Mind the Gap?

CHILDREN'S DOMESTIC WRITINGS

[The Domestic Writings of a Child Practitioner]

and Their Implications for Educational Practice

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Declaration of authenticity

I, Joan Travers, declare that the work presented in this thesis, 'Mind the Gap? Children's Domestic Writings and their Implications for Educational Practice', is my own work.

Signature…….. …………………….

Date ………………………………..

Abstract

This study, situated in the field of sociocultural research, investigates how the home supports the writing development of my multilingual daughter, Pia, between the ages of 3-9 years old.

Using ethnographic methods, data is gathered at Pia's home, where approximately eight hundred unsolicited texts written in English, French and German are supplemented by fieldnotes, conversational and photographic data. Data is also collected at Pia's bilingual, French-German school in order to assess institutional contributions to Pia's writing development during reception class and Year One. As a final measure, data is also gathered on the domestic literacy practices of Pia's classmates and their families so that we may put the findings on a single child into perspective.

The findings confirm that homes and schools place different emphasis on the physical, social and psychological features inherent in literacy-related interactions. The result is a gap between the messages homes and schools transmit about the purposes of writing. At home, literacy is used rather than explicitly taught. The implicit, holistic nature of family dynamics fosters Pia's experience of writing as socially embedded practice, driven by her very real need to communicate with family members and friends in her environment. At school, by contrast, the child is positioned as an apprentice, who experiences writing more as an abstract cognitive skill. Significantly, Pia's domestic writing is in advance of curricular expectations. This seems to suggest that implicit teaching strategies, coupled to a re-evaluation of the physical, social and psychological aspects of classroom literacy, may be useful in enhancing writing activities within schools. The implicit character of domestic literacy, however, taking place on the margins of awareness, not only largely accounts for why children may find it hard to talk about their domestic literacy practices, but also explains why such practices remain unseen, and, consequently, unacknowledged.

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Chapter One: It Started with a Lollipop

Chapter One:

It started with a... lollipop

1.1. Introduction

'All that I have, all that I have

I will give Jesus all that I have'

A whole school of children sat crossed-legged on the floor, singing the songs that punctuated assembly. By force of habit, some knew the words by heart and could allow their glances to frolic around the congregation; to Miss Adams banging out the melody on the piano at the front, or to the grazed knees of the children placed strategically to the front and to the back of the congregation, perched upon chairs and holding up the words on heavy white cards. These scratchy-kneed prompters might be lucky enough not to have to chirp along, but how their aching shoulders let them pay for it afterwards. And who could tell, in fact, if you were really singing as long as your mouth opened and closed in all the right places? *Children love to sing so why not build upon their natural talents?* Those sitting at the end of the rows, flanked by teachers who did not have to sit cross-legged but quite comfortably on their chairs, were more or less obliged to deliver the daily proof of this axiom, whilst those snuggled in the middle could content themselves with going through the motions. Unless of course, they really did enjoy singing. About Jesus, fish, and loaves of bread, instead of 'One potato two potato three potato four', or even 'Not last night but the night before'... Many children couldn't even read the words anyway. Complicated words like 'I have promised to love Thee till the End' or 'My Saviour and my Friend', written nicely by our teachers, each verse a new colour. We would pick it up, they said. If it is around you for long enough, you'll just pick it up.

We must look like Hundreds n Fousands, I thought. All these colourful children. If you look at em from way up, like a bird, we must look like Hundreds n Fousands; like when they're stuck on a marshmallow or somefing. Or these chocolate buttons.

I was glad that all the children were assembled because today was Monday and on Mondays, performance was rewarded. I was going to get a reward and I wanted

everyone to see it. Mrs Hill, our schoolmistress, a pale, soft, smiling woman that made me think of candy floss, got to her feet to face everyone assembled. In her hand she held a little bag. The bag of our dreams. We shushed and waited. She talked about matters too insignificant to be retained by the minds of five-year-olds. Talked far too long, as it seemed to us. And particularly to me, whose knees were beginning to hurt, until she got as far as

'And now, it is time for the rewards.'

I sat upright, grinned at my best friends around me as I waited for my name to be called. As everyone clapped – as everyone had to – I got to my feet and walked to Mrs Hill. She dipped into her bag - *lovely, lovely fingers you got, Mrs Hill* - produced a lollipop, a hard, round one that you could suck for ages, and then pinned a gold star to my chest. I'd been getting nothing but gold stars all last week in my exercise book.

'For wonderful, clear, joined-up writing like the big children. Well done!'

For the rest of assembly I was allowed to sit at the front, facing the congregated school; all those eyes of all those Hundreds n Fousands fixed on my gold star and lollipop.

When I grow up, I'm gonna be a writer and a teacher. I love words, writing ... and I love teachers.

For the rest of that morning, I forgot my secret envy of Babita and Rajinder, my best friends who could speak other languages (though they hated speaking them in front of us), and whose shop-fronts were jewelled with curly writing that looked like some kind of music. When they went home, disappeared behind the folds of their own melodies, Gods, odours and tongues, I thought that they were living in Fairyland, in a magical-mystery place so far removed from my own. From school. They could be two people instead of one. I envied them. At home my sister and I would play at being someone else. Invent a language. Put our ponchos on our head to emulate Babita's wondrous black mane tamed into a thick rope of a plait that dangled beyond the seat of her chair. Rajinder wore his hair in a bun under a handkerchief with an elastic around it and when I asked him once to take it off so I could have a look he said he wasn't allowed to. Right

now, I didn't mind if they could be two people instead of one. For the rest of that morning, *I* would be the source of envy.

I'll let you ave a lick a my lolly at playtime cos we're friends, innit? I smiled over to them.

And they smiled back.

1.2. My cultural background as a sensitizer for educational research

It is, I think, permissible, to introduce the 'story' of my research with this tale of a key episode in my childhood; a tale revealing my own deep-seated, genuine interest in the written word, along with multiculturalism, multilingualism, home and school and childhoods. These issues have accompanied me throughout my life, and have surfaced in different guises in the past thirty years. They have been ever present in my work as an English language teacher and are now the driving force behind my research into the writing practices of one of my own daughters, Pia.

Keen as I was to emulate the cultural richness I erroneously regarded my friends as surpassing me in, I resolved to learn foreign languages once I got to secondary school. I took French and German. By the time I sat my A-levels, everyone was convinced that I came from a French-speaking Caribbean background. I did not. At home, we *only* spoke English. I am going to marry a Frenchman so that my children will be bilingual, I used to say. They can be two people instead of one. And their languages will be *chic*. As it turned out, I married a German and now live in France. Three instead of one... *sehr gut... et très chic*. What I failed to realise for a long time, however, was the richness of my own cultural background. I, too, returned to Fairyland once the school bell had been rung, disappearing behind the folds of our own music, odours and yes, tongues. So caught up was I in the web of dominant British values that I marginalised my own Caribbean-based Fairyland, apparently already having picked up that some types of identities and cultural practice were accepted whilst others, if not barely tolerated, were openly frowned upon. My first lesson in politics had thus been had by the age of five. As my teachers said: if it is around you for long enough, you'll just pick it up.

Everything belongs to a group. You can group things according to size or shape, colour, feel, smell, age, anything. We group a lot in maths, but you can group anywhere. You can even be in more than one group at the same time; ten and twenty, for example, belong both in the group multiples of two and multiples of five. Everything, absolutely everything belongs to at least one group, and that's good cos it must be a terrible thing to be all alone. If you listened to my parents, then my most important group was the black group. I never think about it much, but they're on about it all the time. They make it sound like war to me. Them and us. (...)

Weekends we normally have something special. But it's always the same. Sunday breakfast is baked beans, bacon and eggs, sometimes fried plantain, or fried bread. (...) Sunday dinner is always rice and peas and chicken. Not green peas, but kidney beans cooked in the rice with coconut cream so the rice goes dark red. Or sometimes black eyed peas. Gungu peas, we call them. We haven't got our own language, but we sort of half 'ave. When my parents speak Jamaican, white people can't understand them and when Mr Harry speaks, I don't always know what he's on about. It's more or less English, but it's often wrong, like when my dad says "it eat good" or "it drink good" when he really means it tastes nice, things like that. Our Sunday dinner always tastes nice, but it's always the same. Then we have a fizzy drink on a Sunday which we're not allowed to touch until we've eaten everything. There's no point asking. I always save the meat for last. I don't like the Jamaican bits we have to eat sometimes; yam, cassava, breadfruit. They eat it every day but we don't have to. Thank goodness.

(From *Long Time Walk on Water*, Joan Barbara Simon, 2007)

I thought my parents only spoke 'bad' English. I yearned to speak recognised, admired tongues. In many respects, however, my linguistic history is as colourful as that of my childhood friends, Babita and Rajinder, or indeed that of my own multilingual children.

My parents, having found work as unskilled labourers, emigrated to the UK in the late 1950s. Whilst my father remained an unskilled labourer all his life, at home in the closed social network of fellow West Indian labourers, my mother's social network expanded as she later began working – as opposed to socialising - with middle class colleagues at the bank where she upgraded after gaining British qualifications at night school. This transition manifested itself in my mother's speech as Creole was gradually displaced by standard English rather than by Cockney, our local dialect no more prestigious than her own variety, both of which were discouraged at home. I, naturally, grew up speaking Cockney anyway and although I have no recollection of it, logic tells me that I must have spoken some Creole as a young child. That my ability to speak Creole eroded with time and was finally lost seems attributable to two main reasons. Firstly, to my limited contact with my father, and secondly, to the fact that my mother now spoke standard English at home.

A second shift in my language patterns predates my entry to secondary school, by which time I apparently no longer spoke Cockney exclusively. Whilst adult West Indians admired the way I spoke, my peers were highly suspicious: not only did I not speak

Creole, but I didn't even speak Cockney properly, either. My segregation from the Black community was, thus, programmed. At secondary school I learnt French and German and took both as A-levels, convinced that I would study languages at university, get me a Frenchman and live abroad.

By the time I left university, the social-linguistic transition was complete. I remember the embarrassment I felt at times if I let a trickle of Cockney slip out: like poopsing in public... After university I worked as a language teacher in Portugal where I learnt Portuguese with some difficulty and lost it with astounding ease upon leaving the country. I moved to Germany after Portugal, learnt German 'properly' and got married. My husband and I took advantage of our proximity to France to move there before starting a family. If our children were going to be bilingual, they might as well be trilingual. I do not subscribe to the view that multilingualism leaves children mixed up and stuttering as an astonishing number of friends and family feared. Living in France revived my interest in, and need for French. With my husband and his family I speak German. To our children I speak standard English which I consciously, if somewhat fraudulently, spice with Jamaican to enable my children to understand their great-grandparents. Our home is a linguistic Spaghetti Junction, where the standard and vernacular of each code circulate freely, reflecting the different requirements of the people in and around me in my syncretic Fairyland. And yes, I have to admit, I find myself walking in my mother's shoes when I pick my children up on sloppy grammar or pronunciation; on too much slang, drooling vowels or gobbled consonants.

Today I view the matter of cultural environments with greater subtlety than in my childhood, my appreciation being sharpened by a better understanding of sociolinguistics as of the individual in general as a composite socio-political mutant entity, negotiating and reacting to the necessities of context in a constant flux of foregrounding and marginalising. As such, I see today that all social activity is equally, and inherently, political activity. This is true for adults and children alike, in varying degrees of transparency and consciousness. A context-sensitive, shifting and inherently political view of social activity is less in keeping with the liberal humanist paradigm of free choice, I believe, but better accommodated by a poststructuralist and critical view of the individual in society. Reflecting upon my personal history and motivation to research children's domestic writing, I am forced to take note of the fact that children

start off with a legacy; their development is a history of continuation but also of change, of adaptation to the demands of new environments and personal needs. Socially and cognitively, children, as learners who grow to become practitioners, are active meaning makers-takers-shapers. Children are indeed making choices (here, my concession to liberal humanism), yet these choices are mediated by the provisions, and values, of their environment (here, the post-structuralist and critical schools of thought): a child cannot choose a yellow pen if only red, green or blue pens are at hand. Similarly, if the message is transmitted that blue pens are not good, this child is unlikely to choose it although apparently free to do so. Provisions and values transmitted by social actors within specific contexts, as this example makes clear, have physical characteristics (the pens put at the child's disposal) as well as emotional and social ones (blue pens are 'not good'), which channel the child's learning in a specific direction. This observation is central to understanding how adults or other helpers, acting within their environments, help young learners to become competent members of their social worlds (Rogoff, 1990; Valsiner & Hill, 1989).

It is within this context - the role of the environment in shaping a child's development as a writer - that my research has been conducted. In what follows, I expand upon how my interest in children's writing matured further to become the current thesis.

1.3. Research background: the foundation

Without a concrete research plan for my PhD in mind, I was nonetheless careful to select research projects during my Master of Education which have built up to the current thesis. Thus, in my first year, focussing on language and literacy in social contexts, I investigated the degree of dichotomy between the school and home literacy practices of a class of 5-year-olds attending a private bi-lingual school; the same school as my children. This project was sparked off by an encounter with my elder daughter, then 6 years old. Hoping to make her view a piece of written work from a different perspective, I tried to make a bridge between what she had just learnt at school and a possible parallel in an everyday, non-scholastic context. I was surprised by the extent of her resistance to my suggestions as by the vehemence of her tearful, exasperated outburst:

> But Mummy! The one has nothing to do with the other! School is school, and here you are telling me *stuff* about home! What the teacher says is right, and anyway, what do *you* know!

A number of things became clear to me as I watched my daughter demonstratively heave her written work more to her side of the table. Firstly, that literacy acquisition can be an emotive affair. Secondly, this child evidently makes a clear demarcation between home and school. The third, most perturbing, conclusion was not only my daughter's unequivocal sense of the incompatibility of the two domains, but also the further strong allusion to the displacement of the validity of learning contributions from the home (relegated to mere *stuff*) by the infallibility of learning contributions from school. Was all of this only taking place in my daughter's mind, or also in the minds of other children, parents and teachers, I wondered. Such reflections engendered a series of questions:

1. How do the pre-schoolers I investigate encounter literacy at school?
2. How do the same experience literacy out of school?
3. Which values are communicated by school literacy practices?
4. How do these compare to the values communicated by the children's home literacy practices?
5. To what extent do homes and schools, as literacy domains, interact?

The major finding to come from the small-scale investigation, based on interviews and classroom observation, was that the children studied appeared to relate literacy learning and practice mainly to the classroom rather than view it as a useful tool for everyday life. Parents exhibited an active interest in literacy acquisition, mainly by reading stories to their children. The vast majority of parents also commented that they had had no stories read to them as children, and that they wanted to give their own children something they themselves would have liked to have had. Childhood experiences therefore influence parents' subsequent literacy-related strategies with their own children. There was a high degree of overlap between the values communicated at home and school. This was largely attributable to the fact that the families in question belonged to the white middle class.

The second year project involved a case-study investigation of parental teaching strategies in relation to the practical task of laying the table and the abstract task of

learning to read. Both activities were analysed according to support strategies proposed by Wood (1998) as by Rogoff's framework for analysing parental contingency, or 'guided participation' (Rogoff *et al.*, 1998). This project, unlike the first, permitted me to venture into the home of a child who was not my own, but whose mother was a teacher, like myself. I discovered that the teaching strategies used by the mother differed according to the nature of the task, contingent intervention being more characteristic of the practical task than of the abstract task. This meant that the mother was better interacting according to the needs and level of her child when she was not consciously seeking to teach. Laying the table rather than learning to read provided the child with a platform for networking her wide range of general knowledge. This finding fortified my interest to investigate in greater depth what children experience at home.

The major hurdle to be overcome for anyone wishing to see what goes on behind closed doors is access. I knew from the start that my research would not involve large numbers, for I was not looking to follow an entire class of children over a longer period, but wanted, above all, to perform qualitative research on one child. I began to scan my environment. Most of the mothers approached had kept the work their children had done at nursery school not only because they found it cute, but also because none of their own work had been valued enough to be kept. Here again we see the bridge between parents' childhood recollections and their behaviour towards their offspring. Careful probing revealed, however, that almost no-one had systematically kept the work their children produced *at home*; the drawings, mark-makings, first writings, etc. Whilst this provides insights into the contrasting values placed upon children's writing and drawing performed at school and at home, the latter of which mysteriously disappeared at a convenient moment, it nonetheless thwarted my research ambitions. The only person I knew who had meticulously guarded every piece of work done at home *and* at school was myself. The question of access was resolved. My final year research project at Masters level, hence, involved a corpus study of the voluntary writing produced by my youngest daughter from the period 1999-2003 with a view to examining her awareness, acquisition and use of literacy as a socio-semiotic tool. I conclude that she has access to a much wider spectrum of literate practices and formats than generally expected of children about to start school, so that there is a substantial gap between her demonstrated level of performance and the curriculum's assessment of competence as reflected in the activities proposed for Year One.

An analysis of my daughter, Pia, as a young writer, learning and using writing which reflects the provisions, values and therefore the framing of specific cultural contexts, is now the subject of my current research.

In Chapter Two, I analyse a sample of Pia's writing in order to provide a comprehensive picture of how Pia is framed at home, where literacy is presented as deeply embedded social practice conducted within social space. I identify the concrete and abstract spaces at play; verbal, affective, cognitive and physical space, thereby showing how framing at home accords the child equal status in the negotiation of meaning and the ultimate ownership of her text. I set the analysis within a compound framework drawing upon scholars informed by sociocultural theory and post-structuralist theory in order to see how these may forward my understanding of the interplay between learning and environments. I then go on to specify which analytical framework seems the best suited to my research design, and will therefore be applied throughout the rest of my research.

In Chapter Three, I review studies which may throw light upon my own thesis, helping me to place it within the context of current theoretical perspectives. By identifying and drawing attention to lacunae in the field of domestic literacy, I strengthen my claim to making a significant contribution to both theory and practice in this domain.

In Chapter Four, I present the design of my research, thereby specifying both my methods of data collection and my research timetable. A significant amount of data on the contextual features of Pia's home and school environments is presented so that we may better understand the environments she continually moves between and draws upon in her texts.

In Chapter Five, I detail the methods, and hurdles, involved in interpreting the data. This chapter concludes with the methodology specified in Chapter Four being applied to a sample of data. The aim here is not only to verify the suitability of the interpretive framework selected, but also to identify its potential limitations as I strive to maintain a critical stance.

In Chapter Six, I shift our focus away from the home to the comparative context of Pia's bilingual French-German school. By means of narrative vignettes, I present the most salient characteristics of literacy acquisition and practice in the last year of nursery school and the first year of primary school.

Chapter Seven is dedicated to interpreting the narrative vignettes in more detail. I unpick and explain how interactions within the scholastic environment position children as writers, portraying an overall abstract, skills-oriented as opposed to a social practice oriented view of writing acquisition and practice, framed within predominantly asymmetrical interactional dynamics with limited room for resistance or for the expression of young writers' authentic needs.

In Chapter Eight, I take a quantitative approach. The somewhat narrow picture to have emerged of children's writing skills framed in the classroom is contrasted with the wide scope of writing Pia has produced within and with the help of her home environment throughout the research period. These texts highlight salient distinctions of form and practice in comparison to institutional literacy. They highlight multimodality as well as semiotic syncretism or blending. They also highlight the multilayered, multilingual and intertextual nature of texts which reflect developmental spurts as opposed to a continuous linear progression through to mastery. Above all, we see how Pia, when writing within the parameters fostered at home, readily crosses numerous zones of learning as she designs personal, emotionally and socially anchored, 'peopled' and meaningful texts which make transparent her real level of competence as much as her need to make a mark in her social environment. Pia's domestic writings, therefore, support my argument both for the primacy of learning within the domestic context, as for literacy as socially embedded practice.

In Chapter Nine, I pursue the analysis of Pia's domestic writing from a qualitative vantage, picking out the most salient contextual strands for further analysis. I demonstrate how Pia's writing at home is essentially to be understood as social practice, mirroring the shifting and multiple levels of social contexts and identities. I argue that the open-ended interactional parameters for meaning-making at home compare favourably to the limited openings for meaning-taking at school. The more flexible

interactional dynamics experienced at home are precisely the ones, I conclude, which enable Pia to achieve writing skills which are in advance of curricular expectations.

In Chapter Ten, I set Pia's writing development within the context of her peers. This helps us to ascertain how typical her writing development is. By means of a questionnaire, I find out about the domestic literacy practices of Pia's classmates. The findings generally concur with those on my own daughter. To test this further, a separate questionnaire was also addressed to the children's parents.

In Chapter Eleven, parental perspectives on domestic literacy supply an additional, valuable layer to sharpen our understanding of the contributions of the home environment, enhancing the picture emerging from the children themselves. Parents are key social actors, or guiding lights, in their children's development. We learn that parents have an educational agenda at home, but one which is neither explicitly transmitted, nor necessarily framed in the same manner as at school.

Chapter Twelve takes us back through the entire research process. In this final chapter, I reiterate the findings and state the implications of these for educational practice. I conclude with a wink to the prospect of potential further study.

1.4 My thesis within the context of current educational research

Educational practitioners are increasingly encouraged to build upon the skills children bring with them from home to school (Bissex, 1984; Kendrick, 2003:39-40). The current thesis, which explores and exposes such skills, may therefore help to bridge the gap between these two equally important learning sites (Kenner, 2004) by providing information which has not yet made its way into, but may certainly inform, classroom practice. By investigating children's domestic writing practices and unveiling the contribution of explicit and implicit values expressed at school and home on the child's writing behaviour, this thesis, it is hoped, may also make a valuable contribution to the still modest body of literature on children's learning and practice at home, but also to multicultural, multilingual literacy in general. The findings, thus, may appeal to a

diverse group of specialists and laypeople, including linguists, teachers, parents, psychologists and policymakers.

1.5. Summary

This introductory chapter started off by presenting a key episode from my own childhood which has had a durable effect on my relationship to and interest in writing. After reflecting back upon my own socialisation and the devaluation of my own home practices, I go on to outline how my longstanding interest in children's literacy was reflected in diverse, yet interrelated postgraduate research projects which have culminated in the present thesis. I then specify the route taken through the wealth of data collected as part of my thesis, and make a brief reference to the central findings, which, I conclude, lend weight to the significance of my research for current educational practice.

This longitudinal investigation is driven by a central question:

How do the home and school environments bear upon children's learning and use of writing?

In the following chapter, I analyse a sample of domestic writing and provide some initial answers to this important question.

Chapter Two: Discovering Writing in the Domestic Context

Chapter Two:

Discovering Writing in the Domestic Context

2.1. Introduction

> To observe how children learn outside school, we need to observe with an open
> mind and in detail (Kenner, 2004:2)

In this chapter I conduct a pilot study of single text in order to unravel what Pia's writing interactions at home may look like. I show how physical, social and psychological factors interact to shape the child's literate development. I draw attention to Pia's ability to network skills gained in different domains as she uses writing as a multifaceted social tool. I examine the meaning-learning strategies of her home and expose the subtle nature of the assistance provided by Pia's mother. I demonstrate, in the end, the extent to which texts and learning strategies are deeply embedded in particular sociocultural contexts.

The investigation begins with a narrative snapshot, setting the scene, before I go on to explain how I plan to analyse the data. As the aim of this chapter is to test, or explore, the data's potential to see how my research may best be pursued, the chapter closes with an evaluation of the analysis and specifies the modifications which will be necessary to optimise the rest of my research.

2.2. Domestic writing in context: a narrative snapshot

I am in my study, playing the treble recorder. Hardly have I begun this treat, a reward that I accord myself after a good stint of work, then along scuttles my daughter, Pia, bursting breathlessly into the room.

We exchange glances. I bow her a bienvenue! She responds with a smile. Pia's glance falls on my paper-strewn desk – a mess, to the untrained eye, but for me, my desk is organic; the evidence of my mental webbing, the musical score for the melody of a particular activity of mind. And Pia knows better than to touch anything on it without my say-so. On the bookshelf is a sturdy plastic folder crammed full with old paper Pia's father brings home from work for his girls. Pia plucks out a sheet, flips it onto the clean side and reaches for a nearby felt-tip pen. Although I am concentrating on a decent rendition of Telemann, I also take in the fact that, like me, every fibre of her is involved in her graphical act. In no time, she has filled the page and holds it beneath my nose. I nod. Satisfied, she places it on my table and skips off.

So much has been said between the two of us, though not a single word exchanged.

Telemann over, I take a look at Pia's offering. Questions, questions, questions:

- Tu mapprend a Jouer la flute? (will you teach me to play the descant recorder?)
- Warum samelst du alles vas ich mache? (why do you collect everything I do?)
- Kann i doo some BasckdtBall?

For each question, an allocated box:

- Oui non
- Ja nein
- Jess No

To round off, the text is embellished by the drawing of a woman playing the recorder, reading the notes on a music stand (illustration 2.1). In a bubble, like in cartoons, music rather than words flow from the woman's mouth.

'Pia?' I call her back. 'Number one...' I let her wait and her grin gets wider, 'yes. Number two...' I hook this in the air, just out of her reach.
She takes up the posture of someone about to catch a ball; knees dipped, hands at the ready...
'... because I learn a lot from you. And I've told you that a hundred times already.'
A little hop of delight.
'And number three...'
She waddles with her hips and rubs her hands. On your marks... get set...
'Of course you can.'
'Oué!' she is off and out the door.
And I? I pick out my research diary from the books and files strewn at my feet. May 15th, 2004, I enter swiftly, before I falter in the face of the daunting prospect of satisfactorily, of scientifically, documenting the wealth of the preceding effortless minutes.
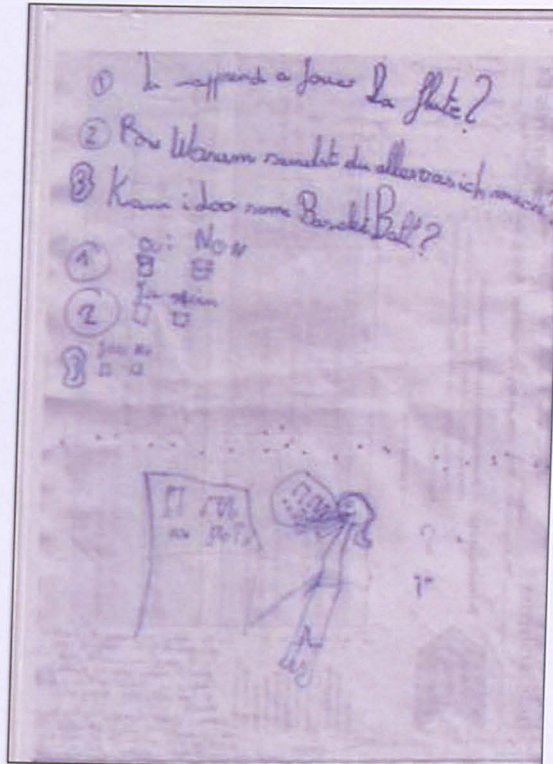
Illustr. 2.1: Musical mama, 04-05-15, 7yrs 11m

The fleeting, initially silent nature of the interaction belies the extreme complexity of what is actually taking place, which I began to glean as the child skipped off to some other pleasure. We may probe further with the following questions:

- What is happening here?
- How?
- Where is the control located?
- What does the interaction mean to the participants?

And we can encompass all these considerations in a central question:

What does the interaction appear to tell us about writing interactions and learning in a domestic context?

2.3. Analytical framework

In order to sieve this event. I draw upon a range of theoretical and analytical stances advocated by a number of scholars conducting research within the post-structuralist and socio-cultural frameworks.

2.3.1. Overall Structure

The premise central to my overarching framework is that the individual is essentially a social being, whose discourse, behaviour, meaning making and thus identity, is contingent upon a number of things. Upon the context. Upon the social tools, both symbolic (e.g. language) and material of nature (e.g. books, paper, computers, etc), which interactants may resource and endow with particular meanings. These tools, however, are also, and primarily, invested with sociocultural/historical, meanings (Vygotsky, 1994), prescriptions (Bakhtin, 1986), or 'affordances' (Gee, 2002). This being so, the present is inextricably intertwined with the past, and the individual firmly embedded within cultural parameters, with language, and by extension of this, writing, constituting a constant potential site of struggle or negotiation over meaning and its inherent power (Bakhtin, 1986; Bourdieu, 1993; Fairclough, 1989; Fowler *et al.*, 1979).

Viewed from this perspective, writing is not a neutral act of reproduction, shedding dead matter like dandruff. Its potential for reflectivity makes it an inherently political undertaking, even for young writers. Similarly, the writer is not merely subjected to the external affordances of writing as a social tool, but may, and clearly does, act, i.e. affirm, negotiate, interrogate, refute. Identity, like language, rather than being monolithic, is permanently renegotiated according to any given context, which may require that we occupy a number of roles, however fleeting or subconscious. Hence identity – again, like language - is a dynamic, political concept deployed skilfully for the conduct of business within the distinguishable characteristics and loci of our social markets (Bourdieu, 1993). Nonetheless, our identity need not be completely reconstructed every time, since our experience as social actors provides us with a base, with *habitus,* or the requisite funds of basic information supplying the 'currency' for us to go about the business of our daily lives (Bourdieu, 1991, 1993; Hall, 1995:224).

The above compound analytical framework provides the lens, then, that will calibrate this investigation, which I have conducted in greater detail elsewhere (Bursch, 2006).

It is impossible to tell the whole story in one fell swoop, for there will always be other stories to tell; extensions and re-evaluations of what has been said before. Nonetheless, individual stories necessarily set boundaries. As a next measure, I specify the boundaries of my pilot study, detailing the levels of analysis foreseen.

2.3.2. Levels of analysis

The investigation comprises three levels of analysis:

Level	Items of analysis
1: Social	- Graphics (or sign) - Code - Form - Function
2: Ecological	- Domestic and institutional ecosystems - Context-sensitive interactional dynamics
3: Psychological	- The text in the wider context of cultural knowledge - Construction of knowledge/meaning - Construction of identity

Table 2.1: Levels and items of analysis

The first level of analysis views the event from the social vantage in that it foresees writing as a social tool, employed to construct a tangible 'text' which is then redeployed as the cornerstone of social interaction. At this social level, I examine signs (graphics), language (code), form and function, whereby it is clear that the last two categories are inextricable, since the meaning of a text relates to the form and contextual function to which the text is put.

The second level of analysis examines the event from the ecological and interactional vantages. Here, I expose how the event extends beyond the ecological context of the home and is networked to wider ecosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Ferreiro, 1984; Gregory & Williams, 2000; Greenfield *et al.*, 2003; Kendrick, 2003; Kenner, 2000). I also demonstrate the usefulness of a particular model for highlighting the interactional

zones which contribute towards shaping of Pia's learning and use of writing (Valsiner, 1997).

The final analytical level is a psychological one focusing on textual indices in relation to the construction of knowledge, identity and meaning.

In an analysis of writing as socially embedded practice, it is important to bring some clarity to the central terms being used. Below, I briefly clarify notions of *text, intertextuality* and *writing* employed in my analysis.

2.3.2.1. Levels of text

The text itself comprises three levels of construction:

1. T1: the tangible written, graphical or semiotic text produced during the interaction
2. T2: the linguistic or conversational text which can be coded as a transcript
3. T3: the literacy event as a whole (Heath, 1982), and as a multimodal phenomenon comprising not only T1 and T2, but also other non-verbal elements (Kress, 1997).

2.3.2.2. Intertextuality

My definition of intertextuality recognises any manner in which a text (T3) may be networked to other texts, either at the horizontal level of genre, or at the deeper, vertical level of wider personal experience (Gee, 2002; Bateson, 1979, in Kendrick, 2003:159). Every new encounter, be it physical or mental, constitutes a *text* in its own right, creating a new node or knot which is then fed back to one's existing knowledge. Intertextuality, however, does not merely lean on previous experiences, but may also establish links to future events in as far as these are already present in some form in one's mind. It is precisely because intertextuality, as an inherent feature of every thought act, not only exists at every interpretative level, but constitutes an intra/interpsychological phenomenon crossing temporal boundaries, that I equally propose the terms *networking* or *webbing*.

2.3.2.3. Approaches to writing

In Chapter Three, I explore how various scholars conceptualize writing (e.g. Dyson, 2001; Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1979; Ivanič, 2004; Kress, 1997; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2003; Street, 2004). Here, it is important to note that, in my approach to writing, I consciously distance myself from the portrayal of writing as an abstract, technical skill, producing dead data suspended from all contextual reality. My analysis is further motivated by the view of writing as an interactional process rather than as a polished end result, and by the view of the child being helped to *be*, rather than to *become*, a writer, for even when we analyse and observe how children learn to write, we should not forget that what we also see is children *writing*, therefore children *being*, rather than merely *becoming*.

I now take a closer look at Pia's text and the event as a whole to see what it reveals about being a writer in the context of the home.

2.4. Level one: the deployment of a social-semiotic tool

In this section, I analyse various features of writing as a social-semiotic tool, drawing attention to Pia's sensitive and flexible understanding of what she may achieve with writing.

2.4.1. Graphical level: code-contingent handwriting

Pia attends a bilingual French-German nursery-primary school, as I describe in more detail in Chapters Three and Four. The two languages not only teach completely different scripts, the French being 'curlier', as Pia explains, but in Year One they also use different materials; a fountain pen in French, and a pencil, at the start, in German (Ch.6,7).

Kenner (2003) describes differences in script styles according to their analytic or synthetic properties. Analytic script involves separate pen strokes, whereas in synthetic scripts, the pen stroke remains continuous. The German practice, then, trains an analytic script, whereas the French practice trains a synthetic one. Ferreiro (1984) distinguishes between the figurative aspects of script on the one hand, that is to say, the quality of the shapes, and the constructive elements on the other, i.e. the links between the graphemes or letters, and the rules of their production. Pia is not familiar with terms such as analytic or synthetic, figurative or constructive, yet she learns to sharpen her awareness of what such words describe, and she reproduces such distinctions when she writes.

Pia, we observe, does not uphold the distinctions learnt at school when writing of her own accord at home. Neither the fountain pen used for French, nor the pencil used for German, but the felt-tip pen, used for colouring activities at school, is the selected tool for this particular text. More importantly, she does not write in German the German way, or in French the French way, but primarily, and tellingly, according to the French fashion. Throughout the text (T1), there is also evidence of code-switching at the calligraphic level (Table 2.2):

Question/Answer	Code	Script
Q 1	French	French, German
Q 2	German	French, German
Q 3	English	French, German
A 1	French	German
A 2	German	French
A 3	English	French, German

Table 2.2; code and script distribution in relation to question and answers

The word 'Basckd(t)Ball', for example, bears the hallmarks of French calligraphy; the *b*, the *k*, the *l*, though the *d(t)* is clearly German and the use of capital letters derives from the German practice of writing nouns with capital letters, which French, like English does not (with the exception of proper names). It is important to point out here that Pia has not been taught to write 'the English way'.

Pia, clearly, is not adhering to the prescriptions or positioning of institutional practice, yet it would be erroneous to surmise that she has not learnt her handwriting lesson well. Her writing is consistent at other semiotic levels. The circle drawn around Question 2 and Answer 2 is, in both cases, bigger than the one drawn around Q1. The consistent encasement of Question 3 and Answer 3 is certainly not coincidental. If we turn our attention to her writing of music, we notice that the notes on the music stand are accurately reproduced in the speech bubble, whose conventional function Pia logically transposes, for it is not words she hears coming from her mother's mouth, but music. Finally, the multiple choice answers are written consistently. Each possible response begins with a capital letter. The correction in Answer Two, from a small *n* to a capital *N*, demonstrates the conscious act of such consistency.

2.4.2. Orthography

If we turn to Pia's spelling of English – her spelling of French and German being largely correct - we observe, once again, how she imports knowledge from different sites to help her write.

The word *doo*, for example, reveals sensitivity to English spelling whilst making a certain degree of cognitive conflict transparent. It is initially spelled correctly: *do*. It seems, however, that Pia is possibly recruiting French or German phonology, according to which the sound of the vowel here is short. The word, however, should sound *longer*; *doo*. It is clearly not German orthography, for in Question 2, Pia correctly spells the German homophone for this: *du*, meaning 'you'. She is thus aware that the same sound can be spelled differently according to the language used.

In the case of *Basckd(t)Boll*, we see that, conceptually, for Pia, the word comprises two discrete nouns; basket, and ball, each beginning with a capital letter, as in German. Her *d* is also a *t*, and this is no coincidence, for in French, the word is pronounced ending with a *d*, whilst in English, the word ends in a *t*. Pia is unsure which spelling is correct, so literally blends both. Pia knows the German word *Ball*, yet seems unaware that the English word is written the same way, i.e. that we are dealing with a homograph. It seems that the /a/ in *Basckd(t)* misleads her to expect a different spelling at the end of

the word. She is, after all, making two completely different sounds. To verify my interpretation, I questioned her once her text was out of view:

Me: Pia, do you know how to write the word 'ball' in English?
Pia: Ball? I think so: b-a-l.

Hence, she *does* know how to spell 'ball' in English, one could say, and *is* momentarily being misled by the different pronunciation of the *a* in the first part of the word 'basketball', although her spelling of *do*, *Boll* and *No*, confirm her awareness that the same letter may represent different sounds in a single language.

What she is doing is to 'draw speech' (Vygotsky, 1978:115), or to draw sounds (Kress, 1997:124). There is logic behind her spelling, based upon the application (A) of an abstract concept (C) once understood, internalised and reduced (R). If I reduce this verbal analysis even further, I arrive at the formula:

$$C \rightarrow R \rightarrow A1 \rightarrow A2 \rightarrow A3 \text{ etc}$$

The child's thoughts to this formula might read as follows: once I've understood it (C), that it, the basic idea (R), then I can use it in lots of different ways (A1, A2, A3), try it out. This is exactly what children do when they approach writing.

2.4.3. Code

The language sequence – French, German, English – in Pia's trilingual text (T1) reflects her habitual language preferences (Bursch, 2005). The second question starts off in French; the *P-o-u*, subsequently crossed out, is the beginning of the French question *Pourquoi*, but Pia wants to switch to German, so she translates the word *pourquoi* to *warum*. In a later chapter (Ch.8), we learn which types of texts Pia typically writes in three languages.

2.4.4. Form and function

Pia's text (T1) is a modification of the multiple choice format familiar to her from school. She discards the conventional question-answer layout, favouring, instead, to

group the questions into a separate category. She also incorporates a picture, which leans more on the narrative genre.

The function of the multiple choice paper is to make the learner's knowledge transparent whilst limiting the options available. Here, it is less the case of the reader, myself, being invited to display knowledge, but of Pia using the event to display her own knowledge. Nonetheless, this is not a test, or work, but a 'game' Pia plays. It is not an academic exercise imposed upon her, but a real life social skill, deployed with extreme fun, as the paralinguistic cues make evident, and selected as the appropriate form for the immediate context of getting her message across without disturbing her mother's musical interlude. In addition to being polysemous and multilingual, this text is, therefore, equally multifunctional; it is a document of extreme yet subtle complexity in view of the fact that it was rattled off with such ease.

2.4.5. Summary

Analysing the text with regard to handwriting, spelling, form and function, we see that Pia resources, yet transforms, her writing-related skills, embellishing her text with other things she knows about writing and symbols, over and above letter formation. At home, she has the freedom to act independently of institutional prescriptions. The result is a rich, playful and personal text, exposing Pia's skills as a writer.

2.5. Level two: ecological and interactional frames

In this section, I examine the dynamics which lead to the production of texts like the one analysed in this chapter.

2.5.1. Introduction

We have seen how Pia designs; how she blends the multiple choice format with the narrative genre, investing the whole with a particular flair tailored to her immediate purpose. In a sense, it is as if she opens her toolbox and deftly whips out the utensils that are available or good enough to get the job done (Kress, 1997; Wood, 1998). Tools

are made for specific purposes, they have 'affordances', but may also be implemented to achieve innovative ends. Some tools Pia is able to handle well, such as French and German spelling. Others, such as English spelling, are less familiar, having been used less frequently. Toolboxes have compartments which help us to order and facilitate retrieval. Two central compartments of a child's social world and development are home and school (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Valsiner, 1997). It is to these compartments and their affordances in relation to the literacy event (T3), to which I would now like to turn.

2.5.2. Domestic ecosystem

The literacy event (T3) yields key information about Pia's household. She comes from a highly literate family. Her mother is a researcher, in whose study writing is omnipresent; a part of the furniture. Pia's father is German. His work entails such a high exposure to print that he brings home pages full of texts, the reverse side of which serves as writing material for the children. Literacy skills thus play a central role in both Pia's parents' lives.

The event provides numerous insights into the household values informing Pia's developmental pathway, or 'chreods' (Valsiner, 1997).

Glances are exchanged. Words are not. Pia knows when not to interrupt, when to enter and leave the room. She knows what she may touch and what not; she knows that she cannot just help herself to clean paper, but must take her father's used paper from a folder she must share with her sister. The text (T3) reveals that Pia has learnt to be a competent social actor in her home market, which operates according to dynamics that do not necessarily overlap with those enforced at school.

2.5.3. Institutional ecosystem

Although Pia's text (T1) exemplifies French and German institutional writing practices, the values couched behind these ecosystems cannot be foregrounded purely by reference to the text alone. Theoretical (Ch.3,4) and empirical (Ch.6,7) data collected on

the classroom will later help us to identify the values at work here. Again, we see that it is essential to look beyond the immediacy of the event or text in order to fully contextualise and retrieve a maximum of meaning.

What can be said here is that, at the institutional level, variegated, if not conflicting, signals are being sent with regard to writing. Such discrepancies must, nonetheless, be bridged by the child. In the text (T1), we see Pia negotiating these values.

2.5.4. Interactional dynamics: Valsiner

Whenever people are in contact, they are in interaction. These interactions will be characterised differently according to where, with whom, with which means and why the interaction is taking place (Bourdieu, 1993; Fairclough, 1989).

A very interesting model which draws attention to such details is proposed by Jan Valsiner (Valsiner, 1997). In brief, Valsiner elaborates the Vygotskian concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) so that it depicts three interdependent interactional levels which channel child development:

- the Zone of Free Movement (ZFM)
- the Zone of Promoted Action (ZPA)
- the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

2.5.4.1. Zone of Free Movement (ZFM)

The ZFM relates to how adults structure, and limit, children's free movement within their physical environment. The school is set out differently to the home, for example. This has direct consequences on how interactions within this 'zone' unfold. Pia's mother's study may be perceived of as a ZFM, with clear 'go' and 'no go' areas.

2.5.4.2. Zone of Promoted Activity (ZPA)

The ZPA, as the name suggests, relates to interactions promoting development via personal (i.e. people) and material resources. The felt tips used for promoting colouring at school are – amongst other things – put at Pia's disposal at home to promote writing, for example.

Valsiner describes the ZPA as non-binding. Hence, the ZPA will only exist as interactional space if a particular activity is being promoted. The concept of the ZPA draws our attention, above all, to the social aspects of an interaction, since people and cultural materials are social phenomena.

2.5.4.3. Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

As in the Vygotskian concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978), Valsiner's term relates to interactional features fostering the 'set of possible next states' of the child's development (Valsiner, 1997:200). Valsiner, however, makes explicit the links between physical (i.e. ZFM) and social (i.e ZPA) characteristics as adults constrain (ZFM) and promote (ZPA) children's participation in activities in such a manner as to stretch children to new levels of learning (ZPD).

Valsiner's model is ecological in the sense that it provides a tool for understanding the various levels of interaction contributing towards child development in relation to any ecosystem, thus it may be used to describe how interactions at home and at school shape child development. It is therefore highly appropriate to my research design, and will be explained in more detail in the next chapter.

2.5.5. Summary

In this section, I argue the case for environments as ecosystems, in which various components are balanced and promote child development. I introduce the interactional model propounded by Valsiner (Valsiner, 1997), as this highlights the physical, social and cognitive features of context-sensitive interactions between teachers and learners,

thus making his model extremely well suited to structure an investigation into *both* the home and the school as valid, vital, learning loci (Kenner, 2004).

I now turn to the cognitive aspects of the event, in order to see how this third perspective on interactional dynamics may sharpen our understanding of the experiences made within the home environment and their role in shaping child development.

2.6. Level three: learning and meaning in cultural context

Learning does not take place in a vacuum, thus it is possible to identify the social experiences which contribute to, or are linked with, individual learning events.

2.6.1. Networking knowledge within and across contexts

This interaction, presenting a new 'knot' in the chain of events constituting Pia's knowledge, cannot be fully appreciated if left in a vacuum. Rather, it must be related to the web of her experiences and therefore firmly anchored within the cultural context of her personal life. In order to unveil this, I must step beyond the knowledge provided purely by the interaction alone and resource my knowledge as the child's mother. Bearing in mind the general consensus that knowledge is more subjectively taken or socially co-constructed than it is an objectively given phenomenon, the trustworthiness of my investigation is not undermined by this approach which allows me to strengthen my argument for the contextual contingency of development and learning. Indeed, stepping beyond the text is the *only* means to establish such intertextuality.

Upon closer inspection, then, literacy event throws a wide net of 'knotted relevancies' (Bateson (1979) in Kendrick, 2003:159), spanning semiotic codes (including music and body language), scripts, tools, genres, ecological zones, temporal zones, and social actors in shifting roles, all of which contribute towards shaping Pia's development as a writer, and all of which may be identified and described according to Valsiner's interactional model. The text links Pia to her mother, building upon the skills, the

'dispositions' or 'common sense' Pia has acquired over time for successful interaction with her mother in particular and for community appropriate behaviour in general (Bourdieu, 1993; Gauvain, 2001). It links her with her father, with his workplace and his professional materials. Central to the understanding of this interaction is also the fact that Pia receives piano tuition. She is therefore familiar with the musical score although she is not yet required to write music herself. Pia knows that her mother, as a child, received intensive music tuition. The text thus links Pia not only with her own music tuition, but forges a bridge between her mother playing the treble recorder and Pia herself learning to play the piano, a bridge, also, between her mother as a child musician and Pia as a child musician. The interaction provides Pia with a vehicle for webbing her knowledge of different forms of codification; French handwriting, German handwriting and music. It links the multiple choice format with the narrative format via the drawing. The speech bubble establishes a further node between narratives and comics, regularly borrowed from the local mediathèque. At the communicative level, this interaction is inter-related to all previous speechless encounters between mother and child, contributing to the growth of the participants' intersubjectivity as a 'lifelong conversation' (Mercer, 1995). At the level of function, the text is part of the larger network of both games on the one hand, and requests on the other. The interaction makes links projected into the future as into the past. It makes room for a new type of interaction between mother and child, looking into the future, to a time when, with her mother's help, Pia will be able to play the recorder as well, perhaps, as she is able to play the piano now. As such, the text also makes a link between Pia's mother as her teacher and Pia's piano teacher, for Pia knows that her mother taught children for several years. The text, however, also makes of Pia the teacher and of her mother the learner, whose contextual notes, and whose response to the question *why do you collect everything I do* demonstrate the reversed positions. This latter link clearly wanders beyond the home to Pia's school and to her mother's 'school', that is, to her mother's working environment, so that both parents' professional activities are enmeshed in the event. The text makes a link to Pia's sister, who is already learning to play the descant recorder at school. Thus, a further home-school node involving a further family member is established; one docking tenuously onto ongoing sibling rivalry, for the necessity of sharing the folder of paper can be a highly contentious issue when supplies are running low. The text, finally, projects Pia not only beyond the home and its members out into the wider community of her parents' workplaces and their alternative non-domestic

roles, it also quite concretely creates links to Pia's school, to herself as a pupil, to the dynamics and formats encountered at school, and beyond; to her position in a much larger community as a speaker of that community's language: a speaker of English, a speaker of French, a speaker of German. And, I contend, a 'speaker' of music. This sample of domestic writing, I conclude, is intertextual and culturally situated, and if I were to try to visualise what I have needed so much space to put in words, the image that would transpire would be a web; a network of interlinked texts of experience.

Such webbing and shaping of meaning cannot be gained by a child in isolation, but is the result of interaction with other people in social space and with social tools offered by the child's environment. The intertextual, interactional analysis enables us to identify a host of others who help Pia: her mother, father, sister, her school-teachers, her music teacher, each occupying social space in divergent ways. Pia does not invent writing. It exists as a social tool, invented by others and which becomes part of her 'social inheritance', although there is a sense in which Pia re-invents or discovers writing as meaningful to herself as she learns to master it, with the aid of more competent others.

Intertextuality underscores the notion of 'zones' occupied by individuals as they negotiate their positions within and across culturally sensitive scenarios (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Maquire, 2001; Valsiner, 1997). The literature abounds with corresponding references to 'sites', 'worlds', 'transfer', 'settings', 'environment', 'boundaries' and 'crossing' (Kenner, 2004), which relate directly the dynamic, 'porous' 'zoniferous' qualities Valsiner has captured in his interactional model. Pia enters/leaves the room, she 'hovers' between verbal and non-verbal space, crosses linguistic borders and semiotic zones. She slides in and out of roles related to the past, present and future of her own person and that of the other key interactant, her mother, who steers the interaction in a manner that is, initially, barely perceptible.

2.6.2. The construction of meaning

If we accept that literacy, as a social tool, is deployed for the construction of meaning, it becomes essential to also find out what this literacy event means for the individual participants.

There is no direct verbal exchange between mother and child during the writing act, which is a solitary performance, yet 'so much has been said between the two of us, though not a single word exchanged'. Without the need for language, the mother directs her daughter's entry to and exit from the study, taking in, almost in passing, the text her daughter has written. Meaning is not co-constructed verbally in the first, but in the second instance, as Pia's mother subtly answers her daughter's questions. For Pia, it is clear what her intentions are; what she means. She wants to have her requests heard and granted, but without unpleasant 'repercussions', as Valsiner terms it (Valsiner, 1989). If she 'plays her cards right', she will get what she wants. Playing her cards right, however, presupposes that she has learnt how. This *how* has been transmitted via the interplay of the ZFM and the ZPA, which supply the rules of correct conduct. Her request – it is not a demand – is presented as a game. A teaching game in one sense, since her mother has to fill out the correct boxes in the way Pia has herself learnt to do at school. In another sense, it is not quite a teaching game because Pia does not have the answers and cannot know how her mother will respond. Still, she pursues her goal in the spirit of a game, taking further cues from her mother, who pitches her answers in a manner intended to heighten the child's excitement. Pia smiles, she skips, she grins, gives a 'little hop of delight' and shouts 'Oué!' (Yeah!) when all her wishes are granted. All these responses are consciously solicited by the child's mother, who appears to want positive emotional parameters to play a decisive role in her daughter's experience and learning. Notions of immediate pleasure are not always appropriate to learning situations and depend on the community in question (Gregory & Williams, 2000). Later, I demonstrate how French and German classes resource children's feelings in different ways, and with different results (Ch.7). Here, the interaction takes the guise of a game, yet the feelings involved are genuine.

For the mother, at the surface level, the meaning of the text (T1) appears clear, too. The question 'why do you collect everything I do' cannot be answered by 'yes' or 'no'. Pia appears to be on 'automatic pilot' in the yes/no game. Her mother does not point out to her the mistake, but simply provides the correct answer, as she knows what her daughter *means*: meaning takes precedence over instruction right now.

Meaning is tied up with legitimacy and ultimately, with power. Power is more than an oppressive tool associated with knowledge (Foucault, 1997:6), for it is also productive

and malleable. Whilst it is true to say that the mother, as the more competent agent, sets up the over-arching physical (i.e. ZFM) and social (i.e. ZPA) parameters, which Pia acknowledges, and uses to her advantage, the reverse is equally true. By limiting the range of her mother's responses, Pia reverses the conventional adult-child asymmetry. By taking up the classical role of the teacher, Pia invests herself with power. Her mother, however, may choose between more than the foreseen yes/no options and by providing alternatives, she indirectly points out the inappropriateness of the options given. Teaching is not the primary goal here. No correction is proposed for Pia's spelling, handwriting or the 'misfit' between certain questions and answers. Pia's mother, however, does not let the opportunity to instruct escape her entirely. She *is* teaching, *implicitly*, although it is not immediately clear if Pia has chosen to understand the lesson, which, non-binding, is not forced by the mother keen not to deflate her child's pleasure and therefore accepting to play the game and share the role of the 'child'. In any case, a subtle tug-of-war over power is taking place, and it is inextricable from the roles negotiated between the interactants.

Meaning, thus, is constructed in accordance with immediate cultural contexts and in the 'space' between the utterances or behaviour of the interactants and to the degree to which each acknowledges the rights and intentions of the other. As a straightforward mother, Pia's mother knows what her daughter means and does not jeopardise the encounter by hugging the power accorded her by her higher level of competence. As a mother-teacher, she co-constructs knowledge by subtly manoeuvring a way out of her daughter's unfitting options but careful for her daughter not to lose face. As a researcher, her mother is less involved in the co-construction of meaning than she is in the *re*construction of meaning. At this level, meanings are established which lie beyond the consciousness of her daughter – meanings related to her daughter's development. The mother's privileged perspective and knowledge permits her to see how her daughter, assisted by the physical, social and cognitive input and guidance of others, may develop as a writer.

The meanings embedded within the event (T3) are given and taken according to the linguistic dynamics of informal contexts. Pia 'talks' a lot, via her text (T1), directly to her mother (T2), but also with her feelings, her body, and via the event in general as a contribution to the lifelong conversation between mother and child (Mercer, 1995). The

dialogue is not one of initiation-response-feedback, which characterises classroom interaction, as I later demonstrate in Chapter Seven, but one in which power struggles are more apparent, and which the adult may, and does, occasionally lose:

> **Mother**: this is a lovely drawing, Pia.
> **Pia**: (smiles)
> **Mother**: why didn't you put yourself in the picture?
> **Pia**: eh ben, je dessine ce que je vois et c'est sûr que je ne vois pas moi même – à moins que j´aie un miroir. Et je n'en ai pas! (well, I draw what I see, and of course I can't see myself – unless I've got a mirror. Which I haven't!)
> **Mother**: what about this drawing of me. Do you want to change anything? Colour me in, or anything?
> **Pia**: Non. C'est terminé. (No, it's finished)
>
> *NB should I have pointed out to her that I am not white, or would she take this to be nitpicking and break down in tears at the criticism? Better keep my mouth shut. I am black and she knows it. She has the right to resist my mediational means.*

<div align="right">(from research diary, 17.05.04)</div>

2.6.3. Implicit learning in the domestic context

Pia is not being taught in any overt sense during this short though meaning-laden exchange, yet it would be wrong to assume that social skills are being deployed without any true gains to knowledge.

Behavioural blueprints acquired during socialization are guides, they are not guarantees, hence there is always the risk of failure. The fact that this encounter achieves the desired goal teaches Pia that her strategy is still an effective one which she may resort to in future under similar circumstances.

Pia learns, from the fact that her mother files away everything, 'collects everything I do', that her work counts; she has a particular value in this respect.

Pia's attempts to spell in English constitute a further learning experience. She can be seen to trawl her knowledge of phonology and orthography across three languages in order to spell in a language she has not been taught to write. It does not matter that her mother does not correct her spelling and it is possibly better that she has not done so in this context. By providing answers of equal sincerity to her daughter's questions instead of focussing on the technicalities of spelling, Pia's mother indirectly teaches her

daughter, or confirms, that the child's text is comprehensible just as it is. No additional instruction is deemed necessary. Learning may take place in the absence of instruction. It may take place on the periphery. Indeed, this is one of the salient characteristics of learning situations in a non-institutional context (Dyson, 1994; Hall, 1994; Kendrick, 2003).

