

LITERACY AS DISCOURSE: TECHNOLOGIES OF DISCIPLINE

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ABSTRACT *In this article I examine the teaching of reading utilising Foucault's notion of discourse. This examination consists of the analysis of statements to identify distinct structures of thought, to identify the 'set of rules' by which it is possible know something, to know about what can be said, stated, thought and the conditions that constrain or enable what can be said. Such an approach was developed by Foucault and is known as his 'archeological method'. In my analysis I have utilised Foucault's archeological method to explore the discourses that construct reading. To do this I have examined the past and present official syllabi, documents that are 'official' teachers handbooks, children's classroom texts, and teaching and in-service teacher guides. I also draw from my twenty years of primary teaching and eight years of pre-service teacher education in the subject.*

Not all educational sites in New Zealand adhere to the same interpretation or even to the dominant discourses of reading/language education. The dominance of the official discourses or 'truth' claims of literacy, the literate subject and the optimal technologies for constituting that subject will vary from school to school and indeed within schools themselves. Having said this however, New Zealand teachers, teaching pedagogy and school curricula, have been and continue to be inscribed within technologies of power of centralised curriculum 'truths' that have been enforced by the hierarchical 'gaze' of a range of Department of Education and Ministry of Education officials. I have identified literary, behaviourist, progressivist and recently natural learning discourses that constitute the teaching of reading. While educators, researchers and theorists might argue about which discourse has dominance or a purchase on the truth, all can be viewed as legitimating particular regimes of practice and the exercise of power.

We have realised more and more that the qualities of intellect, character, and attitude that we wish to produce cannot be imposed from without but must be nurtured through the child's maturing awareness of himself and his world, and his expression of that awareness. What does that mean in practice? (Department of Education, 1961b, p. 14).

Foucault describes knowledge as consisting of different and competing discourses, thereby denying the possibility of any one social reality. The knowledge and meaning constituted within a discourse includes not only the language that can be used, but also the type of person or people (their subjectivities), the social practices and the power relations that are particular to the discourse. There are

many different and competing discourses that give 'meaning to the world and of organising social institutions and processes' (Weedon, 1987, p. 35). Many discourses constitute the theories and practices of literacy within New Zealand primary schools. They influence how teachers view themselves, their work and the children that they teach and they also influence the theoretical and pedagogical practices within teacher education courses.

The teaching of reading in New Zealand primary schools is viewed by researchers, teachers, teacher educators and curriculum developers as an essential part of school programmes to assist children's literacy development. The development of 'reading' within New Zealand education cannot be viewed as being external to international debates and discourses, but rather as positioned within the international discursive field of literacy education. The official discourses in New Zealand focus on reading and language programmes that are posited within literary discourses. I examine these first. I then focus on the psychological and sociolinguistic discourses of behaviourism and progressivism. As the discourses have changed, so too have their constructions of the teacher, the child/reader, the types of text/literature and their resulting practices. While these discourses can be seen as characteristic of specific historical periods, each continues to inform practices by some teachers. This article then outlines these, recognising however that they are not discrete but rather that there are overlaps and each informs the other.

LITERARY DISCOURSES

The teaching of reading can be viewed as being discursively located within and across literary discourses. Irrespective of which approach or approaches are taken by teachers to teach readers to read, the purpose of children learning to read has been located within and across romantic literary discourse and the discourse of liberal literary criticism. These two discourses have been woven together within official teachers' texts since the 1960s although in the recent *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1994) they appear more discrete.

Romantic Literary Discourse

Within romantic literary discourse, reading is constructed as a personal, individual 'good' and the major purpose of reading is for the reader to be able to learn about themselves, particularly their creative selves, their essential, unique, inner humanness and to appreciate their relationships with the wider world. Readers are encouraged to 'want to' read independently and to view reading as an enjoyable, enriching, worthwhile activity of itself. An examination of a range of the Department of Education English handbooks since the 1960s would suggest that reading continues to be viewed as an unquestioned individual, personal 'good':

... by reading his sympathies should be widened and deepened, his perceptions quickened, and his sense of values clarified and corrected until he is able to discriminate between what is true and false in emotion and thinking (Department of Education, 1961a, p. 15).

From their reading of books children will gain a sense of the reality of people in other times and other places, and this too helps (them) to develop the twin senses of belonging and uniqueness which are basic to (their) understanding of (themselves) and of others (Department of Education, 1961c, p. 25).

