

Charlotta Häggblom

Young EFL-pupils Reading Multicultural Children's Fiction

An ethnographic case study in
a Swedish language primary school
in Finland



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YOUNG EFL-PUPILS READING MULTICULTURAL
CHILDREN'S FICTION

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Abstract

The present study investigates the use of multicultural children's novels with young EFL-readers in Finland. Two main research questions shaped the study: 1) What issues arise when authentic reading material is introduced into the EFL classroom? and 2) What is the impact on children's understanding of cultural diversity and what issues are involved when incorporating a multicultural dimension and using multicultural children's fiction in EFL-teaching? Neither of these questions has so far received much attention in the context of primary education.

Because the purpose was to gain a holistic understanding of issues involved, an ethnographic case study technique was used, involving a reading project with a Year 6 EFL-group. The present writer acted in the role of both teacher and researcher during the reading project, which lasted for one school term, between August and November 2000. Sources of data included: the teacher-researcher's field notes; interviews with children, the head teacher, and the class teacher; video-recordings of independent group work and of reading conferences in lesson time; children's reading diaries; plus two question sheets filled in by the children. Data collection was thus both oral (views expressed in public) and written (views expressed in private), and it included both real time and retrospective perspectives. Furthermore, children's views were expressed both spontaneously and as triggered by questions and tasks. The main voices heard were the teacher-researcher's and the pupils'. The study offers an analysis of all this data based on qualitative research principles.

The findings of this thesis suggest that, when given appropriate support, even EFL-readers as young as 11-12 are able to understand and engage critically with authentic reading material, both orally and in writing; and they can also engage empathetically with issues of culture and diversity. The main issues involved in this kind of teaching are discussed, and six main themes emerge. Three of these themes, reported in Part I of the thesis, are related to EFL-literacy: EFL-reading, -writing and -literacy support (Chapter 3), group work around the texts (Chapter 4), and responses to chapter content (Chapter 5). The three remaining themes, reported in Part II of the thesis, concern the multicultural dimension of EFL-teaching and the use of multicultural texts: culture and reading in language teaching (Chapter 6), multicultural and anti-racist aspects (Chapter 7), and teaching perspectives (Chapter 8).

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This thesis has been made possible thanks to cooperation between Åbo Akademi University, Finland, and the University of Reading, England. During my first terms of PhD-study (September 1998- December 1999) I was based at the University of Reading under the supervision of Professor Viv Edwards. After this, I moved back to Finland and Åbo Akademi University, where I conducted the present field work and analysis, and also wrote the thesis text. After returning to Finland, one longer study trip (in autumn term 2001) and two shorter ones were undertaken to the University of Reading, where I received further supervision and also updated the theoretical material. Professor Edwards has visited Finland twice. I am very grateful to both the University of Reading and Åbo Akademi University for the cooperation and opportunity to conduct this study.

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*This book is dedicated with love
to the memory of my dear grandmother Freda Sell,
whose presence in England
inspired me to study English and to go to England.*

Charlotta Häggblom
22.10.2006

YOUNG EFL-PUPILS READING MULTICULTURAL CHILDREN'S FICTION

An ethnographic case study in a Swedish language primary school in Finland

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TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

The following conventions apply to transcripts in Chapters 4-7:

What was actually said is written in plain text to the left. My commentary, explanations, and paraphrased translations into English are in italics and parentheses to the right. Translations into English generally focus on conveying meaning. But in cases where a literal translation is helpful, italics and single inverted commas - without parentheses - are used to indicate this. I have not attempted to reproduce hesitations, false starts, self-corrections, and other details on the micro-level. Comments on technical details related to the recording situation and on children's body language have been deleted.

CENTRAL TERMINOLOGY AND ABBREVIATIONS

Term or abbreviation	Use in the present study
FL	the foreign language
L2/SL	the second language
EFL	English-as-a-foreign-language
ESL	English-as-a-second-language
EFL-reader	a reader who is learning English as a foreign language and is reading in the target language
ESL- and EFL reading	reading in a second language and reading in a foreign language
L1	the first language/mother tongue
Multicultural education or a multicultural dimension in teaching	education which includes a multicultural and anti-racist dimension, as outlined in section 1.4. In short, it involves preparing children for life in a multicultural society and world in which, ideally, each group (linguistic, religious, cultural, ethnic, etc.) respects the cultures, values, and individual members of the other groups, and understands other people's perspectives. It also involves efforts towards providing equality of educational opportunity and outcome for all students.
Multicultural children's fiction	fictive texts written for children, in this case set in Britain, which include ethnic minority members in important character roles (see section 1.5).
Pupil	I use 'pupil' rather than 'student' when discussing the participants involved in this study, because of their young age.
The teacher or teacher-researcher	I refer to myself, Charlotta Häggblom
Primary school in Finland	Primary school education in Finland involves children between the ages of 6/7 and 12/13. There are 6 grades in Finnish primary school.

Children with Finnish as their mother tongue (the official majority) are taught in separate schools from those with Swedish as their mother tongue (the official minority). Parents can choose whether their child will attend school in Finnish or Swedish. Finnish and Swedish language schools follow much the same National Curriculum but the medium of teaching is either Finnish or Swedish. The Swedish language primary school setting of the present study is outlined in chapter 2.

Swedish language primary school

a primary school in which the medium of teaching and learning is Swedish.

Introduction

1. AIMS AND BACKGROUND

This thesis sets out to study the use of multicultural children's novels and short stories with young English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL-) learners in Finland. In this chapter, the purpose, starting points, and theoretical relevance of the study are outlined. The two central and overarching theoretical perspectives underpinning teaching and research are introduced: the use of authentic fiction in language teaching, and the multicultural dimension and use of multicultural fiction. The chapter ends with a discussion of the rationale for including a multicultural dimension in EFL-teaching, and for using authentic multicultural literature in language teaching. The books chosen for the present study are also introduced.

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to explore what happens when authentic multicultural English fiction is used in EFL-teaching at primary school level in Finland. The main issues involved were investigated through the following two research questions that shaped the study:

- I What issues arise when authentic reading material is introduced into the EFL classroom?

- II What is the impact on children's understanding of cultural diversity, and what issues are involved when incorporating a multicultural dimension and using multicultural children's fiction in EFL-teaching?

The aim was to provide a holistic picture and an understanding of the main issues involved.

1.2 STARTING POINTS

One of the two main starting points for this thesis lies in the use of authentic English language texts in primary EFL-teaching. Since the 1990s, there had been a growing interest in this question among secondary school EFL-teachers in Finland. The Department of English at Åbo Akademi University had offered a course as part of both the initial and in-service training of EFL-teachers on using literature in the foreign language- (FL-) classroom. I myself took this course in 1995. In addition, books from the British Embassy's very large donation of authentic class sets of children's and young adult novels, *Children's Literature in English Language Education* (CLELE), were increasingly being borrowed by teachers all over Finland. But although the Åbo Akademi University English Department was establishing a reputation for research on issues involved in literature in language education (Sell, 1994, 1995), there was little empirical evidence on what was happening in the real classroom. In particular, there was a dearth of theory and empirical findings from the primary school mainstream EFL-classroom. During the school year 1997-98, I was fortunate to work with another EFL/class teacher, Liliane Kjellman, who had used authentic texts in her EFL-groups. Together, we planned the teaching of two novels from the CLELE collection, which we each carried out in our own year 5 groups. It soon became apparent that the use of authentic texts in the primary EFL-classroom places demands on both teacher and pupils which would need careful consideration.