The ease with which Pia conducts this performance certainly legitimizes the question of what it is she is learning. By looking at the physical, social and cognitive aspects of the interaction, with the help of Valsiner's model in particular, I have established that the child has, with the help of her environment and notably her mother, in fact learnt a great deal and demonstrates great skill in being a writer, sensitive to writing's social function and how best to employ it to meet her ends. As far as her spelling is concerned, Pia is still operating within the ZPD across all three languages, conventional spelling being 'above yet within reach', with English, understandably, at a lower stage of development than her French and German. At the calligraphic level, it would be wrong to argue that Pia has not yet learnt to distinguish between the French and German styles of handwriting. She simply chooses not to adhere to the distinctions enforced at school, after all, she is not at school, but at home, where different rules apply, where she may play and blend what she knows, and where the more implicit parameters encourage her to give her fantasy full reign.

Even though she does not push the matter, Pia's mother is nonetheless conscious of her teaching role in this interaction. Pia accords her the role of the prospective music teacher. It is unclear if she accords her mother the role of a language instructor. This is a role her mother does not insist upon as she remains in the spirit of the game, which leaves no room for blatant pedagogical intervention, for she is not in the classroom, but at home with her daughter. The encounter, then, helps the mother to practice and confirm her skills in 'assistance tuning' (Tharp & Gallimore, 1998), or 'active, sensitive, involvement' (Mercer, 1995). Such active, sensitive involvement advances the mother's own learning:

> (...) my analysis of Pia's work has changed my attitude (...) Of course their work is 'good enough' to receive a clean sheet...

> (from research diary, 15.10.04)

Changes within the domestic ecosystem, with their attendant changes to behavioural patterns, in turn, will shape how Pia experiences writing as a promoted activity in the future:

> (...) I noticed how conspicuously empty this blue plastic folder is in comparison to when I conducted my pilot study half a year ago. This is due to a number of factors:
> 1. papa has changed his job (does he read/write less?)
> 2. papa now only comes home at the weekends (i.e. less contact)
> 3. girls each got blocks of coloured paper for Xmas from Uncle Anton (has a printing business). No more need to share the plastic folder
>
> The used, 'dirty' paper will probably fester in this tray for I don't know how long now (...) I feel a pang of nostalgia, as at the death of an era.
>
> (research diary 18.01.05)

The balance between the physical (i.e. ZFM) and social (i.e. ZPA) components of Pia's domestic ecosystem, therefore, bear directly upon her further cognitive development (i.e. ZPD).

2.7. Evaluating the pilot study

As I progressed through the analysis, I became increasingly attracted to Valsiner's interactional model (Valsiner & Hill, 1989; Valsiner, 1997), as this provided me with a single means for comparing both the school and home environments, for highlighting the mobility in social interactions as participants move in and out of 'semi-permeable' zones at the physical, social and abstract cognitive levels, and for exposing the instrumental role of others in channelling the child's development. This latter point may not seem immediately apparent in the text I have chosen to analyse here. Indeed, I originally, and largely, overlooked my own contributions, as Pia's mother, to the shaping of her development. The literacy event is everything but a solitary, neutral performance, and although control seems to be firmly in the hands of the child, who radiates surety, her mother but a prop in comparison, it is the mother who has significantly provided the framing that enables such an interaction to take place in the first place, and it is she, along with other family members, who will continue to play an important role in the child's development.

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My enthusiasm for the comprehensive framework provided by Valsiner notwithstanding, I note potential areas which would benefit from further clarification. I anticipate that the non-binding nature of interactions in the *Zone of Promoted Activity might weaken the* suitability of this framework to address classroom interaction, and I question in general the extent to which any internalised operation, or learnt behaviour, can be truly non-binding. I anticipate, therefore, that I might need to revise the depiction of the *Zone of Promoted Activity*, in the same way that Valsiner (1997) or Rogoff (1990) have also reconceptualized the Vygotskian concept of the Zone of Proximal Development. Indeed, my analysis has already identified ways in which the ZPA may be more finely scaled, in that it draws attention to not only the non-verbal aspects of the interaction, but also to the role of emotional framing, neither of which are specifically mentioned by Valsiner.

I readily accept that it will be impossible to analyse the eight hundred texts which make up my corpus in this way, to say nothing of the data collected at school. Thus, whilst Valsiner's model, which will be tested once again in Chapter Five, does seem ideal to my research intention and design, the qualitative framework he provides will need to be complemented by a quantitative approach to bring to light the scope of Pia's writing at home so that I may sound out the extent of the gap between the levels of skill fostered at home and school.

2.8. Summary

In this chapter, I have taken a single sample of Pia's domestic writing and analysed it to see what it reveals about how she writes and is framed as a writer at home.

The interactional text (T3), despite its fleeting nature, is nonetheless a complex polysemous, multilingual, multifunctional *zoniferous* encounter, which yields a wealth of data about the literacy values and strategies expressed within this child's community, and the ability of this child to resource and web such knowledge in her writing. The absence of coercion throws light on the implicit family interactional patterns, casting learning as a playful invitation, so that we might even be fooled into thinking that no learning is taking place at all. Sieving the domestic literacy interaction to get down to the level of the stitch, and now standing back to take in the full picture, we see a child

who does much more than absorb and enact endorsed literate behaviour and we see a mother, whose 'sensitive, active involvement' (Mercer, 1995) guides her child's development in numerous, subtle ways.

Now that I have piloted my data, I turn to the theoretical perspectives in current research to see how these may inform my understanding of my chosen field of investigation, help me to verify the relevance of my own project and confirm the contributions my thesis may make to educational theory and practice.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Perspectives

Chapter Three: Theoretical Perspectives

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I review a number of theoretical perspectives to see how they might inform the picture of domestic literacy which is gradually emerging. I focus upon four areas. The first area concerns the influence of the home and school as domains transmitting literacy-related values shaping the child's engagement with writing. The second area I review, given the multilingual nature of Pia's writing, relates to the literature on multilingualism. The third area I examine focuses on concepts of writing, which may help me to illuminate the views adopted in the different domains influencing Pia's literacy development. Finally, I focus upon interactional frameworks as the overriding structure within which all social action takes place. In this section, I return to Valsiner's interactional model, presenting it in more detail and comparing it to similar studies.

To start with, however, I will summarise some general trends in literacy research.

3.2. General Trends in Literacy Research

Literacy research, until the 1970s, mainly focussed on teaching in classroom settings (Baynham, 2004). The availability and dissemination of Vygotsky's theories from the 1970s onwards triggered off studies relating to the use of literacy in authentic contexts beyond the classroom (Robertson, 1999). The diverse and multilingual nature of domestic literacy practices, therefore, became an important field of study (Kenner & Kress, 2003; Nutbrown & Hannon, 2003; Maquire, 2001).

One trend in literacy research foregrounds the richness and diversity of domestic practice and the implications of these for educational practice (Burnett & Myers, 2002; Kenner, 2000:128). The over-riding conclusion is that literacy at home and school are not the same. Family literacy fulfils the needs of the family and should not be measured by an institutional yardstick. Reacting to the evident gap between culturally diverse

home literacy and the uniformity of school literate practice, Cazden, for example, describes curricular experiments in the US and Australia designed to negotiate and blend culturally different domestic literacy styles in keeping with the pedagogy of multiliteracies (Cazden, 2000). The starting point of Cazden's study converges with that of my own research in that it addresses the gap between home and school practice. However, it diverges from my research at the methodological level, for my research is neither conducted primarily at school, in a monolingual environment nor under experimental conditions. My study, therefore, may be seen to fit in with and contribute to current research trends without merely reiterating what has already been said before.

Numerous factors shape children's literacy development at home. Parental views are a key factor. These shape children's interaction with literacy at both the social and cognitive levels. They channel the types of literacy engaged in. They also influence whom children recognise as social partners in literacy events. Parental views, as we saw in Chapter Two, structure the interactional strategies chosen, and ultimately internalised, by the child (Gregory & Williams, 2000; Hannon, 2003; Rowe, 2003). Siblings likewise play a role. Older siblings may reinforce parental views. Often, they also mediate between the young learner's different literate environments (Weinberger, 1996:58; Williams & Gregory, 2001). Family values form an 'educational agenda' (Leichter, 1984:38), reflecting what *counts* (Gregory & Williams, 2000; Kendrick, 2003; Pahl, 1999). These messages may bear directly upon the child's ability and willingness to participate in and benefit from certain types of classroom activities (Czerniewska, 1992; Heath, 1982; Robertson, 2004).

A number of studies, like my own, focus on the literacy development of a single child (Kendrick, 2003; Kress, 1997). Some research the child at home and school, as I do (Bissex, 1994, Muhlern, 1995). Others focus on writing (Kenner, 2000; Schickendanz, 1990). However, these studies sometimes involve an external researcher as opposed to a parent (Gutierrez, 1994; Hall, 2003; Kendrick, 2003). Moreover, none cover the same developmental period I address. Glenda Bissex, a fellow parent-researcher, studied her 6-year-old son's writing development (Bissex, 1980) and demonstrated the sincere communicative intentions behind his self-taught writing as a pre-schooler at home (Bissex, 1984). This does not mean that my field of study was already covered a quarter of a century ago, for despite the parallels, distinctions may also be drawn with regard to

my own work. Both the context and the perspective in my research differ. I analyse writing in a multilingual context. I also show, with the help of Valsiner's interactional model, how the child's development is 'framed' by physical, social and cognitive interactional characteristics, in which others play an important role.

A further trend in current research relates to the modes of literacy appropriated by young writers. Here, the work by Gunther Kress has been instrumental in drawing attention to the multimodal aspect of writing (Kress, 1994; 1997). A multimodal perspective invites us to rethink conventional notions which fail to acknowledge how literacy involves transformations and 'semiotic recycling' (Kress, 1997:104; Kendrick, 2003; Pahl, 1999). In my pilot study (Ch.2), both interactant's bodily postures may be regarded as multimodal. Every fibre is involved in the graphical act, transforming the semiotic act of writing into a new non-verbal 'text' as part of the overall literacy event. A multimodal perspective also draws attention back to the significance of play for literacy development. This, in itself, is the subject of a wide body of research (Dyson, 1993; Pahl, 1999; Roskos & Christie, 2001). The element of play, in the pilot study, is not only framed verbally, but physically. Pia skips and hops. Her posture reveals her eagerness to 'catch' her mother's answers in the question-answer 'game'. The literacy event is characterised by much movement, and this is significant to the dynamics of home literacy in comparison to the relative immobility and lack of play experienced in the classroom (Ch.7).

The shift in research trends, away from the search for universal cognitive tendencies in experimental or classroom-based settings, towards more context sensitive approaches acknowledging variables such as culture, language and interpersonal dynamics, can be seen to illuminate my own work further. In particular, the repeatedly confirmed gap between home and school practices may be characterised by the extent to which literacy may be viewed as 'peopled' activity. This is essentially a social rather than an abstract, cognitive perspective. It means assigning the people who either inspire the text or help in text production a central role (Ch.2,5,8-11). It also means viewing literacy as a means of social interaction. To view literacy as a means of social interaction equally demands that we pay attention to the interactional features shaping children's learning and use of literacy. These features, I now realise, do not simply relate to the people involved, but

are better understood in a more global context encompassing physical, social and psychological aspects (Valsiner, 1997).

Now that general trends in literacy research and their implications for my own thesis have been outlined, I would like to look in greater detail at the literature which is particularly germane to my area of study.

3.3. Domestic environment

3.3.1. Introduction

Literacy activities taking place beyond the school-gate have been referred to by a number of terms, most frequently as 'home' or 'domestic' literacy. Other terms employed include 'out-of-school literacy' (Gregory & Kenner, 2003), 'unofficial literacy' (Gregory & Williams, 2000), 'family literacy' (Hannon, 2003), 'community literacy' (Cairney & Ruge, 1996), 'vernacular', 'everyday', 'alternative', 'hidden' or indeed 'in-between' (Knobel & Lankshear, 2003:54). Whilst hinting at the author's point of comparison, e.g. the school, the wider community, the degree of validity or the type of language associated, these terms, above all, confirm the manifold potential ways of viewing, and contextualizing, the home. In this section, I review ways in which the home environment has been depicted, showing how these relate to and enrich my understanding and presentation of the dynamics taking place within Pia's home.

3.3.2. Home environment

The home environment in general is currently typified as a holistic, informal, cultural context, fostering the inductive, even subconscious, yet *early* acquisition of skills as social processes in the daily landscape (Dyson, 1994; Kendrick, 2003:40; Willinsky, 1994):

> Remarkable learning has already occurred before children pass through the school doors.
>
> Clay (1998) cited by Carney, in Hall (2003;8)

Children, thus, are exposed to and engage with writing well before formal instruction at school.

A further feature of domestic literacy interactions is that they are not necessarily specifically geared towards the promotion of literacy, but are often embedded in other everyday activities (Leichter, 1994). The less restrictive nature of the home environment supports the child's networking of knowledge, generally accords children more space to initiate events and in so doing, allows children to reveal genuine levels of motivation and interest (Tizard & Hughes, 1984; Wells, 1987).

My analysis of Pia's behaviour in the pilot analysis certainly substantiates this picture of domestic learning and practice. We see a literacy event embedded in an ordinary, typical daily encounter, in which the adult does not explicitly embrace the teaching role. Pia initiates the event, which, however, is not instigated, or 'contrived', as in classroom interactions (Woods, 1980), but rather deployed as a practical skill for real social purposes. The fact that Pia employs forms of literacy which are not typically encountered at school furthermore strongly suggests that the home environment fosters sensitivity for a wider spectrum of literate experience than anticipated or cultivated at school.

3.3.3. Characterising the gap between homes and schools

Studies addressing notions of class-contingency, home-school dichotomy and deficiency necessarily address a perceived gap between the home and school environments, and are thus of relevance to an understanding of these two key domains.

A number of studies establish class-sensitive interactional patterns (Tharpe and Gallimore, 1998). Others contest this (Ferreiro, 1984; Rogoff *et al.*, 1998), pointing to potential similarities in uses of literacy across classes (Hannon, 1995), or else to more community-sensitive, as opposed to class-sensitive, uses of literacy (Gauvain, 2001; Gregory & Williams, 2000:51; Kelly *et al.*, 2001:10).

Even if we side-step the issue of the fluid nature of class membership, it is clear that distinctions according to class or domain may easily lead to a hierarchy reinforcing the supposed infallibility of schools and middle-class environments (Fairclough, 1989; Hammersley, 1993; Mercer, 1994) to the detriment, and displacement of other contexts as providing valuable learning scenarios (Amanti, 1995; Cummins, 1996; Kenner, 2000). Such a hierarchy is echoed in Chapter One, where Pia's sister degrades home knowledge to mere 'stuff' (p18). It is also alluded to in the following comment by an American study of early literacy:

The classroom is like a second home with print added (Block *et al.*, 2002:188)

The assumption, here is that the home is a literacy impoverished setting, whose deficit, or gap, is rectified at school. This view, however, is already contested two decades earlier by Heath's *Ways With Words* (1983) and continues to be contested today (Kenner, 2004; Maddock, 2002). Shirley Brice Heath's important study has been instrumental in achieving a more differentiated view of literacy, acknowledging the multiplicity of literacy contexts, roles and functions. It also foregrounded the hierarchy validating certain literacy-related practices to the marginalization of others. By carefully analysing where print is added at home and school, I seek to make an empirically based evaluation which reveals how and to which degree both sites contribute to the development of Pia as a writer.

The starting point for any alignment between home and school practice should ideally be the child's demonstrated competence (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000:18). Studies contributing to a bottom-up as opposed to top-down alignment, therefore, help to clarify the true nature of children's literacy skills. Even if domestic literacy strategies may not be easily transferred to the classroom (Burnett & Myers, 2002:61), further research conducted in out-of-school contexts, such as my own, could provide a more solid empirical basis for any future alignment seeking to improve classroom practice.

3.4. Institutional environment

3.4.1. Introduction

Several studies document the general character of institutional practice. This is conventionally portrayed as being tightly structured and atomistic as opposed to holistic. Classroom practice is also typically framed by an interactive style exhibiting more trenchant asymmetry than usually encountered at home (Dunn, 1988, Mercer, 1995). Given that my thesis concentrates on highlighting practices within the domestic environment, a comprehensive account of institutional practice seems less appropriate. In this section, therefore, I limit my review of the literature to the positions on literacy acquisition taken up by the relevant governing bodies at Pia's French-German nursery-primary school, as these will help me to understand the specific cultural orientations which shape the classroom practices I observe.

3.4.2. French school

The French curriculum is centralised. Publications by the Ministry of Education relevant to nursery and primary education encourage practitioners to build upon the competencies children bring to school:

> ce n'est pas à l'école ... que l'enfant commence à découvrir l'écrit (MEN, 1992:26).
> (it is not at school that the child first begins to discover writing)

Writing is described as 'urban furniture'; an integral part of urban space and a meeting point of communication. It is this furniture which permits the initiation into various functions of writing. Such a description of writing clearly acknowledges the primacy of the home environment for teaching children about print. This would lead one to anticipate identifiable attempts in the classroom to use writing as an interface or meeting point of communication between homes and schools. In my analysis of classroom interactions, I therefore look for signs of such an interface, and for parallels between the home and school environments which have been harnessed for educational purposes.

French policy can be seen to adopt a structuralist, stage-oriented view of literacy acquisition, shaped by the notion of *graphisme*. This involves training the child's body in specific relation to handwriting development (Kenner, 2004). This may be done, for example via finger games or by making snaking, curly movements. Detailed attainment levels are specified for each of the three years of nursery school. Literacy instruction begins with sensitizing children to handwriting skills as part of the pre-alphabet stage. Here, lines, circles and loops are drawn as precursors to alphabetic writing. Nursery-school children, as in numerous other European countries (Cotton, 1991), later use writing models to form separate letters before moving on to joined up writing, which they are expected to master before entry to Year One. Educational policies encourage parents to support children's writing development in order to secure a smooth transition from the home to the school and there is a wide variety of material for sale in supermarkets and bookstores from all the major educational publishers for this purpose (e.g. Bled, Bordas, Hachette, Nathan, Hatier). This type of alignment, however, is top-down, with support materials, available for children from the first year of nursery school to the end of compulsory education, replicating the structure and sequences of the classroom.

Behind such practice is an emphasis on literacy competence from the very first year of nursery school. Indeed, nursery school is predominantly a site for work (however attractive and enjoyable), not for play. Nursery school teachers are graduates with the same qualifications as primary school teachers. Yet despite such strong focus on skills transmission, nursery schools as a site of learning remain under-researched: in France, no research centres exist solely for research into early childhood (Rayna & Plaisance, 1998).

3.4.3. German school

In contrast to the French centralist educational policy, in Germany each federal state is responsible for its own educational agenda, or *Bildungsplan*. Pia's school adopts the curricular guidelines of the neighbouring German federal state of Baden-Württemberg. The German teachers are all native speakers, and a conscious effort is made to offer a schooling experience as close as possible to that experienced in Germany.

In Germany, a different position is taken up concerning early literacy acquisition. Nursery school – *Kindergarten* – is predominantly viewed as a site of play and discovery. Children learn to read and write in Year One (Döhring, 1997; Hesse, 1997; Reinbold, 1997). There is, then, a noticeable shift between nursery and primary school.

The absence of teaching objectives for nursery school is reflected in the absence of concrete pedagogical aims. This, in turn, has resulted in the absence of research on nursery schools, as such research is often motivated, and financed, precisely to test the success of educational policy. Hence, as in France, there is practically no data for the field (Otto & Spiewak, 2004; Strassmann, 2004). It is only in reaction to recent comparative international studies bemoaning Germany's under-estimation of early childhood competence and the under-qualified status of nursery-school staff (OECD ECEC:http://www.oecd.org/document/3/0,3343,en_2649_39263231_27000067_1_1_1_ 1,00.html) that more precise guidelines are beginning to be set up. These guidelines differ widely in the scope of commitment to active teaching in nursery schools. They range from a 12-page declaration (in Thüringen) to a 323-page declaration (in Bavaria) and are not always welcome:

> Manchen Kollegen falle es noch schwer zu akzeptieren, dass ein guter Kindergarten plötzlich mehr anbieten muss als lustige Lieder, spaßige Spiele und putzige Basteleien (Otto & Spiewak, 2004:31)

> (Some colleagues still have difficulty swallowing the fact that today, a good nursery school must, all of a sudden, offer more than amusing songs, enjoyable games, and cute handicrafts)

Nursery education, unlike formal schooling, does not always fall under the purview of the Ministry of Education, but sometimes under that of the Ministry of Social Affairs. This hints at the status given to pre-compulsory education, which is reflected in the qualifications required. Germany spends less money on nursery education than any other European country (Spiewak, 2004; OECD ECEC: http://www.oecd.org/document/3/0,3343,en_2649_39263231_27000067_1_1_1_1,00.ht ml). Nursery teachers need not have obtained A-levels in order to qualify for training. Only one federal state (Bremen) offers a university education for nursery school teachers.

Comparing Pia's French and German classroom contexts, we may anticipate considerable differences in how these shape her pathway through literacy in general and writing in particular. These differences are investigated in Chapters Six and Seven.

3.5. Multilingualism and Multilingual Literacy

3.5.1. Introduction

It is a special feature of Pia's home and school environments that both are, in differing degrees, multilingual. This justifies some attention, however brief, to research into multilingualism which may help us to sharpen our reflections on the linguistic qualities inherent in the interactions and writing products which illuminate Pia's development as a writer.

3.5.2. Multilingualism/Multilinguality

The phenomenon of multilingualism is more prevalent than thought. Over half of the world's population speaks two or more languages (Holmes, 1992:79). Surprisingly, multilingualism is nonetheless a relatively young, but growing research field (Hoffmann & Ytsma, 2004). Trilingualism in particular is extremely under-researched (Hoffmann & Ytsma, 2001:13). Although the cognitive advantages of multilingualism have been well established (Robertson, 2004), definitions of multilingualism itself are still being negotiated (Baker & Jones, 1998; Hoffmann & Ytsma, 2004; Romaine, 1995).

In a multilingual household, parents do not always speak the same language to their children (Riley & Reedy, 1986). Language choices between family members may change in a given context, or even mid-sentence (Bursch, 2005), contradicting the idea of One-Parent-One-Language (Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2001). Language choices, moreover, establish language hierarchies with political implications about how one is located in linguistic space (Baker & Jones, 1998).

Noting that the difficulty in defining multilingualism arises from the variety of disciplines addressing the subject (e.g. sociology, sociolinguistics, politics, geography,

psychology), Aronin & O'Laoire (2004) distinguish between multilingualism and multilinguality. The former refers to societal practices and theories of multiple language use. The latter comprises the individual's subset of the universality of multilingualism, elsewhere referred to as one's 'ecolinguistic' (Maurer-Hetto, 2007). The distinction between multilingualism and multilinguality also hints at potential differences between spoken and heard languages; an individual's multilinguality or ecolinguistic may comprise different languages to the multilingualism of the surrounding community.

All of these reflections about capturing what multilingualism looks like in practice are of relevance to the present study in that they invite attention to the linguistic dynamics of Pia's home and school environments. Both of these are bi- or multilingual, but in differing degrees. Both environments shape Pia's learning and use of writing. Pia not only writes multilingual texts, but the talk which frames such texts is also multilingual. In Chapter Two, Pia's mother reads the trilingual text, yet answers purely in English. Pia, on the other hand, writes a trilingual text, yet when pulled into a conversation about the text, she chooses to speak French. Multilingualism is also present at the calligraphic level, where Pia freely interchanges the French and German writing models. In Pia's household, the mixture of languages heard may even change in mid-sentence (Bursch, 2005; see also fig.4.3, p86). Multilingual institutional practices look quite different. Here, French and German speaking and writing contexts are not in open dialogue, but are kept apart as part of clear language and literacy-related pedagogical aims.

3.5.3. Multilingual literacy

In the same way that the emphasis has fallen upon spoken language within the general field of multilingualism, the emphasis has tended to be on reading in studies examining multilingual literacy (Gregory & Williams, 2000; Voerhoeven *et al.*, 2002; Hall, 2003). There is not a vast amount of literature in the field of multilingual literacy, with precious little on the products, as opposed to mere processes, of early multilingual literacy (Kendrick, 2003). The multilingual aspects of my study, therefore, which not only address processes of literacy, but also the written products, acquire particular significance.

Some research has been conducted on multilingual writing development in nursery/primary classrooms (Kenner, 1999). Ferreiro & Teberosky's studies (1979;1982) have been instrumental in establishing the stages of bilingual writing acquisition in the context of 4-6 year-old Spanish-speaking learners, and their findings have been replicated elsewhere, as a review by Bauer (2004) demonstrates. Stage theories on writing development, however, have been contested (Clay, 1987; Kendrick, 2003).

Whilst research on young bilingual children's writing development across both languages is quite limited (Bauer, 2004:208), writing research encompassing both the domestic environment *and* biliteracy is even more sparse (Pahl, 2002). Kenner, who has conducted a number of studies into this area, concludes that the awareness of different scripts (e.g. Arabic, Gujarati or Chinese) and divergent teaching styles do not lead to cognitive conflict, but rather to cognitive gains (Kenner, 2000, 2003).

Research on domestic triliteracy is practically non-existant. The term triliteracy may be used to describe literacy skills in three languages, and helps to avoid confusion with the term 'multiliteracies' or indeed 'multiple literacies' meaning a variety of literate practice and/or modes, not codes (New London Group, 2000; Street, 2000). Repeated searches of a variety of university libraries using a number of search terms such as *child, home, writing, literacy*, yielded poor results, with the items found being technical dictionaries, or else referring to linguistic aspects (i.e. multilingualism). The terms 'trilingual', 'tri-lingual' and 'tri-/triliteracy' yielded no results, even though research is being conducted in the field (Bursch, 2005).

Having explored how different ways of conceptualizing language and literacy may inform my research, I now repeat the procedure with regard to writing as my central area of research.

3.6. Approaches to literacy

3.6.1. Introduction

Behind every statement lies a theory, a concept or ideology. If we foreground these, we are able to make the stances taken up in research more transparent (Baynham, 2004;

Freire, 1972). Such concepts not only relate to different views of language (Graddol, 1994), but also to individual academic disciplines, with new orientations arising from the critique of the established models or paradigms. Such concepts, however implicit, determine which aspects of a phenomenon are selected for analysis and how they are defined.

3.6.2. Implicit and explicit writing concepts

Behind an account of writing as progressing through universal stages (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1979) lies a completely different view of literacy learning to one which shows how children appropriate and re-contextualise cultural resources/spaces in their writing acts (Dyson, 2001).

Hannon (1995:11) refers to Street (1984), who identifies two basic models of literacy:

Model	Characteristics
Autonomous	typical of (cognitive/developmental) psychologists and educators imperialistic, asocial stance: establishment of universal tendencies, cognitive and social benefits. Skills located in the individual
Ideological	typical of sociolinguists, cultural psychologists, sociologists *sociocultural stance: literacy is inseparable from the social institutions in which it is practised, or the social processes used to acquire it.* Foregrounding of critical literacy and matters of meaning/power, hence the overthrow of the 'literacy myth'

Fig.3.1: models of literacy. Street (1984)

Street's model can be seen as the over-arching model within which other orientations may be housed. If we return to the two studies opening this section, we see that Ferreiro & Teberosky (1979) may be housed within his autonomous model, whereas Dyson is accommodated within the ideological model.

Kress (1997:8) identifies 4 broad approaches to literacy:

Approach	Area of focus
Historical:	Changes in form/use
Linguistic:	Form of language
Educational:	Meaning-making in sociocultural environment. Discovery of user's principles
Anthropological:	Culturally contingent uses

Fig.3.2: approaches to literacy. Kress (1997)

The educational and anthropological approaches make concrete links to Street's ideological model foregrounding the socially embedded nature of literacy practice. Kress's orientations also draw attention to the correlation between one's discipline (history, linguistics, educational science, anthropology) and the area of focus selected for research, whereby it is clear that different orientations and paradigms may be adopted within the same discipline.

Ivanič (2004) proposes a more nuanced distinction; a 'meta-analysis of theory and research about writing and writing pedagogy', resulting in six ways of conceptualizing writing and relating these to particular discourses. Leaning upon the definition given by Gee (Gee, 1996:131), she describes discourses as 'configurations of beliefs':

> Policy, practice and opinions about literacy education are usually underpinned, consciously or subconsciously, by particular ways of conceptualising writing, and by particular ways of conceptualising how writing can be learned. These different ways of conceptualising literacy lie at the heart of 'discourses' in the broadest sense: recognisable associations among values, beliefs and practices which lead to particular forms of situated action, to particular decisions, choices and omissions, as well as to particular wordings. The ways in which people talk about writing and learning to write, and the actions they take as learners, teachers and assessors, are instantiations of discourses of writing and learning to write.
>
> (Ivanič, 2004:220)

Ivanič's model originally encompasses both the reading and writing aspects of literacy. In the publication I refer to here (Ivanič, 2004), she shows how her model relates to writing. This is simplified and summarised below.

Discourse	Characteristic beliefs about writing			
	Writing is...	*How to learn*	*How to teach*	*How to assess*
Skills	Application of: sound-symbol relationships syntactic patterns	Learn sound-symbol and syntactic rules	Explicit teaching of phonics	Accuracy
Creativity	Product of author's creativity	Write from genuine interest	Implicit holistic teaching	Content and style
Process	Execution of an internal composing process	Learn necessary mental and practical processes	Explicit teaching	-
Genre	Set of situated text-types	Learn the features and contexts for each text type	Explicit teaching	Appropriacy
Social practice	Purpose-driven context contingent communication	Write authentic texts in authentic contexts	Implicit/explicit teaching	Effectiveness for purpose
Socio-political	Negotiable practice related to identity	Understand the sociopolitical stances behind writing options and consciously position oneself among them	Explicit teaching of critical awareness	Social responsibility

Fig.3.3: Discourses on writing practice and learning (adapted from Ivanič, 2004:225)

Assessment criteria relate directly to the discourse adopted. Thus, within a skills discourse, the assessment criteria will be accuracy. Within a creativity discourse, the assessment criteria focus on content and style. Although Ivanič, rightly, believes the assessment criteria for a process discourse should not relate to the product of a text, hence her view that there are no appropriate assessment criteria for this particular discourse, I believe that assessment criteria for a process discourse may indeed be established, and that these should take into account the writer's editing skills.

Ivanič does not accord particular attention to multilingual literacy as her model is based upon research conducted within Anglophone institutional contexts. Her framework may nonetheless help us to expose and compare the discoursal stances adopted by learners, teachers and pedagogical materials in multilingual settings. Her model is, then, a useful complement to Valsiner, who analyses interactional facets, but not the latent values

motivating these. Ivanič's model has been tested by her students, who confirm the heterogeneous use of writing discourse, thus an overlap between the discoursal spaces displayed within individual instances of theory, policy and practice. Such conclusions map onto my own (pp136, 168, 178). The strongest merit of Ivanič's model is, perhaps, that it sharpens our appreciation of how writers may be conceived, by others as much as by themselves. This, in turn, incites me to look for more global conceptualizations of writers as practitioners and/or apprentices within my own data, for these two subject positions are subsumed within Ivanič's more comprehensive framework, and, like her six discourses, they may, and will, involve a degree of amalgamation, or hybridity.

The models presented above make clear that there are many ways from which to view a particular phenomenon. Most perspectives, however, can be housed in the broader distinction between an ideological and autonomous view of literacy, and therefore according to a culture-inclusive, implicitly political, socio-culturally oriented view of learning and practice, or else according to a culture-exclusive, universal, structural, stage-oriented view of learning and practice (Street, 1984). These two broad perspectives are of particular significance to a comparison between school and home dynamics, for they capture the essential difference in the orientations of the two sites. This essential difference may be further refined, and I would now like to present a model which enables us to achieve this.

3.7. Understanding interactional dynamics: Valsiner

Every aspect analysed in this chapter, that is, the properties of the home and school as ecological sites (p53, p56), the properties of language (p59) and the orientations towards literacy (p61) are, ultimately, reflected in individual instances of social interaction. In Chapter Two, I introduced an interactional model by Jan Valsiner (1997) which merits further analysis as this model seems ideally suited to my research design.

Jan Valsiner has re-conceptualised the Vygotskian notion of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in the hope of providing an accessible, cogent framework for the analysis of interactional dynamics in the semi-permeable learning environments, or *zones*, of the developing child (Valsiner & Hill, 1989; Valsiner, 1997). He proposes a

theoretical framework which refines the notion of the ZPD by combining three elements. These are:

- the Zone of Free Movement (ZFM)
- the Zone of Promoted Action (ZPA)
- the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

3.7.1. Zone of Free Movement (ZFM)

In an article showing how American toddlers are socialised into courtesy practices, Valsiner describes the elements of this interactional model (Valsiner & Hill, 1989:165).

The ZFM, a concept inspired by Kurt Lewin's field theory (Valsiner & Hill, 1989), is to be perceived of as a zone in which adults, or others, structure the child's access to a particular environment:

> The ZFM specifies the structure of the environment that is functionally available to the developing child at a given time. Boundaries are set through negotiation with caregivers, and are dynamically altered as the child develops or moves to an environment with a different physical structure. The ZFM is originally a delimiter of the child's actions, and becomes internalised by the child.
>
> (Valsiner & Hill, 1989:165)

Transferred to our text in Chapter Two, the ZFM refers to the physical quality of the environment of Pia's mother's study, and how Pia may behave within this space, or zone, i.e. how it is made 'functionally available'. We see how Pia's actions are limited by family rules on what to touch or take and when to leave or enter the room. We also see that Pia has internalised these rules, which may differ once interaction is taking place in a different 'zone'; the kitchen, bedroom or living room, for example, or indeed at school. In Pia's home, writing, as a practical, physical tool, is omnipresent. In the study, writing takes on particular significance; contained in the books filling the bookshelves, and littering the 'paper-strewn' desk in a room where the child is more likely to see her mother engaged in writing than in anywhere else in the house. All of this is shaping Pia's understanding of literacy, what she puts in her 'toolbox' and, thus, how she behaves as a writer. It is not the zone in itself which may achieve anything – it is not the study *per se* – but how successful interactions between participants are

structured within this physical space and learnt by the child, that give the notion of the ZFM meaning.

Often, the ZFM is delineated by the adult's evaluation of child competence, based on past experience. It is a means to channel the child's development and is dispensed with when no longer relevant, much like a playpen or a car seat (Valsiner, 1997:192). The image of the playpen or the car seat vividly portray how the child's movement, or freedom, is physically restricted by the adult, who will judge when this restriction is no longer necessary. Pia, in Chapter Two, is restricted to taking 'used' paper from a shared folder for now. Later in the same chapter (p45), we see that this restriction is dispensed with when Pia's work is esteemed 'good enough' for clean sheets of paper. This change in the physical provisions made for Pia's development will engender further developmental advancements in the child (p46).

3.7.2. Zone of Promoted Activity (ZPA)

Unlike the limiting properties of the ZFM, which is conceived of as an 'inhibitory mechanism', like the play pen, its counterpart, the ZPA, comprises activities and objects which are deemed conducive to the child's development. Essentially, the ZPA refers to proactive and reactive social/interactional characteristics as opposed to physical characteristics as in the ZFM. However, a degree of overlap is anticipated between these 'semi-permeable' or 'porous' zones (Valsiner, 1997) as made clear by the reference to 'objects' within the ZPA. These objects, as I understand it, are at the interface between the ZFM and the ZPA, and extend beyond the mere physical layout of particular space to encompass individual objects which may promote the activity in question. Pia's plastic folder of paper, for example, whilst, in one sense, being a property of the study, and thus part of the ZFM, is more importantly to be regarded as an object in the socially-oriented ZPA, as it promotes much more than limits her writing development. Valsiner's description of this zone would benefit from greater clarity so that potential misunderstanding may be avoided. Nonetheless, we may apply the concept as it stands and see how it helps us to understand the interactional dynamics shaping Pia's development.

The ZPA is of a non-binding nature (Valsiner, 1997). This means that this zone is optional: it will not exist, or be created, if there is no particular activity being promoted. There is evidence that Pia's engagement with writing is shaped within the ZPA. There is no evidence, on the other hand, of a ZPA existing for, let us say, dance or sport. Furthermore, within the ZPA, activities are encouraged, but non-compliance has no repercussions (Valsiner & Hill, 1989). Transferred to my data, this model should allow us to identify the non-binding characteristics of social interaction around writing as a promoted activity. In this thesis, we see that Pia is not ordered to write, but that writing is 'on offer'; encouraged and facilitated by objects put at the child's disposal, as by a playful, inductive interactional style. Each level of Valsiner's interactional model is to be internalised by the child. This fact, in my opinion, ultimately weakens somewhat the claim to the non-binding nature of the ZPA, for internalised operations, in that they become automatic, are less readily susceptible to change. In this sense, they are indeed binding.

The ZFM and the ZPA, i.e. physically oriented and socially oriented characteristics, work together to channel the child's development by delineating and promoting specific areas of activity. Pia's access and free movement within her mother's study is limited (ZFM). There are, however, objects on offer (the folder of paper, felt-tips, the presence of books, witnessing her mother writing) and interactional styles (non/verbal, playful, non-imposing) which promote her development as a writer (ZPA).

Within the ZPA, the object of acquisition becomes a means for attaining other goals (Valsiner & Hill, 1989). In section 2.4 (p32), we saw how Pia used what she has learnt about French and German handwriting and spelling in order to write in English. She also used her knowledge of the generic qualities of text to design her own text, playing with the functions and format of the multiple choice, speech bubbles and the visual aspects of narrative. The goals of Pia's writing are explored in more detail when we look at the purposes of her writing at home (Ch.8,9) and school (Ch.6,7).

3.7.3. Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

The Vygotskian concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) has been widely, and varyingly interpreted in contemporary child psychology, Valsiner observes (Valsiner & Hill, 1989). Vygotsky himself describes the ZPD as:

> the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (Vygotsky 1978:86)

Valsiner leans upon Vygotsky's concept when he characterizes the ZPD as entailing:

> the set of possible next states of the developing system's relationship with the environment, given the current state of the ZFM/ZPA complex and the system. The ZPD helps us to capture those aspects of child development that have not yet moved from the sphere of the possible into that of the actual, but are currently in the process of becoming actualised (Valsiner, 1997:200)

Rather than concentrating on purely cognitive properties of learning, Valsiner makes specific reference to the physical (ZFM) and social (ZPA) affordances of the child's environment, which contribute towards the child's development. It is this careful, shifting balance and interplay of aspects of the learning environment which is at the heart of an ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), supporting the view of the home as an individual ecosystem (Kenner, 2004:128). Within the ecosystem of the home, the ZPD, whilst acknowledging and interacting with physical (ZFM) and overall social (ZPA) parameters, is meant to capture the cognitive features which bring new levels of achievement within the child's reach. Whilst it is commonly thought that the ZPD is also social in that it depends on social interaction with important others, we must remember that the ZPA relates to people and objects as social phenomena whereas the ZPD relates to meaning-making strategies as a psychological phenomenon. In other words, whereas the ZFM describes 'where', the ZPA describes 'who and what', and the ZPD describes 'how'.

The ZFM/ZPA/ZPD (i.e. where, who, what, how) complex reflects the interplay of physical, social and cognitive processes shaping the child's development in different environments. In the same way that the ZFM and the ZPA were demonstrated to overlap, the ZPD shares some common ground with the ZPA, for cognitive processes cannot

take place independently of social ones, at least not within a sociocultural, as opposed to a positivist, view of child development. The salient distinction between the ZPA and the ZPD, as I understand it, is that the ZPA relates to activities which may be offered, whereas the ZPD relates more directly to concrete instances of learning and teaching, and of measures taken to help the child to a higher level of knowledge. The ZPD forms a link to the ZFM and the ZPA in as much as it sets the parameters for free movement and promoted activity: a promoted activity which lies beyond the range of the child's development level will fail whereas a promoted activity coinciding with the child's developmental level has the best chances of success.

Valsiner's tripartite framework may be applied to any instance of learning in any zone of learning. As such, it does not succumb to the polarized depiction of interactional strategies. One may, nonetheless, expect the relative availability of the ZFM, ZPA and ZPD to vary according to the domain or ecosystem in question. We have already seen how this model helps to identify different properties of Pia's home environment which shape her behaviour as a writer. If we apply Valsiner's framework to Pia's institutional context, we may anticipate that the physical, social and cognitive framing will, as in any ecosystem, exhibit a balance which is suited to that particular site. In Pia's case, the institutional site must also be split according to the languages and the commensurate teaching ideologies these advocate. The institutional balance of physical-social-psychological properties, we see, may differ to the one the child is familiar with at home. Therein lies the gap I refer to in the title of my thesis, and which I explore by means of this thesis. Furthermore, if, as I argue in Chapter One, schools are to build on the knowledge children bring with them from the home to the classroom, and if teachers are to successfully help children to higher levels of knowledge, then they must first discover the level of knowledge children have already achieved at home. This type of knowledge is made transparent, I hope, in the current thesis.

Valsiner's model can be seen to relate to and complement other conceptualizations of adult child interaction within the socio-cultural paradigm, notably Rogoff's 'guided participation' (Rogoff, 1990; Rogoff et al., 1998). Also leaning upon the Vygotskian concept of ZPD, Barbara Rogoff's 'guided participation' confirms the inseparable nature of cognitive and social activity. This view is shared by Valsiner. 'Guided participation', Rogoff explains:

involves adults or children challenging, constraining and supporting children in the process of posing and solving problems – through material arrangements of children's activities and responsibilities as well as through interpersonal communication, with children observing and participating at a comfortable but slightly challenging level. (Rogoff, 1990:18)

Barabara Rogoff and Jan Valsiner both speak of constraining and supporting child development. Valsiner, however, gives each of these actions an analytical category of its own, constraining being an aspect of the ZFM and supporting being an aspect of the ZPA. The material arrangements, as well as the interpersonal communication mentioned by Rogoff, too, can be located within Valsiner's ZPA. The interactional style, pitched 'at a comfortable but slightly challenging level' echoes Valsiner's interpretation of the ZPD as capturing 'those aspects of child development that have not yet moved from the sphere of the possible into that of the actual, but are currently in the process of becoming actualised' (Valsiner, 1997:200). Valsiner's attention to the physical, environmental properties shaping child development (i.e. ZFM), on the other hand, finds no parallel in Rogoff.

Valsiner's model, furthermore, may uncover significant indices over and above language-based structuring in any given site. It also has the added advantage of making us sensitive to the notion of space, which I find most useful in conceptualizing shifts in physical, social and cognitive characteristics. In Pia's home, literacy is clearly a promoted activity occupying a large 'space' in her development. Unlike school, it remains essentially non-binding in nature. Pia's development is shaped by the in-house values she has internalized as part of her enculturation into her family 'space' and which make clear what type of behaviour would be *out of bounds*. She is not only active, but above all creative, for within the limitations set up by her environment, she still manoeuvres room for play. She has a perfect 'feel for the game', to return to Bourdieu's *dispositions*. And she plays to win. Such interactions, typical of the domestic environment, are less likely to take place in the classroom where Pia must occupy a different role in a different space with its own affordances, where the asymmetry between the child and the adult is more extenuated, and where she would have to compete with many other children for the attention of the teacher. In this concrete sense, too, she has less 'space' within the institutional ecosystem, where the interplay between

the ZPA and the ZFM, and ultimately, as I hope to prove, the ZPD, are in a different constellation to each other than at home.

3.8. Selecting an overall interpretive framework

The approach I adopt in my thesis is informed by all the frameworks, or models, delineated in this chapter. My sociocultural commitment embraces the ideological stance proposed by Street (1997). I also lean on the educational and anthropological vantages forwarded by Kress (1997), for my research involves demonstrating how meaning is negotiated and what practice looks like *in context*. Schools, after all, are not a-contextual, but represent a different context of their own, where meanings are also negotiated and where practice takes place. Valsiner helps me to identify levels of interaction which contribute towards the child's development. Ivanič's model, finally, allows me to take one step back from direct instances of practice so that such practice may be located philosophically, i.e. so that I may not only identify what and how practice is conducted, but unearth the deeper beliefs which shaped such practice in the first place.

All of the above paradigms, then, have helped me to sharpen my understanding of my chosen research field and how best to tackle the data. No single model, however, appears to be wholly satisfactory. The complex, zoniferous character of my own research calls for a particular, eclectic, or tailored blend of frameworks. A review of the literature, coupled to my personal commitment, has motivated the decision to tailor my interpretation within the sociocultural paradigm, refined by the interactional model of Valsiner to address the interactional characteristics of literacy learning and practice, and further enhanced by Ivanič's model, permitting me to identify the ideology behind the practices observed.

Within the sociocultural paradigm I embrace in this thesis, writing is viewed as an inherently social, context-sensitive activity expressed in many (un)conventional forms resourcing several types of 'tools' (Bomer, 2003; Kress, 1997, Pahl, 1999). Social features and the context-sensitive nature of learning are central, as we see from the definitions proposed:

> (literacy is) The ability to make full sense and productive use of the opportunities of written language in the particular culture in which one lives (Smith, 1984, in Goelman *et al.*, 1984 :143)

> (...)literacies as a way of describing how people negotiate and construct patterned and socially recognizable ways of knowing, doing and using language to achieve different social and cultural purposes within different social and cultural contexts (Knobel & Lankshear, 2003: 55)

Such definitions differ significantly from an autonomous view to literacy acquisition:

> Writing behaviour (...) involves the expression and shaping of meaning through the manipulation of a writing code, where this includes mastery of the grammatical, spelling, writing and punctuation systems of that code. (Christie, 2003:287)

A sociocultural perspective not only motivates an analysis of culturally contingent interactional patterns or of how Pia's social world is reflected in her texts (Ch.9). It also motivates an analysis of how influential others in Pia's environment act as a guiding light, structuring, in their own ways, Pia's learning and use of writing (Cruickshank, 2004; Kelly *et al.*, 2001; Padmore, 1994). Social actors must also be contextualised from a discoursal perspective. Ivanič's model makes us alert to the discoursal positions attributed to or assumed by interactants, in addition to providing a useful means for measuring these.

The sociocultural framework, to conclude, may provide the theoretical tools which help us to identify and understand the myriad of factors at play in teaching and learning scenarios, and thus in this particular study.

3.9. Filling the gap in current educational research

Many topics germane to multilingual research still require further investigation:

- products of early literacy (Kendrick (2003) focuses on verbal texts and supplies a mere two samples of children's writing in the appendix)
- writing in general, and knowledge of the acquisition of script as a social process (Kenner & Kress, 2003:180)

- multimodal literacy (Kress, 1997)
- family teaching styles (Kendrick, 2003)
- how children initiate/combine educational influences in their lives (Kendrick, 2003)
- children's awareness/application of literacy as cultural capital (Kendrick, 2003)
- out-of-school literacy (Knobel & Lanshear, 2003; Cazden, 2000; Gregory & Williams, 2000) and how schools can learn from homes (Datta, 2000:24; Martin-Jones & Jones, 2000:32, Roskos & Christie, 2001)
- unsolicited texts (most texts have been *invited/incited*, e.g. Kenner, 2000. See however Kress, 1997)
- research on trilingualism and multilingual literacy (Hoffmann & Ytsma, 2001; Maneva, 2004)
- studies on children aged 5-11 (Kress, 1994)

The scope of my research distinguishes it from previously conducted research on a number of points and enables me to make contributions to all the above-mentioned lacunae. It unites the vantages of multilingualism and multilingual authoring, providing data which may stimulate new interpretations of these phenomena. My study takes place predominantly where it is most difficult to gather detailed, longitudinal data, namely at home, as opposed to creating a 'home corner' or literacy-enriched settings within a classroom (Block *et al.*, 2002; Kenner, 1999). My research also focuses on the transitional period between preschool and primary school, which makes it of particular relevance to investigations into the skills children bring with them into formal schooling. Teachers, after all, cannot learn about, and from, what takes place in children's homes without studies, like the current one, which are conducted in children's homes. Finally, the analytical structure of my research provides answers not only on *how* children are shaped as writers by other social actors at home and school, but equally identifies the latent beliefs governing interaction. By exposing these often unarticulated beliefs, the study may motivate those who help children to learn to reflect upon their practice and upon the possibility or desirability of change.

3.10. Summary

In this chapter, I specify how current research has and may inform the present study, and argue for the ability of my thesis to address a number of identified lacunae in the field.

After reviewing general trends in literacy research, and demonstrating, even at this more global level, the relevance of the current thesis to numerous aspects of contemporary literacy research, I go on to look more closely at research relating to the home and school as domains of learning, to multilingual literacy and, finally, to conceptualizations of writing. In these three areas, I demonstrate not only how extant research informs my study, but also how current research may be informed by my research findings.

Within the over-arching sociocultural parameters of my thesis, two complementary frameworks have been selected and combined in order to make both the nature of writing-based interactions and the more deep-seated, often unarticulated ideological positions governing such interactions, transparent. These frameworks are provided by Valsiner (1997) and Ivanič (2004). Valsiner's framework appears adequate as it stands. Ivanič's framework, however, provides the inspiration for a simpler classification of learner/apprentice orientations. How this tailored compound analytical framework relates to the rest of the data will be specified in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four: Methodology I: Collecting the Data

Chapter Four:

Methodology I: Collecting the Data

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter I explain the overall research process and present some of the hiccoughs and insights this protracted and reflexive route entails. After reviewing how other scholars have approached similar topics and the extent to which their studies have and may inform my own, I present the design of my own study, discussing the merits of the variegated methodological approaches resorted to, but also expanding upon their limitations.

The following two chapters (Ch.4, Ch.5) form a unit in that both involve the methodological aspects of this thesis. Whilst the former gives the details of my data collection, the latter addresses the related issue of data interpretation, ethical considerations and reflections upon my role as a mother-researcher.

4.2. Research process

In this section I account for the methodological approaches chosen. I continue by presenting the data collected.

At this point, it would be useful to retrace the path back to the beginning of my research in order to recollect the reflections which had sparked off the whole research intention in the first place. I asked myself how young learners experience literacy at home and school. I wanted to probe for, illuminate and compare the values transmitted in these two domains and to ascertain if these two domains could be seen to interact. I wanted to chart the scope of my daughter's writing practices to ascertain the types of skills being brought to the classroom. All these reflections are brought together in a central question:

How do the home and school environments bear upon children's learning and use of writing?

The methodology selected must be able to provide answers to all the analytical layers implicated in my research design. As first mentioned in Chapter Two, and subsequently refined in Chapter Three, a predominantly qualitative, explorative and eclectic compound structure is necessary, as I first discovered from other studies in the field (e.g. Maquire, 2001). No two studies are identical, however, thus it is not simply a question of borrowing the methodological structure of another study, designed to meet different ends, but of allowing work already done in the field to inform one's own work.

In Chapter Three, I demonstrated how relevant extant research may enhance my own thesis by sharpening my understanding of central definitions of and orientations within literacy in general and domestic literacy in particular (Street, 1984; Kress, 1997; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2003; Kendrick, 2003; Ivanič, 2004). No extant research provides a methodological framework which neatly maps onto all the aspects involved in my work. Thus, neither Street, Kress, nor Ivanič specifically accommodate the multilingual or calligraphic aspects of writing, although Kress does draw attention to the multimodal aspects of writing, further addressed by Pahl (2002), or Kenner (2004). Kenner (2004) examines how a small group of 6-year-old bilinguals become biliterate, learning Chinese, Arabic, or Spanish in addition to English (Kenner, 2004). Kenner follows the children for one year, and invites them to expose their knowledge of different scripts by teaching these to a classmate. Kenner's study, like my own, confirms children's ability to distinguish different scripts without great difficulty, and their awareness that the same letter, or grapheme, may represent different sounds, or phonemes, according to the language used. My study, however, is longitudinal and documents *unsolicited* behaviour of a *trilingual* child. Similarly, whilst the research of Maureen Kendrick has inspired my use of the term 'verbal snapshots' (Kendrick, 2003), interpreted in a fashion approaching my own in the research of Goodman & Wilde (1992), no other study seeks to foreground the participants' emotions as integral to the events. Glenda Bissex' longitudinal case study of her son's writing development between the ages of 5-11, like my own research, analyses *spelling and learning strategies* (Bissex, 1980). Having said this, my interest, and therefore my methodology, extends beyond analysing learning to analysing practice. Liz Brooker (2002), in her study of how sixteen children from a disadvantaged background adapt to school, uses a range of methods overlapping and extending beyond my own use of parental and child

questionnaires, classroom observation and document analysis. However, her research design is for the study of a group, unlike my own, whose methods must satisfy my aim to provide, in the first instance, an in-depth longitudinal analysis of a single child. It is only in the second and third instances that I investigate institutional literacy and peer domestic literacy practice respectively. Furthermore, qualitative approaches, offering a wide range of possibilities to illuminate social processes and personal representations, are perhaps not well adapted to inform an analysis of the scope of products to have emerged from my study. Here, I believe a quantitative approach, as I employ in Chapter Eight, is more suited, and less prevalent in research on children's writing, often based on the analysis of a limited selection of texts (Pahl, 2002; Kendrick, 2003).

As I continued to identify the usefulness and limitations of extant research, so my own ideas about the appropriate tailor-made means to conduct my own research became clearer. The result is a multifaceted ethnographic methodological approach to data collection, interpreted with the help of Valsiner's interactional model (Valsiner, 1997) and further reinforced by an understanding of discoursal orientations (Ivanič, 2004) positioning children either as practitioners or as apprentices.

4.3. Ethnographic methods

Ethnography is a generic term for a set of research tools originating from anthropology and used as a means to understand and describe other cultures. Ethnography was later adopted and adapted by sociology to describe and analyse others within western society. The aim of ethnographic research is to 'get alongside' the participants, to be 'taught' by them and to thereby understand their social and symbolic worlds (Emond, 2006:23-139). This being so, ethnographic research may also be regarded as contextual or, better still, as ecological due to the fact that this approach does not aim to test a hypothesis, to predict or establish generalisable theories, but rather seeks to explain or explicitly link the individual with the context and to foreground and acknowledge the interactive processes between these two (Trudge & Hogan, 2006: 102-122).

The qualitative nature of my research is supported by the use of ethnographic methods which allow me to capture and illuminate the wealth of information contained in a

longitudinal, sociocultural perspective on childhood literacy. Ethnographic research, drawing from a wide range of disciplines including education, psychology, anthropology, sociology and sociolinguistics, normally focuses on group interactions. However, the methods employed, like the aims of ethnographic research, are equally suited to a micro study such as I have conducted and triangulated by an investigation into classroom and peer practice.

The much quoted aim of ethnographic research, namely to make the 'familiar strange' (Mehan, 1981:47) corresponds entirely to my research objective. For 'insiders', a child's writing at home may be familiar to the point of passing unseen. I certainly did not pay much attention to this developmental period of my first child, or make any attempts to validate let alone keep the fruits of her labour and fantasy. Only upon deeper analysis of Pia's texts did I begin to understand the complex strategies at work, however effortless a writing event initially appeared. As I picked at the threads of experience and skill woven into such events, that seemingly familiar became increasingly strange, unruly even, until the spectrum of ethnographic methods employed each added to the picture slowly emerging so that I eventually recognised and understood something of the mechanisms at work.