Teachers are encouraged to provide 'regular opportunities' for children to 'discover that books can amuse them, inform them, 'talk' to them about life as they live it from day to day' (Department of Education, 1972, p. 160). The location of reading within romantic literary discourse continues in a later handbook (Mooney, 1988) where 'true reading' is viewed to be an enjoyable life-long activity that will take care of itself if the habit is established early enough. More recently in *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1994) and *The Learner as a Reader* (Ministry of Education, 1996) reading is portrayed as integral to the construction, negotiation and development of identity and to unquestioningly have personal and private value.

The Discourse of Literary Criticism

While romantic literary discourse is considered essential to the teaching of reading, so too is the discourse of liberal literary criticism. Within this discourse some books, often referred to as 'good books', the 'classics' or 'literature', are viewed as being of more value, especially when they are read in particular ways for particular purposes. So while all reading is viewed to be a personal 'good' some reading of certain literature is a greater 'good' than others. 'Good' literature is viewed as providing access to truth and 'fixed moral and political values' (Weedon, 1987, p. 139) and as addressing both the unique individual and the universally human.

The appeal of seeing 'great' literature as the receptacle of fixed universal meanings which enable us to understand the 'truth' of human nature, which is itself fixed, has been widespread (Weedon, 1987, p. 139).

In the Department of Education's English handbook for teachers (1961c) reading is constructed across these two liberal literary discourses so that one appears to inform the other.

The child's reading needs to be of many sorts. From his reading of good fiction of all kinds he will enlarge his range of sympathy and experience and will enact in imagination scenes and situations which help him to understand better and deal more completely with the actual situations that he meets. In books he will meet people and study their motives and conduct in ways that will illuminate the lives and actions of real people about him. The behaviour of real and fictional characters will strike an answering chord in his mind, and he will become more aware, confident, and controlled as a result of recognising both the universal and unique in his own nature (Department of Education, 1961c, p. 25).

During the act of reading then, readers are viewed as being able to learn about themselves imaginatively, to understand, to become more sympathetic, aware, confident and controlled. However, it is the books that are 'good fiction' that assist this process and help the reader to learn the truth of his/her universal yet unique self.

While reading as an individual, personal 'good' is not debated, a problematic issue is which 'good books', which literature or whose 'classics' should be read for which purposes. Such a perspective was developed during the 1930s in England by F. R. Leavis and Q. D. Roth-Levis (Docker, 1994; Eagleton, 1983; Weedon, 1987). Debates in international liberal literary criticism have continued to focus on which literature should be carefully selected, taught, and properly read or interpreted in schools to teach universal truths and to speak for the unique individual; ranging from literature that contributes to 'What Every American Needs to Know' (E.D. Hirsch, Jr., 1988) to Shakespeare being studied in 'Shakespeare's land' (Prince Charles). In New Zealand debates have centred around the development of various English curricula. One such debate was reported in the magazine *Metro* (Du Chateau, 1989) and contributed to the abandonment of the proposed new senior English curriculum. The issues were described as 'a little known committee' wanting to 'alter radically the English curriculum taught to the country's sixth and seventh forms' and where 'one group (was) grabbing the high moral ground of anti-sexism and anti-racism and running with it, and the other group taking over the similarly high moral ground of Shakespeare and Latin roots' (Du Chateau, 1989, p. 75). More recently the debate about which texts to include in the development of English in the New Zealand Curriculum has resulted in the statement that 'close and careful reading of literary texts and the development of the skills of literary criticism' (Ministry of Education, 1994, p. 9) should be carried out in classrooms in response to pressure from some conservative groups such as the Education Forum. However, the curriculum developers did not include specific lists of 'great classics' or traditional English literature despite pressure to do so.

In primary classrooms teachers spend a significant part of their day teaching children how to read, arguably within both the discourse of literary criticism and romantic literary. How teachers teach reading varies according to the discourses available during a particular historical period. These discourses construct reading, the child reader, the teacher, and the literature, books or texts that are developed and how they are used in the classroom. By examining curriculum documents I have identified three official discourses which have constructed and continue to construct, the teaching of reading in New Zealand primary schools. Again, while it could be claimed that these discourses are historically specific, each discourse to some extent informs current practices.