The other main starting point for this thesis involves ideas for how a multicultural dimension to mainstream teaching could be incorporated in the Finnish primary school. My interest in the subject began in 1993, when I was on teaching practice in a multicultural school in Cambridge, England. During this period I realized that I knew nothing about how to teach culturally diverse groups of children, and that the school population in Finnish schools was overwhelmingly white. However, as the numbers of refugees and other immigrants increased, it seemed likely that schools in Finland would soon resemble those in more ethnically and linguistically heterogeneous parts of Europe, and that Finnish teachers would lack the skills to respond effectively. For these reasons, in 1994 I began looking into how educational establishments in countries with a long tradition of cultural diversity have responded to such educational challenges. Because literature on the topic was so scarce in Finland, I spent time at the University of London Institute of Education Library in 1995, collecting material which I later developed into my Master's dissertation in 1997, for the Faculty of Education at Åbo Akademi University, on the topic of multicultural education in English-speaking countries (Sell, 1997). A theoretical and general literature review, this dissertation also made suggestions for future research at grass root level in Finland.

This study, which began in 1998, has attempted to implement ideas from the field of multicultural education within a real teaching situation in Finland, in the hope that experiences gained would provide insights on both theoretical and practical levels

which would be of relevance in Finland. This goal was combined with that of studying reading of authentic texts in the primary school EFL-classroom. The theoretical rationale and relevance are discussed below.

From the perspective of multicultural teaching, a medium was required to familiarize pupils with multiculturalism in their mainly all-white schools. The use of multicultural children's fiction seemed a logical first step. However, at the time, few appropriate texts were available in Swedish or Finnish. The English-language literature, in contrast, was extensive. Since reading is an important part of EFL-teaching, and EFL-teaching also includes a cultural dimension, the use of these texts seemed natural within EFL. Wide reading in a foreign language meets the goal of Finnish curricula, since it stimulates the development of both language and literacy skills in the target language, and offers insights into the target culture. These are common arguments for the use of authentic texts in the language classroom, and a theoretical discussion supporting these claims is offered below. In addition, Swedish-speaking primary school pupils in Finland – the setting with which I am familiar – are becoming increasingly proficient in English, owing to youth culture, the use of computers, and the rise of English as a world language. As teachers have felt that they need something 'more' than textbooks and workbooks, the use of authentic texts has gradually extended down to the primary years. However, knowledge of the issues involved in EFL-reading and in the use of multicultural materials is still urgently needed in schools. This study came to involve a multicultural dimension and the use of authentic multicultural children's fiction within EFL-teaching at primary school level.

1.3 RELEVANCE OF STUDYING READING IN EFL-TEACHING

Three theoretical perspectives seem to indicate a need for research into EFL-reading and the use of literature in EFL-teaching.

I

The first concerns the dearth of information on *reading in EFL settings*. With the notable exceptions of writers such as Alderson-Urquhart (1984), Carter & Long (1991), Lundahl (1998), Silberstein (1994), and Swarbrick (1990; 1998), few writers provide a specific EFL-focus. Much of what happens in EFL is in fact informed by first language and second language reading theory.¹ Some writers also seem to have *both* SL and FL-

¹ Such as Carrell (1984, 1997), Coady (1979), Day & Bamford (1998), Fitzgerald (2000), Gibbons (1991), Gregory (1996), Koda (1994), Spangenberg-Urbschat & Pritchard (1994), and Wallace (1989).

readers in mind.² It is possible, therefore, to argue that there is a need for more research dealing specifically with EFL. In Finland, there is a particular need because the use of authentic texts in schools is becoming increasingly common.

II

Secondly, despite the vast body of literature on reading in a second or foreign language from a *theoretical* perspective,³ *empirical* research from a *pedagogical perspective* is scarce. While writers such as Silberstein (1994), Lundahl (1998), and Aebersold & Field (1997) address pedagogical concerns, the students involved have often been older than those of the present study, and the pedagogical perspectives have concentrated on practical ideas for teaching, without discussing how pupils might respond to or manage tasks and texts, or what happens in the real classroom, though Gregory (1996) is a notable exception in the ESL-setting.

In contrast, my own aim was to provide insight into real young EFL-pupils reading within the mainstream EFL-classroom, and also into the children's own perceptions of the issues involved. My perspective is therefore both empirical and pedagogical.

III

Further, to date, most studies from the *EFL* perspective involve secondary school-, young adult- or adult learners (e.g. Aebersold & Field, 1997; Brumfit, 1991), whereas most studies from the *ESL*-perspective involve children and young emergent readers (Gibbons, 1991; Gregory, 1996; Spangenberg-Urbschat & Pritchard, 1994). The trend is easily explained: children learning to read in a SL are often young and are learning in an English speaking setting, whereas learners of EFL who have mastered enough skills to be able to read authentic texts in the target language are often older. There is, however, a dearth of information directly relevant to *young EFL*-readers. The present study tries to address this gap.

² Such as Aebersold & Field (1997), Anderson (1999), Brumfit & Carter (1991), Collie & Slater (1987), Nuttall, (1982), Parkinson & Reid Thomas (2000), and Short (1989).

³ See, for example, Parkinson & Reid Thomas (2000) on 'literary' aspects; Gibbons (1991) and Wallace (1989) on learning to read in an SL. See Short (1989) on language learning in relation to literature; see Nuttall (1982) on technical aspects of SL/FL-reading, such as text attack skills; see Brumfit & Carter (1991), Carter & Long (1991), Anderson (1999) on a wide range of issues; and Kramsch (1993) on cultural aspects in relation to SL/FL reading.

1.4. RELEVANCE OF STUDYING A MULTICULTURAL DIMENSION IN TEACHING

I approach the question of relevance, here, by discussing, first, what a multicultural dimension in teaching means in theory and practice, and why such a dimension might be important. I then consider this dimension in relation to a Finnish context. The section ends with a discussion of the rationale for introducing a multicultural dimension within the specific context of EFL-teaching.

1.4.1 What is a multicultural dimension in teaching and why is it important?

A multicultural dimension in teaching is related to societal diversity. While varying in intensity, population movements have been a permanent feature of most societies throughout history (Edwards, 2004). For example, the Indigenous populations of North America, Australia and New Zealand were colonised by Europeans. Slave labour from Africa, and indentured labour from China have further increased diversity in the US. And in Europe, although many countries are officially monolingual, multilingualism is often a fact of everyday life (Banks, 2004a; Edwards, 2004; May, 2001).

The sudden upsurge of migration after the Second World War resulted in the emergence of a new multiculturalism. Traditional Western immigration nations, such as the UK, the US, Canada and Australia depended on immigration for their economic prosperity and industrial development. At the same time, countries increasingly allowed entry to asylum seekers from countries experiencing political unrest (Banks, 2004a; Figueroa 2004; Edwards 2004). In continental Europe, the second half of the twentieth century saw a massive migration northward from Mediterranean countries into the industrial centres of Germany, France, Switzerland, Belgium and the Netherlands (Lynch, 1989; Phillipson, 2003).

With the formation of the European Union, ethnic-, cultural-, and linguistic diversity has continued to increase in Europe, while borders between different nations are fading. Population mobility has accelerated as more and more people have settled further from their place of birth. Forms of cultural diversity have come to differ also *within* nations. In the UK, for example, most minority groups live in London and other large cities; but there are also 'white' areas in multicultural areas (Gaine, 2000). The resulting linguistic and cultural diversity has raised a wide range of social issues and many states now have explicit policies on minorities, their languages and education (Mackey, 1992; Kivisto, 2002). This is the context within which multicultural education has emerged in Western and European nations.