Ethnographic studies produce a 'cultural grammar', which seeks to make the rules governing successful, culturally contingent interaction transparent (Heath, 1982:34). In so doing, ethnographies aim to yield as comprehensive a picture as possible of 'living man' and our 'full-blooded facts' (Malinowski, 1967:255). I cast my statements in more modest a mould than Malinowski, admitting merely to understanding 'something', for although ethnographic methods are lengthy, data-rich and well suited to unearthing the quality and complexities of social interaction which may remain uncommented upon by research conducted in a positivist ethos, I still consider it over-ambitious to claim to tell the 'whole' truth, however wide the range of methods employed, and however deep we delve. Moreover, ethnographic approaches, irrespective of their democratic, empowering features, are not without critique (Hammersley, 1998), so that even the emic, that is to say participant-centred, perspective they accord is not incontestable, as I specify later (section 5.3, p114).

My intention is not to write a cultural grammar or to present one child's experiences as a blueprint. I do, however, wish to make the familiar strange. Strange enough to inspire us to want to learn as much as we can from such behaviour and to recognise the value of this cultural capital imported daily into the classroom.

The research process may, in some ways, be likened to a tapestry. With the needle, we at first stick into an empty space, which is demarcated by our initial inspiration and hunches. For what seems an incredibly long time, we work hard without seeing what such endeavour will concretely amount to. A structure will gradually emerge according to the colour of the yarn selected and the many little stitches made along the way.

In what follows, I present the yarns and the routes of the ethnographic methods selected. I begin by presenting Pia's home environment then go on to detail the data collected there.

4.4. Data collection at home

In this section, I specify the context of Pia's home, together with the primary and secondary sources of data collected there.

4.4.1. The domestic cultural context

Pia was 3 years old when I began my thesis and 9 years old when I stopped collecting data on her. She has a sister who is seventeen months her senior. Her father, an engineer, is German. I, her mother, a research student, teacher and writer, am British-Caribbean.

We live in Alsace, in the north east of France. In this region, the local Germanic dialect, Alsatian, is still spoken, predominantly by the older generation, although attempts to revive it are increasing. Alsatian can be heard on local radio and television, in church and it may be read in the regional daily paper, the *Dernières Nouvelles d'Alsace*, published in two editions, the one in French, the other in German and Alsatian. As a result of measures to keep the regional dialect alive (Sallabank, 2006), the number of

public and private nursery and primary schools offering bilingual French-Alsatian/German education is on the rise.

I make every attempt to speak to my children exclusively in English. In practice, however, the ability to consistently speak one's native tongue when living abroad, without the support of a native linguistic community, is restricted (Bursch, 2005). Pia's father, similarly, speaks predominantly to her in German. Like her sister, Pia has three native languages: English, German and French. Although every family member is multilingual, each has their own 'ecolinguistic', that is, a very personal and dynamic rapport with the languages spoken (Maurer-Hetto, 2007). How these languages are distributed (represented in order of predominance) and spoken between family members and to oneself (i.e. self speech) on a daily basis in Pia's household is represented in Table 4.1 below:

	Speaker B			
	Father	Mother	Pia	Whitney
Speaker a				
Father	G, E	G, E, F	G, E, F	G, E, F
Mother	G, E	E,G,F	E, G, F	E, G, F
Pia	G, F, E	F, G, E	F, G, E	F, G, E
Whitney	G, F, E	F, G, E	F, G, E	F

Table 4.1: Family Language Distribution, Bursch (2005)

Thus we see that Pia speaks predominantly in French to her mother, sister, and indeed to herself, then in German and last of all in English, whereas her mother addresses her daughters predominantly in English, then in German and least of all in French. The language distribution documented in 2005 persists even until today.

In Pia's domestic environment, print is ubiquitous. Her parents have a high-level engagement with print, both professionally and privately (Ch.2). Pia witnesses and actively participates in a wide range of print-related interactions at home. She has a large collection of books in all three languages and in various genres, from the narrative to the scientific, from the comic to friendship books or calendars. She showed a keen interest in learning to read and write, spurred by the new books her elder sister brought home from school, which were occasionally fought over; a battle Pia invariably lost. Despite the school's recommendation to parents not to teach their children to read or

write prior to formal schooling, I acted upon my daughter's genuine interest and bought Pia her first 'readers' at a flea market when she was four years old.

4.4.2. Primary domestic texts

For a period of six years, beginning in September 1999 and ending in August 2005, hence a period spanning from Pia's pre-school years (1999-2002) to her early primary school years (2002-2005), I collected as much material as possible which my daughter had freely produced at home and which related to her development and behaviour as a member of a literate community. I term this material primary texts or data as they are the most important for my research.

The beginning and end of data collection were chosen to coincide with the school year (September-August). Such an arbitrary measure does not necessarily map onto any distinctions in Pia's mind, but seemed more practical than using the calendar year or Pia's birth date. By the time I had registered as a research student in 2003 I had already collected and annotated the majority of the texts which were to make up my corpus and which had represented the core data for my Masters. The annotations, expanded into fieldnotes, vary in length, accuracy and consistency, particularly because, originally, the data was not analysed with the present thesis in mind, albeit continually motivated by my longstanding interest in early literacy development. How such eclecticism bears upon the interpretive process shall be discussed below (p111).

For this thesis, a total of 791 items of primary data were collected, ranging beyond work produced on paper to encompass texts that may also be regarded as multi-modal, texts such as Pia forming the letters of her name using a plastic spoon and tin foil (p202), or the computer she makes from cardboard boxes, complete with separate keyboard and mouse (p200).

I did not systematically collect ephemeral texts written in sand or with beads or other tools, for the simple reason that I did not possess the foresight to film or photograph everything I saw, and hence to transform them into 'hard', durable data. In this respect, the claim to have documented everything produced by my daughter must be qualified, particularly given the impossibility of me being around her during every waking hour.

For the large part, the items collected were brought to me by my daughter herself. Other items were retrieved from various sites: the toilet, bedroom, hallway, kitchen walls, doors, study, sometimes long after they had been produced, and always with Pia's consent.

All the data was initially stored in files. Each item was given a title and dated (yy-mm-dd), either immediately, or else after respondent validation to ensure the highest degree of chronological accuracy. I added Pia's age to each item in pencil before it transpired that she objected to such 'disfigurement' of her work (fig 4.1):

Witch 03-10-30	For Anett, Anton & Sophie (her drawings are always for someone). Cartoon. Pumpkin = hallowe'en. Drawn 06.42am Pia glad to see that I am not writing on her txt. P: you can write some things on it like: Pia didn't draw it, she only coloured it in. Sophie is her cousin and Anett is her auntie and Anton is her uncle. Do...does... do what do you say: do she or does she? M: does she. P: does she understand German? M: who? P: your teacher. M: yes, she speaks French & German. P: so you don't need to translate. When Pia comes back from the toilet, she sees me writing these notes. She came over, looked, and said (in French): Phew! You're not writing on my drawing. She then asked me (in French) to read her what I had written. Then smiled, nodded and said: it's good like this (C'est bien comme ça)

Fig 4.1 Research Diary extract

Once I had completed the collection of primary texts, each was scanned into my personal computer and the language used was added after I realised that I had completely forgotten this crucial codification: (F) for French, (G) for German and (E) for English. Texts were then dated and given a title where one was missing. Scanning the data proved to be a time consuming process, overlapping with my theoretical research into other studies conducted in the same field. Any new insights gained from my theoretical research or from my repeated 'reading' of my primary data were added to the research diary entry (fig 4.2):

04.11.15	Xmas list	Noticed in the study on my table a xmas list by Pia, which leans on a text I had already noted by Whitney. NB: she doesn't give me the text but simply places it on my table, knowing that I sit here frequently and will see it soon. In a sense, Pia is 'recasting' (Rowe, 2003) my desk into a new function. It no longer simply 'signifies' (Kress, 2003) a table, but also my letterbox. This interaction is another extension/form of our voiceless dialogues

Fig 4.2: Research Diary extract

The research diary proved to be a crucial support document, whose form and functions shall be addressed more thoroughly later on in this chapter (section 4.5.5.2, p99).

The body of primary data, once scanned, was finally transferred to compact discs as a security measure.

4.4.3. Secondary data

In what follows, I present the other types of data collected in order to provide a more rounded picture of Pia's socialization into writing at home.

4.4.3.1. Conversational data

In order to triangulate the picture of what Pia was *doing* as an author, I clearly needed to gather at least some information on what she was *saying* as well. Consequently, data was gathered not only on the talk taking place during the authoring event, but equally on talk 'around' or 'behind' the event, e.g. the talk between Pia and myself as I tried to understand her data and involve her directly in this process. Conversational data is, therefore, valuable for its ability to reinforce or refute particular ideas as hunches are gradually refined to become substantiated conclusions.

It was both impossible and unnecessary to supply transcripts of the interactions leading to the 791 texts which make up a substantial part of the research data. A selection of typical samples of family interactional routines would suffice. Samples of Pia's conversations with other family members, in as much as I was present or able to hear them, were immediately noted, but not as faithful transcriptions, for what I managed to retain for myself was mostly the gist rather than the exact words spoken in the particular context.

Such notes give access to a different quality of data, providing significant clues not only on family interactional styles, but also on how Pia thinks and feels, hence they lend immediacy to the semiotic texts. From such oral data, we may, further, glean something of the emotional climate of the interaction and experience the multilingual nature of the everyday conversations in Pia's family (fig 4.3):

G, F	04-04-05 squaw	I was talking to papa. He was talking to someone else and I had to wait for ages even though I was talking first! (she says this to me in French). When I complained, all he said was : huh, was ist denn los? (imitates and exaggerates his facial expression. Speaks German, like he did) M: has papa read this? P: sais pas... (looking up at me) tu écris en anglais? M: mhm (she is watching me all the time I stick this post it on her writing). She asks: what's the matter? (did she really speak English? Can't remember) M: I stick this on cos I don't want to write on your work. P: mhm. Pia nods, satisfied, then skips out of the room

fig 4.3: Research Diary extract

Often, especially in the middle of longer interactions, I thought 'you should be getting all of this down' yet being myself immediately and intensively involved in the event itself, I was unable to make a mental note of everything. The spontaneous nature of such interactions also meant that I could not prepare for them or capture them as audio or video recordings.

Conversations were initially written down on the next best thing at hand, then later transferred to my Research Diary. Regular reading of my Research Diary generated new insights which were cross-referenced with the date and title of the original entry.

4.4.3.2. Photos

In addition to taking photos of those ephemeral, multimodal texts I was fortunate enough to have seen before they were washed, wiped or cleared away, photos of typical literacy related scenarios taking place at home were taken or else retrieved from family albums (Ch.8-9). Such scenes involve, for example, bedtime story reading or prayer routines. Other photos document sibling interaction with/in collaboratively constructed texts, or how the children make a bedroom out of the hallway and read on their bellies (p224). The photo data, thus, may complement primary data by showing the latter 'in operation' rather than as a purely chronological fact. They may also enrich, or even replace, conversational data by granting us vivid images of what literacy 'looks' like.

A total of forty photos were scanned into my computer and stored in a separate file to the primary data.

4.4.3.3. Parental memoirs

In order to provide a more thorough account of Pia's enculturation into literacy, my original intention was to include parental memoirs on the childhood literacy experiences of Pia's parents and how their involvement with writing had evolved in adult life. This data, intended to expose our individual values and ensuing ideologies (Ivanič, 2004), would allow me to excavate three generations of literacy (for as children we were also shaped by our parents' attitudes) and provide complementary data to explain Pia's development. It was also intended to strengthen a comparison between the values and ideologies of parents as tutors and teachers as tutors, since similar data was to be collected from the relevant teachers at Pia's school.

I was aware of the methodological difficulties implicated in my 'objectively' writing a memoir about my own childhood and using this as research material to explain how this might influence how I interact with my research 'subject', my own daughter. I nonetheless felt the reflection such a memoir would demand of me and Pia's father would considerably sharpen my understanding of our family's literacy-related dynamics as well as make a valuable contribution to discussions on class-contingent literacy and that these gains would outweigh the methodological objections to such a measure. In the end, unfortunately, parental memoirs were never written, since Pia's father and I have now separated. My reflections as to the role of parental literacy history continue although they shall not be subject to the rigorous structuring and analysis required in order to be regarded as a valid methodological component of this thesis. The necessary omission of this data is also the reason why an analysis of the ideologies behind tutor-guided interactions of children's writing development will have to take a more peripheral role in this thesis than originally planned.

4.4.4. The end of data collection

I stopped collecting data for my thesis at the end of August 2005 as this date marks the end of the school year. By the summer of 2005, Pia was 9 years old and in many respects already a mature writer. My aim to illuminate and understand something of the writing skills and strategies children bring with them from home *into* formal schooling

made an extended analysis of the period beyond the initial years of formal schooling unnecessary.

Certain types of data have been excluded from the study. I have not attempted to collect extensive data on the domestic practices of other children as I did for Pia for a number of reasons. Firstly, initial probing had already made clear that no parents had systematically collected their children's drawings and writings, hence no reliable conclusions could be made about the quantity and types of material being produced by another child at home. Secondly, the use of tapes or videos to collect data on domestic literacy could not only be viewed negatively by participants, who feel embarrassed, but would also involve a methodological approach which diverges from the one I had employed at home and be subject to the personal views of the parents on what is worth recording. This second view might not overlap with my own intentions. If I were to visit these children's home myself, this might create an artificial situation or prompt parents to encourage their children to write for my sake. Such solicitations automatically render the claim to observe natural practice invalid. Finally, Pia is the only trilingual child in her class. A questionnaire, addressed to the parents and to each child in Pia's class, seemed an efficient solution to such hurdles and well suited to providing sufficient comparative data on the domestic literacy practices of Pia's peers.

Whilst Chapter 8 shows Pia using her self-made computer (p200) and in Chapter 12 we learn that Pia, as a 12-year-old, writes zealously in the contracted form common to virtual chatrooms (p271), no data has been systematically collected with regard to Pia's use of ICT. This is due to a number of reasons. Pia did not have access to a 'real' computer during the key research period 2001-2003. She did occasionally have access to a mobile phone and this category of text has been identified in the quantitative analysis of core typologies (Fig.8.3, p197). Sms texts sent to myself were documented. For ethical reasons, however, I abstained from asking my daughter if I could read the sms texts she had sent to others. Furthermore, the notion of text as a quantifiable item may not be readily applied to computer interactions as these do not necessarily yield a finished product. One would have to be selective about which 'slice' of the ICT event one decided to document. This would, additionally, depend upon one being present. I was rarely present when Pia was using her personal computer. By acknowledging the omission of this type of data, I confirm just how difficult it is to give a fully

comprehensive picture of Pia's writing practice, or the 'full-blooded facts' as Malinowski states so eloquently (Malinowski, 1967:255).

An analysis of Pia's literate environment, however, also invites us to pay, if not equal, then at least some attention to the institutional context for it is here that her understanding of literacy will be systematically structured. It is to this institutional context and the data collected there that I would now like to turn.

4.5. Data collection at school

I begin this section by providing contextual information on Pia's institutional environment. I detail how I gained access to the classroom, then specify the means and types of data collected there.

4.5.1. Institutional context

In France, pupils attend school for 26 hours a week. Nursery schools, attended by over 99% of children[1], are provided for a three-year period before the children enter primary school at the age of six and remain there for five years (Table 4.2).

	Class	Age upon entry
Nursery school (école maternelle)		
	Petite Section	3yrs
	Moyenne Section	4yrs
	Grande Section	5yrs
Primary school (école primaire)		
	Cours Préparatoir (CP)	6yrs
	Cours Elementaire 1 (CE1)	7yrs
	Cours Elementaire 2 (CE2)	8yrs
	Cours Moyen 1 (CM1)	9yrs
	Cours Moyen 2 (CM2)	10yrs

Table 4.2: Structure of nursery and primary education in France

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[1] http://www.alsace.iufm.fr/web/ressouc/pedago/discipli/ens_scolaire_bilingue/grilles-a-h/alsace-neu.htm

In the school year 1992-1993, the first public sector bilingual schools, in which the teaching time was evenly distributed between French and German, known as '*parité horaire,*' were introduced at the nursery school level.

A total of 213 children in 11 classes throughout Alsace attended such bilingual schools in 1992 (MAERI). By September 1999, when Pia entered nursery school, 268 classes catered for 6192 children attending nursery and primary schools (MAERI.). By the end of my data collection period, a different official source registers 126 nursery schools and 98 primary schools offering bilingual education in the public sector in Alsace (*Inspection Académique du Bas-Rhin*). The vast majority of German language teachers in the public sector of French education are not German, but French native speakers (Hélot & Benert, 2006).

Alongside, and at times preceding developments in the public sector, a number of private associations have been founded which promote bilingual education in Alsace. Frequently founded by parents whose wishes diverge from provisions in the public sector, such associations begin by opening a nursery school which then 'grows' into an elementary school as the pupils get older and continue to attend. These associations follow the same French national curriculum as in the public sector, yet may adopt the neighbouring federal German curriculum to cover the German part of the school's bilingual programme. In this the private associations deviate from public sector bilingual education, in which the German part of the bilingual curriculum is simply a translation of sections of the French national curriculum[2]. Private sector schools may receive a degree of financial support from the Ministry of Education and generally enjoy more freedom concerning the appointment of staff. Here, the German teachers are predominantly native German speakers.

The very first bilingual schools in Alsace were opened by such a private association in 1991, a year before the first bilingual classes in the public sector[3]. Whilst various sources provide discrepant statistics[4], there is nonetheless a steady rise in the overall

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[2] http://www.alsace.iufm.fr/web/ressouc/pedago/discipli/ens_scolaire_bilingue/grilles-a-h/alsace-neu.htm
[3] http://www.flarep.com/flarepgrpe/membres/ABCM/index.html
[4] compare http://www.flarep.com/flarepgrpe/membres/ABCM/index.html with
http://www.alsace.iufm.fr/web/ressouc/pedago/discipli/ens_scolaire_bilingue/grilles-a-h/alsace-neu.htm ,
http://site.voila.fr/alsacezwei/frnacais/accueil/sitesbilingues/sitesbilingues.htm or
http://abcmzwei.free.fr/index.php?menu=2 , of which the latter site contains contradictory information as to the number of classes and pupils in bilingual education in general.

number of bilingual French-German nursery and primary schools opening in Alsace. These schools, located more in urban areas than in rural ones, cater for approximately 6% of the total number of children schooled in Alsace, and are also a response to European directives to support language diversity (Extra, 2006:3-6; Hélot & Benert, 2006; Sallabank, 2006:43ff).

Pia, like her sister, has attended such a private, bilingual parity-based nursery-elementary school since the age of three. By the end of my data collection period (August 2005), this school catered for 77 nursery school children and 112 primary school pupils. Table 4.3 helps us to grasp the size of the development regarding bilingualism in Alsace:

School year	Private associations	State schools	Private confessional schools	Total
1991	105	0	30	135
1999	532	5898	268	6698
2001	711	8037	352	9100
2002	744	9536	378	10658
2004	749	10351	562	11662

Table 4.3: number of pupils in parity bilingual schools in Alsace

In adhering to the parity system of education, many schools teach according to the 'one teacher one language' approach, also known as Grammont's Law since it was Grammont who recommended this approach to his student Ronjat (1913) who later became one of the first authors to conduct a study into bilingualism in a domestic context (Hélot & Benert, 2006). In keeping with Grammont's Law, at Pia's school, two teachers share the bilingual class. Half of the programme is taught in French by a native speaker. The other half is taught in German by a native speaker. Alsatian does not enjoy the same status as French and German (Hélot & Benert, 2006) and is predominantly encountered in the context of play and song, or as the children interact with Alsatian-speaking auxiliary staff. During the last year of nursery school, literacy is taught exclusively in French whilst numeracy is taught exclusively in German. In Year One, literacy is also included in the German curriculum, and all the subjects are taught either in French or German (Table 4.4).

	Grande Section		Primary School	
	Fr	Ger	Fr	Ger
Literacy	•		•	•
Numeracy		•		•
History			•	
Geography			•	
Natural Science				•
Biology				•
Civic education			•	
Physical education			•	•
Music			•	•
Religion/Moral education			•	
Art			•	•

Table 4.4: The bilingual curriculum in Pia's nursery and primary school

Alsatian is not used to teach any of the areas specified within the National Curriculum, which uses the official written form of Alsatian, namely standard German, a practice which has been heavily criticised (Hélot & Benert, 2006).

4.5.2. Accessing and involving the classroom community

In order to understand Pia's experience of literacy in an institutional context, I visited the classes she attended during reception class (*Grande Section*) and Year One (*Cours Préparatoir/ die erste Klasse*).

I approached the relevant teachers with my request. Once this had been granted, I approached the parents individually, explaining carefully my research intentions, the anonymity and rights their children would be guaranteed. After securing the agreement of the parents and teachers, I addressed the headmistress of the school. It was important to me to be able to approach the headmistress after having spoken to the staff and the parents, since to ask her first might make the teachers and parents feel left out of a top-down directive. The children themselves, who might seem last in line in the decision-taking, were always uppermost in my thoughts and objectives. Ultimately they were the ones who would be given 'the last say'.

With the help of the *Grande Section* teacher, Isabelle, I sought for ways to cushion my sudden appearance in the classroom. My child, Pia, was the only black child in the class, and I, the only black mother in the entire school. This meant that all the children 'knew' me, albeit as a mother, not as a researcher, and thus, I belonged *outside* the classroom.

Isabelle and I agreed that I should attend the children's weekly ice-skating classes for the first term. Helping the children in and out of their skates and chatting to the parents gave everyone the opportunity to become more familiar before I entered the classroom during the second term. Isabelle explained to the children that I was there to take part in and learn more about classroom life. This explanation not only reflects my genuine personal attitude, but to recast oneself as a learner and the participants as teachers is also one of the typical stances of an ethnographic approach (Emond, 2006:124).

By the time the children had moved on to Year One, we were familiar and comfortable in each other's presence, so that a brief introduction by their teachers sufficed for my re-integration into their classroom activities.

« *Mais maman, tu verras toutes nos fautes!* » ("But mummy, you'll see all our mistakes!"). Pia's initial feelings about my presence in her classroom ranged from pride to embarrassment. I assured her that I would not be watching her or spying on her in any way and that I would most certainly *not* go hunting for mistakes. Indeed, throughout my time in the classroom, contact between us was minimal, with the exception of her being questioned like all the other children as part of my questionnaire.

In the classroom, I regularly shared and cross checked my impressions with the experience of the teachers concerned, encouraging them also to comment on how I conducted my research. Isabelle helped me, for example, to translate my questionnaire, originally written in English, into a level of French more easily digestible for 5-year-olds. She, further, suggested that I ask the children only a handful of questions at a time instead of all the questions in one go as I had originally intended. Her recommendation not only meant that the children were not taxed beyond their concentration span, it also facilitated the direct comparison of the ideas 'of the day' and meant that the children could quickly get back to their schoolwork.

The questionnaire addressed to the parents, and intended to enhance the information given by the children, was conducted at school. Both questionnaires are presented more fully in section 4.5.5.4.

4.5.3. Contextualising the classroom

The classroom community in question consists of twenty-two children, including Pia; eleven girls and eleven boys between the ages of 5 and 6 years old at the beginning of the *Grande Section* (i.e. September, 2001). The parents represent a homogeneous social group. They are predominantly white, monolingual French and, as determined by their socio-economic and educational levels, middle class. The educational level of the parents ranges from the Baccalauréat, or A-level, to doctoral studies (Table 4.5):

Level of education (English equivalent)	Mother	Father
Baccalauréat, BAC (A-Level)	11	16
BAC+1	0	0
BAC+2	5	4
BAC+3 (Bachelors)	2	4
BAC+4 (Masters)	1	0
BAC+5	2	2
BAC+6	0	0
BAC+7	0	0
BAC+8 (Ph.D.)	1	6

Table 4.5: Parental educational background

There are three native Germans among the parents, two of whom are fathers, one being Pia's father. Thus, there are three children who speak at least two languages at home, an interesting fact although official sources on bilingual education in Alsace supply no similar statistics on the multilingual background of children attending bilingual schools. At the time of the study, one child in the class comes from a mono-parental household. Another child comes from an ethnic minority background; my own child, Pia.

The classroom community is summarised in Table 4.6:

School Year	Teacher	Number of pupils	Number of multilingual pupils
Nursery school: 2001-2002 (5-6yrs)			
Grande Section (Fr)	Isabelle	22	3
Kindergarten (Ger)	Anita	22	3

	Joelle (auxiliary)		
Primary school: 2002-2003 (6-7yrs)			
Cours Préparatoir (Fr)	Sandrine	22	3
Die erste Klasse (Ger)	Ingrid	22	3

Table 4.6: The classroom community

Isabelle teaches the *Grande Section* in the year concerned (i.e. 2001-2002). She has been teaching at the same school for the past 4 years. Her German colleague, Anita, joined the staff in the year 2000. Both are supported by Joelle, an Alsatian-speaking auxiliary who assists the teachers on a practical level without direct pedagogic responsibilities.

When the class starts formal schooling a year later, they have new teachers. Ingrid is a native German and teaches Year One, or as it is called in German, *die erste Klasse*. She has been at the school for 5 years. Sandrine, the French teacher for *Cours Préparatoir*, commonly referred to as CP, has taught the same level for 3 years. There is no auxiliary staff at Pia's primary school. In the last eight years there have only been three changes in the members of staff throughout the entire nursery-elementary school although there has been some rotation of the classes taught. Teachers are addressed by their forenames by children and parents alike.

The wider institutional community involved in my research thus comprises:
- 22 children
- 43 parents
- 2 French teachers
- 2 German teachers
- 1 auxiliary staff
- 1 headteacher
- myself

4.5.4. Data collection period

Data relating to Pia's institutional environment was collected over a period spanning twenty months, from September 2001 to May 2003. Given the central role accorded to structured literacy transmission in French and the absence of such emphasis in the

German section of the nursery school programme (Table 4.4, p91, also pp56-58), most of my time was spent in the *Grande Section* on the days taught in French, notably one morning a week for the first term from September 2001 – December 2001, followed by two mornings a week for the second term, from January 2002 – Easter 2002.

I then intermittently accompanied the same class during their Year One, beginning in September 2002. During the first term of Year One, I spent a total of four mornings with the class – two mornings each for French and German - before returning for a final morning at the end of the second term to see how the classroom layout had evolved as concrete literate space. More time was spent in the nursery school than in the primary school, primarily because of the 'insertion' period spent with the children during their skating classes and in order to question the parents, but also because the primary school teachers were less open to the idea of longer periods of observation. The limited period spent in the classroom might initially seem insufficient in order to make the stable interpretations I advocate. We should, nonetheless, bear in mind that, whilst I am using ethnographic *methods*, I am however not conducting ethnographic research (section 4.3, p81). I conduct, in the first instance, a micro-study of the domestic writing practices of a single child.

4.5.5. Data collection in the classroom

The data collected here needs to take into account the wide range of factors implicated in literacy learning, being and doing. In the same way that the core research question may be broken down into sub-questions exploring what counts as literacy:

- Which literacy messages are being transmitted in reception class and Year One?
- Which literacy messages are being transmitted in French and German at this school?
- How is literacy transmitted at this school?
- How are the pupils shaped as writers?

The factors to bear in mind when collecting classroom data will relate to:

- the roles occupied

- the processes, meanings and functions of interaction
- the products for and of the interaction
- the characteristics or 'affordances' of the ecological environment as a concrete literate space and how these bear upon knowledge transmission and acquisition

In Table 4.7, we see how the means of data collection map onto the above sub-questions as onto to the relevant layers of interaction:

Research Focus	Year	Means of data collection
Roles in interaction		
	Grande Section	- Fieldnotes - Questionnaires
	Cours Préparatoir Die erste Klasse	- Fieldnotes - Questionnaires
The products of literacy		
	Grande Section	- Children's writing samples - Wall-work - Curricular guidelines - Photos - Video material - Fieldnotes - Questionnaires
	Cours Préparatoir Die erste Klasse	- Children's writing samples - Course books - Wall-work - Curricular guidelines - Photos - Fieldnotes
The materials for literacy learning		
	Grande Section	- Sample primer - Worksheets - Official texts - Fieldnotes - Questionnaires
	Cours Préparatoir Die erste Klasse	- Samples from class books - Samples from textbooks - Curricular guidelines - Fieldnotes
Functions of literacy		
	Grande Section	- Curricular guidelines - Fieldnotes - Questionnaires
	Cours Préparatoir Die erste Klasse	- Curricular guidelines - Fieldnotes
Site characteristics and interplay of key literacy learning sites		

	Grande Section	- Layout - Wall-work - Curricular guidelines - Fieldnotes - Questionnaires
	Cours Préparatoir Die erste Klasse	- Layout - Wallwork - Curricular guidelines - Fieldnotes

Table 4.7: data collection in the classroom

The data collected, we see, encompasses material directly produced by and/or for the children, hence the classroom layout as a multimodal 'text', the children's schoolwork, course-books, curricular guidelines and other official texts on schooling in general and bilingual schooling in particular. Fieldnotes and questionnaires, by contrast, are neither produced by/for the children, but are created by myself to underscore the picture of classroom and peer literacy practice. This type of data is mediated by my active involvement and would not exist or take the form it has had I not collected it according to the means that I had.

4.5.5.1. Fieldnotes

When entering the classroom, and in my attempt to be as open as possible to what I was to experience, I refrained from composing an observational sheet with clearly defined, prescribed areas of interest. Such a measure appeared to me to be better suited to a quantitative approach or at best useful after a certain degree of observation had foregrounded a particular area for more systematic analysis. I decided to use fieldnotes written from my stance as a participant observer to document the quality of writing interaction and further my understanding of classroom life.

Fieldnotes are able to throw light on all areas identified as relevant to the overall research aims, as can be seen in Table 4.7. When cited, they may provide insights into the research process, and as such allow researchers to share their thought processes and discoveries with the reader in a less conventional form.

My fieldnote entries varied from day to day with regard to their length and focus, which may make them seem a spurious, unsystematic means of data collection driven by mere

hunches and whims. The subjective nature of fieldnotes (I cannot imagine that two researchers observing the same phenomenon would write identical fieldnotes) may be defused by numerous triangulation measures, as undertaken here, and buttressed by extensive reading in the field, which serve to enhance the reliability and trustworthiness of one's interpretation of the data (Carspecken, 1996; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Taylor, 2002).

4.5.5.2. Research Diary

Throughout the research period a Research Diary (RD) was kept, noting:

- the literature read and how this informed my procedure
- the research procedure itself
- problems encountered in data collection or analysis
- findings
- sample documents
- feedback
- what should be done next

The latter point provided an indispensable pathway back into the research, particularly after longer breaks. Each entry was dated, the topic noted and cross-referenced wherever possible to facilitate the re-grouping of information for later analysis.

As an extension of my RD, I devised tables to collate and regroup information to facilitate the retrieval of ideas scattered over such a long research period.

One group of tables served to organise my theoretical research thematically, under rubrics such as 'family literacy', 'single child studies', 'multilingualism', 'writing development'.

A second group of tables focussed on the analysis of Pia's writing, providing a quantitative and chronological overview of the following:

- number of texts produced

- genres and formats employed

- language(s) used

- people who helped or are addressed in the text

A table entitled 'school year – age correspondence' was devised to show how old Pia was for each month of the data collection period, and in response to her dislike of the idea of me writing on her texts (fig.4.3, p86). An excerpt of this table is provided below (Table 4.8).

Month/year	Age (yy/mm)
09-99	3.3
10-99	3.4
11-99	3.5
12-99	3.6

Table 4.8: school year – age correspondence

The first month concerned, September 1999, is coded as 09-99, corresponds to the age 3 years and 3 months, coded 3.3. In the final month of data collection, August 2005 (i.e.08-05), Pia was 9 years 2 months, therefore 9.2.

These tables help us to trace Pia's development throughout the research period. We can see what is produced, when, for how long, in which language and with/for whom. We can trace how long she displays interest in a particular genre, or compare the emergence of particular styles at home to their introduction at school, or indeed vice versa, so that claims of which domains knowledge is being transferred to and from may be supported.

With regard to institutional data, tables documenting classroom indices were devised subsequent to my period in the classroom and on the strength of fieldnotes elaborated upon at home and transferred to my Research Diary. Tables offer an efficient means for presenting the structure of the school day, thereby complementing the narrative snapshots, or else to support a quantitative analysis of the number and types of words used in French and German during a period of observation. Finally, once all the information had been gathered, analysed and cross-referenced, the findings on how the institutional environment shapes the learning and use of writing were synthesized in tabular form (p183).

What appears here to be a smooth methodological and analytical process was in fact punctuated by hiccoughs, false starts and back-tracking. My Research Diary shows the different routes taken, some leading to dead ends, others pointing the way to a better level of understanding. The Research Diary documents, for example, my original blindness to the codes used in the texts, which meant that I had to revise both the scanning and my tables in order to add the languages displayed in the texts.

The Research Diary, like my fieldnotes, may justly be regarded as piece of data in its own right, although it would not exist independently of my research, as does the data collected from Pia or at school. It is a central piece of data through which all other sources of information are passed and networked as part of my progressive focussing. It has been read more regularly than any other document related to my research and may be resorted to, as I do intermittently, as a valuable commentary. The Research Diary is, in a sense, my alternative thesis, providing direct access to the messy business of conducting research before this process is itself processed to become a coherent, conventional text.

4.5.5.3. Participant observation

Acknowledging the fact that I can neither be a true member of the classroom community nor need to be accepted as such, I nonetheless wanted to be as close as possible to the reality of classroom life.

Participant observation allowed me to be a part of classroom life, enabling me to better illuminate and understand the strategies employed by teachers and learners as they interact with texts in an institutional setting.

I sat with the children, moving from desk to desk, responding to their curiosity and withdrawing when unwelcome. I did not sit at the teacher's desk, or at any time take on any teaching responsibilities. The urge was strong to note as much as possible and be sidetracked by the innumerable fascinating aspects of the hungry young mind. In order not to become too embroiled in data collection, it was helpful for me to remind myself regularly that the data collected at school was merely a triangulation measure and not the main focus of my research. My aims were threefold:

- to discover how children experienced literacy in the classroom

- to compare how such experiences relate to official texts on literacy instruction

- to see how this institutional experience mapped onto what I was learning about writing at home

The ideal balance between participation and observation seems impossible to achieve. On the one hand I was careful not to intrude, at times suppressing spontaneous questions as I noticed an embarrassed grin here and there when I asked if I may sit or crouch down next to a particular child. On the other hand, it was difficult to determine which degree of distance was comfortable for the children without me seeming standoffish, for I wanted the children to feel free to talk amongst themselves but also to me.

For this reason, but also because of the difficulty of writing fieldnotes and being a participant at the same time, I tried to write as little as possible when in the classroom. I used a pocket-sized notepad to document key ideas which I could then go on to discuss with the teacher at an opportune moment. Fieldnotes were written up and expanded upon in my research diary as soon after the observation period as possible, often culminating with a 'To Do': summative comments on where to channel my focus in future.

As a participant observer, continually negotiating my position on the 'inside-outside' continuum, caught by the observer's paradox (Labov, 1997) and committed to conveying multiple perspectives, both my own and those of other participants, I have chosen, as in Chapter Two, to represent some of the liveliness of my experience at school in the form of narrative snapshots, as exemplified by the extract below:

> Look at my new shoes. You've cut your hair. Where did you go on holiday? I like your new satchel, grandma bought mine can you already read a little I can, I've been practising in the holidays. With mum. Oh no, she wants to take even *more* photos of me (deep sigh but inwardly pleased). (Sarah)

Citing from fieldnotes is not an irregular practice in ethnographic studies (Goodman & Wilde, 1992; Robertson, 1999). Nevertheless I have not yet found another study using the narrative style I employ here. It is, I believe, an excellent means of conveying the

emotional and interactional climates as essential cognitive vectors, though ones which may not be easily quantified in the same way that discrete writing activities may be. The narrative snapshot does not mask itself behind spurious objectivity but is to be regarded as a political statement and act of empowerment exhibiting a blend of different subjectivities in a consciously creative process intended to remind us that *all* knowledge is constructed in one form or another. Here, the form chosen is a literary one, in which my role, as the author of my understanding, is foregrounded; the researcher does not only (co)construct knowledge but constructs the presentation thereof. At the stylistic level, the absence of speech marks, a form of semiotic encasement, is intentional. I prefer not to erect boundaries between the direct and the indirect, the spoken or the told. The use of the narrative snapshot makes the 'story' of the study apparent, for ultimately, every study seeks to tell a story. My 'story', however, is not purely fictive since it is grounded by the data and the scientific methods enumerated and explained in this chapter.

4.5.5.4. Questionnaires

Two questionnaires, talked through with each participant but filled out by myself, were designed to provide further information on the domestic literacy behaviour of Pia's peers.

Children's questionnaire

One questionnaire, addressed to all the children in the *Grande Section* and revised with Isabelle's help, sought to reveal the children's understanding of writing in the following areas:

- Assimilation/appropriation
- General recognition
- Personal emotional engagement
- Purpose
- Writing as a social function

Questions on assimilation and appropriation sought to discover how the children judged their own competence as writers. Questions on general recognition aimed to reveal how

aware the children were of writing as an integral part of their daily lives. As I wanted to find out more about the feelings the children brought with them to literacy, a number of questions were designed to this end. In addition to wanting to ascertain the children's general awareness of writing as integral to their daily landscape, I thought it equally important to find out how sensitive they were to the purpose of writing in school, at home and beyond.

I decided to question the children in French as opposed to German, French being their native language and the one in which they are most at ease. This not only guaranteed a higher degree of emotional security, making the situation less strange for them, but also possibly allowed the children to express themselves more fully, thereby increasing the quality of the data gathered.

Questionnaires were completed anonymously and without regard to gender. The results are presented in Chapter Ten (see also Appendix 1).

Parental questionnaire

A separate questionnaire, presented in Chapter Eleven, was devised for the parents. My aims were twofold:

- to gather some general information on the parents' linguistic and social biography (i.e languages spoken, socio-economic status)
- to triangulate the impressions of the domestic literacy environment provided by the children (e.g. sensitizing to the world of print, the dynamics of family literacy)

This questionnaire was conducted concomitantly to the one addressed to the children in the first term of the *Grande Section*, between October and December 2001. It was conducted mostly immediately after the parents, generally the mother, had brought the child to school, either for the morning or afternoon class. Other parents were questioned whilst waiting for the children's ice-skating class to finish. I envisaged approximately ten minutes to complete the questionnaire. The willingness of the parents to share their observations and recollections often meant that twice the anticipated time was needed.

As no video or tape recordings were made which would have allowed me to produce reliable transcripts of individual parental responses, I repeated the key information given for each question, got the parents to confirm the correctness of my understanding, then wrote down the answer in their presence. Again, the questionnaires were completed anonymously.

Questioning parents cannot fully expose a child-centred perspective on domestic literacy practice. It is nonetheless a highly efficient means of gathering further data on the domestic literacy practices of Pia's peers. Indeed, as key actors in literacy events taking place at home, and better able to reflect upon as well as articulate their practice, parents are in a good position to provide data which does not disqualify or devalue what their children have said, but which, rather, enriches the child's explanations, helping us to better see what the children 'mean'.

When first approaching the parents with my intention in September 2001, I was careful to demonstrate my sensitivity to the numerous family contexts children may experience today. I elaborated upon my understanding of the term 'parent', which extends beyond biological and adoptive parents or legal guardians to encompass new partners who co-assume the care-giving role. In practice, however, the questionnaire was answered by a single person; the one who accompanied the child to school. This person was predominantly female, and the child's mother. It would, perhaps, have been an improvement in my research design if I had gathered information from both parents. This, however, could only have been done in the more informal mode of a questionnaire to be taken home, filled out and returned. I, on the other hand, considered the contact between myself and the respondent important, wishing to establish a positive climate with the parents so that they remained open to my presence in the classroom. By questioning the parents myself, I also hoped to guarantee a higher response rate although all participants were informed of their right not only to not accept to participate in the questionnaire, but also to withhold information during the course of the questionnaire if they so wished.

When speaking of the home environment, I signalled that, according to my 'inclusive' understanding of this context, the domestic environment might consist of other members of the family beyond the core unit of mother and father, but that it would

normally involve a single home, since I was concerned with where the child spent the *most* time. This place need not be the home of one or of both the parents, but could equally be the home of someone else, in which case parents were invited to consult these people in order to complete the questionnaire. Knowing something about these children prior to my change of status from a mother to a researcher, I knew that many came from conventional family backgrounds. Nonetheless I felt it incumbent upon me to anticipate and accommodate the potential variety of scenarios which comprise the home environment today.

The parents were given a trilingual copy of the questionnaire to take home to help them gather their ideas in preparation for the questionnaire proper (see Appendix 2). This measure also provided the parents with the opportunity to ask any other care-givers for relevant information, if necessary. I decided upon a trilingual version of the questionnaire because this offers the reader, many of whom I knew could speak at least a little English, the chance to see what the questions look like not only in the languages taught at school, but also in the language in which the thesis would finally be presented.

Before embarking upon the questionnaire, finally, I reiterated the fact that it would be conducted anonymously, nor was it to be thought of as a test, for there were no right, wrong or expected answers, only legitimate rejoinders which would provide me with useful information, and which care-givers could expand upon, if desired, at the end of the questionnaire. These comments were written down and shown to the respondent for verification.

4.5.5.5. Writing samples

Samples of children's writing in both languages were photocopied from their exercise books and worksheets in order to demonstrate the type of writing activities proposed in the classroom and how the children coped with them. By comparing samples of children's written work at different intervals I was able to follow the children's progressive mastery of writing and unearth the teaching strategies employed according to the language of instruction.

4.5.5.6. Wall-work

Wall-work was documented via fieldnotes and photos. My aim was to see what type of work was selected for public display in the *Grande Section* and *Cours Préparatoir/Die erste Klasse*. I also wanted to explore the notion of knowledge ownership. Who decides where something is to be displayed? Is it displayed at the child's eye level? Does the wall-work create a different literate space to the exercise book? For whose benefit? All these considerations further my understanding of how institutional practices shape children's writing development, cognitively and emotionally.

4.5.5.7. Layout

Classroom layout was documented via fieldnotes and photos for the two years of schooling in question, complemented by a written inventory of the classroom equipment. The changes in classroom design from *Grande Section* to *Cours Préparatoir/Die erste Klasse* were noted, and inform my reflections upon the correlation between the design of concrete literate space and the overt/covert messages being transmitted about literacy (Valsiner, 1997).

My place in the classroom landscape was not at all arbitrary, but a conscious decision to put myself at the level of the children when sitting next to them on their small chairs, or else crouching or indeed kneeling alongside them. No position was ideal, and each meant excluding certain children from my view. It was nevertheless important for me to signal by this posture our shared position as learners.

4.5.5.8. Teaching materials

The teaching materials and their contents for each language and year were documented, allowing me to see how each language structured the learning of literacy. The following aspects were noted:

- number of course books
- structure of the course books
- layout or presentation
- nature of literacy activity practised

- number and style of instructions given

Analysing of the material covered on the first day of schooling in French and German enabled me to chart and establish communalities or discrepancies in the approaches to literacy teaching.

4.5.5.9. Official texts and other publications

Publications by the French Ministry of Education and other sources such as newspaper articles, academic journals and internet websites were consulted to enhance my understanding of the classroom literacy-related experience and enable me to put this into a wider educational context.

4.5.5.10. Photos

Photographs, taken at the beginning and the end of each trimester, served to document the concrete layout of the classroom and samples of wall-work. In agreement with the teachers, such pictures were taken at break-times when the classroom was empty.

4.6. The research data and process at a glance

The data collected and analysed in this thesis may be presented in tabular form:

Chapter	Theme	Methods of data collection (ethnographic)	Methods of data analysis
Ch1	Introduction	-	-
Ch2	Pilot study	- Narrative snapshot - Fieldnotes	- Qualitative: - Valsiner, 1997
Ch3	Theoretical perspectives	- Research reports	-
Ch4	Methodology I: data collection	- Primary texts - Conversational data - Photos - Fieldnotes - Research diary - Participant observation - Questionnaires - Writing samples	-

		- Wall-work - Classroom layout - Teaching materials - Official texts	
Ch5	Methodology II: data interpretation	- Sample text	- Qualitative: - Valsiner (1997) - Ivanič (2004)
Ch6	Presenting classroom literacy	- Fieldnotes - Video recordings - Participant observation - Narrative snapshots	-
Ch7	Understanding classroom literacy	- Photos - Fieldnotes - Research diary - Participant observation - Writing samples - Wall-work - Classroom layout - Teaching materials - Official texts	- Qualitative: - Valsiner (1997) - Ivanič (2004)
Ch8	Presenting domestic literacy	- Pia's texts - Photos	- Quantitative: - core typologies
Ch9	Understanding domestic literacy	- Pia's texts - Photos - Conversational data - Fieldnotes	- Qualitative: - Valsiner (1997) - Ivanič (2004)
Ch10	Peer perspectives	- Questionnaire - Fieldnotes	- Qualitative: - Valsiner (1997) - Ivanič (2004)
Ch11	Parental perspectives	- Questionnaire	- Qualitative: - Valsiner (1997) - Ivanič (2004)
Ch12	Conclusion	-	-

Table 4.9: Research methods and analysis

The timescale envisaged for the completion of the thesis may be presented in a similar fashion:

Period	Aim
September 2003	Registration for PhD
November 2003	Submit study plan
January 2004	First draft of Chapter 1
January 2004-December 2004	Review current research

	Initial analysis of classroom data and questionnaires
November 2004	First draft of Chapter 2
March 2005	First draft of Chapter 3
June 2005 – December 2005	Initial documentation/codification of Pia's domestic writing
September 2005	Upgrading
September 2005 – December 2006	Progressive analysis of domestic and institutional data
June 2006	First draft of Chapter 4
December 2006	First draft of Chapter 5
January 2007 – April 2007	First draft of Chapters 6 + 7
May - June 2007	First draft of Chapter 8
July 2007 – November 2007	First draft of Chapters 9-11
December 2007	First draft of Chapter 12
January – September 2008	Revise thesis
October 2008	Presentation of thesis

Table 4.10: Proposed timetable for the completion of the thesis

Together, these tables provide a succinct overview of the pathway taken through the thesis.

4.7. Summary

Following an ethnographic approach, a wide range of 'rich' data was collected over a 6-year period in order to help me to provide comprehensive empirical responses to how the home and school environments shape children's learning and use of writing.

The bulk of the data consists of the primary texts produced by Pia herself at home between the ages of 3 and 9 years old. These texts are triangulated by a number of secondary texts which help us to understand Pia's writing development and practice within broader domestic and educational contexts.

The data, I argue, permits us to view Pia's literate enculturation from a number of perspectives which extend our view from a single child to a wide range of important others – her siblings, parents, peers, their parents, teachers and helpers, all of whom play an important role in Pia's writing development. At times the data appeared motley, jumbled, full of 'knotted relevancies' (Bateson, 1979, in Kendrick, 2003:159) and I

could not be sure which conclusions I would be able to draw from it. I knew that, frequently, much of the data so zealously collected never 'makes it' into the thesis. As I looked at the mound of information gathered; almost *800* primary texts, plus photos, to say nothing of my conversational data, the data collected at school, all my fieldnotes, my background reading and a daily lengthening research diary, as I considered the immense amount of time I had invested in collecting and documenting, one question gnawed at me persistently: I had a lot of data, but did I have the *right* data? Repeatedly, I asked myself whether my facts were 'full-blooded' enough, not to support a claim to present the 'whole' truth, but to provide as just, as round a picture as I could of how the home and school shape a child's learning and use of writing, as interpreted primarily according to Valsiner (1997) and corroborated by Ivanič (2004). We are often inclined to think that *that* one extra piece of data will be the one to make the difference. Not I had control over the data, I concluded, rather, it had control over *me;* the 'facts' I had collected delineating the route, and thus the conclusions I would be able to draw. Comparing my original intentions to where the data has in fact taken me, I realised that I would have to pare down the scope the thesis may cover, for many of my original aims, such as the exploration of Pia's multilingual identity, genre development or comparative code-contingent pedagogical practice, would each constitute a thesis in their own right. I have also had to relinquish the desire to analyse the socialization of key helpers, namely Pia's parents and teachers, now that contact with Pia's father has become brittle and wounding. Research is indeed messy, tangly business, for not only does the data not always yield a neat answer to the envisaged research questions, or analytical parameters fit as well as we would like, but the research process itself is never as smooth as we desire it to be. Such problems, however, have been regarded positively in as much as they also allowed me to see where there was still work left to be done.

Now that I have presented and argued the case for my methods of data collection, we continue along this route, paying attention, not to data collection, but to the interpretation of the data, thereby testing the suitability of the methods selected to provide answers to my central research question.

Chapter Five: Methodology II: Interpreting the Data

Chapter Five:

Methodology II: Interpreting the Data

5.1. Introduction

'But Mummy! The one has nothing to do with the other! School is school, and here you are telling me *stuff* about home! What the teacher says is right, and anyway, what do *you* know!' She spat the word *stuff* out as if it were something unpleasant that had got caught between her teeth.

<div align="right">Extract from my Masters dissertation</div>

In this, my second methodological chapter, I reflect upon the recursive process involved in making sense of the data. The exasperated rebuff 'anyway, what do *you* know!' acts as a leitmotif; transforming the attack made by an angry child into an interpretive guiding light which, at every level, both analytically and methodologically, steers my vision and appraisal of how children are shaped into writers.

For the rest of this chapter, I list the reflections which need to be made prior to and during the interpretive process, then go on to give a practical example of data analysis.

This chapter concludes with a last reflection on the path taken through the research so far and outlines how the research itinerary shall continue (see also table 4.9, p108).

5.2. Researcher commitment

Despite all endeavours to present a scientifically verifiable account, we are unable to leave our subjectivity or personal histories behind (Cameron *et al.*, 1992). As *conscious* scientists, it is imperative that we foreground the scope of such consciousness or commitment, since this necessarily bears upon the selections inherent to the research process.

My commitment to viewing literacy as a social practice, when combined with my multiple, shifting and context-contingent roles as a mother, teacher, and ultimately as a learner, have motivated me to take a qualitative and *post-structuralist* approach in which

the social actors, the contexts of action and the meaning-making processes at the intra-
and intermental level are major concerns. Such a culture-bound perspective, however,
does not seek to negate conclusions arrived at by alternative analytical or
methodological parameters, such as questions of generalisability and reliability within a
positivist or quantitative framework. Rather, I regard my qualitative, micro-study as a
complement and a case-in-point which may incite readers to take a closer look at the
characteristics of their particular surroundings. This being so, the wish to generalize
becomes superfluous, replaced by the ability of research to provide 'stable
interpretations' (Clifford, 1988:36), guided by alternative criteria such as reflexivity,
trustworthiness, accuracy, ethics and empowerment (Griffiths, 1998; Robertson, 1999;
Silverman, 2000).

As a *committed* scientist, it is equally incumbent upon me not to state more than is
verifiable, conceding that my thesis is precisely that; a thesis, and not an inalienable
truth. I present a systematic and rigorous analysis of someone else's experiences which
I interpret, 'get alongside' (Emond, 2006) and re-present, or argue, in the hope of
furthering general understanding of the actions and processes researched. At a certain
level, the *truths* are there, incontestably. Pia's documents exist. The teaching materials
exist. The conversations and interactants are indeed authentic, yet at another level I have
had to reconstruct them, thereby imposing arbitrary boundaries to what is essentially an
ongoing process for the research participants as much as for myself. It is, perhaps, an
over-ambitious intention to fully capture someone else's reality or to lay open the
cognitive strategies at work in someone else's mind. This being so, I regard it as my
responsibility not to claim a *truth* but to advocate a constructed understanding,
legitimized by the transparency and trustworthiness of the research procedure itself, yet
without succumbing to overstatements.

In what follows, I reveal how my commitment shapes, and limits, my understanding of
the data.

5.3. Reflexivity

Conducting research is not the straightforward linear process implied by the sequential
presentation of ideas which make up the final thesis, but is characterised by recursive, at

times agonising self-questioning in an attempt to do justice to the data. To guarantee the stable interpretations Clifford advocates (Clifford, 1988), our responsibility is to present 'disabused knowledge' (Robertson, 2004). This is mainly achieved via reflexivity: a self-interrogation transferred to the design and conduct of the research to the point where one feels saturated, when no new *relevant* answers appear so that the quicksand of the interpretive process gradually transforms into a stable sediment. In this section, I specify such reflexive processes occurring as I progressed through the interpretation of the data.

5.3.1. On my role as a researcher

As I progressed through my research, I became increasingly aware of the multiple identities I was occupying, which incited me to question how these impacted on the research process. My role as a mother at home was modified by the new scientific interest I had taken in my child's development. At school, I changed from being an outsider to an insider. I changed from being an ordinary mother to being a researcher from the point of view of the teachers and parents concerned. I became a helper for teachers and pupils alike, I sincerely hope, and finally, I cast myself in the role of a fellow learner, on as close a footing as possible with the children who were helping me to learn, however amusing they might have found this exchange of roles. My variegated, context-sensitive roles at home and in the classroom will affect and be reflected in how I behave and am received. Only wanting to be likeable and accepted, I however quickly woke up to the political and ethical niceties of gaining access to the classroom (section 4.5, p88) as well as gaining access to my daughter's work (section 4.4, p81).

As I reflected on the enactment of these roles, my sensitivity to the use, to *my* use of language and its ideological niceties also gradually became refined. This was not only a question of arriving at satisfactory definitions of key terms such as *literacy, multilingual* or *meaning-making*, but extended to apparently 'harmless' terms such as *child, mother, father, family*, which I could not employ without a certain discomfort, knowing too well how contemporary families correspond less and less to the convention, my own family a case in point.

Greater attention to the covert power of words revealed a discrepancy, I believe, between the 'full-blooded' intentions of qualitative research and the somewhat bloodless convention of describing participants and their contributions as 'data'; a word, which, for me, seems a relic from the time when researchers pretended to be invisible and unimplicated in the processes observed. For a while, I pondered upon the term 'material' and although it grates less on my consciousness, it is not a satisfactory alternative. Thus, I continue to use the term 'data', but consider it important to signal my unease.

In like vein, the point came when I became painfully conscious of my use of 'I'. On the one hand, 'I' represents a conscious decision to make myself transparent rather than hiding behind formulations in the passive voice as though some neutral hand were at play. On the other, 'I' provokes my growing awareness of the lack of opportunity for my research contributors to say 'I', their perceptions always filtered by my own understanding.

At no point in my research did the fact escape me that I might be embroiled in the 'observer's paradox' (Labov, 1997). My very presence and increased interest in the research participants may have impacted upon their behaviour, and, in the case of Pia, possibly on her output, so that my claim to observe natural behaviour or practice needs to be qualified. The much advocated aim to dissolve the distinctions between the researcher and researched appears practicable only to a limited degree. I believe it is better to state clearly that I am not 'one of them' nor will I ever be, but must acknowledge my status as an outsider and embrace the responsibility of conducting my research from this position in a manner which is as ethically irreproachable as possible.

5.3.2. On the child

An 'emic', participant-centred approach to research on children endeavours to make the child's perspective central, as opposed to the 'etic' viewpoint (Pike, 1954 cited in Robertson, 1999:170). Given the inability to fully reside in another's mind, the possibility of being fully emic is limited. I try to position myself more to the left of the emic-etic continuum without idealizing the child or the potential problems of researching children.

