading circle sessions produces six themes for exploration: reading as five acts, reading identity, the nature of knowing words, how a novel is 'built up' by the reader, the relationship between fiction, truth and learning and why it may be 'nice' to read in a group. Areas for discussion include reading as a communal cognitive process (as well as a communal practice), reading circles as self- and peer-differentiation, and novel reading as a political act. Implications are discussed for both the teaching and learning of adult emergent reading and for our understanding of novel reading processes and practices.

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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Samantha Duncan
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Statement

Starting the Doctor in Education (EdD) Programme
I applied for the EdD in the summer of 2005. I was looking for an academic challenge and my professional field (adult literacy teaching) seemed underresearched and underrepresented in higher education. Additionally, at this stage I had been working for six months at the Institute of Education as an adult literacy teacher educator and was coming to realize that I wanted a career at least partly based in a university. It therefore seemed the perfect time and place to begin the doctorate I had always longed to try. For almost ten years I had been trying to write a proposal for a PhD in literature, only to find (again and again) that I was not sure what, or who, I wanted to study in this depth. Not until I began working as an adult literacy teacher did I recognize that I did not in fact want to research a particular author, period or theory but rather the role that reading and literature play in human life- the *why* of it all. This became my EdD proposal.

Four taught modules
Before I had time to reflect on the extent of what I had taken on, I found myself deep within the first of the four taught modules, Foundations of Professionalism (FoP), working on "the role of definition in the professionalisation of adult literacy teaching." This led me to explore the complex history of adult literacy teaching in Britain alongside theories of professionalism and Further Education policy transitions. I proposed that literacy need is defined in three ways (by social norm, by social function and by individual self definition) and argued that these definitions both clash and cross-fertilize in the development of public policy and a shifting adult literacy teacher professional identity.

I argued that ideally adult literacy teachers should be trained in integrated PGCE Adult Literacy courses (rather than generic PGCEs followed by discrete subject specialist courses), as the 'subject specialism' of adult literacy teaching is a form of pedagogy, rather than an academic subject with a coherence outside of its teaching. This idea of pedagogy as a teacher's subject specialism was further developed in an NRDC (National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy) publication on models of teacher education (*Getting the practical teaching element right: A guide for literacy, numeracy and ESOL teacher*

educators) (Casey, Derrick, Duncan, & Mallows, 2007). I also argued that the Adult Literacy Core Curriculum delineation of literacy in levels (Entry 1 to Level 2, GCSE level) was an act of defining literacy in a way which has allowed for a shift in public spending towards higher level 'brushing up' courses and away from beginner readers and writers. Since writing this assignment, entry provision has indeed been cut (Derrick, 2006).

The next module, Methods of Enquiry 1 (MoE1), allowed me to begin to explore adult literacy teaching from the perspective of researching pedagogy. I wrote a proposal addressing the primary research question, 'what impact does reading a novel have on reading, according to adult literacy learners themselves?' and its sub-questions: 'What do adult literacy learners think reading is?', 'What are we doing when we read?' and 'Can we understand more about reading from asking people about their own reading?' This assignment helped me to understand the interrelated nature of research methods, methodology, theoretical perspectives and epistemology, and awoke my interest in working from adult literacy learners' conceptualizations of reading.

I was then able to carry out an aspect of this proposal as a piece of small-scale research for Methods of Enquiry 2 (MoE2). I focused on the idea of researching reading using readers' conceptualizations, addressing the research questions 'What is reading, as perceived by adult literacy learners?' and 'Can people's perceptions of their own reading contribute usefully to our knowledge of reading?' Using semi-structured interviews, group discussions, mindmapping and a grounded theory approach to data analysis, I produced a model of reading from my data. This model demonstrated the distinction between the text on the page and the realization of that text in the reader's mind and that reading is cause and effect of a cyclical development of decoding skills, vocabulary and grammatical awareness (so 'the more you read the better you get'). This was my first attempt at educational research and is riddled with limitations, yet the richness of data and the way grounded theory could 'turn' it into a model of reading which potentially adds (albeit in a tiny way) to our understanding of the teaching of adult reading inspired me as both teacher and researcher.

Pedagogy, Curriculum and Assessment (CPA) was an introduction to psychoanalytical theory and its relationship to education. My previous interest in psychoanalytic theory was matched only by my ignorance of its detail. In my

assignment, "Can psychoanalytic theory help us tell a story of pleasure in novel reading?," I tried to connect Freud and Lacan's ideas of the ego/subject to concepts of identification in novel reading from literary and aesthetic theory. This was a very satisfying piece of work to undertake as not only was it a steep learning curve, but it also connected my undergraduate English Literature work (on the novel, the tragic hero and identification) and my MPhil film theory work (examining pleasure and identification in cinema spectatorship) to my EdD studies.

Institutional Focused Study (IFS) to Thesis

My IFS was the product of the above modular investigations into what reading involves, its role in adult life and the nature of its pleasures. I used twenty-one individual interviews, mindmapping and four focus groups to collect adult literacy learners' conceptualizations of reading, and once again followed a grounded theory coding approach to build these into a story of reading. I identified seven areas for discussion: that a knowledge of appropriate metalanguage can help adult learners develop decoding skill, that how we read is not the same as how we learn to read, that motivation can make all the difference between someone to learning to read or not, that reading aloud is both a method for improving reading and a reading practice in itself, that the relationship between reading and time is manifold, that reading is both a social practice (sometimes an enforced and unwelcome one) and a potentially *a*social practice of escape from the self.

This was my first attempt at a slightly larger scale piece of research and therefore besides leading to the above insights, it was an education in research methods and report writing: using the Nvivo data analysis software, working from codes to categories to themes, learning how to structure a longer piece of writing and managing its production (including how to work on several chapters at once). I also produced a piece of work which, though flawed, made a small contribution to my field; I presented at the NRDC International Conference in March 2007, wrote a short professional article about one aspect of the findings, reading aloud, (Duncan, 2008a) and published a condensed version of the entire IFS in a peer-reviewed journal this year (Duncan, 2009). Most importantly, however, my IFS led to this thesis. My thesis research questions follow from IFS findings and my methodology was developed through the MoE1, MoE2 and IFS developmental process.

The EdD and my professional life

The EdD process has made me a better adult literacy teacher and teacher educator because it has given me a deeper understanding of my field, its literature and its debates. Finishing the IFS also marked a larger professional transition, from working full-time as an adult literacy teacher, and part-time as a teacher educator, to (from September 2008) working full-time as a teacher educator and part-time as an adult literacy teacher. This was a difficult decision but (so far) the right one. I can now explore life at a university and diversify my teaching (for example, into generic post-compulsory initial teacher education), while my one adult literacy class a week keeps me in touch with the reality of teaching adult literacy.

The EdD has also expanded my range of professional activities. In the summer of 2006, my increased understanding of educational research (or perhaps just increased confidence) led me to make a joint-proposal to the NRDC for funding for a national learner writing project. The project, *Voices on the Page*, called for adults in literacy, ESOL and numeracy classes to write whatever they most want to write: true stories, fictional stories or poems, anything that someone else may want to read. *Voices on the Page* ran for two years and involved three strands: an online 'storybank' (http://www.nrdc.org.uk/voicesonthepage.asp) containing every piece of writing submitted (around 800 pieces), a selection of work published in a book (Duncan & Mallows, 2007) and a reading event in Adult Learners' Week. *Voices on the Page* also trained me in the administration of a national project and management of an advisory group.

I wrote three short articles about *Voices on the Page* for the NRDC journal, *Reflect* (Duncan, 2006, 2007a, 2007b) and presented at two conferences (NRDC and RaPAL) on '*Voices on the Page* and a learner-centred approach to developing writing'. These workshops emphasized the importance of reading and writing for pleasure as an approach to literacy development and led, indirectly, to work on an NRDC development project and the already mentioned publication, *Getting the practical teaching element right: A guide for literacy, numeracy and ESOL teacher educators* (Casey et al., 2007), for which I conducted and transcribed two semi-structured interviews, and wrote two chapters of the final publication. The EdD provided the training in interviewing, data analysis and academic writing this required, while this project provided an opportunity for me to continue the exploration of adult literacy teacher education I began in the EdD FoP module.

On a different track, in March 2008 I presented at the IATEFL Literature, Media and Cultural Studies SIG event in Budapest. This event was titled 'Teaching and enjoying the words and music of Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen & Joni Mitchell' and my presentation was on 'Bob Dylan and the literacy of poetry,' exploring how listening to and reading Dylan (and other) songs can help with adult literacy development. The same year, the NRDC conference presentation of my IFS research led to work as part of a team developing and leading a series of seminars and resources on 'Teaching Reading to Adults' for the Scottish Government (Gawn, Derrick, Duncan, & Schwab, 2009). Both were opportunities to explore aspects of my EdD work in a wider context.

Finally, over the past few years I have been working on a freelance basis for a publishing house, mainly reading novels and arguing why or why not they should be published. The self-awareness this brought to my novel reading helped me to formulate some of the ideas central to the CPA essay and was a further motivating factor for the novel focus of this thesis. I am also working on piece of fiction in the form of a series of letters dealing with the relationship between writing, reading, love and where, *physically*, time, in the form of emotion, or emotion, in the form of time, is stored. This is neither cause nor effect of my EdD work, but is nevertheless related. Besides being another way to examine the role of literacy in human life, writing (or trying to write) fiction is a way of practicing different styles of writing, as appropriate for different academic, professional or personal purposes.

The future

The thesis itself indicates where I hope to take this work, and these themes, in the future.

Chapter 1: Introduction and rationale

1.1 Introduction

In 2005 Margaret Atwood wrote a review of Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* (2004). The final sentence of her first paragraph reads: "There is a book club in *Reading Lolita*, but it's more like a life raft than an after-work social gathering" (Atwood, 2005, p. 317). This one sentence contains four implicit messages. It indicates that the concept of a 'book club' is widely understood; book clubs are a common, accepted, 'normal' part of Anglo-North American lives. Secondly, it implies that book clubs can play dramatically different roles in these lives, from 'life raft' to 'after-work social gathering.' It also conjures the question of how anyone could possibly identify the role a book club plays in someone else's life; what may seem like an 'after-work social gathering' may in fact be a life raft. The reader's perspective is usually obscured. Finally, for anyone who has read *Reading Lolita*, or who goes on to read the rest of Atwood's review, this sentence raises the issue of the relationship between informal book clubs and formal educational policy. Though not previously articulated in this way, these four messages are aspects of my rationale for this thesis. More than this, they are reasons why I feel that literacy, and literary, teaching and research will always be worth doing.

My past research (Duncan, 2009) posed the question: 'What are we doing when we read, according to adult literacy learners?' Individual interviews, mind-maps and focus groups generated adult literacy learners' conceptualizations of reading and grounded theory turned these into a model with implications for the learning and teaching of adult emergent reading. Two conclusions called for future research. Firstly, researching the perceptions of adult literacy learners can yield practical insights into the learning and teaching of reading and secondly, the relationship between novel (or fiction) reading and individual reading development warrants further, and closer, exploration. I decided to research what adult literacy learners can tell us about novel reading and what novel reading can tell us about adult reading development.

However, in searching for literature on the novel and reading development, I found large amounts of data on 'reading circles': people getting together to read as a

group. I became increasingly interested in what reading as a group involves, why it appeals to individual readers, and how it relates to both adult literacy development and novel reading. For this thesis, therefore, I set up a reading circle in an existing adult literacy class, gave the group control over what they read and how they read it, and used this reading circle as a research case study.

1.2 Key definitions:

A number of key definitions need to be established. *Adult literacy learners* are adults who have identified a literacy need in themselves and enrolled, voluntarily, in adult literacy classes. In England these classes are offered on five levels, delineated in the Adult Literacy Core Curriculum (Good et al., 2001): Entry 1 (beginners), Entry 2, Entry 3, Level 1 and Level 2 (GCSE level). Hereafter these levels will be referred to as E1, E2, E3, L1 or L2. *Adult literacy* and *adult emergent reading* refer to this spectrum.

E. M. Forster likes Chevalley's 1921 definition of a *novel* as "a fiction in prose of a certain extent" (Forster, 1927, p. 25) and this, echoed by Burgess' "the term 'novel' has, in fact, come to mean any imaginative prose composition long enough to be stitched rather than stapled" (1967, p. 16), is the definition I am using. By *fiction* I mean writing that is primarily concerned with beauty or insight, what McRae, working from Jakobson (1960/1988), calls the "representational" rather than "referential" function of language (McRae, 1991, pp. 2-7). Eagleton's definition is also useful: fiction "means something like 'a story (either true or false) treated in such a way as to make it clear that it has a significance beyond itself'" (2005, p. 13). The complexity of any definition of fiction, and how this slipperiness is manifested in the data, is discussed in 4.6.

The terms '*reading circle*,' 'literature circle,' 'book group,' and 'book club' are in common enough usage to suggest popularity, and yet their use also indicates a lack of consistency of terms. For example, Richard and Judy's 'book club,' involves television discussions of book selections and a website offering these books for sale at reduced prices; a 'book group' I helped run in a North London library was a group of adults who chose a book together, read a set amount individually at home and met once a week in the library to debate themes passionately and argue politics; the Texan women's 'reading groups' discussed by Long (1993) involved intellectual discussion

as respite for full-time mothers; and many Australian and American school 'literature circles' are set up and closely managed by teachers as a classroom activity to encourage the development of comprehension skills and 'critical reading' (Cumming-Potvin, 2007; Daniels, 2006; Malchow Lloyd, 2006). O'Donnell Allen (2006) emphasizes the difference between a book club, a reading group and a literature circle: reading groups are teacher-led, literature circles are student-led but temporary (to read one book), while book clubs are participant-led and enduring, moving from one book to the next. Daniels (2006) uses the term 'literature circles' for "small, peer-led book discussion groups" but notes the "terminology drift" which means that 'literature circles' in schools often involve a range of other (less peer-led) teaching activities (p. 10).

However, these terms *are* used interchangeably, within and without educational institutions and the media. Reading circles, reading groups, book groups, book clubs or literature circles can involve weekly, monthly or less frequent meetings, discussions of books read at home, or discussion of what is read together as a group, and can focus on novels or other texts. What they share is their communal focus, the group experience of an act (reading or novel reading) usually seen as highly individual. In this thesis I am using the term 'reading circle.'

1.3 Rationale

The rationale for this project contains four elements. I have already mentioned the first: the findings of past research. Though the focus of Duncan (2009) was on reading in general, the majority of participants spoke a great deal about reading fiction. Participants described the inter-subjective acts of identification involved in novel reading and argued that these helped them to decode words and to remember those words for future use in reading and writing. They spoke of reading novels and stories as social, cognitive, emotional and spiritual acts and explained how they read differently (silently or aloud, quickly or more slowly) depending on the purpose of those acts. Participants spoke of reading as both an intensely private (even *a*-social) act and a very much communal act. I decided to build on these findings and research 'what we are doing when we read novels', including the relationship between novel reading and reading development, and reading as a communal or as an individual activity.

The second element concerns how and where reading is studied. Different disciplines lay claim to reading: cognitive psychology, child pedagogy, social practice theory, literary theory and social history. Each researches reading and, in doing so, defines both reading and research. In past EdD work, I was concerned with which of these an adult literacy teacher should turn to for help developing adult emergent reading. This question remains, but my interest has shifted to the studies which try to bring together these diverse disciplines, as well as how different researchers conceptualize the range of disciplines researching reading. For example, Zunshine (2006) unites cognitive psychology and literary theory (see 2.1.1); Meek (1988) uses literary theory to develop child reading pedagogy (see 2.3.2); Purcell-Gates, Jacobson & Degener (2004) and Green & Howard (2007) unite the social practice and cognitive skills-based approaches to adult literacy pedagogy; while Radway (1994) identifies "four related literatures on the practice of reading [...] the new social history of the book and reading, reader response criticism and reception aesthetics and [...] a new ethnography of reading" (p. 281). She uses each to argue that reading is as much social as it is individual. The above studies demonstrate the fruitfulness – and necessity – of interdisciplinary reading research, but even as they work to unite different disciplines, they are still carving reading into separate territories: what it is, how it can be studied and the purposes or uses of these studies.

The third element of my rationale is the body of work connecting novel reading, reading practices and literacy development: reading circle research. English Language Teaching (hereafter ELT) has used and researched reading circles as a vehicle for language development, researchers have charted the use of reading circles in American and Australian school English classes and ethnography/social history documents the reading circles started by adults outside of formal education (these are all examined more closely in 2.2). Yet, there is little or no research on the use of reading circles in adult literacy education. Why is something that is used and researched in ELT and school literacy, and formed by adults of their own accords, not used – or not researched – in literacy provision for adults?

The final aspect of my rationale is the simplest: curiosity. In writing and defending the proposal for this thesis, I realized that I was interested in the theoretical, methodological and pedagogical implications of conceptualizing reading as *experience*. This is what ethnographers call an *emic* approach, focused on the perspective of readers themselves (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Silverman,

2006). I want to explore what it *feels like* to read a novel, alone and in a group, and what this means for the research, theorising and teaching of adult emergent reading.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Research Questions

2.1 Research on adult emergent reading

Research on adult emergent reading includes work in three areas:

- How adults read
- How adults learn to read
- The role of reading in adult lives

Each is relevant to this study, and they interrelate, but it is important to recognize their differences. For example, how we read is not the same as how we learn to read (Duncan, 2009). Likewise, how we read, at least in terms of its cognitive and affective processes, is not the same as the role that reading plays in our lives, though, as Barton (2007) and Green & Howard (2007) discuss, a social practice approach to reading (dealing mainly with the latter) is often placed in direct contrast to a cognitive psychology approach (dealing mainly with the former). This literature review will look at research in each area in terms of what it can tell us about adult emergent reading.

2.1.1 How adults read

One could argue that 'how adults read' – the mind and body processes that turn marks on the page into speech, meaning, action or emotion – is clearly the domain of cognitive psychology. Huey (1968) attributes the beginning of the psychological study of reading to Javal's 1879 Paris eye-movement experiments, Vernon (1984) to the work of Wundt in mid-nineteenth-century Leipzig, and Manguel (1996) to Al-Haytham's studies of perception and the visual system in eleventh-century Cairo. Working in a tradition which would later be called cognitive psychology, Wundt, Javal, Al-Haytham and their predecessors, like psychologists today, were concerned with mapping the processes of reading from one observable end (the printed word) to the other observable end (word identification, speech and/or a grasping of meaning) using methods Rayner & Pollatsek describe as "empirical experimentation" (1989, p. 8).

This body of research produces conceptualizations of how text is processed into speech sounds and/or meaning, including models mapping this process and analyses of its biological or neurological bases. This includes theories of how

language and literacy skills or knowledge relate to the two hemispheres of the brain, offering physiological insight to conditions such as dyslexia (Shillcock & McDonald, 2005), and hypotheses of potential relationships between reading and genetics (Castles, Bates, Coltheart, Luciano, & Martin, 2006; Coltheart, 2006; Keenan, Betjemann, Wadsworth, DeFries, & Olson, 2006). Nation (2006) argues that though literacy is too recent in evolutionary terms to be genetically encoded in the same way as speaking and listening, there are nevertheless genetically encoded cognitive and linguistic capabilities which affect reading, such as lexical comprehension.

Rayner & Pollatsek (1989), Just & Carpenter (1980) and Stuart (2002, 2005a, 2005b) all present models of the route between the eyes 'seeing' a word on the page and the mind allocating a meaning to that word, identifying both lexical and phonological routes. Models differ in whether the lexical and phonological routes are parallel or sequential, and over the role semantics plays in the path from print to speech (Coltheart, 2006; Coltheart & Jackson, 2001; Rayner & Pollatsek, 1989; Stuart, 2002, 2005b), but share a stress on the existence of distinct whole-word and sound-based routes. Stuart (2005a, 2005b) has also researched the development of phonemic awareness, whether one has to develop phonemic awareness in order to learn to read, or whether reading itself develops phonemic awareness, concluding that it is a bit of both: a cyclical development. Pugh (1978), Brooks (1984) and Ashby (2006) studied the role of vocalization or sub-vocalization ('saying' or 'hearing' words in one's 'head') in the route from print to understanding. Whether or not sub-vocalization is always part of the reading process remains contested (Ashby, 2006; Brooks, 1984).

However, cognitive psychology's engagement with the route from print to meaning goes beyond lexical understanding. Hudson, Pullen, Lane & Torgerson (2009, pp. 4-5) note that "attention has shifted from phonemic awareness and decoding to those areas where less consensus has been established, including reading fluency" and investigate how fluency relates to word decoding and comprehension of individual words and whole text, finding that fluency in word reading both facilitates and is facilitated by comprehension processes which are determined by "knowledge about the world" (p. 26). Yet, this work had already been going on. Just & Carpenter (1977), Garnham (1987), Rayner & Pollatsek (1989), and Garnham & Oakhill (1992) researched textual comprehension using eye-movement observation and/or timed reading and sentence completion activities. Just & Carpenter (1977) investigated eye-

movements in sentence and paragraph reading, observing that the duration of eye fixations reflect the semantic importance of words or phrases as the reader builds up an understanding of sentences and paragraphs through "comprehensive computations" (1977, p. 137). Garnham (1987) and Garnham & Oakhill (1992)'s "mental models theory" presents how the reader processes each new word in the context of a mental model she has already built of the text, a model that is constantly added to and adapted (Garnham & Oakhill, 1992, p. 194). Noordman & Vonk (1992) present this 'building' process as an interplay between 'new' information the reader gathers from the text and the reader's existing world knowledge.

It is not only cognitive psychology, however, which addresses the mental processes of reading. The last sentence of the above paragraph could easily be describing the work of a number of literary theorists. Literary theory is a vast field, but has always, even before the reader-response and reception theory of the mid/late twentieth-century, included work focused specifically on the reading process and reader experience (Coleridge, 1817/1986; Culler, 1975; Eagleton, 1996; Forster, 1927). Iser developed literary phenomenological hermeneutics into reception theory (Cuddon, 1991; Eagleton, 1996; Iser, 1978) to theorize the difference between the written *text* (the marks on the page) and the *work* of literature: "a convergence... virtual... dynamic" (Iser, 1972, p. 212) which is produced in the connections the reader makes between sentences of text:

> ...each intentional sentence correlative [link to be made between
> one sentence and another] opens up a partial horizon, which
> is modified, if not completely changed, by succeeding sentences.
> While these expectations arouse interest in what is to come, the
> subsequent modification of them will also have a retrospective effect
> on what has already been read (Iser, 1972, p. 215).

Reading is therefore an active, interpretive process unique to each reader, and to each reading, which produces, through constant "anticipation and retrospection" (p. 219) an "individual realization" (p. 219) of the written text. Additionally, by reading text written by someone else, following their 'intentional sentence correlatives,' and therefore realizing someone else's text in one's own mind, reading becomes a removal of the boundaries between self and non-self, replicating "the process by which we gain experience" (p. 224).

Fish (1980) presents a similar model of the reading process from the American reader-response tradition, developed through a linguistic analysis of Milton's sonnets. Fish argues that purposely ambiguous words, syntax and punctuation force the reader to be more active:

> the making and revising of assumptions, the rendering and regretting of judgments, the coming to and abandoning of conclusions [...] In a word, these activities are interpretive [...] not waiting for meaning but constructing meaning and continually in the act of reconstituting...(Fish, 1980, pp. 158-159).

Similarly, narrative poetics theorists Culler (1975), Perry (1979) and Rimmon-Kenan (1989) explore how the reader constructs and reconstructs the "story paraphrase" (Rimmon-Kenan, 1989), as "frames" (Perry, 1979) of meaning are formulated and revised or rejected. While Culler (1975) builds on the work of structuralist linguistics, Perry (1979) and Rimmon-Kenan (1989) use the work of cognitive psychologists Asch (1946) and Luchins (1957) on the 'primacy effect' and 'the phenomena of adaptation' to theorise the reader's cognitive drive to hold on to earlier formulated conclusions, even when these conclusions are threatened by newly read information, as well as the dynamics of when new information may finally overturn previously held conclusions/interpretations. This work theorises now a reader uses the *text* to construct the *work*.

What is perhaps most significant about the above examination of cognitive psychology and literary theory on the reading process is that despite their research methods differing dramatically (empirical experimentation vs. textual analysis), their findings are the same. They both emphasize the reader's work of 'building up' and constantly revising meaning based on a decoding and interpretation of written text.

2.1.2 How adults learn to read

When discussing present pedagogy or educational policy there is a danger of making assumptions about how something 'has always been done' or was done 'very' differently in the past. Equally important, therefore, to my present study is an examination of how adults have learnt to read in the past. Yet, historical studies often present an assumption that those learning to read are children. It is unclear whether this means that only children learnt to read or the teaching of children was simply

more documented than the teaching of adults, as it still is today. For this reason, this literature review will include work on how children, as well as adults, have been taught to read. My focus is on Western Europe, Britain and North America because I am concerned with developments leading to, and in, the teaching of reading the Roman alphabet in the English-speaking world.

Trying to trace the history of how people have been taught to read in Western Europe throws up few surprises. In Ancient Greek and Roman times the 'alphabetic,' or 'ABC' method (later called the 'Roman' or 'Latin' method) dominated: children were taught the *names* of the letters of the alphabet and taught to say the names of the letters of each word before saying the word. The child was then taught how letters combined into syllables, syllables into words and words into sentences (Huey, 1908/1968; Manguel, 1996). Huey writes of strategies for developing this letter-to-syllable process, including an Ancient Greek who bought twenty-four slaves, one to represent each letter of the alphabet, and instructed them to move into different combinations to teach his son to read. Huey also writes of 'the gingerbread' method where a child receives the letters of the alphabet baked as individual pieces of gingerbread and is only allowed to eat a letter after it was 'learnt,' usually for breakfast on study days (this was also used in eighteenth-century Europe, where one school-master declared "it is not necessary for any child to eat the alphabet more than three weeks" (Huey, 1908/1968, p. 241)).

The alphabetic method dominated English formal education until the fifteenth-century (Altick, 1957). This was, however, predominantly an education in reading and writing Latin, for those training for the Church (though Manguel (1996) writes that aristocratic children were taught to read from the thirteenth-century onwards, whether destined for the Church or not). From the fourteenth-century, primers (basic prayer books) and horn-books (the alphabet, syllables and a prayer on a wooden-board) contained some prayers translated into English, though Latin dominated until the Protestant Reformation. Teaching was done by the clergy in schools and by mothers as part of "Christian belief and worship" (Clanchy, 1984, p. 34), following the iconic image of the Virgin and Child absorbed in a prayer book.

From the fifteenth- and sixteenth-centuries, it became more common for children to be taught to read English in village schools, while 'song schools' taught choirboys to read Latin and 'classical schools' taught boys to read both Latin and Greek (Altick, 1957). Clanchy (1984) reports that by the fifteenth-century about half

of the British population could read (though it is unclear what 'knowing how to read' meant and equally unclear whether this means half the male population, half the Christian population or half the entire population), most having been taught to read Latin the 'old Roman way' (the alphabetic method followed by chanting the scriptures) and both Latin and English using primers or horn-books.

From the seventeenth-century, 'whole-word' methods of learning to read became popular throughout Europe. 'Orbis pictus' books of words and pictures were used to teach whole-word recognition in Nuremburg (Huey, 1908/1968) and in Colonial North America, Puritan English horn-books, primers and 'Battledores' (fold-up cardboard pieces displaying letters, words and pictures) were used to teach reading with both alphabetic and whole-word methods (Monaghan & Barry, 1999). In Western Europe and North America, the eighteenth-century brought an interest in phonic methods (learning phoneme-grapheme correspondences) in primary schools (Huey, 1908/1968; Monaghan & Barry, 1999), though the alphabetic method continued to be used. From the eighteenth-century onwards, therefore, three conventions dominated the teaching of reading in English: the alphabetic method, the phonic method and the whole-word method, with the phonic and whole-word methods becoming more popular as the alphabetic became less.

In the United States, 1820 saw a shift towards emphasis on 'meaning' in teaching reading: texts had to be meaningful (as primers became secular, prayers had been replaced by nonsense rhymes). By the end of the nineteenth-century, teaching reading through a focus on the sentence and story became popular, along with the use of literature to teach reading (Monaghan & Barry, 1999). The final notable change in reading pedagogy was the early twentieth-century introduction of 'initial silent reading methods,' following "the shift toward the silent reading of literature and away from the elocutionary texts" and "experimental evidence [...] which found that children understood more easily when they read silently than orally" (Monaghan & Barry, 1999). Controversially, reading was taught without vocalization, using a series of written instructions (Brooks, 1984; Pugh, 1978).

With the exception of the initial silent reading method, these methods continue to dominate debates on teaching reading today: use of story, use of sentences, phonics and whole-word recognition, along with the corresponding debates about meaningfulness of texts used and whether to start from the letter and work 'up' to the text, or from the text and work 'down' to the letter (Moss, 2005; Purcell-Gates, 1997).

However, the above trends describe how reading was taught in relatively formalized educational settings, which does not tell us about how reading was taught outside of these settings, how many people learnt as adults (as opposed to as children), how many women learnt, or indeed how many people, children or adults, taught themselves.

Clanchy's (1984) iconic image of the medieval mother teaching her child to read suggests that at least some women could read, while the medieval focus of formal education around training for the (male only) clergy indicates that it is unlikely that these mothers learnt to read in formal educational settings. This in turn suggests that a significant amount of learning to read happened informally. Vincent (1989) notes that in England, by the end of the eighteenth-century, even parents who could not read much themselves "could manage to teach a child its letters" (p. 14), supporting the idea that learning to read outside of formal educational settings was common. Vincent also provides the example of Joseph Mayett, one of ten children of a farm laborer who had to "spend his childhood making lace rather than attending school" but remembers being taught to read at the age of four by his grandmother reading picture-books to him (p. 1).

Much of this literature, however, assumes that people either learnt to read as children or not at all. Yet, work on adult education in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries indicates that adults did learn to read, and did devote themselves to improving their existing reading skills (Altick, 1957; James, 1973; Rose, 2002; Vincent, 1989, 2000). Rose (2002) stresses the link between adult reading, adult education and workers' political movements, citing examples from the Reformation (and associated movements for universal access to Holy texts) to workers united by their reading of the national press. He notes that adult education in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries had two strands: the development of educational provision specifically for working men on one hand and a strong autodidactic culture on the other: "from the beginnings of industrialization, the British working class enjoyed a reputation for self-education" (2002, p. 187), through reading 'the literary canon.'

James (1973) writes of an organization in Bala, Merionethshire which started teaching "adult poor" to read in 1811 and was teaching "an estimated 3,500 adult poor to read" by 1850. Altick (1957) describes Quaker-led provision "beginning in Bristol in 1812 [...] for adults who had never been taught to read" (pp. 148-149). These schools then opened in London and the Midlands, and by 1832 "12,400 men and

women [were] attending about a hundred schools" (p. 149). By the mid-nineteenth-century many adult schools closed as a "worsening economic situation [...] brought more desperate concerns to the pupils" (Altick, 1957, p. 149). Interestingly, however, by the end of the century, evening elementary schools for adolescents and adults grew in popularity again as "they enrolled tens of thousands [...] who had left [the newly compulsory] day schools before mastering the fundamentals" (p. 149). The expectations and results of compulsory schooling became (and remain) key to adult literacy policy and practice.