Multiculturalism

As an idea, *multiculturalism* is new, although the reality of multiculturalism is very old and familiar to most societies. Various writers have addressed issues of definition. Wahlbeck (2003), for instance, discusses the term from three distinct perspectives that are visible today: Multiculturalism as a description of a society with many cultures; Multiculturalism as a normative ideology or political goal (involving a recognition and positive endorsement of diversity); and Multiculturalism as specific action plans. Wieviorka (1998) also discusses the complexities of multiculturalism, and difficulties involved in defining the concept. She distinguishes three approaches: sociological (what occurs in a society in which multiculturalism is present, how cultural differences are produced, questions of identity), political philosophy (consideration of legal or political measures related to a multiculturalist perspective), and political science (analysis of institutional and political forms through which a multiculturalist principle is set up.). Wieviorka further outlines some problems involved in multiculturalist policy: should multiculturalism be restricted to ethnicity alone, or be an open framework concerning many kinds of difference? Further, multicultural policy should recognize cultural difference as permanent renewal, and also accept responsibility for inequality and social exclusion.

In the classroom situation, students within each ethnic group may share the same religion, life-styles and values, and these may be different from those of classmates. Each student has a culture. Parts of the culture are shared by class members, whereas other aspects are shared only with family members or the particular ethnic community (Gollnick & Chinn, 1990). Because multiculturalism has been interpreted differently in different Western nations, different philosophical, political, and educational stances have been taken in different settings (Goldman, 1993).

Political and philosophical approaches to multicultural education

Multicultural education has emerged in culturally and ethnically diverse countries that are politically democratic, and it has also been shaped by political and philosophical considerations. Dewey's principle that education must take the experiences and interests of children seriously lends support to the idea of a culturally diverse curriculum which makes the school less alienating for children from various cultural groups. In this view, all children should have equal opportunity to gain thorough and appropriate knowledge of their culture within the education system (Banks, 2004a; Figueroa, 2004; Leicester & Taylor, 1992). One line of argument says that schooling can in fact help subordinate groups achieve status and income on a roughly equal basis with more privileged groups in society; the opposing line of argument says that the school can either reinforce or conflict with ethnic and social class characteristics brought to school by children (Gollnick & Chinn, 1990; Labelle & Ward, 1994; Morgan, 1997). Putnam & Putnam (1993) suggest that the aim of schooling should be

to prepare *all* future citizens, not only the minority, for a pluralistic society characterised by respect for other cultures and values. Respect requires some knowledge of the other culture, since one cannot respect what one does not know.

Education is value-laden and political. Multicultural education has been criticized in Western nations by both the political right and left (Banks, 2004a; Epstein, 1993; Figueroa, 2004). In the UK, for instance, right wing opposition during the 1980s argued that multicultural education threatened the nation's heritage, traditional values and culture, and eroded educational standards. There was also serious discussion of whose version of the British heritage and culture should be accepted (Epstein, 1993; Tomlinson, 1990; 1993). Writers of the left, in contrast, argued that multicultural education should be replaced with anti-racism (Banks, 2004a; McLaren, 1995; see also below).

A range of ideologies has arisen in traditional Western immigration countries, each influencing educational planning, policy-making and the school curriculum (see Bullivant, 1986; 1994; Labelle & Ward, 1994; Leicester, 1989, 1992; Lynch, 1989). Each writer has termed the stages and teaching approaches slightly differently, but some general trends are visible. Banks (2004) offers a recent overview of stages of development towards multicultural education in the United States: the early ethnic studies movement and the intergroup education movement, the later ethnic studies movement (1960-1970s), which then developed into four separate phases of multicultural education.⁴ Figueroa (2004) traces developments in the UK: *laissez-fair* immigrant education, assimilation, integration, multiculturalism and pluralism, Black studies, antiracism and later also multicultural antiracism.

In general, during the first phases of school response, cultural and historical content is often incorporated into the curriculum. The solution to immigrant children's problems, it is believed, is their rapid *assimilation* into the way of life of the dominant culture. Shifts in thinking in the late 1960s and mid-1970s contributed to the development of an *integrationist position*. Immigrants were no longer expected to disregard their own cultures completely, and the white majority was expected to tolerate some differences between cultures. Language teaching was provided for immigrants and additional thematic subject areas were added to the curriculum. (Banks, 2004a; Figueroa, 2004; Gollnick & Chinn, 1990; Lynch, 1989).

During the 1970s, the positive values of bilingualism and of a culturally mixed society were highlighted. It was argued that cultures other than the historically dominant Anglo-Saxon groups were not only to be tolerated but were also to be preserved and

⁴ I) Concepts and information from ethnic studies incorporated into school curricula; II) a realization that such incorporation was not enough to respond to the needs of ethnic minority students and to develop more democratic attitudes among all students; III) other groups, such as the disabled, demanded incorporation of their perspectives into curricula; and IV) the current US phase, multicultural education: development of theory, research and teaching practice that involves variables of race, class and gender. (Banks, 2004a)

appreciated. Within education, *multicultural* approaches in teaching reflecting cultural *pluralism* developed. This phase sought to permeate the whole curriculum with a commitment to cultural diversity, and to promote teaching materials and methods appropriate to that goal. Students from dominant cultures were to learn about the history, culture and contributions of subordinate groups. In the US, curricular guidelines and professional journals were published, and professional organizations for teachers committed to multicultural education emerged (see Banks, 2004a; Gay, 2004; Gollnick & Chinn, 1990).

Critical or radical multiculturalism, which is a British phenomenon, argues that diversity must be affirmed within the politics of cultural criticism and commitment to social justice (Figueroa, 2004). The *radical paradigm* assumes that the school plays a key role in oppressing ethnic groups (Lynch, 1989; McLaren, 1995; Sleeter & Bernal, 2004). Supporters in Britain of both multicultural-and anti-racist education have advocated greater equality of opportunity, although anti-racist education has given more attention to race and racism. Multicultural education, in contrast, has emphasized personal attitudes over power structures, and has highlighted what teachers can do. In the 1980s, multicultural and antiracist education were often held to stand in opposition to each other. However, the two can also be combined; antiracist education can be multicultural, and multicultural education can be antiracist. (Figueroa, 2004; Hessari & Hill, 1989; Sleeter & Bernal, 2004). In the present study, the term multicultural education is used for educational practices which also involve anti-racism.

Thus, multicultural education in Western nations has evolved over a long period of time, responding first to the problems met by immigrant children and later to an increasing awareness of the multicultural nature of society and of racism. There are, however, significant differences in the educational paradigms developed in response, both within and between nations, and multicultural education has been used as an umbrella term indicating many different types of beliefs and teaching practices. (Banks, 2004a; Bastiani, 1997a; Hildago, Siu & Epstein, 2004; Olneck, 2004). Several multiculturalists have attempted to define the field of multicultural education. James A. Banks' (1993a; 2004) description of the five principle dimensions of multicultural education in the United States has been widely cited: Content Integration; The Knowledge Construction Process; Prejudice Reduction; An Equity Pedagogy; and An Empowering School Culture and Social Structure. Today, there is wider consensus about the major principles, concepts, and concerns than in the 1980s and early 1990s (Banks, 2004a; Gay, 2004).

Multicultural education in practice

In practice, the implementation of multicultural education has meant that the *school culture* should reflect the cultures of the whole school population in order for minority students to experience equality. The *knowledge base* of the school and the process of

knowledge construction should be considered (Banks, 1993b; 2004b).⁵ Another important focus has been *equality of opportunity* and *educational outcome*. Factors affecting *school performance* have received particular attention, because ethnic minority children, especially boys, often have difficulties achieving at the same level as their majority peers.⁶ *Language issues* have also received attention: since ethnic minority children are expected to acquire new concepts in a barely familiar language, and to learn to read and write in this language, they may experience difficulties. Also, many of the educational and intelligence tests which rely heavily on language put ethnic minority children at a disadvantage. Attention has also been directed towards opportunities for *interaction between home and school*.⁷ (Banks, 2004a; Cosin & Hales, 1997; Olneck, 2004)

In later stages of multicultural education, attention has also been paid to the education of majority pupils. In the present study, a distinction has been made between issues related to ethnic minority children (such as those listed above), and issues related to the education of *all* children. It is the second kind which is the focus here. In fact, many commentators now agree that one major goal of education is to restructure schools so that all students will acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function in an ethnically and racially diverse world (Banks, 1993a; 2004). Such multicultural education is important not only in black areas but also in white areas, because racial prejudice, stereotyping and myths tend to be strong where white people do not mix daily with black people and know them as friends (Deegan, 1996; Keats, 1996).