Children have been conceptualized as a person in the making, an inconclusive process which continues in the adult, making it difficult for us to assure complete objectivity or the epistemological rupture granting us the right of way from the naive to the scientific (Mollo, 1975). The French word for child – *enfant* – sets off a series of reflections which are not automatic when we consider the term in English. *Enfant* originally means 'a person who cannot talk'. Whilst a similar English term exists, 'infant' refers to the earlier part of childhood, up to three years (Schaffer, 1996). The French *enfant*, however, covers the whole developmental period up to adolescence. If we blend the notion of a person-in-process with that of one who cannot speak, we easily slide into reflections on incompleteness and inability. These are *etic*, 'outside' perspectives, leading me to question the extent to which I exploit or abuse the invisibility, or, more precisely, the inaudibility of the child's 'voice'. This question shall be taken up again later (section 5.3.4, p119).

The child is not a natural, homogenous reality (Danic, 2006), an abstract universal, but a sociological construct and a social actor caught up in the power relations intrinsic to all social interaction. The asymmetry between the child and the adult makes it incumbent upon a sensitive and ethically just analysis to search for a common referential zone, a common language, to minimise such asymmetry. Nudged by Isabelle's rewording of my questionnaire for the children, I began to reflect upon the linguistic register I employed and how this helped or hindered the children's understanding. This led to reflections upon the thesis itself. My research being *on* and *for* children, I began to wonder if it would also be possible to write a thesis that children would be able to read, or if there might be other ways of making it accessible to them. How I achieve this is explained in the section on empowerment (section 5.3.5, p121).

5.3.3. On reliability and trustworthiness

An uncomfortable reflection I could not suppress relates to the reliability of the child as a source of information (Atkinson *et al.*, 2001). Could I be sure that they would deliver sincere answers, sincere 'verbalised representations' (Deprez, 1994, in Galhardo, 2007), or were they possibly trapped in the discursive patterns of the classroom which might motivate them to tell me what they believed I wanted to hear? Who was I to them? Did

they trust me? How did they place me? Were they sufficiently able to distinguish between my objectives and those of the teacher?

Research by Goodman & Wilde (1992) demonstrates the limits of verbal elicitations from young learners, since the children can do more than their meta-linguistic skills allow them to articulate. When a child responded to my questionnaire with 'don't know', I could never be sure if this did not perhaps mean 'can't explain'. This latter *interpretation conveys a completely different type of response, alluding to abilities which however cannot be verbally represented (Ch.10, p243).*

Similarly, my thoughts repeatedly returned to the impact of the conversational context on children's responses in the classroom. The children were perfectly aware that our talk was not normal conversation resulting from a natural flow of events, but a slice of time set aside to talk to someone they knew only vaguely; a classmate's mother who suddenly became something else, wanting to get closer (Emond, 2006), someone whose intentions could not be fully understood and who would disappear once the necessary 'data' had been gathered.

Concomitant to questions about our relationships, and made sensitive to the issue by Valsiner's attention to the physical properties of the ZFM (Valsiner, 1997), I began to question the implications of the classroom as a social site, impacting upon the children's responses. The institutional location, layout and dynamics magnify the inherent asymmetry of adult-child relations in that the child is in a further subordinate role of learner or pupil. The child sits. The teacher often stands, moving around freely. I squeeze myself into the pupil's chair to be more on a par, yet I am the one asking the questions the children are 'invited' to answer. Interactions at home, as we know, look different (p84, p86). Valsiner's model helps us to understand why. At home the child is more *at home*... Increasingly, I doubted that the institutional context was the ideal location for soliciting ideas from a child about natural practice in another context. Such reservations were soothed only by bearing in mind not only the subordinate nature of the questionnaire, but also the impracticality of interviewing all these children at home. (section 4.5.5.4, pp103ff)

Trustworthiness is not only a question of sincerity but equally of verifiability. The latter may be secured by multiple triangulation measures. My triangulation measures were presented in the previous chapter (p108). At the paradigmatic or theoretical level, cross references between the conceptualizations proffered notably by Valsiner (1997) and Ivanič (2004) allowed me to identify and compensate for the weaknesses of individual frameworks, allowing me to 'read' the data from complementary perspectives.

Even when we think the point of saturation has been reached, it is important to remain in an interrogative frame of mind. To benefit from fresher, more objective perspectives, I showed my work to lecturers and post-doctoral students, presented it at research forums and profited from the insights of researchers from a wide range of fields. These contributions sharpen and complement the conclusions I draw, allowing me to state that, to the best of my knowledge and ability, this thesis presents a sincere and trustworthy account.

5.3.4. On ethics

Many of the considerations mentioned above are equally germane to the ethics of and empowerment in research, which, for structural clarity, I would like to present in more detail here.

Coming back to the degree of trust established between myself and my research participants, I had to reflect on how to optimise the relational climate in order to get quality data but without exploiting or misleading the participants in any way. Confidentiality is an important step in engendering a sense of trust or emotional security. All the names of the participants have been changed, excepting the key participant in my research, my daughter Pia. This is not only because she wants to be identified most of the time, but also because she has written her name on every item of work, making it impossible for her to remain anonymous without me manipulating the presentation of her texts in some way, a measure which would entail additional ethical problems. As reported in Chapter Four, all participants were informed of their right not to participate in my research and were invited to share their thoughts with me beyond the context of classroom observation or the questionnaire. Pia, conscious of her role as co-author (fig.4.1, p84; fig.4.3, p86), makes use of this right when she tells me, or informs me in

writing, that certain texts are not to be shown to anyone else. Accordingly, such texts are quantified but never used as samples in my thesis.

Acknowledging the rights of the participants, and encouraging Pia to exercise her role as co-author, means taking into consideration questions of ownership and accessibility alluded to in my discussion of the notions of childhood (section 5.3.2, p116). One problem I am unable to solve is the fact that my thesis is written in English. I have offered to give a copy of my thesis to the school, nonetheless I remain uncomfortable with the vacuity of this gesture, knowing that none of my research participants speak English well enough to access my thesis. An alternative, and I hope, satisfactory solution is to present the school my work in another form (section 5.3.5, p121)

When wishing to gain access to the classroom, researchers should take the temporality or rhythm of the school system into account. There are auspicious moments and less favourable times which may alter the willingness of the establishment to collaborate. When requesting permission to be present in the classroom, I also invited the teachers to tell me when the most suitable time would be from their point of view. Longer periods of observation towards the end of the term, when more time is dedicated to evaluation and possibly coupled with the stress of completing the programme on time, were viewed unfavourably. Isabelle's restructuring of my questionnaire 'en petits morceaux' ('into smaller chunks') meant less disruption to the rhythm of classroom life. Similarly, I asked the parents when they would prefer to answer the questionnaire and interviewed them accordingly.

Endeavours not to employ value-laden terms can only be partially successful since languages, by their very nature as cultural artefacts, are value-laden and ideologically influenced (Voloshinov, 1973, Fairclough, 1989). The task, when striving to 'disabuse knowledge', is to foreground which interpretation is being applied and to acknowledge the limits of this perspective.

Disabusing knowledge also means not to 'pathologise' the participants. I strove to resist hasty conclusions on the domestic literate practices of Pia's classmates, for example, bearing in mind that the insights gained from the intensive study of hundreds of texts cannot wholly compare to the insights gained from questionnaires. I was also at pains

not to abuse the detailed knowledge gained about my daughter, which could tempt me to regard her as the yardstick and measure of all child development. An investigation into peer practice helps to reduce this risk by placing Pia's practice into a wider context.

Research, being relational, must acknowledge and accord the rights engendered by such relations. Admittedly, however, no ethical position may guarantee the flawlessness of research design and conduct. In what follows, I specify some of the measures taken to accommodate the rights of the participants in my research.

5.3.5. Empowerment

Sensitive to the ideology of language, I refrained from viewing or calling the people in my study research 'subjects'. The term suggests subordination and a facelessness or neutral variable over and above anonymity, thereby heightening the asymmetry between the researcher and the researched. I refer to the people in my study as contributors, co-actors, co-authors, or research participants. This is a form of empowerment which the participants might not even be aware of, yet which I deem important.

I was careful not to engender a sense of competition with the staff and to minimize interruptions to their daily routines (p92).

Triangulation measures hand over some of the power to the others involved in the research process. By crossing-checking my understandings with Pia, the teachers, Pia's classmates and their parents, the participants are given the room and the right to verify my understanding of their utterances.

A copy of my thesis will be given to the school and complemented by a comprehensive folder of writing samples selected by Pia. This folder may be put in the book corner, taken home and read along with the other books. It allows me to *give* and not only *take*, thereby providing a means of making the core part of my work more accessible to the children without bogging them down by words in a foreign language. It may, further, motivate the children to see their writing in a new light, and possibly sensitize caregivers to the potential and value of similar work being produced at home by their own child(ren). The teachers involved have been given a selection of Pia's texts which

exemplify the core typologies and functions of her authoring. This gives them the opportunity to leave the institutional context and enter Pia's home as they, too, had granted me the opportunity to complement the emerging understanding of home practice by entering the classroom.

Wherever possible, I try to make the voice of the participants transparent in my research. This is done via the narrative snapshots, the use of direct speech, unedited citations from my fieldnotes and by bilingual transcriptions. Voice, however, is not simply about transcriptions or giving the participants more say, but also about bringing one's findings to a larger public. Three publications have resulted from the work done so far on my thesis (Bursch, 2005, 2006, 2008). I have also contributed to the second edition of a book on children's multilingual literacy (Gregory, 2008). By disseminating my work at conferences, a further step is being taken to make children's domestic writing practices 'seen'.

There is a sense in which my research may be regarded as critical in as much as my intention is to foreground a marginalised voice and make this voice valid within official teaching contexts. It allows the children who 'cannot speak' to 'have their say'. I cannot predict the impact of the study on the participants or the wider public, thus it would be premature to contemplate changes to balances of power. Nonetheless I may at this stage already confirm that my thesis has resulted in 'ripples on the self/others' (Ely *et al.,* 1997) in that the teachers in my study expressed greater sensitivity to young children's authoring. This will not necessarily translate into concrete pedagogic modifications to the curriculum at an official level, but may, perhaps, lead to the introduction of new activities at a local level which have been inspired by our collaboration.

5.4. Making sense of the data

Once the data has been collected, the knotty business of 'unriddling' the data begins. This process is filled with hurdles, not all of which have or may be overcome. In this, the final section on my methodological reflections, I outline the major difficulties encountered as I tried to make sense of the data, many of which have influenced my comments in section 5.3.

5.4.1. Transcripts

Transcripts not only document speech, but their layout has political connotations according to the floor space allocated to the speakers (Coates, 1994; Denny, 1985; Edelsky, 1981; Sacks *et al.*, 1974):

P:Do...does... do what do you say: do she or does she?
M: does she.
P: does she understand German?
M: who?
P: your teacher.
M: yes, she speaks French and German.
P: so you don't need to translate.

Fig 5.1a: Floorspace

Pia (P) and her mother (M)

P:Do...does... do what do you say: do she or
does she?

                M: does she.

P: does she understand German?

                M: who?

P: your teacher.

                M: yes, she speaks French and German.

P: so you don't need to translate.

Fig 5.1b: Floorspace

A sequential layout (fig 5.1a) does not accord the speakers the same floor space as a parallel layout, in which both speakers are allocated their space at the outset by having their names placed on the same footing, with the first speaker appearing first (fig 5.1b). A parallel layout, however, becomes difficult if more than two speakers are involved. Scripts and transcripts forge a new and purely subjective order onto the spoken word, transforming it into a new mode, thereby creating synoptic breaks which are not present orally (Halliday, 1994). It is difficult to accommodate paralinguistic information in the transcript, which is why I sometimes opted for the narrative snapshot. Respecting the speech rights of my participants on the one hand, and the reader rights on the other, multilingual transcriptions have turned into something of a nightmare, particularly if I want to make use of a parallel layout and accommodate non-verbal indices. The ethical implications of switching from the original language, coupled with my moments of language blindness (fig.4.3, p86), possibly undermine the sincerity and trustworthiness of transcriptions as a source of data presentation, which, however need to be weighed against the increased visibility accorded to participants by this means. I experimented

with different representations of speech in my research and opt for the most practical solution, which is a sequential layout (fig 5.1a) supplemented by translations and non-verbal indices.

5.4.2. Classifying the data

The multisemous nature of texts often defied codification into straightforward categories. This, in turn, occasionally renders the quantification of the data problematic.

> Can't always tell Pia's early 'drawings' from her 'writings'. Why do we say 'drawings' and 'pictures' but not 'writings'?
>
> Extract from RD

In section 5.5, we see how adult and child perspectives on the significance of a text may vary. When in doubt, I give the author, Pia, the last say.

5.4.3. Retrospective triangulation

Attempts to interpret data which had been written years before proved enormously difficult at times. Pia could not always remember more than I had documented in my fieldnotes. This meant that retrospective triangulation, seeking to see Pia as an authority on her own authoring, was of limited efficacy for the very first years of her authoring. This problem, however, did not extend to data analysed during the main research period (2001-2003).

5.5. Methodology in practice

At this point, it would help, once again, to reiterate the title of my thesis - 'Mind the Gap? Children's Domestic Writings and their Implications for Educational Practice' – along with my main research question:

> How do the home and school environments bear upon children's learning and use of writing?

Now we may move away from general issues of data interpretation and turn to a concrete example of methodology in practice.

5.5.1. Sample analysis

The data I have chosen to demonstrate how my methodology works in practice is entitled *Natascha 01-12-01* (see Illustr.5.1). It was produced during the first year of the two-year key period identified by the official literature as central to literacy acquisition (section 3.4, p56), and therefore well suited to illuminating the skills children bring to formal schooling. At the time, Pia was in the last year of nursery school and had already begun 'pre-writing' activities as part of the French curriculum. It should however be noted that this document, in keeping with the main focus of my research, was produced at home. It was produced on a sheet of A4 paper, which Pia then folded in two to form a book. The text was begun at school with a classmate, Natascha, who helped to colour the book's cover, but was completed by Pia at home. From my table 'school year – age correspondence' we learn that Pia is 5 years and 6 months old at the time she produced this text, in which she declares *'Natascha, tu étais ma meilleure copine aujourd'hui'* (Natascha, you were my best friend today). A picture complements the text by depicting children in the playground, in the centre, Pia and her best friend for the day arm-in-arm:
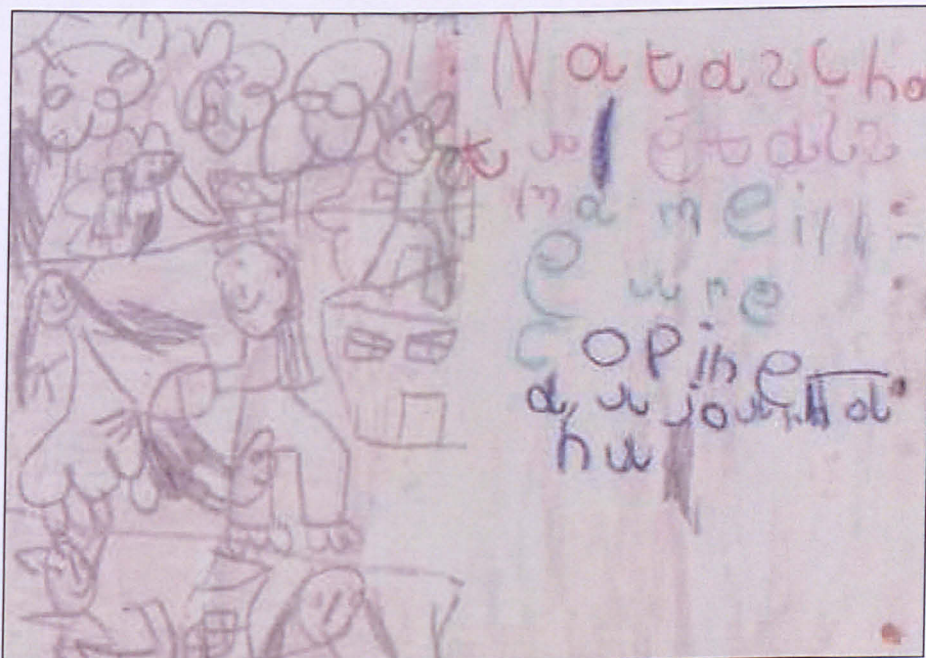
Illustr.5.1: Natascha 01-12-01, 5yrs 6m

The text is accompanied by detailed fieldnotes (fig.2):

10/12/2001

Pia's book for Natascha
Pia emphasizes the fact it is not a letter, but a book. Natascha did the first three colours on the back. Pia continued the pattern, then gave the book its brown cover.
She told me what she wanted to write in her book. I wrote the phrase on a piece of paper for her. She got lost quickly in the jungle of letters, e.g. writing 'p' from 'copine' after 'tu .
I suggested she crossed out each letter after having copied it, which she expanded into a secondary activity of colouring the letters. This way she was able to direct her gaze to the appropriate letter and integrate an element of personal creativity (she does not simply carry out my order)

Fig 5.2a: Fieldnotes
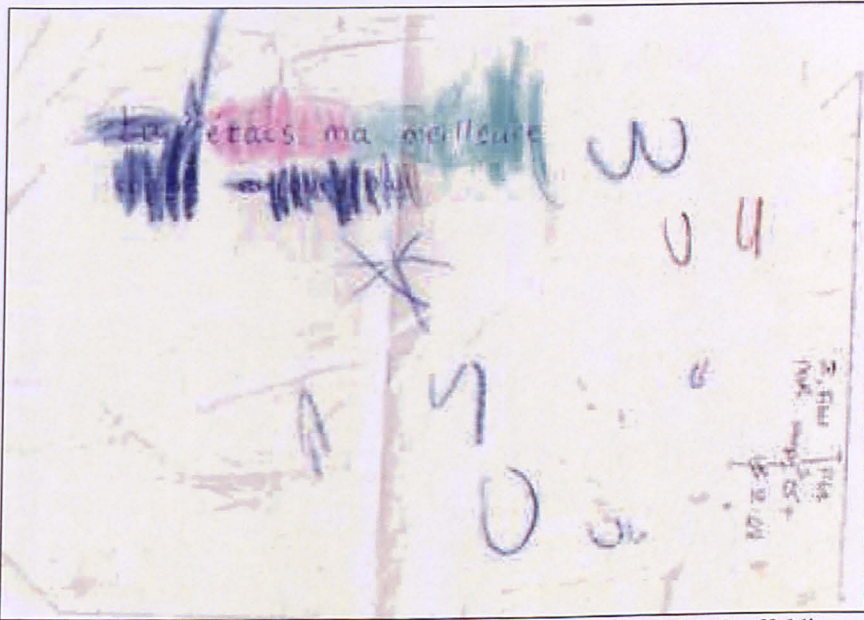
Illustr.5.2: Scaffolding

In spite of my clear spacing, it is not easy to identify the start and the end of words in Pia's text, which possibly indicates that the word, as a concept, has not yet been internalised.
Pia's letters do not always follow the traditional sequence of forming (...)

fig 5.2b: Fieldnotes cont'd
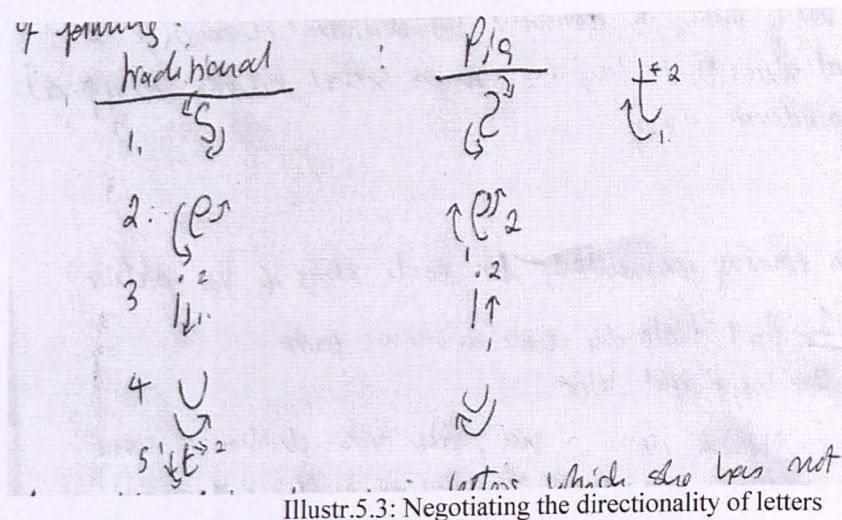
Illustr.5.3: Negotiating the directionality of letters

She adds strokes to certain letters which she has not completed, much in the manner of drawing/painting, eg letters m,a,e

She was uneasy about the straight line at the beginning of the letter 'm' because she said she had not 'learnt' this letter yet, although I know she is familiar with it in the cultural context of the sign 'MacDonald's'

She did not want to put an accent on the 'e' because, again, she said she has not yet 'learnt' it yet. She insisted that I did it for her.

Fig 5.2c: Fieldnotes cont'd

From the fieldnotes we learn that Pia has very concrete ideas on the form of her text, thus she is the 'authority' on her own authoring. The text is a book, not a letter. The distinction Pia makes presupposes her awareness of the differences between the two formats. The fieldnotes make clear Pia's awareness of what she has learnt at school, but also her unwillingness to attempt anything new. In this respect, she doubts her 'authority' to venture into something new. By the end of text, however, she has written something which extends beyond the knowledge she has gained at school. This accomplishment, moreover, is not achieved as an abstract, solitary writing exercise, but with the finely tuned help of her mother, and is deeply anchored in a specific socio-affective context, being inspired by the initial contribution of her friend, Natascha.

The fieldnotes (fig. 5.2a-d) give explicit information on parental scaffolding techniques and how Pia appropriates and remodels these. The scaffolding techniques employed (Illustr.5.2) seek to guide her letter formation whilst leaving her the freedom to negotiate spatiality. I do not tell Pia what to do, but wait to see what she can do on her own before offering more assistance, for example when she gets lost 'in the jungle of letters'. Pia does not 'simply' or 'blindly' copy, but takes over the activity, giving it her

own meaning, adding colouring and drawing activities which transform it (Maddock, 2002; Kenner, 2004; Kress, 1997), and coupling it to parallel activities with her sister (fig.5.2d). All of these aspects are documented in the fieldnotes, which also provide details on Pia's emotional state, her concentration, and how the text relates to the corpus as a whole:

(...) This indicates her awareness of her level of competence, and also an unwillingness to attempt something which hasn't been officially introduced, except for apostrophe in *aujourd'hui* (*also suggests she sees only the school environment as a valid site of learning, and thereby underestimates her skills*)
When she ran out of space for the word *meilleure*, I explained that she could use a hyphen to show that the word continues on the next line. She appropriated the concept and drew a hyphen after *copine* because the following word was on the same line as the model I had written. (cf later, her book, les oiseaux, jan 2002)
Pia's txt shows that my model did not use a clear writing model, but has elements of italic as well as basic print.
She wanted to continue the text. As I noticed that she was not concentrating on the activity, but gliding off into parallel activities with her sister, I suggested that that was enough for now, and that, anyhow, she did not have enough space. I soothed her frustration by proposing that she drew a picture to accompany her 'story'. The txt took approx 30min.
Pia is using writing to document her emotional closeness to a child at school that day, and therefore as a social activity as opposed to an academic one.
Picture:
Pia gives a running commentary for each stage of her picture
Stage 1: pia and natascha arm-in arm
Stage 2: boy and girl below
Stage 3: heaven clouds and sun, later adds children and some school buildings. The children in this section are cold, so she draws 'freezing' lines down the sides of their bodies (it's December...)

The picture is populated with children...

Figure 5.2d: fieldnotes cont'd

5.5.2. Interactional dynamics of domestic literacy: Jan Valsiner

The initial interpretation of the event may be tightened by applying Valsiner's interactional model to structure the findings according to their physical (ZFM), social (ZPA) and cognitive (ZPD) features.

5.5.2.1. Zone of Free Movement (ZFM)

Activities within the ZFM structure access to the physical environment which is functionally available to the developing child, as determined by the adult's evaluation of

child competence (pp66-7). Pia's home, as a ZFM with 'go' and 'no go' areas, differs to the classroom as a ZFM, which is reflected in how literacy is experienced within them. At home, Pia is free to move from place to place, and person to person, almost like a bee, collecting pollen, or ingredients which may be reworked in her texts. At school, her options are more restricted; she must largely remain seated, for example. Nonetheless, the gap between the home and school as physical environments with their own influences is dismantled by Pia in this text. The book is inspired by an encounter at school, and begun at school, using the paper provided by the school to document friends and life at school. The tightly structured classroom routine, however, does not leave Pia the 'space' (or time) to compose this text, so she completes it at home.

5.5.2.2. Zone of Promoted Activity (ZPA)

Interactions taking place within the Zone of Promoted Activity draw attention to the materials and people involved in concrete cases of promoted activities (pp67ff). From the analysis conducted in Chapters Two and Three, we know what sort of materials are put at Pia's disposal to promote her writing development at home. Once again, Pia does not use a pencil, the writing material familiar to her from nursery school, but chooses to use crayons. Not only that, but she uses exactly the same colours she selected to 'colour'-scaffold her through the 'jungle of letters' (fig.5.2a, p126; illustr.5.2, p127).

Valsiner emphasises the non-binding nature of the ZPA, in which interactions may be proactive as well as reactive. Here, unlike child-adult interactions at school, where the child reacts to adult input, it is the proactive child who initiates the event, saying when she needs help. The non-binding nature of interactions within the ZPA mean that non-compliance has no 'repercussions' (Valsiner & Hill, 1989). The mother's help in the form of 'assistance tuning' (Tharpe & Gallimore, 1998) is 'on offer'. It is not a command. Pia, for her part, does more than merely execute her mother's advice. She creatively interprets it. The climate of the interaction is central to understanding the dynamics of writing as a promoted activity, and Pia's mother does not disregard this. She alters the nature of her assistance when Pia shows signs of losing interest, pacifying her child's disappointment with the less taxing proposal that she draw a picture. This leads to a new spurt of motivation, and new dialogue. It may take us but a few seconds

to read Pia's text, but we should remember that it took her approximately 30 minutes to compose it, thus it involved considerable time and effort.

This instance of writing at home as a promoted activity might, at first sight, seem identical to one which takes place daily in the classroom. However, it is not. Whilst Pia is also a member of a group at home, namely the family, she does not have the same material provisions as at school (e.g no coursebooks, worksheets, etc), but equally valid, alternative ones. Moreover, her learning is not the focal point of daily interaction, rather her needs must be fitted into the running of family life (section 9.7, p229). Despite this lack of specific time consecrated to learning activities, the learning which takes place is insightful and more pitched at the child as an individual than as a member of a group of learners. It is, understandably, rare for schoolteachers to dedicate half an hour to a single child in a class of twenty or more learners.

The object of acquisition fostered within the ZPA, in this case writing, once internalised, then becomes a means for attaining other goals (Valsiner, 1997). The letters and symbols Pia learns in this event are diversified. She may, and later does, use newly acquired letters, such as é, in new texts. We see how, having understood the function of the hyphen, she immediately uses it in a situation she determines by herself, putting a hyphen where none was present in the model proposed by her mother. At another level, this book, as a declaration of friendship, is diversified in many other subsequent declarations of friendship, which are accomplished without further assistance, and in a variety of forms (p204).

5.5.2.3. Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

The Zone of Proximal Development captures how adults facilitate knowledge acquisition, or, to use Valsiner's own words, the 'set of possible next states' (Valsiner, 1997:200) beyond, but within the reach of the developing child. The detailed fieldnotes reveal how Pia's mother helps her daughter to achieve a level of knowledge that had not yet been acquired at school. This fact substantiates the argument for the primacy of the domestic environment for the child's development, which is central to this thesis.

As with the overlap between the ZFM and the ZPA, the cognitive properties of the ZPD can be seen to overlap with the more social properties of the ZPA, for cognitive development cannot take place independently of social action and interaction.

Pia learns a lot, with the help of her mother. She learns about script at the visual, verbal and kinaesthetic levels (Kenner, 2004). She learns about how signs look, how they are produced, and what they stand for. This knowledge is anchored in verbal exchanges. Kenner calls this type of knowledge 'embodied knowledges', reflecting the different layers of learning related to script. Learning, however, must be coupled to practice, thus we must also look at how writing is used. To look at the uses of writing means to look at social practice and, consequently, at social relations. Such relations are never enacted in an emotional vacuum. Pia's text is sparked off by a sincere emotional need to express her feelings towards someone else; a need which is uppermost, for the text itself never gets sent to Natascha in the end. The text, I argue, is primarily to be seen as a vehicle for exploring her feelings rather than as a calculated cognitive act, which may be the impression left by an analysis of learning which leaves motivational and affective considerations as peripheral variables (Jackson, 1993; Rowe, 1994; Campbell, 2002).

The child is helped to new levels of knowledge, thus cannot cross the ZPD entirely without assistance. In the pilot study, Pia required no help whatsoever to compose her text, and the question was put whether or not she was actually operating within her ZPD (section 2.6.3, p44ff). Here, she clearly is operating within the ZPD as far as handwriting and spelling are concerned. To need the help of others does not mean the child is wholly dependent upon others, however, and at several points, Pia exhibits independent action, for example in the directionality of her letters, by blending drawing and writing, by designing her book. When analysing activities within the ZPD, therefore, attention must be paid not only to how children are helped, but also to how they help themselves.

5.5.2.4. Interactional zones in interaction

The semi-permeable nature of each of Valsiner's interactional zones means that we can expect a dynamic exchange between and within them, thus we may look at how interactions move 'in' and 'out' at various levels. We have seen how Pia moves in and

out of the home and school as concrete physical environments in the real sense as much as in the figurative sense as she takes the text from school to home. A closer look at the interaction as enacted within a Zone of Promoted Activity reveals further instances of moving in and out of various zones or concepts:

- materials
- directionality
- social actors/roles
- linguistic codes
- meaning-making/taking
- intertextuality (text networks)
- temporality

I will address each in turn. With regard to materials, Pia makes a 'book' out of a single sheet of A4, colouring the reverse side to constitute the book's cover. She is aware that her book might be misinterpreted as a letter, hence states explicitly that it is the former and not the latter. This reveals the potential for moving in and out of these two written forms. Pia appropriates crayons, used for colouring at school, to write at home. Once again, we move in and out of the physical properties and materials provided by the home and school, not to erect a gap, but to create a synthesis. We should, however, note that this flexibility is promoted at home, and not at school.

If we look at how Pia writes, we see how her mother's scaffolding helps her to produce the letters she needs to make her declaration of friendship, but how the directionality of individual letters, notably *s, e, i* and *u,* are opposite to the model proposed. Pia moves left when she 'should' move right (cf 's'), up when she 'should' move down (cf 'e', 'i'), right when she 'should' move left (cf 'u'). The fieldnotes document how she also adds strokes which are reminiscent of drawing more so than of writing. She therefore moves differently not only with respect to her letter formation, but also in and out of writing and drawing as discrete visual representations. Here, it is important to note that this is performed without comment from her mother, i.e. without Pia being corrected. This, in turn, underscores the non-binding nature of the ZPA. Pia's handwriting is not 'wrong', and, as in the text analysed in Chapter Two, Pia's mother doses her assistance carefully to permit the child a maximum of freedom.

In the text, we move between different social actors and roles. The text initiated at school with a classmate is completed at home with a different social actor, Pia's mother, who is learner and teacher in one, pitching her help at the child's level and learning from every clue Pia reveals about her development. Pia, likewise, although less consciously, is both learner and teacher, assisted by her mother to new levels of competence and teaching her mother along the way.

If we turn to the linguistic properties of the interaction, we observe that the interactants do not only move in and out of language (moving from talk to action), but in and out of languages. The written text (T1) is in French. The mother's advice, or conversational text (T2) is in English, so that the overall text, or event (T3), is bilingual.

Fieldnotes reveal movement in and out of meaning *making* and *taking* for both participants. Pia does not only take meaning but transforms it. Pia's mother does not simply make meaning to advance her daughter's writing development, but takes new meanings revealed by her direct involvement in her daughter's cognitive processes.

Concerning the network of Pia's texts, we move in and out of a number of identified text types, presented in more detail as part of the quantitative analysis of core typologies (p196ff). The sample data may be linked with French texts (linguistic codification), books (genre codification), collaborative texts (codification of social construction) and friendship (codification of social function).

Finally, if we look at temporality, we see that the activity is not performed according to the idea of standard units suggested by the structure of coursebooks, but is quick and slow, depending on the context. Pia needs a lot of time to write her message, which stretches beyond her concentration span, leading her to veer off into a parallel activity with her sister. The task is a touch beyond her reach, which is why she needs help, and tires with the effort. Once she turns to drawing, however, the task is accelerated, as it is not too difficult for her. It is easy enough for her to give a running commentary, whereas she is silent when tackling the writing.

Valsiner's interactional model, we see, enables us to identify several layers of interdependent physical, social and psychological factors which shape how writing is learnt and used in different environments. To return to the image of the pens proposed in Chapter One (section 1.2, p17), and the toolbox in Chapter Two (section 2.5.1, p35), we see that Pia's 'toolbox' is equipped with many 'pens' she may choose from, although she appears to believe that some have more value than others. The school 'pen', i.e. school knowledge, is an important one in her eyes, so important that it encroaches upon her willingness to consciously use the other ones in her toolbox. Ironically, the pens she doesn't see, and which are not seen at school, yet which she uses subconsciously, intuitively, and with the often unacknowledged guidance of others, appear to be precisely the ones that are really pushing her learning forward. These other pens may at times look like the ones Pia knows from school, yet they are employed differently. The analysis of the characteristics of Pia's Zone of Free Movement (ZFM), Zone of Promoted Activity (ZPA) and Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) at home reveal more generous interactive parameters in comparison to school (cf also p182ff). It is precisely the freedom to use these pens in novel, non-prescribed yet socially and emotionally authentic ways at home, moving in and out of the plethora of relevant physical, social and psychological spaces, which 'open' such interactions cognitively in a manner which is not matched by the careful, tightly, and possibly over-planned stage-oriented activities at school. Institutional framing of literacy acquisition and practice leaves no space for the child to switch course in mid-sentence as we see Pia doing in this chapter; changing from red to pink to green to blue (Illustr.5.2, p127) in an act of unequivocal creativity, social purposefulness and acknowledged ownership.

Valsiner's model, for all its merits, is not without its flaws. Although Valsiner provides a flexible tool to tease out the variegated mechanics of social interaction in any given site, so that we may dismantle such interactions, like we might do a watch, the better to understand how it works, and although his model did indeed help me to identify facets I had previously failed to take into account, his classifications could benefit from further refinement. Once I had taken his lead and started to dismantle interactions, I not only found elements whose descriptions were 'fuzzy', but also other elements which were not specifically accommodated within his model. Whilst he mentions 'objects', i.e. physical phenomena, as part of the ZPA, he does not argue forcefully enough for the interplay between the physical and the social. The physical and the social, I contend, are

inextricably intertwined, so that the notion of a Zone of Free Movement should extend beyond structured physical space to encompass physical elements of social interaction such as body contact and body posture, which are difficult to place within his model as it stands. Similarly, the *Zone of Promoted Activity*, as a global description of people and activities which foster child development in a particular direction, can be subdivided into smaller items of analysis, such as the verbal or the affective. My own classification of zones in this section suggests new ways of labelling interactions (e.g social actors/roles, temporality, linguistic codes, meaning-making/taking) which I was able to feed back into Valsiner's model as I put it to the test, but which Valsiner himself did not provide. His model, therefore, may be refined even further. Finally, the case for the non-binding nature of actions taking place within the Zone of Promoted Activity, I suspect, is a weak link in his theory, for actions, once internalised, are less negotiable, and, in this sense, more binding. I suspect that Valsiner's insistence on the non-binding nature of interactions within the ZPA will destabilise the usefulness of his model for analysing classroom interaction although his model should provide a tool for analysing interactions in *any* site. When put to the test in the classroom context, his model might warrant further refinement, or possibly risk not being able to cover important aspects of classroom interaction.

5.5.3. Writing discourses: Roz Ivanič

By using Valsiner's model in order to analyse how the activity has been framed, we are steered towards discovering what the activity 'means', and thus to the image of the child harboured within the discourse. Here, our understanding so far may be enhanced by referring to Roz Ivanič (2004), whose model, although initially conceived for monolingual contexts (p64), may be applied to my multilingual research.

First presented in section 3.6.2 (p63ff), Ivanič's model of literacy discourses provides a broad framework, or, in her own words, a 'research tool', allowing us to unpick and foreground underlying orientations towards writing, as reflected in educational theory and practice (Ivanič, 2004:220). She posits six 'discourses' (Skills, Creativity, Process, Genre, Social Practice, Socio-political), describing their commensurate underlying beliefs about what writing is and how it should be learnt, taught and assessed. Despite

the institutional context behind Ivanič's model, it may be applied to other contexts. In the sample of a domestic writing event presented here, we see Pia's learning and use of writing being shaped according to a number of orientations, particularly:

- the creativity orientation (i.e. writing as stemming from genuine interest)
- the skills orientation (i.e. understanding of sound-symbol correlation)
- social practice orientation (i.e. writing authentic texts in authentic contexts)

These orientations entail a blend of implicit and explicit teaching, the 'creativity' discourse being transmitted implicitly, the 'skills' discourse involving explicit teaching of the sound-symbol correlation, and the 'social practice' discourse involving both.

Whilst, according to a skills discourse, the sound-symbol correlation is taught explicitly, we note, however, that Pia's mother does not say the sounds for Pia to practise, as at school (section 6.3.3, pp146ff), but merely writes down the text according to her daughter's instructions. Thus, and despite the explicit scaffolding aimed at helping Pia to negotiate the 'jungle of letters', her mother does not consciously seek to teach Pia to read, or verify the child's understanding via comprehension checks. Nor does she correct or comment upon her daughter's handwriting, neither from the point of view of the directionality of the figurative properties of the letters themselves (Ferreiro, 1984, also section 2.4.1, p32, and illustr.5.2, p127), which are occasionally the 'wrong' way round, for example, nor with regard to Pia's logically correct yet unconventional use of hyphen in the text (illustr.5.1, p126). Evaluating the mother's behaviour in the light of Ivanič's model of writing discourses - what the mother says or leaves unsaid, what she does and does not do - the image the mother appears to harbour of the child is not unequivocal, but involves a mixture, though no serious tension, between a view of the child both as a learner or apprentice, and as a practitioner. The tendency, due to the mother's apparent disinclination to exploit potential explicit teaching opportunities, which was also noted in the pilot study (section 2.6.2, p41ff, section 2.6.3, p44ff), is towards the latter option, i.e the child as practitioner, although ironically, as stated above (section 5.5.2.4, p132ff), it seems that non-explicit teaching is the interactive style which fosters learning the most.

Whilst Pia is clearly learning with her mother's help, her primary motive is not to learn, but to explore her friendship to a classmate, hence, from the child's perspective, one could argue that the 'creativity' and 'social practice' discourses appear to provide the driving forces behind her action. In other words, Pia does not inhabit the discoursal space of a learner, but of a practitioner. She is proactive and not merely reactive in this writing event, thus it is valid to explore not only the positionings adopted by the mother, but also those possibly adopted by the child, however subconscious these may be. The child as a conventional learner operating within the Zone of Proximal Development is more apparent in this text compared to the text analysed in Chapter Two. However, it is not in the cast of a learner, but as a practitioner, resourcing the many subtle interactional strategies which Valsiner's model helps us to identify, and which Ivanič's model helps us to locate within discoursal 'space', that learning appears to be optimised.

5.6. Summary

In this chapter I have reflected upon my methods of data analysis, which I then apply to a sample of data in order to see how useful my methodology proves to be in practice. I show how Valsiner's interactional model and Ivanič's model of writing discourses provide useful tools for sieving the data in response to the central research question of how homes and schools bear upon children's learning and use of writing. Despite my overall conviction of the suitability of the models to satisfy my analytical objectives, I nonetheless, and also, draw attention to potential weak points in the frameworks selected.

With regard to how the home environment shapes the child's learning, the data confirms a predominantly holistic interactional style even in this event which involves a degree of explicit teaching. The interactional style is also porous, moving in and out of physical, social and cognitive zones in at times barely perceptible ways.

With regard to the child's use of writing, the salient difference to the school context is that the uses of writing are not prescribed by the adult, thus are not top-down, but determined by the proactive child as she engages in authentic social action. This practitioner-driven attitude or 'position' takes precedence even in a situation such as the

one investigated in this chapter, in which explicit learning incidents are taking place. The explicit learning witnessed, and which places the child in the position of an apprentice, is, however, regarded purely as a means to an end. This end is socially pragmatic, for Pia does not approach her mother in order to learn *how* to write, but to get writing *done*, using it as a tool for an ulterior socially motivated, and emotionally anchored, goal.

Whilst Valsiner's model identifies the multifaceted, dynamic mechanics of social interaction which further child development, Ivanič's model helps us to understand the ideological, discoursal positions attributed to and negotiated by learners within writing-related events. These discoursal positions locate the learner differently along the apprentice-practitioner continuum. To recognise the ideologies behind educational policy and practice constitutes an important prerequisite for any attempt to change interactional patterns, and ultimately to change ideas about teaching and learning in the classroom.

The features of Pia's home environment have been analysed considerably so far (Ch.2,3,5), so that we may now claim to 'know' how her writing development is supported at home. To keep pushing the analysis forward, individual aspects of what domestic writing-related learning and practice 'look like' will be highlighted from now on in the relevant sections (Ch.8-11) in preference to more global representations which would only lead to unnecessary repetition.

In the next two chapters of my research, I triangulate findings gained about the role of Pia's domestic environment in her writing development by shifting my focus to the classroom. Here, my intentions are to 'get alongside' the pupils (Emond, 2006) in order to strengthen my understanding of how the institutional environment shapes them as writers, and to unpick the ideological stances behind policy and practice.

Chapter Six: Literacy in the Classroom: a Qualitative Approach

Chapter Six:
Literacy in the Classroom: a Qualitative Approach

6.1. Introduction

This thesis, entitled 'Mind the Gap? Children's Domestic Writings and their Implications for Educational Practice', is driven by the central question: how do the home and school environments shape children's learning and use of writing? The title of the thesis makes clear that children's writing at home constitutes the focus of my research, with the question 'Mind the Gap?' (as opposed to a statement 'Mind the Gap!' or 'Mind the Gap:') opening up a discussion of the degree of divergence between home and school practice. Both the title of this thesis and the central question, however, also direct one's attention to the classroom as a co-contributor to children's socialization into literacy, and it is to this particular learning environment that I now turn.

If a two-minute encounter between mother and child, as analysed in Chapter Two, can yield such a wealth of information about how the domestic environment may shape children's learning and uses of writing, then a similar analysis of teacher-pupil interactions should be able to provide equally valuable insights into the role of the institutional environment in shaping Pia's literate development and practice. In this chapter, I give a qualitative account of classroom literacy in the last year of nursery school (*Grande Section*) and in Year One in French (*Cours Préparatoir*) and German (*die erste Klasse*). With the help of the narrative snapshot, complemented by fieldnote excerpts, I provide vignettes of typical interactions, which, in Chapter 7, will be analysed in greater detail to foreground and compare the mechanics and meanings being transmitted according to the differing pedagogic styles used in French and German classes respectively.

6.2. The parameters of classroom observation

Vignettes of the first day of school were considered an ideal means of discovering the dynamics of the classroom in view of the fact that teachers, parents, policies and course

material alike emphasise that, from now on, learning is serious, and 'real' (e.g. section 3.4, p56ff). Whilst the first day of school is special at the emotive level, the pedagogical strategies employed during this day do not differ from the rest of the school year, thus the practices observed may provide the basis for reliable conclusions.

An analysis of the last year of nursery school in German has not been conducted since the literacy programme falls within the purview of the French curriculum. The last year of nursery school in German is charged with teaching the children basic mathematical skills in preparation for *die erste Klasse* (section 4.5.1, p89ff).

Although writing numbers also constitutes a literacy skill, it does not require an ability to recognise and reproduce complex phonological patterns as the basis for reading and writing, the latter being the main focus of my research. As specified in Chapter Three (section 3.4.3, p57ff), reading and writing, in Germany, and thus in the school studied, which follows the German educational system, is first taught upon entry to formal schooling. Until then, there is no explicit teaching of literacy, although non-explicit exposure to literacy via daily routines such as register taking or songs may, from a social constructivist perspective, also provide opportunities for children to actively construct meanings around literacy. The main source of literacy messages nonetheless remains the explicit teaching of literacy in French.

In what follows, I seek to make us familiar with the scholastic contexts of Pia's literacy learning.

6.3. Classroom literacy

I begin with scenarios taking place in the last year before formal schooling.

6.3.1. Snapshot #1:
The *Grande Section*'s daily routine (11th February, 2002)

> *Teacher, Isabelle (T) and children (CC)* Isabelle and all the children are seated on a long v-shaped bench in the corner of the classroom, away from their tables and chairs. *The interaction takes place in French.*
>
> T: Are all the children here?
> CC: Yes!

T: Are you sure? We'll see. Elisa, are you here?
Elisa: I'm here!

(Isabelle notes Elisa's attendance with a tick in her register)

T: Victor, are you here?
Victor: I'm here!

Isabelle goes through the whole class. Whilst the register is being taken, the children fidget and whisper.

T: How many are we today?
CC (simultaneously): Fifteen!
                    Twenty!
                    Nineteen!
T: How many girls? Who would like to count the girls?

Numerous hands shoot up and a few bottoms hover above the bench fervently. A girl is selected. She stands up, points her finger at each girl as she counts. The other children count with her. The procedure is repeated for the boys. Today there are nine boys and eleven girls. Two boys are missing. Isabelle chooses a different child to count how many children are present altogether. Some children join in too, whilst others chatter. Isabelle waits patiently.

T: So, we have more...
CC: Girls!
T: Girls.

The girls cheer. The boys sulk.

T: Which day is it today?
CC: Monday!
       Friday!
(Laughter)
T: Today is the first day of the week...
CC: Monday!
T: Monday, right.

Isabelle gets up. She walks over to a wall chart with the heading : *Aujourd'hui nous sommes* ('Today we are...'). The heading is followed by the days of the week, each associated with a particular colour and a one-line poem. Handwritten day tags, of the same colour as the days on the chart, are pinned on the wall next to the chart. Isabelle chooses a girl to find the right tag for Monday. This girl finds the tag, takes it off the wall and places it beneath the chart. The other children begin to get restless. The noise level rises.

T: What is the date today?

The children guess various numbers. They seem to have forgotten the date they had on Friday (I hear a few whispered 'Friday was the ...?') and over the weekend they appear not to have use of knowledge of this type. Still, they work it out in the end. Today is the eleventh.

T: How do we write eleven?

Isabelle holds out a bag of numbers written on square card. She chooses a boy this time to come forward, who finds the correct number before placing it next to the day below the chart.

T: Good. And the month?

CC: February!
T: February. Two thousand...
CC: ... and two!
T: Two thousand and two. So today is...
CC: Monday, the 11th February, 2002.

Isabelle crosses the classroom to the blackboard. In the top right hand corner, she writes the date in joined-up letters, pronouncing each word as she does so:

T: Lundi, le... onze... fevrier... deux ... mille ... deux. Bien!

With a gesture, she signals the end of the activity. The children return to their tables, grouped to seat up to five children.

Activities in the *Grande Section* consist of a clearly defined blend of play-oriented skills acquisition tasks, with the morning and afternoon sessions consisting of four activity blocks: ritual, language work, worksheet, pre-writing exercises. A typical worksheet is *Le trait vertical*; the vertical line, which progressively structures the size of the children's penstrokes in the 'run up' to writing (illustr.6.1, p145).

My observation of this activity is accompanied by the following fieldnotes:

The children sit at group tables, are supposed to work individually, but mix their work with private talk, which, though tolerated, is punctuated by Isabelle's frequent reminders as she moves from group to group: 'not so loud! Concentrate on your work!' At the end of each morning or afternoon session, the children's work is filed away in their folders, stored in a communal area along one side of the classroom. The children go over to a big chest of drawers and put their pencils and crayons back in one of the drawers bearing their name.

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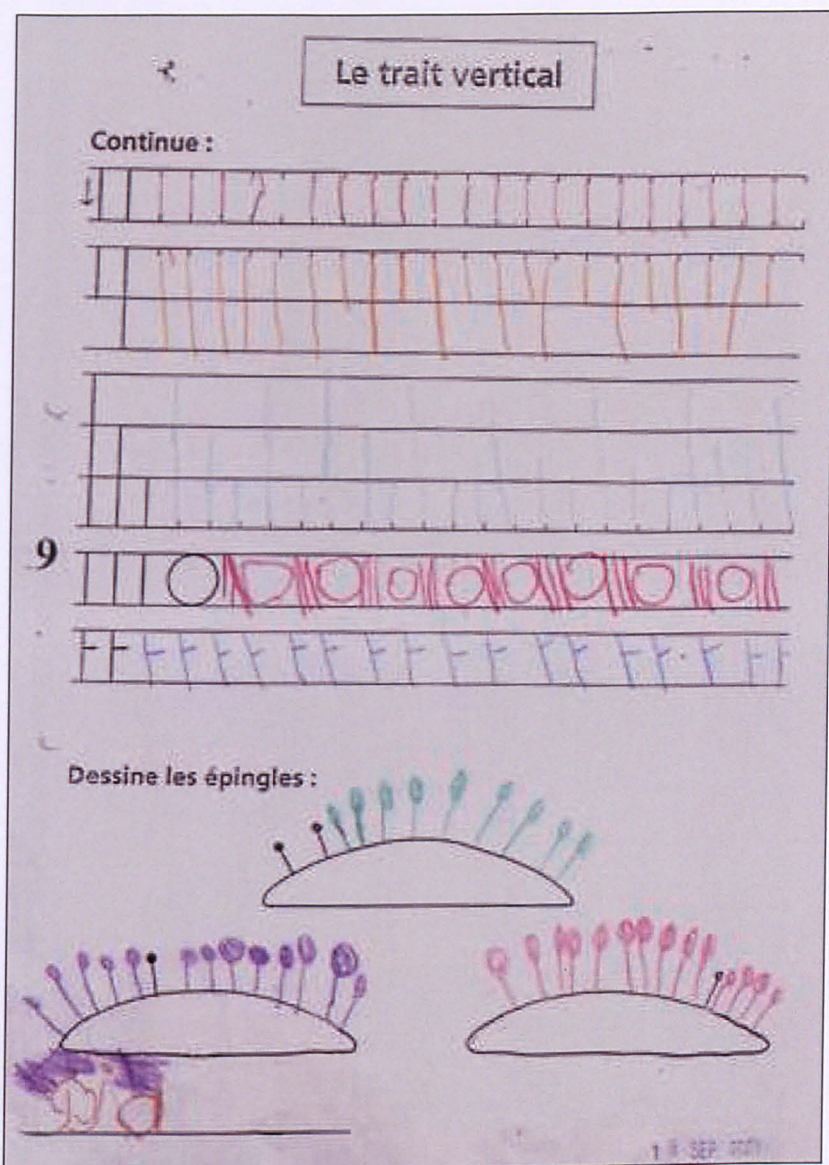
illustr.6.1: the vertical line

6.3.2. Snapshot #2:

Day One Year One: *Cours Préparatoir* (5th September, 2002)

The first day of Year One is conducted in French. The children are excited. What will be new?

> **Marie:** Who're you gonna sit next to? D'you think we can choose? I hope I won't be right at the back.

Sophie: We can't all sit together anymore they'll probably move us around like they did last year. If you sit at the front you're the teacher's pet.

Elise: D'you reckon we get to come and write on the whiteboard?

Real school. New room. New layout. Tables no longer clustered like honeycomb, but lined up like pencils on their sides: one, two, three, four rows, every face to the teacher. In *real* school you don't hang your coats up in the classroom like the little ones do, but leave them outside on a hook with your slipper bag. Any you keep *your* things in that compartment under *your* desk...

The walls are as bare as the new books now being taken from the satchels and purchased in strict accordance with the list handed out to the parents at the end of the preceding school year. Every book, every pencil, rubber and sharpener, every pair of scissors bears the child's name. Hours of writing, sticking, of calming down excited children implored to write their names neatly have gone into the preparation of this big day. The classroom looks, smells squeaky clean; the naked walls, *like the exercise books, soon to be clothed with common knowledge.*

The children – erratum – the *pupils* may in fact choose their own seats, the noise level necessarily rising, yet the teacher is generous with her patience. For today. The register is taken, then the pile of new books, stacked on the teacher's desk like so many plates in the canteen, are ladled out to the children, row after row.

Sandrine, the teacher: Bien. Et maintenant, au travail. (Right, now let's get down to work)

6.3.3. Snapshot #3:

Cours Préparatoir's daily routine (5th September, 2002, 08:15 – 10:00)

The school routine is started without delay. The course book is handed out: *Mika CP.* Mika is a little girl, whose adventures with a wolf provide the narrative context for the reading exercises. The book is described as '*méthode interactive d'apprentissage de la lecture*' and further as '*cycles des apprentissages fondamentaux*' (i.e. as 'an interactive method for learning to read', and as 'a basic training course'). With the help of this book, the pupils will learn to read their first story. Numerous exercises in *Mika CP* will help the first-graders to understand how the written language works: '*le fonctionnement de la langue écrite*'.

We turn the first page. Sandrine distributes a sheet with a text on it to each child. She reads: 'The start of school. Today, it's the start of school (*la rentrée*). For you, it's your big day. You are now in Year One. Real school.'
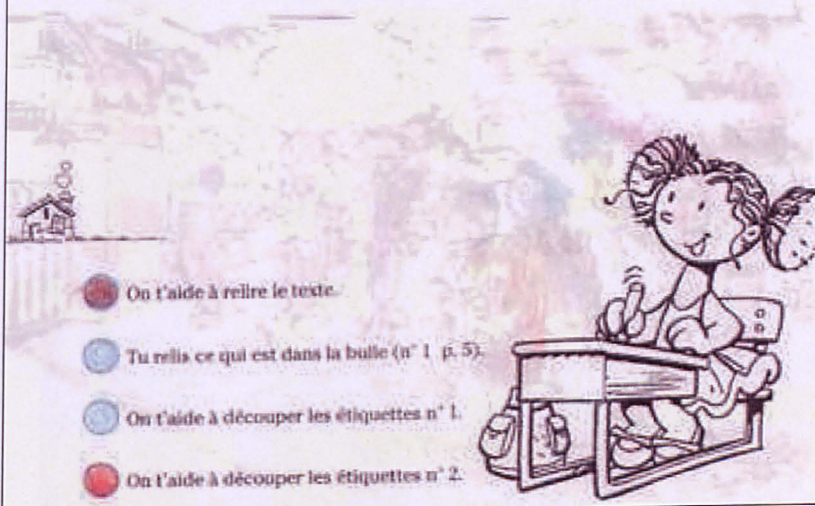
illustr.6.2

The pupils are asked to identify and underline different word groups in yellow or blue. They must stick texts into their exercise books, then cut out four jumbled words in order to reconstitute the sentence 'Bonjour! Je m´appelle Mika' in the allocated speech bubble. Sandrine holds the same word cards, or etiquettes, in a larger format, up to the class.

Sandrine: What does this say?
A pupil who shouts out the answer is thrown a stern look. Sandrine chooses a pupil who has put his hand up. His answer is correct.