James (1973) notes that the first Mechanics' Institutes, later Polytechnics, devoted themselves to educating working men. They offered classes in a range of subjects, held meetings, had libraries, circulated grammar books and dictionaries, and so probably involved some degree of reading instruction or development. Vincent (1989), however, stresses the large amount of learning to read or write outside of formal schooling from the industrial revolution onwards, gathering momentum with the self-improvement focus of the political Chartist movement of the mid-nineteenth-century (Altick, 1957; Rose, 2002; Thompson, 1964; Vincent, 1989). Howard (1991) similarly writes of the integral role of community groups in adult literacy development, and the 'informal' nature of how many adults learnt to read and write in the nineteenth-century:

> Adults and young people learnt through a combination of self-help, 'mutual improvement', family learning, community organization, the work of voluntary organizations and dissenting churches, e.g. attendance at Adult Sunday Schools, which offered a half hour of writing before bible reading and learning as part of social and political movements. We would call it informal learning (Howard, 2004).

Despite their concern with breaking down social barriers, these organizations or movements, on the whole, did not include women: "until the late nineteenth-century, autodidact culture was overwhelmingly male territory. Few working women would participate in adult education" (Rose, 2002, p. 18).

This blend of adult reading and writing instruction, adult education and political/cultural consciousness-raising was common in North America too. In the United States, the Chautauqua Movement emerged in 1874 out of the initial idea of running short courses to train Sunday School teachers (Gould, 1961). It developed

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into a national, touring adult education organization, including reading programmes, Hebrew lessons, swimming instruction and 'library sciences'. The inclusive educational philosophy of Chautauqua (what Gould calls "our continuing American revolution") influenced the creation of Chicago University in the late nineteenth-century (Gould, 1961). Likewise, O'Leary (1991) situates Canadian adult literacy provision in the broader adult education movements of the early twentieth-century, including "the Farm Forum," "the Workers' Educational Association" and the "Frontier College" (p. 4).

How adults were taught to read is less clear, whether the methods (mainly phonic and whole-word) common in schools at the time were used or whether instruction for adults was organized around reading the newspapers, periodicals, novels, political or religious texts which were so popular at the time (James, 1973; Rose, 2002). However, Sticht (2004) writes of three key movements in twentieth-century American adult literacy education: "the Moonlight Schools for adult illiterates in 1911," the "Write-Your-Name Crusade aimed to get adults into literacy programs to learn to sign their names when voting and in other important situations" in 1922/23 South Carolina, and the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee which led to the Citizenship School for "adult African Americans" in South Carolina 1957-1962, while continuing its own work throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Merrifield, 2006) to the present. What these movements shared was the starting point of writing one's name, an emphasis on literacy for social inclusion (particularly centred on voting) and the use of "kinesthetic" teaching approaches, such as 'carving' letters or words onto thick paper and tracing them with fingers (Sticht, 2004).

It is hard to discuss pedagogy without mentioning social history. Monaghan & Barry (1999) argued that the silent reading pedagogies emerged in the late nineteenth-century, at the end of the first century of 'mass literacy' where more people could read than could not (Altick, 1957; Vincent, 1989; Watt, 2000), and therefore silent reading became, for the first time, more common than reading aloud to others (Pugh, 1978). Similarly, it seems that a reading pedagogy specifically for adults emerged in a late nineteenth- or early twentieth-century context where it was assumed that most children learnt to read in compulsory schooling, and a dramatically increasing number of jobs required the use of literacy. For example, Howard (2004) discusses the beginnings of the increase in clerical jobs from the introduction of the Penny Post in 1840 and the impact this had on literacy expectations.

In Britain, during and after the Second World War formal literacy programmes were developed in the Army, to support the many recruits who could not manage the reading and writing required for increasingly mechanized warfare (Haviland, 1973; Jones & Marriott, 1995). For this purpose, in 1945 "some appropriate methods" for teaching adult literacy were identified, "stressing the need to use non-school resources such as football and racing results and reports, comic strips, and to provide typewriters and printing sets" (Jones & Marriott, 1995, p. 339). However, in the civilian world adult literacy provision did not take off for another twenty years. The adult literacy provision run by the Cambridge House Settlement in England (when dealing with formal adult literacy provision, my primary focus becomes England as provision in Scotland is differently organized) in the late 1960s was largely one-to-one provision; adults would come to see a tutor with a particular literacy need, such as a letter to be read or written and the tutor would help (Hamilton, 1996; Haviland, 1973; Jones & Marriott, 1995). There were few published materials specifically for adults, and training opportunities for the mainly voluntary pool of tutors were minimal, so tutors predominantly worked from the real life texts that learners brought with them, including extracts from the national and local press (Mace, 1979). Writing of her own experience as a volunteer literacy tutor with Cambridge House at this time, Mace (1979) stresses that while some tutors worked hard to develop innovative and effective adult focused pedagogies such as language experience (scribing a learner's oral storytelling and using this as the basis for reading or writing work), other tutors used materials designed for school children, often (without the benefit of school teachers' training) incorrectly. For example, Mace (1979) describes a phonics lesson where the volunteer tutor focused on teaching the learner how to move his mouth to form different phonemes, not seeming to realize that the learner could indeed form the sounds; it was the relationship between the phoneme and the graphemes which he found challenging.

Hamilton & Hillier (2006, p. 8) identify "four key policy phases" in English adult literacy provision since the 1970s. The first, from the mid-1970s, starts with the British Association of Settlements' *Right to Read: Action for a Literate Britain* (Harrison, 1974) report, leading to a literacy campaign in partnership with the BBC. The second, in the 1980s, was one of increasingly settled Adult Basic Education provision run by Local Education Authorities and voluntary organizations, while the third, from 1989 to 1998, saw a "reduction of LEA [Local Education Authority]

funding and control" and "a more formalized further education (FE) system, dependent on funding through a national funding body" (Hamilton & Hillier, 2006, p. 12). Their final phase is the development of the Skills for Life era following the 1999 Moser Report (Moser, 1999), which identified Britain as having an adult literacy "problem" (Moser, 1999, p. 3), claiming "one in five adults has less literacy than is expected of an 11 year old child" (p. 1). The first three phases are similar in terms of pedagogy, while the fourth represents a departure, if not in pedagogy at least in how that pedagogy is presented.

Haviland (1973) notes that the majority of materials used in adult literacy classes in the 1970s were created for children and Moss (2005) recalls that adult literacy teaching in the early 1970s was "heavily influenced" by the phonic approach fashionable in primary schools at the time. She notes, however, that "early guidance for adult literacy teachers (such as the BBC teacher's book 'On the Move' in 1974)" recommended a "mixed approach [...] using "both whole-word [...] and phonic approaches" (p. 23). Moss also identifies two main influences in a developing *adult literacy* pedagogy: Smith's (1973), now discredited, notion that "fluent readers do not read by decoding words letter by letter. Instead they [...] use cues to constantly predict what words will be" (Moss, 2005, p. 23) and Freire's (1978) call that literacy education should "challenge the status quo" (Moss, 2005, p. 24). Texts used to teach reading must therefore be meaningful and empowering, questioning dominant and potentially oppressive practices (Freire, 1978).

These influences together contributed to, in England, the dominance of a text-focused approach to teaching reading, the popularity of the language experience approach and the association of both with a learner-centred educational philosophy, a powerful sense that the 'curriculum' comes from the learners. These influences also relate to the increasing popularity in the 1970s and 1980s of teaching reading using texts written by other adult literacy learners (Hamilton & Hillier, 2006; Lindsay & Gawn, 2005; Mace, 1992; Moss, 2005; Woodin, 2008), for example the Gatehouse series (Woodin, 2008) and compilations of student work such as *Write First Time* (Individual authors, 1976-1986), *If It Wasn't for this 2nd Chance* (Mace, Smith, & Aylett, 1990) and *Yes I Like It* (Individual authors, 1984). The often overtly political, anti-establishment learner publishing movements in the 1970s and 80s stressed the importance of "seeing yourself in others" and engaging in "complex and philosophical notions" (Woodin, 2008, pp. 227-231) as a part of literacy learning.

Hamilton & Hillier's fourth policy phase could be characterized by its departure from this learner-centred pedagogy with the creation of a National Adult Literacy Core Curriculum (Good et al., 2001). This Core Curriculum, complete with suggested activities, directs teachers to ways of teaching reading (including phonic, whole-word and text-focused approaches), often based around daily life 'functions,' such as using a washing machine or looking something up in the Yellow Pages. Moss (2005) argues this embodies a deficit model because it implies "adult literacy learners [...] are unable to choose the right washing cycle [or] make a meal," while "in fact many learners [...] may also be interested in, and motivated by, reading about lives they can relate to, in fiction and poetry, and in discussion and writing about new ideas" (p. 27). The new online curriculum (Excellence Gateway, 2008) is similar in its 'functional' approach; both are curricula imposed 'from above,' based on externally assessed notions of deficit and therefore a dramatic contrast to the learner-focused, self-liberating philosophies of the earlier phases. This fourth phase, based largely within Further Education colleges, can also be characterized pedagogically by more whole group and less individual provision (Hamilton, 2005), teaching led increasingly by external accreditation requirements focused on the utilitarian, rather than expressive or philosophical aspects of literacy (Duncan, 2006) and an increasing focus on literacy for 'employability,' which Meadows (2008) believes marginalizes older learners and others whose motivation is unrelated to employment.

Whether English adult literacy teachers in 2009 are still in Hamilton & Hillier's fourth policy phase or in a new one is debatable. Adult literacy provision in England still (just about) comes under the 'Skills for Life' funding umbrella, but the amount of research on a specifically adult literacy pedagogy, produced (directly or indirectly) by the Skills for Life initiative merits the conceptualization of a fifth phase. For example, from 2002 to 2008, in England, the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (hereafter NRDC) received government funding to research adult literacy, language, numeracy and ICT practices and pedagogies. A number of studies on teaching adult reading came out of this funding. Besser et al. (2004) reviewed the school-level research on reading and used classroom observation, diagnostic materials, interviews and teacher focus groups to identify a range of adult literacy learner difficulties in reading (including phonological awareness, decoding and comprehension), advocating more classroom attention to these areas. Brooks, Burton, Cole & Szczerbinski (2007b) investigated the "strategies

used to teach reading in adult literacy classes" and how they "correlate [...] with measures of change in literacy learners' reading attainment and attitudes to literacy" (p. 7), using teacher observation and learner assessment tools, and concluding that more work needs to be done on "oral fluency, explicit comprehension strategies, reciprocal teaching, phonics and language experience approaches" (p. 10). Burton (2007a, 2007b; Burton, Davey, Lewis, Ritchie, & Brooks, 2008) extended these research findings into teaching guides on developing adult emergent reading (including oral reading fluency) through reciprocal reading, language experience, explicit teaching of comprehension strategies and a strong focus on phonics.

Similarly, but with United States government funding rather than British, McShane (2005) used a survey of existing research, teacher interviews and teaching evaluations to analyze key adult reading difficulties, assessment tools and areas of instruction. She calls for better assessment of reading and more teaching of alphabetics, fluency, comprehension and vocabulary development. These studies present a renewed emphasis (though not an exclusive emphasis) on a phonic approach, which could be seen as in opposition to the text-focused adult pedagogy of the 1970s, 80s and 90s.

However, it is important to remember that the debate for and against phonic approaches, and for and against text-based approaches ran throughout each of these phases (Hamilton & Hillier, 2006; Moss, 2005; Purcell-Gates, 1997). With phonics associated with primary school pedagogy – and teacher authority – and a whole-text approach associated with the student publishing movements (Woodin, 2005), a learner-centred approach, Freire and freedom from oppression (Moss, 2005), it is easy to see how these approaches came to be seen as political opposites, or emotionally-charged reactions to one another, rather than complementary pedagogies. Yet all of these approaches, alphabetic/phonic, whole-word and text-focused, have been used to teach both children and adults to read for hundreds of years, and therefore there is no reason to associate phonics, rather than any other approach, with child-focused pedagogy. Likewise, debates about the meaningfulness and appropriacy of texts used to teach reading have taken place in school education as much as in the adult context (Monaghan & Barry, 1999). At the same time as this renewed interest in phonics, the *Voices on the Page* learner creative writing campaign (Duncan, 2006; Duncan & Mallows, 2007; Woodin, 2008) saw a renewed 'official' emphasis on using learner writing to develop adult literacy.

In the reading chapter of *Teaching Adult Literacy: principle and practice* (Hughes & Schwab, 2010), arguably the first ever English textbook of adult literacy pedagogy, Schwab (2010) uses the framework of Luke & Freebody's (1999) 'four resources model' (code-breaking, meaning-making, text-user and text-analyzer) to present a range of approaches, from synthetic phonics to critical questioning, and from schema activation to pre-teaching vocabulary, to develop learners' reading skills in these four areas. Taking a similarly inclusive approach, the Scottish Government commissioned a series of workshops leading to the publication of "Teaching reading to adults: a pack of resources and ideas for literacies tutors," (Gawn et al., 2009) presenting a range of approaches for developing adult reading, including language experience, whole-word recognition, phonic approaches and book clubs. Schwab (2010) and Gawn et al. (2009) represent a more settled and less reaction-based adult reading pedagogy, which demonstrates phonic, whole-word and text-based approaches to be complementary rather than in opposition, and looks less to the life-dysfunction deficit model of the Core Curriculum and more towards the uses and pleasures of literacy.

2.1.3 Reading and adult lives

The above discussion of reading pedagogy has already demonstrated that developments in pedagogy cannot be understood without reference to the role that reading plays in personal, social and cultural life. The reading pedagogy outlined in the previous section was the product of shifting expectations of who should and who should not be able to read, what they should read and in which language, where and by whom the teaching should be done, the political, religious and social status of Latin as opposed to vernacular European languages and the educational expectations of different classes and their associated occupations. It was the product of the Reformation and the Industrial Revolution, population shifts from country to city, changing attitudes to the education of women, and the role of the local and national press in forming new communities. Finally it was the product of new expectations set by compulsory schooling, the increased use of literacy in warfare and, in the case of the Moser report and Skills for Life initiative, international comparison and national pride. Reading pedagogies are indisputably connected to reading practices, and perceptions of those practices.

Any study of how adults read and learn to read must therefore include an examination of the role of reading in adult life. To do so, I am looking at two categories of literature: the social history of literacy and social practice research. There are a number of key studies in the social history of literacy in the English context. Webb (1955) researched the development of the British 'working class' reading public in the late-eighteenth- to mid-nineteenth-centuries, connecting increasing mass literacy to political and cultural tensions between the 'working' and 'middle' classes. Hoggart (1957) continued this approach for the twentieth-century post-war period, identifying a conflict between mass and elite culture, typified (though not unproblematically) by the broadsheet vs. tabloid presses. Altick (1957) identifies the enlarged nineteenth-century reading public as both cause and effect of religious, educational, publishing and political movements, while Vincent (1989) examines the same period in terms of the relationship between mass literacy and rapid changes in education and family life, before looking at the larger picture in a European study (Vincent, 2000).

James (1973) examines literature produced for a new 'working class' Victorian audience, and in doing so explores its relationship to a "new lower class culture in towns" (p. 1), a mid-nineteenth-century shift in public taste from politics to literature, and the industrial and taxation changes which allowed for cheap publications. Rose (2002) argues for the importance of the "audience perspective" (p. 3), the point of view of the readers themselves, in his study of *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, which, like Altick's, links political, religious and educational movements with the reading habits of working people. Each of these studies argues that increases in literacy levels and the development of new literacy practices are both cause and result of far-reaching social, economic and political changes.

Sharon (1974) explores adult literacy and illiteracy as life choices, rather than personal skills, making connections between reading, 'socio-economic index' and 'style of living' by researching the reading practices of a broad sample of adult Americans, finding many 'blue-collar' workers saw themselves as non-readers because, according to their own assessment of what 'counts' as reading (books) and what does not (reading signs and packaging), they *didn't* rather than *couldn't* read. Heath's (1983) study of two distinct communities in the Piedmont Carolinas found that language and literacy practices in any community are intertwined with other

"cultural patterns," such as "space and time orderings" and "group loyalties" (p. 344). She argues that these "cultural patterns" influence both the relationship between spoken and written language and a child's experience at school.

Influenced by Heath's work, New Literacy Studies (Barton, 1994; Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic, 2000; Gee, 1996; Mace, 1992; Street, 1984) presented a move away from the study of literacy as individual skill and towards a view of literacy as a social practice: literacy, or literacies, can only be understood in relation to cultural context. This work shares with social history its interest in the relationship between literacy practices and the wider political/social/cultural context, but uses an ethnographic approach to examine (often globally) diverse contemporary examples rather than focusing on the past. For example, Openjuru & Lyster (2007) studied the literacy practices of a Christian community in rural Uganda, finding that the drive to read the Bible was the primary motivator for literacy development. Ghose (2007) explored the 'everyday' literacy and numeracy practices in New Delhi, citing examples of wall writing on houses in Dalit (untouchable) communities, which "included polio immunization messages, religious texts, names of family members, names of newly-wed couples [and] poetry" (2007, pp. 46-47). Gebre, Rogers, Street & Openjuru (2009) used Ghose's model in Ethiopia to encourage adult educators to work from existing community literacy (and numeracy) practices such as covering the walls of homes "with magazine papers and also with some religious, cultural and educative quotations" (p. 79) which families would read and reread over coffee. They also noted the increasing use of text messaging "among people officially designated as 'illiterate'" (p. 12) and friends writing and reading messages to each other "using more than one language and indeed more than one script" (p. 121). Adults read and write to communicate, to take part in various social worlds, motivated and determined by the natures of their adult lives.

Perhaps most relevant to this thesis is Gregory & Williams' (2000) study of the social practices of reading and learning to read amongst the multi-cultural inhabitants of the London districts of Spitalfields and the City over a hundred year period. They report a diversity of reading pedagogies and practices (seeing pedagogies as also practices and practices as potential pedagogies), along with how individuals felt about learning to read, reading and the role of reading in their lives. Their study also presents a clear and much needed answer to "the myth of the 'correct

method' of teaching reading [which] has become particularly powerful in Britain during the final years of the twentieth century" with evidence of:

> an array of methods in different contexts; for example, letter naming in school, chanting and blending sounds in their religious classes and reciting whole chunks of text at choir or drama classes (p. xvii).

Similarly interested in how people feel about the reading practices of their lives, Long (1993) is an example of both social history and social practice. She argues that the dominant historical/cultural image of the lone reader obscures the social nature of reading: the social relationships central to the development of reading, as well as the social aspects of text production and evaluation. Long also stresses the social nature of "the habit of reading": "social isolation depresses readership and social involvement encourages it. Most readers need the support of talk with other readers" (p. 191). Like the studies above, Long is interested in what the perspective of readers can tell us about reading.

Each of these three areas (how adults read, how adults learn to read and the role that reading plays in adult lives) reveals something about adult emergent reading: how adults may process symbols into words, sentences and paragraphs of evolving meaning, how that process developed (and was influenced by) adult reading pedagogies, and how acts of reading, and learning to read, are woven into cultural, religious and political life.

2.2 Research on reading circles

As explained in 1.3, one motivation for this project was the lack of research on the use of reading circles in adult literacy teaching. Most research into reading circles falls into two categories: school English classes and ELT.

Research in primary and secondary schools in Australia and the United States has overwhelmingly found reading circles to be an effective method of developing comprehension strategies and of encouraging both the enjoyment of reading and greater learner autonomy (Burns, 1998; Chinn, Anderson, & Waggoner, 2001; D. Day & Ainley, 2008; English, Robinson, Mathews, & Gill, 2006; Hunter, 2003; Katz, Kuby, & Hobgood, 1997; Lloyd, 2004; Sutherland, 2003). King (2001) studied the use of reading circles in English schools, arguing that the transfer (from teacher to

pupils) of control over, and responsibility for, reading circle discussion is an excellent way to develop interpretive skills. Malchow Lloyd (2006) highlights key challenges of this transfer of control. She argues that "some groups displayed more hierarchical interactions than would be permitted in a teacher-led discussion" (p. 55). However, she notes the importance of pupils choosing their own texts, and produces evidence for reading circles as effective training in critical reading.

Cumming-Potvin (2007) examines one Australian elementary school pupil's experience of a reading circle, concluding, like King, that reading circles provide scaffolding, or "guided participation" (p. 502) for challenging aspects of literacy development, such as decoding and reading comprehension. Similarly, Day's (2003) research in Australian elementary schools argues for the benefits of the peer support offered by literature circles using a reciprocal reading approach of assigning members roles such as 'summariser,' 'word-wizard' or 'discussion-director.' Daniels (2006) surveyed the use of literature circles in (mainly American) schools, emphasizing that they 'work' because of member engagement, choice, and responsibility. Daniels also reviews conclusions from other reading circle research, including reading circles developing critical reading skills, reading attitudes, gender equality, and comprehension skills (pp. 11-12). He also makes recommendations for future uses of reading circles in schools, calling for more "explicit [teaching of] reading strategy [and] social skills" (pp. 12-13). Anderson and Corbett (2008) note that literature circles are not often used by 'special' education teachers, while arguing, as I will for adult literacy groups, that the collaborative nature of literature circles and their potential for peer support and development of social as well as literacy skills makes them particularly helpful when working with pupils with learning disabilities.

Interestingly, Gordon (1999) writes that "setting up reading clubs in a class or school is about having children read as adults read," (p. i). He argues that adults choose what they want to read, choose how to read it, and respond to their reading with discussion, and therefore this is what teachers should be encouraging children to do in schools. Discussing "ways of making [adult ELT] reading lessons less of a tedious task," Paran (2003, p. 26) offers a similar argument, that 'reading in the classroom' should be closer to 'reading outside of the classroom,' which means (amongst other things) readers choosing the texts they read and following their reading with discussion. Reading pedagogies, Gordon and Paran argue, should follow the patterns of reading practices.

Research in ELT has also found reading circles an effective way to develop speaking and listening skills, vocabulary, and reading and writing confidence and proficiency (Kim, 2004; Yang, 2001; Ying Lao & Krashen, 2000). Zakaluk (1991) used a 10-week programme of literature circles as part of a language project for immigrant women and their children, finding that the women's reading comprehension improved, as did their confidence reading to their children. Four years later Zakaluk & Wynes (1995) reported on a continuation of the same programme, finding that the women's language and literacy was improving along with their confidence to take part in their new communities. Clarke (2008b) writes of "a monthly reading group" for English for Speakers of Other Languages (hereafter ESOL) learners in Lewisham, London, meeting in a local library. The participants reported benefits including greater confidence reading, vocabulary and speaking skills as they "share our feelings and opinions about the book we are reading" (p. 15).

Reading circles have also been researched as tools for developing the language skills of bilingual learners. Rado & Forster (1995) investigated "strategies for expanding learning opportunities for NESB [non-English speaking background]" learners in Melbourne. They argue "current contact hours are inadequate" and that reading circles could be used as a way to extend learning time (without a teacher needing to be present), while "draw[ing] on the adult's capacity for independent learning and the bilingualism of the learners" (p. 59). Looking at the needs of bilingual school children, Roberts (2008) found that reading storybooks in primary and secondary pupils' first and second languages in class and at home produced an improvement in second language vocabulary learning. Research therefore firmly supports the idea that reading circles in the formal (or semi-formal) educational settings of ELT, school and community education develop first and second language reading.

There is a third, smaller, area of research into reading circles: sociological studies of adult reading circles, outside, or on the fringes of, formal education. For example, Altick (1957) writes of the frequency of Victorian informal reading circles, where participants read to each other as well as discussing the latest novels. Jackson's (1999) historical research on the nineteenth-century Kalamazoo Ladies' Library Association's reading circles found the group's aim was to further the women's "mental development and self-improvement"(p. 14), and that the ladies of Kalamazoo felt this aim was achieved. Long (1993) includes an ethnographic study of

contemporary middle/upper-class reading circles in Texas. She writes of the role the circles play in individual member's lives, such as "housewives with young children [talking of] their reading groups as [...] a 'lifeline' out of their housebound existence into a world of adult sociability and intellectual conversation" (p. 198), as well as the "group dynamics" of a reading circle encouraging and developing "critical reflection" (p. 204) of the text *and* each other's lives.

Radway (1994), like Long, argues that the dominant cultural view of reading as a solitary activity (typified by the spinster librarian) runs contrary to the reality of reading as collective action, presenting evidence ranging from Howe's (1993) research into Anglo-Saxon performative reading to Long's (1993) Texan reading groups. Finally, Long (2003) develops her earlier work into a more detailed social history of reading circles. "From [...] sixteenth-century Protestant reading groups [to] the Chartist correspondence societies of early nineteenth-century England," reading circles, she argues, "have played an important role in the cultural politics of class, religion and gender in Europe" (pp. 31-32). Long emphasizes the prevalence of female-only reading circles, which, in the nineteenth-century spread "across the American continent to the West almost as fast as did the frontier" (p. 34). She also presents a study of hundreds of contemporary white female reading circles in Houston, arguing that these groups provide women with the communal space to "explore their identity" in what has become rare in early twenty-first-century life: "a world [...] separated from the worlds of adult men" (Long, 2003, pp. 71-72). Finally and perhaps most significantly, Long argues that women do not go to reading circles to present their already formulated ideas about a book, or about their lives, but rather to formulate those ideas in conversation with other women.

Conversation about books is also core to the UK government-funded Reading Agency's 2008 'Six Book Challenge,' which aimed "to engage less confident adult readers in a reading habit" (Clarke, 2008a, p. 1). The Reading Agency worked with library services, colleges, community organizations and the Costa Book Awards to promote their challenge for adult literacy learners to read six books. Their report identifies five key outcomes for the majority of participants: achieving the goal of reading six books, enjoying reading and discussing books, improved literacy skills, increased confidence, and inspiration "to do something different" (Grylls, 2009, p. 2). While it did not involve establishing or studying actual reading circles, the Six Book Challenge was nevertheless an investigation into communal reading and its potential

for use in literacy development. At the final proofreading stages of this thesis, on the 30th of November 2009, the Reading Agency took this work further and launched "Chatabout: a unique new national network to support the growing number of reading groups for adults with literacy needs" (The Reading Agency, 2009). Chatabout offers a database of adult reading groups and opportunities for librarians, teachers and adults wanting to join a reading group to share information and ideas online. Like the Six Book Challenge, this is an educational initiative rather than research, but promises to be a useful resource in linking formal adult literacy provision with informal adult reading groups.

Significantly, however, there does not seem to be any research on the use of reading circles as part of formal adult literacy education, despite the fact that above studies have found that the reading, thinking and discussion generated by reading circles develops reading, vocabulary and discussion skills, independent study skills, confidence as both readers and members of the community, exploration of personal identity and enjoyment of reading – all arguably goals of adult literacy education.

2.3 The novel

The above sections have explored how adults read, learn to read and use reading in their lives. I have focused on the mental processes, the pedagogies, and the life practices, but what of the texts? Equally relevant to a study of reading circles, novel reading and adult literacy development is work around the novel itself. Novel reading is usually associated with fluent readers, and often with a certain social or educational group of fluent readers, and by association, with an elitist view of literacy (Barton, 2007). For this reason, the decision to use a novel in an adult literacy class demands explanation, if just in relation to what is realistic in terms of reading abilities and confidence. However, from E2 most learners can read many short texts, which raises the key question of the differences between reading a shorter text and reading a longer text. Is a longer text more difficult simply because it contains more words, or because it involves additional skills connected with memory and inference, or are there other differences? These potential differences need to be explored.

In my Institutional Focused Study (Duncan, 2008b), I wondered why there was so little reference to literature in the world of adult literacy teaching. Yet, it may have been more logical to ask the opposite question: why has literature been used in schools to teach reading and writing skills for most of the twentieth century? Eagleton

(1996) and Hall (2005) suggest that the literature focus of school literacy development could be the product of an evolution from a classical education involving reading and writing Latin and Greek (using literary and historical texts in these languages) to an education where pupils learn to read and write in English, using English literature. Carter (1986, 1997) and Hall (2005) discuss the culturally prevalent idea that there may be something particular about literary language, a 'literariness,' which marks it as different from 'ordinary language' and particularly suited to the development of literacy skills. Monaghan & Barry (1999) suggest another answer, linking a late-nineteenth-century call for the use of 'more meaningful' texts in reading instruction with "the literature movement:" (p. 31): meaningful (in this newly secular context) means literary. I would like to look at the use of literature in the development of literacy in two ways: is literary language different from 'ordinary language' and is literature 'more meaningful'?

2.3.1 Poetics: is reading a novel 'different'?

> Does literature have a language of its own, perhaps unrepresentative of, or rather different from, ordinary language? [...] The simple answer to this question is no [...] but... (Hall, 2005, p. 9).

As Hall indicates, it would be hard to argue that literary language is always or necessarily different from 'ordinary language.' However, two continuations of Hall's "but" seem particularly applicable here. As discussed in 2.1.1, reception theorists and narrative poetics theorists (Culler, 1975; Iser, 1972; Perry, 1979; Rimmon-Kenan, 1989) present a highly 'active' novel reading process, where the reader interprets and reinterprets to 'build' and constantly revise 'frames' of meaning. Iser discusses how the literary writer deliberately creates "intentional sentence correlatives" (1972, p. 215) – or gaps – to be filled in by the reader. In this view, the literary writer does try to create written language different from 'ordinary' language. Halliday & Hasan (1989) and Carter (1997) present a similar story. Halliday & Hasan write of literary language containing referencing chains with in-built ambiguity for the reader to 'solve', while Carter points out that literary language is a speech act referring to what is not real, making the references more real than what is referred to. He emphasizes the frequency of polysemy in literary language, meaning that literature demands its readers perform more acts of interpretation. That other texts may contain similar

ambiguities, or that other writers may also deliberately leave such gaps for interpretation is undeniable, but the key difference is that these gaps are part of what defines a novel and what the novel reader craves.

Yet, even if literary language is not necessarily different from 'ordinary language', this does not mean that the literary reading process is not different. The 'literary' can also be located in the act of reading itself (Eagleton, 1996), as a way of reading. Reading novels could therefore be seen as a training in a particular type of highly interpretive reading, including knowing what is left for the reader to interpret and on what basis to make that interpretation.