Several educational variables are affected by efforts to include a multicultural dimension in mainstream teaching for all children. For example, the importance of the *curriculum* lies in the underlying values which should reflect the cultures represented in the wider community (Barrett, 1993; Hillis, 1993). It should help students view concepts, events and issues from diverse perspectives, and should aim to cultivate respect for minority cultures, beliefs and practices (Hillis, 1993; McLaren, 1995). This necessitates a 'whole school' approach. J. A Banks (2004a) has conceptualized four curricular approaches which have been used to include ethnic content into the school curriculum.⁸ Traditionally, most curriculum theory in the field has been theoretically deductive, and not based on empirical findings (Gay, 2004).

School materials have also called for consideration. In countries such as the US, UK, Canada and Australia, multicultural content has increasingly become a part of core

⁵ Banks (1993b; 2004b) identifies five categories of knowledge, which in reality overlap and are interrelated in a dynamic way: *Personal/Cultural Knowledge*; *Popular Knowledge*; *Mainstream Academic Knowledge*; *Transformative Academic Knowledge*; and *School Knowledge*.

⁶ See for example Arnot, David & Weiner (1997), Artiles, Trent & Palmer (2004), Barton & Oliver (1997), Hammersley (1997), Morgan (1997), Ogbu (1992), Steele (2004).

⁷ See for example Ahmad, McCann & Plackett (1997), Alexander (1997), Bastiani (1997b), Edwards & Knight (1997), Ferris (1997), Puri (1997), Sneddon (1997).

⁸ Contributions (discrete cultural elements, heroes, holiday); additive (content and themes added without changing structure); transformation (changing the structure of the curriculum, perspectives of ethnic and cultural groups represented); and social action (pupils make decisions and take action on important social issues).

courses and text books in schools and colleges. Books, posters and notices, toys, labels and nameplates, signs, displays, artifacts, audio-visual resources, and reading schemes, now include positive images and accurate information about all ethnic groups and show people from these groups in a wide range of roles and situations (Hessari & Hill, 1989; The Multilingual Resources for Children Project, 1995).

Certain suggestions have been offered for *practical implementation*. The challenge is to find ways both to build common goals and networks, and to enable each individual and group to strengthen their positive identification with their heritage. A pedagogy is needed which neither exoticizes nor demonizes the ‘other’. Dialogic enquiry, learner-centred approaches and cooperative learning are common within multicultural teaching. Other common approaches include: cross-curricular initiatives and topic work; the examination of realities through media; case studies; open discussion; and ethnic interaction with visits to the classroom by members of various ethnic groups and inter-ethnic work groups. Expressive activities and drama help children experience what it feels like to belong to another culture. Co-operation between schools and international contacts have also been used. Branch, Goodwin and Gualtieri (1993), Butt (1989), Hessari & Hill (1989), and Kendall (1983) present specific actions for the inclusion of culturally pluralistic perspectives into teaching.

Dealing with *issues of racism* requires special attention. Various approaches have been adopted to modify children’s racial attitudes, including curricular intervention, perceptual differentiation, the examination of bias, and cooperative learning.⁹ For example, Epstein (1993) emphasizes the cultures of the classroom and the building of trust among the children and between them and the teacher. Troyna (1993) and Troyna & Hatcher (1992) emphasize the need for anti-racist teaching to focus on issues such as friendship rather than ‘race’.

Several years of multicultural education in Britain and the US have resulted in a considerable wealth of experiences, both positive and negative (Banks & McGee Banks, 2004). The success of multicultural and anti-racist initiatives has depended, among other things, on the importance attached to them by local education authorities and on the availability of funds from central government. Far more than classroom curriculum reform is needed to ensure the promotion of equal opportunities (Blair & Arnot, 1993; Troyna, 1993). In times of economic crisis, funding has not always been sufficient to implement the objectives of multicultural education and practice has therefore often lagged behind theory (Figueroa, 2004; Gaine, 2000). More recently, the introduction in the UK, for example, of action plans for raising the achievement of ethnic minority children, and new initiatives in citizenship education, have started to redress this imbalance. There is now greater official recognition of racism in British

⁹ See Boutte, LaPoint & Davis (1993), De Genova (1995), Schofield (2004), Stephan & Stephan (2004), Gaine (2000); see also sections 7.4.2-7.4.3.

society, although scholars such as Figueroa (2004) argue that much more remains to be done.

Another problem lies in the fact that multicultural and anti-racist efforts have not always been successful, and multicultural education has therefore received criticism. In Britain, for instance, it has been argued that multicultural education has operated in a vacuum, with few academics engaged in the development of epistemology (Appiah, 1999). And an important lesson learned in the UK has been that the white perspective also needs to be remembered (Kundnani, 2000). In The US, heterogeneity, hybridity, and multiplicity need to be considered (Ladson-Billings, 2004). More generally, it is important to remember that all cultures undergo change.

1.4.2 The relevance of a multicultural dimension in teaching in Finland

What, then, is the relevance of multicultural education to Finland? Let us first take a look at issues of diversity. Although Finland is often held to be monocultural, it has long been a melting pot between East and West (Wahlbeck, 2003). It is also a linguistically heterogeneous nation with official bilingualism (Finnish spoken by 92 % of the population, and Swedish spoken by 5,6%), and Sami speakers in Lapland (0,03% of the population) (Tilastokeskus, 2004). There is a long history, too, of Romany Gypsies and speakers of other minority languages, such as Russian. What makes this diversity slightly different from that of many other countries, however, is that the speakers of the minority languages traditionally represented in Finland have generally been white. Therefore, *visible* minorities in Finland are a relatively new phenomenon.

Finland has traditionally been a country of emmigration, to destinations such as the US, New Zealand, Australia, and Sweden. It began to receive refugees rather later than other European countries (Ministry of Labour, 2003/317), and it was only in the 1990s that issues concerning immigrants and refugees began to be widely debated (Pohjanpää, Paananen & Nieminen, 2003; Ministry of Labour, 2003/317). At the end of 2003, the total Finnish population was 5 219 732, of whom two per cent were foreign citizens (Tilastokeskus, 2004). Although small in comparison with that of most other European countries, the number of foreign citizens had almost doubled in the space of just one decade. The largest number in 2003 came from Russia, Estonia, Sweden, Somalia, former Yugoslavia, Iraq, the UK, Germany, Iran, China, Turkey, the US and Thailand. The number of immigrants, especially refugees, though constantly increasing, is still proportionally smaller than that of many other European nations (Tilastokeskus, 2004), and there is a concentration of foreign residents in the Southern parts of Finland. For these reasons, many Finnish people still have little direct experience of visible minorities. However, low birth rates and an aging population suggest that immigration quotas are likely to increase in the future (Valtionneuvoston kanslia, 31/2004; Ministry of Labour, 2003/317).

Negative attitudes in Finland towards refugees and other immigrants have been explained with reference to a wide range of factors, including economic depression in the 1990s and competition for jobs, insecurity about oneself or one's foundations, ethnocentrism, and intolerance.¹⁰ Racist crimes towards immigrants have increased significantly since the 1990s. Racism might be less overt than before, but racial attitudes are present in everyday life (Jaakkola, 2000; Pitkänen, 1998b). Pitkänen (2004) points to research findings which indicate that the majority population's ability to meet cultural difference has not increased despite the increasing numbers of immigrants to Finland.