Sandrine: Good!
She repeats the answer, then pins the word on the wall next to the whiteboard. If no-one is able to read the word, Sandrine gets the pupils to identify each of the letters in the word before she says the word slowly, running her finger along the letters as she pronounces them. Then she invites the pupils to collectively pronounce the word a number of times:
CC: je m'appelle... je m'appelle... je m'appelle.

To finish the session, the pupils must write their names, that of Mika and of their teacher according to the French writing model and in the space scaffolded by dotted lines. They are eager and complete the task without any difficulty. The day's homework consists of three activities:

1. learn to recognise the words from the yellow group.

2. draw a picture of yourself and your teacher.

3. colour in the picture at the front of the book (children outside the school gate, keen to start their first day of real school).

Before closing my notebook so that I may share my first impressions with the teacher, I note:

Very little talk all morning apart from Sandrine's instructions and the pupil's answers. During the cutting out activity, the noise level rises slightly. The pupils seem eager to work hard. Above all, they must work individually.

6.3.4. Snapshot #4:

Day Two Year One: *die erste Klasse* **(6th September, 2002)**

Now that we have witnessed the pupils' very first hours of formal literacy teaching, and have thereby gained valuable insights into the dynamics of French classroom literacy-based interaction, we accompany the same first-graders through their very first morning in German, which takes place on the following day.

The children enter the grounds accompanied by their parents, or else by a larger cluster of adults; the aunties, uncles, godparents of the native German-speaking pupils, who take snapshots of the new first-grader posing proudly with satchel and *Schultüte*; an enormous cone filled with sweeties and school-related objects. Once the excitement recedes, Ingrid rallies the children around her and clears her throat:

"So, dear children, welcome back to school. Welcome to Year One. I am sure you all had a wonderful summer. And I am sure we will all have a wonderful time learning to read and write in Year One. In Germany, the start of Year

One is an important day for every boy and girl and it is celebrated. For each of you, I have a *Schultüte*, like in Germany."

In alphabetical order, Ingrid photographs the pupils with their *Schultüte* before they enter the classroom and sit down (same seating arrangements as for French).

6.3.5. Snapshot #5:
Die erste Klasse's daily routine (6th September, 2002, 08:15 – 10:00)

The very first activities invite the children to draw and colour a picture of their new satchel and *Schultüte*.

Who has never seen a *Schultüte* before, Ingrid wants to know. Some pupils turn round to see how the others respond. "I've seen some in the supermarket," proffers one pupil. Others agree. Someone comments spontaneously in French "mais ce n'est pas la même!" (but they're not the same!). No, Ingrid agrees, those ones are not the same. They're too small, they're for anyone, and they have nothing to do with school. At the end of this activity, Ingrid passes round a picture of herself on her first day of *die erste Klasse*; bright-eyed, knobbly-kneed, and holding an enormous *Schultüte*. The pupils are fascinated. Laugh. Ask questions. Ingrid says she remembers exactly her first day of school. And the name of her teacher. More questions. Genuine interest. Ingrid laughs. "Ok, let's get back to work".

The social climate for the classroom is first set by a series of worksheets, mostly handwritten, and which, via colouring activities, reposition the children according to the rules of classroom life:

- We keep the place tidy (*wir halten Ordnung!*)
- This is how we play together (*so spielen wir miteinander*)

Ingrid then turns to the course material. In a series of structured activities, conspicuous for the absence of concrete written instructions in comparison to the French material, the pupils negotiate letter formation and the pronunciation of the names Nino and Nina, the central figures in the coursebooks.
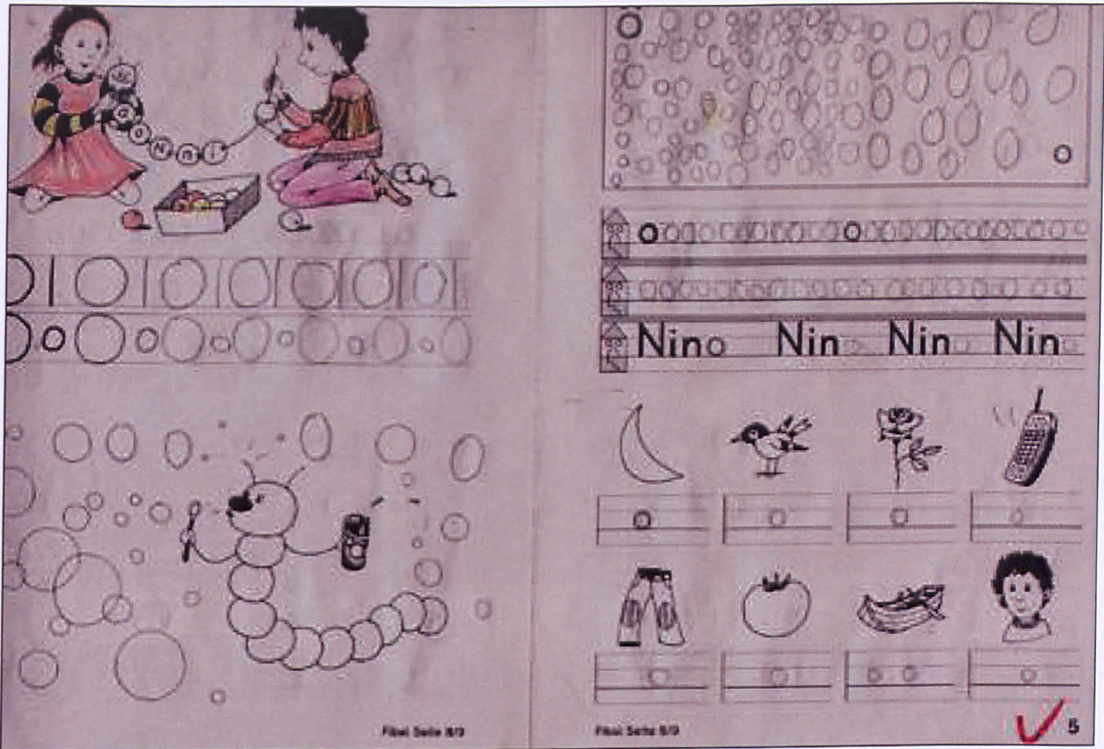
illustr.6.3

illustr.6.4

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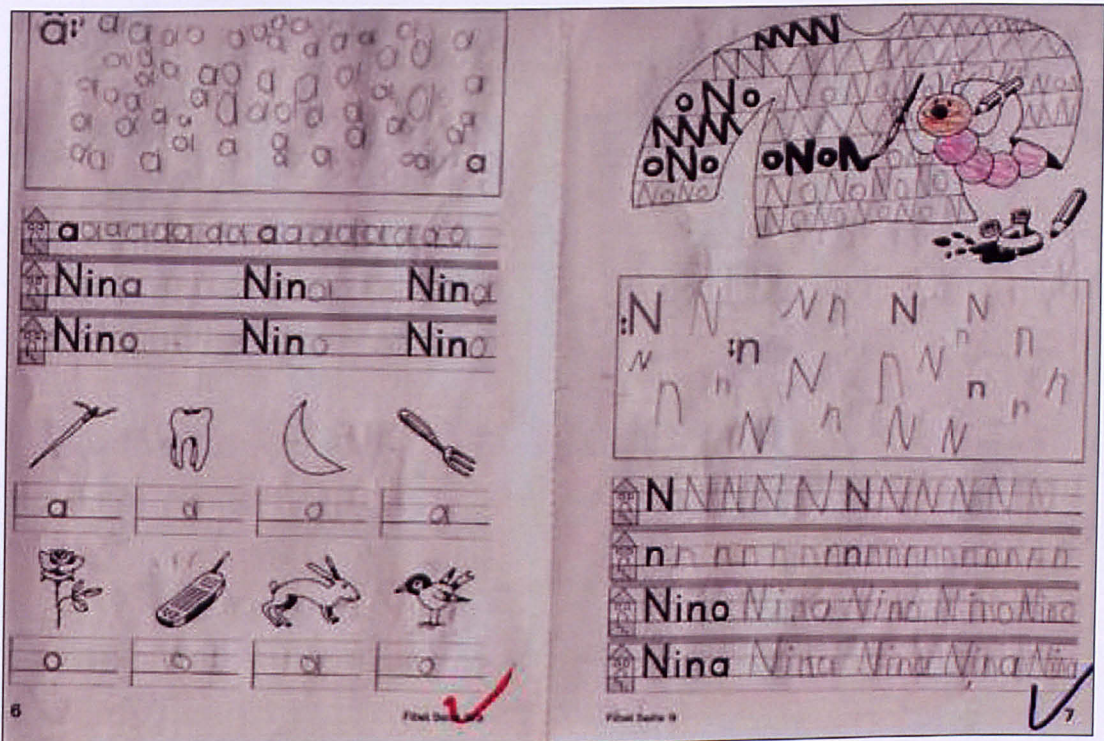
For homework, the children must complete a few pronunciation and writing activities.

The morning is rounded off with something new:

> Ingrid secures the attention of her class by asking them to look her way. She introduces the *Kummerkasten*, or complaints box, which she holds chest high as she faces the class. If the pupils have anything they are unhappy with, they can write a note and put it in the box. Spelling is unimportant because it's not a test. She will look in the box once a week and she will always get their meaning, Ingrid promises. The notes can be anonymous or signed and Ingrid assures her class that their comments will be read and taken seriously. It's a box for you, so use it whenever you are ready to. 'Don't forget!' She gives the box a shake, then places it on a table near her desk.

Morning break.

6.4. Summary

In this chapter, I document a typical nursery school morning routine before I accompany the same children into the classroom on their first day of 'real' school in French and German. The vignettes, by highlighting classroom layout, teaching materials, emotional climate and pedagogic procedures, relate directly to Valsiner's interactional model (Valsiner, 1997), so that the concepts of the Zone of Free Movement (ZFM), Zone of Promoted Activity (ZPA) and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) provide a useful analytical framework for interpreting classroom practice in more detail, as I do in the following chapter (Ch.7). The vignettes document how the children in the *Grande Section* become pupils in *Year One*. Ivanič's model of writing discourses (Ivanič, 2004) will help us to explore the significance of such transitions more consistently (Ch.7).

We already begin to get an impression of the ways in which young writers, within the institutional context, may make different experiences to those gathered at home (Ch.2, Ch.5). These institutional experiences, shaping young writers' learning and use of literacy, are examined in greater detail in the next chapter.

Chapter Seven: Understanding Classroom Contributions to Children as Writers

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Understanding Classroom Contributions to Children as

Writers

7.1. Introduction

Classroom interactions send a plethora of messages; overt, covert, and even, at times, conflictual:

> A classroom, for example, where young children spend considerable time copying letters beneath their teacher's clear handwriting and are expected to get every spelling correct in the first draft runs on assumptions about learning that are very different from those of a classroom where children choose what to write and where children's invented letter shapes and spellings are accepted and encouraged. (Czerniewska, 1992:53)

In this chapter, I try to unpick, make sense, and see beyond the immediate sense of Pia's school environment. The analysis, primarily based upon the snapshots of classroom literacy presented in the previous chapter, is further underscored by reference to other relevant data such as curricular guidelines, textbooks and exercise books, as detailed in Chapter Four (section 4.5.5, p96ff). Valsiner's interactional model supplies the key instrument in helping us to identify the salient dynamics of the classroom, which I then re-interpret in order to expose the view of writers such interactional dynamics appear to harbour.

I begin with an analysis of the last year of nursery school (*Grande Section*), then go on to analyse Year One in French (*Cours Préparatoir*) and German (*die erste Klasse*) respectively.

7.2. Framing learning and practice in *Grande Section*

7.2.1. The classroom as a Zone of Free Movement (ZFM)

The ZFM, we remember, relates to how adults, or others, structure the physical environment and the child's access, hence the child's interactional possibilities, *within it*

(section 3.7.1, p66). In this case, the notion of ZFM draws attention to the 'functional availability' of the classroom as concrete space and how interactions within this culturally designed space bear upon the child's development as a writer.

With regard to literacy acquisition, the classroom comprises three main learning spaces. One space is denoted by the grouped tables, where the mechanics and meanings of writing are practised and appropriated with the support of worksheets (section 6.3.1, p142ff).

The second designated learning space is the bench area. Here, the registration routine encourages the recognition of key words associated with scholastic discourse. The bench area is also the space where the children may withdraw to discover or read books – but not write - on their own if time permits.

The whiteboard represents the final learning space, forging a link between the tables and the bench as discrete seating areas. It channels the children visually to a limited space, from which they may take the knowledge the teacher places there.

We see, then, that the physical characteristics of the classroom, which are not arbitrary, but consciously designed by others to provide an optimal learning and working zone for teachers and pupils, consists of concrete spaces which relate to specific cognitive activities. The ZFM, we must also remember, is to be perceived of as an inhibitory device, limiting the options available in order to channel the child in particular ways. Classroom design limits specific types of learning to specific spaces for learning in a systematic manner. This is not replicated within the domestic environment, where children are free to learn anywhere (section 9.6, p227ff). The classroom, however, offers supplementary learning zones, which promote rather than limit the child. These do not belong to the concept of the ZFM, but to the ZPA and will be addressed below (section 7.2.2.4, p157).

7.2.2. The classroom as a Zone of Promoted Activity (ZPA)

The concept of a Zone of Promoted Activity (ZPA) relates to the interplay of people and materials involved in interactions on offer within the environment which, rather than

limit the child's development, are geared towards promoting the child's development with regard to a particular activity (section 3.7.2, p67).

7.2.2.1 Interactional partners in the classroom

There are a number of people on offer within the classroom environment. There are the children, the teachers, the auxiliary staff and the parents. These actors may be paired or grouped in a number of ways: children interacting with other children, teachers interacting with auxiliary staff and children, teachers interacting with parents, etc. Children's talk among themselves, however, is only tolerated to a certain degree. The auxiliary staff are not charged with pedagogical responsibilities in this school, and the parents only 'pop' in and out of class mostly to pick up or bring their children, with whom, as with the teacher, they may only exchange a few brief words before their departure. In practice, therefore, the potential offered by all these interactional partners is not fully exploited, and, as intended, social interactions within the classroom centre around the teacher-pupil dyad. In the following sub-sections (7.2.2.3-6), I highlight how teacher-pupil interactions are framed at Pia's school in order to promote literacy development.

7.2.2.2. Verbal frames in the classroom

Children's learning to write, along with their emerging identity as a writer, is framed verbally largely via question-answer routines, commonly referred to as 'initiation-response-feedback' (IRF), which channel, tease out and confirm the correct or desired reply (e.g. snapshot #1) :

> T: Today is the first day of the week...
> CC: Monday!
> T: Monday, right.

With her statement 'let us see if all the children are here', or the question, 'Elisa, are you here?', Isabelle also subtly manoeuvres the children at the start of each day away from their private identities into their identity as learners in an institutional context, employing specific learning strategies and discourses that may, or may not, be familiar to the children from their home backgrounds.

The appropriation of institutional discourse prepares the children for the more imperative, analytical linguistic styles or registers later encountered in the course material for Year One, and already alluded to by the simple instructions printed on the worksheets in the *Grande Section* (illustr.6.1, p145).

7.2.2.3. Affective frames in the classroom

At another level, feelings are harnessed in order to promote learning. The feelings solicited often try to evoke a sense of fun to take the sting out of learning. The registration ritual, for example, is designed to feel like a game; the children cheer, play at sulking, laugh (snapshot #1, p142ff). Pre-writing exercises are made to feel like drawing rather than the serious business of learning to write.

Wall work, as an interface between parents, teachers and children, and thus between the home and the school, may also be harnessed emotionally, for by talking about their work on display, the children may not only proudly demonstrate their abilities to their parents, but also see the interest of their parents validated by talk with the teachers. Here, the 'zoniferous' nature of interactions, such as Valsiner describes them, comes particularly to light. We see how the home and school, as two distinct zones may interact when parents enter the classroom. Two other aspects – the material and the verbal – may equally be seen to interact and promote learning by stimulating positive feelings in the child. Verbal framing, moreover, has additional affective attributes in that the children, once 'repositioned', are supposed to 'feel' differently; in particular, they should 'feel' that they are at school to work, yet may 'look forward' to learning via activities and interactional strategies that are intended to be enjoyable, and therefore motivating. Fun and games notwithstanding, the school does not 'feel' like home, so that, even at the emotional level, different zones may be identified.

Not only the teaching materials employed or the potential interactional strategies seek to tap into children's feelings in order to promote their learning, but the classroom design itself constitutes an emotional frame. The children sit in groups, whose members are rotated (snapshot #2, p145ff) so that the children may learn to learn, and make friends,

with different people. The physical and social climate of the classroom will 'feel' quite different in Year One, due to frontal, individual, and definitive seating arrangements.

7.2.2.4. Materials available for writing as a promoted activity

If we turn to look at the materials on offer in the classroom, we may establish a link between the socially oriented interactional affordances of the classroom as a ZPA and the physically oriented view, and properties, of the classroom as a ZFM. Objects on offer within the ZPA form an interface with the ZFM in that they are part of the physical equipment of the classroom. These objects, however, are not intended to limit, but create new literacy spaces, promoting the child's development in a non-binding manner. There are the coatpegs, bearing the children's names, and to which the children return several times a day as they arrive and leave school and come in from or go out to play. Wall space is shared with the maths-related contributions from the German part of the *Grande Section* (section 4.5.1, p89ff) so that the children are constantly exposed to and may interact with the products of both pedagogical persuasions within the classroom. The samples of the children's schoolwork which decorate the classroom are at the child's eye-level, inviting, but not demanding, the children's attention. The children must, therefore, actively decide to interact with these literacy spaces and 'opportunities', and in so doing, they are interacting *pro*actively, even though they are not writing. Other materials, by contrast, lead to the children interacting *re*actively. These are the materials such as worksheets, wall charts, cue cards, or indeed classroom rituals as teaching 'material', which solicit the children's responses, but do not allow them to instigate. Indeed, the classroom dynamics witnessed did not provide opportunities for the children to take the lead in literacy activities as we see Pia doing at home.

Classroom material may promote children's learning and use of writing explicitly or implicitly. Songs and poems are regularly used as teaching materials, from which a number of writing-related messages are drawn. Having first learnt the songs or poems by heart, the children then receive the texts they are not explicitly taught, or expected, to read, and which are then filed away in their folders. These texts sensitize the children to new written formats, or genres. Poems and songs, though often accompanied by pictures, 'look' different to stories, and they rhyme. Thus, the way songs and poems are used in

the classroom teaches the children explicitly about rhythm and rhyme, and 'offer' – the ZPA, we remember, is non-binding – opportunities for the children to recognise new written layouts.

Pre-writing worksheets provide the core teaching material, which offer more than the official model. Some worksheets are handwritten. Others display various script fonts (Times New Roman, Arial, Helvetica, etc) or writing styles (analytic, synthetic, texts written in capital letters, etc). Closer examination of a folder of a child's work for the year demonstrated that almost all the pieces of work filed away (105 out of 113, i.e. 92%) exhibited such distinctions. This means that the child is offered much more than the official, 'binding' handwriting model. Indeed, even the teacher's handwritten worksheets frequently did not correspond to the handwriting model being explicitly taught. The samples of written activities, displayed as wall work, however, invariably correspond to the prescribed writing model. The implications of such discrepancy are discussed in section 7.2.2.6 (p159). Finally, and in addition to the binding handwriting model transmitted via worksheets, non-binding interaction is further possible in that the worksheets expose the children to how learning is structured at school. The purpose of the worksheet is not to teach the children what scaffolded learning looks like, but to help them, *via* this strategy, to learn to write. Later, (Ch.9), I will demonstrate that Pia has taken in not only the official, explicit messages, but also the implicit ones, 'on offer', but not imposed, which are integrated into her writing repertoire and which influence the types of texts she produces at home.

7.2.2.5. Framing handwriting in the classroom

In Chapter Two of my research (p31ff), I refer to Kenner's (2003) and Ferreiro's (1984) descriptions of the character of writing. Kenner compares 'analytic' (i.e. discrete) to 'synthetic' (i.e continuous, or joined-up) pen strokes. Ferreiro differentiates between the 'figurative' (i.e shape and spacing) and the 'constructive' (grapheme-letter links and rules). Kenner (2004) also refers to the 'embodied knowledges' of writing, thus to the verbal, visual and kinaesthetic elements relating to what symbols represent, how they are positioned on the page and the physical, bodily act of making the symbols themselves. These conceptualizations are of relevance here. Writing transmission is initially characterised by the controlled 'analytic' repetition of graphical forms in

picture-like presentations such as in 'the vertical line', from which conventional letter formation later emerges (illustr.6.1, p145). The tasks progress to the repeated writing and 'figurative' control of individual letters, according to the handwriting model. The children, framed verbally, visually and kinaesthetically, gradually move from 'analytic' print to the writing of 'curlier' letters, as Pia explained in Chapter Two (p32). Finally, these 'curlier' letters are combined to write complete words respecting the 'constructive' rules behind grapheme-letter links and using 'synthetic' pen strokes, for which, in this final stage, the scaffolding of letter size is removed. From the start of the *Grande Section*, most of the children automatically write their names in joined-up handwriting on each worksheet even though these, throughout the first term and beyond, are still preoccupied with analytic 'pre'-writing tasks. This strongly suggests that the children are capable of more than anticipated by curricular guidelines for this level. By the end of the school year, however, there are still some children whose joined-up writing is largely illegible. This being so, an important attainment goal prescribed by official publications (e.g. MEN, 1991:44; CNDP, 2003) has not been reached by all.

Despite the significant space accorded to promoting the activity of writing, rigorous evaluation criteria are not applied to work in the *Grande Section* and no use is ever made of the red pen. The children self-correct as they gradually learn to manage the directionality and spacing of script. When required, Isabelle explains, sometimes using a separate sheet of paper, how to improve the writing, after which the child returns to his/her own sheet and attempts to carry out the recommendations. Pia, for example, motivated by the 'needle' drawing/writing exercise (illustr.6.1, p145), gradually moves from a 'blob' on the letter *i*, which she persistently employs for the larger part of the *Grande Section*, to recognising, and respecting, the analytic and figurative properties of this grapheme, resulting in her scaling down the size of the dot and placing it at an appropriate distance from the main body of the letter, or grapheme.

7.2.2.6 Framing and promoting writers in the classroom

If we apply Ivanič's model for writing discourses to the data on nursery school interaction (section 7.2, p153ff), we see that literacy instruction in the *Grande Section* is largely underpinned by a skills oriented approach characterised by the explicit teaching of the successive recognition and production of discrete forms in the build up to writing.

The skills approach, at the heart of French educational policy, is enhanced by the more holistic, inductive orientation implied by the recommendation to 'explore writing at school and in society' (section 7.2.3, p161). Through the holistic, non-binding encounters with writing outlined above (e.g. wall work, name pegs), but also via frequent story-reading sessions sensitizing the children to the characteristics of the narrative, the children are, therefore, being sensitized towards diverse forms and functions of writing.

Notwithstanding clear curricular specifications, in practice, there still seem to be conflicting messages about what really counts as literacy. This is exemplified by the inherent discrepancy between minimal correction of classroom work on the one hand, and the selection of conventional, error-free samples of writing for public display, on the other. The teacher does not systematically write according to the official model, although she only selects work which corresponds to the norm for public display. It seems that one aspect of what counts as literacy is accuracy in the display of skills. Moreover, there appear to be two levels of skills display involved. On one level, the worksheets, later filed away in the children's folders, document the progressive acquisition of writing skills and provide a reference point on display for the children. On another level, the selection of perfected writing for *public* display document an additional, more official interface between:

- the children as a community of learners, and the school as an institutional, evaluating and evaluated organ
- the children and parents, hence the home and school

Thus, the question of *what counts* must be pursued by *for whom?* The answer to what counts relates to who is seeing, and judging different texts.

An image of how the child is being shaped as a writer begins to emerge from all the facets analysed so far. It is of the child as *becoming* rather than as *being* a writer, as the discourses in operation, embedded in the interactional characteristics of classroom life which Valsiner helps us to unravel, position the child in the role of a *learner* or *apprentice* rather than as a *practitioner*. In the two samples of domestic writing events analysed so far (Ch.2, Ch.5), Pia clearly does not primarily position herself, nor is she

positioned, as a learner, but as a practitioner; as someone who uses writing because she needs it to get things done.

7.2.3. The classroom as a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

The ZPD addresses the psychological characteristics of how others facilitate the child's learning of something which is within, but beyond reach (section 3.7.3, p69ff). The French curriculum has quite clear guidelines of what must be within the child's reach by the end of the cycle; a stage-theory based approach which is sometimes viewed negatively (Deviterne *et al.*, 2006). Publications by the Ministry of Education (MEN, 1991:42-48; CNDP, 2003; MEN, 1992:12, 24-29, 52-55) stipulate that by the end of the *Grande Section*, children should, amongst other things, be able to:

- progressively recognize and know why different forms of writing exist
- recognise the organization of a page
- identify familiar words
- hold a pen correctly
- be able to write their first and surname in addition to other simple words
- explore writing at school and in society
- Master joined-up writing as preparation for *CP*

In the data analysed, we see some of these competencies being practised using divergent pedagogical strategies. Rituals teach the days, months and years. Word cards expose the children to important everyday words, including their own names. Stories, poems and songs familiarise the children with different writing forms. Worksheets train the mechanics of handwriting in a gentle progression from single letters to joined-up writing. The 'needle' activity worksheet (Illustr.6.1, p145) may, once again, be referred to as a concrete example of the ZPD in practice.

Notwithstanding the argument that children insist upon the distinction between drawing and writing (Harste *et al.*, 1996, cited in Lancaster, 2003), writing development is channelled as 'emerging' from drawing, it therefore requires the children to 'redesign' their knowledge of drawing (Kress, 1994:217), and we may clearly identify the different steps assisting the child through the activity to achieve a degree of accuracy which

brings writing 'within reach'. Although the child is required to complete such worksheets alone, the activity is nonetheless facilitated, or framed, by others, notably those who design the worksheets in the first place, and by the teacher, who will verbally prepare the child for the activity by explaining what needs to be done, and who will assist the child further in the event of any difficulties.

The children, we note, are not yet being taught the sound of the letter, but are drawing, or 'pre'-writing. The boundary between the illustrative and the semiotic, therefore, appears to be 'porous', yet the clear intention is to use drawing to 'stretch' the children to the higher developmental skill of being able to write. For the moment, reading remains 'beyond reach'.

7.3. Framing learning and practice in French: *Cours Préparatoir (CP)*

In this section, the same analytic criteria are applied to the first year of formal schooling in order to ascertain if similar messages are being transmitted to those identified in the *Grande Section.*

7.3.1. The classroom as a Zone of Free Movement (ZFM)

Snapshot #3 (p146ff) provides us with the central observation: the pupils no longer sit in groups but in rows facing the teacher. Everyone can see the whiteboard without having to turn around. The pupils' belongings are kept under their desk. Walking around the classroom becomes superfluous. In Valsinerian terms, the physical space 'functionally available' for the pupils within the classroom as a Zone of Free Movement (ZFM) is restricted as literacy gains importance. Visually, the pupils may move from one concrete literacy-related learning zone to the other as their gaze is transferred from the classbook to the teacher, to the whiteboard or to the wall work. They must, however, remain seated, with no alternatives, unlike in the *Grande Section*, whose bench area offered the children an alternative site to the school desk. The tightening of the pedagogic structure is thus reflected in the preparation of the concrete space designed to optimise teaching and learning upon the pupils' entry into formal schooling.

The fact that parents are no longer admitted into the classroom once formal education begins means that wall work may no longer provide a meeting point for pupils, teachers and parents to discuss the children's learning. This, in turn, marginalizes the potential benefits of a dialogue between the home and school as learning sites.

7.3.2. The classroom as a Zone of Promoted Activity

Whilst analysing the classroom for its properties as a Zone of Promoted Activity, it would help not to lose sight of, underestimate or disqualify the rather binding character of institutional teaching. Valsiner's model does not negate this by drawing attention to objects within interactional strategies which are 'on offer'.

7.3.2.1. Interactional partners in the classroom

The number of partners on offer in the classroom from Year One onwards is reduced. Auxiliary staff are dispensed with, and parents are no longer permitted to enter the classroom, as the children are deemed mature enough to arrive and depart on their own. The seating arrangements, further, restrict interactions between the children themselves. The teacher-pupil dyad, therefore, constitutes the central interactional opportunity available to the children.

7.3.2.2. Verbal frames in the classroom

The unidirectional nature of linguistic interaction transpires as the main characteristic of language in the classroom. This observation cannot be substantiated by a detailed quantitative presentation of teacher talking time and forms in relation to pupil talking time and forms since no recording equipment was permitted in the classroom. Nonetheless, asymmetrical verbal frames are substantiated by snapshot #3 (p146ff), exemplifying the initiation-response-feedback (IRF) according the teacher two-thirds of the verbal floor-space and the pupil one-third only. Furthermore, the snapshot documents how pupils' impulsive responses are blocked, and it summarises the linguistic climate:

> Very little talk all morning, apart from Sandrine's instructions and the pupil's answers.

The tightly structured, interrogative and/or imperative tone of the course material is buttressed by the teacher's reiteration of the written instructions as by her questions soliciting knowledge recall. With the pupil's response 'sandwiched' between the teacher's linguistic guidance, the verbal frame steers the pupil to the desired response which, if attained with some difficulty, may be consolidated through practice: 'Je m'appelle, je m'appelle, je m'appelle'.

7.3.2.3. Affective frames in the classroom

The course book for *CP* involves a number of colouring and drawing activities, which, as employed at nursery school in the run up to literacy, have the capacity to transfer the dynamics of play onto learning scenarios. Learning framed this way becomes playful, fun; *'ludique'*. The relationship between emotion and cognition has already been addressed in the *Grande Section* (p156) and all the arguments equally apply here. It is, however, interesting to note that the colouring activities are either given as homework (snapshot #3, p146ff), or else are granted to the quicker pupils as 'time out' whilst they wait for the others to complete their exercises. The marginalization of play-related activities seems to imply that they are not wholly relevant to direct instruction. This impression is further corroborated by the fact that the mascot accompanying the *Mika* series, and envisaged either as a dramatic aid or else as a 'friend' for the pupils to take home, has not been bought. Mika, thus, must remain a friend on the page and in the mind, rather than becoming a tangible friend the pupils cannot wait to take home and play with.

Entering *CP* remains a special event in the institutional life of a child in France, as the first text in the course book emphasises (illustr.6.2, p147). The acknowledged emotional component at least to the *start* of school, celebrates a new phase in the child's life for the child has grown up since the nursery school days, has become a *pupil* and must now learn 'seriously'. References to 'real' school, however, imply that the time for fun and games is now over.

Four levels of affective framing have been identified:

Level 1: institutional level (course material)

Level 2: institutional level (at junctions decided by the teacher)

Level 3: personal level (at junctions decided by the teacher)

Level 4: personal level (at junctions decided by the pupil)

At the institutional level (level 1), course material attempts to harness learners' feelings by means of a mascot, and by playful colouring or cutting out activities reminiscent of nursery school activities, but now upgraded to serious work in 'real' school, supported by a whole new range of learning tasks. At an intermediary institutional level, (level 2), it is the teacher, not the course material, who may voluntarily weave in elements which have the potential to heighten the pupil's motivation, for example when bridges are built with what the children, or teacher, know/like/do in their private lives (level 3). In *die erste Klasse*, the Schultüte (snapshot #4, p148ff), and Ingrid's photo of herself as a first grader fulfil this level 3 function, possibly even too well, as she then has to calm the children down and remind them to 'get back to work', a comment which, again, alludes to the tension between notions of work, fun and play (snapshot #5, p149ff). The final level of affective framing (level 4) is initiated by the children, who make associations for themselves, and choose, or not, to share these feelings with others. In snapshot #3 (p146ff) we witness how the children's excitement at going to real school spurs them on to take on the serious work ahead. We learn about the fears and preferences of certain pupils (Elise, Marie, Sophie), which will be lived out in the classroom and affect how they work. We also hear of their excitement during the preparation of school materials at home. We see, in short, that the first graders bring their feelings to learning, and use these feelings to guide their interaction.

Whilst affective framing at the levels 1 and 2 are top-down, levels 3 and 4 are bottom-up, coming from the participants themselves. The teacher occupies a special role in that she may behave from both the top-down and bottom-up perspectives, not only framing the pupils in adherence to curricular guidelines, but at will, introducing personal elements and validating the personal elements the children choose to share with the class. Of the four possible levels of affective input identified and witnessed, only the first one, however, is foreseen by the French curriculum.

7.3.2.4. Material frames for writing as a promoted activity

The course material comprises several binding, or compulsory, elements:

- Mika *CP*
- Dictionary
- Dictionary activity book
- Test book (cahier de contrôle)
- Writing exercise book (cahier d'écriture)
- Fountain pen

There are also a number of non-binding materials/objects on offer. The equipment in the pupils' pencil cases remains the same as for *Grande Section*. They have scissors, felt-tipped pens, coloured pencils and wax crayons. The pupils draw, as they did in *Grande Section*. However, this activity becomes a peripheral act to be completed at home, or else a bonus in the classroom for the 'quicker' pupils. Whilst the first-graders no longer have coatpegs on offer as a zone with the potential to promote writing activities, new zones are created. The walls, still bare on the first day of school, are quickly filled. However, they are not filled with drawings or paintings, as in nursery school. Sandrine uses the wall space as an extension of her whiteboard to hang out colour-directed grammar rules as an optional point of reference for the pupils.

In real terms, the space accorded to promoting writing as a non-binding activity is reduced as literacy gained importance. There is a reduction in the number of potential interactional partners (section 7.3.2.1, p163). Pupils are no longer 'sensitized' by stories, songs and poems on offer, but are now explicitly taught about textual components and writing genres. There is an increase in the stratification of knowledge, with each knowledge item documented in separate books. There are no more self-designed or handwritten worksheets. The possibility to network knowledge by peer talk is greatly reduced by individual seating arrangements. All of these measures strongly suggest that, from an institutional perspective, 'serious' learning necessitates tighter control over learning interactions at the physical, social and psychological levels, which automatically means reducing open-ended, non-binding interactional options.

7.3.2.5. Framing handwriting in the classroom

As in the *Grande Section*, the pupils encounter a number of script types and writing forms. The course book *Mika* consists of two script types. The first is an analytical script (i.e, print). The second is the official handwriting model familiar to the pupils from the *Grande Section* (i.e. cursive). Both script types are used from the start (illustr.7.1, p168).

From the first day on, the pupils are writing; their name, that of the teacher, that of Mika, individual words. Later in the year, they write the date in the space provided instead of having it stamped in by the teacher (illustr.7.1, p168). By mid-October, pupils must write the instructions for the homework themselves instead of using pre-printed homework slips. Naming, dating, these tasks, reminiscent of *Grande Section* activities, secure a gentle start to the year, yet they are embedded in a much more tightly structured and evaluated literacy programme.

Mika, notre amie

La maîtresse _____ nous a dit :

«Mika est mon amie depuis longtemps.
Elle voudrait être l'amie de la classe, l'amie
de tous les enfants de la classe!»

Mika va nous aider à apprendre à lire.

● On t'aide à relire le texte du jour.

● Tu relis tout seul les phrases suivantes :

▲ Mika est l'amie de la classe.

△ L'amie de la classe s'appelle Mika.

● « Bonjour, je m'appelle Mika,
je suis votre amie. »

● Tu travailles avec tes étiquettes comme en classe.

● On t'aide à découper les étiquettes n° 3.

illustr.7.1

7.3.2.6. Framing and promoting writers in the classroom

As in the *Grande Section*, and despite a discernable shift from a focus on writing to a focus on reading, there are two clearly identifiable pedagogical orientations with their corresponding discourses; a 'skills' discourse promoting abstract sound-symbol correlations, and a 'genre' discourse promoting the internal properties of different text types (Ivanič, 2004). The layout of course material, for example, with questions, yes/no

boxes, word-chains, gap fills or dictionary activities etc, make the children aware of new text structures beyond the narrative.

Wall work, comprising grammar cues, is harnessed by the teacher to a skills discourse, for example, for it no longer provides an interface between the home and school and a means of verbal exchange motivating children's performance, but is reconceptualized as an optional reference book to support internal cognitive strategies for the acquisition of syntactic skills.

Mika *CP* comprises numerous exercises to explain the function of the written language: 'le fonctionnement de la langue écrite' (snapshot #3, p146). This formulation appears to want to foster sensitivity to the features and contexts of writing, hence it may be assigned to a 'genre' approach. The formulation, however, is in the singular, thereby excluding the diversity of practice which is elsewhere recommended in other official publications (section 7.2.3, p161). Writing appears to have a lower status in CP than reading. There seems to be an assumption that the children have sufficiently mastered handwriting in the Grande Section so that it need no longer be considered a key feature of the Zone of Promoted Activity (Valsiner, 1997) to be accorded priority cognitive space, but may be viewed more as a means to an end. At the start of *CP*, writing activities merely involve already familiar words whose contribution to the improvement of writing skills remain, I contend, vague. The vast majority of writing is done in the pupil's test book, hence writing is not yet being employed as a vehicle of social interaction, which is its wider, cultural signification, but serves to make recently acquired knowledge transparent. In this sense, the function of the written language is, thus, indeed singular.

The transition from the Grande Section to Cours Préparatoir, hence, appears to be accompanied by an implicit shift in the view of the pupil from a learner of writing to a writing practitioner, whose main objective is now to learn to read and to harness writing skills for this purpose. This is done, for example, in spelling tests or by breaking down word chains.

7.3.3. The classroom as a Zone of Proximal Development

Given that the *Grande Section* and *CP* belong to the same pedagogic cycle, the attainment guidelines for *CP* continue to sharpen and channel the skills introduced in the previous year. The teaching material compartmentalises knowledge, introducing new forms and uses of writing beyond the narrative (Babin, 2003; *MEN*, 1991:42-3). The pupils will learn to:

- summarise
- classify in tables
- reconstitute the correct word order
- identify the correct word from a number of possibilities
- select the odd one out
- identify a statement as 'true' or 'false'
- foreground and practice the sense of particular symbols of punctuation

To assist such classifications, colour coding is frequently resorted to (snapshot #3, p146; illustr.6.2, p147). Such activities exemplify how pupils are helped through the Zone of Proximal Development to a higher level of competence.

By retracing the various steps typically undertaken to help the pupils negotiate words as discrete semiotic units, we may witness how the pupils are helped to cross the ZPD. The teacher, Sandrine, first frames each activity verbally, making sure that the pupils understand what they have to do.

The pupils then cut out whole word cards (e.g. snapshot #3), an activity in which they not only cognitively, but physically 'cut' words into separate items. As a third measure, the children will reconstitute a sentence by stringing words together. Here, they will have recourse to their funds of linguistic knowledge, for they already know what the sentence should sound like, even if writing it and reading it is still 'beyond reach'. As a further step, the sentence will be strung together for the pupils to separate into words of different colours:

Pia's response was as follows:

> *Mika* (in yellow) *a* (in pink) *fait* (in purple) *tomber* (in blue) *les* (in red)
> *étiquettes* (in brown)
> *(Mika dropped the labels)*

Finally, the pupils must write the sentence using their fountain pens, leaving clear spaces in between the words. It is worth noting here that Pia practised a similar means of syntactic classification in her book to Natascha a whole year previously (Ch.5, p127).

The ZPD is, Valsiner insists, not to be perceived of as a zone of cognitive isolation, but is intricately interdependent upon the social and physical characteristics of the environment (section 3.7.3, p69ff). Indeed, as I have demonstrated, classroom interaction is shaped by classroom layout as much as by the materials and people available within the classroom. The passage through the ZPD, therefore, is not neutral, but extremely context-sensitive.

7.4. Framing learning and practice in German: *die erste Klasse*

An effective way to analyse Year One in German (*die erste Klasse*), and obviate undue overlap with its French equivalent (*Cours Préparatoir*) is to foreground that which distinguishes the former from the latter with regard to how interactions in the classroom environment shape literacy learning and practice.

7.4.1. The classroom as a Zone of Free Movement

The physical properties of the classroom as a ZFM remain the same as for French.

7.4.2. The classroom as a Zone of Promoted Activity

Different people and slightly different objects are on offer in *die erste Klasse* in order to promote the pupils' literacy development.

7.4.2.1. Interactional partners in the classroom

Whilst the partners available in the classroom remain the same, namely other children, but more importantly, the teacher, this latter role is performed by a different person in German, namely by Ingrid. Ingrid is less influenced by French pedagogical theory and practice, but teaches according to German views of classroom practice (section 3.4.3, p57). This means that even though the teacher-pupil dyad is maintained, different interactional approaches may be anticipated.

7.4.2.2. Verbal frames in the classroom

The more frequent and explicit bridges made to children's feelings in *die erste Klasse* may change the momentary verbal input:

> "So, dear children, welcome back to school. Welcome to Year One. I am sure you all had a wonderful summer. And I am sure we will all have a wonderful time learning to read and write in Year One." (snapshot #4)

> Ingrid (...) introduces the *Kummerkasten*, or complaints box, which she holds chest high as she faces the class. If the pupils have anything they are unhappy with, they can write a note and put it in the box. Spelling is unimportant because it's not a test. (...) It's a box for you, so use it whenever you are ready to. 'Don't forget!' She gives the box a shake, then places it on a table near her desk. (snapshot #5)

This, however, does not change the overall interactive linguistic style in the classroom, which, as in French, is predominantly based on the initiation-response-feedback model allocating greater verbal space to the teacher than to the pupil.

7.4.2.3. Affective frames in the classroom

The German curricular programme accords a central role to the emotional aspect of learning, as to the socialising character and duty of schooling, in contrast to France, where emphasis is placed on the intramental, cognitive aspects of learning (Deviterne *et al.*, 2006; http://www.ls-bw.de/allg/lp/bpgs.pdf). These basic beliefs about the nature of learning are reflected in the curricular design of the respective countries, and are immediately apparent in observations of classroom practice.

During the classes observed, the German curriculum harnessed the children's feelings with more consistency and diversity than documented in *CP* (section 7.3.2.3, p164). Drawing and pictures, with their fun/play-related connotations, are more prevalent, and are not merely reserved as a treat to occupy the quicker pupils. Instead, they replace words, for example, or else scale the figurative control of letter-writing, as we saw in the house (roof - ground floor - cellar) model (illustr.6.3 and 6.4, p150).

When we think, we also automatically associate this with images and feelings. We learn to process information visually, and we 'feel' long before we learn to master language, or, much later, the abstraction of language, namely literacy. The interdependence of the meta-linguistic, visual and affective cognitive levels are acknowledged and activated at the start of each new book which begins with a drawing or colouring activity; the satchel (snapshot #5, p149), Nino and Nina emptying their *Schultüte*, etc (illustr. 7.2, p175).

Affective framing is further exploited via the much coveted mascot, Limorps, a cuddly toy bookworm, which a different child may take home each week. We remember that this channel of learning was available but not made use of in French literacy classes (section 7.2.2.3, p156).

Ingrid, further, stimulates the affective plane by recounting her personal experience of *die erste Klasse,* then redirects her pupils' spontaneously heightened energy back to the task at hand: "Ok. Let's get back to work" (snapshot #5, p149). *It is my conjecture that by showing the pupils a picture of herself as a first-grader,* Ingrid diminishes the asymmetry between herself and her pupils. She displays herself as one of the pupils, a learner on the same footing, having shared similar experiences to their own. This move towards the pupils creates a bond, a collective consciousness which is stored both cognitively and affectively. When, during the break, I asked Ingrid why she had brought the picture to school, she replied: 'I thought it might interest them. My first-graders are always fascinated by this photo.'

Finally, the worksheets setting the social climate of the classroom prior to the opening of a single coursebook, provide an opportunity for the pupils to make contributions from their funds of knowledge acquired beyond the classroom (snapshot #5, p149). The

recognition and validation in the classroom of pupils' knowledge acquired outside school has been proven to have positive effects on a pupil's motivation and self-image (Gregory *et al.*, 1992).

Motivation may be conceived of as a reaction at the interface between cognition and emotion. Emotional framing in *die erste Klasse* is not a strategy employed simply because it is integrated into the course design (level 1), i.e. as an externally initiated affective input, but also as an occasion of personal investment, of internally initiated input by both the teacher and the pupils (i.e. levels 2-4). Ingrid's *erste Klasse*, and the pupils' complaints box, contribute to an intersubjectivity or 'lifelong conversation' (Mercer, 1995) which is aimed at improving the overall learning climate, and occasionally taking learning off the paper into real life.

7.4.2.4. Material frames for writing as a promoted activity

Unlike the *CP*, which has a single book for reading and writing acquisition (*Mika CP*), supplemented by the dictionary activity book, the German *Bücherwurm* literacy course material for *die erste Klasse* comprises a battery of books:

- *Fibel*. The reader, similar to *Mika*
- Classbook
- Activity book
- Work block (word/syllable cards)
- literacy exercise book 1 (analytic script, or *Druckschrift*)
- literacy exercise book 2 (synthetic script, or *lateinischer Ausgangsschrift*)
- Mascot, Limorps (a metre-long purple and orange cuddly toy bookworm)

The literacy exercise books, training both reading and writing, are in the A5 format as opposed to the A4 format of the French course material. Book 1 starts with a play-related approach. The protagonists, Nino and Nina, are to be coloured in as they sit at their desk and empty out their *Schultüte:*

Fibel Seite 8/9

illustr.7.2

The same colouring materials, (felt-tips, crayons, etc) are on offer in both French and German, but are used differently as promoted activities. Whilst colouring, as a tool for classifying knowledge according to semantic and syntactic properties, is performed in the classroom in *CP*, colouring as an emotional prop is marginalised to homework, or else used as a bonus. In *die erste Klasse*, by contrast, Ingrid chooses not to marginalise the value of this activity. Accordingly, all three functions of colouring – as a semantic, a syntactic and as an emotional support – are promoted in the classroom.

In addition to the whiteboard, wall space constitutes an important zone for promoting literacy, but one which is filled with the teacher's, not the pupil's, writing. Unlike the whiteboard, literacy activities which relate to wall space are optional. My analysis of the wall space at the beginning and end of the first term confirmed that, for both *CP* and *die erste Klasse,* wall space is employed for similar purposes, namely to display rules of grammar and spelling, which the pupils may refer to at will. German literacy, however, does not take up as much wall space as French, and a smaller number of rules are on display. This would seem to correlate with the less explicit use of rules in the German course material (Table 7.1, p180).

7.4.2.5. Framing handwriting in the classroom

Book 1 comprises a balanced distribution between writing and reading activities, the latter consisting of mono and bi-syllabic words. Writing activities are based upon the 3-tier house model or the progressive scaling models (illustr.6.2, p147). The texts are accompanied by attractive drawings which the pupils may colour in. The print is less dense than in *Mika CP*. Unlike the simultaneous introduction and practice of analytic and synthetic print in *CP*, the *Bücherwurm* literacy exercise books introduce the different scripts sequentially. Significant is also the fact that the type of synthetic script taught in German differs from the one taught in French, as we see when we compare the letters *B,M,j,r* and *l* in Illustr.7.1 to their German equivalents below (Illustr.7.2):

A a	Auto alle	P p	Papa pusten
B b	Baum bauen	Qu qu	Quark quaken
C c	Chor lachen	R r	Rad reden
D d	Dose du	S s	Sonne sagen
E e	Esel essen	Sch sch	Schule schön
F f	Foto freuen	Sp sp	Spaß spielen
G g	Gans gehen	St st	Stein stehen
H h	Haus helfen	ß	groß
I i	Igel ich	T t	Tisch tragen
J j	Junge ja	U u	Uhr uns
K k	Kind klein	V v	Vater viel
L l	Leute leise	W w	Wagen wo
M m	Mutter mein	X x	Xylophon Hexe
N n	Nadel neu	Y y	Ypsilon Teddy
O o	Oma oder	Z z	Zug ziehen

A	Auto Abend Apfel Anna
F	Faden Feld Fisch Foto Futter
H	Hase Hemd Himmel Hose Hund
b	baden bellen bitten böse bunt
v	verlieren vor viel
w	was wer wie wo
r	raten reden riesig rot rufen
o	oben offen oder

64

illustr.7.3

The exercise books 1 and 2 are supplemented by a third exercise book, in A4 format, especially designed to train writing, and whose pages consist of the 3-tier writing frame introduced in snapshot #5 (p149). The first pupil entries in this book are in the analytic script and in pencil. Half way through the book, the pupils switch to synthetic script and to using fountain pens. This book is soon dispensed with, for the children, thanks to the writing training performed in the *Grande Section*, already have the level of knowledge trained by the book.

A number of differences may be identified between the French and German materials. The scripts are different. German writing exercise books contain absolutely no written instructions, but present the tasks visually in such a way as to make the purpose of the activity self evident (illustr.6.3, p150). Colouring activities are accorded a different 'space' in literacy learning, being integral to classroom learning instead of being extraneous to it. Monosyllabic sound cards are used before the pupils progress to whole word cards as used from the start in *CP*. Such distinctions lead to the pupils as writers being framed in different ways.

7.4.2.6. Framing and promoting writers in the classroom

The discourse most frequently employed in *die erste Klasse*, as in *CP*, is a 'skills' discourse Ivanič (2004). Reading is not structured in the same manner as in *CP*, where the exercises are more finely scaled, involving whole words rather than words broken down into syllables. At least for the first morning of school, which constitutes the basis for my analysis, the pupils in *die erste Klasse* are exposed to a smaller range of words albeit largely according to the same genres as in *Cours Préparatoir* (Table 7.1, p180).

The 'genre' discourse is linked to the 'process' discourse, for the ability to use a genre effectively presupposes knowledge of how to structure a text according to the requirements of individual genres. The main form of writing performed during the first term of *die erste Klasse*, but not immediately from the first day, is the narrative, initially based on a sequence of pictures and ending as a free composition respecting the rules of chronology and layout. The promotion of affective and authentic contributions and associations in *die erste Klasse* relate more to the 'creativity', 'social practice' and 'sociopolitical' discourses so that writing not only leans on a greater number of discourses than have been identified in *CP*, but relates to all the typologies identified by Ivanič (fig.3.3, p64). This means that, although, in German, the pupils' literacy programme begins a whole year later, they learn, and use, a wider range of literacy skills than in *CP*. At the end of the class, for example, by moving from structured skills-oriented activities, to introducing the complaints box, Ingrid repositions herself in discoursal space, moving from a 'skills' discourse to a 'social practice' discourse. Within the latter, the 'messages' take priority over the 'means', and accuracy is no longer the primary concern.

Ivanič's teaching criteria, however, do not always apply to the situations I observed. She believes that engagement in the sociopolitical discourse, which I regard the pupils as doing via their complaints box, requires the explicit teaching of critical awareness. Ingrid, the German teacher, has helped to provide the mechanics, or tools of expression, but relies on the pupils' inner motivation to invest the application of these tools in a meaningful, critical manner. She does not *teach* the pupils how to use the complaints box. Thus, in addition to the socio-political discourse, the introduction and use of the complaints box may equally be seen to lean upon the creativity discourse, foregrounding author creativity, genuine interest and the implicit, holistic nature of instruction.

What counts as writing is demonstrated by the uses made of it. Spelling is important in certain situations, when the pupil is in the apprentice mode using the newly acquired building blocks in ever new constellations. Spelling does not count, or attention to it should not hinder the pupils' willingness to express themselves, in situations where authentic social interaction is encouraged. Here, Ingrid assures the children that she will 'get your meaning' and I do not doubt that she will. The children take her up on her offer. They not only use the complaints box, but receive their slips back once the comment on it has been discussed with the child (cf Appendix 4). Although the course material and the complaints box suggest quite different evaluations of what counts, I refrain from speaking of official literacy for the course material and unofficial literacy for Ingrid's personal non-corrected supplements. The contributions in the complaints box are no less valuable. Moreover, the presence of a complaints box *in* the classroom makes it a facet of an official learning scenario. It is not the assessment criteria which confers validity to a piece of writing but the *communicative import* and the text's appropriateness. A note in the complaints box is as valid a piece of writing as a carefully structured activity practicing the formation of a single letter or individual words.

In *die erste Klasse*, the interactional dynamics as much as the material analysed demonstrate how *the pupil as writer progresses* from being viewed for a short period as an apprentice to becoming a versatile and critical practitioner. Despite the linguistic

imbalance of power typical of a transmission approach to teaching, in practice the pupils are accorded more autonomy and control over their writing than in *Cours Préparatoir*.

7.4.3. The classroom as a Zone of Proximal Development

During my first morning in *Cours Préparatoir* and *die erste Klasse*, the pupils are exposed to different categories of words (Table 7.1).

		Total no. of words in French	Total no. of words in German
Group 1: Calligraphy	Pupil's handwriting	3	5
	Teacher's handwriting	27	51
Group 2: Word recognition	Reading activities	60	10
	Whole word cards (classwork)	22	0
	Whole word cards (homework)	7	0
	Monosyllabic sound cards	0	12
Group 3: Genres	Narrative	35	0
	Headings	2	11
	Instructions	68	23
	Classroom rules	0	15

Table 7.1: code-contingent word categories for literacy learning

The total number of words – written or read - indicated also includes words that are repeated. Thus, in French, whilst the 3 words written in the category *pupil's handwriting* are the name of the child, the teacher and the mascot, in German, the five words written are always the child's name. Name-writing, however, is not a genre, but an act of appropriation and of according oneself an identity, the very first sociopolitical act one may practise. We see that in French, the children read many more words, work with whole words and are more carefully scaffolded by instructions. On the first day of French school, the children read a whole story whilst in German they read two words. In French, the majority of words the pupils encounter are in the context of their learning to read. This is not the case for German, where the first-graders take the entire morning to

learn to read two words – Nino and Nina - but nonetheless *encounter* nearly 50 other words in the form of instructions, headings, and rules which are not explicitly taught.

The differences in exposure to words in French and German classes can be seen to herald other divergences relating to the framing of learning and practice in *die erste Klasse*. The German curriculum for Year One clearly has different attainment levels to that of the *Cours Préparatoir*. The careful scaffolding of writing activities take place at a level practised in French nursery schools a whole year earlier. During the first day of *die erste Klasse*, the pupils are demonstrably still very much occupied with letter formation, nonetheless they quickly progress to using their skills to form the first sentences. The key element to this rapid progress is the use of verbs as cornerstones which may be preceded or succeeded by any other semantically or syntactically appropriate item. After a mere four pages into their writing exercise book, the pupils practise a number of the verbs in the third person in combination with a range of names (Nino, Nina, Nini, Mama, Moni) and prepositions. These lexical building blocks enable the pupils to proliferate the number of sentences possible. A selection of picture cue cards is employed to replace words or sounds the pupils have yet to learn to write: a car, a house, the beach, a tree. These cue cards, when added to the verbs, the prepositions and the names already acquired, furnish the pupils with sufficient tools to allow them to construct sentences in a principled manner early on into their literacy programme.

Pictures, further, assist the pupils to a higher level of story-writing later into the curriculum. By Christmas, and based on a sequence of four pictures, the pupils are able to write stories in the present tense, complete with title, and select from over twenty verbs which they can write in the third person. The rapidity of the transition from letter formation to the writing of complete sentences – which is still not the case at the end of a year's writing training in the *Grande Section* – transfer the 'mechanics before meaning' approach (Czerniewkska, 1992) to a 'meaning *motivates* mechanics'.