2.3.2 Hermeneutics: are novels 'more meaningful'?

Monaghan & Barry (1999) link the call for the use of more 'meaningful' texts with "the literature movement" in American reading pedagogy, implying that literature (including novels and stories) is, or can be seen as, 'more meaningful.' Meek (1988, 1991) writes passionately of the place of literature in a child's literacy development: "to learn to read a book, as distinct from simply recognizing the words on the page, a young reader has to become both the teller (picking up the author's view and voice) and the told (the recipient of the story, the interpreter)" (1988, p. 10). She argues that emergent readers must "enter the reading network through the multiple meanings of polysemic texts" [the above training in interpretive reading] as opposed to "the reductive features of words written to be 'sounded out' or 'recognized'" (p. 24). Meek links this wrestling with 'multiple meanings' with the development of moral value systems, "both life and text have to be interrogated about 'the way things might be,'" providing "a chance to read not so much about different people but to read about people differently" (p. 29). Meek's emphasis is on the power of literature, including children's literature, to make the reader think, explore and understand the world and literacy's place within that world: "the reading of stories makes skilful, powerful readers who come to understand not only the meaning but also the force of texts" (p. 40).

Rose (2002) makes a remarkably similar argument from the perspective of social history. He traces the use of literature (including the classical literary canon) in the working class autodidact tradition of the nineteenth- and early-twentieth centuries. Rose warns against prejudices that the literary canon is elitist or not of relevance to working people and argues that this kind of thinking is both patronizing (in making

decisions on behalf of working people) and an act of withholding. He argues that "the 'great books' [do indeed] embody universal moral values, psychological insights, and aesthetic standards" (p. 4)."Again and again we find classic literature embraced by working people who thoroughly lacked literary education" (p. 5) precisely because it relates to the personal and political struggles of their daily lives.

Both Rose and Meek argue that literature has been used for literacy development in the past (and should continue to be used in the future) for the same reason that literature has been read in the past and will continue to be read in the future: it *means* something to its readers. Arguing for the use of literature in foreign language teaching, Paran (2008) makes this point more broadly and yet more simply: "literary texts are suitable because language is learnt by human beings, and the interest and love of literature for its various qualities is a human characteristic" (p. 469).

2.4 Chapter summary & research questions

This chapter reviewed three bodies of literature relevant to my rationale: literature on adult emergent reading, literature on the use of reading circles and literature on the novel. Key messages emerged. Reading pedagogies for children and adults are the product of religious, cultural and political movements as well as shifting individual and social reading practices. Adults and children have been taught using alphabetic/phonic, whole-word and text-based approaches for thousands of years and, for at least the past sixty-five years, adult literacy teachers in England have been looking for more guidance for a specifically *adult* reading pedagogy, better suited to adult needs and adult lives. Moving to a broader educational perspective, for the past two hundred years British adult education (outside of the universities) has been the product of formal educational provision organized for or by 'working people,' combined with a strong autodidact tradition. This autonomous emphasis still resounds in research on adult education (Derrick, Ecclestone, & Gawn, 2009), but is often lost in discussions of adult literacy pedagogy.

Research in ELT and school literacy has demonstrated a reading circle approach to be effective in developing reading and other linguistic skills and competencies, as well as learner autonomy. However, there is little or no research into the use of reading circles in formal adult literacy provision. Further, it is important not to lose sight of literature in adult literacy pedagogy, for the reasons outlined by Meek

(1988), Rose (2002) and Paran (2008) above: literature, including novel reading, can hold tremendous meaning for its readers. Yet, there is little research on what it *feels* like to read a novel, and this is a perspective adult literacy learners, approaching novel reading for the first time, may be well placed to provide. This thesis is therefore a double investigation, into what a reading circle approach can offer adult reading development and what adult literacy learners can tell us about novel reading.

Research questions:

- What can a reading circle approach offer to adult emergent reading development?

- What are we doing when we read novels, according to adult literacy learners?

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Overview of research design

This project involved setting up a reading circle within an existing adult literacy class and using this reading circle as a research case study. Before the first reading circle session, I conducted a 30-minute semi-structured interview with each participant to gather individual conceptualizations of reading and novel reading. From November 2008, the last 40 minutes of our three-hour class became a reading circle, reading and discussing a novel chosen by the group. Each week I audiotaped the session and wrote a page of notes after it finished. Additionally, following the Kalamazoo Ladies' Library Association (Jackson, 1999), a member of the group volunteered to be chairperson each week and another member volunteered to be 'note-taker' to record "the events of the evening as well as his or her impressions of the reading and the meeting" (Jackson, 1999, p. 9). Participants were also encouraged to take notes in any way they liked.

In February 2009, two focus groups (of four learners each) were used to gather developing ideas about novel reading and how participants wanted the reading circle to proceed. When we finished the novel in April 2009, I conducted 30-45 minute individual semi-structured interviews to gather final conceptualizations of, and reflections on, novel reading and the reading circle process (see appendix A for research design chart). The following sections provide a more detailed examination of this process.

3.2 Creating a reading circle for a case study

My past experience as an adult literacy teacher told me that most adult literacy learners at the E3/L1 level are eager to experiment with reading longer texts such as novels and biographies. I had also found that most groups want to read 'together,' usually meaning everyone reads the same text at more or less the same pace, and also doing some reading aloud to one another. For these reasons, reading a novel or biography 'together' as a group is something I have done, on request, with adult literacy classes for the past seven years. I was therefore confident that my new E3/L1 adult literacy workshop, meeting on a Tuesday evening between 6 and 9pm, would make a similar request, from which I could lead onto reading circles, and explain my

proposed research project. If all learners agreed, I could set up a reading circle for my case study with a group who genuinely wanted to try out a reading circle approach.

As anticipated, in our first few weeks together, the group came up with a list of text-types they wanted to read. This included novels and so we were able to talk together about possible ways we could read a novel. Several students spoke of 'book clubs' (mentioning *Oprah* or *Richard and Judy*) and reading circles (seen on television and in films), which led to a discussion about this project. I explained the nature of this research and its possible audiences and spoke to each learner individually to ensure that each had understood what I was requesting; the learners were able to ask questions and I was able to obtain consent. I emphasized that saying no to being a case study for research would not mean that we would not become a reading circle (if they wanted to be a reading circle) and would not cause me any difficulties. However, all ten members of the group consented.

I wanted to use one of my own teaching groups for both practical and methodological reasons. I felt that a group who already knew me would be more likely to believe that I was not looking for a 'right' or particular answer when interviewing (I discussed this issue in more depth in my IFS (Duncan, 2008b)); I could also be more confident that I was using a group that really wanted to be working as a reading circle. Practically, using my own group meant that I could embed the reading circle within our usual class time and therefore neither demand that we meet in the learners' own time (eating into their busy schedules or ending up with only members with more relaxed time-tables) nor take up another teacher's teaching time.

3.3 Literacy learners to reading circle members

In this way, the ten members of my E3/L1 adult literacy workshop became ten members of a reading circle, and ten volunteer participants in this research. There were seven women and three men, three native English speakers and seven second or third language speakers. These proportions are typical of adult literacy provision in London FE colleges (Ryan, 2005). Many second or third language speakers access literacy provision, rather than ESOL provision, when their command of spoken English outweighs their confidence in reading and writing. Some of these learners are literate in their first languages and some are not. All members of this group joined

this class voluntarily, to improve their reading and writing (see appendix B for anonymized profiles of each participant).

Learners placed in the E3/L1 level can read shorter texts but are rarely confident reading texts longer than one or two pages and may have trouble decoding longer or less phonically regular words. Three of these ten learners dropped out of the course over the winter break due to work and family commitments. This is also statistically regular; learners in adult literacy classes frequently have to drop out when their personal circumstances change (Ryan, 2005).

3.4 Starting the reading circle

Once we had agreed to become a reading circle, I handed out a questionnaire (appendix C) on what they wanted to do with their reading circle time. Individual completion of these forms, with literacy support, was followed by a group discussion (see appendix D for notes). This established that participants wanted to:

- Read the book aloud together
- Read the book at home alone
- Discuss what they had read
- Discuss new words
- Discuss their ideas and feelings about what they had read

Reading aloud was not part of the majority of the reading circles discussed in 2.2.; most involved the discussion of chapters or passages read before the meeting, but no reading aloud together. I did not mention reading aloud when introducing the idea of reading circles. However, it was something that every one of the ten participants requested on their individual questionnaires.

Next, we began the process of choosing the novel. Participants spoke of their criteria for selection: "interesting," "not too long" (under 200 pages), "not too many complicated words" and "fun." I asked everyone to bring in a novel meeting these criteria. Five students brought in a book (*The Alchemist*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Double Indemnity*, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *Sex and the City*), and I brought one in too (*Passenger*). We put these books on the table and the learners looked at them, read the backs, flicked through and asked me and each other questions about them. After twenty minutes, we took a vote. *Passenger* and *Of Mice and Men* shared the top

position and so we did a revote on these two. *Passenger* received the most votes (see appendix E for examples of voting slips). I ordered eleven copies.

Passenger was the novel I had contributed. It is possible that some participants saw me take the book out of my class folder. However, I did not say which book I had brought in (we agreed no one would reveal which book they had contributed), and (luckily) knowing all the books selected, I was able to answer questions about each novel. When participants were discussing which novel 'looked best,' I refused to give my opinion, only supplying factual information about each and encouraging them to look through the books themselves and discuss.

Two weeks' later, when the novels arrived, we started our first reading circle session. The weekly sessions varied depending on the priorities and moods of the participants on any given week. However, a pattern emerged: participants started by talking about what they had read at home, they then took turns reading pages aloud, usually stopping after each page to discuss 'what was going on' and clarifying particular items of vocabulary. When the chairperson noticed that it was almost the end of our time, he or she would ask the group how much of the novel they wanted to read for next week. We continued in this way until the novel was finished, approximately six months.

3.5 Passenger

Passenger (Cowie, 2008) is a 184 page novel about a forty-two year old violinist, Milan, who starts hearing a musical 'tapping' coming from inside his body. When he goes to the hospital, they find his twin embedded within him ('foetus in fetu'). The twin seems to be the source of the music. Milan names her Roma, develops a method of communicating with her, and begins to introduce her to his world. As he does so, Milan loses one girlfriend, a Japanese flautist called Karen, and gains another, Murri, a special needs teacher.

3.6 Research methods

3.6.1 Theoretical perspectives

My interest is how the participants conceptualize novel reading processes and practices, what novel reading and reading circles are *for the reader.* I want to forefront the perspectives of readers, what Rose calls "a history of audiences [...]

focusing on readers and students rather than authors and teachers" (2002, p. 3). In this sense, this project is both a continuation of my previous EdD work and a departure. In my IFS (Duncan, 2008b) I discussed discursive psychology as a move away from a model of human subjectivity as a mysterious, incomprehensible "multilayered [...] battleground" which is essentially inexpressible (we humans cannot say what we mean or mean what we say), and a move towards

> See[ing] mental life as a dynamic activity, engaged in by people, who are located in a range of interacting discourses [...] and who [...] fashion relatively integrated and coherent subjectivities for themselves (Harré & Gillett, 1994, p. 180).

I highlighted that Harré and Gillett identify discursive psychology as "in part, an attempt to resurrect the full Aristotelian conception of a human being as a rational, social animal" (1994, p. 80). Similarly, Reason (1994) locates 'co-operative inquiry,' one of his 'three approaches to participative enquiry,' in humanist psychology:

> the idea that persons can with help choose how they live their lives, free from the distress of early conditioning and restrictive social custom and that working together in a group with norms of open authentic communication will facilitate this (Reason, 1994, p. 325).

This is a central premise of my research design: we can articulate our experiences and perceptions in 'authentic communication'.

Another core premise lies in phenomenology, which stresses "the perceiver's vital and central role in determining meaning" (Cuddon, 1991, p. 705) and invites us to understand "social phenomena from the actor's own perspectives, describing the world as experienced by the subjects" (Kvale, 1996, p. 152). This emphasis on the first person perspective can also be expressed in terms of philosophy of mind. Following Nagel's influential "What is it like to be a bat?" (1974), I want to know *what it is like to read a novel*. I am concerned with "the subjective character of experience" (Nagel, 1974, p. 435), but also, following Nagel, believe that one can only find out what it is like to read a novel by speaking to novel readers. From the perspective of what Bakhurst (2008) calls 'personism' (in opposition to 'brainism'), neuroscience may be able to tell us that a certain part of the brain is active when reading, but it will never be able to tell us what it *feels like* to read. Only readers can do this.

Though born of psychology's interest in mind vs. brain (while phenomenology comes from a European philosophical/literary tradition) (Woodruff Smith & Thomasson, 2005), philosophy of mind has much in common with phenomenology. It is:

> concerned with [....] the nature of mental phenomena and their place in a systematic account of the world; what sort of thing is a pain, a thought, a mental image, a desire, an emotion? (Rey, 1997).

[What sort of thing, I am asking, is reading a novel?] Others stress the difference:

> Phenomenology is the study of conscious experience as lived, as experienced from the first person point of view, while philosophy of mind is the study of mind – states of belief, perceptions, actions [...] focusing especially on the mind-body problem, how mental activities are related to brain activities (Woodruff Smith & Thomasson, 2005, p. 2).

Both approaches, however, are directly relevant to the study of reading and influence this research. Philosophy of mind's interest in mental phenomena, and phenomenology's emphasis on "the world as lived experience" (O'Neill, 1974) are central to my desire to research reading circles, adult reading development and novel reading from the perspective that reading is an experience and must therefore be approached through the first person perspective, by working with readers themselves.

3.6.2 Methodology

There are three aspects to my methodology which need exploring: this project as a case study, as grounded theory and as community action research. Research method textbooks will stress that a case study is not a methodology or particular method of data collection or analysis, but rather the use of the specific to illustrate or investigate the general (Cohen et al., 2007; Robson, 2002). However, I would like to argue that the use of a case study is a decision wider than the analytical issue of the relationship between the specific and the general; it is a decision about what is useful to research, what we can learn from and why. These are methodological concerns. A case study is the attempt to learn something from a close look at a 'bounded system' (the case) "over time through detailed, in-depth data collections involving multiple sources of information rich in context" (Creswell, 1998, p. 61).

Two questions present themselves: what defines or delineates the 'bounded system' and what can be learnt from it? A case could be a person's life, or a year, month or week of a person's life. A case could be a group, an organization or an event. For this study, I have said the case is the reading circle, but is it bounded by its place (our classroom), its weekly time-slot (between 820 and 9pm on Tuesday evenings), its duration (November to April) or its membership? Defining my case became defining a reading circle: the members, the meetings, the duration of the novel reading process, and the chosen novel itself.

The rationale, methods, analysis and discussion of any research revolves around the potential generalizability of the specific (Brown & Dowling, 1998), but this is particularly acute with case study research as a case can be used to learn more about the case itself, or to learn about something wider than the particular case. The 'boundary' symbolism of the case as 'bounded system' highlights the division between what is within the boundary and what is outside of it, and raises the question of what the 'within' can or cannot say about the 'without.' Yin (2003) and Stake (1994, 1998) both articulate this tension, but in different ways. Yin presents three types of case studies: 'exploratory' (pilot studies), 'descriptive' (aiming to describe a particular case) and 'explanatory' (case studies used to test or explain theories) (Yin, 2003). The first is a specific case used to learn about a specific situation and/or research design in order to plan future research, the second is concerned with generating knowledge about one particular case (which may or may not be applied to other cases, situations or contexts), and the third is the use of a specific case to explore, test or develop generalizable ideas.

Stake (1994) also presents a three-part classification, but is best known for the first two categories: intrinsic and instrumental case studies (the third, a 'collective case study' is "an instrumental study extended to serve several cases" (Stake, 1994, p. 237)). The intrinsic case study "is undertaken because one wants better understanding of this particular case," while the instrumental, as its name suggests, is the use of a specific case "to provide insight into an issue or refinement of theory" (Stake, 1994, p. 237). Using the above classifications, this thesis, with its interest in studying a reading circle of adult literacy learners in order to find out more about what adult literacy learners think novel reading is, and what reading circles can tell us about adult reading development, is explanatory, in Yin's terms, or instrumental, in Stake's. I am using this case to find out more about something wider. It is not merely that I

will argue that this specific case *can* be generalized to generate wider implications, but the desire for wider implications was my purpose for studying this case in the first place.

The second aspect of my methodology is grounded theory. As well as being a guideline for data analysis (see 3.6.4), grounded theory is also a methodology because my aim is to build theory *from* data, using this case to develop new ideas rather than test existing theory (Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). However, I am using grounded theory 'in spirit' rather than as orthodoxy (an example of grounded theory as 'orthodoxy' would be having no pre-existing ideas about the area under study).

Finally, I was working within the tradition of community-based action research. Stringer's concept of 'community-based action research'

> works on the assumption [...] that all stakeholders — those whose lives are affected by the problem under study — should be engaged in the process of investigation (Stringer, 1999, p. 10).

This thesis is an example of community-based action research because I researched my own practice, and moved between the role of researcher and teacher on a weekly basis. Similarly, but perhaps more importantly, the participants moved from being adult literacy learners to reading circle members on a weekly basis, using the study skills they had developed as literacy learners for their reading circle roles and their reading circle ideas in their literacy class work. The participants were engaged in the process of investigation as reflective members of the reading circle. The key stakeholders of this investigation of adult emergent reading — the adult literacy learners and their teacher — all took part in this action research and reflected (see chapters four and five) on ways it can or should change our practice. The final interview responses demonstrate that though I was going through a specific data analysis process to produce implications for practice, the participants had already formed their own implications for practice as readers and as learners. This is explored in 4.1. I will also share my findings with other adult literacy learners, teachers and policy-makers for feedback.

3.6.3 Methods of data collection

Four main forms of data collection were used: semi-structured interviews (including mindmapping), observation/audiotaping of weekly reading circle sessions, focus groups, and 'field notes' (mine, the weekly note-taker's, and members' individual notes). Additionally, I kept the materials used to set up the reading circles: notes of the group discussion, initial questionnaires and voting slips.

The initial and final semi-structured interviews followed an "interview guide" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 353) approach to find out as much as possible about participant conceptualizations of reading and novel reading, with minimal 'leading' through fixed questions (Kvale, 1996). I devised, and refined through piloting, lists of question prompts (see appendix F) for the initial (before the reading circle process) and final (after the reading circle process) interviews with each participant. Following Tomlinson's (1989) 'hierarchical focusing' approach, I began with more open questions to encourage interviewees to set the direction of the discussion, while later posing more 'focused' questions about aspects of reading/novel reading that interviewees did not raise, but may have had important insights into. The structure of both sets of interviews was predominantly improvised from participant responses.

Foddy (1993)'s discussion of perils inherent in interviewing apply to my use of interviews. The "symbolic interactionist view of question-answer behaviour" (p. 22) stresses that there is always a danger that both researcher and participant will speak according to 'second guesses' about what the other may be thinking or wanting. I aimed to limit this by being transparent about the purposes of the interviews, how they relate to the overall research project, stressing that there were genuinely no right or wrong answers and encouraging interviewees to set the direction of the interview. Foddy's warning against assuming that "respondents are capable of verbalizing the information that the researcher wants" (1993, p. 35) is also highly relevant to this study. Can people really put into words what they are doing when they read? Yet, the phenomenological, discursive psychology and co-operative inquiry perspective of this research means that "the information the researcher wants" is precisely the experience that the interviewees can and do express.

At the end of each final interview, I asked the interviewee to produce a mind-map ("could be images, words, arrows, lines, anything") to sum up their reading circle experience and then asked them to explain what they had produced. This was to provide a less word-based form of expression (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Mavers,

2006), potentially more suited to less confident writers, but also designed to provide a different way to ask interviewees to consolidate their thoughts and a vehicle for that consolidation. My aim was to access the participants' own final reflections or findings on the reading circle. Kress and Mavers (2005) suggest that different modes of expression can play different representative roles. This potential difference was one of my motivations for using mind-maps; I wanted to exploit "the *materiality* of mode [to] provide different *affordances*" (p. 172) for interviewees to communicate their overall ideas about the reading circle.

The second form of data collection was audiotaping each weekly reading circle session. There were two reasons why I chose to audiotape, and transcribe, each reading circle session, rather than take field notes. Firstly, had I chosen to take field notes, I would have had to decide at the beginning what I was taking notes *of*. I would have had to have an idea of what I was looking for (who spoke and for how long? the range of opinions expressed? who read aloud and what they read? words discussed or stumbled over?). By audiotaping I had only to know that I was less interested in what I could see, and more interested in what I could hear. Secondly, audiotaping the sessions allowed me to be both a part of the reading circle group and a completely detached observer (when later listening to the tapes), even able to listen to my own participation.

Cohen et al. (2007) classify case study observation as either 'non-participant' (when the observer is sitting at the back of a room taking notes) and 'participant,' with 'participant' further divided into 'covert' (researchers joining groups without saying that they are researchers) and 'overt,' where the researcher's dual role is explicit. Robson (2002) divides overt participant observation into "the participant as observer" and "the marginal participant." The role of "participant as observer" is made explicit to all participants, but he nevertheless fully participates in activities. "The marginal participant" does not participate fully, being instead "a largely passive, though completely accepted, participant" (Robson, 2002, pp. 316-319).

I aimed for my role in the reading circle to be that of "the marginal participant," as passive as possible to allow the learners to take ownership of the reading circle and effectively 'self-run.' Listening to the transcripts, I could see that I was veering between being "the marginal participant" (as planned) and being "the participant as observer," participating more fully. Robson notes that it is common for participant-observers to take on a particular role which allows them to be both

accepted as a member of the group, and clearly different from other group members (Robson, 2002, pp. 317-318). At times I too did this, taking on the 'particular role' of teacher.

It was initially extremely challenging to be a member of the reading circle when the participants know me as their teacher and so were more likely to want to ask me the meaning of a word than to ask each other. Paradoxically, I had to use that teacher role to encourage them to ask and answer each other's questions, not only as autonomous learners in any classroom, but as self-managing members of a reading circle. Gradually they got used to the idea that I was playing the part of a 'marginal participant' and began work autonomously. I was able to observe and react to our shifting roles precisely because I was taping the sessions (and listening and transcribing each week) and so could hear when I was answering questions or being too 'teacher-ish'. Literature on participant observation discusses the problematic nature of the dual role of participant and researcher, just as literature on action research discusses the problematic nature of the dual role of teacher and researcher; here I was negotiating all three: teacher, researcher and reading circle marginal participant.

I transcribed the tapes myself within twenty-four hours of each session to ensure a clear memory of anything unclear. Listening and transcribing were the first step in my data analysis, as discussed in 3.6.4.

Focus groups were used midway through the reading circle process to gather data on participants' developing ideas of reading, novel reading and reading circles, and assess how the organization of the reading circle was working for its members. I chose not to do individual interviews because I did not want to break up the communal focus of the reading circle or stall the reading by spending too long conducting time-consuming individual interviews. Neither did I want to work against my role as marginal participant in the reading circle by effectively turning the reading circle into a group interview for one of the sessions. Instead, I used a double focus group structure (one class divided into two separate focus groups, working at opposite ends of the room at the same time). This was effective in generating the group interaction/exploration which focus groups offer over group interviews (Cohen et al., 2007; Morgan, 1998). I gave each group a list of questions to talk through (see appendix G) but then stayed out of the conversations. The use of two groups meant

that neither group felt I was listening primarily to them and were therefore potentially less inhibited. I audiotaped and transcribed each verbatim.

However, while in my IFS (Duncan, 2008b), this focus group approach generated a great deal of valuable data, this time the focus groups were not such a success. Though the discussions provided useful feedback on how participants wanted the reading circle to proceed (for example, more discussion and more reading aloud), participants did not analyse what they were doing, alone or together, in the reading circle. They did not talk about what their reading processes involved. Instead, the discussions focused on what was going on in the novel so far (or 'the story' as discussed in 4.5 and 4.6).

A methodological lesson can be learnt. When a group develops an identity in relation to a particular activity, it is hard (or would take time) to move away from this identity and its associated behaviours. These participants had developed a group identity as a reading circle, meeting week after week to read and discuss *Passenger*. Though they met as a literacy class on the same evenings, there was a clear difference in identity: as a literacy class we sat in a horse-shoe and worked on spelling, punctuation, grammar and writing different texts, as a reading circle we sat around a table and talked about *Passenger*. To ask these participants to sit in groups and discuss our reading circle activities, without moving into their usual patterns of discussing *Passenger*, was perhaps unrealistic. This issue of group identity relates to Cohen et al.'s (2007) observation that "focus groups operate more successfully if they are composed of relative strangers rather than friends" (p. 376) because the friendship or acquaintance of any group of people brings with it a pre-existing identity which distracts from the desired focus.

Notes were also a significant aspect of the data collection. I kept a notebook of my own. Every night after the session, I would write a page of notes recording who was at the session, what stood out (Did we mainly read or mainly talk about words? Did anything strange happen?), and initial observations for analysis. This notebook was therefore a part of both data collection and data analysis. The group notebook and participants' individual notebooks were also both data collection and the beginnings of a communal aspect of data analysis, as participants recorded what they found significant, interesting, or useful about the novel or reading circle process. These ideas were then developed in their final interviews.

The group and individual notebooks were not, however, without their problems. Volunteers to be group note-taker tended to be those, like participants P or K (I am representing each participant with a false initial), who were more confident writing; participants less confident with their writing, such as S or A, did not volunteer. Secondly, in an effort not to lead participants into using their individual notebooks in a particular way, or reading and thinking in a particular way, I simply gave them their individual notebooks and told them to use them however they liked. I did not say that I wanted to see them at the end of the process. When we finished the reading circle, I explained that if anyone was willing to show me their notebook, and/or let me photocopy extracts, that would be helpful, but not essential.

This meant that of the seven members of the group still attending in April/May, only five had used their notebooks at all, and of those five only three brought them in for me to look at and photocopy from. However, the advantage of this approach was the diversity in how these notebooks were used (for example, one only recorded new items of vocabulary, while another recorded events in the plot and personal reflections). Additionally, those I did see were used to fulfill personal needs rather than in the spirit of completing an assigned task for a teacher. In teaching terms, this was a sacrifice of teacher control for the sake of developing learner autonomy. In research terms, this approach sacrificed control over data collection for the sake of data authenticity. It is also an example of ecological validity (Cohen et al., 2007); my priority was for participants to behave as 'naturally' in this new reading circle situation as possible.

There are three (overlapping) reasons for using multiple methods of data collection. Firstly, case study research is characterized by being an in-depth look at a case, which usually necessitates collecting as much data as possible, in many different ways, in order to get as full 'a picture' of the case as possible. Cohen et al. (2007) also stress that a single method of data collection "provides only a limited view of the complexity of human behaviour and of situations in which human beings interact" (p. 141), making it important to use multiple sources of data when studying anything that involves 'human interaction'. A reading circle involves a group of people interacting regularly over an extended period of time, a constant interplay between individual actions and ideas and communal work and consensus. Using notes from group discussions, individual interviews, transcripts of focus groups, transcripts of group sessions and individual notes provided this more comprehensive view.

Secondly, this could be seen as a form of 'methodological triangulation' (Cohen et al., 2007; Denzin, 1989) linked to reliability. If data from different sources (for example individual interviews and observation of a reading circle session) reveal similar themes, then they could be seen as confirming one another, decreasing the possibility that either is the product of bias. Finally, Silverman (2006) recommends the researcher "take advantage of naturally occurring data" (p. 396). The setting up and week-to-week running of the reading circle generated a huge amount of data which could not fail to be of relevance in its study. It therefore seemed sensible to collect it.

3.6.4 Methods of Data Analysis

The above methods of data collection produced initial interview transcripts, taped reading circle sessions, midway focus groups, final interviews and notebooks (see appendix H for examples). I used a five-stage process to analyse this data.

The first stage was immersion in the data (Becker, 1984), beginning with writing the notes, listening to the tapes and transcribing. Immersion continued as I listened to all tapes again to check the transcripts and read, and reread, all notes and transcripts.

The second stage I am calling 'Becker-style' analysis after how Becker (1984) recommends researchers 'get started' with qualitative data analysis, particularly when the researcher is faced with large amounts of data (I had approximately 70,000 words): read, read and reread the data and then "sit down and write whatever came into [my] head, as though the study were done, without consulting […] field notes" (Becker, 1984, p. 109). This allowed themes to begin to emerge. I did this for each data source in turn (see appendix I for an example).

The third stage was a coding and categorization process, as modeled by Bolden (2009). This is what Robson (2002) calls first and second level coding, and what Miles & Huberman consider a form of "data display" (1984, pp. 25-26) (one of the four interrelating aspects of qualitative analysis: "data collection," "data reduction," "data display" and "conclusion drawing & verification") (1984, p. 23). I used the grounded theory approach of open coding followed by axial coding (Cohen et al., 2007; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). However, rather than using Nvivo as I had done in previous work (Duncan, 2009), I coded by hand as part of a

continuing process of immersion in the data. All data was coded using the same process of open and axial coding.

Open coding involves assigning codes to recurring concepts. I coded 'in vivo' (using the participants' own words) (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 69). For example, in her initial interview B explains that before coming to college, she had a strong "fear of words." This concept of being afraid of words was coded, 'in vivo,' using B's phrase "fear of words." This was then used to code other participants' discussions of a 'fear of words.' Likewise, when P spoke of how reading *Passenger* was developing her "reading confidence," "reading confidence" became the code for the concept of readers having a feeling of confidence or lack of confidence about reading, which is related to, but distinct from, notions of reading ability. This was then used to mark this concept in other transcripts. The open coding process incorporates the grounded theory concept of "constant comparison," a feature of the coding process by which "the researcher compares the new data with existing data and categories so that the categories achieve a perfect fit with the data" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 493). 'In vivo' coding is necessarily a process of 'constant comparison:' assigning one participant's words to a concept and using those words to mark this same concept in another transcript is an act of comparing the 'new' data with 'existing' data.

To ensure coding was consistent – that earlier coded data is marked with the same range of codes as the later – the process was repeated a second time. For example, in the final interviews, L said (of *Passenger* and novel reading more generally) "it's all about compassion." I coded this concept 'in vivo' using his word, "compassion." On my second coding of all the data, I found and coded this concept in more data. In this way, 130 open 'in vivo' codes, such as "compassion," "a fear of words," "reading confidence," "thinking about whether it is true or not" and "a good reader is someone who reads every day" were created. I deliberately erred on the side of creating more rather than fewer codes, to create as much space as possible for each of the participants' ideas.

Grounded theory's axial coding involves grouping these codes into categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). For example, the codes "fear of words" and "reading confidence" both concern an individual's sense of self, or identity, in relation to reading, whether that involves an increasing or decreasing confidence, or a past or present fear of words. Codes such as "I don't like to be pushed to read," "I'm scared of other people laughing," "teachers got angry because I was slow," or "reading gives

us full confidence in ourselves" also fit this wider concept and so these six codes were grouped under the category "fear, confidence and reading identity." First I identified twenty-seven categories. However, typing up the codes and categories highlighted some redundancies. For example, I had originally created a category 'strategies if you can't read a word' but realized this was replicating the 'how we read' category. The twenty-seven categories became eighteen. Nevertheless, I still erred on the side of keeping more, rather than fewer categories, knowing that I would explore how these categories overlap (such as "fear, confidence and reading identity" and "what is a good reader?") in the next stage of analysis (see table 3.1 for all categories and codes).