On the other hand, there are also many Finns who are familiar with other cultures. Through the media of radio, film, television, video, and computer, technology has made it possible to follow events and entertainment from other parts of the world. Finnish students are highly attuned to youth culture. Also, Finland is increasing its contacts with other countries through exchange programmes, such as Erasmus and Socrates (Europe), NORDPLUS (Nordic countries), and TEMPUS (Eastern Europe). Since the 1980s, it has also been common for Finnish upper secondary school pupils to spend a year abroad, and the fact that pupils in Finnish schools generally learn between two and four languages makes travelling and summer language courses abroad a popular option. Many young adults, too, find work abroad. Further, the "globalization", "global process" and "global culture" discussed by writers such as Kivisto (2002), Friedman (1994) and Robertson (1992) affect Finnish society as well, contributing to increased multiculturalism.

In addition, Finland, like many other countries, has been affected by international developments and the 1990s economic depression, which led to the reform of many aspects of the Finnish welfare state (Rinne, 2000). These developments affected educational policies as well, which in turn have been affected also by membership of the European Union. Universal, comprehensive state education delivered free of charge has been the traditional Finnish model. But when Finland entered the European Union, there was a clash between the Finnish education model and the more market driven models of larger EU member states. Finland has had to conform to EU policy in many areas. Among other things, there is now competition between schools, greater diversification in the school system, stronger parental choice, and the introduction of private funding (Rinne, 2000).

Mainstream teachers in Finland are increasingly meeting social, ethnic and cultural diversity in their classrooms (Pitkänen, 1998d). In 2003, 25 143 children in Finnish schools had a mother tongue other than Finnish or Swedish (Tilastokeskus, 2004). Although the history in Finland of dealing with issues of multiculturalism within

¹⁰ See Antikainen (1998), Anttonen (1998), Jaakkola (2000), Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind & Vesala (2002), Pitkänen (1998b).

educational establishments is shorter than in the UK or US, development has been rapid in the past decade. Immigrants of school age living in Finland are both entitled and obliged to attend basic education (Ministry of Labour, 2003/317). They attend reception classes ('valmistava opetus') before moving to mainstream classrooms (Utbildningsstyrelsen, 2004; Öster, 1998), and special arrangements are made for ethnic/linguistic/religious minority children according to their specific needs. The education of immigrants has as its goal both the integration of pupils into Finnish society, and the preservation of immigrant languages, identities and cultures (Pitkänen, 1998d; Utbildningsstyrelsen, 2004). However, owing to lack of funding and experienced teachers, immigrant children have sometimes been moved into mainstream teaching too quickly (Lind, 1999; Matinheikki-Kokko, 1999c).

As Finland is now a member of the European Union, it is required to include a European dimension in teaching, with goals similar to those of multicultural education (see Taylor, 1997). In fact, the latest Finnish National Curricula (Utbildningsstyrelsen, 1994; 2004) have stressed the overarching goals of developing European, international and multicultural awareness, tolerance, and respect for diversity among children. Therefore, the school system has, on a theoretical level, adjusted to the need to prepare the mainly white school population for a life in an increasingly multicultural nation and world.

1.4.3 Multicultural education in Finland

Multicultural policy

Official policy in Finland aims to integrate immigrants into society, support pluralism and tolerance, and grant equal rights and opportunity. There is a commitment to helping preserve the cultures and languages of immigrants (Matinheikki-Kokko, 1999c; Ministry of Labour, 2003/sopemi; Liebkind, 2000b), and to countering racism.¹¹

The term 'multiculturalism' was first used by Finnish academics in the 1990s to refer to societies where several cultures co-exist, and only more recently as an ideology concerned with minority politics (Matinheikki-Kokko, 1999c). Official documents often refer to 'integration' (a recent Finnish term is 'kotoutuminen', as in Ministry of Labour, 2003/317). Matinheikki-Kokko (1999c) and Pitkänen (2004), however, argue that 'integration' describes Finnish actions which are, in fact, reminiscent of multiculturalism. Wahlbeck (2003), similarly, argues that Finnish law concerning the integration of immigrants includes ingredients of multiculturalism. But Wahlbeck also

¹¹ For example, a Government action plan, ETNORA, against ethnic discrimination and racism, and the European Union's action plan, for 2001-2006, against all forms of racism, have both been implemented (Ministry of Labour, 2001; 2003/Sopemi, 2003/317). Finland has also signed up to the action plan of the UN Third World Conference against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance.

identifies some problems in Finnish discourse and seeks a critical discussion of what ‘culture’ entails in order to gain an understanding of multiculturalism. For example, minority groups have often been presented as static cultural groups, and multiculturalism has been discussed in relation to *problems* associated with intercultural encounters and how these should be ‘managed’. It has, implicitly, been the immigrants, not Finns, who need to change.

Since the 1990s, several research projects have been initiated at a number of universities and research centres, and within official bodies. An increasing number of networks, organizations, and societies are active in questions of culture, ethnicity and immigration.¹² This is, in fact, a rapidly expanding and developing field. One recent development is seen in the fact that in June 2006, The Society for the Study of Ethnic Relations and International Migration (ETMU) in Finland began to publish a refereed journal, *Finnish Journal of Ethnicity and Migration*.

Various reports have been produced since 1998 on integration, ethnic groups in Finland, immigration, and emmigration (see for example Ministry of Labour, 2003/317). In an overview of research in the field compiled by the Ministry of Labour (2004/343), approximately 470 studies were included in the category “foreigners in Finland”. These studies cover a wide range of issues, though only approximately 30 of them concern the field of education.

Multiculturalism and education

In Finland, the term ‘kansainvälisyyskasvatus’ (fostering internationalism) has often been used to indicate a broadening of students’ world view and moral growth as in multicultural education for all children, whereas ‘monikulttuurinen opetus’ (multicultural teaching) has been used for teaching multicultural and multilingual groups of children, with a focus on immigrant education (Matinheikki-Kokko, 1999d). Lerkkanen (1999), however, suggests that ‘fostering internationalism’ has now been replaced by ‘multicultural’ and ‘intercultural’ teaching. In some cases, ‘multicultural education’ has been interpreted very widely as anything to do with globalisation, internationalism or immigration (as in Häkkinen, 1998). Therefore, terminology in the Finnish setting can be confusing.

Multicultural education in relation to the *minority* has received some scholarly attention. Yli-Renko (1997), for example, in a discussion of the European multicultural dimension in Finnish schools, interprets multicultural education as referring mainly to

¹² For example, The Migration Institute, Turku; The Centre for Research on Ethnic Relations and Nationalism (CEREN); The Family Federation of Finland (Väestöntutkimuslaitos); Kehityskaatutkimuksen laitos, Helsinki University; MEV (Muuttoliike ja etnisyytutkimuksen verkosto); ETHNICA (Etnisten suhteiden tutkimusyksikkö); RASMUS (Network against racism and xenophobia); SYREENI (concerned with discrimination, inequality, and ethnic relations); and ETMU (Society for the Study of Ethnic Relations and International Migration).

the teaching of immigrant children.¹³ Various studies have focused on ways in which immigrant children have been integrated into or have adapted to Finnish schools.¹⁴ For example, the importance of learning the majority language, and the rights of immigrant children, have received attention (Martin, 1999b; Lind, 1999). Yli-Renko (1997) found that learning Finnish was an important factor in the adaptation process, and that children from cultures geographically close to Finland (Russia and Estonia) adapted well and with fewer problems than those from countries further away, though Liebkind, Jasinskaja-Lahti, & Haaramo (2000b) found that Turkish and Vietnamese school children adapted well to their Finnish schools, especially when they had support from their parents. Alitolppa-Niitamo (2004) studied Somali youth within formal education in the 1990s, with a focus on their opportunities in Finnish society.