The differing abilities trained in *CP* and *die erste Klasse* lead to a number of tensions at the cognitive level. From the point of view of script, the pupils are more advanced in *CP* and must regress cognitively to perform the initial tasks required in *die erste Klasse*. From the point of view of semantics, the pupils may construct sentences in German whilst still only required to insert individual words into a text in French. From the point

of view of autonomy, the pupils in *die erste Klasse* are trusted and encouraged to write about their feelings, i.e. they are encouraged to engage in a critical dialogue with the teacher and judge for themselves when they are capable of doing so whereas in *CP* it is the teacher who is the sole judge of ability in a scenario which seems to allocate little room for authenticity or critique. Depending on the language of instruction, therefore, the pupils must identify the level of skills expected and reposition or reframe themselves as a writer, leaving some of their abilities on standby.

7.4.4. Interactional zones in interaction

Valsiner's interactional model has successfully steered our attention to the myriad of contributory factors beyond the purely cognitive which are shaping the children's literacy development. He describes the zones of his interactional model as 'porous', which invites us to anticipate a certain degree of flexibility between their boundaries. This was made evident by the objects on offer in the classroom, such as the coatpegs, or wall-work, at the interface between the physical (ZFM) and social (ZPA) properties channelling the children to a higher level of psychological development (ZPD). The analysis also demonstrates that subtle shifts in interactional styles are enacted *within* interactional zones themselves. Hence, whilst the *CP* and *die erste Klasse* are both based on dyadic interactions, these are conducted differently, according to the pedagogical persuasions of the teacher and the course material. The same material or 'means' may also be used to different ends, as we saw with the divergent uses of colouring material across the three classes observed, or if we compare the structured, solitary production of a worksheet with the linguistic exchange on offer between parents, teachers and children once the same material becomes wall work.

French and German classes may also be seen to interact at the synoptic level in that pupils are exposed to work in both languages on the walls of the classroom. This being so, German and French learning contexts are not hermetically sealed, but constitute a porous interactional cognitive space. This porous cognitive space, however is not maintained in other respects; the two languages of instruction appear to be kept apart, they employ different scripts, phonological and syntactical rules. The two curricula reside, therefore, side by side in a form of dual monolingualism which is not typical beyond the classroom (Gregory, 2008; Hélot & Benert, 2006).

7.5. Summary

During observations of Pia's institutional environment, I collected a variety of material in order to help me better understand the nature of literacy teaching in the classroom and how this shaped the young learners as writers.

The findings may be recapitulated in tabular form in order to provide an accessible overview (Table 7.4):

	Grande Section (Fr.)	Cours Préparatoir	Erste Klasse
ZFM: (Physical: structure of space 'functionally available')			
Classroom Layout	Grouped seating	Individual seating	Individual seating
	Zones: tables, bench, wall-work, clothes pegs, blackboard, material cupboard	Zones: desk, wall-work, whiteboard	Zones: desk, wall-work, whiteboard
	Physical/visual mvmt bet zones	Restricted physical mvmt bet zones	Restricted physical mvmt bet zones
	Wall-work = interface bet home/school	Wall-work = extension of whiteboard for intramental networking	Wall-work = extension of whiteboard for intramental networking
ZPA: (Social: interactional partners in conjunction with materials)			
Overall focus	Mechanics before meaning	Mechanics before meaning	Mechanics initially before/ later motivate meaning
Interactional partners	Teacher, peers (auxiliary staff, parents)	Teacher, peers	Teacher, peers
Verbal frames	Explicit verbal instructions	Explicit verbal/written instructions	Explicit verbal instructions
	Linguistic asymmetry (IRF)	Linguistic asymmetry (IRF)	Linguistic asymmetry (IRF)
Affective frames	Play-related + affective channelling fostered (level 1,2,4)	Play-related + affective channelling foreseen by curriculum (level 1) but not always employed in class	Play-related + affective channelling foreseen by curriculum (level 1), employed in class and complemented by personal input (levels 2-4)
Materials	Pencil, crayons	Fountain pen, crayons	Pencil, fountain pen, crayons
	Work/song/poetry sheets, stories	4 centralised coursebooks	6 federal coursebooks
	Wall-work = interface bet home/school i.e. intermental	Wall-work = extension of whiteboard for intramental networking	Wall-work = extension of whiteboard for intramental networking
		No mascot	Mascot
		Whole word cards	Picture cue cards Sound cards
Handwriting	Official analytic and synthetic French handwriting model	Official synthetic French handwriting model	Official analytic and synthetic German handwriting model
	Exposure to other scripts	Exposure to other scripts	Exposure to other scripts

	(printed/handwritten)	(printed/handwritten)	(printed/handwritten)
	Minimal correction of letter formation	Accuracy of spelling/reading evaluated via ticks, stamps and grades	Accuracy of spelling/reading evaluated via ticks, stamps. Dictation evaluated via grades. Complaints box not evaluated
Image of writer	Apprentice	Writing practitioner (Reading apprentice)	apprentice (initially) practitioner (later)
	Skills discourse (explicit instruction) Genre discourse (implicit via narratives)	Skills /Genre discourses (explicit instruction)	Skills (explicit instruction) Genre, Creative, Process, Social Practice, Sociopolitical (implicit)
ZPD: (Psychological: child helped to a level of knowledge within but beyond reach)			
Strategy	Focus on handwriting acquisition	Focus on reading acquisition	Focus on reading+writing acquisition
	Cognitive dvpmt promoted via play/drawing activities from which writer later emerges	Cognitive dvpmt promoted by learning sound-symbol correlations via whole word cards, coloured word chains etc	Cognitive dvpmt promoted by learning sound-symbol correlation via sound/picture cards + verbs+ prepositions

Table 7.2: institutional socialization into literacy

The classroom, as a site, consists of numerous interactive learning spaces with varying degrees of control over the child's engagement which result in different learning styles (e.g. ex/implicit) and opportunities (e.g. via different people, materials, strategies). To recognise this is to recognise the context-sensitive nature of learning and social interaction, which may involve numerous locations, even within a single 'site' such as the classroom, traditionally depicted as decontextualized or neutral.

In all classroom settings, the children are exposed to many forms of practice so that they implicitly register the multiple ways of 'doing', but know that each teacher, or each language of instruction, has its own specific criteria according to which the pupils will be evaluated. The predominant discourse in all settings is skills oriented, with the view of ideal writing development emerging from drawing activities and later comprising the gradual mastery of the graphical and figurative aspects of writing coupled with an understanding and later mastery of the sound-symbol correlation. In keeping with this stage approach, the children relinquish their status as children as they progress to becoming pupils, from which point on learning is viewed as 'real' and 'serious', resulting in tension between notions of work and play. Classroom dynamics, underpinned by the course material, result largely in the transmission of a single way of learning to be a writer. In German classes, however, young writers are encouraged to be more versatile with meanings, which need not first be explored once the mechanics have

been mastered and the learner has progressed to become a user. The German curriculum, despite its late acknowledgement of the child's cognitive readiness for literacy, quickly prepares the child for lengthier passages of writing as for engagement in a wider range of discourse types than is the case in French. What counts as writing in the settings observed is not a socially embedded practice, but appears to be a solitary internal process of recognition, mastery and knowledge recall. It is, however, not a question of 'show me all you know', for the funds of knowledge acquired elsewhere largely remain unexplored.

Chapter Eight: Setting the Domestic Context: a Quantitative Approach

Chapter Eight:

Setting the Domestic Context: a Quantitative Approach

8.1. Introduction

'Mind the Gap?' in the interrogative rather than imperative or declarative form, invites reflections about convergence and divergence. In the previous chapter, I demonstrated how young writers are shaped within the institutional context. I argued that the classroom does share some points in common with the home context, such as the transmission of implicit and explicit messages, or in its capacity as a site comprising various interactive and interactional zones. Central features of classroom literacy, however, are the ways in which it positions the children as learners rather than as users, and, via predominantly explicit teaching methods, how it transmits the overall view of a single skills oriented way of being and becoming a writer more driven by knowledge display than by authentic, socially embedded communicative needs.

In this chapter, I argue the case for a different experience of being and becoming a writer, as demonstrated by Pia as a writer at home. Using a quantitative approach, I begin by presenting the volume of texts gathered as evidence of the wide scope of writing fostered at home. I then go on to address both the developmental and linguistic characteristics of Pia's authoring to demonstrate how Pia grows as a multilingual writer at home in comparison to the dual monolingualism fostered at school. Finally, after charting and interpreting the most salient writing forms identified, I conduct a closer analysis of multimodal texts, and of the notion of writing as a social, 'peopled' activity, which, I argue, are typical features of Pia's writing at home, in contrast to her writing at school.

8.2. Quantitative overview

Different types of information have been quantified in order to provide a comprehensive overview of Pia's writing development from 1999-2005 (Table 8.1). Columns A-B chart Pia's annual productivity. Texts, such as drawings, which involve no writing (see

column C), are then distinguished from written texts (column D). Texts written in a recognisable language (Column E) are distinguished from texts, such as letter strings, which are not (Column F). A final category comprises texts displaying only Pia's name (Column G). Together, these quantifications and classifications present a concise initial picture of Pia as a writer at home:

(A) year/age	(B) Total number of texts	(C) Texts with no writing	(D) Written texts	(E) Texts in a specific language/code	(F) Code-free texts	(G) Texts with author's name only
1999-2000 : 3yrs	16	9	7	0	5	2
2000-2001 : 4yrs	133	70	63	2	31	30
2001-2002 : 5yrs	176	29	147	79	34	34
2002-2003 : 6yrs	182	0	182	169	13	2
2003-2004 : 7yrs	159	0	159	149	10	0
2004-2005 : 8yrs	125	1	124	120	4	0

Table 8.1: Writing & Code Distribution

The percentage of the overall corpus of unsolicited texts produced per year may be made more readily visible in the diagram below:
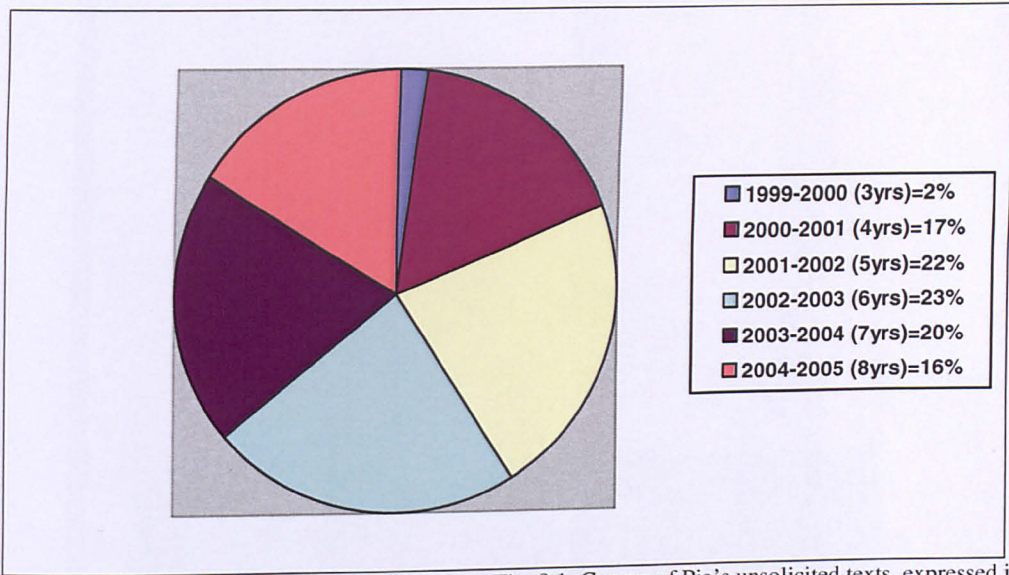
Fig. 8.1: Corpus of Pia's unsolicited texts, expressed in %

Legend:
- 1999-2000 (3yrs)=2%
- 2000-2001 (4yrs)=17%
- 2001-2002 (5yrs)=22%
- 2002-2003 (6yrs)=23%
- 2003-2004 (7yrs)=20%
- 2004-2005 (8yrs)=16%

Table 8.1 and Fig.8.1 make a number of points about Pia's domestic authoring clear. We see that Pia, as a three year old, is already writing. Whilst most of the texts written at the time cannot be attributed to a specific language, she is nonetheless already writing her own name. The texts Pia produces as a three-year-old constitute a minor part of her entire writing produced during the research period (2%). Her writing takes off, we could say, from the following year (2000-2001), which marks the start of her most productive period (2000-2004). During this period, we may identify an increase not only in the number of written texts (column D) but also in her code-contingent writing (column E). This trend begins to regress when Pia is 7 years old. In the final year of data collection (2004-2005), the peak of Pia's productivity has been passed. Aged 8, she produces approximately the same number of texts as she did as a four-year-old, the significant difference being that, by the time she is 8 years old, she has 'grown out' of writing just her name, for all her texts, apart from one, involve writing. Furthermore, the overwhelming majority of these written texts (97%) involve writing in a specific code. Pia starts out as a child discovering how to write (illustr.8.1). As she progresses in her development, she increasingly employs writing so that by the time she is six years old, every text produced displays writing. By the end of the research period, we see that she has emerged into a prolific and multilingual writer (illustr. 8.2).
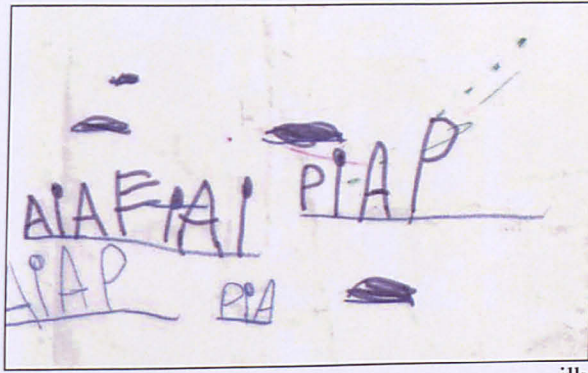
illustr. 8.1: 00-12, 4yrs 6m

illustr.8.2: Happy New Year, 02-12, 6yrs 6m

8.3. Writing development: forms of writing and first appearances

The skills-oriented view of writing development at school, framed according to the regular and successive introduction of stage-appropriate literacy-based cognitive elements (Ch.6-7), provides a basis of comparison with how writing development may be shaped at home. To support my argument for the wider scope of literate forms or typologies, the early acquisition of writing skills and the nature of Pia's writing development in the domestic environment, the first appearances of individual aspects of writing were plotted.

Any aspect of a text not encountered previously was recorded as a 'first appearance'. Thus, whilst the letter sent to her mum (09/08/01) is recorded as a first appearance:

| 'letter' to be sent by post to mum in UK (picture, no txt, stamp drawn by papa, text written by papa, signed by Pia, | 09/08/01 G | 5yrs 2m |

given to mum on her return)		

It notes different novelties to the 'letter' to Loic (31/10/01):

Letter to Loic traced out dotted lines (with Whitney's help)	31/10/01 F,G	5yrs 4m

Although both texts have been written collaboratively (the former text with the father's aid, the latter text with the sister's aid), the letter to Loic is bilingual.

Structural, functional and linguistic novelties were charted as first appearances. Hence Pia's self-made computer with a German keyboard (dated 12/01) is documented as a structural novelty, not a linguistic one, for she has already written texts in German. The 'novelty' of the Easter card made in April 2002, likewise, is not the card itself, for she has already produced many of these, but the fact that it is the first text written wholly in German. When we compare these four texts (letter to mum, letter to Loic, self-made computer, Easter card), all of which involve writing in German, we see that each, nonetheless, demonstrates something *new*. New developments may be represented as a graph (Fig.8.2), enabling us to identify fluctuations in Pia's development at home from year to year.
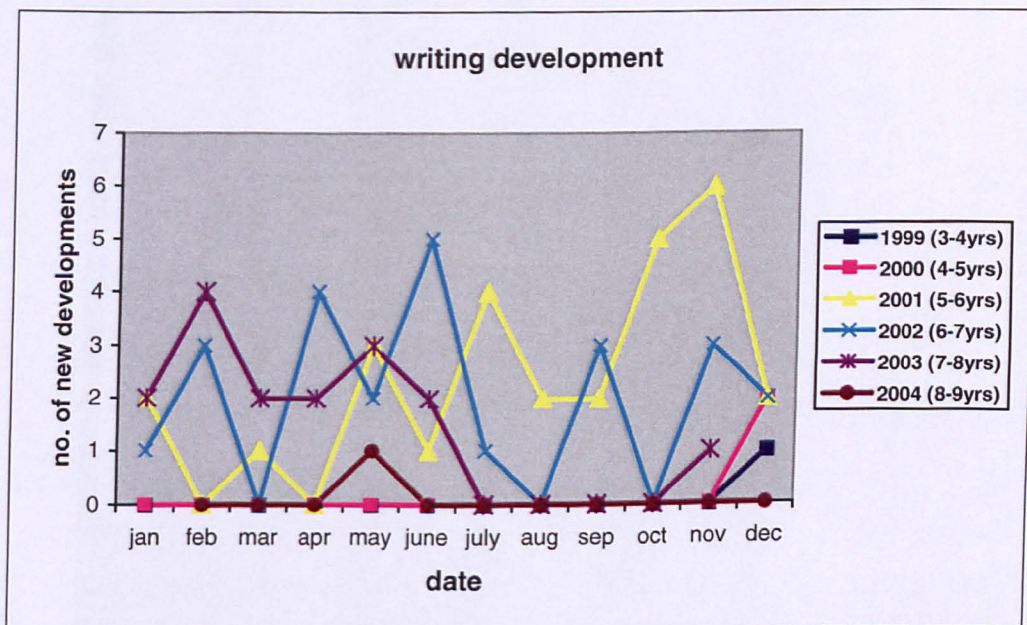
fig.8.2: Writing development

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Above all, the fluctuations represented in Fig.8.2 show that Pia's writing development at home does not overlap with the institutional concept of cognitive progress, which would be represented by a straight, upward-rising diagonal line. Instead, Pia's 'natural' development is characterised by spurts, or bouts (Bissex, 1980), which differ from year to year, peaking at the age of 5 ½ years, and slowing down considerably from 7yrs onwards.

8.4. Multilingual writing

The quantitative analysis of Pia's texts may provide a useful overview of how her languages, French (F), German (G) and English (E), are employed in her writing at home (Table 8.2). The key research period, 2001-2003, corresponding to the last year of nursery school (*Grande Section*) and Year One (*CP/die erste Klasse*), have been highlighted:

Age/Year	Total items	Written texts	F	G	E	FG	EF	GE	FGE	Code-free texts	Name only
3yrs: 1999-2000	16	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	2
4yrs: 2000-2001	133	63	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	31	30
5yrs: 2001-2002	176	147	62	6	4	3	1	0	2	34	34
6yrs: 2002-2003	182	182	104	31	5	12	2	3	10	13	2
7yrs: 2003-2004	159	159	79	38	11	6	8	1	5	10	0
8yrs: 2004-2005	125	124	57	32	11	5	8	1	6	4	0

Table 8.2: Code Distribution

The sequence of languages as depicted in the bi- and trilingual sections of Table 8.2 is arbitrary, thus from 'FG' should not be inferred that French is the first language used in the text and German the second. In the first two years of analysis (1999-2000 and 2001-2002), the majority of the written texts could not be attributed to a particular language. This might be so because Pia is not initially writing in languages, but, rather, she is discovering letters and writing *per se* (e.g. Illustr.8.1). Both of the two texts produced in

French in the year 2000-2001 were reproduced from storybooks as opposed to being freely composed.

It is not until Pia is aged 5 that evidence of her code-contingent writing begins to emerge. From 2002-2003 there is a proliferation in the number of documents produced in all three languages. Her output of texts in French almost doubles that of the year before. The number of German texts produced is five times more than in the previous year, as is the case for her trilingual texts for the same period. The two languages most used in her bilingual texts are French and German, the languages also taught at school. The bilingual constellation least encountered is English and German, the two native languages spoken at home by her mother and father respectively. This could possibly relate to the status of English in Pia's written repertoire: it is neither learnt at school, nor are explicit measures taken at home to teach her how to write in English. The fact that she nonetheless writes in English is an important indication of her active role in knowledge acquisition and her use of writing to reflect her context-specific language choices.

The multicultural nature of Pia's domestic environment shapes her writing in a manner which does not converge with her institutional framing. Attending a bilingual school, Pia nonetheless never writes bilingually at school, but produces monolingual texts, in keeping with the curriculum. Although both languages are accorded equal weight at school, at home, Pia writes demonstrably more in French than in German, and this although it is more within the German context that flexible and authentic writing is fostered at school (p178ff). As with her handwriting and her redesigning of conventional forms to meet her particular needs (p32, p127), Pia, therefore, is not simply taking the messages transmitted at school into the home, but transforms meaning *taking* into her own personal meaning *making*, aware that institutional criteria need not apply at home.

8.5. Writing beyond words: onomatopoeia and semiotic awareness

Unlike her scholastic texts, which are firmly anchored in writing, Pia's domestic texts exhibit a broader understanding of signs and sounds. One interesting feature of Pia's

domestic writings relates to the use of onomatopoeia: when Pia listens to the family's washing machine spinning, it goes 'ram ram ram...':

illustr. 8.3: washing machine, 02-04-28, 5yrs 10m

A number of texts are neither in French, German or English, but employ symbolic as opposed to linguistic codes: Pia uses crosses to mark the presence of pupils in her register, for example, or logograms encountered in everyday social life at home:

illustr.8.4: register of pupils present, 01-11-29, 5yrs 5m

illustr.8.5: girl in love, 02-04, 5yrs 10m
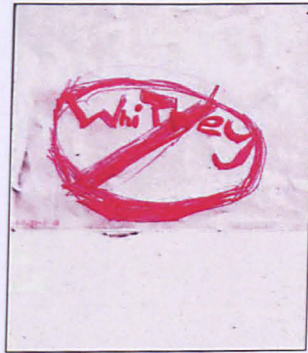
illustr. 8.6: no entry 04-12-03, 8yrs 6m

These illustrations demonstrate Pia's awareness of semiotic alternatives to writing, exemplifying also her sensitivity to colour cues in semiotic representations, for the red heart symbolises passion, whilst the red 'no entry' sign symbolises prohibition. These texts affirm the influences of exposure to literacy-based material at home and at school, for whilst the register (illustr.8.4) clearly derives from institutional practice, the other two illustrations are encountered within the context of home and wider society. Funds of knowledge gained at school, therefore, can be seen to be imported and integrated into Pia's domestic literacy practice, whereas the reverse seems to be less true (p185).

So far, I have presented data to demonstrate the quantity of writing Pia produced at home, how her writing developed and both the linguistic and semiotic features of her texts. All of these diverge in certain ways from curricular expectations. I argue that the image which transpires at home is one of a prolific writer, sensitive to the literacy messages of her environments. These messages are not put as forcefully or as explicitly as at school, yet the

evidence strongly suggests that it is these interactional dynamics, typical of the home environment we have unravelled (Valsiner,1997), which are helping Pia to acquire a wider range of skills and develop as a writer faster than anticipated at school.

In what follows, I address the scope of forms employed in Pia's texts, demonstrating how these surpass the generic avenues provided within the scholastic context.

8.6. Core typologies

In a process of progressive focussing, reinforced by the regular cross-checking of the texts, I was able to unearth clusters of the most predominant writing forms:

Fig 8.3: nominative analysis of core text-related typologies

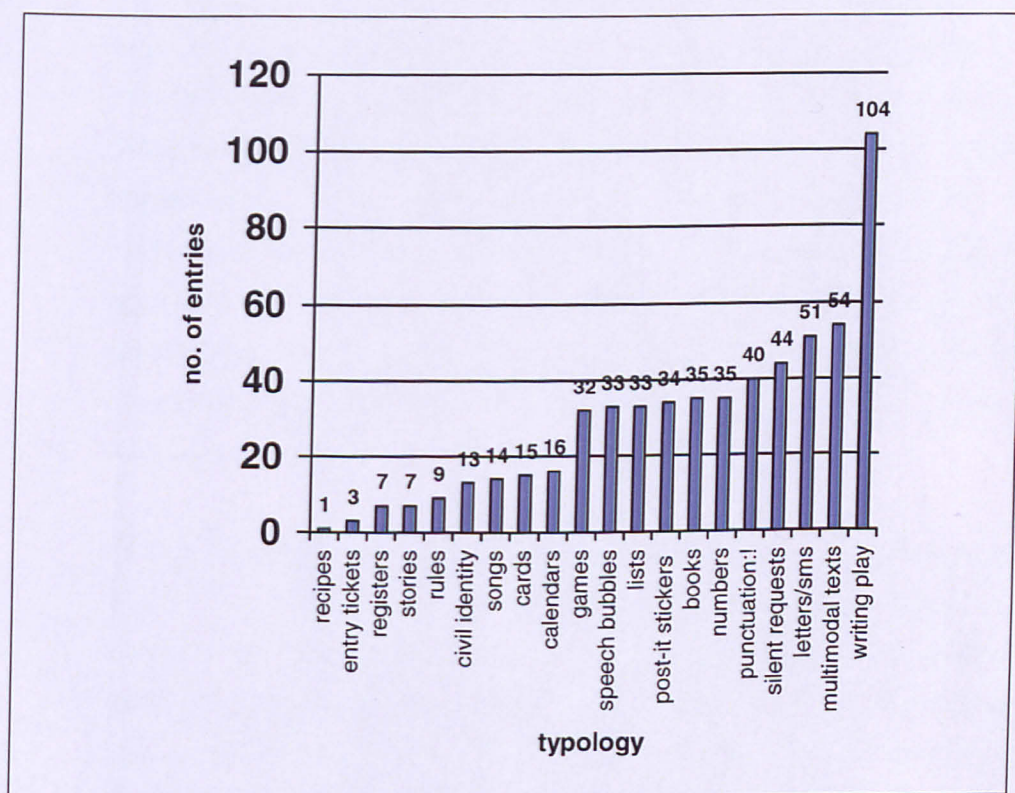This diagram attests the central role of playing or experimentation with writing, which has by far the most number of entries (104), followed by multimodal texts (54), letters and sms as 'news' (44), silent requests (44), books (35), numbers (35), post its (34), lists (33) and games (33). We see that the classification of the most prevalent features of Pia's writing comprises a blend of generic forms (e.g. recipes, calendars), and semiotic characteristics (speech bubbles, exclamation marks), but also includes new 'tailor-made' forms reflecting her particular expressive needs, such as silent requests (cf Ch.2, Ch.9). It is also interesting to note that Pia explores her civil identity via texts following the I.D. format, i.e. surname (in capitals), forenames, address and telephone number. The way Pia describes herself becomes more refined over time; changing from forename only (Table 8.1), to a more objective, comprehensive self image.

The scope of Pia's domestic writing supports the case I put forward for the primacy of knowledge acquisition in the domestic context. In Chapters 6 and 7, we saw that the forms of writing encountered at school were predominantly skills oriented and designed to train literacy acquisition. They consisted of controlling letter formation, establishing phoneme-grapheme correlations, identifying words, placing them in the correct order, inserting the right word in the gap. Literacy at school was characteristically an explicit learning activity of en- and de-codification, aimed at knowledge display. The texts Pia produces at home go far beyond this. Not only does she use forms of literacy which have yet to be encountered at school (e.g. recipes, post-its, entry tickets, sms texts), but the functions of her authoring also diverge from scholastic practice, focussing less on knowledge display and more on an authentic need to express genuine feelings in everyday contexts.

There is, however, some overlap in the forms of writing in the domestic and scholastic contexts. The functions of Ingrid's complaints box bear resemblance to Pia's 'silent requests', for both permit the writer to get a message across discreetly without immediately interrupting the recipient. Stories, songs and books belong to both learning domains. What largely distinguishes domestic writing from scholastic writing, even if the same forms are being used, however, is the degree of self-interest and motivation invested by the child. At home, Pia writes because she genuinely wants to, and has something to say. It is she who runs into the study and writes the note to her mother (Ch.2), she who engages her mother's help to write a book to her friend Natascha (Ch.5),

her father's help to write a letter to her mother (section 8.3, p191) and her sister's help to write a further letter to her friend Loic (section 8.3, p191). Every text written at home, thus every sample presented in this thesis (Ch.2,5,8,9), is initiated by her and reflects a genuine communicative intention. The texts are unsolicited, instead of being demanded by someone else. At school, her writing is embedded in externally planned and controlled activities geared towards knowledge display and not towards social practice.

The writing forms Pia employs at home are not always immediately apparent. What seems to be clear to the mature, conditioned writer might be regarded otherwise by the child author. Illustration 8.6 below is a letter. Upon opening the letter, we do not find a written text, as we might expect, but a picture. The stamp is drawn on and the address is replaced by a dedication, which Pia writes conjointly with her father. The letter is folded, but it is not placed in an envelope or sent. Instead, it is given to me upon my return from a period abroad:

illustr. 8.7: 01-08-09 letter for mum, 5yrs 2m

Individual literate formats can be multifunctional in the same way that a specific function may be expressed by a number of formats; Pia's friendship patterns, for example, are reflected in almost every literate form. Such networking of knowledge across different fields stands in direct contrast to the foreseen compartmentalization of knowledge in French and German classes at school, where, and in spite of the fact that the two classes share the same physical space (section 7.4.1, p171), the two funds of knowledge are not connected officially, or cross-referenced by the teachers, although in the classroom, too, I demonstrate that children do not always respect the boundaries erected between French and German, as a child's spontaneous exclamation in French in the middle of a teaching routine in German makes clear (snapshot #5, p149).

8.7. Multimodal texts

Whilst the vast majority of Pia's core typologies have been produced on sheets of A4, the second largest typology identified consists of multimodal texts, exhibiting a plethora of materials, spatial dimensions and the translation, recasting or redesigning from one mode to another (Kress, 1997:xvii; Pahl, 1999; Rowe, 2003). Such texts incorporate a kinaesthetic element into literacy acquisition and practice in that they involve cutting, pasting, constructing three-dimensional texts, often via alternative materials or modes which take literacy off the page:

illustr. 8.8a: self-made computer 01-12-28, 5yrs 6m

illustr. 8.8b: Pia using the computer

Pia designed her own computer, sparked by witnessing my use of one. Occasionally allowed to use my computer, Pia's interest was nonetheless generally thwarted by the fact that this 'tool' was, largely, 'out of bounds' for her. A closer look at her keyboard (illustr. 8.8a) shows that this comprises two boxes which have been stuck together. As with a standard keyboard, regular quadrants form the keys representing the semiotic symbols required to write texts, including upper/lower case symbols, and the 'shift' symbol (↑). The keyboard is in German. Typical French letters such as *é, è, à* or *ç* are not present, but we do have the German *ö*. The computer monitor is made from a shoebox covered with sheets of paper cut to the right size. The 'software' to appear on the screen is provided by a series of drawings, juxtaposed like film, which may be inserted into the empty space provided. The mouse, like the keyboard, is made of card and, as Pia is right-handed, positioned to the right of the keyboard.

This 'text', although it is produced by Pia entirely on her own and of her own initiative, is an interactional text shaped by Pia's domestic environment, which supplies the physical, material and social provisions that promote her development. Pia becomes conscious of computers because she sees her mother, a writer and a researcher, using one every day, the personal computer being part of the equipment of her mother's study. Whilst her mother's personal computer is not intended to be a key object in promoting the child's literacy (ZPA), Pia nonetheless gets close enough to be able to familiarise herself with its structural and functional characteristics, which enable her to reproduce them for herself. Her self-made monitor, we note, does not display written texts, but pictures. This could possibly mean that

Pia is writing a story. Alternatively, she might be using the internet, where images gain in importance over written texts. Pia might even be playing a computer game. All of these 'modes' require different literacy skills, none of which are trained at school, where no computers are on offer (Ch.7). The text, therefore, is multimodal on a number of points: it combines writing with drawing, cutting and pasting. It combines written texts with imagery. Finally, it blends a number of potential structural/functional modes; the narrative, the internet, the computer game.

The following text not only exemplifies the creativity inherent in multimodality, but also demonstrates how deeply writing is enmeshed in social practice (Illustr.8.9):

illustr.8.9: Pia's spoon 02-02-12, 5yrs 8m

Pia uses two 'modes' to write her name; tin foil and a medicine spoon. The text can be read in its global social context (i.e. at the level T3, cf Ch.2, p30) in that it shows what Pia has for breakfast and that, for example, as is typical in Germany, though we live in France, small cold meals, often accompanied by brown bread, are taken on a wooden block rather than on a plate. Untypical of Germany, yet typical of France, on the other hand, is *patisserie*, or sweetmeats. Once again, we witness a blending of the values and components of Pia's differing social worlds which only become apparent once we get into the text beyond its characteristic as pure writing, or semiotic (i.e. T1), and interpret it as a contextual vehicle (i.e. T3). It is only at this global contextual level that the majority of Pia's texts gain and yield their meaning.

Multimodality is not merely exhibited at the level of the materials used, but also regarding the forms or genres resourced, as we saw in *musical mama* (Illustr.2.1, p27) and *Natascha*

(Illustr.5.1, p126). In a birthday invitation addressed to her friend Clara, Pia incorporates yes/no response boxes and instructs the recipient to 'cross yes or no' (*coche oui ou non*):
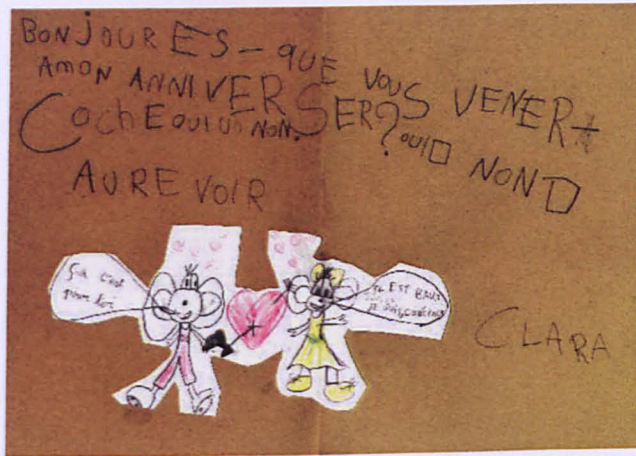
illustr.8.10: invitation, 02-04-23, 5yrs 10m

These response boxes, together with the formulation of the invitation – 'would you like to come to my birthday party?' lean on the questionnaire genre more than on the invitation genre. The picture *in* the card might even remind one of narrative structures, or the pictures which embellish the comprehension exercises performed at school (Ch.6). Invitations, like other greeting cards, 'normally' have a picture on the front. The front of Pia's card is empty. The text, including the picture, we notice further, is written across both halves of the card, instead of being written on one half and continuing on the second half. Pia employs the hyphen to make the link between the first and second lines, as is correct when a word is continued, but for the fact that, here, we have a new word. The recipient's name, finally, is written at the bottom, almost like a signature, which in turn leans on the letter format rather than an invitation.

The text, then, displays characteristics from different 'modes' of writing; invitations, letters, questionnaires, comprehension exercises, narrative. To concentrate on Pia's divergences from the conventional format for invitations would be to draw our attention away from her creative process. As Kress observes:

> To watch children writing is to see focused energy and intelligence at work; anyone who has done so cannot dismiss the products of that work as insignificant, deficient, wrong.
>
> (Kress, 1994: ix)

Texts which do not follow convention are not automatically wrong. This particular text is not a secret language, comprehensible only to the initiated, but displays familiarity with the genre. Sufficient structural and linguistic indices make the function of the text clear. The invitation takes the format of a card folded in the middle. We have the opening greeting ('bonjour') and a closure ('au revoir'), the invitation proper, the RSVP, and the recipient. As it is not possible to misunderstand or misread this text, we see that the salient linguistic and structural features for genre-appropriate use have been satisfied.

This multimodal text not only highlights the linguistic and structural fluidity of Pia's domestic writings, reminding us of the 'zoniferous' outlets fostered by the holistic parameters of the home environment (Valsiner, 1997), but demonstrates how Pia imports aspects of her scholastic skills (e.g. yes/no boxes), in addition to social partners from school, into her domestic writings. It shows, in sum, that Pia's domestic writings may accommodate and reflect the globality of her writing competence. This is not true of her writing at school. The linguistic and structural features so happily mixed in the invitation to Clara would be neatly separated at school, and evaluated according to strict criteria. Writing activities promoted in the classroom are performed analytically (Ch.7), disqualifying, or throttling, the creativity on offer to the child engaged in less binding activities which promote writing development at home. In all the domestic texts analysed so far, Pia is 5-6 years old. The complexity of her self-initiated texts, the 'focused energy and intelligence at work' (Kress, 1994:ix) surpasses by far the writing tasks demanded of her in the classroom (Ch.6-7).

8.8. Social networks

A further significant finding to emerge from the analysis, yet not restricted to a single type of text, was the number of people referred to in the data, a fact which certainly supports the case for writing as a social activity.

Social networks are reflected across *all* the typologies Pia employs within the domestic context. A total of 124 names are enunciated by Pia throughout the research period. These people come from the different domains of Pia's social life. They are members of her family and closer domestic social network, or else they are friends, cultural figures and idols, or indeed fictive characters who animate Pia's fantasy.

The names of those people who are important to Pia, and with whom she engages at regular intervals, may be deduced from the frequency of individual texts in which these people are mentioned. By noting the date of each entry, the patterns of Pia's social network may be charted: we learn when a person is mentioned and how often they are referred to during the research period. Spurts of emotional allegiance emerge, but also regular, durable interactions, as demonstrated by the following fieldnote excerpt:

> Cécile (school friend) 01.03 / 22.01.03(8x) / 01.03 / 29.01.03 / 02.02(2x) / 16.02.03(3x) / 14.03.03(16x) / 03.03 / 19.03.03 / 22.03.03 / 23.03.03 / 01.04.03(4x) / 20.04.03(2x) / 12.05.03(4x) / 24.05.03 / 04.06.03 / 04.06.03 / 12.08.03 / 5.11.03 / 09.02.04 / 06.03.04 / 09.03.04 / 15.04.04

Cécile, a classmate, is mentioned eight times in texts dated 22.01.03 and as often as sixteen times on 14.03.03. The data relating to Pia's social network can be quantified in a number of ways. Leaning upon Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), we may group the participants in Pia's social world according to the 'microsystem' of home and school. To these groupings may be added, as a further onion ring so to speak, the 'system' of wider cultural practice. This interactional layer has not been accommodated in Bronfenbrenner's more politically oriented depiction, but has been conceptualized elsewhere, notably by Kenner (2000:137), as a significant aspect of a child's social world, where language and literacy find expression. Grouped according to the domains of home (H), school (S) and wider culture (C), it became apparent that the classifications could be further refined. To the home environment can be attributed family members, family friends, toys, fictive characters. The scholastic environment can be sub-classified into friends and teachers. In Chapters 6 and 7, we saw that fictive characters, Mika, Nino, Nina and the German mascot Limorps, also feature in the classroom. These characters, however, do not figure in Pia's private writing. The cultural environment, finally, comprises not only cultural and religious figures such as God and Father Christmas. This environment, in which the multicultural strands of Pia's life clearly come to light, also comprises cultural figures and idols from TV, books and

magazines; Mary Poppins, Harry Potter, Asterix, Britney Spears. This wide social network, in relation to home (H), school (S) and the wider cultural environment (C) is represented in Fig.8.4.
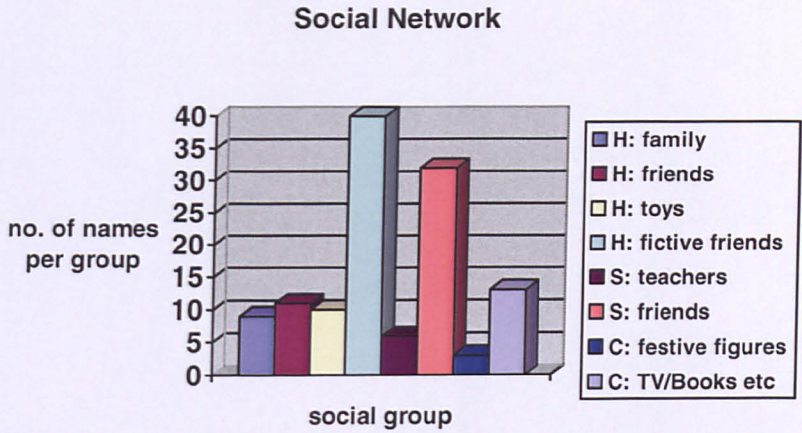
Social Network

Fig. 8.4: Social Network

The data, once synthesized to reconstitute the percentages of the three key domains of home, school and culture, confirm the predominance of the social activities and participants encountered within the domestic arena (Fig.8.5):
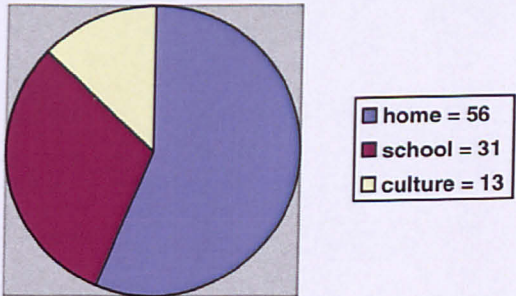
Fig.8.5: % of participants enunciated in each social domain

Not only does this analysis reveal the central role of the domestic environment for the social networks reflected in Pia's texts, it also yields the surprising finding on the significant number

of fictive characters in her authoring. This finding, triangulated by the analysis of the forms resourced in Pia's writing, make clear that the fictive characters do not only inhabit the world of narrative, but appear in games, letters, evaluations, registers, lists, songs, in short, across a wide range of the literate forms Pia employs and redesigns from her exposure and interaction with such forms at home, school and beyond.

Whilst the above pie chart helps us to visualize the ratio of names to domains, it tells us nothing of how often each name is mentioned, unlike the fieldnote excerpt on Cécile. A quantification of the number of entries per name permits a clearer picture of allegiances. The ten most frequently enunciated names in Pia's writing are given below (Fig.8.6), together with their attribution to the home (H) or school (S) context:
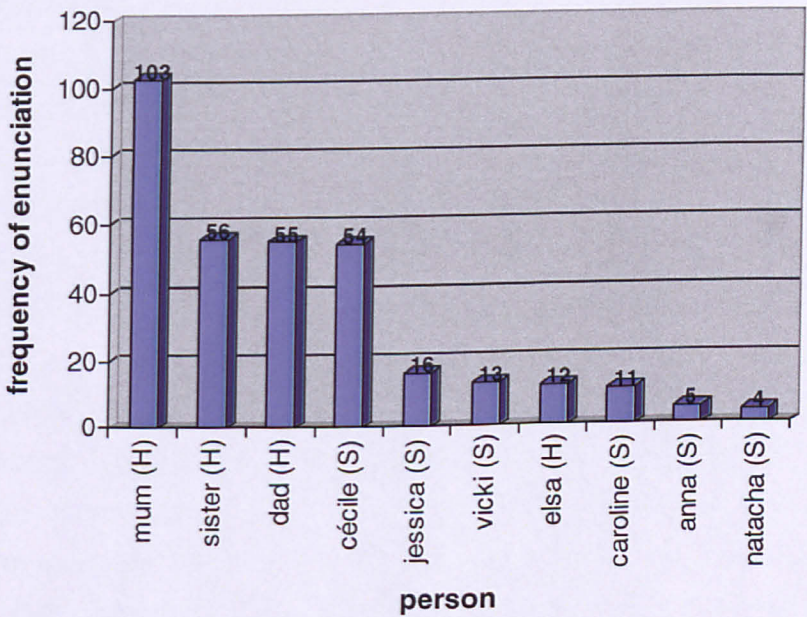
Fig.8.6: frequency of enunciation per person

Mother, father, sister (Whitney) and friend (Elsa) all belong to the home context. The other people are friends from school. Thus 225 enunciations may be attributed to the domestic environment, whilst less than half that number (103 enunciations) may be

attributed to people from the scholastic environment. Having said this, we note that Pia's friend, Cécile, is mentioned almost as often as her sister, or her father. This gives evidence of a strong emotional allegiance which originates from outside the home, at school, but which Pia sustains at home in her unsolicited texts.

8.9. Summary

In this chapter, I demonstrate how Pia's learning and use of writing within the domestic context can be investigated by means of a quantitative approach, which may not only permit a general overview of the volume of Pia's writing, but equally inform our understanding of the developmental and linguistic characteristics of her authoring, whilst throwing light upon the important social components within the texts.

Pia's domestic writing is characterised by a wide range of forms, some of which, like her multimodal texts, have not yet been encountered at school, so that my claim that her skills are in advance of instructed learning is reinforced. Multimodal texts, constituting a significant feature of the 'design' of Pia's domestic writing, demonstrate her ability to dismantle conventional generic boundaries, rendering them porous, and making clear the greater expressive flexibility permitted within her home environment. I go on to demonstrate that Pia's writing development is characterised by developmental bouts, which appear to peak around the age of 5 ½ years, and that new developments are recorded at a slower rate for the rest of the research period. This seems to suggest that instructed learning from Year One onwards has not accelerated her writing development, for the largest part of what she knows has been acquired prior to official schooling. The influence of institutional literacy activities is nonetheless reflected in the texts Pia produces at home. These texts also reflect Pia's particular linguistic background. She writes more texts in French than in German, and more French-German texts than trilingual texts. Her domestic writings also reflect her trilingualism, unlike the work performed at school. Pia's texts are 'peopled' by friends, family and fictive characters with whom she establishes emotional allegiances. These emotional allegiances, Pia's full linguistic repertoire and the range of writing forms Pia exhibits at home are not paralleled in the classroom. Thus, to conclude, I argue that the home and school environments provide different avenues of literate expression, the former permitting the child to demonstrate her competence, her creativity and her feelings more accurately.

Chapter Nine: Literacy as Social Practice at Home

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Literacy as Social Practice at Home

9.1. Introduction

> School needs to demonstrate that writing is a purposeful *social* activity.
> (my italics, Czerniewska, 1994:102)

> Whatever and whenever children write, and no matter what exotic metaphors they employ, they write out of their own *social* circumstances.
> (my italics, Steedman, 1982:61, cited in Kendrick, 2003:163)

In this chapter, I continue the analysis of Pia's writing at home. Taking a qualitative approach this time, I present numerous texts which demonstrate that, first and foremost, Pia employs writing as social practice. I show how she explores relationships she lives everyday and the different social roles she may occupy. I show how her language choices in her texts give evidence of her simultaneous membership of multiple communities. We discover how feelings relate to verbal patterns to reflect the nature of relationships. I argue, in sum, that Pia's writing may ultimately be viewed as autobiographical social practice, expressing a child's need to interact with society and make a mark within her environment.

A significant feature of all of Pia's domestic writing is its socially embedded nature (Ch.2,5,8). Texts, therefore, may be viewed as social objects more so than linguistic ones (Kress, 1994:221). Pia's domestic writing is social in many senses. Her texts are not only frequently produced collaboratively, but are all written for someone (if only for herself), or mention others (section 8.8, p204ff). The texts are motivated by social events, as we saw in Chapter Two, where the mother playing the recorder inspired Pia to write, or in the *Natascha* text in Chapter Five, where play with a classmate spurred Pia on to write her 'book' (section 5.5, p124ff). Writing *per se*, moreover, involves the appropriation of a social semiotic tool, which may itself be mediated via a number of equally socially embedded tools: pens, paper, foil, beads, computer or mobile phone, to name but a few, so that writing, in its various forms, may be regarded as a node of social interaction and modes. Finally, if we apply Valsiner's interactional model to Pia's authoring, as we did in Chapters Two and Five, we may 're-arrange' the picture of

social practice by showing how at the physical (ZFM), social (ZPA) and psychological levels (ZPD), important others are structuring and fostering her development.

For the following analysis of the many ways in which literacy at home is experienced as social practice, I select texts which, for the most part, are relevant to the key research period (i.e. September 2001 – August 2003). These texts, written by Pia between the ages of 5-7 years old, provide a vivid comparison to the texts we are now familiar with from her school environment (Ch.6-7).

9.2. Exploring relationships and social roles

Pia's domestic texts reflect her preoccupation with the quality and dynamics of social relationships. The names of others repeatedly figure in her writing (Ch.8), thereby confirming the significance of her social networks. These networks are made up of both real and fictive people from her wider social backgrounds (illustr.9.1, 9.2).
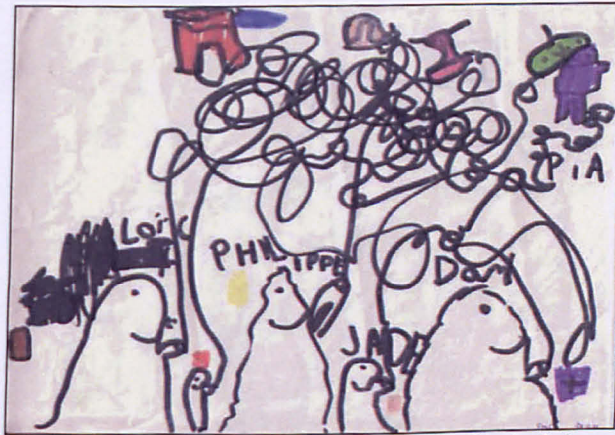
illustr. 9.1: name spaghetti of classmates, 01-11-28, 5yrs 5m

illustr. 9.2: best friends (girls in Pia's class), 02-05-02, 5yrs 1m

Unlike friends, who come and go, Pia's family members figure regularly throughout her work, attesting to the durability of the bond, particularly with her mother (fig.8.6, p207).

Pia repeatedly demonstrates her sensitivity to potential social identities. In Chapter Two, we saw how Pia, aged 7yrs 11m, subtly moves in and out of social roles in relation to her mother within a single text. Later texts reveal Pia's sensitivity to her role as my teacher with regard to this thesis. This development adds a new colour to the mother-daughter relationship, investing the daughter with power, which she uses readily. In her role as my teacher, Pia often contextualises her writing on the reverse side of her drawings (illustr.9.3, 9.4):
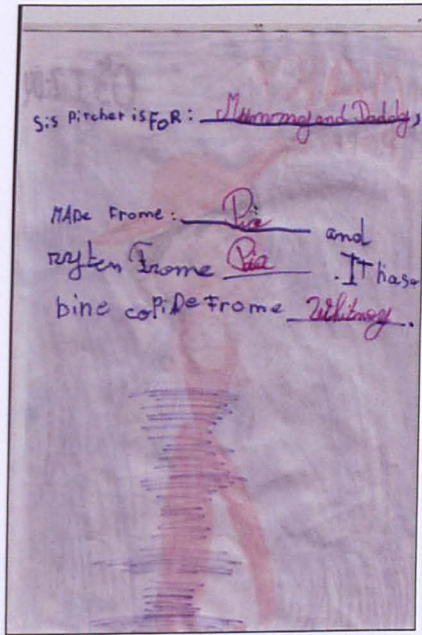
illustr. 9.3: Mary Poppins 04-03-03, 7yrs 9m

('sis pitcher is for: Mummy and Daddy, made frome: Pia and ryten frome: Pia. It has bine copied from: Whitney')
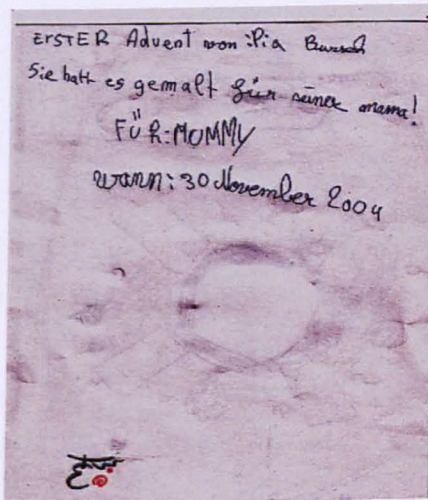
illustr.9.4: advent, 04-11-30, 8yrs 5m

('First advent by Pia Bursch. She drew it for her mum! For: mummy. When: 30 November, 2004')

Alternatively, Pia as co-researcher stipulates which texts may or may not be shown to the other people involved in this research. For ethical reasons, such texts may not be used here.

I have highlighted the social identities Pia occupies in relation to myself, but clearly, the possibilities are much wider, mapping onto other interactive constellations and people

encountered in Pia's daily social life (section 8.8, p204ff). Within the corpus, Pia adopts the roles of mother (of her toys), sister, teacher, co-researcher, pupil, best friend, enemy, tell-tale, narrator, shopkeeper, to name a few.

9.3. Language as identity:
simultaneous membership to multiple communities

> What makes us human multiple beings, then, (...) is our entry into multiple co-ordinations, each of which has the capacity to tease out of us a different situated self.
>
> (Gee, 2002: xiv)

I have demonstrated how Pia, as a multilingual writer, indicates not only her multiple cultural identities but also her sensitivity to the linguistic registers of her interlocutors in various social sites (section 8.4, p192ff). Her trilingual texts are addressed to trilingual recipients; her mother or her sister, but never to her father, who does not speak French. At times, she translates the text herself, to leave no room for doubt:
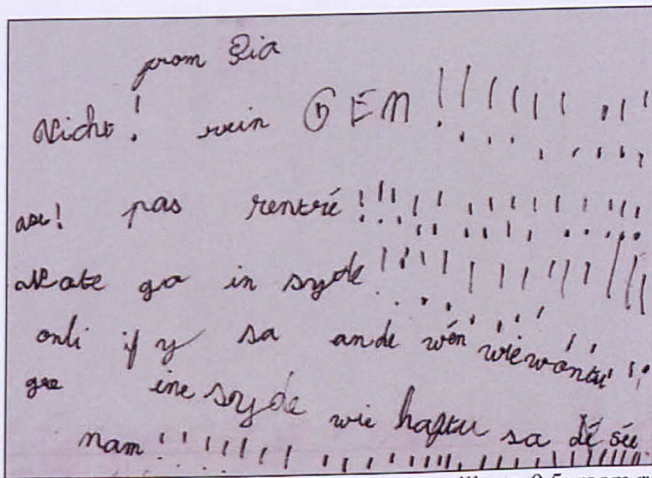
illustr. 9.5: room rules, 03-01-31, 6yrs 7m

From Pia : nicht! rein gehen!!!! (do not enter). Ne! pas rentrer!!! (do not enter). Note go in syde. Only if y (I) sa (say) ande wén (when) wewontu (we want to) go ine syde wie (we) haftu sa sée (the) nam (name)!!!!!!!!!!!!.

She writes in the language in which she has emotionally 'stored' particular experiences (Bursch, 2005). Alternatively, she 'quotes', using the words spoken by the other person:

illustr. 9.6: request slips, 02-07-01, 6yrs 1m

The above request slips document things to do during the summer holidays, when a German au pair had come to lend a hand. English request slips relate to proposals made by myself in English (potato stamps, bike ride) or regularly experienced activities in English (stories). Similarly, the German request slips reflect the au pair's suggestions (Kunststück, i.e. artwork. Museum), or else experiences typically conducted in German (Rezept, i.e. recipes, thus baking). Whilst Pia is multilingual, and can translate her experiences across languages, particular deeply embedded emotional experiences are reproduced in the language in which they were 'felt'. The request slips, which Pia decided to make so that that she had some say in daily activities, were intended for myself and the au pair, who also understood some English. We see, then, that Pia is also communicating to each of us in our native languages, but not failing to take in the fact that each speaks the language of the other. It is interesting to note that no request slips are written in French.