Table 3.1: Categories and codes (the codes are 'in vivo,' and, like any coding system, are a form of shorthand. I have added information in italics if these codes need further explanation to make sense to my reader)

1. Reading as learning • To find out about everything • Getting knowledge of the world • To improve your language • Learning new words • Reading helping your writing • Read newspapers and magazines to get more words in my head
2. Fears, confidence and reading identity • I'm scared of other people laughing • You need to actually be able to read *(to 'get on' in life)* • Teachers got angry because I was slow • Fear of words *(has dominated my experience of reading)* • Seeing jumbled up words • Don't like to be pushed to read • Reading giving us full confidence in ourselves • Everyone should be able to read in this day and age • I *(want to)* pick up a novel like any normal person • *(the reading circle)* has made me stronger • Reading keeps me busy, so I don't waste my time *(feeling more productive)*

3. **Fiction and reality**
   - Emotional connections with books (*is the product of*) the reality of it
   - Don't like the novel; I like stories that really happened
   - I like fiction, stories- as well as true stories
   - A novel is fiction, something that somebody created in their own head
   - A novel is a fantasy, a piece of imaginary writing
   - I'm learning things for work (*finding truths or reality within the fiction*)
   - It's in your imagination- you exercise but you don't worry (*the way you would if it were really happening*)
   - *Various discussions of characters or plot of Passenger*

4. **How do we learn how to read/how can someone learn how to read?**
   - Start with short texts
   - Reading children's books/simple books
   - Read a sentence to them, get them to read it and then look at each word
   - Using tapes and books to learn to read, listening and following
   - In your own time
   - The right support/patience/explaining
   - Recommends reading circles because we can understand from each other

5. **How do we read?**
   - Reading words by thinking of what the words mean and personal associations
   - Breaking words into parts/sounds/syllables
   - Learning new words
   - Whole word recognition
   - Reading each word looking, reading silently and saying it aloud
   - Linking the words we read with their meanings, usage and connotation
   - Concentrating and understanding what it means
   - A dictionary to check unknown words
   - Asking about meanings when you really want to know how the words is decoded
   - The more you read the better you get
   - Pronounce what we are saying and write it in words (*linking the spoken form with the written form*)
   - Look at the words that are everywhere: try to read everything
   - When reading aloud, I divided words to read them

6. **How the story 'gets built up'**
   - The story gets built up as you read
   - Used a notebook to keep track of what was going on
   - The story help me read more words (*the sense of story allowed for decoding and/or understanding of more words*)
   - We do the story together (*we built up the story in discussion together*)

7. **Learning from others**
   - I learnt from the others telling me about words and I helped them too
   - I liked them correcting me when I read
   - Exchanging ideas and learning from each other

8. Learning words
- Learning a lot of words from a novel
- You need a lot of words to read a novel
- Novel reading helps you be a better reader because it's practice getting words and sentences

9. Reading and community life
- You need to actually be able to read *(to 'get on' in life)*
- Books/magazines/newspapers
- Words/books/written language represents things we commonly agree on
- Reading as talking stories
- Reading is a form of storytelling
- Reading more or less depending on what else is going on in our lives
- Read on the bus on the way to college or at home after work
- Reading poems out loud *(to others)*
- I read in different languages
- It's part of our life- we've been doing it for years *(we = humans)*
- You have to read because that's what employers want
- Everyone should be able to read in this day and age *('no excuse' not to)*
- Reading with grandchildren
- Reading is how we live on our planet and I need to do it too
- You have to learn to read- reading is a part of life- it's everywhere, writing's everywhere- you'd be missing out
- Reading in several languages and choosing between them

10. Reading and other language skills
- I read in different languages
- Learning new words
- My writing has improved as well

11. Reading as broadening thinking
- Getting knowledge of the world
- Reading is thinking about whether it is true or not
- Broaden our way of thinking
- Reading biographies
- Reading fiction- crime stories *(teach us about life)*
- Reading books and then watching the films of them *(increases what you can learn)*
- Reading history
- Reading to get knowledge from past ages
- Reading true stories
- Reading about what relates to my experience
- To understand what other people are going through- that there are worse situations than yours
- Learning things for work
- Good to read about these things because if it happens to you, you can't take it
- *(reading gives you)* an awful lot of information

12. Reading as cognitive work
- Concentrating on understanding what it means
- Makes your brain work better
- Exercise your brain
- Reading is thinking about whether it is true or not
- Reads books out loud when home alone, to help concentration
- If you start something up again – you remember where you were because it's saved in your mind
- Breaking words into parts/sounds/syllables
- Learning new words
- Whole word recognition
- Reading each word looking, reading silently and saying it out loud
- Linking the words we read with their meanings, usage and connotation
- Concentrating and understanding what it means
- Going back to reread bits of chapters to remember the characters and what they're doing

13. Reading as communication
- Reading is like saying things but on paper
- Reading is a one way communication
- We read to communicate
- Reading is a form of communication

14. Reading as imagining
- You live everything that's in the book – that's why you get the emotions
- I used my fantasy and my imagination
- I get images in my mind, like a short film
- I get changing images in my mind of what I'm reading
- I use my imagination to make the story
- I read to disappear and learn something new
- Getting into another person's point of view
- Like talking to someone without them being there
- Getting into characters and their emotions
- Get away from whatever situation you are in
- Reading words by thinking of what the words means and personal associations *(imagining helping decoding)*

15. Reading as pleasure/emotion/affective

- Therapeutic
- Reading being fun/funny
- Enjoying learning to read in college
- Reading as happy, sad and calming
- Reading balances my emotions
- Getting into characters and their emotions
- Emotional connections with books, the reality of it
- We read because we are bored or lonely
- You read sad novels to understand what other people are going through, that there are worse situations than yours
- Emotions from connecting to what you are reading
- It builds empathy
- You live everything that's in the book – that's why you get the emotions
- Compassion *(novel reading is a training in compassion)*

16. Reading silently and reading aloud

- Reading silently to observe it and children's books aloud because they are funny to get the characters
- Reading poems out loud
- *(A good reader can)* read fluently and loudly
- Reading each word looking, reading silently and saying it
- Reads books out loud when home alone for fun
- Reads books out loud when home alone, to help concentration
- Reading silently for concentration
- Reading silently to get more wrapped up in a book
- Aloud helps you understand more and remember more
- I read the Koran aloud by heart
- My speed of reading improved, because I had to read aloud

17. The group experience

- The right support, patience and explanations
- I liked the group, a nice bunch of people
- I like to listen to my classmates and teacher talking about the story
- I can hear the words *(when I and others read aloud)*
- We do the story together
- Being punctual was hard, keeping up with the reading *(keeping pace with others, week by week)*
- I recommend reading circles because we understand from each other
- Everyone encouraged each other and no one put each other down
- It builds empathy

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> **18. What is a good reader?**
> - Someone who reads every day
> - Would read at least one book a month
> - Can take a book and read it all from the first page to the last page
> - To read fluently and loudly
> - Someone who can tell you what the story is about from beginning to end
> - They like reading a lot
> - Might have a higher education

The fourth stage was the identification of themes emerging from these categories. This is also Kvale's fourth stage of analysis: the "clarification of the material [...] by eliminating superfluous material [...] distinguishing between the essential and the non-essential" in order to "develop [...] meanings" (1996, p. 190). The highly problematic question about what is 'essential and what 'non-essential' can be approached from the perspective of the research questions: anything that provides an answer to these questions is 'essential.' This stage of analysis therefore required me to extract what these codes and categories could tell me about novel reading, reading circles and adult reading development. Nine of the categories (1, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15) relate to reading as a certain type of act (an educational act, a cognitive act, a communicative act, an imaginative act, an affective act) and so presented my first theme: *reading as five acts.*

Likewise, the categories of 'the group experience' and 'learning from others' reinforced each other's messages, that for these participants *'it's nice to read as a group'.* This became another theme. Similarly, across the categories the notion of 'learning words' dominated. Further, *learning words* seemed to refer to decoding at some times and to vocabulary development at others. This became a theme. 'Fear, confidence and reading identity', combined with 'what is a good reader?' and the interrelated nature of reading as five acts produced the theme of the significance of each of our *reading identities.* I also noted that the sense of 'how the story 'gets built up' (a category) ran throughout a number of other categories (3, 5, 12, 14, 15 and 17). This too became a theme.

At first analysis I identified ten themes: *reading as five acts, reading as an individual and a communal activity, fiction and non-fiction, fiction and truth, reading identity, reading in a group, building the story, differentiation & peer learning, knowing words* and *reading aloud.* However, beginning stage five of analysis

(below), I realized that I was dealing with fewer than ten themes. The data only told a story of *non-fiction* as it related to fiction, and specifically with regard to truth, untruth and what can or cannot be learnt; this was therefore one theme, not two: *fiction, truth and learning*. Differentiation and peer learning were actually part of *reading as a group* and *reading aloud* was less a theme in itself than a sub-theme running throughout the other themes, particularly *knowing words* and *reading as a group*. Six themes remained:

1. *Reading as five acts*
2. *Reading identity*
3. *Knowing words*
4. *Building the story*
5. *Fiction, truth and learning*
6. *Reading as a group*

Following Bolden (2009) and Brandt's (2001) models, the fifth and final stage of data analysis is returning to the data for elaboration or exploration of these six themes, a return to the complexity or messiness that any systematic coding process necessarily obscures. This final stage of analysis is presented in the next chapter.

3.7 Reliability & validity

I will examine the reliability and validity of this project in terms of qualitative research in general, in terms of case study research in particular and finally in terms of an interdisciplinary approach.

3.7.1 Qualitative research

Reliability and validity signify ways of establishing the "trustworthiness" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 233), or not, of any given research process or findings, involving the choice and 'fit' of methods, methodology and theoretical perspectives (Brown & Dowling, 1998; Cohen et al., 2007; Kvale, 1996). More fundamentally, they are a way of articulating what claims a piece of research can or cannot make, which concerns both the relationship between the specific and the general and the conventions each discipline follows for the demonstration of authority.

Whether the data actually answer the research questions (have I measured or evaluated what I intended to?) is a matter of 'internal validity,' while 'external validity' concerns "the degree to which the results can be generalized to the wider population, cases or situations" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 136). 'Reliability' addresses the stability and consistency of the relationship between the research process and the results (Cohen et al., 2007, pp. 146-147): whether another researcher would arrive at the same results after analysing the same data, or following the same research process (Nunan, 1992, p. 17). This could be problematic for qualitative research; if another researcher arrives at different conclusions after following the same research process or analysing the same set of data, does that mean the original research was not rigorous, or merely that the data is rich or complex enough to yield a range of insights?

For these reasons, Guba and Lincoln (1989) suggest "parallel criteria" for "trustworthiness" in the constructivist paradigm (p. 233): "credibility," "transferability," "dependability" and "conformability" (pp. 236-243). *Credibility* replaces internal validity's emphasis on results representing the 'truth' under enquiry, with an emphasis on whether the results adequately represent "the constructed realities of [the] respondents" (p. 237). This is a product of a focus on the researcher's engagement with the participant group and wider community of peers. Credibility is therefore based on researcher consultation with the key stakeholders of the area of investigation (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 232), calling up Stringer's belief that community-based action research should engage "all stakeholders" (1999, p. 10). The final interviews (particularly the mindmapping) were a way of accessing the participants' (key stakeholders) own assessments of, and reflections on, the reading circle process to look at alongside mine. I also aim to present this work to adult literacy learners and teachers later this academic year, and work their responses into further writing.

Transferability, replacing external validity, shifts the responsibility for assessing generalizability from the researcher to those using the research (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 241); it is the researcher's responsibility to describe the research context and participants in such a way that those using the research can judge to what extent these findings apply to other contexts. Likewise, *dependability* and *confirmability* (replacing internal and external reliability) call for the researcher to leave a paper-trail documenting each stage of the research process so that the reader

can see exactly how the research findings were arrived at and therefore be assured "that data, interpretations, and outcomes of inquiries are rooted in contexts and persons apart from the evaluator and are not simply figments of the evaluator's imagination" (p. 243). This links back to the community emphasis of credibility; each stage of the research process has to be transparent and open to the scrutiny of the stakeholders.

3.7.2 Case Study Research

The above discussion of reliability and validity recalls the tension between the specific and the general in case study research: what can one case tell us? Literature on case study research offers (at least) three insights into reliability and validity. The first, mentioned earlier, concerns triangulation. Using multiple methods to collect data about a particular case can provide a sense of 'trustworthiness' (Cohen et al., 2007; Robson, 2002; Stake, 1994; Yin, 2003), "verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation" (Stake, 1994, p. 241). The individual interviews, my observations as participant observer, and students' notes all indicated a preoccupation with vocabulary expansion, making it less likely that this finding was the product of researcher bias in any one of these methods of data collection.

The second insight concerns what Stake calls the "knowledge transfer between the researcher and reader" (1994, p. 241). Likening the researcher's role to the pedagogy of 'discovery learning,' Stake argues that "research provides materials for readers to learn, on their own" (p. 240), shifting part of the responsibility of what can or cannot be generalized onto the reader of the research. "The case researcher needs to provide grounds for validating both the observation and the generalization," but it is the reader who decides how far the insights of the study can be taken.

However, Silverman (2006) focuses on Fyvbjerg's (2004) argument that "the whole debate about the 'representativeness' of case study research has been characterized by basic misunderstandings" (Silverman, 2006, p. 304). He stresses that "we should not overvalue formal generalizations" but rather focus on the "key advantage of qualitative research [...] to give us insight into local practices" (p. 305). The generalizability of one case, how local the local practices we learn about are, is an issue of sampling. Silverman argues that purposive sampling is led by what the researcher wants their case to be able to demonstrate. I selected a group of adult literacy learners because I wanted my case study to be able to offer insights into the

'local practices' of adult literacy learners in a reading circle. I aimed, therefore, to ˈ
able to generalize about adult literacy learners at London FE colleges. Had I wanˈ
to generalize about all Londoners, I would have tried to set up a reading circle using a
cross-section of London's population. Sampling, methods of data collection and the
clarity with which the case is presented to potential readers are therefore key aspects
of validity and reliability in case study research.

3.7.3 Interdisciplinary research

Lastly, how can issues of validity and reliability be understood in relation to an
interdisciplinary approach? Kvale (1996) borrows Habermas' ideas of validity and
reliability of interpretation depending on what that interpretation is for, dividing
purposes of interpretation into three main disciplines: natural sciences, humanities and
social sciences. If this project falls between humanities and social sciences, and
humanities interpret "to further the understanding of the human situation" and social
sciences for "emancipatory knowledge interest [...] getting beyond the surface level
of the phenomena" (Kvale, 1996, pp. 51-52), how then do I judge the validity of this
project? What kind of knowledge am I hoping to generate and what will this
knowledge be used for?

Similarly, Van Maanen, in his 1988 study of writing styles in ethnography,
discusses differing "standards" for judging the "correctness" of research, between
scientific standards, believing in a measurable truth, and "literary standards" where
"standards are largely those of interest (does it attract?), coherence (does it hang
together?), and fidelity (does it seem true?)" (1988, p. 105). Are my 'standards of
truth,' with a constructivist epistemology and phenomenological theoretical
perspective, almost literary? Can I judge my success by how attractive and coherent
this model seems to me and the learners and what use we can make of it in
understanding and developing reading?

Four disciplines feature in my literature review: cognitive psychology, reading
pedagogy, sociology/social history, and literary studies. Each of these would assess
the 'trustworthiness' of research in a slightly different way. Cognitive psychology
would not, in likelihood, accept this thesis as 'research' because of its lack of
empirical experimentation. Sociology deals with 'trustworthiness' as outlined by
Guba and Lincoln (1989) above. Literary theory is concerned with textual analysis
and philosophical argument; its validity and reliability rest in the very coherence of its

argument, as Van Maanen argues above. The 'trustworthiness' of academic research on reading pedagogy published in peer-reviewed journals could also be understood in terms of Guba and Lincoln's "parallel criteria."

However, there is a great deal of writing about reading pedagogy published in non-peer reviewed journals, or discussed and disseminated in staff rooms across the globe. This work rarely contains justifications for its reliability and validity and is often disparagingly referred to as 'tips for teachers.' Yet, its 'trustworthiness' is nevertheless dealt with in the time-honoured method of trial and error. Teachers share ideas, try them out and see what happens. This approach privileges the notion that an experienced teacher can assess for herself what is worth trying, can assess what 'works' and why, and on this basis decide to use this method again or not. Edmondson's (1997) attack on the use of literature in language teaching declares the 'look at this!' argument (the highlighting of successful classroom practice) as "invalid" because "a good lesson does not constitute a good argument" (p. 49). Paran (2008) counters Edmondson, arguing that "the testimony of a practitioner reflecting on what they do in class [...] can be extremely valuable" (p. 470). Many teachers learn a great deal by developing practice through trial and error and sharing success stories with other teachers who go on to do the same. These cycles of communal reflective practice are part of what Hillier (2006) calls our constant "hunt [for] our assumptions" (p. 178), another (and invaluable) way of assessing the 'trustworthiness' of an idea. They should be valued accordingly.

3.8 Research ethics

This project was an attempt to ask adult literacy learners to collaborate with me to produce insights into adult emergent reading, novel reading and the use of reading circles in order to help us all understand these areas better. I felt strongly that this should represent a move away from a deficit model that presents adult literacy learners as passive subjects of research and silent recipients of the knowledge gained, and a move towards more work using adult literacy learners' conceptualizations of their skills, needs and desires. However, there were serious ethical issues to consider.

I asked for and received permission from my line manager to do this research within my existing adult literacy class (see appendix J). I had to convince her, and myself, that the proposed reading circle, conducted in class time, had valuable learning outcomes, on top of my research aims. More importantly, I had to gain the

consent of the participants. This was especially important because I was proposing to run the reading circle in the last 40 minutes of our normal teaching time, and therefore needed to be confident that each member of the group was genuinely happy to take part, and avoid anyone feeling that they had to go along with a majority view. For this reason, I spoke to each learner individually, stressed that nothing had been decided yet, and gave no indication of other students' responses. I chose to obtain oral consent through a two-way conversation (rather than the potentially one-way procedure of written consent), stressing that the conversation (and option to opt-out) was ongoing. These discussions had to involve explicit articulation of my three roles (teacher, researcher, and marginal participant) and how and when I would shift between them.

However, it is impossible to ignore the myriad of reasons why students may agree to something their teacher suggests, including to please the teacher, to be seen as 'a good student', out of respect for a teacher's judgment, out of kindness, or out of curiosity. Therefore, I had to be confident myself that regardless of *why* participants agreed, the reading circle would be of pedagogical benefit immediately as well as over the longer term. It would not have been enough to explain the process and obtain consent; I had to also put myself in the learners' positions and judge whether it would be a good use of their valuable college time. I also had to keep moving from my role as researcher, back to that of teacher to make sure that students were 'getting educational value' out of the circle at all times.

Coincidentally, research ethics features in *Passenger* too. Murri, Milan's girlfriend of some months, reveals to him that she has published her PhD thesis on 'communicating with isolates,' based almost entirely on Roma (Milan's 'fetus in fetu' sister). He also discovers that Professor Conway, the sociologist who first put Milan in touch with Murri for advice on communicating with Roma, is Murri's PhD supervisor. All reading circle members felt that Murri had 'used' Milan for her research, and everyone agreed that she should have asked for his permission first. Most thought that Murri had only started a relationship with Milan in order to gather her data, using him to complete her PhD and further her career. Participants' outrage at this behaviour reminded me that though I had been open and gained permissions, I too was using these learners to complete my doctorate and 'further my career' and I therefore had a serious moral obligation to make sure that they benefited from the reading circle time even more than I did.

3.9 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I explored the design, theoretical perspectives, methodologies and methods of data collection of this study. I went on to describe my five-step process of data analysis, before analyzing how issues of reliability, validity and research ethics manifest in this project. In the next chapter I will complete the fifth stage of data analysis: the analysis of the six emerging themes.

Chapter 4: Analysis

This chapter presents my fifth and final stage of analysis, the exploration of the six themes: reading as five acts, reading identity, knowing words, building the story, fiction, truth & learning, and reading as a group. However, first I would like to examine the participants' own final analyses: the mind-maps they drew and described to sum up their reading circle experience.

4.1 Participants' mind-maps

K drew a picture of a large cake, with arrows drawn from around the edges of the cake, pointing to the outer edges of the page (like sunbeams) towards drawings of members of the reading circle. She described what she had produced:

> It's a cake [...] Everybody liked it. We all took part in it. And it was like, um, um, how can I put it, complementary. Everybody was complementing, trying to understand, trying to understand each other's points. It's kind of the, um, the physical and the visual, because everybody had the physical cake, the book. Everybody could pick it up and eat it whenever they felt like it, and the visual, that's the actual story, what's going on, what the ingredients is. I don't think there's any boundaries. When we was actually reading the book, everybody took part, we had a kind of, um, we had a spokesperson to keep us in order, but there wasn't any boundaries, everybody explored, everybody was free, explored their own...wasn't afraid to explore (K final interview).

K emphasized the reading circle as a communal activity, something 'everybody' was doing together, sharing and exploring. K did not want me to keep her mind-map.

P, by contrast, drew three small pictures. One picture is of a person, with a thought-bubble containing a cross and a book/page with the words 'Death of Roma' written. The second picture is of a thick book, perhaps a novel, with scribbles indicating lines of sentences, and the words 'new word' written on each page. The final picture is of a hand writing something into a notebook (figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1: *P's mind-map*
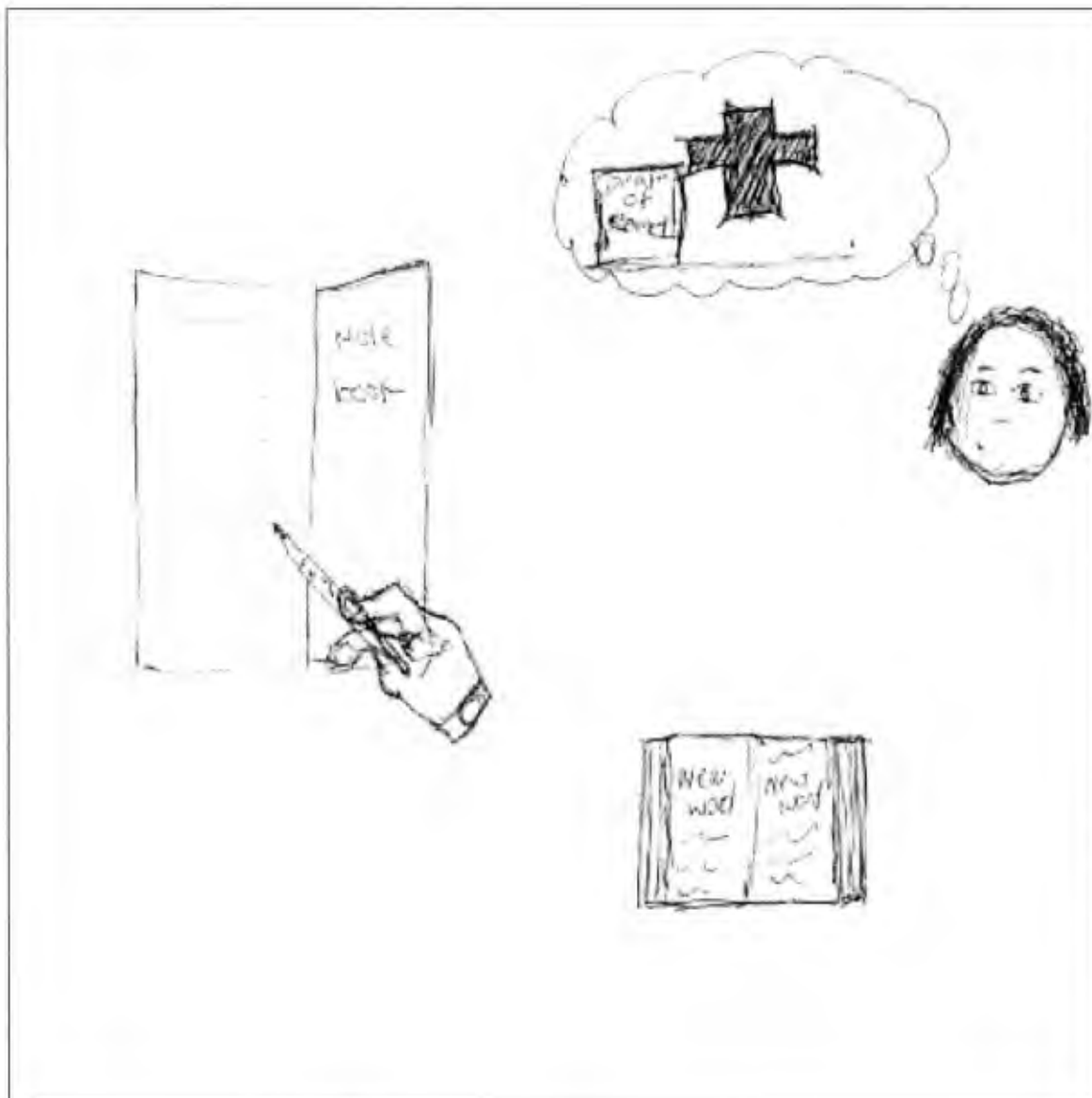
That's the notebook that I took the notes down in, and that's me imagining what's going on, about Roma and things, and then that's me looking up new words in the dictionary, to learn new words. These were the main things that I was doing (P final interview).

In contrast to K, participant P focused on the three things *she* was doing in our reading circle process: taking notes (which she discussed as being in order to help her "remember what's going on"), imagining "what was going on" and learning new words.

Despite being the group member least confident in her literacy, B chose to sum up her experience in words rather than images. She wrote in three lines: "Journey

to reading books. / + makes my job injoyby / looking for new life of reading for me."
(She started to write a fourth line but changed her mind and crossed it out. See figure
4.2)

Figure 4.2: *B's mind-map*
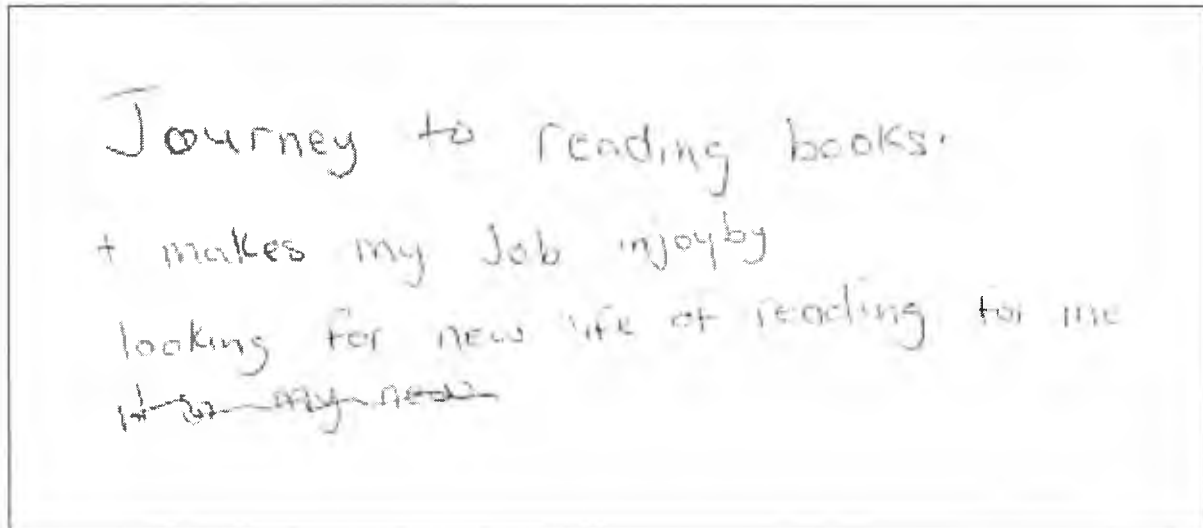
B elaborated:

> Right, 'the journey to reading books' it means that now I can pick
> up a novel or a book, knowing that I can read it and I will
> understand. And 'to make my job enjoyable' – I don't know if that's
> the way to write it [...] Because I understand if something is written
> down I can read it, because they do a lot of writing and if the nurse
> is not there I just have to pick it up and read what they have done,
> without them –the care plan I can do that. And actually I'm looking
> forward to a new life of reading for myself (B final interview).

B too emphasized her personal experience, and for B this was a journey from feeling
unable to pick up a piece of text and read it, to feeling that now she can: "a new life of
reading for myself."

S did not want to draw or write anything to sum up the reading circle
experience. However, she was happy to talk about it:

> I was reflecting on what is going on, what Milan is doing, why he is
> doing it, who are the others. Milan's stories... Milan was musician
> and then after he knew his sister is inside his body, he starts like
> secret and then when they know, the doctors and then when they
> told him he started to contact with his sister and then he was doing

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what she needs, how he communicated with her... how they were together (S final interview).

S continued to talk about the world of the novel, the story, the characters. When asked again about the processes of the reading circle itself, S nevertheless continued to talk about the story.

By contrast, A was eager to draw a representation of her experience (figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3: A's mind-map
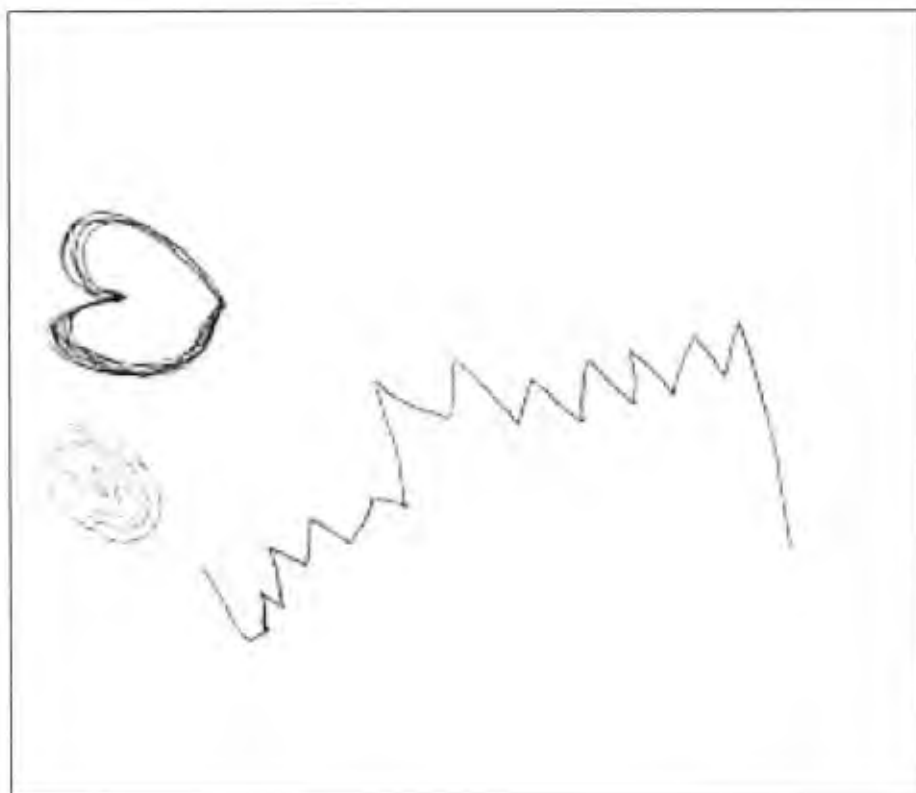
She described it:

> That's the brain, and the heart, and this is, like, when I start to read and I am happy and I like it, I am happy it goes up and then it goes down because I feel sad about it and then up more and then down more [...] most of them [emotions] come from my brain. No, my heart- no my- um- both of them- it's your heart, yeah, when she [the reader] is happy - she is reading something happy and when she is sad, the things are not right in the story and she feels sad and then it changes as she reads (A final interview).