Behaviourist Discourse

Within behaviourist discourse cognitive theorists believe that what goes on inside a person's head is the important aspect in learning to read. They hold a 'code emphasis', an 'outside-in', or 'bottom-up' view of reading. Their theory is based on the belief that the reading process begins 'with the inward flow of graphic information from the page. This information proceeds to the inside of the

reader's head in a strictly linear fashion where it is analysed bit by bit until some meaningful interpretation occurs in the brain' (Cambourne, 1979, p. 79). Teachers focus on developing children's competence through the regular practising of set skills so that the teaching of reading begins with 'the synthesis of letters into words, words into sentences and so on, until a large enough sequence of language is perceived to allow the reader to understand what the author has written' (Sloan & Whitehead, 1986, p. 5). This construction of reading is posited within a behaviourist discourse of psychology 'because the groups of letters forming the words are seen as a stimulus, and the 'reading', i.e. pronunciation or recognition is the response' (Sloan & Whitehead, 1986, p. 5). Within this theory 'the concern is that if only children could learn the words, the rest of reading would somehow take care of itself' (Ministry of Education, 1985, p. 33).

The study of learning within psychological discourses constructed a 'behaviourist child' dependent on stimulus-response models of learning and social interaction. This construction of the child increasingly influenced the teaching of reading in schools and the development of 'mass testing and uniform basal readers' (Luke, 1991, p. 111). Reading texts contained the sequential skills that were deemed important to aid teachers in the implementation of stimulus-response teaching. Such texts contain single letters, letter combinations and then simple short sentences and enhance the view of the reading child needing to learn skills and knowledge in a particular sequential way.

In an effort to simplify the task of learning teachers taught children to read by what they saw as a gradual introduction to the increasing complexity of written language. Children were taught the letters of the alphabet and to firstly read all the two lettered words together with sentences made up of these words. Two lettered words were followed by words and sentences with three letters, then four and so on. As ox is the only noun that consists of two letters the text of *The Queen Primer* used in New Zealand schools at the beginning of the twentieth century for the instruction of reading, focused on that animal:

Go on ox, go on.
Is he to go on?
Ox go on, as we go in.

However 'the era of the ox' (Parker, 1985, p. 2) began to change together with the 'regimes' of reading knowledge that related to the development of psychology and linguistics. As psychology constructed 'truths' about 'personality and intelligence and gross areas of human behaviour', the truths of linguistics 'were concerned with the sound structures of language and on words as language entities' (Sloan & Whitehead, 1986, p. 4). These two discourses became influential on an approach to reading that centred on the so called 'phonics approach'. The 1920s saw the introduction of the 'progressive phonics' approach whereby 'phonic rules and their associated word families could expand the vocabularies of texts like *The Queen Primer* without increasing their difficulty' (Parker, 1985, p. 23). Within this discourse, words that looked and sounded the same were believed to be the simplest to learn and were taught to children in groups of increasing complexity. As reading developed within a 'progressive phonics' frame reading texts were developed that included simple words and their word families. As

previously stated this provided a wider range of vocabulary for the reader to read and the teacher to teach.

Ring, ting, ting!
The little bell will ring,
School has begun,
And it is fun
To read and write and sing.

(Fasset, J. 1922, p. 27)

Sentences in both these examples above were arranged in an attempt to construct a basic story line although the major focus was on the teaching and learning of the gradual introduction of specific words and skills and increasing the complexity of written language with a view to the reader eventually learning how to read. Certainly until the mid-1960s this was the focus of teaching, research and publishing of curricular materials for classroom use.

In the 1950s the 'Fun with Dick and Jane' series was introduced to children in the United States (Luke, 1987) and Canada while in New Zealand schools children started to read about 'Janet and John'. The teaching of reading continued to focus on the behaviourist models of learning. Aspects of the previous schemes remained, such as the gradual introduction of skills, repetition and the phonic grouping of words. 'This era of the basal reader was founded on the notion that reading can best be simplified by introducing words gradually, and repeating them frequently' and that 'reading competence was best achieved through mastery of (sets) of skills which needed to be practised regularly' (Parker, 1985, p. 24). During this time reading texts were developed that became known as basal readers. While phonic groups of words remained, other 'look and say' words were added in the interests of good story telling.

Look at the green house.
Father is in it.
It is Father's home too.
There is Mother.
She is in the green house.
She can see us.
Let us run to Mother.

However basal readers also signalled the introduction of the progressive child within reading texts, where 'cultural archetypes' (Luke, 1987, p. 91) of boys and girls became constructed. They introduced 'an official fiction - the whitewashed world of untroubled progressive childhood, of the simplified nuclear family' (Luke, 1987, p. 91). However, behaviourism was and continues to be a powerful discourse that influences teaching, research and subjectivities within and beyond it.