Pia's use of linguistic codes in her domestic texts reflects not only the various geographical and cultural zones she inhabits (section 4.4.1, p81ff), but also her sensitivity to the differences in the expressive 'zones' within the same language. This may be exemplified by three letters, written in German. The first is the letter to her German teacher Beate (illustr.9.7). The second is the letter to her pen-pal Jessica (illustr.9.8). The final letter was addressed to her father (illustr.9.9):
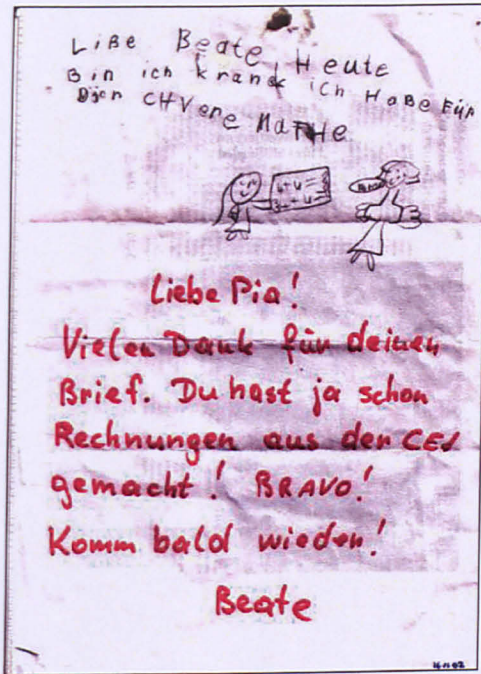
(Dear Beate, today I'm ill. I've done hard maths for you. Dear Pia, thanks for your letter. You've done maths from Year 2! Well done! Come back soon! Beate)

The letter to Jessica, translated, reads:

Dear Jessica,

I am so glad and really looking forward to visiting you!

Have you got a smaller brother or sister?
In my letter you can answer here: yes □ no □ .
Cross the yes if you have one, the no if you don't.

I wonder why you don't write me letters anymore. Today (Monday 9th July) my mum and dad invited my auntie and my uncle and my cousin. Have you invited your auntie and uncle too? yes □ no □ .

When are you coming to my place again?

Do you like Diddle things? yes □ no □ .

I know, I've asked you a lot and told you a lot.

I like you soooooooooooo much! Here is my signature (*signature provided*).

Love, Pia.

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Illustr.9.8: letter to Jessica, 03-06-09, 8yrs

If we compare the first two letters, which relate to a scholastic context (Pia's pen-friend was organised by the school), we see that in both, Pia is personal. She tells Beate that she is ill, for example, and has done something especially for her, namely maths. In the second letter, however, Pia talks about her private family life and wants to know more about Jessica's family life. The letter leans on 'school' texts, as we see from the question, yes/no answer box structure Pia employs. Although both letters use the same language and the same form, subtle differences may nonetheless be established. The first letter is written at home and taken to school by Pia's mother. The second is written at home and sent to Jessica's home address. Jessica is not a friend, like Natascha, who Pia also knows from school and whom she also writes to (p125ff). Rather, Jessica has been selected for Pia as a *pen*-friend by her teacher. Although Pia knows her teacher, Beate, much better than Jessica, in her letter, we see how she tries to express friendship towards her pen-friend in a manner she does not for her teacher. The structure and content of the letter to Jessica is more elaborate, possibly because Pia feels that the two girls are more on a par. In any case, she endeavours to sustain the friendship and find similarities between their two lives.

In the third letter, Pia is neither pupil nor potential friend, but writes from the heart as a daughter:
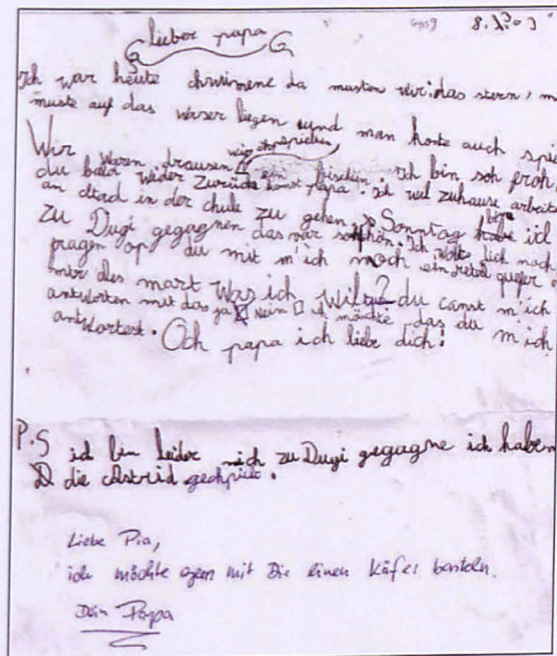
Translated, the letter reads:

Dear Papa,

Today I went swimming we had to do the 'star' we have to lie down on the water and we could also play.

We were outside we played a bit. I am so glad that you'll be home soon, Papa. I want to work at home instead of going to school. On Sunday I went to Douggy it was fun. I wanted to ask you if you could make a metal beetle with me, one that does everything I want for me. You can answer by yes ☐ no ☐ . I want you to answer. Oh papa I love you!

PS unfortunately I didn't make it to Douggy I played with Astrid.

Dear Pia,

I would love to make a beetle with you.

Love Papa

In this letter, Pia not only recounts details of her day, makes requests and looks forward to meeting the recipient again, as with Jessica, but expresses her feelings more explicitly. *I am glad, I want to work at home. It was fun. I wanted to ask you. I want you to answer. Papa I love you*. No feelings are expressed in this manner in the letter to her teacher. As in the other texts, the school environment is imported stylistically via the response boxes, as by direct reference to going to school. School is associated with negative

emotions, for Pia would rather stay at home, as she says. This third letter is handwritten and given to Pia's father upon his return. It has crossed out sections, tippex in places, and Pia's writing is compact. The final draft of the letter to Jessica, by contrast, is typed, conferring a more distant note. Both Pia and her mother were keen for the letter to Jessica to be as error-free as possible. Pia's father replied, at the bottom of Pia's letter, immediately upon his return. The letter to Jessica was never answered. In the letter to Beate, Pia shows herself and what she can do at home. Here, as elsewhere (Ch.2,5,8), we see, and, more importantly, Pia's teacher sees too, that Pia can do more than is expected at school: *You've done maths from Year 2! Bravo!* In the letter to Jessica, Pia's private face becomes more visible, yet it is still restricted by concerns on accuracy, in a letter which, though friendly, is somewhat terse, and lacks the complexity and fluidity of the letter addressed to Pia's father over a year previously. Although concerns about accuracy are also visible in the letter to Pia's father, as self-editing makes clear, these concerns are not important enough to warrant the complete re-writing of the letter. Different values, I argue, apply, depending on the contextual parameters permitted by the 'community' even if the language and the form selected remain identical. These values shape the social roles Pia may occupy and are reflected in how she expresses herself in writing. It should be noted, finally, that Pia has written to her German teacher and not to her French teacher. In Chapter Six we witnessed that it was within the German context that more authentic feelings were introduced into the classroom, either via the complaints box, or by the *Schultüte*, or indeed by the picture of the teacher on her first day of school. In fact, Pia writes letters, notes, messages and cards, to all her German teachers. She does not write anything private at all to any of her French teachers. This finding appears to strengthen the correlation between emotion, motivation and cognition. It also substantiates greater attention to the affective aspects of interactions, to which I now turn.

9.4. Feelings

Pia's emotional state and that of others are inextricable from the social context and constantly reflected in her writing. Everyone has a sad face the day her grandfather died:
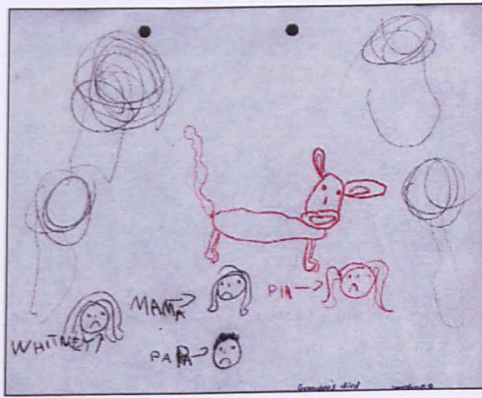
The feelings expressed reflect the climate of the relationship involved. Anger surfaces repeatedly in conjunction with her sister, accused of injustice, and from whom Pia anticipates further injustices:
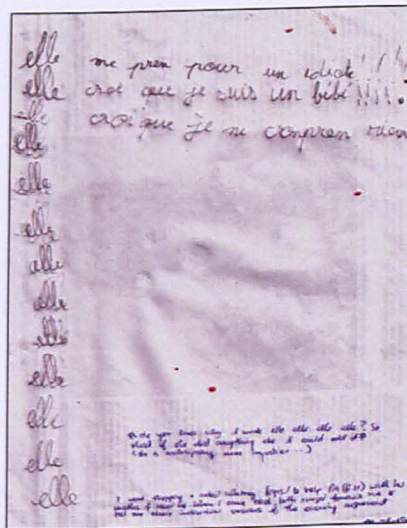
illustr. 9.11: elle, elle, elle, 03-05-26, 6yrs 11m

('she takes me for an idiot!!! She thinks I'm a baby!!!! She thinks I don't understand a thing!!! She...she...she...etc)

What enrages Pia, it appears, is when she is not acknowledged or taken seriously. At such moments, she may even adopt an objective perspective, as if talking about someone else, as when she sticks a note on the wall in the hallway: 'when Pia is feeling sad, she sits here.'
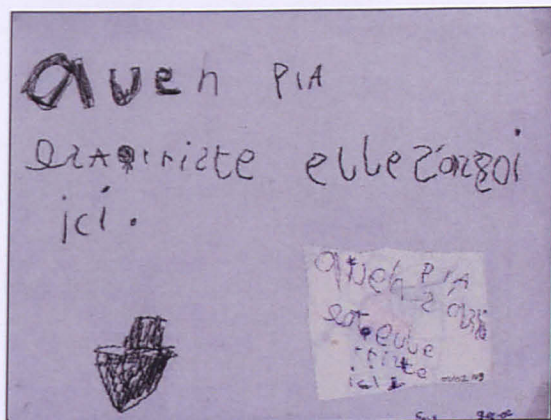
illustr.9.12: sad Pia, 02-02-09, 5yrs 8m

Feelings may be transmitted in the absence of words, as Pia resorts to non-verbal semiotic communication identified elsewhere (section 8.5, p194), or exemplified here in a text expressing bewilderment, her being at a 'loss for words' for why her beloved teddy should be hanging on the poker stand in front of the chimney:

illustr. 9.13: teddy, 04-10-25, 8yrs 4m

Feelings are not merely *in*, but are *behind* the texts. This latter level of affective input, which may be retraced in the fieldnotes, is, however, lost at the surface level of text production:

Me (M) speaking English. Pia (P) speaking French:

P: I was talking to Papa. He was talking to someone else and I had to wait for ages even though I was talking first. When I finished complaining all he said was *(imitating):* 'Huh, was ist denn los?' (i.e. 'huh? What's the matter?')

M: Has Papa read this?

P: I don't know. *(looking at me)* You're writing in English?

M: Mhm.

She watches me as I stick this post it on her writing. She asks:

P: What's the matter?

M: I stick this on cos I don't want to write on your work.

P: Are you taking this for your work?

M: Mhm.

She nods, then skips out of the room.

(Fieldnotes to the text 'please read', written to Papa: 04-07-27, 8yrs 1m.)
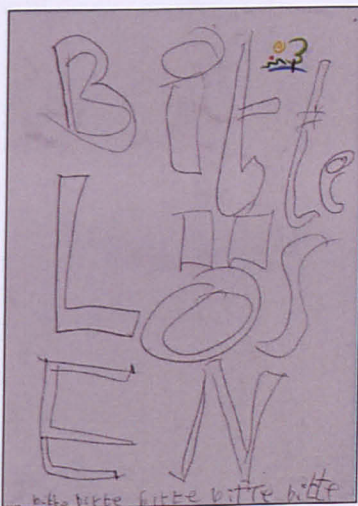
illustr. 9.14a: Please read, 04-07-27, 8yrs 1m
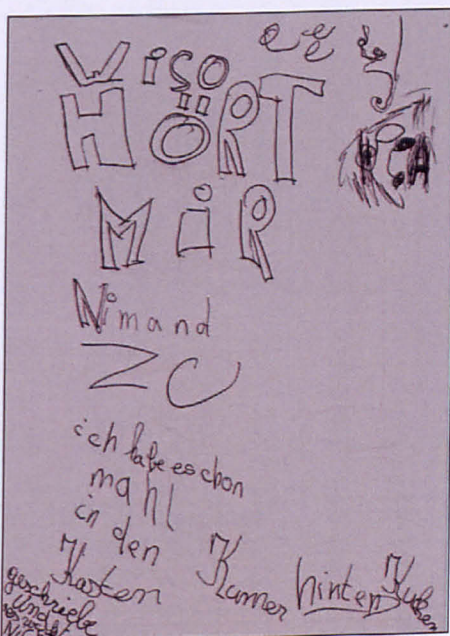
illustr. 9.14b: Please read, 04-07-27, 8yrs 1m

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'why doesn't anyone LISTEN to me I've already written about it in the complaints box (look at the back) but it's not working'

The quality of the social relationship between the interactants influences the feelings brought to an interaction. This, in turn, bears upon how such events are verbally framed. In the above transcript to the text *Please read*, we note the complete lack of initiation-response-feedback exchanges which prevail in the verbal framing at school (Ch.6,7). Instead, Pia at home is on a more equal footing, emotionally and verbally, with her mother.

9.5. Interactional zones of everyday literacy: Valsiner (1997)

In my analysis of the classroom as a learning site, I demonstrated how the room actually consists of individual learning zones, each offering the pupils different opportunities to interact with print (p182). The domestic environment may also be depicted in this way.

Pia lives in a print saturated world, in which the 'place' of literacy-related activities modulates according to context. Unlike the classroom, designed to structure the learning of a whole group of learners, the home is not explicitly designed to structure children's knowledge acquisition, yet provides more porous avenues for learning, often on the margins of awareness (Leichter, 1998). Like the classroom, the home consists of zones, yet there are no grammar tags on the walls and no names above the coat pegs. Literacy, being an integral aspect of daily family life, has no specific location or time set aside for it; it may take place anywhere, in any room, at any time, with anyone, and be inspired and expressed by anything: Pia might lie on the floor in the entrance and read in her pyjamas on a Sunday morning (Illustr.9.15); an image which exemplifies wonderfully the notion of crossing zones, or being porous, for Pia is 'in between' conventional 'rooms'. She might play with her self-made computer on the veranda (Illustr.8.8, p200), compose her texts in the kitchen whilst interacting with me as I cook (Illustr.8.9, p202). She might sit on the kitchen windowsill for her bedtime story, or perch on the edge of her bed, her hands clasped in the correct pose for nightly prayers:

illustr.9.15: Reading in the hallway, 04-08-14, 8yrs, 2m

illustr.9.16: Prayers, 00-04-16, 3yrs 10m

People not belonging to the family may enter the home zone, and join in:

illustr.9.17: bedtime story, winter 1999, 3yrs 6m

Non-group members may even take over, as when a friend, Christa, reads all our children a story, and all sit cross-legged on the floor, curled over the book:

Illustr.9.18: Story with Christa and friends, winter 2001, 5yrs 6m

Literacy-related interactions have no one prescribed 'home' or 'zone' within the home. Nonetheless, their dynamics, their discourses and their purposes are not only discernable, but diverge, as I demonstrate, from those Pia encounters at school (Ch.2,5-11).

If we move from the physical characteristics of Pia's environment (i.e. ZFM) to the social characteristics of Pia's environment (i.e. ZPA), we observe that both zones are larger than at school. The classroom as a Zone of Free Movement is physically more restrictive than the home: Pia would never be allowed lie on her belly in the hallway and read at school.

The number of interactional partners is also lower at school, concentrating mainly on the teacher-pupil dyad (Ch.7, pp155, 163, 172). At home, Pia may not only interact with one or more of her family members, but also with non-family members. Pia has a wider range of materials on offer at home. She writes, as we saw, with such unconventional means as tin foil, or a medicine spoon (Illustr.8.9, p202), sand and beads (section 4.4.2, p83). The non-binding nature of writing as a promoted activity at home also gives Pia the freedom to use her school writing material in different ways to those sanctioned in the classroom. At home, for example, she may write with felt-tips, but not at school (section 7.3.2.4, p165ff, section 7.4.2.4, p174). In fact, although I was originally irritated by Valsiner's description of the Zone of Promoted Activity as 'non-binding', which at first seemed not only paradoxical but rendered the ZPA less suited to describing classroom interactions, I gradually came to realise that it was precisely this non-binding condition which captured the main difference between home and school interactions. Children spend less time writing at home than they do at school. However, children's writing at home occupies a larger 'space' as a *non-binding* activity. Pia, in short, is freer to explore and use writing at home than she is at school. The paradox, therefore, lies in the fact that the more time spent on writing activities at school is not the sole reason for making Pia a better, more mature writer, since the home appears to contribute more quickly by offering more varied experiences which Pia may experiment with. This is so because institutional discourse and practice position Pia as an apprentice, not as a practitioner, which is the predominant practice, reflected in the corresponding discourse, at home. Ivanič's description of the characteristic beliefs of a 'social practice' discourse summarises what Pia experiences at home:

- *writing is*: purpose-driven context contingent communication
- *how to learn*: write authentic texts in authentic contexts
- *how to teach*: implicit/explicit teaching
- *how to assess*: effectiveness for the purpose

In Chapter Five, we saw Pia being helped to write the book to Natascha (p124ff). Whilst her mother helps her to negotiate spacing and spells the words for her, she does not explicitly attempt to teach Pia how to read. Pia assesses the appropriateness of her texts herself, an opportunity not on offer at school. If she says it is a book, it is a book. If she

decides not to colour her mother in brown, then because she deems the text effective, such as it stands (Ch.2).

At several points, then, (Ch.2,5,9), we have seen Pia being helped, but not primarily taught, at home. Indeed, certain teaching opportunities are seen, but not taken. The holistic, implicit character of domestic interactions leaves room for Pia to discover and learn by herself. Due to the lack of a tight, externally imposed learning agenda, she may choose and mix what she wants, and needs, to know. The result is an innovative networking of different types of knowledge – some gained at home, others gained at school – which give a true reflection of the level of writing skills achieved. If we focus our attention purely on classroom achievement, then, we fail to take in significant features of the child's writing development and practice.

9.6. Purposes behind writing as social activity

Pia's writing is too voluminous to not be purposeful or to have no deeper, more 'distal' intention than to play around with an abstract coding system. Some functions appear more immediate, or 'proximal' than others. We have already encountered the term 'proximal' with regard to Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, which Valsiner interprets as the 'next possible states' (section 3.7.3, p69). The proximal or short-term connotations of this term may be contrasted with distal or long-term considerations. By paying attention to the immediate, surface, short-term or proximal functions of Pia's authoring, and comparing these to deeper, long-term or distal functions, we may refine our understanding of the functions of her writing.

Many of the samples provided in this chapter and elsewhere throughout this thesis have demonstrated how the home environment shapes the proximal, or immediate, surface-level functions of Pia's writing. Her texts, however, also harbour distal, more long-term functions. These appear to be her desire to signal or negotiate membership to a structured socio-cultural world. Pia wants to 'make a mark', to be seen, to be taken seriously, and to participate. Pia literally stamps her presence on her environment via her hundreds of texts in their multifarious forms addressed to a myriad of people belonging to the several communities providing the social backdrop to her development.

Her writing encompasses a political aspect in as much as the over-arching distal function of her authoring is, ultimately, to explore and negotiate her own identity. This implies questions of empowerment. The picture which emerges is less one of neutral text production, but rather one of active, reflective engagement as the child affirms, negotiates, interrogates and refutes, all of which is possible within the less asymmetrical interactional dynamics of her home environment. Pia interacts, via her durable marks, with society. She solicits serious engagement, authentic interaction, and seeks to exercise a degree of control. Such control is exemplified by her *No Entry* logogram, (Illustr.8.6, p195), by her making use of her right to determine which of her texts appear in this very thesis (section 9.2, p211ff), or indeed by her resistance to attempts to get her to change her text (section 2.6.2, p41ff). Every single piece she writes is reiterating the statement 'this is me!' in one form or other, thereby setting, contesting and negotiating boundaries of selfhood:

Illustr.9.19: This is me, 03-05-02, 6yrs 11m

The expression of identity, whether intra- or intermental, involves social interaction, mediated by the appropriation of concrete or abstract socio-cultural tools as community resources (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Cole, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978). Whichever form it may take, social interaction, then, is inherently political and an expression of Self:

> Literacy is not just a matter of 'attitudes' or 'motivation' in acquiring a new 'skill' but is embedded in epistemology, deep notions of identity and what it is to be human.
>
> (Street, 2004:328)

This 'being human' is shaped by daily experience. These inspire Pia's learning and use of writing as a social tool. With the exception of her fairy stories, her authoring relates directly to personally lived situations, so that her texts amount to an autobiography, providing a discoursal picture of Pia's Self and reflecting the various roles she may occupy in her divergent social and linguistic contexts. Solsken notes:

> By learning to read and write children make choices through which they construct definitions of themselves and strive to be counted as members of social groups and recognized as unique individuals.
>
> (Solsken (1993:9), cited in Kendrick, 2003:38)

I would add that it is not merely as learners, but, more importantly, as *practitioners* that children reveal to us *how* they attempt to express such individuality and negotiate membership to social groups.

9.7. Summary

In this chapter, I conduct a qualitative analysis of Pia's domestic writing, thereby arguing the case for writing as social practice at many different levels.

Writing is demonstrated to occupy a smaller space at home than at school, and Pia's needs must be fitted into the rhythm and requirements of everyday family life. This does not stop Pia from being a keen writer at home, where it is perhaps precisely the lack of a tight, abstract structure or approach to learning which gives her the freedom to express herself so diversely and blend her knowledge, either at the semiotic level (e.g. script

styles), the structural level (forms/genres used), the productive level (i.e. collaborative interaction) and the linguistic level (codes/registers).

Pia's domestic writings provide insights on so much more than the cognitive level of a learner, yielding a more holistic, emotional, autobiographical, discoursal picture of an author. This poignant expression of Self is not matched in the texts produced at school, which yield an autobiographical picture of the learner predominantly at the cognitive level. Pia's authoring, as a cultural marker (Kress, 1994:228), is socially motivated as opposed to academically. Her authoring is also socially and linguistically contingent, reflecting the people she interacts with in different social domains, and demonstrating Pia's sensitivity to the linguistic skills of her audience. Writing is a means to an end; an expressive vehicle for real concerns in real contexts by means of which Pia negotiates her social environment, her place in it and the social roles she may occupy.

I now leave Pia's home environment to investigate the domestic literacy practices of her peers. This measure helps us to put Pia's development into a wider context so that we may establish how typical her behaviour appears to be.

Chapter Ten: Peer Analysis: Literacy in a Wider Context

Chapter Ten:

Peer Analysis: Literacy in a Wider Context

10.1. Introduction

In this chapter, and in response to my questionnaire (Ch.4), Pia's classmates, whom we met in Chapter Six, will tell us more about their experiences of literacy at home. Thus, as we accompanied Pia from home (Ch.2,5) to school (Ch.6,7) and back (Ch.8,9), we now, to a lesser degree, accompany her peers behind the closed doors of their inner thoughts and domestic worlds in order to enhance our appreciation of young learners' developmental chreods, or pathways, (Valsiner, 1997) into literacy.

10.2. Understanding children's perspectives on literacy

10.2.1. Assimilation and appropriation: closed questions

As a first step, the children, then five years old and in the last year of nursery school (*Grande Section*), answered a series of closed questions. Their answers make it immediately clear that they have begun to appropriate semiotic representations:

Q1: Do you know how to write?	Yes = 15 No = 7
Q2: Can you write your name?	Yes = 22 No = 0
Q3: Can you write other letters that are not part of your name?	Yes = 22 No = 0
Q4: Do you write at home?	Yes = 14 No = 8
Q5: Do your parents practise writing with you at home?	Yes = 5 No = 17
Q6: Do you keep all the writing you do at home?	Yes = 0 No = 19 Some = 2

10.2.2. Assimilation and appropriation: open-ended questions

Closed questions were followed by open-ended questions yielding answers which are less binary:

Q7: What do you write at home?	I copy things = 17 Words = 10 The letters I know = 9 Names = 6 *Whatever I want to = 3* Stories = 3 Rubbish = 1
Q8: Which languages do you write in at home?	French = 19 French and German = 3
Q9: What do you use when you are writing at home?	Paper = 22 Crayons = 12 Pencil = 10 Pen = 8 Felt tips = 6 Learner's book = 3 Exercise book = 2 Mum's things = 1

Here, the responses indicated are not equal to the number of children, for the open-ended nature of this section of the questionnaire allows the children to give more than one answer.

10.2.3. Interpreting assimilation and appropriation

These answers are already beginning to tell a story. They tell of a discrepancy between *knowing* and *doing*, for although seven children declare that they are unable to write (Q1), all twenty-two children can write their own name (Q2) and other letters of the alphabet (Q3). One possible explanation for this discrepancy could be that the children and I 'mean' different things by the term 'writing'. Maybe they assume I mean the conventional model they are being initiated into at school (Ch.6-7), and which they do not yet master, so that they are not 'ready' to say that they *can write*, even though they *can* according to my criteria of sign-making with recognisable communicative intentions. The children's responses strongly suggest that they see themselves as *becoming*, not *being*, thus as apprentices, rather than as practitioners.

The majority of the children (64%) write at home. An even larger number (77%) declare that their parents do not help them to write. This would appear to substantiate the observation (Ch.9) that domestic literacy is not characterised by teaching interactions familiar to the child from school, but by children who actively seek to get inside the world of print and make writing their own. A relevant question in the parental questionnaire will help us to reinforce, or rectify, this impression.

If we turn our attention to the open-ended answers, we see, from Q7, which notions the children harbour about what constitutes writing, a concept I further explore in the second section of the questionnaire. Whilst several responses reveal the child's awareness and ability to be explicit about certain forms or characteristics of writing, such as 'words', 'the letters I know', 'names' or 'stories', the most frequent response remains vague : 'I copy things'. It seems that the children are engaged in an activity which they are not yet able to explicitly verbalise, so that, once again, the discrepancy between 'knowing' and 'doing' is made apparent (Goodman & Wilde, 1992). One response, 'whatever I want', underlines a central difference to writing performed at school, drawing attention to the greater control children enjoy at home over their actions. Another response, describing the writing performed at home as 'rubbish', echoes the outburst of Pia's sister, who downgraded home knowledge to mere 'stuff' (p18), and thereby displaced the validity of the home environment as a valuable learning site.

No child claims to write in a language other than the 'school' languages, i.e. French and German, with the vast majority of children, despite three years of bilingual education, choosing to write only in French (Q8). This is perhaps due to the children's predominantly monolingual backgrounds (section 4.5.3, p93ff). However, not even Pia, who has a trilingual background, declares that she writes in her third native language, English. A cross check with the data charting the first appearances of specific developments in her writing reveals, however, that Pia's first English text was written in November 2001, thus around the time the questionnaire was conducted. Institutional bilingualism, clearly, does not infiltrate the children's domestic writing. We therefore have a gap between the children's writing behaviour at home and school.

All the children have writing materials at home (Q9), which overlap with those used at school, and whilst seventeen children, in response to Q5, declared that they received no

help with writing from their parents, we nonetheless have five responses to Q7 which allude to the use of books aimed at structuring literacy acquisition. No mention is made, however, of other modes beyond conventional pen and paper, such as the use of beads, sand, string, computers, which constitute the multimodal form of literacy I have documented as an important expressive means (p199ff). Once again, yet without wishing to use my daughter as the measure of good or age-specific behaviour, there might well be a rupture between what the children are able to report about their own practice, and what a more systematic collection of data might have produced. In other words, whether the children might nonetheless be engaging in behaviour they are either unconscious of, it taking place on the 'margins of awareness' (Leichter, 1994 cited in Weinberger, 1996), or else their performance outstrips their ability to articulate their behaviour (Goodman & Wilde, 1992:39-40).

10.2.4. General recognition and family practice

A further set of open-ended questions shift our focus from the children's own writing practice to their more general appreciation of the concept of writing, their general awareness of the presence of print and their awareness of literate behaviour within their own families:

Q10: What is writing?	Words = 10 What you learn at school = 6 In books = 3 Letters, abc etc = 2 Don't know = 1
Q11: Where can you see writing in your house?	On pages = 8 On a birthday card = 6 Don't know = 5 In books = 4 In the kitchen = 2 On the ABC wall-chart = 1 In the study = 1 In a newspaper = 1
Q12: Where can you see writing elsewhere when you are not at home?	At school = 9 Don't know = 8 On shops = 6 On street signs = 3 In books = 1 On walls and trees = 1
Q13: Do you ever see other people in your family writing at home?	No-one = 11 Older siblings = 7 Mum = 5 Dad = 1

At the abstract level (Q10), the children demonstrate a grasp of the concept of writing, with only one response revealing the child's lack of knowledge. Nevertheless, when a child says 'don't know', and although it is incumbent upon us as researchers to take each response as authentic, we should not altogether exclude the possibility that 'don't know' might also mean 'can't explain' for young children unaccustomed to having to make explicit such forms of knowledge.

The children's rejoinders confirm a degree of sensitivity to the overall presence of writing at home (Q11). Although the third most frequent response is 'don't know', twenty-five of the twenty-nine declarations, thus 83%, make concrete reference to specific locations (e.g. kitchen) and objects (e.g. birthday card, wall-chart).

With regard to the children's awareness of writing in a wider cultural context, we continue to register positive, though less accentuated, indices (Q12). We note that 71% of the rejoinders make concrete, and correct references to the presence of writing beyond the home, to the point of showing that even posters nailed to trees have not gone by unnoticed. Once again, nonetheless bearing in mind the advice of Westcott & Littleton (2006) not to 'pathologize' children's answers, we should take in the fact that the second most frequent answer, and 29% of the total responses (as opposed to 17% in the previous question), document 'don't know'. The results given to Q11 and Q12 seem to indicate the children's greater familiarity with potential locations of writing within the home than beyond, where writing is to be found mainly in schools (9 responses) or in shops (6 responses). Although the eyes of a five-year-old do not necessarily 'register' easily semiotic information pitched at the adult eye-level, we nonetheless have clear indications that the children are not immune to the presence of writing at home and beyond. The claim still being made by official French policy three years after my questionnaire, namely that, for many children, school constitutes the only place where print is encountered (CNDP novembre 2004: *Lire au CP*, p8), is by no means substantiated by the data I have collected.

Able to write and to describe certain properties of writing, the major tools employed or where writing may be found at home and beyond, the children, at first sight, appear to be less receptive to the literate behaviour of other members of their own family (Q13).

Almost half the class (48%) declares seeing no other member of the family write. The person the child is most likely to see writing is a sibling, as opposed to mum or dad, an observation in keeping with the fact that people generally do write less once they are out of compulsory education and do not enter higher education (cf also Barton & Padmore, 1994; Taylor,1994).

10.2.5. Feelings towards literacy

Whereas French curricular guidelines are quite explicit about attainment levels even from the nursery school years (CNDP 2002, CNDP février 2003, CNDP novembre 2004), barely giving mention to the correlation between emotion and cognition, the German syllabus employed at the school involved repeatedly underlines the importance of harnessing learners' emotional access to the world of print (e.g. http://www.ls-bw.de/allg/lp/bpgs.pdf). A section of the questionnaire, thus, sought to illuminate the feelings the children associated with literacy acquisition:

Q14: Do you like writing?	Yes = 16 A little = 3 Don't know = 2 No = 1
Q15: Can you tell me why you like writing?	Don't know = 7 To go to CP (i.e. Year 1) = 4 To write my name for school = 3 To learn to read = 2 Because I like writing loops/letters = 2 To read to my dolls = 1 Because it's easy = 1 Because I've got books at home to practice = 1
Q16: Can you tell me why you don't like it?	Because it's boring. I prefer to play = 1

The vast majority of children are able to be quite explicit about their feelings towards writing (Q14) although approximately a third of the class cannot explain why (Q15) they in fact like writing. Two children make reference to the graphical properties they all spend so many hours training. Two see it as a tool for reading, and only one, significantly, as a tool for social interaction, namely for reading to dolls. Whilst seven

responses make a direct association with the scholastic context (to go to $CP = 4$, to write one's name for school = 3), only two refer to properties within the domestic context which contribute towards establishing positive feelings towards writing (to read to my dolls = 1, because I've got books at home to practice = 1).

At this point, it would be propitious to stop and reflect upon the complexity of these answers. On the one hand, many of the responses might seem to be answering an altogether different question, since they speak of the *functions* of writing (to learn to read, to go to *CP*, to write one's name for school, to read to dolls), which, we note, are predominantly associated with the scholastic context. On the other hand, we observe a diffuse range of origins for the positive feelings brought to literacy, these being for example semiotic (loops/letters) or cognitive (because it's easy). We discover that many explanations are inward-looking, involving the child as an isolate, but that there is recognition of the emotional reward in using writing to look 'outward' in order to interact with others, in this case, to read to dolls. The case for children's ability to use writing as a social tool may, therefore, be regarded as being reinforced.

Given that the children are only just beginning to write complete words at this stage of their development, a central function of their writing, certainly at school, but possibly also at home, as my primary data suggests, is, for the time being, to get it right. This does not mean that their writing involves 'non events' (Bissex, 1980), an adult-centred perspective, for the wish to get it right does not impede children from investing their texts with social meaning. Even Pia's very first texts, we recall, were conceived of as meaningful invitations to social interaction: they were stories, books, games, declarations of love to friends and family. Moreover, the texts were always written because she *wanted to*. She knew *what* she was doing and she knew *why*. It should, further, be noted that, in the initial stages of her authorship, Pia's texts were motivated by positive feelings. Negative feelings such as hatred or anger appear later in her development. Pia's peers, similarly, do not approach the task of literacy acquisition and practice with indifference and we have evidence of their reflections on what literacy is, what 'counts' and what it might be good for. What *is* and what *counts* are, however, not synonymous, for you can stop counting whenever you like. What counts is, essentially, always a *choice*; the result of a sub/conscious selection of criteria to the effect of marginalizing, if not excluding, other forms of the same phenomenon. A very strong

message being transmitted by the children's answers to the questionnaire and despite their sensitivity to and engagement with print in their everyday lives is that literacy is something you learn at and *for* school.

Around a quarter of the class (23%) expressed ambiguous feelings towards writing (Q14); liking it 'a little' (3 responses) or not knowing whether they liked writing at all (2 responses). One child, however, not only leaves no doubt as to the negative feelings associated with writing, but is able to justify the dislike (Q16):

> 'because it's boring. I prefer to play'

This comment may be related back to the discussion of literacy as work or play in Chapter Seven. It suggests that writing is not only uninteresting, but that it is like working, which makes it unappealing. It is possible that this child has writing at school in mind, where the decontextualised activities might fail to inspire motivation, and where writing, impressed upon the children as real work (Ch.6-7), is excluded from the realm of play.

10.2.6. Functions of literacy

The children, it seems, largely associate literacy learning and use with school, yet their responses also indicate their awareness of literacy as social practice involving typical everyday forms which are not trained at school:

Q17: Why do you think you learn to write?	For school = 7 Don't know = 7 To write words = 1 Because I like it = 1 To give letters = 1 Because mum says = 1 Because it's good = 1
Q18: Do you know what a letter is?	Yes = 22 No = 0
Q19: Can you tell me what the difference is between a letter and a book?	Don't know = 18 Letters have stamps = 1 A letter is written, a book is not = 1 Letters are sent = 1 Books are read or played with = 1 A letter is not a story = 1

One child reveals an awareness of a typical literacy-based interaction in an everyday context, namely writing and sending letters (Q17) whilst the other responses corroborate the impressions already emerging from Q10 and Q15 concerning the predominant correlation between literacy and school.

Three forms of everyday literacy activities were selected: letters, books and greeting cards. My primary data indicated Pia's early awareness and production of these three forms, thus I sought to ascertain the typicality of such awareness.

Pia is not alone in her consciousness of these literate forms. All the children know what a letter is (Q18), even though the vast majority had never written one (Q24). Books are

familiar to the children in both the scholastic and domestic contexts, each introducing the children to different content and interactional styles so that the description of a book as a 'story' or as something you can play with strongly invites the interpretation that the children who provide these responses have storybooks and the domestic context in mind.

A number of responses reveal certain children's sensitivity to the differing properties of books, letters and cards, although many are unable to explain what distinguishes the one from the other (Q19, Q20). The potential confusion in English between a letter as a semiotic sign, e.g. abc, and a letter as a written communication, i.e. as mail, is obviated in French, the language in which the questionnaire was conducted, for in French, the two terms are not the same: *lettre* for the former, *courrier* for the latter.

A number of responses to Q19, Q20 and Q21 demonstrate an understanding not only of the inherent properties of letters, books and cards, but also of their appropriate social contexts. Letters have stamps and are sent. You put letters in a letterbox, but to do this, you first need to know the address of the recipient. You can play with books (e.g. electronic or interactive books). Books tell a story. You receive cards for your birthday. Cards have pictures. 'A card is a little folded book you give in an envelope to someone you like'.

By the frequency of certain responses, we see that one's birthday, as for Pia, constitutes an important event in the life of a child. This event is also accompanied by literate social interaction; the child receives a birthday card, from family members and maybe also from friends. Such cards might be sent per post. In such cases, the properties of cards and letters merge, for you will require an envelope, a stamp, the address, and a letterbox. The children do not exclude these properties in their distinction between the intrinsic and social interactional affordances of letters and cards; they do not say the one is put in an envelope, has stamps, must be sent and put in a letterbox whereas the other does not. They do not say the one is written and the other is not. One response in particular shows an appreciation of the subtle differences between all the three forms proposed in the questionnaire in that it not only distinguishes between the two forms proposed in the question, namely between a letter and a card (Q20), but makes reference to the third:

'a card is a little folded book you give in an envelope to someone you like'.

The answers confirm the significance of mothers as key participants of literacy-based social interaction. Nine children would give a letter to their mums so that the recipient receives it. Six would simply give the letter to the person concerned. This is not surprising, for the children's friends are often also classmates, as with Pia's friend Natascha (Ch.5). A quantitative analysis of Pia's social networks indicated that, between January 2003 and April 2004, thus between the age of 6yrs 7m and 7yrs 10m, Pia wrote over twenty 'communications' to her then best friend, and classmate, Cécile. None of these were sent by post. By contrast, letters to her German penpal, Jessica, were. In those letters to be sent per post, Pia's mother, but also other family members were solicited so that event became a family interaction. The home environment, therefore, has begun to shape children's notions of literacy as social practice, and transmit the relevant social procedures for successful practice.

Whilst it was rare for the children to receive letters (Q22), all of them have received cards (Q23). Similarly, whilst only one child had written a letter (Q24), every child had made or written a card (Q25). The two possibilities offered by the formulation of Q25 are intentional, for I know, and have documented (p196ff) the fact that Pia would much rather make a card, and spends considerable time in doing so, than write a message in a ready-bought one, which she has also done. The fact that children receive more cards than letters might well provide the motivation for them to also write more cards than letters.

By writing or making a card, be it a birthday card, a Mother's Day, Father's Day, Easter, Christmas, friendship card or otherwise, the child is actively involved in a literacy-based interaction. This action is also social, or peopled, extending beyond a child's solitary use of a social semiotic tool and encompassing other social actors, helpers and recipients.

The overwhelming majority of the children (86%) try to read such cards themselves (Q26). All, however, ask someone else to read the card to them. This would imply that all the children still need assistance, even if only to have their understanding confirmed.

In so doing, they exhibit their awareness of the limits of their knowledge, actively initiate the help needed and transform the reading act into a collaborative activity.

None of the children write back (Q28). One possible explanation could be because some feel they cannot write well enough (Q1). This uncertainty might be attributable to the fact that they have picked up on their status as non-writers, as a year long of being told, in the *Grande Section,* that they are *learning* to write, might reinforce.

10.2.7. The limits of awareness. The margins of awareness

The children have demonstrated that they can be quite explicit about the qualities of at least three forms of everyday literacy. When asked what they wrote at home, however, whilst two children mentioned stories, and nineteen spoke about the abstract quality of writing words or letters known, seventeen children, thus 77%, said they copied 'things' (Q7). No-one mentioned letters or cards, despite later confirmation that they had all written cards (Q25). Such discrepant responses, overlapping with the conflicting messages the children send about their ability to write (Q1-4), may be explained.

One of the characteristics of domestic literacy is its implicit nature, it being, in a sense, a spin off from ordinary, daily life:

> Even when parents quite consciously introduced their children to print, the words were locked into the context of the situation. The label on the shampoo bottle, the recipe for carrot bread, the neon signs on the street were not constructed specifically to teach reading; they were part of the child's world, and the child learned of their purpose as well as of their meaning. (Taylor, 1994:69)

Domestic literacy, being 'inherited' indirectly, it being one of the threads that make up the fabric of everyday life, as we saw in Chapters Two, Eight and Nine, and one, furthermore, which might not be overly important for children (Kress, 2003:154), it can easily pass by unnoticed. It may remain on the 'margins of awareness' (Leichter, 1994 in Weinberger, 1996). There is no danger of this at school, where the children's conscious appreciation for the properties of specific forms of literacy is actively trained in 'contrived encounters' (Wood, 1988:15). In this chapter, I have tried to tease out the knowledge of literacy stored on the margins of these children's awareness. At times,

conflicting threads of knowledge have knotted to form an image that is not altogether silken, reminding us of the 'knotted relevancies' of research referred to in Chapter Four (p111). Nonetheless, the children's responses confirm that literacy activity *is* engaged in beyond the school-gate. The children *are* aware of this. Pia's behaviour *does* appear to have something in common with her peers. No set of answers stand out so much that they can be attributed to a child who knows more than the other children in the class. Pia, who comes from a highly literate family, lives in a house that is 'littered' with print (p36) and herself produces nearly eight hundred texts during my research period, like her peers, does not seem to have consciously taken in the scope of her literate behaviour at home:

> **Me:** Would you say that you write and read at home, Pia?
> **Pia:** Not so much... I read a lot, but I don't write so much.

> Upon being presented with two heavy files of *her* work, Pia stared – and grinned – in disbelief.
>
> (extract from RD)

It is possible, it seems, for a child to be sensitized, active, demonstrate broad and sophisticated literate skills, yet nonetheless remain *unaware* of what she is doing or what is taking place around her. One explanation could possibly be that, due to the marginal nature of literacy at home, it is difficult for the children to articulate themselves. It is, after all, not easy to be explicit about something you have never given any, or little, thought to. A further explanation could be that the children, and in particular Pia, whom I have had the opportunity to speak to more frequently about the matter (see appendix), are indeed cognizant of their literate behaviour at home ('Yes' was said 204 times by the class in the questionnaire, in comparison to 118 'No' and 54 'Don't know'), but they are unable to evaluate the distal significance of their action: literacy at home might simply be perceived of as one of the 'things' you do, nobody ever drawing attention to it or according it greater significance as a promoted activity (p223ff). The discourses at home shaping children's experience of literacy are predominantly implicit ones (Ch.2,Ch.9), transmitting the message, and real life experience, of literacy as social practice and as a creative process, characterised by authentic purpose-driven context-contingent communication (Ivanič, 2004). Being implicit, it becomes harder for young children to be explicit about what they know, in comparison to the clearly spelled-out messages of the classroom. The effect of the implicit nature of learning at home is to make it easier to overlook not only the practice

itself but the value thereof, and thus of the significance of the home as a valuable site of learning (Kenner, 2004).

10.3. Summary

In this chapter, I analysed the findings of a questionnaire addressed to Pia's class with the view to gaining comparative data on young children's understandings about literacy. The questionnaire permits a new 'take' on the notion of a Zone of Promoted Activity, as seen from the child's perspective. The findings confirm that Pia thinks much like the other children in her class and that she, like her peers, exhibits knowledge of literacy as 'peopled' activity in a wider social context, sensitive to the functions, materials and audiences involved. As such, the children demonstrate some knowledge of the fact that literacy can be shaped in a manner which differs to their experiences of literacy at school.

The children's responses demonstrate that all the children are literate. Their writing is 'invested with intention' (Kress, 1997:90), despite an apparent uncertainty the children's statements imply about their status as writers.

The children know a lot about literacy, possibly more than they are able to explain. Nor do they wait to enter the classroom to be taught about literacy, but are 'ready' and active beyond institutional literacy transmission (Hall, 1994). Literacy at home, however, certainly seems to be less important to the children than literacy at school, with few children keeping what they write, and conflicting statements being made about the purposes of literacy, which are mainly coupled with the scholastic context in the minds of the five-year-olds. The implicit character of literacy practice and discourse at home means that its messages and influence on shaping children's learning and practice remain on the margins of the children's awareness, not only making it difficult for children to talk explicitly about domestic practice, but also possibly undermining children's appreciation of the home as a valuable learning environment.

Now that we have confirmed and made transparent the latent knowledge Pia shares with her peers about literacy in a wider context, I would like to turn to those people who contribute largely to shaping young learners' holistic impressions and openings to the world of print so that we may learn how this is done.

Chapter Eleven: Parental Perspectives on Domestic Literacy

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Parental Perspectives on Domestic Literacy

11.1. Introduction

The final measure, intended to reinforce not only the 'full-blooded facts' (Malinowski, 1964) but also the 'stable interpretations' (Clifford, 1988) concerning children's domestic literacy, is provided by a questionnaire addressed to the parents of Pia's peers. In view of the inextricable relationship between reading and writing, I direct my focus, this time, to the dynamics of story-reading as a key literacy activity based upon interaction with books, as these are still regarded as a 'core technology' (Luke *et al.,* 2003) even in this age of virtual communication.

11.2. Understanding parental contributions to shaping children's literacy

11.2.1. Discovering literacy

How parents foster their children's sensitivity to print was probed by means of open-ended and closed questions:

Q1: Does your child own any books?	Yes = 22
Q2: Do you borrow children's books from the school library	Yes = 22
Q3: If yes, how often?	1xwk = 22
Q4: Do you borrow children's books from a public library?	Yes = 15 No = 7
Q5: If you visit a library, how often do you go?	1xwk = 4 1xfortnight = 2 1xmonth = 9
Q6: Do you take your child with you to the library?	Yes = 14 Not always = 1

Q7: Is there written material in the child's home environment in an alphabet different to the one taught at school?	No = 21 Yes: music = 1
Q8: Through which medium does your child encounter stories at home?	Books = 22 TV = 15 Video cassettes = 7 Audio cassettes = 5 Computer software = 2 Memorised fairytale recitals = 1 Invented stories = 1
Q9: Which languages do your children hear stories in at home?	French = 22 French and German = 5 French, German and English = 3
Q10: What in your opinion are the benefits of reading to your child?	To offer my child more than I experienced myself as a child = 21 Awaken interest = 2 Concentration training = 2 Personality forming = 3 Train obedience = 1 Transmit moral values = 1 Create interest in reading = 3 Encourage imagination = 3 Keep children quiet = 2 Train vocabulary/pronunciation = 3 Get children to dream = 1 Make children talk = 1 Train comprehension = 5 Bridge different subjects/themes = 2 Pleasure = 3 Teach reading and writing = 1 Open the mind/discover world = 2 Transmit knowledge = 1
Q11: Do you practise writing with your child?	Yes = 21 No = 1

All the children own books (Q1). All the children borrow books from the school library on a weekly basis (Q2, Q3) and over two-thirds (68%) of the children also visit public libraries (Q4-6). There is, then, regular engagement with print at home.

A little over a third (36%) of the households read to their children in other languages, with three households reading in three languages (Q9). This is interesting, for Pia is the only trilingual child in her class and only three of the twenty-two families are bilingual (section 4.5.3, p93). The parents who read to their children in other languages explained that they wanted their children to develop an ear and a better 'feeling' for these languages, even if they could not yet understand everything.

The parents offer their children stories in various forms (Q8). Some promote aural experiences (e.g. via audio cassettes or memorised/invented narrations). Others foster greater visual mobility during the narrative interaction (electronic stories, television, video cassettes). Each of these types of narrative interaction solicits different interactive skills from the listener, placing reading, seeing, touching and hearing in changing constellations. The central medium, however, remains the book.

The parents expressed concrete beliefs about the benefits of reading to their children (Q10). These responses may be regrouped to reveal implicit emotional, cognitive or behavioural orientations:

Emotional	Offer an experience parents wish for themselves = 21 Create interest in reading = 3 Pleasure = 3 Encourage imagination = 3 Awaken interest = 2 Get children to dream = 1
Cognitive	Train comprehension = 5 Train vocabulary and pronunciation = 3 Concentration training = 2 Open the mind/discover world = 2 Bridge different themes = 2 Make children talk = 1 Teach reading and writing = 1 Transmit knowledge = 1
Behavioural	Personality forming = 3 Keep children quiet = 2 Transmit moral values = 1 Train obedience = 1

Once again, we see the difficulty of extricating emotion from cognition, for some of the responses classified as emotionally motivated (e.g. child interest), have direct cognitive consequences.

Reading stories as a vocabulary training opportunity highlights the cognitive-linguistic ambitions of the parents. The case of 'making the children talk' is not so straightforward. Whilst this has cognitive-linguistic undertones, it also harbours behavioural qualities, much like 'keeping the children quiet'.

Quantitatively, most responses to Q10 are emotionally motivated (33 responses). The parents speak of 'offering', 'encouraging', 'awakening', 'pleasure', 'imagination', 'interest', 'dream'. The second largest group, with approximately 50% less responses, relates to the cognitive qualities of story-reading (17 responses). Here, the vocabulary is of another nature: 'train', 'concentrate', 'comprehension' 'bridge', 'themes', 'vocabulary', 'pronunciation', 'teach', 'transmit', 'knowledge'. We note, further, that there are more emotionally oriented responses relating to reading (3 responses) than there are cognitive oriented ones (1 response). The final orientation towards story-reading is the behavioural one (7 responses), using similar terms to those encountered in the cognitive orientation: behavioural aims include 'forming' the child's personality, 'transmitting' moral values, 'training obedience', 'keeping the children quiet'.

There is a sense in which these three orientations towards the benefits of reading are either of an expansive or restrictive nature, echoing the interplay between 'limiting' and 'promoting' characteristics described by Valsiner (1997). An emotional orientation is an 'opening', expansive one. Cognitive and behavioural orientations, however, 'restrict' the child's development by bringing it into alignment with conventional expectations. The explicit nature of the parents' comments contradicts Heath's belief that few parents are aware of the preparatory character of their domestic practices (Heath, 1982). This might have been true for the American families taking part in Heath's study over a quarter of a century ago, and who belong to a different generation of parents. Heath's observation does not hold true for the French families participating in my research, who are not only aware of the preparatory characteristics of their domestic practices, but also seem to prioritise an emotional approach to learning.

11.2.2. The dynamics of family literacy

A second set of questions sought to throw more light upon family interactional styles.

Q12: Which members of the child's closer domestic environment read to the child?	Parents = 22 Siblings = 6 Grandparents = 4 Childminder= 4
Q13: Who reads the most stories?	Mother = 15 Mother and Father =4 Father and/or older brother =1

	Father and older sister =1
	Older sister = 1
Q14: How often does your child listen to stories per month outside school?	Daily =7 Often = 5 Sometimes = 8 Rarely = 1
Q15: Who chooses the story?	*Child = 15* Storyteller = 7
Q16: Who holds the book?	*Storyteller = 16* Storyteller + child = 5 Child = 1
Q17: Who turns the pages?	Storyteller = 16 Storyteller + child = 5 Child=1
Q18: When you read, do you follow the text with your finger?	Yes = 18 No = 4
Q19: Who generally suggests reading a story?	Parent = 17 Child = 5
Q20: Do you read a story at a specific time?	Bedtime = 21 No = 1
Q21: Where is the child when the story is being read?	In/on bed = 17 On reader's lap = 3 In the kitchen= 1 On the Sofa = 2
Q22: Do you ever interrupt the story if your child is disinterested?	Yes = 16 No = 6
Q23: Do you ever interrupt to perform a comprehension check?	Yes = 17 No = 5

Not only do all the parents read to their children (Q12, Q13), but other family members, notably siblings and grandparents, may also act as 'guiding lights' (Padmore, 1994; Gregory, 2001; Kelly *et al.*, 2001). In general, however, it is the mother who by far (i.e. 68%) reads more often to the child than any other family member (Q13). In the children's questionnaire, we remember, the word 'mum' appeared more often than 'dad' (Ch.10: Q13, p235, Q 21, p240).

In fifteen of the twenty-two households, it is the child who chooses the story (Q15) although in an even greater number of households, it is the parent who instigates the reading activity (Q19). The linguistic interaction during story-reading (Q22-23) is, however, not matched at the tactile level. Children are hardly permitted to hold the book

on their own (Q16, also illustr.9.17, p225). On the one hand, the adult is reading to 'pass on' experiences which foster the child's growth. On the other, adults, or the more knowledgeable participants, appear to find it difficult to 'let go'. The child, therefore, remains bound to a certain degree in an asymmetrical interaction which, when coupled with the comprehension checks (Q23), is reminiscent of the classroom. Having said this, it has been proven that children who are familiar with such strategies at home perform better at school (Fairclough, 1989; Gee, 1994; Verhoeven *et al.*, 2002).

From the remaining questions in this section of the questionnaire, we discover how parents consciously seek to structure their children's experience of story-reading. One means of doing this is to guide the child synoptically by making explicit the directionality of the words (Q18), and by placing one's finger on the word being read in order to underline the correlation between written and spoken words, hence the 'passage from language heard to language seen' (Bissex, 1980:119). Another way is to refer back to elements of the narrative and ask the child about it (Q22). The regular and systematic nature of story-reading at home may nonetheless be punctuated by more individual stances. Thus, not all children hear stories only at bedtime (Q20) and story-reading may take place in a number of places inviting a number of poses (Q21). Almost equal to the number of parents who conduct comprehension checks is the number of those who do not 'force' a story if the child displays disinterest (Q22). Once again, the child's feelings play a key role.

11.2.3. The implicit nature of family interactional dynamics

These findings not only confirm the different ways families may channel children through reading as a literacy event, but also draw attention to the physical (ZFM), social (ZPA) and psychological (ZPD) characteristics of such interactions.

The responses of both parents (Ch.11) and children (Ch.10) indicate that literacy is also a promoted activity at home, the dynamics of which may overlap, as with comprehension checks, but which essentially diverges from school practice (Ch.6-7). This is due to the different interplay between the physical (ZFM), social (ZPA) and psychological (ZPD) interactional features of the home (Valsiner, 1997).

Parents interact with their children in line with their personal implicit 'educational agenda' (Leichter, in Goelman *et al.*, 1984:38). As part of this agenda, parents are interested in the gains from literacy-related activities. These gains, however, are not only perceived of as cognitive, but, more importantly, as emotional, and, in the third instance, behavioural. Parents, therefore, *are* teachers, yet they are teachers with less visibility, particularly in the minds of their children (section 10.2.7, p243).