A's description examines the interactions between the brain and heart when reading. However, more than providing an insight into how our brains and hearts work together to produce emotions as we read, A's representation is notable for her absolute surety that this emotional-cognitive process is the most significant aspect of the reading circle experience.

T resisted putting anything on paper, but had a clear idea of how she wanted to sum up our reading circle experience:

> Reading *Passenger*, I learnt lots of words that I didn't know it before and we discussed, um, at the room, everybody, in the class, and get their ideas, different ideas….and develop our language (T final interview).

T combines an individual ('*I* learnt lots of words') and a group focus ("*we* discussed […] *everybody*"). In this summing up, as in the rest of her final interview, T's focus was on how the reading circle developed her and her classmates' language skills. The discussion on the novel was important because it developed "our language."

L's mind-map (figure 4.4) includes no words. It is a drawing of two people holding hands.

Figure 4.4: L's mind-map

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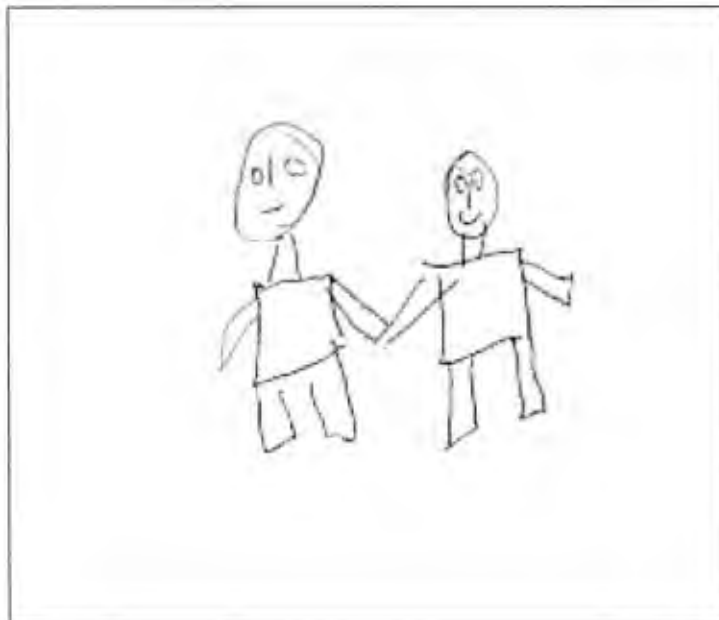
> It's a brother and a sister, with arms joined, a brother and a sister. They could have been like that but they're not [...]. I was imagining this, how it would have been if she'd been born naturally, how she's his sister, how he would have had some support if she'd been born naturally [...] I think it's about compassion, all about compassion. His compassion for her and her compassion for him (L final interview).

L has identified what he sees as a main theme of *Passenger,* compassion or brotherly support, as the dominant feature of his reading circle experience.

These are the conclusions, or analyses, of the participants themselves. I will refer back to these in my analysis of the six themes below.

4.2 Reading as five acts

From the initial interview process onwards, participant responses conceptualized reading as five distinct, though interrelated, acts: an educational act, a cognitive act, a communicative act, an imaginative act, and an affective act. These acts are reminiscent of Jakobson's "six basic functions of verbal communication [...]: referential, emotive, poetic, phatic, conative and metalingual" (Jakobson, 1960/1988, p. 38), with emotive, poetic and phatic as parallels to affective, imaginative and communicative, and conative, referential and metalingual as corresponding to aspects of the educational or cognitive acts. However, the key difference is that while Jakobson's functions are different reasons *why* we use verbal communication, the participants' five acts of reading are five aspects of what we are doing whenever we read.

4.2.1 An educational act

Reading as an educational act includes ideas of reading addressing specific learning goals, such as "reading improves your language" (T initial interview) or reading is a way of "learning new words to use in your writing" (R initial interview). This idea of reading as a specifically linguistic educational act was evident in participants' desire to be part of a reading circle in order to "to learn new words" (S initial reading circle discussion), in the way participants asked each other for help decoding or for explanations of meanings of words in every single reading circle session, how both focus groups discussed how they wanted more time to "talk about words" (focus

group B) and how participants constantly recorded words and phrases in their notebooks.

This is also an area participants discussed in the final interviews: "when you read [a novel] you get the right words – you see them and you know them and you want to write them, so you write" (A final interview) or "reading novels could help your reading speed or confidence or teach you new words" (L final interview), and was one of the three aspects of the reading circle work that P expressed in her mind-map (figure 4.1, p. 72): reading 'new words'.

However, participants spoke even more about reading as a broader learning experience: "to learn, to find out about everything" (G initial interview), to "get more knowledge of the world" (L initial interview), "to understand how the world has changed" (B initial interview) and "to make your life simpler or better" (R initial interview). This is a broader sense of education, gathering knowledge from others: "I read to get facts, more information, to get someone else's knowledge" (A initial interview).

> When you read, it's like you're finding out something [...] challenges that happen in people's lives [...] for you to learn from it [...] to make sure you don't put yourself in that kind of position (R initial interview).

> I learn a lot because it makes me think, you know? Because before, if I don't read, I don't understand lots- but when I read I realize there's lots happening (A final interview).

> You get knowledge, you feeling like you understand or you improve your knowledge, because before you don't have anything, it's blank your mind, but after, you've got some words, some stories. It opens your mind, like you understand some new things, you get some knowledge (S final interview).

This "knowledge" includes learning specific pieces of information:

> I learnt a lot about the tumour thing. I didn't know about that before, and now I've seen it on TV and everything. Some woman, I think in Afghanistan, had a baby for forty-two years and they had to take it out (P final interview).

It also includes learning about other people's points of view:

> It [novel reading]'s educational; it broadens your way of thinking and how to see things [...] the way I read the book it's given me a

guideline of how I can see things from someone else's head. I can see things better (B final interview).

This is conceptualization of reading (particularly novel reading) as a way to learn about and from the lives of others. It is discussed further in 4.6 and 5.4.

4.2.2 A cognitive act

Secondly, participants construe reading as a cognitive act: an act of "concentration" (R initial interview) "understanding" (K initial interview) "observ[ing] the words" (J initial interview) "associat[ing] sounds with letters" (P initial interview), an act which "makes your brain work better" (L initial interview). Participants described "concentrating" and "remembering" (G initial interview) to phonically decode or recognize whole words, assign meanings to words and 'build up' meanings between sentences, paragraphs and chapters. B described the cognitive process of decoding a word:

> I divided it [...] if it's something like a 'chair'- I know I'm going to divide it to get 'air' and then the 'ch' [making the sounds and pointing to the letters of the word she's written] and then join them together.[...] that's what I do all the time (B final interview).

L spoke of recognizing symbols and words to create "a larger meaning:"

> [when reading a novel] you're looking at the words, to recognize the symbols that have a meaning and then in your mind it's a process of putting them together into a larger meaning (L final interview).

P explained how she sees the cognitive processes of memory as significant in reading longer texts:

> If I start reading something again, I remember where I was because it's all stored in my memory (P final interview).

The cognitive act (for example, decoding or remembering above) is distinct from the educational act (learning new words or learning about other people's lives, as described in 4.2.1.

4.2.3 A communicative act

Thirdly, reading is a *communicative act*: "reading is a form of communication" (T initial interview). "I read to know what other people are thinking" (J initial interview). "Written words and books represent the things we commonly agree on" (L final interview). Reading as communication, or social participation, also includes reading for religious reasons, "I read the Koran out loud" (A initial interview), personal/spiritual reasons, "we read because we are bored or lonely; it's like a one way conversation" (L initial interview) and reading for and with family, "I read with my Dad; he read a lot, big books" (P initial interview); "I want to read with my grandchildren" (B initial interview).

Significantly the data also indicate that reading is something we do *with* and *for* others: "a good reader can read clearly so others can understand, like a news reader" (L initial interview) or "a good reader can explain the story from the beginning to the end for other people to hear; you have to be able to do that" (P initial interview). Reading for others requires confidence reading aloud (discussed further in 5.2), something the pupil participants in Clark, Osborn & Ackerman's (2008) study of young people's 'reading self-perceptions' agreed was a characteristic of a 'good' reader. This communal, or community, aspect of reading, and how it relates to the reading circle experience, is developed in 4.7.

4.2.4 An imaginative act

Reading, for these participants, is also an imaginative act. Reading is "imagining." Significantly, every participant used this term in their final interviews. Imagination, as an act different from learning, cognitive processing or communication, is as widely used and recognized culturally as it is problematic to define. These participants, however, used this term confidently to express both visualizing what they were reading, and the conscious, creative mental activity of conjuring something into existence. This dual use of the term 'imagination' evokes Sadoski and Paivio's (Sadoski, 1998; Sadoski & Paivio, 2001) distinction between visualization – or "spontaneously occurring mental imagery" (Sadoski, 1998) – and imagination, the "individual mind's ability" to "shape and create" (Sadoski & Paivio, 2001, p. 31). Tomlinson (1998) reviews literature on first and second language reading, finding nearly all readers report visualization in first language reading while few do so reading a second language. Interestingly, L (for whom English is a third language), B,

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and focus group A (half second-language speakers) discussed visualizing as part of reading:

> Usually when I read, I get images in my mind, like a short film that I'm watching. I've got this habit – I see the characters (L final interview).

> My mind is picturing what I'm reading, and in action, I'm thinking of what's going to happen next (B final interview).

> It's easy to follow when you see pictures of the characters and what they're doing (focus group A).

Tomlinson also argues that visualization is "functional" (pp. 267-268) in that it helps with comprehension of, and engagement with, a text. Supporting this argument, P connected visualization with 'good readers:'

> They ['good' readers] can almost make it like a film, they can see it and act it [...] make it like a film [...] they can see and express what's happening (P final interview).

S emphasized how visualizing helped her decode and understand the words of the novel:

> I saw them [Milan, Karen and Roma], like acting, like pictures, like imagination. Milan is young man and he's acting with his girlfriend, the Japanese, and what they are doing [...] to know the story, what happens, then I can understand words and spelling (S final interview).

K links visualization to escapism and learning:

> I'm drifting into the fantasy with a visualization of what was going on [...] to visualize and feel the emotion and just get away. I wouldn't say get away from our world but get away into this lovely book, to visualize something new, to learn something new (K initial interview).

T, another second language speaker, argued that discussing *Passenger* with her peers in the reading circle allowed her to visualize, and therefore better understand what she was reading:

> When you don't understand many words it is so difficult to go to the dictionary every time [...] but when they are talking about what is happening with Milan and his sister, I start to get it. I start to picture

him and what is he doing and who he is talking and then it gets easier to read and understand (T final interview).

Tomlinson (1998) stresses the importance of ELT teachers developing the visualizaton skills of their learners through direct instruction or activities. The discussions of a reading circle may be one such activity.

L and B also spoke of imagination in Sadoski and Paivio's second, more creative, sense: forging new ideas, new realities, new possibilities. L discussed "fantasising about the characters and what they're going to do next and why. I imagined it all." B explained how it was the act of imagining Milan's situation (however unlikely or unusual) that allowed her to "learn about other people's feelings:"

> I think the writer did a good job actually, make your mind work [...] He actually put an imagination in your head and you imagine that this is a man and it's impossible for a man to carry a baby. As a woman you know you have your organs and the baby can sit in the right place, but the writer he put it in such a way that it could happen to somebody that a man can actually carry his sister inside and we imagine this man and his sister and how they both feel and we learn about other people's feelings (B final interview).

This aspect of imagination is instrumental to reading as a broad educational act. B says one only learns from other's lives if one can "imagine another person's point of view" (B final interview). Both aspects of imagination are explored further in 5.4.

4.2.5 An affective act

Just as reading as an imaginative act is related to reading as cognitive, educational, and communicative acts, it is also related to reading as an affective act. Reading can (though of course not always) make you happy: "reading is fun" (G initial interview), "reading can be enjoyable" (L initial interview).

Each weekly reading circle session included laughter and smiles, as B remembers:

> Everybody enjoyed the book [...] the reading and the discussing both, because when we discuss about it, you haven't seen anybody that gone quiet. Everybody actually chipped in and said their way, what they thought about the book and laughed, and a lot of 'awwww's (B final interview).

This is related to the concept of reading identity (explored next), "reading gives me confidence in myself, in what I'm worth" (J initial interview) and enjoyment of the social interaction of group reading (explored in 4.7). However, besides the process of reading itself being (potentially) emotional, reading is an affective act because of what one is reading about, what one is learning or imagining: "you live everything that's in the book; that's why you get the emotions" (R final interview).

> [B has just read the last paragraph of *Passenger*, where Milan buries his sister].
> T: You read a sad part.
> B: Oh yes. Oh God. It's such a sad moment (29 April 09)

> It's feelings [...] if you can imagine it and build it inside you so that you have real feelings. It's like, I'm a mother, it's like parents losing a child and it's very painful and it's like actually somebody died. It's the death of Roma actually, suddenly, I really felt like she should have lived (B final interview).

> ...when the tumour got taken out of him, that was the most, that was the hardest bit [...] 'cause I tried to imagine what it would be like if it was me, and it's not a nice feeling (P final interview).

To sum up her experience of the reading circle (see figure 4.3, p 74), A charted how a reader's emotions fluctuate when reading, from the experience *of* reading (happiness at being able to read, or pleasure from holding a book) as well as from the experiences she is reading *about* (the events of the story), which imagination allows her to feel as her own. A stresses that this emotional 'rollercoaster' is the product of the interplay between the brain and the heart, thinking and feeling, the cognitive and the affective, with the imaginative, communicative and educational playing their parts. Interestingly, as suggested in B's quotations on pages 77-78 and 81 (middle), this interplay also produces the criticality (in the Freirian sense introduced in 2.1.2) of reading; reading can transform the reader and the reader's relationship with the wider culture precisely because it is at once educational, cognitive, communicative, imaginative and affective.

4.3 Reading identity

> I want to pick up a novel like any normal person, but then I run away (B initial interview).

> I think that reading a novel is showing somebody else a part of you, your hobby, or part of your personality – 'I like to read,' just like most people say 'I like music' (K final interview).

The previous theme discussed how reading is a cognitive, educational, communicative, imaginative and affective act, with each of these elements playing a part in what and how people read. This notion of reading identities involves the interplay between the five acts of 4.2, developing cognitive skill, developing knowledge of words, texts and the world, our relationships with others and where reading fits into these relationships, confidence and desire to make imagination part of reading, and the emotions produced by each of the other acts. The development of each act affects, and is affected by, the development of the others, bound together in an overall 'reading identity.' The psychological notion of identity has three core elements: it refers to a person's "essential, continuous" self, it can and does change over a person's lifetime (while retaining the above degree of continuality), and it is an "internal, subjective" self-concept (Reber, 1995, p. 355). These are all key to my notion of reading identity: a personal, shifting yet continuous self-imposed label. I have chosen to call it 'reading identity' rather than 'reader identity' because the reading identities of many people may be those of 'non-readers,' a lack of a reader identity. Unlike Clark, Osborn & Ackerman's (2008) notion of 'a reader's self-concept,' which is that of either a 'reader' or a 'non-reader', I am using 'reading identity' to convey a spectrum of identity.

'Good' readers "read every day" (J initial interview), "read a book from beginning to end without skipping any of it" (A initial interview), usually "have a higher education" (R initial interview) and "are confident reading to friends and family" (G initial interview). Most participants contrasted this 'good reader identity' with their own, varied reading identities: "I have a fear of words and a fear of laughter from other people when I read" (B initial interview), "the big books really scare me" (J initial interview), and "I'm not really a good reader; I can never remember the whole story to tell someone else" (R initial interview).

The decision to read a novel was therefore a challenge to these reading identities, feeding into the group's initial criteria for choosing a novel: "not a big one-those scare me" (J, reading circle organizing group discussion). The initial reading circle sessions were full of surprise as participants' experiences ran contrary to their existing reading identities: "I understood it, nearly all of it" (K 9 December 08), "I

enjoyed it reading it actually" (J 2 December 08). B expressed her happiness at being able to recommend a book to others:

> I got excited because it's my first book ever [...] I took it to work overwhelmed about this first book and reading it, enjoying it at the same time but I wanted my friends to know that I got a book for the first time ever and my friend Jenny decided she wanted to look at it and she highjack it from me and she read it a little bit and [...] is going to buy one [...] and all my colleagues at work are actually excited- they heard about it [...] but I was the first one to take it to work and I'm so proud of that (B 16 December 08).

Though all participants spoke of the relationship between their reading identity and their reading processes and practices, their individual reading identities were of course different, as were the influences the reading circle had on these identities. B started the reading circle thinking of herself as a non-reader and ended it feeling that she is now someone who "can pick up a novel or a book." She reflected on the difference this will make to her work as well as her leisure time:

> Now I can pick up a novel or a book, knowing I can read it and I will understand [...] and [this will] make my work enjoyable [...] because I understand if something is written down I can read it, because they do a lot of writing and if the nurse is not there I just have to pick it up and read what they have done, without them- the care plan- now I can do that. And actually, I'm looking forward to a new life of reading for myself [...] because before I couldn't [...] I just shy away and just put it down because I'd think that I'm going to make a fool of myself, but actually it [the reading circle] helps me a lot because it made me stronger- yeah- I have no fear (B final interview).

B is not claiming that she learnt to read during the reading circle, but rather she developed a new reading identity as someone who can read and recommend novels, and who can therefore have a go at reading anything that life, including work, throws her way.

K, by contrast, was already a "fairly confident" reader (K initial interview) at the start of the reading circle process, having joined the literacy class predominantly to work on her writing. However, she describes an equally powerful shift of reading identity:

It's quite interesting because I've never come across a reading, a reading, you know forum like this, in a college or in a university […] I've only seen something like that on an American film of some sort […] while I've never done it before […] I think it's useful because in a college where people are trying to read English and trying to do essays and things like that, it's something different. I think it's a boundary where people don't think they can go to. I – when I'm normally reading a book, I'm normally reading a book with my mother who lives in America, so we kind of – we – she's got the book and I've got the book and we kind of see where each other is in the story […] I've had that kind of relationship before- but not with a group. I suppose you see it as a, a high-society kind of thing. Something for somebody in Oxford or a higher class (K final interview).

For K, taking part in a reading circle was taking part in a practice she had previously associated with other social groups.

A also underwent a transition in reading identity, "I didn't think I could read a whole book like this" (A final interview), but was more interested in a realization that she could write, as well as read, a book:

…when I read I realize there's lots happening. I can read, I can write a story about myself. I've got lots of ideas […] I can write my story and somebody can read; it's an interesting life story- the place I was born, the fighting that happened in Somalia, the war, when I came here – things like that (A final interview).

Her shift in reading identity was part of, or perhaps even a trigger for, a wider shift in her relationship to print culture: she is someone who can read books, but also someone with a story to tell and the ability to write it, for others to read.

4.4 Knowing words

"What does it mean to know a word?" (Schmitt, 2000, p. 1)

…the reading, the words and the sounds and the meanings (A final interview).

4.4.1 Reading words

The issue of what exactly it means to 'know' a word emerges from these data in two ways. The first concerns the distinction between understanding the meaning of a word and being able to vocalize that word (I am using the term 'vocalize' (Brooks, 1984; Huey, 1908/1968) to signify the ability to look at a word and then say that word aloud). This lies in the relationship between the first seven of Nation's (2001, p. 27) eighteen (receptive and productive) aspects of 'knowing a word' (see table 4.1):'
"What does the word sound like? How is the word pronounced? What does the word look like? How is the word written and spelled? What parts are recognizable in this word? What word parts are needed to express the meaning? [and] What meaning does this word signal?"

Table 4.1: Nation's "What is involved in knowing a word"? (2001, p. 27)

1. What does the word sound like?
2. How is the word pronounced?
3. What does the word look like?
4. How is the word written and spelled?
5. What parts are recognizable in this word?
6. What parts are needed to express the meaning?
7. What meaning does this word signal?
8. What word form can be used to express this meaning?
9. What is included in this concept?
10. What items can the concept refer to?
11. What other words does this make us think of?
12. What other words could we use instead of this one?
13. In what patterns does this word occur?
14. In what patterns must we use this word?
15. What words or types of words occur with this one?
16. What words or types of words must we use with this one?
17. When, where, and how often would we expect to meet this word?
18. When, where, and how often can we use this word?

"Learn[ing] new words" (S) and "learning to read more words" (J) were key motivations for some participants for taking part in a reading circle, just as the initial interviews identified that reading was largely about "learning words" (R initial interview). However, when coding the data, I found the phrases 'knowing a word' and 'reading a word' were both used to refer to being able to vocalize a word *and* also to understanding the meaning of a word. In Duncan (2009) I also identified this

'confusion' and related it to the importance of teachers using appropriate meta-language so that learners have the power to say 'I can phonically decode, or sound out, this word' as opposed to (or in addition to) 'I understand the meaning of this word.'

However, looking more closely at the data from this thesis, I came to see that rather than participants being 'confused,' the error was mine. I was missing the point; these participants saw vocalizing and understanding the meaning of a word as two inseparable aspects of the same process – reading – making the distinction not worth labouring:

> SD: What comes to mind when I say reading?
> B: Spelling, and the meaning- what the word means.
> SD: When you say spelling, do you mean how you write words?
> B: No, saying the words- how the letters sound- to read them out, to know what they mean (B final interview).

Some participants were unable to vocalize words, despite knowing their meaning, for example the word "popping" for P (10 March 09) or "sycamore" for B (29 April 09). These participants are first language speakers with large vocabularies but difficulties with phonic decoding and limited whole-word recognition. Other participants, particularly second language learners who are more confident reading in another alphabetic language, were able to use phonic decoding to vocalize words without knowing their meanings, for example S vocalized "amplifier" (10 March 09) and T vocalized "thimble" (13 January 09) without knowing what these words meant (both asked the meaning of these words later in the same session). The difference between these two groups of learners typifies the challenges for teachers of adult literacy classes (see 5.2).

Yet, the weekly session transcripts reveal the most common pattern: if one knows the meaning of a word, one is *more likely* to be able to vocalize it than if one does not. As participants chose to take turns reading aloud for a portion of every session, their decoding processes were, to an extent, visible in their hesitations, miscues and help offered to others. At times familiarity with a word, and therefore a degree of knowing its meaning, helped vocalization because the word was part of the participant's active mental lexicon and therefore could be recognized as a whole word or decoded with the familiarity of practice. For example, B read "abdominal" correctly with no hesitation (10 March 09), despite needing help with seemingly

simpler words such as "struck" and "that" in the same session. She had explained earlier that she "knows the medical words" because of her work as a health care assistant.

These data also suggest that familiarity with a word helps participants decode words which are not entirely phonically regular due to the morphophonemic nature of English (Coulmas, 2003). In these cases participants started to read the words through the most 'standard' sound-symbol relationships and then self-corrected when they got far enough on in the word to recognize it. For example, reading the word 'patronizing,' A first read 'pat' (/æ/), then 'pat' (/æ/) 'ron' and self-corrected to 'patron' (/eɪ/) before getting to 'izing' and self-correcting back to 'patronizing' (with a /æ/ as in the English pronunciation) (24 February 09). Similarly, P reading 'laboriously' first read 'labor' (/eɪ/) then 'i-ously' and then self-corrected to "oh, laboriously" (with a /æ/) (3 March 09). In both of these examples, participants used their knowledge of standard phoneme-grapheme correspondences to begin to decode these words. When they had decoded enough of the word to recognize it, they self-corrected to the spoken form they know. Once again, knowing the meaning of a word helps vocalization.

Rather than presenting a distinction between decoding a word and understanding the meaning of that word, these participants stressed that 'knowing a word,' 'learning a word' or 'reading a word' involves linking a meaning, a spoken form and a written form:

> ...words which we don't know, we underline and then we discuss
> [...] and we are writing the meaning in the book to learn and for the
> spelling [...] the reading of the spelling, how I can read each sound
> [...] I improve a lot [...] my writing and my reading [...] the words
> I pick up and the meanings (S final interview).

Phonic decoding and reading aloud are discussed further in 4.7 and 5.2.4.

4.4.2 Knowing meanings

The second aspect of 'what it means to know a word' addresses what *knowing the meaning* of a word actually involves, and how this knowledge is developed and used (the rest of Nation's (2001, p. 27) list, see table 4.1, p 86). What does it really mean to know the meaning of a word and how do we develop and use this knowledge?

You're picking up words that you may never have used, and once you've found the meaning and are able to use them yourself, you've used it- and it's part of you (K final interview).

Without receiving any guidance or recommendations from me, a pattern emerged for how participants learnt the meanings of new words. Reading at home, when participants found unfamiliar words they did one of two things: guessed the meaning from the novel's context and moved on, or underlined/circled/highlighted the word. To find the meanings of these words, they asked a friend or colleague, looked them up in a dictionary (monolingual or bilingual) and/or brought them to the next reading circle session. If they looked in the dictionary or asked a friend, they wrote down the meaning in a notebook and then double-checked with the context in the novel. If they chose to ask about the word in the next reading circle session, their fellow members would explain the word to them using the context of their own lives or the novel (as discussed later) and they would then record the meaning of the word. Though faced with a choice of ways to find out the meaning of the word, all participants followed the same three step process: find meaning, check meaning with context, and record meaning.

When reading together in the reading circle (one person reading aloud and others following silently), participants underlined words as they and others read and then asked each other in the pauses between one person finishing reading and another starting (usually after every page). These discussions about specific words led on to, or from, discussions about 'what was going on.' Participants noted down explanations in their notebooks. Three aspects of this pattern warrant a closer look: the use of peer-learning, how participants recorded meanings of words, and the use of context in the vocabulary learning process. Participants asked me, but increasingly each other, what words meant, and taught each other words, discussing meanings communally. Here, participants discussed the meaning of the phrase "back with us:"

T: He has been there before. He is returning?
S: No he never been there before, this hospital is in Vienna.
T: But they said, end of page 175, 'you are back with us'?
K: It means he's come to. He's woken up from the operation-
B: He's been unconscious and now he's waking up-
K: That's what they say –
B: You're back with us…. (24 March 09)

The phrase 'back with us' meaning 'regained consciousness' was new to T and so S, K and B explain it to her. This peer explanation happened an average of nine times a session.

Participants recorded meanings of new words in a range of ways, using sentences and notes, English, other languages and examples from the novel and their own lives. A's personal notebook was entirely devoted to recording lists of new words, recorded in four ways:

1. Words with explanations in English: "cogitate= means think very carefully"
2. Words with translations into Somali: "storm off =isdhipashe"
3. Words followed by sentences, in English, demonstrating their meaning: "Apron = I wear an apron when I cook biscuits."
4. Words followed by sentences in English demonstrating their meaning using the world(s) of the novel: "mortality = God is never die but what planet will died. Mortal = will die. Roma and Milan are mortal. Roma will die one day and Milan too."

Finally, participants used the context of the novel in three ways: to guess the meaning of words, to understand the dictionary definition, and to explain items of vocabulary to each other. Participants explained items of vocabulary to each other using the different domains of their own lives and the worlds of the novel. This demonstrates how essential context is for 'learning words' (you cannot identify or explain a meaning without a context), but it also demonstrates a shift in *which* contexts they used for their explanations. During the reading circle process, participants moved from explaining vocabulary predominantly with reference to their own lives/domains, to using their own lives as well as the world(s) of the novel, to, finally, using predominantly the world(s) of the novel. Here are three examples of participants explaining items of vocabulary to each other, the first using mainly the context/experience of their own lives, the second a mixture and the third using the (now shared) experience/context of the novel.

P: there's something about the orchestra she was going to-
J: It's a rough music or something-
K: No, he says its wholesome, that's the word he used-
S: What does it mean 'wholesome'?
R: He explained it –
B: Healthy, like brown bread. I eat brown bread because it's wholesome.
K: It means good for you, so kind of goody-goody... (9 December 08).

T: What's a thimble?
B: You put it on your finger to stop you –
K: From pricking yourself. For sewing.
S: Oh I know what that is.
T: I didn't know that was a thimble. I have some, but not metal, plastic.
P: Oh, to protect your finger
B: I'll bring my thimble next week. It's not metal but I'll bring it.
P: He gets the thimble and has some metal on his belt, to tap
K: To communicate with his sister (13 January 09).

A: Accompaniment? What's that?
B: Where is that?
K: 156, here, here, there you go.
P: Maxim is playing something on the piano and Milan is playing the accompaniment –
A: Like company –
K: Maxim's playing the main bit of music and Milan is playing something that goes along –
P: Not the main piece but it goes with it –
B: Goes along with it.
K: In the orchestra some instruments are playing the main tune and the others, maybe Daphne, are playing the accompaniments.
T: Roma is Milan's accompaniment!
B: Yes!
K: Or is Milan Roma's accompaniment? (17 March 09).

This shift emphasizes the role of context in learning and using vocabulary, but more than this, it reflects the way in which novel reading involves 'building' a new world, a shared world full of contexts which can be used for explaining and understanding new vocabulary. This world, or bank of experience, comes not from participants' lives but from their reading, but through that reading, they have made it part of their lives.

4.5 Building a story

The story gets built up as you read (L final interview).

The above transition in context – what could also be called domains or worlds – used to define, discuss and clarify vocabulary (from participants' 'real' worlds to their newly shared world of the novel) relates to what participants identified as a notable feature of novel reading: that reading novels involves a process of 'building up.' The

metaphor of 'building' is often used for reading and particularly for novel reading, but what is built, out of what and how?

The cognitive psychologists Garnham & Oakhill (1992) and Noordman & Vonk (1992), and literary theorists Iser (1972), Fish (1980), Perry (1979), Culler (1975) and Rimmon-Kenan (1989) (see 2.1.1) each explore how the reader begins by assigning meaning to the words they read and goes on to make connections between what they have already read and what they are reading now. From a philosophical perspective, Sartre (1967) too writes of reading as an "re-invention," where the novel "does not have an end" because "the reader's will" (pp. 30-38) continues to create it. This is a process of continuously adapting, rejecting and reforming meaning as the reader 'builds' what Iser calls the individually realized *work* as opposed to the written *text*. Participants presented a similar account, often using the terms 'story' and 'book' where Iser uses *work* and *text*.

> ...this *Passenger*, you read the book from the beginning to end, get knowledge from the beginning to end, building, building. How it starting the story, where is going the story, what happened in the end of the story (S final interview).