Since the 1960s in New Zealand there has been a developing critique and move from the behaviourist skills-based approaches to literacy, particularly by many teachers, teacher educators and curriculum developers towards language/reading programmes based on the developments of psycholinguistic

and cognitive theorising. The 'scientific truths' of cognitive psychology together with the 'developments in the study of meaning in linguistics' (Sloan & Whitehead, 1986, p. 4) signalled the psycholinguistic theory of the reading process and there was a major shift in the official discourses of the teaching of reading in New Zealand. These reading processes became part of the discourse of progressive education.

The Discourse of Progressivism

By the 1960s other constructions of the child became incorporated within and by reading/literacy discourses. The study of child development within psychological discourses constructed the active learning, developmental child that resulted in 'progressive education'. The child increasingly became the focus of teaching rather than the specific knowledge that was deemed important for them to know. In 1961 the new syllabus *Language in the primary School: English* became official policy in New Zealand schools. It heralded an official change to progressivism not only in the teaching of reading but as part of the official recognition of this major change in the approach to teaching in New Zealand classrooms and schools.

The syllabus places no limits on what may be attempted other than the needs, capacities, and interests of the children, but it does insist that children should understand what they do and see point in doing it, and that they should be helped to become more creative and independent, and more critical of their own work (Department of Education, 1961a, p. 2).

Learning was to become 'a joyful adventure' that would develop from 'trust and love' liberating 'both children and teacher' from what was viewed as the oppressive teaching in the past. (Department of Education, 1961b; Walkerdine, 1984, 1992). The handbook for teachers: *Suggestions for Teaching English in the Primary School* (1961b) outlines this turn to progressivism by marginalising behaviourist discourse. Previous teaching methods were criticised in terms of how they affected the child. Children were no longer to be treated as if they 'were mere stimulus-response mechanisms and not human beings with purposes'. Previous teaching was viewed as having caused them 'serious waste of time' and of 'dissipating the energy and enthusiasm with which they came to school' (Department of Education, 1961b, p. 58). In contrast to the behaviourist child who needed stimuli and responses, the 'new' developmental child needed love, understanding and freedom to produce knowledge and become competent in its use by expressing themselves and their feelings. Knowledge as a social category became 'marginalized in favour of knowledge, as both individual production and competence' (Walkerdine, 1984, p. 171). Located in theories as far back as Locke and Rousseau, children within progressive discourse would learn from active experience:

Where do the contents of the mind originate? 'To this I answer, in one word,' Locke wrote, 'from experience. In that all our knowledge is founded; and from that it ultimately derives itself' (Locke in Cleverly & Phillips, 1988, p. 16).

(i) *The Progressive Child*

The child within progressive discourse is viewed as an active learner and in the teachers' handbook *Suggestions for Teaching English in the Primary School* (1961) language itself has been redefined as behaviour to fit with this notion of the active learner:

In the primary school it is more useful to think of language as a form of behaviour, a means of thinking, and a means of communicating ideas. Therefore the development of the capacity to use language is best promoted not by exercises practised in isolation from any real purposes but by placing children in an active and vital classroom where there is every incentive to think, talk, listen, and to read and write (Department of Education, 1961b, p. 15).

The child also develops in specific ages and stages and to this end the teacher needed to provide the 'right environment' and activities to enhance rather than impede these stages of development and active learning. To assist the development of children moving from a preschool stage to a school learning stage, an example provided in the English handbook was for teachers to provide a 'Developmental Period' where children could in Rousseau-like manner utilise aspects of their active 'natural play' within the school programme. These aspects were viewed to include:

Joy in movement,
Delight in experiment with natural materials,
Pleasure in make-believe and in playing a part,
The satisfaction of making things
A developing interest in books and writing
(Department of Education, 1961b, p. 17-18).

Perhaps the best known theorist of child development within this discourse is Jean Piaget (1929, 1976). The Piagetian ages and stages, developmental child required a teacher to recognise these stages in child development. Children were viewed as wanting to learn and would 'make the best progress if they are helped to be most fully themselves so that they have time to enjoy each stage of growth before it gives way to the next' (Department of Education, 1961b, p. 6). Within this discourse an ideal unitary, generically male childhood that developed in stages was constructed alongside which differences of others could be acknowledged. The stage of the child needed to be recognised by the teacher who was expected to begin their teaching from that stage. If teachers recognised these stages and assisted the child then children would progressively develop towards more advanced stages of development. Moreover teachers were reassured that they would be able to recognise the child's stage of development very quickly and that their teaching should develop from that point (Department of Education, 1961b).

(ii) *The Progressive Teacher*

As the documents of the 1960s signalled an official change in the construction of the child, so too they signalled an official change in the construction of the teacher and teaching. Teaching itself became officially viewed as a personal art and requiring an understanding of the child by the teacher.