Few studies, however, have discussed how teachers can organise teaching to meet the needs of immigrant children (though see Koppinen, 1999b), and empirical studies from real classrooms are scarce. One exception is Miettinen (1998), who studied the pedagogical and cultural thinking of class teachers in Karelia, Finland.¹⁵ Another interesting exception is Valladingham (2004) who studied an English-speaking international class in Oulu, which included children from many different cultural backgrounds. She found that parents were much involved in the activities of the school, and that teaching methods were intercultural, including, for instance, co-operation, participatory and experiential methods. The teacher of the class, however, found it difficult to locate content and teaching materials relevant to teaching a multicultural dimension.

Problems experienced by Finnish teachers when working with immigrant children have been recognised, as have teachers' experiences of multicultural groups.¹⁶ Teachers have highlighted anxieties about their ability to cope, pointing to their problems in understanding foreign languages, and their lack of knowledge of different cultures (Miettinen & Pitkänen, 1999; Pitkänen, 2004). Miettinen & Pitkänen (1999) argue for increasing resources within schools and teacher education. According to Alitolppa-Niitamo (2004), there is still inconsistency between theory and practice, placing teachers of multicultural groups in a demanding position. Increased consideration of the educational needs of pupils from different immigrant backgrounds is felt to be necessary (Pitkänen, 2004).

¹³ Other examples of this kind include Ikonen & Pakarinen (1998), Viitalahti & Silvennoinen (1998), Peltonen (1998), Kauhanen, Luokkanen & Manner (1998), Öster (1998), Soutamo, Säily & Wilhunen (1998).

¹⁴ For example Alitolppa-Niitamo (2004), Jaskinskaja-Lahti et. al. (2002), Liebkind, Jasinskaja-Lahti & Haaramo, (2000b), Matinheikki-Kokko (1999c).

¹⁵ Miettinen found four types of teachers: the assimilative educator, the routine-oriented educator, the humanistic multicultural educator, and the critical multicultural educator. Some teachers were singularists (valuing one correct way of living), some were pluralists. Others were ethnocentric, some valued internationalisation, and some were teacher-centred and concerned with teaching rules and regulations to minority students. Teachers who liked teaching were generally pupil-centred and empathetic towards the child. All teachers had stereotypes of different cultures, some were aware of their own attitudes, whilst others were not. All teachers agreed that an important step in multicultural education would be for the teacher to be aware of her own prejudices.

¹⁶ See, for instance, Miettinen & Pitkänen (1999), Pollari (1999), Yli-Renko (1997).

The present study is not concerned with the integration of minority pupils into the Finnish school system, nor with the special needs of ethnic minority pupils. Instead, the focus is on another equally important aspect of multicultural education: the mainstream education of *all children*. In fact, there is very little empirical evidence of multicultural teaching and learning among the Finnish or Swedish language groups.¹⁷

Multicultural education for all children

The new national curriculum (Utbildningsstyrelsen, 2004) emphasises human rights, human equality, democracy, the willingness to preserve the natural environment, tolerance, and respect for other cultures. Important goals include familiarizing oneself with other cultures and views of the world, learning to function in a multicultural society and within international cooperation, and learning to understand factors that contribute to cultural identity. In addition, 'cultural identity and internationalism' are listed as one of seven important overarching themes.

Several Finnish writers have acknowledged the importance of these educational goals on a theoretical level. Hämäläinen-Abdul-Samad & Mattila (1998) and Pitkänen (1998d) discuss the need to foster tolerance and multicultural values which include social skills, problem solving, ability to resolve conflicts, cooperative skills, development of empathy and knowledge about the 'other', ability to deal with diversity, and a focus on similarity rather than difference. According to Räsänen (1998), knowledge of more remote cultures would need to come earlier than is currently the case, if Finns are to understand that they are world citizens. Kaikkonen (1999) discusses learning between different cultures as a concept. Such learning is based on both a strengthening of one's own cultural identity, and learning to understand and accept cultural elements of the 'other'. Cultural identity among Finnish children is mainly monocultural in relation to that of children in other European countries, and secondary socialization in schools and institutions is also more monocultural. Kaikkonen recommends the notion 'kulttuurien välinen oppiminen' (learning between cultures) which reflects the need for a two-way relationship in which both parties need to learn to understand each other. However, cultural learning is difficult to integrate into the Finnish school system, since the orientation of learning is highly cognitive and subject-specific.

Development of tolerance is a recurring theme. Yli-Renko (1997) notes the importance of developing positive attitudes and knowledge of other cultures. A priority for Finland, Liebkind (2000b) argues, would be to prevent racist attitudes from spreading to those young people who have not yet developed strong attitudes in one direction or another. Pitkänen (1998a) discusses cognitive and moral empowerment in a multicultural society, and argues for the need to discuss what a common morality with universal values and norms might entail: in conflicting situations we need to be aware of our own

¹⁷ Though see Hämäläinen-Abdul-Samad & Mattila (1998), Pitkänen (1998c).

aspirations and place them in relation to other people's interests. Greater flexibility in our moral judgements will help us to show more 'good will' towards other people.

Despite the recognition both by the National Curricula and by scholars in the field of multicultural teaching, practice lags behind. In fact, little is known about how teachers implement the goals of the curriculum, and there has been little empirical evidence of the outcomes of such teaching (Liebkind, 2000b). Pitkänen (2004) suggests that teachers, in actual fact, have done little to implement the goals of multiculturalism. Problems for teachers have been the lack of teaching materials, and the abstract nature of the goals of the curriculum (Yli-Renko, 1997). Similar problems and discrepancies between theory and practice to those found in Western immigration nations (see 1.4.1) are therefore visible also in Finland. Exceptions to this general trend include, for example, Tella's (1997a; 1997b) study of a multicultural dimension in media EFL-education; Liebkind & McAlister's (2000) reports of efforts to combat racist attitudes among 13-15 year-old pupils through extended contact, peer modelling, and group discussions; Sarkkinen's (1999) study of ways in which schooling can positively affect tolerance; and Liebkind, Haaramo & Jasinskaja-Lahti's (2000a) study, which found that the *quality* of contact between groups is important. As Liebkind (2000b) notes, since there are so few immigrants in Finland, it would not be possible for all Finnish school children to know immigrants as close friends, and we therefore need to find other strategies to foster tolerance and positive attitudes.

A multicultural dimension for all children is the focus in the present study. As we have seen, such education has received political and educational attention in some Western countries since the 1960s (see Banks & McGee Banks, 2004). Since the late 1990s such issues have received attention also in Finland.

1.4.4 A multicultural dimension in EFL-teaching

The present project aimed to integrate a multicultural dimension into EFL-teaching. What might be the relevance? The Finnish National Curricula (Utbildningsstyrelsen, 1994; 2004) have stressed the need for language teaching to involve learning about the society/societies in which the target language is spoken. In the case of the English language, the main societies emphasised within Finnish schools, Britain and the United States, are multicultural. The inclusion of target language society (British) minorities in EFL-teaching provides an important theoretical underpinning for the present study inasmuch as issues related to multiculturalism are important aspects of sociocultural knowledge of British society today. The aim of the present study has been to use EFL-teaching as a subject for incorporating a multicultural dimension. This, I believe, is in line with the aims and objectives for foreign language teaching, and teaching in general, as stated by the Finnish National Curricula (1994; 2004). Such teaching also supports

goals similar to those of already established European approaches to language teaching (see 6.1).