As the above theorists, and participants, found, it is challenging presenting this building process as a set of discrete steps, as any 'steps' seem to be cyclical or even simultaneous. However, these data present key elements of the process: building sentences from words, building sentences up into a story, and then using this story to read subsequent words into sentences, events and characters of that same ever-developing story [I am not using 'story' in the sense shared by the Russian Formalists and Forster, of the chronological order – as opposed to narrated order – of fictional events (Cuddon, 1991; Forster, 1927). Rather, following these participants, I am using the term *story* to express the *work* produced by the reader as opposed to the printed text, or book].

Five (of seven) participants spoke explicitly of 'building' in their final interviews.

> You're looking at the words, to recognize the symbols that have a meaning and then in your mind it's a process of putting them together into a larger meaning (L final interview).

> K: In my mind I'd have the character [...] so it's like meeting a person and then meeting them again- you remember them because

you've met them before. You know them a bit, you remember them and then you will go on to know more about them- come back to them […] as you see that characters, what they are doing, you get more information, slowly it gets built up.
SD: How does it get built up?
K: By the information I get, the words (K final interview).

As with the vocabulary development described in 4.4.2, this building process happened both individually and communally. Participants read an average of a chapter a week at home, often taking notes. P noted in her initial interview that she finds it hard to "remember what's going on" (P initial interview) in a book or story and so "I used a notebook to keep track" (P final interview). This makes her notebook a relatively rare document, evidencing the stages of how P was building her *story*.

Chapter 1: It took me a little while to figure out who is who […] Milan seems humorous, making silly comments at time then Karen having to correct him […] I'm guessing that Milan and Karen plays (*sic*) for the orchestra.

Chapter 2: The think (*sic*) I am confused about is Milan's occupation. Andreas is either his father or a friend- I think he is a friend because in chapter 1 Andreas bring (*sic*) croissants to Milan's house.

18/12/08: Whilst Milan is having an X-ray the conversation about his occupation is brought up and he says that he is a violinist so its (*sic*) all clear now.

02/01/09: Milan's back injury seems to be more than a back injury. They find a tumour inside him making him believe that it is a living thing inside of him which soon becomes news of the world- and questions about clicking.

Chapter 4: 9/01/09 Milan is seeing Dr. Conway she discusses with Milan the concept of the thing inside him. This makes me think if this was me and I was in this situation that I have no control over, the first thing I have to realize is that despite that I've had this thing inside me for like 40 years […] thank God I'm still breathing, eating and talking. I don't understand the idea of talking to Roma, saying words or how it's mean (*sic*) to work.

Participants brought these individually developed ideas to the group sessions. For example, in early March, P read chapter nine at home, recording in her notebook:

> Chapter 9: Milan founds (sic) out that Murri has puplished (*sic*) a book about him and Roma. He is quiet (*sic*) upset about it because she never asked 1st. I think that Murri should have at least consult (*sic*) Milan about this first and get his point of view and permission.

In the reading circle on the 10th of March, participants began discussing Chapter 9 and P contributes "It's about Murri. She comes back from holiday and um she's like...wrote about Roma and Milan, and Milan doesn't like it, because she never asked [...] I think it's a bit sly..." and the group go on to discuss Murri's actions. P's contribution reflects the notes she has written at home, the building work she has already started.

Conversely, the group discussions also influenced subsequent individual reading. On the 17th of March the group discussed the music lesson scene in Chapter 13 where Roma corrects a note Milan's student plays (from sharp to natural), leading to the discovery that Roma's version not only sounds better than the printed version, but is the note Bach originally intended. P asks her fellow participants, "What is Roma doing? [...] I don't understand, what's sharp?" and others clarify:

> K: Is she counting the notes?
> B: Yes, her mathematical bit- she's counting- and listening-
> K: The note was too sharp- it means it didn't sound right.
> S: He made a mistake, Milan and Maxim both mistake,
> A: And she found it-
> K: It was supposed to be a different note- what they call a 'natural' one, not sharp. It's different types of notes (17 March 09).

P writes in her notebook two days later:

> Roma was sure that Maxim and Milan were not playing the right note so she gets them to play the right note- F natural instead of F sharp. This is funny because it seems like she is controlling them and like with the alcohol and cigarets (*sic*) won't give up until she gets her way (P notebook, 19 March 09).

From the group discussion, P now understands the 'F natural/F sharp' mistake and uses this new understanding to reread, and potentially reinterpret, this passage. However, while the group discussion went on to focus on Roma's 'cleverness,' P interprets this scene as an example of Roma's continued desire to exert her control (something P has commented on earlier in her notebook). P's story is the product of the interplay between group and individual interpretation.

Besides reading alone at home, participants volunteered to read aloud in the session, usually reading a page each and stopping after each page to talk. For example, after A read page 87 (where Roma asks Milan to stop having sex with Karen) the group discussed:

> B: What's happening is, I think, Roma has begun to know the brother more but when the romance was taking place [...] it's like a strange feeling- she wants it to stop and she wants probably an explanation, why is your body shifting around like this...
> T: I think the thing that is affecting her-
> S: She would be moving around quite a lot-
> A: Sea-sick!
> P: Karen is angry.
> S: Karen wouldn't understand what was going on because this is based in what is happening to Milan. She felt furious at him stopping. When Milan confessed that it is Roma who told him to stop, she went mad- how dare she- call me later- she said-
> P: Karen's angry because basically he's allowing someone to take control of him, that's not fair on her (27 January 09).

Together, they interpret the text in the light of what they already know about Milan, Roma and Karen: Roma feels every movement of Milan's body, Karen is not understanding when it comes to Roma, and Milan does exactly what Roma tells him to do.

These discussions were integral to the 'building' of the novel they were reading together: the interpreting of vocabulary (what does 'back with us' mean?) and hypothesising of character (is Roma the real musician?) which form the developing, rejecting, adapting and adjusting of the story. A novel may usually be read alone, with the 'building' done entirely in the mind of one individual reader. However, in this reading circle, a significant part of the 'building' was done through group discussion. These discussions were not merely *about* what they had read (reflections on completed, individual building processes), but rather *part of* the reading process. To take two more examples, after G has just read the last page of Chapter 1 aloud, they discuss:

> R: And he gets to try green tea.
> J: Oh yeah, that's right. He said he quite liked it actually –
> G: And he lies that he doesn't like tea. Normally tea, he does like it, but he told her that he doesn't?
> J: He makes a comment that he sometimes twists the truth a bit- may to have –

> K: To have more in common with her?
> L: That's the second time he'd twisted the truth. He said he didn't hear her mistake on the flute, but he did hear it (12 September 08).

The group together interpret that Milan lies "to have more in common with her," to ingratiate himself. Months later they discuss Milan reading a book to Roma:

> K: She started to read something. She wants him to read her a book. About love.
> B: *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*.
> L: She says 'I love Murri' and he asks her 'What is love?'
> S: Milan asks Roma what love is –
> B: [reading] "Love is when you are sad when you cannot talk to someone any more."
> L: Roma knows what love is but is confused by what a book is –
> K: Maybe because she's, she's, she knows what the outside world is, she kind of knows what death is, and she's got a kind of- she kind of knows what love is, but asking her to think about something that is written in a book –
> B: She cannot physically handle it. She didn't know what a book is–
> K: Even if you said a box, a box of words- she- I don't know- she wouldn't know –
> L: She knows the whole world as words, as clicks, how would she know about worlds created only of words?
> B: Might be quite difficult for her (24 March 09).

Together they fill in gaps to create Roma's experience, to understand her confusion. The participants interpret in and through their discussions. This reading circle was not an opportunity for communal discussion of individual reading, but an example of genuinely *communal reading*, with aspects of the reading process (the 'building') completed as a group:

> B: You, well, we, recap when we read [...] link up [...]
> SD: Can you explain what you mean by 'link up'?
> B: [...] I mean join them together [...] Paragraph by paragraph, talking about it together, building up (B final interview).

These participants agree with the literary theorists; reading a novel is a building process, and this was a communal building process. They built their *Passenger* together. Reading as a communal process is discussed further in 5.3.

4.6 Fiction, truth and learning

Like 'knowing' and 'reading words' in 4.4.1, participants' uses of the terms 'fiction,' 'real,' 'realistic' and 'true' seemed, at first analysis, to indicate some confusion.

> I do like fiction but also I like true stories- because it's more realistic […] fiction is not real, and you know I like to read about a girl who's had troubles maybe and sometimes you can relate to that; it's more real- because you can sort of put yourself in that position, you know, instead of a monster chasing another monster- it's not real, but if the girl's had a few problems, that's really life and that's more interesting really. I can learn from it (J initial interview).

> I like realistic stories, true stories, not fiction (G initial interview).

> Fiction means it's not true, doesn't it? No, I don't like those kind of stories. I like stories that are true to life, that make me think about my life (R initial interview).

These demonstrate uncertainty around the terms 'fiction,' 'science fiction,' 'real,' and 'realistic.' Additionally, despite early classroom discussions on the 'novel' and fiction' (amongst other text types raised by learners), halfway into reading *Passenger,* one of the focus groups discussed: "So is it a true story?" "What do you think?" (focus group B) leaving it as an unresolved question. The issue of whether the events represented in *Passenger could* be true (whether it was realistic) was confused with whether or not it was a 'true story.'

This is certainly the result of a lack of familiarity with the conventions of the classifications 'fiction' and 'non-fiction,' which are often (in schools and colleges contexts) defined as 'true' and 'not true,' relying on a familiarity with conventions of what 'true' and 'not true' mean in the context of this kind of written text classification. However, once again, this 'confusion' reveals a useful learning point. What is true, real, untrue or unreal about a piece of fiction such as a novel? Also, following J's lead (above) what is the relationship between the classifications of fiction and non-fiction and what can be *learnt* from a text?

In the discussion of reading as five acts (4.2), participants spoke of what they learn from novel reading, including accessing other people's experience and thereby gaining an increased knowledge of the world. In the final interviews, participants argued that "reading novels is educational" (B final interview), and spoke of what they felt they learnt from *Passenger* in particular:

> I learnt new things, like the tumour thing. I can now relate to these stories on the news (P final interview).

> I learnt about how orchestras practice and travel to other cities, Vienna (L final interview).

These participants are describing learning 'real' things from a fictional world. Further, participants spoke of what they learnt from the access to other perspectives that fiction provides:

> I got an awful lot of information [...] some of the things in the novel I can bring into practice- take it to work [...] it teach me a thing or two [...] how I can approach my patients [...] Because normally you [health care assistants] come to them abruptly, without thinking about their feelings- yeah, and in Milan's case, when he's going to see the doctor- how nervous he is [...] for me he's like the patient lying in the bed not knowing who's going to come through that door in the morning (B final interview).

Passenger contains truths from which participants learnt, ranging from learning about the (real life) condition of 'foetus in fetu' to learning about feelings of disorientation. Participants did not say that Roma was a symbol, or representation, of Milan's transition from emotional isolation to emotional engagement with others; this would have been a huge jump for those new to fiction. However, they spoke of Roma as instrumental in Milan's emotional transition and allowed for the possibility that Milan was 'imagining' her or willing her into existence. Without specialist literary experience or terminology, these participants nevertheless recognized the different levels of truth which fiction provides. In this sense, fiction cannot really be considered 'not true.'

How, then, is fiction untrue? Simply, perhaps, that the events depicted in a novel are not presented to the reader as events that have definitely taken place in the world (though they may be events that could have taken place). A identifies this as fiction's great strength:

> There's a big difference [between reading a newspaper and reading a novel]. If it's the news, when you read the news or a newspaper, you just worry- because [...] this is happening, this is true? And because you believe the news, this is true and then you are worrying about this [...] you worry. But this [pointing to *Passenger*] is just a fun [...] you don't believe it is true, so you go on and read, you exercise but you don't worry (A final interview).

It is this juxtaposition between the self-evident truths of a novel and its declared untruth, or its simultaneous reality and unreality, which defines fiction. Fiction offers truths from which to learn, while announcing its untruth: 'I am not really happening.' For A, the fact that a novel is not (presented as) something 'really happening,' means that it does not cause the worry or anguish that a true story, or the news, would cause. Yet, the fact that it *could* be true means that the reader is able to relate to it and explore it as a potential (but safe) experience, from which to learn. For A (like Freud (1907) and Zunshine (2006)) this use of the unreal to provide 'safe' exploration of reality is central to the pleasures of fiction:

> You know it's like exercise for the brain. You are reading
> something and your mind is really thinking about it. Is it true?
> Could it happening? Maybe or maybe not? And what would I do?
> (A final interview).

S recognizes this as *useful*:

> A novel is a story, any idea of the people [...] the people are writing
> their ideas, suggesting it- and these ideas are useful for the people,
> the readers, those listening [...] you can get knowledge from that
> [...] and you can understand things, new things, from that story (S
> final interview).

The final aspect of the (un)truth/reality of the novel which emerges from these data could be called 'the tenacity of the story' and 'the disappearance of the author.' The events portrayed may not be real but the story that the readers build certainly is. As discussed in 4.5 we talked the inner and outer lives of Milan, Roma, Karen, Murri and Andreas into existence and used them to learn items of vocabulary. The story, understandably, dominated the weekly reading circle discussions for six months, but what was less predictable was how the story dominated the final interviews. Any questions in the final interviews relating to the reading circle or *Passenger* were about the process of reading, not the story; I never asked participants to recount the story or discuss the characters. However, participants were clearly eager to do so. For example, when asked about what they liked best about the processes of our reading circle, S and A responded similarly:

> I like best when Milan and Roma are going to Germany and she is dead (K final interview).

> I like best when Milan and Roma they are going to Germany and they have some accident and when he wake up he says like 'Is she dead? Where is my?' things like that. I liked that (A final interview).

Similarly, T answered a question about her favourite part of the reading circle process with: "Roma, she's interesting" (T final interview). It would be hard to argue that these characters were not real, that this story was not real.

Yet, as much as the story was tenaciously real, the author was absent. In seven months (from the beginning of the reading circle to the end of the final interviews) the author was mentioned – by any of the participants – only twice. The first mention was in February, when K stopped L as he was reading:

> K: Can I just ask something? You know how it says "speakers and microphones and wires" – why has he done that? Why didn't he put in a comma?
> B: He's showing that there are all these things- by using too many 'ands'-
> L: He's saying that there are lots of things (24 February 09).

The author emerged here as a 'he' responsible for the writing and then disappeared again until our penultimate reading circle session's discussion of Milan's operation in Vienna:

> B: Why did he kill Roma? He killed her! He actually killed her!
> T: Who killed her?
> B: The writer!
> K: He killed her! Just as you're getting to know her; he killed her.
> B: Just as we're getting to know her and she's getting to tapping and getting to books and reading, that was encouraging but then- [makes a cutting noise] (23 March 09).

This absence can be seen as the product of the tenacity of the story, the simultaneous truth and untruth of the novel and the readers' communal building process. It was *their* story, until 'he' ended it. [Hirvela (2007) examines ELT students' writing to authors in order to encourage exploration of the author's process in creating the literary work. When all the final interviews were completed I invited Billy Cowie to come to meet the participants. He very kindly came, answered participants' questions and enjoyed the feast that they had prepared for him. This was successful on many levels and something I will write about in another context. However, I deliberately

chose not to mention the possibility of the author visiting us until all interviews were finished and chose not to include his visit in my data because an author visit could not be a routine part of a reading circle and I therefore wanted it to remain outside of this thesis].

4.7 Reading as a group

> This is my first book I ever ever read. I never ever picked up a novel and thought of reading it myself. I'd pick up a novel and maybe just look inside quickly and think it's too much for me to read and put it down quickly and forget about it, but this one, because we were doing it in a group, did encourage me to read it, for myself. And sometimes I didn't understand some of the words, and then when I come back in the class and reflect back and talk about what it meant, then I'd get those words. It was very good (B final interview).

Participants all reported their enjoyment of reading as a group. They gave five reasons.

Reading in a group helped participants to learn and use new words. In each and every reading circle session, members identified words they weren't sure about, defined words for each other and discussed the usage of these words (see 4.4). Every participant reported that the reading circle helped them learn new words and understand the story better.

> If some words we don't understand, we can check together, read them, talk about them, write them, the meaning as well (A final interview).

> I want to read it, to tell the story, about the words I pick up and the meanings. I like learning the meanings and [...] when they are talking the stories- Milan did that, and the other girl live with him, I know the story, they are telling us clearly when they read it at home- they tell us in class, but me I couldn't do all that [...] after that little bit I understand [...] I improve my reading and my understanding the story (S final interview).

> We understand from each other, you know. If I don't understand this, I can understand from my colleagues, from my classmates [...] the words that we don't understand (T final interview).

Secondly, participants identified how reading aloud in a group helped with phonic decoding and/or whole word recognition. Reading aloud (having others listen and

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correct) or following the text while others read aloud, was seen by the majority of participants as helpful in the development of decoding skills:

> I like when we read together, because I can hear somebody's voice, better than me, or somebody like me, because I want to improve and you can hear my voice and correct me if I'm wrong (A final interview).

> I can hear the words [when somebody else is reading] and I am looking at the book and I'm following what they say and what the words look like (P final interview).

> I knew that at the end of the reading, nobody's going to look at me like 'oh you didn't read well' – they were all there to support me and the words that I couldn't read or didn't understand or got stuck- they helped me along, to make the reading enjoyable (B final interview).

Participants helped each other with decoding an average of sixteen times every session. For example:

> B read "slyly" and P corrected "slightly." B repeated "slightly" and responded "thank you" (27 January 09).

> L hestitated and read "d,d,d" and hesitated again and K read "declines" for him. L repeated "declines" (24 February 09)

> A read "pass" and B corrected "pissing" (3 March 09).

For these participants, reading in a group was appealing because of the opportunity it offered to read to others and listen to others read (see 5.2 for a further discussion of reading aloud).

Participants also spoke of the group as a supportive and encouraging network to increase reading confidence (and adjustment of the reading identity discussed in 4.3):

> There are certain people that are weak like me, it actually bring them out. One or two students, when they first came in the class, they couldn't speak up, you remember? Eventually in the end, they were actually reading even louder and speaking openly, giving their opinions, feeling free [...] because everybody chipped in and nobody made anybody else feel down. Everybody encourage everybody to read and the beauty of it is that when somebody finish reading, you can't wait to read [...] As a first time reader, it did encourage me [... before] there was always a fear of reading a book.

> The thought of not being able to read in class, or to feel embarrassed [...] Am I going to make myself look a fool? But nobody laughed and it did encourage me to read even more (B final interview).

Similarly, in her mind-map (see 4.1), K drew the reading circle experience as a cake, created and shared by everyone, allowing every participant to feel "free" and not "afraid to explore."

The fourth aspect relates to the earlier theme of 'building up' the story; reading in a group models the interpretive processes of novel reading. The reading circle encouraged collective interpretation, while also making it clear that everyone has individual interpretations, based on individual experience. The notion that there isn't one correct interpretation, and yet interpretation is nevertheless based on 'evidence' in the text can be particularly challenging to less confident readers (Kendall, 2008). If reading is seen as only an individual, silent act, this would be hard to model. Participants noted how the reading circle modelled and supported this aspect of reading:

> The group input was interesting because I think when you are reading the book it's just you and the author, you don't realize what other people are thinking [...] I was interested in what other people, from different backgrounds, different nationalities, where they were coming from (K final interview).

> There were some things that didn't come in my mind but other people got different ideas- or a different angle on the same thing, so it was good to discuss (L final interview).

Finally, participants discussed the social factor, talking with the same group of people every week:

> P: I liked the group [...] they are just a bunch of nice people.
> SD: But we're with this group every week – is there something different about when we are reading *Passenger*?
> P: We have something to talk about- we are getting together over something [...] we are concentrating on something- something to discuss (P final interview).

> Well, it's nice to read together, it's nice to read in a group – it's just nice. We get to understand each other more (L final interview).

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This last quotation goes beyond the pleasure of being with other people, beyond P's stress on meeting with others with a focus for the conversation, beyond pedagogical benefits of reading as a group, and even beyond even the realization that reading can be a communal as well as an individual process. It moves towards a link between reading, novels and empathy, which will be developed in 5.4.

4.8 Chapter summary

In this chapter I examined the participants' own findings, expressed in their mind-maps, before returning to the transcripts and notebooks to analyse each of the six themes. This analysis generated areas for further discussion in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion & Conclusion

While the previous chapter used the transcripts and notebooks to analyse the six themes emerging from the coding process, this chapter will use existing literature to examine four key ideas put forward by that analysis: reading as experience; reading circles as 'ideal pedagogy;' reading as individual vs. reading as communal; and, finally, the pleasures and politics of novel reading and reading circles. I will then present implications for practice, limitations of this study, ideas for dissemination, areas for future research and final thoughts.

5.1 Reading as experience

In 1.3 I asserted that reading was, amongst other things, an experience and therefore its research requires a phenomenological approach, speaking to learners to access the first person perspectives of readers themselves. That reading can be seen as experience, therefore, was a given of this project from the beginning. However, these data have suggested more about what this really means.

Dewey stresses that experience only has meaning if "action" and "consequence" are "joined in perception" (1934, p. 46). Writing of the place of poetry in the English secondary school syllabus, Gordon (2009, p. 166) argues that poetry *is* an experience and needs to be treated as such, by reading and listening to poems aloud. This is how, he feels, poems are to be understood. He also evokes the notion of a 'lifeworld' (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000), "the voice, history and culture – the *life* – of an individual," stating "any poetry encounter is a meeting of two *lifeworlds*, the first that of the listener or reader, the second that newly unconcealed world projected as poem" (J. Gordon, 2009, p. 166). Importantly, this concept of a lifeworld comes from Habermas' (1984) 'theory of communicative action,' where he writes of the lifeworld as the "context-forming horizon" (p. 337) from which we communicate and interpret. This view declares that literature is experience in two ways: literary works exist only as they are experienced, as they are read, seen or listened to – what I will call 'lived experience' – and reading/listening to literature is an interplay between two different interpretive lifeworlds of experience: the reader/listener's and the work's. The data from this thesis illustrate both aspects of reading as experience.

The data present reading as five acts (see 4.2) and these can be seen as five aspects of the reading circle as lived experience: learning words and ideas, decoding and remembering, communicating, imagining and feeling. Participants explained what they did every week at home, reading both silently and aloud, looking up words in the dictionary, asking friends, thinking, feeling, assessing. Participants spoke of enjoying holding the books, owning them, smelling them and carrying them around. These too are part of the lived experience of reading.

The data also demonstrate Gordon's second aspect of literature as experience: reading as a meeting of lifeworlds. On the 10th of March, we read the passage where Murri reveals that she has published her research on communicating with Roma, and that throughout their involvement she had been secretly studying Roma for her PhD. Everyone agreed that Murri had done something wrong, but opinions varied greatly between whether she was simply "a bit sly" (as P put it) or whether her behaviour was seriously morally reprehensible, a betrayal, as L argued:

> She's using him [...] that's the worst thing [...] she used him badly, if she wanted to use him, she shouldn't have got involved with him- that's bad [...] that was bad [...] treachery [...] it's like 'et tu Brutus'! (L 10 March 09).

L was visibly angry as he was talking. He remembered this in his final interview:

> When [...] the main character slept with this woman who used him or whatever to do her PhD and we had quite a heated discussion about that [...] she could have done it differently [...] if someone knows how important a thing is, then you make different interpretations from the same piece of information that you read [...] and that's what happened. I had my experience that made my observations and they had theirs (L final interview).

L's lifeworld was different, in this respect, from those of his colleagues, and this, combined with the lifeworld of the novel, produced his "different interpretation." Similarly attuned to the workings of this manifestation of reading as experience, K noted how she was drawn into an unfamiliar lifeworld (that of the professional orchestra in *Passenger*) through the use of the familiar experience of personal relationships:

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> It's always easier to pull someone in [to a novel] with a friendship, everybody's had a friendship with someone [...] so the friendship part was interesting [...] the way he meets this girl [...] and he was quite funny, and I don't know, because I've never, I've never been or spoken to somebody who's part of an orchestra [...] I thought it was apart from my world, but the friendship brought it closer (K final interview).

Gordon's use of the term lifeworld, its evocation of linguistics' 'mindstyle' (Fowler, 1977; Leech & Short, 1981), and its application to novel reading calls up another way to express the novel as experience: Bakhtin's (1981) notion of the novel as multi-voiced discourse. A novel (unlike some poems or short stories) does not represent only one lifeworld, but many, not merely those of each character, but also those of the various domains the characters inhabit. Gordon writes that "any poetic encounter is a meeting of two lifeworld*s*" (2009, p. 166); following Bakhtin, we could rephrase this as 'any *novelistic* encounter is a meeting of *many lifeworlds*: the reader's and the many represented in the novel.' For a reading circle experience this is further amplified. Reading a novel in a reading circle is therefore a meeting of *a great many lifeworlds*: those of the novel and those of the readers. This meeting of multiple lifeworlds is one of the reasons why participants felt it was 'nice to read in group:'

> It [reading together] was good because we got different angles; different interpretations based on our different life experiences (L final interview).

However, more than Gordon's *two* aspects of reading as experience, these data evoke Dewey's (1934) *three* way classification of art as experience: the experience (of the artist or culture) which goes *into* producing a work of art (pp. 10-11) (hereafter DE1), the lived experience *of* looking at a work of art (pp. 36-38) (or reading a novel, listening to music, watching a play) (hereafter DE2) and the future experiences which are produced *by* that lived artistic experience: those who have looked at a piece of art, or read a book, will go on to do certain things, to have certain thoughts and therefore experiences as a result (pp. 13-15) (hereafter DE3). Yet, Dewey's distinction between DE2 and DE3 is more complex for certain art forms than others. Taking in a painting, for example, takes less time than reading a novel, or rather the premise of its spectatorship does not rely on an extended engagement in the same way a novel's does (a novel is meant to be read, page by page, if not word by word). It is possible to experience a painting in an instant, but a novel takes time, necessitates a

developmental process. Therefore, DE3, the experience *produced by* reading *Passenger* is not only how *finishing* reading *Passenger* will affect the future actions of its readers (for example, B being more attentive to her patients), but how each day's reading (DE2) changes the reader (if slightly) and therefore affects the next lived experience of reading. The experience resulting from reading one page of *Passenger* (DE3) affects the future experience of reading a page of *Passenger* (DE2), which then produces a new experience (DE3) and so on, page by page, chapter by chapter, day by day (see figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1: A diagrammatical representation of Dewey's three aspects of art as experience applied to novel reading

IMAGE REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES
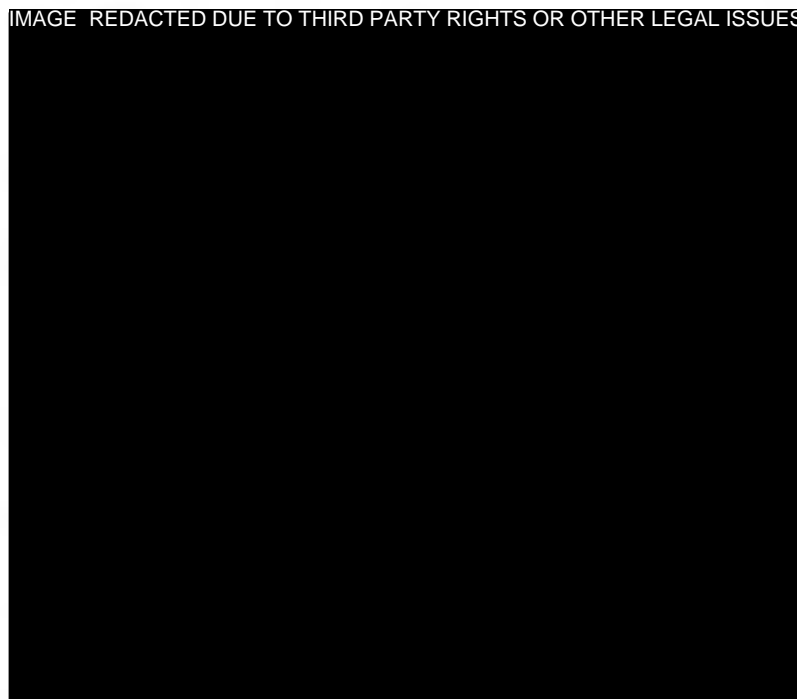
The 'building' aspect of novel reading (discussed in 4.5) means that DE2 and DE3 merge. As already noted, Iser (1972, 1974, 1978), Fish (1980), Perry (1979), Culler (1975) and Rimmon-Kenan (1989) all analyse the process by which the reader reads a piece of text, processes it into frames of meaning, and then uses these frames of meaning to process subsequent text. In this way, Iser stresses, reading replicates "the process by which we gain [our own life] experience" (1972, p. 224). The above model adds to this equation the development of the reader herself during the reading

process. The experience *of* reading (DE2) creates experiences *from* reading (DE3), while (as what the reader reads becomes part of the reader's own developing lifeworld), determining the next experience of reading (DE2). Novel reading, therefore, interweaves these aspects of reading as experience. B's previous life experience as a health care assistant increased her interest in the medical aspects of the novel, which affected her enjoyment of and confidence in the reading process (including showing the novel to colleagues at work, and being the member of the reading circle with medical expertise). What she read (Milan's experience at the hospital, for example), influenced her to better recognize her patients' disorientation, which gave her a slightly different medical experience with which to read more of the novel. Each time she reads she brings a slightly different bank of personal experience with her, and each time she finishes reading she has gained more experience to take into her 'outside' life and influence her gathering of new life experience.

Seen in this way, novel reading is experience formation in a heightened sense, which has implications for any context that values the gaining of life experience. In Auster's (2004) *Oracle Night*, for example, the narrator rewrites *The Time Machine* as a Hollywood script. In his rewritten version, the citizens of the twenty-second-century are required to mark their twentieth birthdays with a time travel voyage:

> You begin two hundred years before your birth [...] and gradually
> work your way home to the present. The purpose of the trip is to
> teach you humility and compassion, tolerance for your fellow men
> (p. 106).

Auster's futuristic coming-of-age ritual, like novel reading, is an accelerated form of experience formation, designed to teach salient lessons. This brings us back to Dewey, this time to *Experience and Education* (Dewey, 1938) and his central "belief that all genuine education comes about through experience" (Dewey, 1938, p. 25).

5.2 Reading circles as 'ideal pedagogy'

This section will explore the notion of reading circles as 'ideal pedagogy' in terms of peer-teaching, negotiated syllabi, differentiation, the needs of first and second language learners, learning words and citizenship.

5.2.1 Peer-teaching

Dewey stresses that for experience to be educative, it must be continuous and interactive (Dewey, 1938, pp. 43-44). The reading circle – a process which lasted for seven months in class, and which participants extended by reading at home (and which could be further extended by starting another novel) – was certainly continuous and also highly interactive, with participants discussing, explaining, and finishing each other's sentences week after week. Both O'Donnell-Allen's (2006) and Daniel's (2006) definitions of reading circles emphasize the importance of reading circles being peer-led and peer-managed. Although my role as teacher worked against this initially, our reading circle became peer-led, an example of what is often called peer-work, peer-teaching and peer-assessment.