Teaching is a personal art and a teacher's methods are his expression of his understanding of children's problems, of his care for children, and his concern for their full educational growth. There is no reason why a teacher should not try out another man's way of working to see if they suit him, but he should be aware of the idea that the problems of teaching can be solved by applying "one best method" (Department of Education 1961b p. 3).

Teachers were expected to now consider and develop programmes in language and reading 'carefully for each child' and to consider whether the child was 'doing enough of the right kinds of work at a high enough level in each language field' (Department of Education, 1961b, p. 5). However, what became most important was:

The quality of an infant teacher's relationship with her pupils is the most important factor in her teaching. It is more important that a teacher should be sensitive, discerning, and able to put herself in a child's place, feeling with and for him, and that she should know about the newest methods of teaching reading (Simpson, 1962, p. 36).

Teaching now 'nurtured' the individual child's maturing awareness of him/herself and his/her world, and his/her expression of that awareness. To this end the teacher 'allowed children' the freedom to do things and to help them learn and develop. Teachers needed to understand the stages of children's physical, emotional and literate growth and to this end they were expected to 'begin where the child is', to suggest ideas and possibilities to the child. Such approaches required teachers to be 'alert, sensitive, watchful, and always ready to foster a good thing when she recognises it' (Department of Education, 1961b, p. 37). Teachers also needed to create active and vital, creative classrooms and be 'alert' to see that every situation, 'activity and interest is turned to the fullest advantage in increasing children's understanding and skill' (Department of Education, 1961b, p. 15).

Teachers were, however, warned about interfering with the natural creativity of the child. Such interference could create reading problems. This would be avoided if teachers waited for the child to 'develop the right attitude' towards their reading. Nor was there any need for teachers to force children, as teachers had done in the past, towards this right attitude. This would happen when children realised that reading was interesting and exciting, and that others, such as classmates and adults, found delight in it. In addition, teachers were not to be in a 'hurry to make adult distinctions and to force adult conceptions' (Department of Education, 1961b, p. 6). Instead they were expected to help, giving

each child time to develop at their stage of growth. When children were ready, at the right stage, they could learn to read.

In contrast to the 'bottom-up' or 'outside-in' theories of behaviourist discourse, progressive discourse incorporates an inside-out or top down model of reading. Developed from the theories of cognitive psychology and linguistics and referred to as the 'psycholinguistic model' of reading process this model posits an active reader who constructs meaning from what they know about the world together with the information on the printed page. Reading is therefore viewed as being a meaning driven process. This process is believed to begin within the human brain and its 'vast store of understanding accumulated by the individual during the process of their development' (Parker, 1985, p. 25). This accumulated understanding, referred to as schema (Pearson & Spiro, 1984) includes 'language and its use, understandings about books, stories,... and understandings about the characteristics and conventions of written language' (Parker, 1985, p. 25). 'This means that what the reader brings to the text in terms of knowledge, values, experience and belief is as important as what the author brought to the creation of the text' (Goodman, 1982, p.1).

To succeed as a reader, the child learns to 'read by reading' (Department of Education, 1985, p. 9) which parallels the notion of learning within progressive pedagogy that children are 'active learners' (Donaldson, 1978; Walkerdine, 1984) and learn 'by doing' (Dewey & Dewey, 1924; Walkerdine, 1984). Within this model the reader is constructed as one who actively uses their understandings in responding to the print before them in the 'attempt to reconstruct the author's meaning' (Parker, 1985, p. 26). In turn the meaning that the reader 'gains' from the text is viewed as being dependent on the experiences that the reader has had and is therefore able to 'bring to the text'.

(iii) Progressive Reading Texts

As part of the turn to the implementation of progressive discourse the Department of Education published and distributed free to all primary schools in New Zealand the *Ready To Read* series of readers and the handbook for teachers, *Suggestions for Teaching Reading in Infant Classes* by Myrtle Simpson accompanied the series in 1962. The series had been developed after consultation with educationalists and trialed by teachers and was planned from the beginning with New Zealand children in mind. This had arisen from the requests of teachers who had wanted books closely associated with New Zealand children's own experiences. Reading for meaning, located primarily within 'top-down, inside-out' discourse was viewed as being reliant on the interest that the stories held for readers and how familiar the reader was 'with concepts and situations in the text' (Simpson, 1962, p. 48). The books constructed a world of experiences and language that the child reader was expected to recognise and understand while the development of the new series was also designed to 'give teachers renewed confidence and renewed pleasure in their work'. In addition to using the books flexibly, the series was to be used in conjunction with a variety of other texts, books and literature. This flexibility was viewed as meeting the needs of the developmental, progressive natural child, to meet with the needs of their particular stage of learning, reading and their language development. These

experiences were viewed as being important within a top-down, inside-out discourse because a reader/child needed previous experiences to bring to the text to be able to construct meaning with the text.