The *ZPA* at home has more personal and material resources on offer. Children may have more than one 'guiding light', and the material resources for stories extend beyond mere books, so that new interactional zones, and new intertextual nodes, are created. These result in stretching the children's skills beyond curricular expectations, which, at this stage, simply require the children to be able to write their own name and copy a short phrase without major errors in French (CNDP, *novembre* 2004), or even circumvent specific reference to cognitive objectives in favour of underlining the significance of emotional properties inherent in learning, as in German (Deviterne *et al.*, 2006; Kahl & Otto, 2007; Otto & Spiewak, 2004; Strassmann, 2004). The level of ability demonstrated at home, then, provides a more accurate indication of the child's Zone of Proximal Development, which is fostered by an interactional style in which both emotional and cognitive factors play an important, if barely visible, role.

11.2.4. Family ideologies and writing discourses

Ivanič's framework (Ivanič, 2004), originally conceived to capture both the reading and writing aspects of literacy (p63), and useful for unearthing classroom ideologies, may also make transparent the subtle blending of various literacy-related discourses at home. Whilst a 'skills' approach is assumed by parents practising writing with their children, and a 'genre' approach is hinted at in story-reading objectives, strengthening, by repetition, the child's sensitivity to the characteristics of the narrative, the prevailing discourses of the families questioned are the 'creativity' discourse, motivated by genuine interest rather than by external prescription, and a 'social practice' perspective, where literacy is conceived of as an authentic, 'purpose-driven communication in a social context' (Ivanič, 2004: 225). Social practice and creativity discourses *do not*

require explicit teaching according to Ivanič. These two discourses, motivating much of domestic interaction, map onto the interactional perspective to confirm the implicit nature of interactions as the most salient feature of domestic literacy practice.

11.2.5. Children as active enquirer-practitioners

Story-reading at home appears to be a flexible event, in which it is common practice for the children to assume an active role as co-reader:

Q24: Does the child interrupt a story in order to ask questions?	Yes = 22
Q25: Have you ever observed differences in the child's level of interest during the course of the story?	Yes = 22
Q26: Have you ever witnessed your child telling him/herself a story at home from a book?	Yes = 19 No = 2
Q27: Does the story always relate to the book?	Yes = 15 No = 4
Q28: Have you ever witnessed your child inventing and telling a story without the aid of a book?	Yes = 14 No = 8
Q29: Have you ever witnessed your child writing or practising writing at home?	Y=21 N=1
Q30: Does your child read what s/he has written?	Yes = 20 Sometimes = 1
Q31: Does your child ever ask for printed material to support his/her writing activities?	Yes = 20 No = 2
Q32: Does your child ever ask 'what does this mean/say?'	Yes = 21 No = 1

All the children are reported to interrupt the story to ask questions (Q24). All the children make their interest, or lack of it, during the story-reading event explicit (Q25). In nineteen cases (i.e. 86%), the children also tell themselves stories without adult or sibling assistance, thereby effectuating the 'takeover' that seemed somewhat problematic regarding the tactile relationship to the book (Q26, Q16). When reading a story alone, the child appears to successfully reconstruct the story (Q27, also Czerniewska, 1994; Dombey & Spencer, 1994:38; Kress, 1997; Vygotsky, 1994: 55). Many families (64%) also report that their child narrates stories without the aid of a book (Q28). In this manner, children create an expressive space for themselves outside adult control and one in which, as in their writing activities, they may practise,

consolidate and extend their knowledge, determining alone the degree of helped required (Q29-32).

11.3. Summary

In this chapter, and by means of a questionnaire, I investigated the parental attitudes shaping literacy in the homes of Pia's peers.

Parental responses confirm that the home provides numerous zones, personal and material resources which have the ability to ignite and foster children's curiosity towards and engagement with literacy.

The central finding to emerge is that parents have an educational agenda at home (Leichter (1984), in Goelman *et al.*, 1984*)*, a 'natural curriculum' (Brooker, 2002:44; Baynham, 1995), with a tendency towards an ideological view of literacy (Street, 1997). This agenda, giving priority to emotional rather than cognitive gains (Leichter (1984), in Goelman *et al.*, 1984; Lancaster, 2003; Kress, 2003, Rowe, 2003), is, however, largely implicit. Measures taken by parents to foster their children's development remain, therefore, invisible. Paradoxically, it is precisely these implicit, holistic, less rigid interactional strategies, mixing the physical, social and psychological framing of the child differently to schools, which appear to be fostering higher levels of skill.

Chapter Twelve: Closing the Gap: Forging Bridges between Learning Environments

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Closing the Gap: Forging Bridges between Learning Environments

12.1. Introduction

> The written word has always held a particular fascination for me, like the lithe dance of a flame, its odour mutating from yellow to blue; like the tail of a kite, winking as it frolics through the air beyond my reach. One day, I remember avowing, I shall catch you.
> (Extract from Research Diary 02.11.07)

The present thesis is the result of over three and a half decades of running after words; a chase which has culminated in the systematic investigation and argumentation of how the environments of home in particular and school by comparison shape Pia's understandings and uses of writing.

In this final chapter, I retrace the steps taken to 'catch words'. I start by drawing together the most salient features of my pathway through the research, before I go on to recapitulate the central findings to have emerged from this scientific adventure. This thesis concludes with a wink to the future, and to future pathways through literacy which may bridge the gap between home and school environments in order to enrich children's writing development.

12.2 Mind the gap?

The starting point of my thesis was sparked off by an angry outburst:

> But Mummy! The one has nothing to do with the other! School is school, and here you are telling me *stuff* about home! What the teacher says is right, and anyway, what do *you* know!

These wounding words triggered off a long series of reflections about the value, and visibility, of homes as learning environments (Ch.1). For everyone, it seemed clear that, at school, you learn. However, I wondered whether it was an incontestable fact that, in

schools, you learn better, and more, in comparison to homes, where children only get told 'stuff'. I decided to pursue these thoughts empirically, within the framework of my longstanding interest in cultural diversity and literacy development. My interests gradually became a concrete intention to conduct a longitudinal, qualitative micro-study of domestic writing as situated cultural practice. In other words, I wanted to explore the 'stuff' taking place at home and to compare this to classroom literacy-related experiences. I wanted to discover what was so different about these two domains that my eldest daughter, who was a mere six years old at the time, had such a strong, unequivocal conviction that 'the one has nothing to do with the other'. I began to scan my local environment in the hope of finding families who had systematically collected their children's domestic writings over a number of years, particularly between the ages of three to eight. Whilst a number of parents were found who had collected their children's products from nursery school, no families could be found who had done the same at home. The only one I knew who had such a rich database, encompassing the domestic and scholastic writings of their children, was myself. My thesis would therefore be based upon an investigation of the domestic writings of one of my own children. This investigation is captured in a central question:

How do the home and school environments bear upon children's learning and use of writing?

In what follows, I re-track, chapter by chapter, how this question is answered.

12.3 Children's domestic writings

12.3.1. Discovering writing in the domestic context

The frontispiece to my thesis comprises the domestic writings of my second daughter, Pia, from whom, with whom and thanks to whom I could collect almost eight hundred samples of voluntarily written texts between September 1999 to August 2005, hence from my daughter aged 3-9 years. Pia is a trilingual child who speaks French, German and English at home to her English mother, her German father, and to her elder sister, Whitney. The family lives in Alsace, a bi-lingual region in north-east France, in which

the German dialect, Alsatian is still spoken and promoted. Pia has attended a bi-lingual, French-German school since the age of three. She therefore learns to write in French and German, but not in English at school (Ch.2).

In view of the fact that I wanted to highlight the skills young learners take with them into formal schooling, I focussed my attention on Pia's domestic texts written around this time i.e from the last year of nursery school to the end of Year One (2001-2003). My first measure was to select one such text and to conduct a pilot study to explore the quality both of my data and of the initial analytical framework I had envisaged for my research, which was to be set within the socio-cultural paradigm (Ch.2).

Even at this early stage, a comprehensive picture emerges of how Pia experiences literacy at home. Literacy is experienced as deeply embedded social practice, with family interactional dynamics according the child more equal status and greater ownership of texts. This can be seen from the fact that Pia is not coerced into reproducing conventional formats, and even enjoys the freedom to resist or contradict the help offered by her mother. The flexible, more equitable and implicit character of domestic interactional patterns permit the child to network her general knowledge in a manner that results in her achieving higher levels of skill than anticipated by curricular guidelines. We see how she weaves and transforms elements encountered at school into her domestic writings, rendering the universal experience of classroom literacy into something much more personal, reflecting her social needs more than the obligation to satisfy externally prescribed criteria. The analysis brings to light the mother's sensitive, active involvement in the child's literacy practice, in which learning and teaching are not made explicit, a fact which may lull us into thinking that no learning is taking place at all. In numerous subtle ways, however, literacy messages are being given and taken by both participants.

The analysis, therefore, confirms the potential wealth of domestic literacy and illuminates the character of literacy interactions within the home. The broader significance and implications of these findings were verified by setting them within the context of wider research.

12.3.2. Theoretical perspectives

A number of theoretical perspectives were reviewed to see how they might inform the picture of domestic literacy which was gradually emerging (Ch.3). I established that my research was in line with general trends in literacy research which involved a move away from classroom and experimental settings towards investigations of literacy as *situated cultural practice* (Baynham, 2004). *This trend has motivated diverse studies on home literacy*, which is also reflected in the many different terms used to describe the field; 'out-of-school', 'community', 'vernacular', or even 'hidden' (Knobel & Lankshear, 2003), the latter being a designation which relates directly to my intention to validate home literacy and make it visible. The invisibility of domestic literacy practices, therefore, had already become a topic of educational research.

I then redirected my focus to literature relating more directly to the salient aspects of my research design. Accordingly, research on home and school literacy transmission, on multilingualism and writing concepts were reviewed. Studies already conducted in the field make clear that the gap between home and school practice has not gone unnoticed (Gregory & Williams, 2000). These studies, which document the wealth of practice within children's homes, disqualify statements which suggest that the classroom is like the home, but with print added (Block *et al.*, 2002). It is a serious misrepresentation to suggest that homes are literacy-impoverished settings. Furthermore, the dynamics of classrooms and homes are not the same. The dynamics of both sites, however, may be *better understood if viewed with the help of analytical tools which are suited to both sites*. Jan Valsiner's interactional model provides such a tool (Valsiner & Hill, 1989; Valsiner, 1997).

Valsiner's interactional model elaborates the Vygotskian notion of the Zone of Proximal Development by characterising child development as being structured by the interplay of physical, social and psychological elements inherent in social interaction. The structuring of physical space creates a Zone of Free Movement (ZFM), limiting the space which is functionally available to the child. A second zone, the Zone of Promoted Activity (ZPA), rather than delineating physical limits to the child's options, is geared, as the name suggests, towards promoting a particular activity. This is done via the interaction of people and objects. Thus, whilst classroom layout places physical limits

on children's behaviour, teachers, as social actors, and learning materials, as cultural artefacts, promote literacy. Valsiner's third interactional level, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), may be perceived of as a psychological one, capturing how more competent others help children to levels of knowledge that are beyond, but within reach. These three interactional zones – the physical, the social and the psychological, addressing the *where, who/what* and *how* of social interaction – shift in subtle ways in relation to each other, so that we may think of them as 'semi-permeable', or as 'porous' (Valsiner, 1997).

Valsiner's framework unearths the dynamics of social interaction, yet it does not provide a tool or the corresponding terms to help us specify what these interactions mean to the participants. Here, we need an approach which directly addresses the ideology behind practice. This is provided by Roz Ivanič (2004). Ivanič presents a model which helps us to identify six discourses behind literacy practice, so that we may see how participants are being positioned at an ideological level. Her model, though devised within an Anglophone, monolingual context, may nonetheless be applied in multilingual contexts. Above all, it inspired and helped me to identify and position young writers along a continuum from practitioner to apprentice.

My review of current educational research then identified a number of areas which still remain largely under-researched. These relate to the products of early literacy (Kendrick, 2003), to trilingual literacy (Hoffmann & Ytsma, 2001), to unsolicited texts (Kress, 1997), and to family teaching styles (Kendrick, 2003). As responses to all of these lacunae are proposed in my research, the relevance of my thesis and its potential to make valuable contributions to both theory and practice is confirmed.

12.3.3. Collecting the data

The methodology of my research was presented in considerable detail in a chapter which reviewed not only how other scholars have approached similar topics, but specified what distinguishes my work from research already conducted in the field (Ch.4).

Following an ethnographic approach, a wide range of 'rich' data was collected over a six-year period in order to provide comprehensive, empirical responses to how schools and homes shape Pia's writing development and practice. The data can be reclassified as primary and secondary data. Primary data comprises the unsolicited texts produced by my daughter. This data is referred to as primary to reflect their priority as research material to substantiate conclusions made about literacy at home. Secondary data refers to research material of a more subordinate nature, thus to photos, conversational data and to the materials collected at school. This data is necessary to qualify and be able to make comparative statements about Pia's two central learning environments. However, the focus of my research is the home context, thus the school plays a secondary role in my analysis.

12.3.4. Interpreting the data

Having collected this rich source of data, the next task was to reflect upon the recursive process involved in making sense of the data, and to put my methodology to the test (Ch.5).

Research is not conducted in a vacuum. The shift from experimental to authentic settings from the 1970s onwards reflects the general acknowledgement of this fact. Researchers, therefore, need not only to acknowledge the contexts of research, but to commit themselves and adopt a critical approach to themselves as researchers, their research tools and to how findings are presented and shared.

To put my methodology to the test, I selected a sample of Pia's domestic writing and demonstrated how Valsiner's interactional model provides an extremely practical tool for sieving the data to unearth the many subtle ways in which literacy interaction is framed at home according to a blend of physical (i.e. ZFM), social (i.e, ZPA) and psychological (i.e. ZPD) properties. We move away from a purely cognitive approach to learning, to a more ecological one, exposing how we, as social actors, move in and out of various physical, social and psychological zones in at times barely perceptible ways. This was a revelation to me. Although I was accustomed to assigning the cultural context a central role, and to identifying aspects of such contexts, I have never

encountered a framework which puts the cultural components together in such a readily, cogent manner. This incited me to look even further within the interactional model, and to find supplementary ways in which it could be refined. One manner would be to grade the nature of social interaction more subtly to encompass the affective variables I had already identified as central to Pia's learning.

The analysis confirmed the predominantly holistic interactional style at home, where literacy is instigated by the child rather than being prescribed by the adult. Pia is positioned, and, significantly, she positions herself as a practitioner, soliciting the help of a more competent other not in order to *learn* how to write but to get writing *done*. Two samples of domestic literacy practice (Ch.2, Ch.5), thus, corroborate the conclusions drawn about the nature of family literacy which are already beginning to resound in current educational research (Ch.3). I therefore decide to see which conclusions I may make about how Pia's institutional environment shapes her learning and use of writing.

12.3.5. Literacy in the classroom

In order to introduce Pia's bilingual institutional context in the last year of nursery school and in Year One, I give a qualitative account of typical classroom interactions in the form of narrative snapshots (Ch.6). These snapshots, or vignettes, illuminate how the children become pupils, positioned in particular ways within the discoursal space afforded by the classroom. We begin to see what characterises the gap between home and school practice. This gap is then explored in more detail in relation to Valsiner's interactional model.

12.3.6. Understanding classroom contributions to children as writers

Classroom settings may be understood by looking at the physical, social and psychological properties of classroom interaction (Ch.7). Thus, I look at the classroom as a Zone of Free Movement, drawing attention to how the layout of the classroom consists of different learning zones which bear upon the types of interactions made available within the classroom. I look at the classroom as a Zone of Promoted Activity comprising people (e.g. teachers, pupils, auxiliary staff, parents) and objects (teaching

materials) in interaction. As part of an analysis of classrooms as a zone promoting literacy (ZPA), I look at how interactions are framed verbally, affectively, and the extent to which pupils are allocated verbal and emotional space in learning interactions. I establish that classroom verbal patterns of initiation-response-feedback (IRF), by giving the teacher two opportunities to talk (initiation, feedback) and the child only one (response), minimise the verbal space the child may occupy in a manner that is not typical at home (Ch.2). I further establish that the emotional aspects to learning, which were demonstrated as central to learning in the domestic context, play a marginal role at school. With regard to the teaching materials, I demonstrate how these, in conjunction with teaching styles and classroom layout, position the child differently to homes, notably by exercising much more control over the child's engagement and pace in literacy learning. In my analysis of classroom interactions helping children to new levels of competence, thus through their zone of proximal development (ZPD), I highlight the tightly structured, linear approach to learning foreseen by the course material. This approach, however, is not necessarily in alignment with how children learn in informal settings (Ch.8). Above all, it positions children as learners rather than as users.

To conclude, I confirm that the classroom consists of numerous interactive learning spaces and opportunities, which are nonetheless largely harnessed to a skills oriented view of writing development emerging from drawing and later maturing to the mastery not only of handwriting but also the correlation between sounds and symbols, i.e. spelling. French and German classes foster slightly different positions, with the latter encouraging pupils to be more versatile with meanings, and to attempt to engage with literacy as social practice. Despite the fact that the German literacy programme, which begins in Year One, starts much later than in French, where it begins from the very first year of the 3-year nursery school cycle, the German programme nonetheless quickly prepares the children to write more than they are expected to in French. The over-riding message from classroom interactions still remains one which does not foster literacy as meaningful social practice, but largely as a solitary internal process of recognition, mastery and knowledge recall, in which the funds of knowledge acquired elsewhere remain unexplored.

12.3.7. Quantifying the domestic context

The funds of knowledge which may be acquired at home are presented in the form of a quantitative analysis of Pia's domestic writing (Ch.8). I argue the case for a different experience of becoming and being a writer. I expose the wide scope of texts Pia writes at home. I then address developmental and linguistic characteristics of her authoring to show how these diverge from institutional practice. I chart some of the most salient writing forms identified, and underline the significance of multimodal features of writing, as I do the notion of writing as social activity.

I demonstrate that Pia's domestic writing is more advanced than the writing she is expected to produce at school. This can be seen from the fact that she produces texts which have not been taught at school. Her texts are designed; they blend and play with graphical, generic and linguistic elements which dismantle conventional writing boundaries yet without making her texts meaningless. On the contrary, it is precisely this element of design which invests her texts with personal, autobiographical significance. I show that her writing development at home does not concur with the 'smooth line' developmental perspective fostered by the regularly paced introduction of new items of learning, as in the classroom. Rather, her development is characterised by spurts or bouts. By charting each new item in Pia's writing at home, I am able to establish that her development peaks around the age of 5½ years, and that her development takes place at a slower rate from then on. This means that most of what she has learnt about writing is acquired prior to formal schooling. Her domestic texts, moreover, are more indicative of her true level of competence, reflecting her full linguistic repertoire and underscoring how writing at home is a pragmatic social tool.

By blending and redesigning knowledge gained from various sites, Pia may be seen to shuttle between the home and school, much in the manner of recommendations expressed in official policy. However, it is the child who is doing this at home. The goal, ideally, should be for such practice to be incorporated into classroom practice.

12.3.8. Literacy as social practice at home

Returning to the most salient features of Pia's domestic writing, I investigate further the numerous ways in which her texts reflect her use of writing as social practice (Ch.9). I

select texts which largely coincide with the key research period from September 2001-August 2003, in order to make the comparison with the types of texts written at school during the same period more vivid.

I show how Pia's texts explore relationships and social roles, how her language choices reflect her simultaneous membership to multiple communities. I underline the role of feelings in and behind her texts, which may be read as an autobiography of the child, and illuminate once more the purposes of Pia's writing as social practice, which is not simply an act of knowledge display, but, ultimately, an exploration of the Self. I demonstrate how writing occupies a smaller space at home in comparison to the classroom, but that the essential difference in the quality of family literacy interactions, ironically, makes Pia a more mature writer at home than at school. This is due to the more flexible, equitable, implicit, interactive options at home, resulting in a greater freedom in text production, negotiation and ownership, but also because at home, Pia can show everything she knows. This involves knowledge acquired at school *and* at home. At school, however, the knowledge Pia has acquired at home is rarely harnessed. Hence if we focus on scholastic scenarios, we can only gain a lopsided view of Pia's overall competence.

Whilst the messages from Pia's home seemed quite clear, I nonetheless sought to put them into a wider context. This was achieved by finding out more about the domestic literacy practices of her classmates.

12.3.9. Peer and parental perspectives on domestic literacy

By means of questionnaires, one addressed to the children and another to their parents, I accompanied Pia's classmates into their homes to investigate the domestic literacy practices taking place in other families (Ch.10, Ch.11). The children's responses exposed the features of their homes as a Zone of Promoted Activity in relation to literacy practice. The findings confirmed that the children, like Pia, are sensitive to literacy in wider social contexts, and are able to talk about their understanding of literacy. The children know a lot, and possibly more than they can explain. Nonetheless, the tendency is for them to relate literacy acquisition and practice to explicit classroom contexts. It seems that the implicit nature of domestic literacy means that skills acquired

and practiced at home remain on the margins of awareness (Leichter, 1984). The invisible nature of domestic literacy may not only account for why some children appear to undermine the value of their home as a learning environment, but it may also be misleading such children to discredit the level of their own accomplishments.

The questionnaire addressed to the parents of Pia's peers sought to strengthen my understanding of literacy practices in other homes. The findings map onto the information provided by the children, confirming their homes as a literacy 'rich' setting. We learn that parents have an 'educational agenda', a 'natural curriculum' (Brooker, 2002) which gives priority to emotional aspects rather than to purely cognitive gains. Hence, parents also view themselves as teachers, and as instrumental in their children's literacy development. However, the teaching taking place at home differs to the teaching taking place in the classroom. Valsiner's interactional model, in conjunction with a discoursal understanding of how children are positioned in different environments, has enabled me to capture the differences between these two key learning locations with regard to Pia and her peers' development as writers. The implicit nature of domestic literacy interaction is confirmed. Thus, the nature of the gap between home and school practice is further identified and verified, so that we may begin to reflect more concretely upon the implications of these findings for educational practice.

12.4. Implications for educational practice

This investigation has confirmed a number of important points. It confirms homes as literacy rich settings able to make valuable contributions to a child's development as a writer. It shows how the nature of domestic interactions has the potential to foster higher levels of skills than are anticipated by curricular guidelines for Year One. It demonstrates how writing development at home is not necessarily characterized by a smooth progression to higher levels of knowledge, but might indeed take the form of bouts or bursts. It shows, finally, how literacy is lived as meaningful social practice by a child who wants to be heard and seen as a member of her social environments.

The implications for educational practice, however, should not be over-stated. It would be naïve to assume that the findings will revolutionise classroom practice, although they

appear to provide a sound, empirical basis for potential change. The findings, for example, support calls by French educational policy for classroom interaction to build upon the skills children bring with them to the classroom. These skills could be incorporated in a number of ways. They could motivate greater effort to provide authentic, socially meaningful writing opportunities in the classroom. Greater knowledge of the scope of skills which still remain 'hidden' in children's writing at home could equally motivate a revision of the attainment levels provided as guidelines for Year One. Teachers might consider how the dynamics of the home, which have been demonstrated to push Pia's writing development in almost imperceptible ways, may be reproduced in the classroom. In any event, the findings of the present thesis, I hope, may set off reflections, 'ripples', which are the important precursor to further change. It might be unrealistic to claim to be able to achieve more, but to achieve this alone is already an important step.

12.5. Contributions to educational theory

The findings of this thesis contribute to educational theory by presenting the interactional model advocated by Jan Valsiner which has not been widely disseminated to date, and by showing how this may inform an appreciation of literacy-based interactions in a multilingual context. Valsiner's model is not simply applied as originally advocated by the author, but further refined. I show how an analysis of literacy interactions as taking place within a Zone of Promoted Activity may be classified more rigorously than foreseen by Valsiner. In particular, I demonstrate the usefulness of refining the analysis of the contributions of social actors by drawing more attention to the interplay of verbal and emotional aspects of social interaction. I further propose a more explicit statement of the interplay between interactional characteristics within as much as across the interactional zones advocated by the author. Valsiner's model, though ideal for exposing interactional characteristics in any given site, nonetheless does not provide us with a tool for understanding what such interactions mean to the participants. This weakness in his framework I am able to rectify by complementing his model with a different one proposed by Roz Ivanič, which exposes the ideological, discoursal stances behind literacy teaching, policy and practice. As with Jan Valsiner's model, I modify Roz Ivanič's discoursal typologies to direct our attention

to how this latter model may inform a view of young authors along a continuum from practitioners to apprentice. Thus, together, these models enable us to understand not only how literacy-related social interactions work, but also what such interactions mean to the participants. Ivanič's model, like Valsiner's, was not originally designed for a multilingual context. The significant contributions of this thesis to educational theory, therefore, lie in the combined application and modification of these models, one proposed by Valsiner and the other by Ivanič, to a multilingual setting.

12.6 Epilogue

The Pia who was three years old at the outset of my research is, in the meantime, twelve. She still likes to add stamps to her stamp collection, still prefers to make her own greeting cards and still writes letters to her friends, though she no longer seeks assistance in any of these activities and her post-its as memory joggers for her mum have transformed into self-directed 'to do' notes kept in a box under her pillow. She has progressed to being an adept conversationalist using the contracted writing forms of virtual chat-rooms, and although she no longer pushes messages under my study door or pins them to propitious places around the house, my mobile phone buzzes regularly, bringing me, per sms, the titbits she likes to send, even if she happens to be in the room next door. Pia's writing skills have evolved, taking in new media which provide new literate opportunities, at times diverging even further from institutional practice. In this respect, a gap remains and possibly even widens (Wray, 2006). I am grateful to my daughter, for the lessons from this child, for she has taught me a lot. My gratitude extends to her schoolteachers, her peers, as to their parents, who have enabled me to forge bridges between my experiences and their own. We, the adults and those entrusted with teaching, whatever form this may take, and wherever the location, must first continue to learn; to create a space for the children to show us what they know. We must continue to build bridges, to keep the gates open and lessen the gaps, as the children we teach so readily do.

When I take my child to school, I often smile a greeting to a mother in an adjacent car, taking her offspring to the same nursery school my own child once attended. My smile, more than a greeting, is also in recognition of eight years of work which have resulted

in my re-evaluation of the hows, whats and whys of literacy and sharpened my awareness of the importance of a conscious use of plurals. I now speak of understanding*s*, use*s*, form*s*, function*s*, writing*s*, text*s*, child*ren*, for the pathways to and through literacy are multiple, and this openness needs to be sustained particularly at the pedagogical level. I recognize that institutional discourses on literacy may be rethought so that, in addition to common linguistic referential zones, they may also accommodate common contextual zones striving to bring the home and school as valuable sensitizers and transmitters of literacy better into alignment. I recognize that my perception of a five-year-old's zone of proximal development and developmental stages has been radically changed thanks to my willingness to learn anew, starting where the child is at and discovering this only by myself becoming a learner once more. I recognize, in short, how conducting this thesis has added to my knowledge of the theory and practice of literacy.

I feel the urge to solicit written material from the new cohort of five-year-olds so that I may share with them, their teachers and parents everything I now know about how their children develop at home and the importance of the knowledge these children take with them to school every day. Maybe the headmistress will agree to my giving a series of talks after school. Maybe the teachers will agree to my proposition to launch a literacy project. Hopefully I will find a publisher interested in making my findings more readily accessible to the general public. Certainly, I will feed my insights back into the classes given at the teacher training college I now plan to return to, and I would like to continue to disseminate my findings at conferences, for I see a number of implications for educational practice which have emerged from the research and although my thesis has drawn to a close, the story continues. There are still words waiting to be caught and a myriad of ways in which this may be done. I resolve to stop by, to say hello to my daughter's former teachers and offer them more of my time.

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1. Appendices

Appendix 1: Questionnaire for the children

Assimilation/appropriation of function and forms:

Q1: Do you know how to write?

Q2: Can you write your name?

Q3: Can you write other letters that are not part of your name?

Q4: Do you write at home?

Q5: Do your parents practise writing with you at home?

Q6: Do you keep all the writing you do at home?

Q7: What do you write at home?

Q8: Which language do you write in at home?

Q9: What do you use when you write at home?

General recognition:

Q10: What is writing?

Q11: Where can you see writing in your house?

Q12: Where can you see writing outside your house?

Q13: Do you ever see people in your house writing?

Personal emotional engagement

Q14: Do you like writing?

Q15: Can you tell me why you like it?

Q16: Can you tell me why you don't like it?

Functions of literacy

Q17: Why do you think you learn to write?

Q18: Do you know what a letter is?

Q19: Can you tell me what the difference is between a letter and a book?

Q20: Can you tell me what the difference is between a letter and a card?

Q21: Imagine you have just written a letter to a friend. What do you have to do so that your friend gets your letter?

Q22: Has anyone ever written you a letter?

Q23: Have you ever received a card?

Q24: Have you ever written a letter?

Q25: Have you ever made and written a card?

Q26: If you have received a letter or card, did you try to read it yourself?

Q27: Did you ask someone to read it to you?

Q28: Did you write back?

French version of the questionnaire

Assimilation/appropriation of function and forms:

Q1 : Est-ce que tu sais écrire?

Q2 : Est-ce que tu sais écrire ton nom ?

Q3 : Est-ce que tu sais écrire d'autres lettres qui ne sont pas dans ton nom ?

Q4 : Est-ce que tu écris à la maison ?

Q5 : Est-ce que tu fais des exercices d'écriture à la maison avec tes parents ?

Q6 : A la maison, est-ce que tu gardes tout ce que tu as écrit ?

Q7 : Qu'est-ce que tu écris à la maison ?

Q8 : Quand tu écris chez toi, tu le fais en quelles langues ?

Q9 : Qu'est-ce que tu utilises pour écrire chez toi ?

General recognition:

Q10 : Peux-tu m'expliquer ce qu'est l'écriture ?

Q11 : Où est-ce qu'on peut voir des choses écrites chez toi ?

Q12 : Où est-ce que tu peux voir des choses écrites en dehors de ta maison ?

Q13 : As-tu déjà vu d'autres personnes chez toi en train d'écrire ?

Personal emotional engagement:

Q14 : Dis-moi, aimes-tu écrire ?

Q15 : Peux-tu me dire pourquoi tu aimes cela ?

Q16 : Peux-tu m'expliquer pourquoi tu n'aimes pas écrire ?

Functions of literacy :

Q27 : A ton avis, pourquoi apprend-t-on à écrire?

Q18: Sais-tu ce qu'est un courrier?

Q19 : A ton avis, quelle est la différence entre un courrier et un livre?

Q20 : Et la différence entre un courrier et une carte?

Q21 : Disons que tu viens d'écrire un courrier à un ami. Qu'est-ce que tu dois faire maintenant pour que cet ami le reçoive?

Q22 : Est-ce qu'on t'a déjà écrit un courrier?

Q23 : Est-ce qu'on t'a déjà écrit une carte?

Q24 : Et toi, est-ce que tu as déjà écrit un courrier?

Q25 : Est-ce que tu a déjà écrit, ou bien fabriqué une carte?

Q26 : Si tu en as déjà reçu, soit un courrier ou bien une carte, est-ce tu as essayé de le lire tout seul?

Q27 : Est-ce que tu as déjà demandé à quelqu'un de te le lire?

Q28 : Est-ce que tu as répondu par écrit?

Appendix 2 : Questionnaire for the parents

Age of mother/partner:	Age of father/partner: ....
Occupation:	Occupation: ....
Level of education:	Level of education: ....

No. / Age of child(ren) in *Grande Section*: ....

I: SENSITIZING TO THE WORLD OF PRINT

Q1: Does your child own any books?

- Est-ce que votre enfant a ses propres livres à la maison ?

- Hat Ihr Kind seine eigenen Bücher zu Hause?

Q2: Do you borrow children's books from the school library?

- Est-ce que vous empruntez des livres pour enfant à la bibliothèque de l'école?

- Leihen Sie aus der Schulbibliothek Kinderbücher aus?

Q3: If yes, how often?

- Si 'oui', combien de fois le faites vous?

- Wenn ja, wie oft?

Q4: Do you borrow children's books from a public library?

- Est-ce que vous empruntez des livres pour enfant dans une bibliothèque publique ?

- Leihen Sie aus einer öffentlichen Bibliothek Kinderbücher aus?

Q5: If you visit a library, how often do you go?

- Si vous allez dans une bibliothèque publique, vous le faite combien de fois ?

- Wie oft besuchen Sie eine öffentliche Bibliothek?

Q6: Do you take your child with you to the library?

- Est-ce que vous emmenez votre enfant avec vous?

- Besuchen Sie mit Ihrem Kind die öffentliche Bibliothek?

Q7: Is there written material in the child's home environment in an alphabet different to the one taught at school?

- Est-ce qu'il y a chez vous des choses dans d'autres alphabets qui ne sont pas enseignés à l'école ?

- Befindet sich beschriftetes Material bei Ihnen zu Hause, das in einem anderen als in der Schule unterrichtetem Schriftsystem ausgezeichnet ist?

Q8: Through which medium does your child encounter stories at home?

- Quels sont les moyens mis à la disposition de votre enfant pour qu'il découvre des histoires à la maison ?

- Durch welche Medien oder in welcher Form erhält Ihr Kind Geschichten zu Hause angeboten?

Q9: Which languages does your child hear stories in at home?

- Dans quelles langues votre enfant peut-il écouter des histoires chez lui?

- In welchen Sprachen hört Ihr Kind Geschichten zu Hause?

Q10: What in your opinion are the benefits of reading to your child?

- A votre avis, quels sont les bénéfices apportés à votre enfant lorsque vous lui faites la lecture ?

- Welche Vorteile hat das Lesen im Allgemeinen für Ihr Kind?

Q11: Do you practise writing with your child?

- Est-ce que vous faites des exercices d'écriture avec votre enfant ?

- Üben Sie das Schreiben mit Ihrem Kind?

II: THE DYNAMICS OF FAMILY LITERACY

Q12: Which members of the child's closer domestic environment read to the child?

- Quels membres de la famille proche lisent des histoires à votre enfant ?

- Welche nahestehenden Familienmitglieder lesen Ihrem Kind Geschichten vor?

Q13: Who reads the most stories?

- Qui lit des histoires le plus souvent?

- Wer liest am häufigsten Ihrem Kind Geschichten vor?

Q14: How often does your child listen to stories per month outside school?

- Combien de fois est-ce que votre enfant écoute-t-il des histoires hors de l'école ?

- Wie oft hört Ihr Kind Geschichten ausserhalb der Schule?

Q15: Who chooses the story?

- Qui choisit l'histoire?

- Wer wählt die Geschichte aus?

Q16: Who holds the book?

- Qui tient le livre?

- Wer hält das Buch?

Q17: Who turns the pages?

- Qui tourne les pages?

- Wer blättert die Seiten um?

Q18: When you read, do you follow the text with your finger?

- Quand vous êtes en train de lire, est-ce que vous suivez les mots avec le doigt ?

- Deuten Sie beim Lesen auf das jeweilige Wort mit dem Finger?

Q19: Who generally suggests reading a story?

- En général, qui propose de lire une histoire?

- Wer schlägt normalerweise eine Geschichte vor?

Q20: Do you read a story at a specific time?

- Est-ce que vous avez l'habitude de lire une histoire à une heure fixe ?

- Lesen Sie eine Geschichte zu einer bestimmten Uhrzeit vor?

Q21: Where is the child when the story is being read?

- Où se trouve votre enfant pendant l'histoire?

- Wo befindet sich Ihr Kind während der Erzählung?

Q22: Do you ever interrupt the story if your child is disinterested?

- Est-ce que il vous arrive d'interrompre une histoire si vous constatez que votre enfant ne s'y intéresse pas ?

- Kommt es vor, dass Sie die Erzählung einer Geschichte unterbrechen, wenn Sie feststellen, dass Ihr Kind sich nicht besonders dafür interessiert?

Q23: Do you ever interrupt to perform a comprehension check?

- Est-ce vous posez des questions à votre enfant afin de vérifier s'il a compris ?

- Stellen Sie Ihrem Kind Fragen, um zu überprüfen, was es verstanden hat?

III: CHILDREN AS ACTIVE ENQUIRERS/PRACTITIONERS

Q24: Does the child interrupt a story in order to ask questions?

- Est-ce que votre enfant interrompt une histoire pour poser des questions?

- Unterbricht Ihr Kind die Erzählung einer Geschichte, um selbst Fragen zu stellen?

Q25: Have you ever observed differences in the child's level of interest during the course of the story?

- Est-ce que vous avez déjà constaté des changements dans le degré d'intérêt montré par votre enfant pendant l'histoire ?

- Haben Sie je festgestellt, dass das Interesse Ihres Kindes manchmal schwankt während der Erzählung einer Geschichte?

Q26: Have you ever witnessed your child telling him/herself a story at home from a book?

- Est-ce que vous avez déjà vu votre enfant en train de se raconter une histoire avec l'aide d'un livre ?

- Haben Sie je erlebt, dass sich Ihr Kind mit der Unterstutzung eines Buches eine Geschichte erzählt?

Q27: Does the story always relate to the book?

- Est-ce que l'histoire racontée correspondait toujours à ce qui était écrit dans le livre ?

- Gab es immer einen Zusammenhang mit dem wahren Inhalt des Buches?

Q28: Have you ever witnessed your child inventing and telling a story without the aid of a book?

- Est-ce que vous avez déjà vu votre enfant en train de se raconter une histoire *sans* l'aide d'un livre ?

- Haben Sie je erlebt, dass Ihr Kind sich eine Geschichte erzählt und zwar ohne dabei ein Buch in der Hand zu haben?

Q29: Have you ever witnessed your child writing or practising writing at home?

- Est-ce que vous avez déjà vu votre enfant en train d'écrire ou de faire des exercices d'écriture à la maison ?

- Haben Sie je gesehen, dass Ihr Kind zu Hause schreibt oder Schreibübungen macht?

Q30: Does your child read what s/he has written?

- Votre enfant lit-il ce qu'il vient d'écrire ?

- Liest Ihr Kind auch das vor, was es geschrieben hat?

Q31: Does your child ever ask for printed material to support his/her writing activities?

- Est-ce que votre enfant vous a déjà demandé de lui donner du matériel écrit pour lui aider dans ses activités d'écriture ?

- Hat Ihr Kind Sie je um Unterlagen zur Unterstützung seiner Schreibaktivitäten gebeten?

Q32: Does your child ever ask 'what does this mean/say?'

- Est-ce votre enfant vous a déjà posé la question: « Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire ? »

- Hat Ihr Kind Sie je gefragt: „Was heisst das?"

Further comments/commentaires supplémentaires/ weitere Bemerkungen:

Appendix 3: Writing development: first appearances

Item	Date dd/mm/yy/ code	Age
Pia (dotted lines)	12/99	3yrs 6m
Writing exercises	12/00	4yrs 6m
Book (only pictures)	21/12/00	4yrs 6m
numbers	06/01/01	4yrs 7m
Other name (Loic)	15/01/01	4yrs 7m
Canteen list (first of many types of lists)	29/03/01	4yrs 9m
String of recognisable letters	13/05/01	4yrs 11m
Book (folded, squiggly lines as letters)	27/05/01	4yrs 11m
Song (recognisable capital letters)	27/06/01	5yrs
Calendar work : countdown to bday (calendars not only made but also used)	05/02	5yrs 1m
Exercise: experiment with italics	18/07/01	5yrs 1m
Song: capital letters on lines	07/01	5yrs 1m
Song. Musical notes on two lines	07/01	5yrs 1m
Book: recog letters non-spaced (A4 stapled together)	27/07/01	5yrs 1m
Book: recog cap letters non-spaced: title separated from main text by a line. Book made of card bound by a string	Summer 01	5yrs 1m,2m
'letter' to be sent by post to mum in UK cf interest in post 28/10/01 (picture, no txt, stamp drawn by papa)	09/08/01	5yrs 2m
Documented dictionary interaction (copies titles)	24/09/01 F	5yrs 3m
Whitney (first behavioural evaluation)	09/01 F	5yrs 3m
Number game: hopscotch	05/10/01	5yrs 4m
Ex bk Miko: mechanics before meaning?	10/01 F	5yrs 4m
Collab activity with W. P dictates, W writes	10/01 F	5yrs 4m
Papa (letters from her name) + evidence of structured writing exercises: copy of front page	28/10/01 F	5yrs 4m
Letter to Loic traced out dotted lines	31/10/01 F,G	5yrs 4m
Picture dedicated to parents and friends (NB she can't write Whitney), mama, papa, Loic Morgane	16/11/01 F,E	5yrs 5m
Exclamation mark	16/11/01	5yrs 5m
Correct unassisted text	16/11/01	5yrs 5m
Speech bubble	22/11/01 F	5yrs 5m
Game: find the name Pia	29/11/01 F	5yrs 5m
School register	12/01 G	5yrs 6m
Self-made computer	12/01	5yrs 6m
Self-made entry tickets(incl rip off edge) to her show	31/01/02 F	5yrs 7m
How I feel: first sentence reflecting her feelings (written not spoken)	09/02/02 F cf also	5yrs 7m
First sentence reflecting her understanding of how 2 people feel about each other (her parents)	28/02/02 F	5yrs 8m
Stamp collection	02/02 E,G	5yrs 8m
First text in German: happy easter for mum	04/02 G	5yrs 10m
First complete name incl surname	08/04/02	5yrs 10m
First instruction to others (unassisted txt) in a (school)	04/02 F	5yrs 10m
game	23/04/02 F	5yrs 10m
Bday invitation	05/02 F,G	5yrs 11m
Rules of conduct	11/05/02 F	5yrs 11m
Decipherable story (uses names of characters from her exercise bk, schoolfriends, i.e. what she knows)	14/06/02 F	6yrs
Fairy tale (unassisted)	16/06/02 G	6yrs
Festive card: father's day	17/06/02 F	6yrs
Thank you card	June-Jul 02 F,E,G	6yrs
Request slips: what I want to do in my holidays	June/july 02 F,E,G	6yrs
Diary		6yrs 1m

Open-ended dedications	07/02 G	6yrs 1m
Start Formal schooling (Year One)	**09/02**	**6yrs 3m**
Book organised by colour into different sections	09/02 F	6yrs 3m
Conscious chapters layout	09/02cf 20/02/03 G princess Lisa story	6yrs 3m
Evaluating symbols for schoolwork	11/02	6yrs 5m
Fairy tale in German (2 sides A4)	18/11/02 G	6yrs 5m
Letter to teacher (Beate)	26/11/02 G	6yrs 5m
Phonebook	12/02 F	6yrs 6m
Trilingual txt: xmas card	12/02 cf 31/01/03 FEG	6yrs 6m
Regular correspondence (to Cécile)	Jan 03 F	6yrs 7m
Multiple exclamation marks as an emotional amplifier	31/01/03 F	6yrs 7m
Prices: game for me to play in my English classes	08/02/03 E	6yrs 8m
Sanctions	08/02/03 F	6yrs 8m
Song lyrics	28/02/03 F	6yrs 8m
Letter to (absent) papa	28/02/03 G	6yrs 8m
Thank you letter	03/03	6yrs 9m
Secret written for a friend (P also has a bk of secrets)	19/03/03 F	6yrs 9m
Recipe (pictures and arrows)	23/04/03 F	6yrs 10m
Post its (idea)	03/04	6yrs 10m
Pia writing in the role of mother for hamsteri's bday	01/05/03 F	6yrs 11m
Telling tales on her sister	25/05/03 F	6yrs 11m
Signature (letter to Jessica)	09/06/03 G	6yrs 11m
Using a calculator	17/06/03	6yrs 11m
SMS	04/05/19 G	7yrs 11m
Prohibition	03/12/04 G	8yrs 6m

Appendix 4: Research Diary extracts

07.04.04	Emotions Behind/in txts Literacy event as social practice involving numerous acotrs Pia using writing as act of empower ment	After an argument at the breakfast table with papa (reason?), Pia stamps up the stairs and slams the door to her room. Later, in the bathroom, I tell her off for being naughty again, and she starts to cry. She seems to have forgotten about it when she comes upstairs to put on the clothes I have put out for her on her bed. I notice her writing something quickly and silently, her back turned to me, next to her wardrobe. At first I thought she was writing on the wall, but that would surprise me. I realized that she was writing on a piece of paper. It contains the secret code to her room. All the entries are names of people. I catch her crossing out my name, hesitating, then writing Elsa, a friend from the village next door, and whose name was mentioned this morning at breakfast. Pia writes with an orange pencil. All entries apart from the last three have been written with an ordinary lead pencil. The last three entries are: Johannes (her father), Joan (myself), Elsa. It appears to me that my name replaced Johannes' after her argument with him this morning, but also that I myself was quickly replaced once I had fallen out of her favour. If I had not been in her bedroom at the time, the meaning of this **transient** act would have been lost on me. I see how **inextricably it is intertwined with her emotional affiliations**. She requires no assistance. And I do not draw her into a conversation, having already seen more than she wants me to... NB maybe she doesn't speak but writes because she feels she has been 'disenfranchised': her voice is not being heard, so she resorts to another means which she knows is highly appreciated by me (possibly, yet here, she is not writing *for* me...).

01.10.04	Stamps	Pia has spied a stamp on an envelope addressed to papa. She asks me if she can take it. I tell her to wait until papa has opened the letter. When he comes home, she signals her interest (in German). Later, Sunday evening (03.10.04) he cuts off the stamp and gives it to her. She ahs not lost interest and he respects her interest. Cross check with other RD entries, e.g. 04.10.04)
		Tucking Pia in bed, I found the stamp that papa had given her at the weekend. I put it on her stamp book (when will she stick it in?)
05.10.04		Pia showed me this morning that she hadn't lost the stamp. She wanted to stick it in her book now, but I said we didn't have the time. She should do it this afternoon after school.

20.10.04	Lists	Whilst getting dressed this morning, I heard a piece of paper being slipped beneath my bedroom door. I thought it might eb a note from pia complaining about something as this morning she moaned about having to wash herself. I deliberately chose to ignore the note. She came to my bedroom, saw the note on the floor where she had left it, and thus knew that I had not read it yet. Mummy, come to the door (not: mummy why haven't you read my note yet?!...) I went over and feigned surprise at the paper at my feet. I started to read. Pia stayed to listen in the doorway. I had difficulty reading her writing. She began to cry: 'J'écris mal...' 'No, Pia! Come and help me,' we sat on my bed. I put my arm around her and we read it together '..... It was a shopping list for all the things she wanted for Xmas. Nothing to do with her traditional morning sulk. 'My, Pia! You Do want a lot, don't you?' 'Yes, Iwant lots and lots...'

24.10.04	Post it	Post it: tu ne ma pas peiller (i.e. payer) pour la derniere fois.tlia. context: I promised to give the children 1 euro 60cents for raking the leaves in teh graden. It proved to be too much work, so I paid them a part and said they would get the rest when tehy have finished. They haven't finished, but want an advance (!). NB: use of post it as a reminder cf core typologies
25.10.04	Teddy	I hung Pia and Whitney's teddy next to the chimney to dry overnight. Pia came down trhe next morning and was shocked to see her teddy, her beloved teddy, 'hanging' by an elastic band around the neck, attached to the chimney utensils. She draws what she sees, and fills ou the remaining space with question marks. This 'text' reads: what are you doing to my teddy?!!

26.20.04	Silent request	A4 question: esque ece que je puet regarder une K K7 K7 oui/non ou TV oui/non merci d´avance pour la patience: in the question boxes she introduces an element not covered by the original question; TV. On the reverese side of the text I write: I am in the study working. Her paperbox is empty, so she points to the paper in the printer. Whips it out and disappears. She came back later. I had ticked both boxes. ´but which? I can´t do both ´!´(French) (she had an effaceur in her hand. I tell her not to change anything) ´K7 is a programme on TV isn´t it?´ ´Mais non – cassette – K7!´ ´Which do you want?´ ´Cassette.´ ´OK´ ´Je peux choisir?
27.10.04	Post it	Whitney had given her a new cahier de textes which she had found (but which she preferred to offer pia so that she could have a cosmetic bag). On a further sticker, she wrote ´Pia coleg ou licée´. She is, then, saving the book for later. On the book she also wrote on a sticker ´ne pas toucher, merci, trés gentil de toi ou vous, pia´. Data is scanned.
28.10.04	Post it	Pia makes increased use of post it stickers, which are often combined with the yes/no question boxes. Today, her request to watch a video was communicated in this way.´can I hire (i.e. hear) bobo le clown. Yes/no. I note that the presentation of the boxes is not identitcal: sometimes the box is below the word, sometimes above and sometimes to the left or to the right. In this case, the yes is written above the box and the No is written below the box. Bobo the clown is a story pia recited to me on a tape recorder, and which we listened to the other day when I recorded her latest story.

01.11.04	Writing as autobio-graphical practice	After a trip to the cinema to see, the children came home and started to copy to key figures. Pia did a number of drawings: one for papa to colour in, one for me to colour in, but not give to my colleagues, and a final one, coloured in, for my colleagues. Her instructions were written on the page. a)Lola b)pas donner au koleg c)de Pia d)pour maman a dessiner.The best of the drawings wa for my colleagues: she is sensitive to the ´picture´ she gives of herself... the writing forms a frame around the picture a)= north position, b)=west, c)=east, d)=south in the text for my colleagues pia writes: Lola: pour:maman:utiliser pour ses koleg de Pia. NB use of colon as 1) introduction 2)to abbbreviate the message
01.11.04	Silent request	I am busy at the computer. Papa brings the kids to bed. Pia rushes in and puts this on my table. I push it aside and continue working. Bringst du mich jetzt ins bett? Oui/non Or have I got 5 mininits? OUI/NON FOM Pia NB answers are in French. The questions are in German or English. This text doesn´t have the desired effect in that I do not read it straight away. By the time I read it and go upstairs, she is already asleep...
01.11.04	Do not disturb	Hung out on Pia´s door: a) ich lese gerne oder arbeite last mich in rue (written largely) oder kommt nicht rein ich bin nicht da b) komme rein aber nur mama oder papa nur einen ist erlaubt oder nicht klauen!!!!! (last comment written in pencil, as if an afterthought addressed to Whitney) NB diffent types of texts written onteh same day
02.11.04	Alphabet	It is 8.30am. pia has been awake for at least **an hour and a half**. I could tell by the light on i her room. Yet there is silence. When I go in her room, she is lying, in her pyjamas on her be carefully writing somthing as her legs swing to and fro. There is no sense of stress. She is practicing handwriting. Why are you doing that, Pia? You should be learning for your test (note my interests...) Whitney says my handwriting is not nice (Whitney dit que je n´écris pas bien) That´s not true! You write nicely! If your handwriting wasn´t nice, don´t you think your teachers would´ve said something about it already?

		Mmm Whitney´s just saying that to get on your nerves I ask if I can have the sheets for my work. She says she will bring them to me later once she has finished. This she does around ten minutes later. Pia uses the French script but her text is in German Sheet 1: alphabet a + alphabet b, hexe a Sheet 2: alphabet c + hexe b, I can write nicely I must establish a uniform **evaluation sheet** for each document, eg Solitary/collaborative, transcript?, location, duration, tools, body position, intended audience etc, what´s happening, how etc, data identification number. A first darft has been made (Pia came and sat by my side, asking lots of questions about the computer and what I was doing)
02.11.04	Media- teque	We were supposed to go to the mediatheque this afternoon. The children were seated in the car, but were very unruly. I threatened not to go if they didn´t calm down. They didn´t take my threat seriously, so when I backed the car back into the garage and turned off the engine, they were both devastated. Whitney cried hysterically. Pia just went up to her room without word. I told them to go outside and play ´nicely´ with each other, which they did for over an hour. Pia wrote the following text, pretending that it was written by whitney (though she add her name in brackets): Je jou jentillment avec pia alors on va, à la mediatec? There then follows a serious or reply boxes 9 yes boxes and 1 no box. All the boxes have a blue cross in them, and the no box has been crossed out and replaced with the word ´oui´. It as if she suddenly decides that she doesn´t want to give me the option of saying no. Pia date: the work herself. Whitney´s text reads: J´ai jouée gentillement dehors avec pia. Donc nous allons ----- le ------- 04 à la mediathèque. Promis. Signature------ I told her I cannot make such a promise and that future visits would depend upon good behaviour. Did Pia know about whitney´s text when she was writing her own? She said she did: j´ai regardé, j´ai regardé! But she didn´t want to use the date as her sister did. NB she is influenced but she doesn´t copy

	03.11.06 le minu, a, b Pia as co- researcher Owner- ship of her txts	A pencil written text I (re)discovered in my tray this afternoon. Written in French, with a small drawing in the top right hand corner. Text finishes with: signature de l´ inventeur: Pia. The reverse side of the text notes the accompanying dialogue: Pia gave this to me, turned the paper over and said: ´here, you can write what I say. I did this because I didn´t wanted to forget my ... (searching for words)... l´ invention?´ M: invention, same word, different pronunciation P: (Pause) I ... wanted ... I would like to have the copy because I don't want to forget it M: You want me to give you a copy? P: (nodding) ... yes M: Okay. I´ll do that later

11.01.05	Kummer- kasten	At a parent-teacher reunion, Pia´s German teacher told me that Pia makes very well thought out contributions to the kummerkasten (complaints box), and that she is skilled in knowing when to say something and how. She is discrete but gets her point across. This reminds me c my sample data analysis. I also ask myself if this notewriting skill has been transported hom from school, or vice versa? *Check to see when she wrote her first notes at home and cross check with her teacher to see when the kummerkasten was introduced... note that Pia has made herself a Kummerkasten a home, too*

Appendix 5: Questioning Pia

#1 05/08/01 (5yrs 2m)

Q: Do you like writing?

A: Yes.

Q: Why?

A: Because I like ... to learn and when I am reading a book ... I can ... learn something.

#2. 12/08/01 (5yrs 2m)

Q: Do you like writing?

A: Yes.

Q: Why?

A: Cos I've got some writing books and I want to get better. I like to write cos I'm writing nicely.

#3 09/11/03 (7yrs 5m)

Q: What do you like to write, Pia?

A: Some things that've happened. For example, Mummy wins at the party.

#4 23/08/04 (8yrs 2m)

Q: Where did you learn to write?

A: At school.

#5 13/03/02 (5yrs 9m)

Q: Has anyone ever helped you with writing at home?

A: Yes. You!

#6. 27/04/03 (6yrs 10m)

Q: Do you like writing with other people or on your own?

A: On my own. Sometimes I do it with other people ... you ... papa ...

#7. 16/02/03 (6yrs 8m)

Q: Does anyone ever write to you?

A: Yes. If I give post to Cécile, she writes back. Alice. Sometimes a carte d'invitation from Lise. And some other people.

#8 16/02/03 (6yrs 8m)

Q: How did you feel when your friends wrote to you?

A: Inside I feel happy. Afterwards I said thank you and she said 'de rien'.

#9. 21/07/02 (6yrs 1m)

Q: Where can you see writing in your house?

A: In my Diddle book ... one time Beate gave me some writing I stuck on the bedroom door with blu-tack... in my writing book.

#10. 21/07/02 (6yrs 1m)

Q: Where can you see writing outside your house?

A: On the street signs. I see numbers on the houses and once at school I saw writing with a pencil and there was a hole in the middle.

#11 14/01/01 (4yrs 11m)

Q: Do you know what a letter is?

A: Yes. I can't explain very well.

#12 18/10/01 (5yrs 4m)

Q: Do you know what an invitation is?

A: Yes. It's a card and we write on it: hello Alice! I'm inviting you to my birthday the 21st June at 44 impasse du Houx 67240 Schirrhein. We have to put it in an envelope and decorate it.

#13 06/12/01 (5yrs 6m)

Q: Has anyone in your family ever helped you to learn something about writing?

A: No (after much thinking....) You helped me to read with the Mico book, but not to write.