The importance of peer-work is central to the ideas of good teaching which currently dominate adult education (Derrick et al., 2009; Derrick, Gawn, & Ecclestone, 2008; Gardner, 2006; Looney, 2008; Swain, Griffiths, & Stone, 2006), which stress that adults learn best when involved in autonomous, peer- and self-teaching and assessment. Similarly, Day's (2003) research on using reading circles in Australian primary school English classes found that "to relinquish teacher control" and encourage peer-decision-making had the "unexpected benefit[s]" of "absolute enjoyment" and "a deeper level of understanding" as "students' ability to clarify, crystallize and justify their thoughts and ideas […] improved dramatically" (pp. 10-11). Cumming-Potvin's (2007) research on reading circles in middle-school Australian English classes found reading circle work to be effective because of its built in peer support, which "scaffolded" literacy development (p. 501).

'Scaffolding' (Bruner, 1983) is a useful way of expressing the in-built peer support of a reading circle. As discussed in the last chapter, participants helped each other decode, explained vocabulary, helped with remembering and interpretation, and gave each other feedback on their reading and ideas. This allowed each participant to read *Passenger* despite individual anxieties (B had trouble decoding, S with vocabulary, P with remembering 'what was going on'). Together they managed to read what few would have felt confident tackling alone.

5.2.2 Negotiated syllabi

Because the reading circle was peer-managed and involved peer-assessment, it can usefully be considered an example of a 'negotiated syllabus.' Breen & Littlejohn

(2000) emphasize the importance of the curriculum emerging as a product of negotiation with learners, rather than being something imposed on those learners. They conceptualize 'negotiation' as being of three kinds arranged in a Russian-doll structure. The outer doll, 'procedural negotiation,' aims to 'reach an agreement' about what to do in the classroom, how, why and/or when. A group may decide their main topic for the week, their learning outcomes for a series of sessions or to work towards a particular form of external accreditation. The middle doll, 'interactive negotiation,' is the conversation, dialogue or communication processes undertaken in order to reach those decisions. The inner doll is 'personal negotiation,' referring to the individual understanding, interpreting, reflecting and deciding, which allows the individual to make a genuine contribution to the group negotiation. Each of these aspects of negotiation are key to Breen & Littlejohn's process of negotiating a syllabus, their emphasis on learning being in the negotiation as well as lead by it, and the sense of personal and group investment in (and responsibility for) the syllabus produced.

This model is a close match to our reading circle work. The group decided that they wanted to read a novel using a reading circle approach. The group also decided how to spend their 40 minutes of weekly reading circle contact time, and what to do at home. Both of these are examples of procedural negotiation. These decisions were made through conversation (interactive negotiation), with time given for individuals to think through what they wanted, and encouraged to express those views, and listen to the views of others (personal negotiation). If we see this reading circle as part of the tradition of reading circles started autonomously by groups of adults around the world, then this aspect of negotiation is unremarkable, 'natural' and part of a long tradition of autonomous adult groups. However, if we see it as a part of a formal educational programme, this negotiation of syllabus becomes a radical pedagogic decision, with risks (such as a 'loss of teacher control' and 'negative hierarchies' developing amongst learners (Malchow Lloyd, 2006)) as well as substantial potential benefits, including a means to "construct and reflect learning as an emancipatory process" and "activate the social and cultural resources of the classroom group" (Breen & Littlejohn, 2000, pp. 21-22). This is reminiscent of the learner-centred pedagogy (and philosophy) of Hamilton & Hillier's (2006) first three English adult literacy policy phases, and, as such, it is an old answer to a new(er) question: differentiation.

5.2.3 Differentiation

Differentiation is the idea that learning methods, questions, tasks or outcomes are adapted to meet the varied needs of different learners (O'Brien & Guiney, 2001; Petty, 2009). These data indicate that reading circles offer opportunities for participant-led differentiation. Participants decided together how to spend our communal time, as well as what to do at home, thus creating 'tasks' and 'outcomes' to match their own abilities, confidence and goals. For example, participant A wanted to expand her vocabulary, while P wanted to improve her ability to remember the events in a longer text. Both of these participants shaped their reading circle work accordingly. A asked questions about items of vocabulary each week and used her personal notebook to record new words and definitions. In the group, P asked and answered questions about the story and took notes of each chapter as she read at home, to help her remember (see 4.5). K noticed this differentiation of goal and personal outcome:

> B, for example, she was getting the medical point of view- she was fascinated by it and also it was a good book for her to read because she wasn't a book reader, she'd never read a book before [...] there was another girl, a lady, in the class, who had difficulty with the words, but she really read well and understood a lot [...] I'm really really interested in how people think and how they see things [...] how they create things in their minds and how they pull things out of books and out of situations (K final interview).

5.2.4 The needs of first and second language learners

Differentiation of a particular kind has become a bigger issue in English adult literacy classes because of the increasing presence of second/third/fourth language learners. While adult literacy classes have always included some learners for whom English (or a variety of English) is not a first language, recent funding changes (many learners now have to pay to join ESOL classes while adult literacy provision remains free), mean that more and more learners who may be better served in ESOL classes join adult literacy provision. There can therefore be substantially different needs to be met in one group, particularly around reading. The needs of a first language speaker who has difficulty decoding words are potentially very different from a second language learner who wants to develop vocabulary and grammatical accuracy, and may have

trouble understanding why an English person cannot read (though there are of course also many second language learners with literacy needs).

Such a range of needs was presented in this particular group, with S representing one end, and B the other end of this spectrum. This had been a great challenge in teaching this group and it was a very happy surprise, therefore, to see that the reading circle 'worked' with both sets of needs, and those in between. Participants who wanted to develop their English vocabularies did so, with the support of those with larger English vocabularies who enjoyed explaining word meanings as part of exploring the meaning of the novel (rather than as a potentially tedious game of providing definitions). Those who had found decoding a challenge were able to call on the help of others to decode particular words, while the fact that they were helping with definitions gave a sense of a 'level playing field' with everyone having some needs alongside obvious, and useful, strengths. This may seem utopian; what would have happened, for example, if there were someone who did not have any 'strengths' to offer the group? This is very unlikely. In a context where linguistic and literacy skills, life experience, study skills and social skills all contribute to the 'building up' of the 'story,' everyone really does have something to offer the communal reading process. A reading circle approach, therefore, is worth exploring as one means to differentiate effectively with mixed ESOL/literacy groups.

5.2.5 Learning words

Exactly how participants used the reading circle to learn words was discussed in 4.4, but I would like to look at both aspects – meaning and decoding – in the light of literature in the respective fields. Nagy (1997) argues the importance of context, stressing that there are three types of context-related knowledge involved in learning, and using, items of vocabulary: linguistic knowledge, world knowledge, and strategic knowledge. A reading circle provides all three areas of knowledge. The text of the novel itself, along with the readers' shared linguistic knowledge, provides the linguistic context for learning new words. The novel and circle of readers also provide knowledge of 'the world,' the developing world of the novel and the worlds of each participant. One participant worked in a hospital and could provide medical knowledge, one was familiar with classical music, and another shared her knowledge of trams. Each helped the others to understand and use new words. Finally, together they developed their strategic knowledge, using notebooks to record words in

different ways and 'recycling' these words in group discussions. In this sense, our reading circle was an ideal environment for learning vocabulary in context.

However, theorists do not agree on the use of context in vocabulary learning. Sökmen (1997) questions this emphasis on context, specifically whether inferring from context alone is enough. Not only does she feel reliance on inference can be slow and confusing, but argues that vocabulary needs to be learnt in such a way that it can be used in new contexts, which involves a broader understanding than may come from one context. Vocabulary, she feels, needs to be observed in numerous 'encounters' and 'recontextualized' by learners, used in new situations and contexts, for a "deeper processing" to take place. Additionally, she stresses the importance of using explicit vocabulary teaching techniques such as dictionary work and 'semantic elaboration' (ways for learners to record and explore vocabulary in relation to other vocabulary) (Sökmen, 1997).

In our reading circle, most new items of vocabulary reoccurred in the novel and/or the discussion, providing the 'numerous encounters' required to learn vocabulary (a finding shared by Day, Omura & Hiramatsu (1991)). As noted above, participants themselves 'recycled' their newly learnt vocabulary. Further, the vocabulary discussions involved negotiating a range of contexts (see example of 'wholesome' in 4.4). Additionally, participants used dictionaries (English and bi-lingual) and recorded words in notebooks (using and developing strategic knowledge). Vocabulary, in this reading circle, was both inferred from context and peer-taught explicitly and systematically.

> With *Passenger* we were reading in the class […] and at home and we were talking […] we explain when we come back in class, what happen and which words we don't know the meaning and we underline and then we discuss […] and we are writing the meaning in the book to learn and for the spelling practice (S final interview).

Neither as teacher, researcher nor participant did I suggest participants record vocabulary in notebooks or give any advice about learning vocabulary. The study skills the majority of the participants used were peer- and self-developed and used within the reading circle to develop particular individual goals (such as vocabulary or spelling). This is at the heart of strategic knowledge.

The other aspect of 'learning words' important to these participants was decoding. Our reading circle involved no explicit reading instruction, and yet participants reported a greater confidence decoding.

> Reading words, you know spelling them out – sounding them. I'm definitely better at reading words now (P final interview).

> I can tackle more words now, try to say them out instead of being scared (B final interview).

In 4.7 I noted that participants discussed how listening to others read, while following along (therefore reinforcing the written-spoken connection), helped their decoding. They also reported that reading aloud themselves allowed them to get help from others in the group, while developing decoding automaticity (Paran, 1996). Reading aloud is hotly contested as a way of developing reading skills, in both adult literacy and ELT circles (Gabrielatos, 1996; Gibson, 2008; National Institute for Literacy, 2009) as well as school literacy (Ash, Kuhn, & Walpole, 2009), with accusations ranging from it merely being "ineffective," as it allocates only a small proportion of class time to any one learner's reading and provides listeners with poor models (Ash et al., 2009, p. 87), to actively "damaging students' social and emotional growth" due to potential "embarrassment and anxiety" (p. 89). Others argue that reading aloud is simply not a useful skill (National Institute for Literacy, 2009).

These data answer the above charges. When one participant was reading, she was not only developing her own reading skills but those of everybody listening and following on in the text (see 4.7). This means that this time was used to improve the reading skills of all the learners, not just those of the learner reading aloud at the time. Gibson (2008) and Duncan (2009) also argue that reading aloud can develop understanding of phoneme-grapheme correspondence in the listener as well as reader. Seen in this way, reading aloud becomes a highly efficient use of time. The argument that a 'less than fluent' reader does not provide a good model for listening peers is to mistakenly imagine that the world is composed of two types of readers, 'fluent' and 'not fluent,' and that learners can only learn from the fluent. Instead, I would argue that all readers are on a spectrum of fluency and that connections between written and spoken words can developed from listening to readers on all parts of this spectrum.

Additionally, for an unconfident reader, listening to someone else reading with a similar lack of fluency can be encouraging (as B discussed, see 4.7).

These participants have spoken of how reading aloud, and listening to others read, helped, rather than damaged, their reading identities and made them "stronger" (B final interview) readers. Finally, they argued, just as I did in Duncan (2009) that not only does reading aloud help develop their reading (and reading identities), but it is also a useful reading practice in itself. Participants explained that they would like to be able to read aloud to family members, at work or to enjoy more novels with others.

I am not arguing that reading aloud is integral for reading circles. The majority of reading circles in the twentieth- and twenty-first-centuries, in and out of formal educational contexts, do not include reading aloud. However, I am arguing that reading aloud could be an important aspect of reading circles, for two reasons. Firstly, the commitment to a *peer-led* reading circle has to be complete; if participants want to read aloud, they should read aloud, and their teacher needs to think about why they are interested in doing so. Cho & Choi (2008) worked with Korean school children learning English and found that a combination of teachers reading stories aloud to pupils and time for self-selected individual or paired reading produced significantly higher English language test scores and an increased "interest in reading." Interestingly, they suggest it is the process of *listening* to a story which really 'awakens' pupils' interest in stories and reading. This is reminiscent of Pennac's (2006) description of reading aloud to challenging French secondary school pupils in order to generate a love of reading and literature. Joining this debate in discussion of 'the story as voice.' Atwood emphasizes the importance of listening to books read aloud: "I'm not arguing for the abolition of the eye, merely for the reinstatement of the voice, and for an appreciation of the way it carries the listener along with it" (1989, p. 71).

Secondly, critics of reading aloud as an educational tool forget that reading aloud is a common reading practice. People do indeed read aloud in daily life (Duncan, 2008a; Gabrielatos, 1996), if just a few lines of an email to a listening colleague, or the opening times of a shop to a waiting friend. Confident, fluent readers simply do not notice the frequency of these occurrences, but adult literacy learners are acutely aware of them, and therefore usually want to develop this aspect of reading.

5.2.6 Citizenship

Participants also explained that they learnt about the world, about others and about their own place in the world, what Gordon (2009) describes as "consideration of the very nature of identity, their own identity and the identities of others" (p. 174). This kind of 'citizenship' education recalls Meek (1988) and Rose's (2002) arguments for the study of literature. It is also fundamental to literacy in its various definitions. Reading and writing are, quite literally, about our place in relation to others (I read another's words; I write for someone else to read). This is developed in 5.3.

The above exploration of reading circles as ideal pedagogy is not a self-congratulatory claim that this reading circle represents the best way to realize the above notions of 'effective' pedagogy. Rather, it was an attempt to use educational discourse to analyse what participants felt they gained from the reading circle. Limitations of this project will be dealt with in 5.6.

5.3 The Individual and the Communal

According to the reading circle members, the imaginative act of reading allows us to gain new experience and to see things from others' points of view, bringing with it a triumphant sense of breaking out of the individual subjectivities or hard little "brain-boxes" (Byatt, 1997) which divide us from each other. Yet, is this a move into another individual subjectivity or a transition from an individual perspective to the communal?

From the perceived gulf between an individual-cognition-based and a social-practice-based approach to literacy, to debates about whether individual silent reading or reading aloud (in and for a group) is 'the norm,' studies of reading, reading circles and the novel are riddled with tensions between the individual and the communal. Indeed, a tension runs throughout this project and its data, between novel reading as an individual act, and novel reading as a communal act. Each will be explored in turn.

The history of the novel has been argued as a history of the philosophy of the individual. Lodge (1992) characterizes the novel as the first literary genre to claim to be telling new stories, born of individuals, rather than retelling the stories of a culture. Watt places the novel within the development of "modern realism" which "begins from the position that truth can be discovered by the individual through his senses; it has its origins in Descartes and Locke" (2000, p. 12), arguing that the novel has

evolved out of the (new) twin cultural preoccupations of the ordinary and the individual, and is essentially a form exploring "the primacy of the individual experience" (2000, p. 15). Eagleton (2005) presents the novel as born of, and dominated by, realism, representing 'the ordinary,' while preoccupied with what "lurks deep in the human psyche" (p. 11). Writing of the twentieth century novelists he admires, Burgess (1967) devotes a chapter to "Great Individuality," noting the dominance of "the strong individual voice that shouts or sings alone" (p. 73).

The development of the novel as a new literary genre preoccupied with individuality can be linked with a new dominance of silent reading. From the sixteenth-century, silent reading was gradually becoming a more common practice in Europe, as being able to read became more common and the need for the few readers to read to the many non-readers was gradually decreasing (Manguel, 1996). Rose writes of the sixteenth-century religious/political figure Hendrik Niclaes's dislike for "the learnt classes arrogantly enforcing a literal reading of the Bible" and welcoming of "the untutored common reader" reading for himself using "the new fashion for individual silent reading" (2002, p. 14). Both Niclaes and Rose note the association of silent reading with individuality of thought. By the time the novel became the dominant popular literary form in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, silent reading was firmly established as a common practice (Pugh, 1978). It could therefore be argued that the novel was born of a philosophical interest in the individual, became popular at a time when reading as a silent, individual activity was also becoming increasingly dominant, and remains a literary form enjoyed privately and concerned with individual psychology.

These data support this view. Participants read individually at home or on public transport each week, kept individual notebooks based on individual needs and recounted their personal interpretations of the novel. Their novel reading was, therefore, at least partly, an individual experience. *Passenger* also revolves around the thoughts and feelings of one main character, Milan, and our discussion reflected this focus. Participants also stressed that they were learning to see from someone else's point of view, gaining another, but still *individual,* perspective. K declared: "it's someone else's vocabulary, somebody else's personality that you're reading" and B said reading *Passenger* has "given me the guideline of how I can see things from someone else's head" (B final interview). *Passenger*'s content, how participants read the novel, and their reflections on this reading process all undeniably highlight

'individual psychology': "What's a novel? [...] I'd say it's [...] a quiet place to go [...] into someone else's life" (K final interview).

However there is, of course, the other side. As much as the early development of the novel had 'the individual' as its subject, its production was the result of large communal, or community shifts. Watt (2000) connects the development of the novel as a genre, and its rising popularity, with the development of the reading public, rising dramatically from the late eighteenth- and early to mid nineteenth-centuries. The factors which produced this increase in the reading public are various and interrelating: from the greater availability of books (in coffee houses and new libraries) to changes in working patterns and the movement of the population shifts (from the countryside to the cities) following the industrial revolution, and from religious and political movements which emphasized freedom through education to changes in the printing industry and taxation which allowed for more affordable books and periodicals to become commonplace (Altick, 1957; James, 1973; Rose, 2002; Vincent, 1989, 2000; Webb, 1955).

This 'rise of mass literacy' occurred at a time when the novel was becoming the dominant literary genre, which at least partly resulted from a change in how 'literature' was paid for, a shift away from an individual-focused system of literary patronage towards the new public-taste-led publishing industry (Watt, 2000). By the mid-nineteenth-century, decisions about what was published were dictated, for the first time, by the reading choices of 'the masses' (James, 1973).

Rose (2002) stresses another communal aspect of reading, how in 1872 reading the national press allowed labourers on strike at different ends of the country to see themselves "as part of a larger struggle to win the right to vote and organize trade unions" (p. 10). He argues further that the increase in working people reading canonical literary works (including novels and poetry) was a significant aspect of a growing national politicisation of the 'working classes,' citing nineteenth-century associations of literature with socialism, as the reading of literature brought "freedom of thought [...] to rebel against custom and convention"(p. 37). This argument carries with it both the greater contention that the development of a print culture is linked to the "disintegration of feudalism" (p. 25) because it created new communities which weakened the servant-master links of the oral networks, and that by definition great literature makes its readers "militant and articulate" (p. 39).

Literary criticism too carries challenges to the idea that the novel is a genre of the individual. Bakhtin (1981) classifies the novel as "multi-voiced discourse" (or "heteroglossia") arguing that a novel contains many voices, not simply those of direct character speech, but those of the 'character zones' which divide the narrative linguistically and ideologically into interacting "specific world views" (p. 292). The novel is a community of voices, shaping individual voices into a written representation of community. Culler (1975) too considers the novel a container of diversity: "fiction can hold together within a single space a variety of languages, levels of focus, points of view, which would be contradictory in other kinds of discourse" (p. 261). For Culler this is a unique quality of narrative fiction; other 'kinds of discourse' cannot hold together this community of voices.

Irish short-story writer Frank O'Connor approached the novel as community from a different angle, arguing that the main difference between a short story and a novel is that the main character of a novel must "represent the reader in some aspect of his [the reader's] own conception of himself" but this must happen within "some relationship – hostile or friendly – with society as a whole" (O'Connor, 1963, p. 27). A novel, unlike a short story, must represent the communal. *Passenger* isn't really about Milan, but about Milan and Roma, Karen and Murri, about Andreas and his children and ex-wife, about the orchestra and how it operates. It's about the world of Murri's research and academic hierarchy, about doctors and their ambitions.

Novels were, and are, also read communally. Mullan (2006) cites evidence from Jane Austen's letters demonstrating that it was common for novels to be read aloud in families throughout the eighteenth-century. He goes on to argue that novelists of this period wrote with the expectation that their novels would be read aloud, writing different characters' voices in anticipation of reader dramatization using different accents. Altick describes "twenty men and women gathering in a locksmith's shop to listen to the newest number of the *Pickwick Papers*, borrowed from a circulating library at *2d.* a day" (1957, p. 11). Novel reading was, at least sometimes, a communal activity with one person reading aloud to a group of eager listeners.

It may be that silent reading is the dominant form of novel reading now, with the reading aloud of fiction mainly associated with parents reading to children, but we do not really know. Radio 4's 'Book of the Week' and 'Book at Bedtime' were two of radio's most popular programmes in 2004 (both featuring in the top twenty-five

most accessed radio programmes online) (BBC Press Office, 2004), audiobooks are gaining in popularity with the rise of 'ipods' (Piatkus, 2009) and now have their own review sections in the national press (see guardian.co.uk and timesonline.co.uk). Observing a teacher training class at a London further education college earlier this year, I overheard one woman tell another that she had started listening to audiobooks but didn't like unknown voices "interpreting [...] for her" and now likes to read novels aloud with her friends. Adult may well be reading novels aloud to each other more than we realize.

However, it would also be a mistake to assume that reading aloud is the only shape that communal novel reading takes. The majority of reading circles do not include reading aloud, but centre on the importance of group discussion as an essential part of novel reading (Daniels, 2006; Harvey & Daniels, 2009; Jackson, 1999; Long, 1993, 2003; Radway, 1994). More generally, Paran (2003), Long (2003) and Harvey & Daniels (2009) all argue that there is a basic human need to talk about what one has read. These data strongly support this view. In the final interviews, participants stressed how much they enjoyed reporting, clarifying vocabulary and interpreting together. In 4.5 I argued that their process of building the novel through group discussion was an example of reading as communal process (a communal cognitive activity), rather than simply a communal practice.

Is novel reading, therefore, primarily individual or communal? The answer, predictably, is that this dichotomy is illusionary; echoing the dynamics of Nietzsche's (1872/1993) Apolline and Dionysiac, each needs and contains the other. O'Connor's (1963) distinction between the short story and the novel is really arguing that the novel's protagonist needs a society to stand against, a community to create him as an individual, and while print culture can be perceived as the bringer of many communal groupings, print is also seen as "the technology of individualism" (Rose quoting McLuhan p. 25). Arguing for recognition of the social aspects of reading which she feels are hidden by the dominant individualist view, Radway (1994) writes of Long (1993):

> She is interested, finally, in the way reading group members use their reading, both individually and collectively, to negotiate their relationship to the culture and society within which they find themselves (Radway, 1994, p. 293).

Pennac (2006) also recognizes this seeming paradox: "We live in groups because we are sociable, but we read because we know we're alone. Reading offers a kind of companionship that takes no one's place" (p. 174). The novel concerns precisely this complex interplay between the individual and the communal, in content as well as in its publishing and reading processes. The enduring popularity of reading circles, as well as people reading alone in grateful isolation, is testament to this duality.

The participants in this project discussed how the group experience has changed their reading identity, and therefore their own reading in five acts. They also described how group-scaffolding has helped them with the 'individual cognition' aspects of individual reading, such as decoding, assigning meanings to words, remembering and interpretation. Finally, the group also read together, feeding individual ideas into a group interpretation, and using the group interpretation as a basis for further individual reading. As noted in 4.2.1 and 4.7, participants discussed reading as gaining another perspective, what Wright (1982) (discussing Holland (1978)) calls "a re-creation of identity [...] an intersubjective process, in that it is the overtaking of another's meaning" (Wright, 1982, p. 149), escaping one subjectivity to access another, or several: the narrator, Milan, Roma, Karen or Murri. This shift allows the reader to escape the self and understand what is outside of the self. The novel reader, whether reading alone, for others, or with others, is necessarily taking on other subjectivities, and therefore stepping outside his or her individual perspective to imagine the world outside. The pleasures and politics of this interplay are discussed next.

5.4 The pleasures and politics of novel reading and reading circles

The women of Kalamazoo (Jackson, 1999) found pleasure in the "delightful entertainment" of books and in this thesis participants described the joys of constructing a story, alone and together as a group. They found happiness, excitement, intellectual stimulation, satisfaction and companionship. It's not hard to find examples of pleasures of reading, of novel reading and of reading circles, in these data as from thousands of years of writings about reading. However, there is more than pleasure.

Trilling (1966) writes of an uneasy relationship between pleasure and morality in European art (including literature). He feels the concept of pleasure from art became divorced from the concept of pleasure as related to morality in a wider

"devaluation of pleasure" (p. 82) and post-Romantic separation of art and politics from the early eighteenth-century onwards. Pleasure, according to Trilling, has become morally suspect, and art, including its pleasures, removed from, and irrelevant to, 'serious' political or ethical contemplation. Yet, much is still being written on ethics and literature. Sartre (1967) argues that the taste of "human freedom," which the 'building' aspect of reading provides, necessarily makes it an ethical lesson as the reader feels their "freedom is indissolubly linked with that of all other men" (p. 46). Hillis Miller (1987) writes of the 'ethics of reading,' stating that storytelling embodies the 'universal moral law' of action and consequence. Narrative, he argues, is necessarily an exploration of ethical equations, of the ethical implications of different courses of action. Booth (1988) similarly stresses the importance, or even inevitability, of ethical evaluation in literary study, given "the unique value of fiction: its relatively cost-free offer of trial runs [...] a relative freedom from consequence" (p. 485). While Sartre focuses on reading as an experience of freedom and its obligations, and Hillis Miller suggests that the cause-and-effect nature of narrative itself becomes a demonstration of ethics, Booth focuses on the reader's ethical training in "trying out" courses of action with "relative freedom from consequence."

Bettelheim (and Meek (1988)) present reading literature as central to a child's moral education, "helping him to find meaning in life" (Bettelheim, 1975, p. 3), including initiation into the polarities of good and evil. Fairy tales, Bettelheim argues, teach children the difference between 'good actions' and 'evil' through identification with the hero and demonstration of the fate of evil-doers. Though speaking of children, and fairy tales, the central idea is shared with Sartre, Hillis Miller and Booth; when we read we see how different lives are lead, observe who does what and what happens to them, and thus gain moral/ethical understanding. R spoke similarly in his initial interview:

> When you read, it's like you're finding out something [...] the challenges that happen in people's lives [...] for you to see, for you to learn from it [...] like some people they put theirself in unnecessary situations, like getting on drugs or mixing in some world that they don't know [...] and then later on they can't just walk away out of it. [you read] to make sure that you don't put yourself in that kind of position (R initial interview).

Novel writers too have written of the ethical element of their craft, often explicitly linked to the relationship between the individual and the communal. Woolf (1929) stresses the importance of writers writing as models for the next generation and readers reading models from the last generation. Forster (1927) argues that people read novels to get "solace" and guidance from the "visibility" of the lives of characters in novels. Orwell argued that the most significant motive for writing is "political purpose" or "desire to push the world in a certain direction, to alter other people's idea of the kind of society that they should strive after" (Orwell, 1946/2003, pp. 4-5).

However, (at least) two novelists locate this ethical dimension specifically in ideas of truth and untruth. Irving (1993) writes of how as a teenager he and his friends made constant fun of 'Piggy Sneed' – an unfortunate man in their town – until one day this cruel mockery lead to Sneed's death in a barn fire. Irving produced his first story as an attempt to rewrite Sneed's life and death, both reproducing and redeeming life's cruelties. He wrote that "a writer's business is setting fire to Piggy Sneed – *and* trying to save him – again and again, forever" (p. 25) because "the most truthful detail is what *could* have happened" (p. 9). Hemingway, too, spoke of the writer's "sense of justice and of injustice" (p. 61) in terms of the creation of truths:

> From things that have happened and from things as they exist and from all things that you know and all those you cannot know, you make something through your invention that is not a representation but a whole new thing truer than anything true and alive, and you make it alive, and if you make it well enough, you give it immortality (The Editors of the Paris Review, 1958, p. 61).

The concept of "a whole new thing truer than anything true" recalls the discussion of fiction and truth in 4.6 and A's point that reading a novel allowed her to play with the idea of something being true, and learn from it, without the anxiety of knowing that it was 'really happening.' Hemingway's emphasis on "a whole new thing" and Irving's "what could have happened" also demand a closer look at imagination (one of the five acts of reading).

As noted in 4.2.4, the term imagination was used by participants to express how they visualized the events of the novel 'like a film in your mind.' This was, however, only one part of their conception of imagination, the other, as for Sadoski &

Paivio (2001) and Coleridge (1817/1986), being an act of creation, in this case the ability to get inside the minds of others, "a freshness of sensation" (Coleridge, 1817/1986, p. 395). Ignoring the word imagination, Russian formalist Shklovsky (1965) called this creative freshness *ostranenie*, or 'defamiliarisation,' arguing, exactly as Wordsworth and Coleridge argued in their revolutionary *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* (1802), that the goal and glory of literature is to re-present the world that habit has blinded us to (Shklovsky, 1965). A work of literature allows us to lose our blinding familiarity so we can once more "feel vividly and see clearly" (Wordsworth & Coleridge, 1802, p. 168).

Maxine Greene also links imagination to *ostranenie*, arguing of the educative powers of the arts for "becoming wide-awake in the world. For me as for many others, the arts provide new perspectives on the lived world [...] a startling defamiliarisation of the ordinary" (Greene, 1995, p. 4). Like the participants in this study, Greene sees *ostrananie* as not only about 'transfiguring the commonplace' (Danto, 1981; Spark, 1961) so we can see *our* old familiars with the freshness of defamiliarisation, but also about another kind of defamiliarisation: seeing someone else's world, through someone else's eyes.

Seeing, or rather reading, the ordinary through the eyes of others is praised by Rose (2002) as the key to a political perspective and the importance of a national press. He quotes George Bourne who, arguing of the impact of the national press in the late-nineteenth/early twentieth-centuries, says ""the main thing is that the village mind should stretch itself, and look beyond the village"" (p. 28-29). B echoes this sentiment:

> If you never read before, like me, I have no awareness of what's happening to those around me. I am just one fool on the street, don't know better, about others. But the way I read the book it's given me a guideline of how I can see things from someone else's head. I can see things better (B final interview).

Reading can get us beyond the village, beyond the individual 'fool on the street' perspective, which necessarily has ethical/political implications.

Zunshine (2006) approaches this issue from the perspective of cognitive psychology and literary theory as she investigates 'why we read novels.' She uses the term 'mind reading' (taken from studies of autism (Baron-Cohen, 1997)) to describe the 'usual' human ability (though less common in people with autism) to make

inferences about the internal mental states of others from reading external signs (such as facial expressions or movements). This ability, she argues, is both required to read a novel and further developed through novel reading, and is the basis of our ability to empathize with other human beings. 'Mind reading' seems to fit with the above ideas on imagination, just as Zunshine's claim that novel reading develops empathy is echoed by L's argument that *Passenger* is about empathy. He argues that with Roma, Milan develops an empathy that was absent from his life before and with *Passenger* the reader too develops renewed empathy.

L: it [*Passenger*]'s good for people, even people at 16. It teaches empathy- things that these days we often overlook, but are important for human beings- how to sympathize with somebody, how to help people, how to empathize with people.

SD: Why does *Passenger* in particular develop empathy?