... we have tried, in editing the stories, and in planning the illustrations, to stimulate those associations that help a child to find meaning in a printed page (Simpson, 1962, p. 49).

Stories were constructed that centred around what were viewed as childhood interests and experiences of 'family', school and other 'familiar' situations 'closely related to the New Zealand environment'. The stories were primarily written to be interesting to the child/reader and were designed to provide 'the most important skill of all ... reading for meaning' (Simpson, 1962, p. 48).

After being used in schools for twenty years, the *Ready to Read* scheme was revised after wide consultation and trialing in New Zealand schools. To support teachers' understandings of the developments of the Revised Ready to Read scheme, the Department of Education published *Reading in Junior Classes* in 1985. This handbook claims in the 'Forward' to incorporate the principles underlying the teaching of reading to young children contained in the previous handbooks and to incorporate the knowledge gained from the experience of practising teachers since 1960. *Developing Life-Long Readers* (Mooney 1988) was published by the Department of Education to further enhance the Department's view of its reading programme. The series had been revised in response to what was stated as the 'evolving style of teaching reading in New Zealand' that had developed within progressive discourse. There had also been specific criticisms of the series' middleclass, Pakeha, gendered portrayal of family life. The developers wanted to publish a series of books that could 'take their place alongside the best of children's picture books, and yet at the same time be part of a graded reading series' (Department of Education, 1984, p. 83). While it was accepted that the original *Ready To Read* (1961) series had attempted to reflect 'the New Zealand scene' this new series purported to portray 'New Zealand people and situations with greater realism, reflecting a diverse society' (Department of Education, 1985, p. 83). Located within progressive discourse where children learn to read by reading, children would now learn to read by reading 'real' books/literature using natural language that reflected authentic people and situations.

THE NORMALISED NATURAL CHILD

However, what is interesting in the handbooks is the shift in the construction of the child. These recent official documents of language/reading education in New Zealand, (Department of Education, 1985, 1988) begin from the assumption of a unitary, natural childhood that is perceived to be intrinsic to all children. These documents textually position the reader as an 'ideal child' who is gender and culture 'free'. Drawing on observations of natural learning (Cambourne, 1984), the child is positioned as a 'natural learner', self motivated, naturally curious, imaginative, having power and interest within them and a natural desire to learn to read (Mooney, 1988).

Reading within this discourse is constructed as a language process that has much in common with other processes such as speaking and listening. These

language processes are viewed as 'natural' and so within this theory reading itself is constructed as being 'natural'. The new series requires a 'balanced reading' programme aimed at developing the child's reading in the same 'natural way that the children learnt to talk'. There is also an assumption that most children begin school with 'certain expectations about books' that had developed from their 'preschool experience of them' as part of the 'serious business of play and the natural acquisition of language'. The teaching of reading was therefore aimed to enhance these experiences so that the use of books at school should be compatible thereby fulfilling the children's expectations.

Based on previous observations of children's development the child is viewed as having an 'expectation of meaning', so that 'by the time they arrive at school, they are well on the way to learning to make sense of their world'. This normal/ised natural child is viewed to have similar experiences to other children such as having familiar settings of 'home, neighbourhood and shop' and other familiar experiences in common. Within the language/reading site of the classroom what the child has learned at home is viewed to 'exist comfortably alongside what they learn at school' (Department of Education, 1985, p. 54). This normal child is viewed as having a 'fairly full knowledge of language and many experiences to draw on' (Department of Education, 1985, p. 32). These later official texts therefore posit an ideal/normal reader within an ideal/normal classroom together with an ideal/normal teacher. In addition there is also an assumption that the child - parent interaction during preschool language sites has been similar:

Teachers also need to reinforce independent behaviour by saying such things as, 'I'm pleased you thought that out all by yourself'. This parallels the way parents have encouraged their children when they were learning to talk (Department of Education, 1985, p. 31).

The notion of the stages of children's reading development still exists in these documents. However what is different in *Reading In Junior Classes* is that a particular category of books (Emergent) has been specifically designed to 'help children establish or confirm sound basic attitudes and understandings about reading' (Department of Education 1985). Each stage now has a specific list of attitudes, understandings and behaviours against which the teacher can view the child's natural, normalised progress.