1.5 AUTHENTIC MULTICULTURAL CHILDREN'S FICTION

1.5.1 Why use multicultural children's fiction and authentic texts in EFL?

Firstly, what is 'multicultural children's fiction'? I interpret 'children's fiction' very simply as fiction written for children. And since the 1960s, many books for children in English-speaking Western countries, including fiction, have had multicultural themes. Multicultural texts are available as picture books, big books, novels, and short stories for young children, older children, and young adults. Their main purpose has been to enhance the self-esteem of children from minority groups, and to contribute to the personal and social development of all children by depicting a variety of social groups, values and customs (Harris, 1994; Pinsent, 1997; Whitehead, 1988). Bishop (1992) distinguishes four types of more or less explicitly multicultural book. The first is the consciously inter-racial one, which includes pictures of various and diverse children participating in the activity being depicted, or focuses on people of different backgrounds interacting with each other. In both cases, they project a vision of a multicultural society. The second type features a child of colour without attempting to reflect a culture different or distinct from the shared dominant one. The child could be a member of any cultural group within a larger society. A third type focuses directly on the distinctive experience of being a member of a particular cultural group. While there may be characters from other groups, integration is not the focus. A fourth type focuses specifically on coping with racism and discrimination.

Why, then, would a teacher use multicultural children's fiction? Several purposes have been suggested: to allow minority children to read texts which speak to them; to develop all students' knowledge of and respect for religious, racial, and ethnic diversity; and to familiarise children with the literary traditions of other peoples and cultures (see Stotsky, 1994). The two latter purposes were central to the present project, in addition to the EFL-related goals (see below).

How might literature function? Storybooks, Marshall (1998: 195-6) argues, can support anti-bias objectives and promote respect for human diversity through 'talking about human differences' (helping children understand their own backgrounds and special qualities), 'talking through human differences' (focusing on commonalities without a focus on issues of diversity), and 'talking about topics which relate to issues of

diversity' (learning to live appropriately together with others). Particularly influential in the field has been Rosenblatt (2002), who suggests that literature enables students to learn about diversity, and about families very different from their own. The teacher can strengthen the effect of literature on social imagination by encouraging an active and personal relationship between the students and the literary work (Rosenblatt, 2002). These have been important reasons for including literature in multicultural teaching programmes. Issues raised by multicultural fiction among young EFL-readers in Finland were a particular focus for the present study.

Lastly, from the perspective of EFL-teaching, why would one use authentic texts? A large number of writers acknowledge the value of authentic fiction (see, for instance, Farnan, Flood and Lapp, 1994; Anderson, 1999; Sell, 1994, 1995, 2002). Literature has been seen as a powerful tool for gaining insight into other cultures and sociocultural beliefs (Lazar, 1993; Kramsch, 1993; Silberstein, 1994). In addition, literature contributes to children's oral language development by exposing them to a wide range of syntactic structures and vocabulary, stretching their oral competencies in the process (Fitzgerald, 1993). Using literature in EFL is also held to be motivating and meaningful, involving the reader in complex themes and suspense. It allows students to use their imagination and develop critical thinking (Burke & Brumfit, 1991; Lazar, 1993).

Thus, it is possible to argue in theory – both in terms of introducing a multicultural dimension in teaching, and from the perspective of EFL-teaching – that authentic literature could have a positive influence on readers' cultural, or multicultural, understanding. What happens in the *real EFL-classroom*, however, has not received much attention to date. The present study combines the goals of multicultural teaching and EFL-reading of authentic texts and seeks to study empirically the issues that emerge in a classroom setting with young EFL-readers.

1.5.2 Multicultural fiction in the present study

In a school situation, the teacher necessarily makes decisions about the selection of books, especially in the EFL-setting where materials need to be brought into class, and there is a wide range of views about which issues are important here. Concerning literature for the L1-setting, Stotsky (1994) in the US setting and Pinsent (1997) in the UK setting, for example, suggest that literature programmes need to be inclusive and avoid stereotypes, and dramatise a variety of experiences. Male and female characters should represent both positive and negative qualities. Illustrations should avoid stereotypes and tokenism, and should feature a variety of people in a variety of roles. There has been some discussion about using books with sexist or racist language or content. Marshall (1998) believes that children should be exposed only to those books which support critical thinking and unbiased attitudes. Other writers note that examples

of this kind can also be used to expose racism and bias (Evans, 1992). However, even if a text is not explicitly 'multicultural', cultural practices may be embedded within language use in texts (see Stephens, 1992/1996; Mc Carthy & Carter, 1994). Finally, there has also been some discussion of whether or not books about a minority group are best written by a representative of that group (see Cai, 1997).

The texts read during the present project were five multicultural children's novels plus a book of short stories. While based at the National Centre for Literacy (University of Reading, England), I made a selection of six books from which the pupils involved in my project chose two. *The setting* of the stories was an important criterion. The texts were to be set in Britain, since Britain was the English language society most familiar to the children through previous EFL-teaching (see also Chapter 6). Further, in contact between different groups of people, multiculturalism *might* or *might not* be important. For story characters, too, having friends from another culture might sometimes be culturally enriching, sometimes might involve difficult issues such as racism or intolerance, and sometimes might involve very little reference to culture, ethnicity or language at all. Other things, such as hobbies or interests, might be more salient than heritage or skin colour (see also Bishop, 1992). Thus, in the books chosen for this project, cultural distinctiveness was or was not central, and the books either did or did not have an explicit multicultural or anti-racist dimension. However, all of them placed visible minority members in important roles.

Jamila Gavin's (1991/1999) *I Want to be an Angel*, Jamila Gavin's (1993) *Grandpa Chatterji*, Elisabeth Laird's (1996) *Secret Friends*, and Paul May's (1999) *Troublemakers* include experiences, both positive and negative, of being a member of a minority group in Britain. *Secret Friends* and *Troublemakers*, and to some extent *I Want to be an Angel*, include a more or less explicitly anti-racist or anti-bullying dimension, raising various issues involved in being an ethnic minority member or of otherwise being different from the mainstream. Judy Allen's (1998) *Seven Weird Days at Number 31* and Malorie Blackman's (1983) *Operation Gadgetman* include minority members in important roles, without specific reference to their ethnicity or cultural heritage. In *Grandpa Chatterji* and *Secret Friends* there is a sense of different cultures coming together. However, in *Secret Friends* we never get to know what Rafaella's country of origin actually is. In the *Grandpa Chatterji* story we have the grandfather from India who has never met his grandchildren or been to England before. We see both a meeting between Indian and English culture, and, a meeting between different generations. The *Grandpa Chatterji* story was also available as a video, which the whole class (not just the children reading this book) watched.

The main *EFL-orientated goal* of the present project was that the children should engage in and enjoy longer authentic fictive texts. Several writers offer criteria or suggestions for selecting texts (see Aebersold & Field, 1997; Anderson, 1999; Lazar, 1993; Lundahl, 1998; Silberstein, 1994; Swarbick, 1990; 1998). Although most writers

have in mind either advanced learners or young adults/grown-ups (though see Williams, 1998), the criteria are also worth considering in primary level EFL-teaching. In this project, particular attention was paid to readability, difficulty of language, the children's age and linguistic proficiency, the length of the texts and chapters, line spacing and size of font. Further criteria included plot and storyline. The pupils needed to be able to grasp the meaning of what they read. The story had to be interesting but not complex and to appeal to both girls and boys. Giving pupils choices was also important, since choice can be a motivating factor for readers (see Swarbrick, 1990; 1998).

The selection became a compromise between those texts which I judged the young EFL-readers to be able to *manage*, and those with suitable *content* in terms of the multicultural dimension and possible appeal. Sometimes, language level was prioritized over multicultural content (as in *Seven Weird Days...* for the benefit of the weakest readers). In fact, finding a balance between language and content in selecting authentic multicultural EFL-reading materials was not always easy.