L: Because the relationship between the brother and the sister [...] the empathy, some people don't see it, they are not capable of understanding other's problems. To give them empathy- to feel sorry for them- everyone feels better- so you know they're not alone in what they feel (L final interview).

This was discussed in the reading circle as well:

...he was a selfish young man and do things for himself and don't care but when he discovered his sister he become very caring... (B 29 April 09).

B elaborates on how novel reading can develop empathy in its readers:

With a patient, my patient in the hospital, they are from their house, they come to an unknown setup [...] and what's going to happen to them- it [*Passenger*] taught me a thing or two- that first thing in the morning I should go and say good morning to them- it taught me how the other person will be feeling, there on the other side of the bed. I'm here on this side, I'm ok, and they are there, and they're not well. In Milan's case, he have this thing [...] this object in his body and he have no idea [...] for me he's like a patient lying in the

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bed, not knowing who's going to come through that door in the morning [...] I need to think what they are feeling (B final interview).

Reading as an imaginative act is an act of *ostranenie*, an act of seeing afresh through taking on other identities. These shifts in identity are cause and effect of the oscillation between the individual and the communal, which I am arguing is core to novel reading and amplified in the reading circle experience. Reading novels and taking part in reading circles (which scaffold the novel reading process as well as heighten its communal nature) are acutely political acts because they educate us in the lives of others, thereby developing that underrated by-product of empathy, compassion.

After describing his mind-map (discussed in 4.1) and how *Passenger*, for him, was about compassion, L explained why this is so important:

Sometimes we are narrow minded and see things just from our point of view, and someone has to remind us to be open, to understand what happens to other people and understand other people (L final interview).

5.5 Implications

I will explore implications for our understanding of novel reading, implications for using reading circles and implications for developing adult emergent reading.

5.5.1 Implications for understanding novel reading

- Novel reading involves the reader 'building up' the *work* (Iser (1972)) or *story* (participants) through the cognitive and imaginative work of inference, the creating, rejecting and adapting of 'frames of meaning' (Perry, 1979), as well as word level decoding and vocabulary processing skills.

- Though often done by a lone reader, the above 'building' work can be carried out by a group, through discussion. Group members can talk through connections, memories, inferences and interpretations to create and adapt 'frames of meaning' together. *In this way, reading can be a communal process as well as a communal practice.*

- Novel reading can be a communal as well as an individual activity. Besides aspects of the reading process being potentially communal (see above), some people enjoy getting together to discuss novels they are reading or have read, listen to others reading novels to them, read novels aloud to others and recommend novels and receive recommendations, passing novels around social circles. These are all aspects of how novel reading can be a social practice (as well as being an intensely private one). These social forms of novel reading may well increase as other opportunities for communal gatherings decrease.

- Any work of art can be an experience (as Dewey (1934) argues), but novel reading, I have argued, is 'more' of an experience than most. The time it takes to read a novel and the active role of the reader (requiring the reader to 'input' experience in order to read) means that novel reading interweaves Dewey's three aspects of 'art as experience.' The experiences which have produced the novel, the lived experience of reading the novel and the experiences that this

reading produces intermingle in a reading process of acute experience formation.

- There is a juxtaposition between the self-evident truths of a novel and its declared untruth, a simultaneous reality and unreality central to the novel form. This means that readers can learn from novels without the anxiety of knowing that what they are reading is 'really happening.'

- The inter-subjective and experience-building aspects of novel reading can develop empathy, compassion and a potentially political perspective in readers (away from the 'one village' (Rose) or 'one fool on the street' (B) limited views). This is a function of the novel's oscillation between the individual and the communal, and heightened in a reading circle approach.

5.5.2 Implications for reading circles

- In formal educational settings, reading circles can be an effective tool to develop peer-teaching and assessment, learner autonomy and learner-led differentiation. Reading circles can also be model examples of negotiated syllabi (Breen & Littlejohn, 2000).

- Used in adult literacy/ESOL classes, reading circles can provide individually focused differentiation to meet varied language and literacy needs within one group (allowing one student to focus on an 'outcome' of widening vocabulary and another on phonic decoding while working together).

- Reading circles can provide opportunities for participants to read aloud, if they like, and therefore, an opportunity for the reinforcement of decoding skills as well as the development of the practice of reading aloud.

- Reading circles can model, and scaffold, the interpretive aspects of novel reading, which can be challenging to less confident readers.

- Reading circle discussions can be a way of achieving a communal reading process.

- Some people enjoy reading in a group, for the pedagogic reasons already listed, because readers like to talk about what they are reading (D. Gordon, 1999; Harvey & Daniels, 2009; Paran, 2003) and because talking about a book is an opportunity to talk about the other things we long to talk about, including who we are or who we want to be (Long, 2003).

5.5.3 Implications for developing adult emergent reading

- Adult emergent readers want to 'learn words,' a process involving increasing the range of words they can both understand and decode. Reading circles can be a way of working on this.

- Adult emergent readers may find the peer-scaffolding of a reading circle a supportive environment in which to develop a range of reading skills (for all five acts of reading), from decoding, learning words and remembering what was read before (in a longer text) to reading clearly to others, and from guessing the meaning of a word from its visualized context to interpreting action and characters in an emotional engagement.

- Adult emergent readers may find reading aloud and/or listening to others read aloud a useful tool in developing decoding skills. They may also want to develop their confidence reading aloud in order to read to others in family, social, work or religious contexts.

- We all have a reading identity, and the reading identities of many adult emergent readers are based on a deficit (what I can't do or am scared to do). This identity is as much of a barrier to being able to read a text as a lack of particular reading skills. Therefore the role of adult literacy education is to develop this reading identity (into someone who can read text, can try different texts, is 'a reader', can recommend books) as well as developing

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reading skills. A reading circle, where participants can contribute to communal reading according to their own strengths or confidences is one way to do this.

- The complex pleasures and ethical discussions inherent in novel reading are likely to be as important for adult emergent readers as for any one of us. Adult literacy teachers should not shy away from literature because of fears of associations with elitist politics or worries that a particular text is 'too hard.' Texts can be adapted and tasks can be graded.

- Adult literacy teaching may be in danger of losing the learner-centred pedagogy, and philosophy, which dominated during the 1960s, 70s, 80s and 90s. A reading circle, and other forms of 'negotiated syllabi' (Breen & Littlejohn, 2000) and peer-assessment (Derrick et al., 2009), could a provide much needed reminder that the only adult literacy curriculum is what literacy means to each learner.

5.6 Limitations of this study

I have already noted three limitations of my research design. Focus groups using a group with an already developed identity (such as the reading circle) may not be able to 'focus' on issues distinct from their usual topic of conversation. Secondly, the use of a group notebook is potentially problematic with adult literacy learners. Even if learners are confident writing notes alone at home, they may not be confident writing notes while also taking part in a discussion. This meant that the notes taken may have been briefer than desired by group members. Another time I would try giving the note-taker time to write up their notes afterwards at home. Thirdly, *Passenger*, the chosen novel, was the novel I contributed to our pile of novels for selection. Learners may have seen me take out it out from my bag and this could have influenced their choice. Next time, I would not contribute a novel myself.

These are specific limitations of my research design. Broader limitations concern the scope and aims of this project. The aim was to address novel reading, reading circles and adult emergent reading development. I aimed to identify typical characteristics of novel reading, but was less interested in trying to claim that these characteristics were unique to novel reading. To compare a reading circle using a

novel to a reading circle using a non-fiction text would be another project (indeed Daniels (2006) and Harvey & Daniels (2009) recommend using reading circles for non-fiction texts to extend this approach to other school curriculum areas such as history and science). Likewise, my focus was the E3/L1 level, yet much of what I have argued could apply equally to other levels, including beginners, with the use of carefully selected or created texts. However, the scope of this thesis did not allow me to address this in detail. This was a study of one reading circle with one group of adult literacy learners, reading one novel. A case study of a reading circle of a different group of adult literacy learners, or this group of learners but using a different text or a reading circle of different sample of people (art school students, for example) would each have produced different data and slightly different implications. Further, my focus was firmly on investigating what a reading circle can offer, not what a reading circle cannot offer. This means that my findings were focused on the positives (what a reading circle can do), rather than negatives (what a reading circle cannot do, or other approaches which could develop these skills better).

This thesis, therefore, offers ideas on what novel reading can be, what a reading circle approach can offer, and what adult emergent readers can get out of a reading circle approach. It is not an 'advantages vs. disadvantages' analysis of a reading circle as a teaching tool. Likewise, I have used these data to argue that novel reading, particularly in a reading circle formation, can develop empathy and political/ethical thinking with specific regard to the individual's relationship with the communal. I believe these data demonstrate this to be the case. However, it would be wrong to argue that novel reading always develops these things, or that novel reading is the only way to develop empathy and ethical contemplation. This is clearly not true.

5.7 Dissemination

The above findings can be disseminated in four ways. I hope to write a paper for publication. I would also like to take this work to several conferences, including RaPAL (Research and Practice in Adult Literacy) in the summer of 2010, to share these ideas with other adult literacy teachers, adult literacy teacher educators and policy-makers. I aim to disseminate this work at adult literacy teacher and teacher educator forums such as the City and Islington College Professional Development Days (where I could work with a group of adult literacy teachers), and the Institute of Education Adult Literacy, Language and Numeracy 'Special Interest Group' (SIG)

and Initial Teacher Education forum. Finally, I will talk through these implications with my present adult literacy learners to gain their perspectives.

5.8 Future research

There is a need for more comprehensive historical study on how people learnt to read, were taught to read and what they read. In trying to sketch the history of adult literacy provision, policy and pedagogy in England over the past fifty years, it also became clear that we are still too close in time to this period of rapid development, and there is still so much undocumented, that any attempt to present a full picture is likely to be lacking. I have written *a* version, the product of what I read and to whom I talked. I would like to work on a more complete version one day.

I hope to study reading circles using non-fiction and reading circles with beginner readers. I also feel there is a need for research on reading circles with bilingual adult learners, using texts in two or more languages, examining the way literacy in one language interplays with literacy in another. Additionally, I am aware of no contemporary studies of the many reading circles that exist across London, with different groups of people, formed and reading communally in different ways. Finally, I would like to further explore the idea of reading as communal cognitive process.

5.9. Final thoughts

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) has worked to establish and consolidate literacy programmes around the world, believing that literacy is key to a nation's economic development. Their emphasis is on 'functional literacy' (Barton, 2007; Gray, 1956) the reading and writing required to participate in one's society, with participation usually meaning being employed within that society and therefore helping to further national economic growth (Barton, 2007). The idea of 'functional literacy' has dominated national literacy campaigns ever since, including Skills for Life in England. This is particularly evident in the present focus on 'employability.' The discourse of 'functional literacy' implies another, alternative, literacy lurking in the shadows: non-functional, non-essential, frivolous. This may be the literacy of writing a diary, the literacy of reading love

letters, or the literacy of writing poetry on the back of a bus ticket. This may be the literacy enjoyed by those writing policies of functional literacy for the masses. One of the great unspoken objections to using literature in adult literacy education is that it is not 'functional:' unnecessary or inappropriate.

Yet, as Rose (2002), Meek (1988, 1991), Paran (2008), Pennac (2006) and these participants have argued, reading, discussing and writing about literature can develop the reading, writing and discussion skills which are the basis for any kind of literacy, any kind of function, and any kind of job. Equally importantly, reading and discussing literature may fulfil a 'function' which models of functional literacy ignore: the intersection between the personal, political, emotional and spiritual. One week in March 2009, the reading circle members were discussing Milan's attempt to explain the concept of death to Roma. The word 'metaphysical' featured in the text and we talked through its meaning, coming to ideas of 'more than' the physical. Later the same evening, marvelling at Roma's musical talent and her ability to influence Milan's life, and K interjected "She's metaphysical! Roma is metaphysical!" This struck me as a particularly apt way of expressing the (faint) uncertainty about Roma's physical reality combined with the unquestionable reality of her sisterly function in Milan's emotional life: the co-presence of these two different types or levels of truth.

This may also be an apt way to express the breadth and significance of literacy outside the 'functional,' and reintroduce a Freirian idea of literacy as transformative, not only allowing each individual to transform their lives (if they so desire), but to recognize a human obligation to improve or transform the lives of others. The ghost complement to 'functional literacy' is not 'frivolous' literacy but 'metaphysical' literacy: literacy serving artistic, philosophical, political, emotional and spiritual purposes. The identification of metaphysical literacy as complement to functional literacy is not to express a split, an 'either or' model, where some literacy is 'functional' while other is 'metaphysical.' Instead I wish to express a *co-presence*: all literacy is both functional and metaphysical. The meanings, uses and values of literacy are broader than those functions we observe each other doing as we scuttle around our homes, streets and workplaces. The recent Muriel Spark biography (Stannard, 2009) locates her conversion to Catholicism in her quest for a solution to the unsatisfactory (for her as artist) dichotomy between mind and body, physical and spiritual or 'prose and passion'. She found a solution in a 'Eucharistic' view: dual truths coexisting within one physical and metaphysical reality. Framing my argument

in this way, any example of literacy is at once functional *and* metaphysical, individual *and* communal, transformative *and* transfiguring. This view may help us to further our understanding of literacy and its role in human life.

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Appendix A: Research design

Timing	Activity	Desired outcome
October 2008	• Pilot semi-structured interview • Organize written permission from college line manager	Refine questions/prompts Gain permission from line manager to conduct semi-structured interviews and a group interview with college students
October/November 2008	• Explain project and process- ask for collaboration • Obtain oral permission from students • Get group to choose a novel and decide how to spend the one hour a week • Semi-structured initial individual interviews (20-30 min each) Audiotape above interviews and focus group • Transcribe interviews verbatim	Data: transcripts Group has chosen a novel and decided how to spend our 1 hour a week
November 2008 - April 2009	• Novel reading, discussion and reading diary process - as decided and monitored by the group • December - midway interviews and focus group (as above)	Data: tapes, transcripts and notes Other reading group evidence as decided by the learners
April 2009 - May 2009	• Final interviews	Data: transcripts
June - July 2009	• Data analysis	Codes, categories, themes
August - December 2009	• Further data analysis • Writing report • Present to group of adult literacy teachers and learners • Record feedback to use in writing up	Draft report Notes from feedback/other presentations
January – March 2010	• Editing and revising report, peer reading and feedback	Completed report with ideas for future research

Appendix B: Participant Profiles

All initials are invented. 10 participants started, 7 finished (three dropped out at Christmas).

P is a young woman in her late teens. She is a first language speaker with mixed African-English heritage. She also attends another college, doing a vocational qualification in fashion. She wants to improve her reading and writing to do GCSE English one day.

B is a woman in her fifties. She grew up speaking English as well as several African languages. She did not go to school and since moving to England around twenty years ago has worked as a health care assistant. She says that she could not read or write at all until she started coming to this college five years ago. B has been diagnosed with dyslexia but doesn't have time for one to one support sessions.

T is in her late forties. She learnt some English in school in Turkey and moved to England about twenty years ago to be with family and get married. She has spent ten of the past twenty years in Holland, where she learnt Dutch. She works as a nursery school assistant and needs to write reports for her work. She joined this literacy class to feel more able to write these reports.

S is a woman in her forties. She came to this country as a refugee, speaking no English, about ten years ago and has been learning English since then. She has attended ESOL classes at this college but wanted to join a literacy class to work specifically on her reading and writing.

J is in her late twenties, born in London of a family of Londoners for generations. She has been diagnosed as dyslexic. She joined this group to feel more confident with her spelling and writing and also does a maths class. She wants to be able to help her children with their schoolwork and hopes to do GCSE maths and English one day. *J dropped out at Christmas to concentrate on her maths exam.*

A is in her mid-twenties and came to London as refugee about ten years ago, with no English or formal education of any kind. She has attended ESOL classes and learnt English informally since then. She would like to go to university one day.

L is a man in his forties who has lived in Somalia and Italy and has been in this country for twenty years. He is a confident reader, in Arabic, Italian and English but severely dyslexic and finds writing very challenging. He joined this class to improve his spelling and also for the company. He has mental health difficulties which have disrupted his educational, work and family lives.

G is a young man in his early twenties. He came to London as a teenager as a refugee. He had been to school and had learnt some English before he arrived and has worked hard on his English. He would like to improve his writing so he can go to university one day. Attending class is hard for him as he works several demanding jobs. *G dropped out at Christmas but hopes to return next year.*

R is a young man in his early twenties, a friend of G. R also came to London as a teenage refugee. He had American friends in his country of origin and learnt to read English before he learnt to read his native spoken languages. He joined this class to improve his spelling and punctuation and to read and discuss books. *R dropped out at Christmas because of work schedule difficulties.*

K is a woman in her late thirties. She was born in London of Caribbean heritage. She has a degree in fashion but is not confident with her writing. She wants to do a GCSE English class eventually and chose this class as a more gentle return to study.

Appendix C: Blank initial questionnaire

Organizing our reading circle

From tonight onwards, we will have at least 30 minutes a week to devote to *Passenger*. Discuss the following questions in pairs and write notes of your ideas below.

How do you think we should use this class time?

What would you like to do at home?

Appendix D: notes from group discussion on setting up the reading circle

Sts want to look at the 'spelling' (decoding) of different words

Sts want to read aloud

Sts want to discuss 'what is going on'

Sts want to 'learn words' at home and in the sessions and 'read words' and be able to 'know more words' (lots of talk on this)

Sts want to talk about 'how they feel about it'

Sts want to ask each other questions about what they've read

Sts want to assign each other an amount to read a home each week (but different sts have more or less time for this home reading)

Sts liked idea of having a 'chairperson' and 'notetaker' every week like Kalamazoo

Sts want to 'look up words' in the dictionary'

Sts want to guess the meaning of words, and 'understand words' from what they are reading

Sts want to give each other a goal of things to think about every week

Sts want to take notes individually- some want to jot down key words and others to write paragraphs

Sts stress wanting to 'pace ourselves' and not read too quickly or too slowly- want to keep at same pace with each other.

Sts agreed that if someone reads 'ahead' they won't spoil any 'surprises' for the rest by talking about it.

DoubLe
Indemnity

Passenger
by
Billy Cauie

Annete
John steinbeck
of Mice and Men

Appendix F: Question prompts for initial and final individual interviews

Initial interviews

Initial round of interviewing- getting an initial idea of what they are doing when they read

A. What is reading

What is reading? What are we doing when we read? What are all the different things you do when you read?

What does reading involve?

How would you describe reading to someone who didn't read?

If you knew someone who was having difficulty with reading, what would you recommend to them?

Alien thing…

What else can you tell me about reading?

When you hear the word 'reading' what comes into your mind?

B. Reading and your life

What kinds of things do you read?

What kinds of things do you like reading? Why? Dislike reading? Why?

What do you find hard to read? Easy to read? Fun to read? Scary to read?

When do you read? Times of life? Times of day?

C. Good reading

If I said someone was a good reader, what would that mean to you?

Do you know any good readers? Why do you consider them good?

Would you describe yourself as a good reader? Why or why not?

How does someone become a good reader?

D. Reading and all of our lives

Why do people read?

When do people read?

What do people read?

E. How we read/how you read

How do you read? Can you read this word (Asako)- how did you do that? Is that what you mainly do? Can you read this word 'October' or 'Sam'? How else do you read?

Do you ever find words you cannot read? What do you do? Examples?

What are your eyes doing? What is your mind doing? What else are you doing? How do you get meaning from these marks on the page?

F. How we learn to read/how you learnt to read

How did you learn to read?

How are you improving your reading?

How would you teach someone to read or help them get better at reading?

G. Stories and novels

Do you ever read stories or novels? Why or why not?

Why do you think reading stories/novels is so popular?

Final interviews:

What do I want to find out?

What they think-

- Novel reading involves, all the reading processes/skills involved

- How they think these various skills relate to each other

- How they felt – emotionally - and how/why they felt that way - how does it work

- How it worked in terms of words/vocabulary- how can you understand what's going on

- So how the understanding develops- how it all makes sense

- What a novel means to them and how this meaning develops

- Anything else they found interesting / notable / challenging / pleasurable / horrible / great about reading *Passenger*

- Recommendations for future work of this kind

Ideas for final interviews- individual, of about 45min-1 hour, semi-structured, asking them to draw mindmaps and explain them (so these will be analysed as part of the interviews not separately) at the end

Areas I want to investigate in bold italics and possible questions under each in normal writing

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Passenger- what we did, what you did, what you thought about it, what you got out of it

- Tell me what you thought of our *Passenger* work

- Describe what we did

- Describe what you did

- What did you get out of this process

- What do you think others got out of this process

- What did you like about it

- What did you dislike about it

- What was hard about it

- What was easy about it

- How did you know what was happening in *Passenger*?

- Would you recommend someone else read *Passenger*, why or why not?

- Would you recommend others do a reading circle like this?

- Would you like to do this again with another book? Why or why not? What and why?

Novels

- What's a novel?

- What are all the things you're doing when you read a novel?

- What does reading a novel involve?

- What are the steps to reading a novel?/what are all the different things you're doing when you're reading a novel?/what skills or activities are involved in reading a novel?

- Why do you think people read novels?

- What is easy/hard/fun/appealing/horrible/hard about reading novels?

- Is reading novels different or similar to reading other kinds of things (like newspaper articles or handouts or letters?)? How?

- When you are reading a novel, how do you know what's going on?

- If I said I knew someone who was good at reading novels, what would this mean to you?

Reading in general

- How would you describe reading to someone who couldn't read?

- What is reading?

- What is hard for you about reading?

- What is easy for you about reading? Pleasurable?

- When you hear the word 'reading' what comes to mind?

- Would you describe yourself as a good reader? Why or why not?

- What's a good reader?

- Does reading novels help you become a better reader? How or why?

Appendix G: Questions for focus groups

Mid-novel reading focus group questions:

1. What were you doing when you were reading *Passenger*?

2. What is different about reading novels, like *Passenger*, from other kinds of reading?

3. What's easier? More difficult? More pleasurable/nicer? Unpleasant?

4. When you read a novel, how do you know what's going on?

5. What's the point/purpose of reading novels? Why do people read novels?

6. How have we been spending our weekly group *Passenger* time?

7. What have you been doing on *Passenger* away from class?

8. Should we continue in the same way for the rest of the novel?

9. Any other suggestions?

10. How are your notes going? How do you use your notebooks and why do you do this?

11. What else can you say about our reading circle so far?

Appendix H: Examples of data

1. Initial participant questionnaire

2. Page of initial interview transcript

3. Page of focus group transcript

4. Page of researcher notes

5. Page from participant notebook

6. Page from group notebook

7. Page from final interview

Appendix H.1

Example initial participant questionnaire

Organising our reading circle

From tonight onwards, we will have at least 30 minutes a week to devote to *Passenger*. Discuss the following questions in pairs and write notes of your ideas below.

How do you think we should use this class time?

To read at the end of the class and together with group
reading one by one to the class
it well up me and reading
need to have the confident.

What would you like to do at home?

Sometime I like to have home work
Looking up at the words at home

Appendix H.2: Sample page from initial interview transcript

J: Yeah, and she's coming home and she says 'I know how to spell pig' and she says /p/ /i/ /g/- she says it like that, you know- I think that's a good start really.

SD: And if someone could read a bit but wasn't very confident, what do you think is the best way for them to get better at reading?

J: Um, just practice really and have good support- somebody who will sit there with you and if you get it wrong, they can sort of explain it to you, how it, how the sounds are- what letters in the alphabet are- things like that really.

SD: And how does practice help you get better at reading?

J: Um, well, I mean if you- if you just- it's continual really- if you are sort of, say for example if you didn't know how to spell 'except'- I would keep going over it and practicing and practicing and keep going over and over it and eventually I would get it- so practice makes perfect!

SD: Yeah, that's true! And if I said I knew someone who was a good reader, what would that mean to you?

J: Um, that maybe they like reading a lot and you know they might have had a higher education as well to be able to read, or, just somebody who likes reading and is enthusiastic about it really.

SD: That's interesting. And is there anything you ever find difficult about reading?

J: What scares me is the big books, like the really thick books- that's- I mean sometimes I'll look and I'll think- I mean I don't mind reading sort of the smallish books but when it gets really thick, it's like- can I be bothered to actually read it- the big books scare me. And there's probably no need to be, but, you know.

Appendix H.3: Sample focus group transcript page

G: Because I think there are lot of words that I don't know-

K: Yeah, difficult words.

G: Yes, difficult-

K: A language barrier then?

G: Yes, language.

K: "What's the point or purpose of reading novels? Why do people read novels?'

P Imagination.

G: Yeah, imagination, yeah.

K: To take yourself away from everyday society, you know- instead of watching TV or going on the Internet, it's for pleasure, isn't it?

G: Yeah. To know more information as well, it's like more information, yeah.

K: yeah, that's true, and it's like reading somebody else's work without having to have them there. It is isn't it? It's like reading somebody else's work and getting to know the writer-

R: Yes.

K: What's the next one? 'what happened so far in *Passenger*?" Where are you up to?

R: I think we're up to chapter 5 or something like that.

P: No, seven?

G: Are you on chapter 7?

K: Everyone else is on chapter 7.

P: Ok, that's ok then, because I've read up to chapter 10-

K: And where have you got up to?

G: Chapter 7.

K: Are you sure?

G: [laughs]

K I can't tell you where I'm up to-

R: Are you finished?

G: Finished it?

K: Yes, I really like reading. and I'm reading it again now. And I was reading chapter 7 today and she was talking about, they are going to an exhibition, and when they were at the exhibition – Milan's friend, what's his name?- anyway they were at the exhibition, and Murri is there and she has shaved all her head off-

Appendix H.4: Example of researcher notes

Appendix H.5: Example from participant (P) notebook

TEXT REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

Appendix H.6: Example from group notebook

TEXT REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

Appendix H.7: Sample page from final interview transcript

F: I might see something things that I've imaged myself- and I'd find that weird.

SD: Would they be the same as you imagined them?

F: No.

SD: Ok, thinking about reading in general for a bit. If you knew someone who couldn't read at all, how would you describe to them what reading is?

F: Um, I would say, it's like what you're saying, but just on paper.

SD: And what do you think is the hardest thing about reading, for most people?

F: I don't know. It's hard for me to say because I can read. Yeah. But when I can't read some words, that's a hard thing- trying to pronounce them.

SD: And what do you do if you come across a word you're not sure how to pronounce?

F: Um, usually I look in the dictionary or ask someone who's near me.

SD: And is there anything you think is particularly enjoyable about reading?

F: Um, yeah, when I found new things in a book.

SD: Like what kinds of new things?

F: Like the tumour thing in the book- things like that.

SD: Ok, so would you describe yourself as a good reader?

F: I'm getting there.

SD: Why?

F: Because the more I read, the more I get it, it's just practice, it gets easier.

SD: How does that work? Why does it become easier?

F: Because I'm reading and I'm getting sentences from what I'm reading.

SD: Ok and do you think that reading novels helps you be a better reader in general- to read anything , or not really?

F: Um, reading novels? Like *Passenger*?

SD: yes, do you think reading *Passenger* helps your reading in a general sense- to help you go on to read anything or just improves your knowledge about, say, tumours?

F: I think it's both. There are some stories that are true, and you learn something from it, but also you are learning new words from whatever you read- so the more you read the more new words you get and so the more you can read- it's like that.

Appendix I: Example of Becker-style analysis

Initial analysis

Final interviews- Becker style

Basic ideas-

That novel reading is about getting ideas- learning new things, new bits of information.

Also about empathy or understanding other people's points of view- a chance to see the world from another's eyes- and that this is about the knowledge gaining above as well.

Discussing with a group is also important for getting different persepctives, learning from eachother- getting ideas of each other's experience (different experiences producing different interpretations)

Discussing with the group was nice- as a nice group of people- and good to have a focus for getting together to talk

Idea that reading circles are for other people, other educational backgrounds, other classes

Novel reading as good for our reading in that we learn new vocab, learn to decode more words, get used to the process, have to read quicker and with expression, lots of practice because so many words

Also helps with writing as get ideas for words and language structures- get to see someone else's vocabulary-take that on when you are reading

The process- like the discussion to get different points of view and chance to talk with nice people about things we are interested in, also the reading aloud helps our reading- confidence, feedback on words, reading speed, punctuation/intonation- no one laughing, everyone helping- and the chance to help others

Difficult words could be frustrating- so needed the discussion time- also discussion time differentiation- come needed it to get what was going on at a more basic or plot level and others used it to explore ideas

Most would recommend to others and would want to do it again

Links to our lives- connected knowledge/ideas from passenger to our own lives- so links to our experience- and use this as a development of our own experience (as well as the reading circle being an important experience)

Participants talked a lot about the plot- sense that this plot cannot be separated from the reading experience – it is the reading experience.

Helping spelling

Exercising the brain!

Developing the imagination, fantasy, day dreams

Sts summing up (use these as one way to organize coding- besides the interview questions- but this too?)

1. a cake- everyone takes part in, everyone shares, everyone tries to work together- physical (the book) and visual (the imagining), work on (and creating?) the ingredients together

2. the notebook I took notes in (see this), me imagining what's going on about Roma and things, and me looking up new words in the dictionary- learning new words

3. the journey into reading books- because now I can pick up a novel or a book knowing that I can read it and understand it – and also makes my job enjoyable- because now can read and write better for work (as well as work having helped her to understand this book)

4. (didn't draw but wanted to describe): reflecting on what's going on, on what mIlan is doing, why he is doing int, Milam's stories (then describes he and his sister)- how they were together

5. that's the brain and the heart and when I start reading and I'm happy and then I read more and I'm sad (so charting the emotions from reading- from the brain and the heart)

6. (didn't draw) reading passenger, I learnt lots of words and we discussed with everybody to get everybody's ideas and develop our language

7. it's a brother and a sister- with arms joined- they could have been like that but they're not. I was imagining this- how it would have been if she'd been born naturally- how she's his sister and how he would have had some support if she'd been born naturally

Coding ideas from the above:

- Notebook- notes took on tracking what was going on

- Vocabulary learning

- Discussing with others- others points of view – a communal process (reading novels as a potentially communal process- is this a new trend for novel reading?)

- Reading helping our writing- helping our reading- helping our jobs and lives

- Confidence and social practices- being able to pick up a novel and read it- a new experience- a new possibility

- The communal experience- aloneness and togetherness that the novel is about- this is also what the novel reading process has been about- or at least this is real- this is something real that we have been investigating and so it's appropriate that keeps coming up in the discussion of novel reading- we are reading **about** something.

- The physical and the imaginary- what we create together and explore together- that is non-physical- that is metaphysical!!

- The emotional journey- and how it's based on, and symbolic of, the relationship between our real lives and real life experiences/memories and what we are reading about- how we relate to this novel, to others' experiences and to each other.

- Togetherness- the individual and the communal- alone and lonely- alive and together or apart- skull boxes etc!

Appendix J: Line manager permission

7/11/08

To Whom it may concern,

I have read Samantha Duncan's thesis proposal and am happy for her to proceed with this research.

Thank you.

Yours Sincerely

Lorraine Brook
Curriculum Manager – Adult Literacy
020 7704 7207