The construction of a normal, natural learning, developmental child is so inclusive as to construct 'homogeneity' where in fact diversity exists. Within the official dominant documents, the two frequently quoted authorities Clay (1972) and Meek (1982) use the generic term "he" in their constructions of the ideal reader, thereby leaving traces enough to continue to suggest that the normal child is male. Difference is identified in relation to what the discourse constructs as normal: a language rich home environment, a self motivated inquiring natural learner, devoid of differences of class, culture, gender and race. Any differences between children within these official documents are referred to in terms of 'individual differences', 'learning experiences' 'background', and 'learning strategies'. To cater for these individual differences, the documents suggest that the programme should be 'individualised' and 'child centred'.

NATURAL LEARNING/AUTHENTIC BOOKS

To develop 'authentic contexts' for 'natural learning' the revised *Ready To Read* series was developed following contemporary book design, utilising a variety of formats, type-faces and illustrative styles. The layout of the books was considered 'in presenting the author's message in the format most suitable for the reader.' It was felt that a series of texts developed for a national education system needed an 'overall balance' reflecting the diversity of make-up and experience to be found in society. These included:

Cultural and social settings, equal treatment of the sexes, a range of circumstances and roles at home and in the community, a range of emotional and social experience through fact and fiction - these are some of the components of that balance (Department of Education, 1985, p. 85-86).

The series was viewed as being a more flexible resource than previously, because teachers would be able to 'select and present books according to the interests, needs, and abilities of the children.' Again in constructing the books the story was seen as assuming the 'greatest importance' so that the grading of the books to meet the children's reading needs was tempered by the needs of the story. Because it was believed by the developers that children approach books in different ways the books themselves in the revised series were not designed to be used in any one way. Instead the 'emphasis should be on confirming and extending the child's experience and success with books and text, and on (the teacher) supporting the child towards independence'. In addition to the use of the revised *Ready To Read* series New Zealand teachers were again encouraged to continue to use a variety of commercially produced texts. The revised *Ready To Read* series provided a model that commercial publishers could supplement or copy thereby providing teachers with a wider range of reading material for their classrooms.

A BALANCED APPROACH

As part of extending the child's experiences and success with books, teachers use a variety of 'reading approaches' together with the widest range of children's literature and reading texts. Such approaches are referred to as being 'literacy based', 'book based', or 'whole language'. In essence the teaching of language/reading is not based on using prescribed 'basal readers' as part of a prescribed, sequenced skills based programme, as described in psychological behaviourist discourse, but rather is based on the development of psycholinguistic approaches where the use of a variety of literature from many sources within a 'balanced reading programme' (Department of Education: 1985) is encouraged. A range of children's literature is used in primary classrooms by teachers in different ways within a 'balanced reading programme'. The balanced programme is a combination of approaches referred to as Reading To, Reading With and Reading By, where teachers read to children, promote books, encourage children's reading and where meanings are negotiated. These approaches construct both the child

and teacher in initially supportive/dependent roles but move toward increasingly more independent roles for the child/reader as they are viewed by the teacher as having learnt to read.

AUTHORISED READINGS AND MEANINGS

Irrespective of which discourse has dominance or is focused on, the various discourses outlined construct particular truths about teachers, texts, the child/reader and the teaching of reading which give rise to and are used to legitimate particular institutional practices. Such practices are referred to as 'technologies of discipline' (Foucault, 1977) as exercises of power and include observation, or systems of surveillance and regulation, normalising judgments and examination.

Foucault drew from Jeremy Bentham's 19th century architectural design of the panopticon as being an exemplar of the institutional exercise of power upon docile and productive bodies where the gaze of the guards 'the all seeing eye of surveillance' (Foucault, 1980, p. 152) is continuous. Normalising judgments and examinations based on the production of truths gives rise to further practices. This surveillance is internalised and becomes part of the inmate's self so that surveillance can be exercised even when the guards are not observing the inmates. Foucault saw the utilisation of surveillance and regulation as most visible in the incarcerating processes of criminology and psychology, but equally manifest in such practices as teaching.

A relation of surveillance, defined and regulated, is enscribed at the heart and practice of teaching, not as an additional or adjacent part, but as a mechanism that is inherent to it and which increases its efficiency (Foucault, 1979, p. 176).

In terms of the teaching of reading, the authority of the text is established by the authoritative gaze of the teacher/author who mediates the practices and meanings that the reader constructs with the text. To be heard as understanding and getting the meaning of the text the reader has to take up positions within the discourses that the teacher and the text demands. In this literate site the child/ren are variously positioned between being able to construct their 'own meanings' around the text and also meeting the purposes and meanings that the teacher and/or text has constructed. In classrooms 'formal ownership is assumed by teachers' (Davies, 1993, p.153) and as stated previously it is the teacher who is viewed as having the authority for acting on behalf of the author, and who is able to interpret the practices and meanings of the text. While children may be encouraged to discuss their previous experiences and meanings, their subjective positionings within discourses in relation to the text, become subjected to the author/ity, the gaze of the teacher. The text can become the authoritative voice of truth about the world 'which students can learn from, can emulate, and can eventually take up as their own' (Davies, 1993 p. 153):

Children do not have the freedom to innovate with or to reject adult interpretations. What they have formerly learned in the process of learning to engage in discursive practices is now subjected to authoritative teaching. The categories to which they have been assigned are now potentially subsumed under educational categories of success

and failure. Getting it right is not just a matter of being able to converse competently, but a matter of becoming competent in the terms that the teacher designates as competent (Davies, 1993, p. 153).

The recent official documents *Reading in Junior Classes* (Department of Education, 1985), and *The Learner as a Reader* (Ministry of Education, 1996) outline a number of practices that centre around those of observation, normalising judgment and examination. Careful and accurate observation and monitoring of individual readers is considered as an 'integral part of the reading programme and indeed a 'balanced programme' should 'provide opportunities' for the teacher to monitor children's progress. 'Sensitive' and 'systematic observation is encouraged with the view of providing teachers with feedback with which to shape their next teaching session. To be able to carry out this 'sensitive and systematic observation' teachers are told that they need to understand what the 'proficient reader can do' (Department of Education, 1985, p. 118) and indeed the teacher is told that 'observation is the starting point for the teacher and a way of monitoring progress' (Department of Education, 1985, p. 118). This constant observation by the teachers is constructed as:

Knowing what is happening means, for example, observing the use the children make of the book corner, or any of the other literacy-orientated features of the classroom; observing how they initiate and implement their own resources to books, events, or ideas, assessing their confidence and success in reading new and familiar texts or writing their own (Mooney, 1988, p. 30).

Within a progressive discourse of reading, where learning to read became constructed as 'natural', so too are the methods of observation:

Monitoring should be an integral part of the programme. A balanced programme provides opportunities for a teacher to monitor children's progress naturally during the learning (Department of Education, 1985, p. 118).

Those children who are constructed as 'normal' within this discourse of reading are 'closely observed', but those children who 'give concern', perhaps those who do not adhere to the normal construction of the reader, who do not internalise the teacher's gaze, are observed more often.

By closely observing one or two children's behaviour each day, using running records..., it is possible to ensure that all children in a class have their progress monitored about once a month. It may be necessary to study those children giving concern more often. This kind of diagnostic teaching often results in immediate adjustments being made, and influences longer-term planning (Department of Education, 1985, p. 120).

These forms of observation, documentation and examination provide norms to which individual readers are compared and encouraged to conform. They also construct the reader as an individual where the knowledge gained about the reader is used to further observe and reconstruct the individual as a reader.

Our best policy is to monitor actual behaviour as the child carries out the task in a meaningful situation - such as normal reading and writing within the programme - and to compare such observations with those taken for the same child at some previous time (Department of Education, 1985, p. 120).

The technologies of observation and examination are also employed to see how well the reader has internalised the teacher's gaze so that teachers' constructions of 'what counts' as a reader, as interpretations of texts, and as reading positions eventually become the reader's. These technologies of examination become 'strong incitations to speak' the 'truth' about how the reader read the story, understood the text, identified with the character, or reconstructed the teachers/authors meaning. Within literacy events the reader is called upon to recognise the truth, to recognise themselves.

CONCLUSION

The teaching of reading is discursively located within and across a number of discourses. As these have changed so too has the teaching of reading and its associated literate practices. While these changes can be interpreted as part of historical shifts, all still inform practices in classrooms today. These discourses can also be viewed as the exercise of power whereby teacher and student subjectivities are positioned and constructed within a variety of discourses. However these practices as the institutional exercise of power locate reading subjectivities to take up authorised meanings which are viewed as being located in the texts themselves. The teaching of reading in New Zealand, therefore, is mediated by the discursive construction of knowledge within authorised school texts. To understand the effects of this is to begin to understand what Foucault referred to as 'the technologies of self' (Foucault, 1988).

Educational sites are subject to discourse but are also centrally involved in the propagation and selective dissemination of discourses, the 'social appropriation' of discourses. Educational institutions control the access of individuals to various kinds of discourse (Ball, 1990, p. 3).

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