1.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has discussed the purpose and starting points of the present study. It has considered the theoretical relevance and rationale for teaching and conducting research in the fields of EFL-reading and a multicultural dimension in teaching. It also discussed the relevance of including authentic multicultural fiction in EFL-teaching. Detailed theoretical considerations related to the specific issues which emerged from the study are discussed in relation to the reported findings in chapters 3-8. Having now considered the overarching theoretical foundations for research and teaching, in the following chapter I shall discuss the research methodology adopted in the present study.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH POSITION AND METHODS

As explained in the previous chapter, the aim of this study was to investigate the range of issues which emerge when reading authentic multicultural texts with young EFL-readers. Because empirical evidence of this approach to teaching is scarce, the purpose was to highlight, describe, and understand the issues involved, and thus to open up the possibility for further, more detailed or specific future research.

2.1.1 Ethnographic orientation

For a number of reasons, a qualitative, ethnographic research approach was chosen. Qualitative methods are effective for discovering and exploring new ground; they offer a comprehensive perspective, and a rich and deep understanding of behaviour. Ethnography is also widely held to be effective in the study of natural settings, such as a classroom (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Eskola & Suoranta, 1998; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

Because my aim was to gain in-depth understanding of phenomena about which little is yet known, a *case study approach* was used (see Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). The case study allows examination of the characteristics of an individual unit (pupil, class, etc.), in a way which captures the complexity of behaviour. The strength of the case study approach is that it provides an example of *real* people in *real* situations, making it possible to support theoretical statements with evidence (Cohen, et al., 2000; Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993).

Epistemologically, the present study conforms to the ethnographic principles of naturalism, anti-positivism, phenomenology, and holism. Thus, it stresses the importance of pupils' own understandings, their beliefs, feelings, and interpretations. Fieldwork was conducted in a natural setting, and variables were not manipulated. Anti-positivism holds that researchers should be involved with their subjects, that the social world is personal and humanly-created, and that people's subjective experiences are important (Cohen, et al., 2000). From a phenomenological perspective, the aim was to obtain a holistic and complete picture of the studied phenomena. Data was interpreted in the context of the classroom where it was collected. (See Eskola & Suoranta, 1998; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Wiersma, 1995a)

Ontologically, the present study takes on an interpretative paradigm, which emphasizes that theory must arise from particular situations and be grounded in data generated through the process of research (see Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). However, although interpretation was grounded in data, it was not my intention to undertake a grounded theory analysis, as described by Strauss & Corbin (1990,1998; see 2.3). The interpretative paradigm also holds that research should be small-scale, and that personal involvement of the researcher is important, as was the case in the present study.

A variety of qualitative research techniques associated with *inductive* inquiry were used (see Hammersley, 1995; Wiersma, 1995a, 1995b). Data collection preceded without preconceived theories or hypotheses. Data was collected from teacher-researcher observations and descriptions (my field diary). Oral data included video recordings of small group work, student-teacher conferences, and group interviews with pupils. Data also included samples of pupils' written work, such as their diaries, a pupil question sheet completed at the end of the project, and pupils' self- evaluation of their work. Finally, data was also collected through video-recorded interviews with other teachers (the headteacher and class teacher). These various sources, outlined in 2.2, served the need for data- and methodological triangulation (see 10.1). Various other measures, outlined in section 10.1, were also taken to address issues of reliability and validity.

The present study is critical in that it gives voice to different positions (researcher's, pupils', other teachers'). Although it has as its goal the production of knowledge (see Ellis, 1993), I recognise that research findings of this type might involve a value orientation as well (see Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Thomas, 1993).

2.1.2 Teacher-researcher position

During the case study, I acted in the roles of both teacher and researcher, thus combining *conventional* and *practitioner research*. An important aim was to try to eliminate the negative aspects of conventional ethnography and practitioner ethnography. Hammersley (1993, 1995) argues that the validity of findings can be enhanced by a combination of *involvement* and *estrangement*. The characteristics of the two roles in my own research are set out below:

Involvement – the teacher

- I planned the teaching;
- I carried out the teaching;
- I knew the children from before;
- as a qualified primary school teacher and teacher of EFL, I was aware of practitioner needs and had access to the teacher's motives and intentions;

- I had an insider perspective on classroom events, and could interpret and analyse video recordings with first-hand knowledge about the children;
- I was in contact with other teachers in the school, and could access further inside information by interviewing the head teacher and the class teacher, who were also experienced language teachers;
- I had access to general information needed to understand the setting;
- I could test ideas as they emerged; and
- I had previous work experience of the studied setting *and* of the studied participants.

Estrangement – the researcher

- I was not an insider in the same sense as the other teachers in the school, since I was only teaching EFL for a few months;
- the 'less-insider-than-a-full-time-teacher'-position allowed me to distance myself from the events going on, and to view things from the perspective of a researcher;
- I could see phenomena in a wider context, since I was not as much involved in school activities as an ordinary teacher might be;
- I clarified my motives for doing the research;
- I was able to combine what was needed from a research point of view, with acceptable teaching practice within the boundaries of the curriculum;
- I had access to funding, university libraries, articles, book collections, and supervision in the way that is normal for a researcher; and
- after I had finished the reading project, I returned to the university where I analysed the materials as a full-time researcher.

The problem highlighted by Page, Samson and Crockett (1998), for example, that researchers in schools risk coming into conflict with teachers about their knowledge of schooling, was avoided, since I acted as both teacher and researcher and was part of both the university and school.

2.1.3 The Case study

Research setting and case group

In Finnish primary school education, the age range is from 6–7 to 12-13 years. The participants in the case study were Year 6 pupils who were 11-12 years of age. Cygnaeus School is an urban Swedish language school, catering for around 480 pupils. It is situated in the centre of Turku, a bilingual (Finnish/Swedish) city with just under 160 000 inhabitants, approximately 5,2% of whom speak Swedish as their first

language (Turku, 2005). The majority of children in Cygnaeus school come from Swedish language or bilingual (Swedish/Finnish) homes.

I taught three EFL-lessons per week for a term of 12 weeks between August and November 2000. The children in my case study had been learning English as their A- (or main foreign-) language for three years prior to the study. For the purposes of my research, an A-English EFL-class was most appropriate, since these children would by now be likely to be able to read and understand an authentic children's novel. In addition, there was a greater likelihood that they would welcome a challenge which took them beyond the standard curriculum.

I was allocated one of the three existing Year 6 A-EFL-groups, partly on the grounds that this group offered least problems with timetabling and liaison, since the deputy headteacher, who was one of my main points of contact with the school, was the normal teacher of this group. Getting to know the class of seven girls and seven boys was made easier by the fact that I had taught all of the children in the past. This shared history also enabled me as the researcher to act in the role as the teacher, since being taught by me was familiar to the children (see Cohen, et al., 2000; see also section 10.1).

Access and planning stages

I followed procedures of ethical conduct in social research by applying for official permission and negotiating access with significant figures (see Cohen & Manion, 1994; Eskola & Suoranta, 1998). Because the school was at a transition point, the retiring headteacher, the new headteacher and the acting/deputy headteacher were all involved in granting me access. Meetings were held in the spring of 2000 to discuss the details of my project, and to complete official paper work. A research application form was sent also to the local education authority (Skolcentralen). In addition, I applied for official permission from the Dean of Humanities at Åbo Akademi University to conduct research involving children.

Also conforming with the ethical conduct of social research (see Cohen, et al., 2000, Eskola & Suoranta, 1998), a letter and consent form were sent to parents and pupils of my EFL-group five months before the beginning of the project (see appendix 2.1.3). The letter informed parents and pupils of what was going to happen in lesson time. The consent form asked parents first whether they would allow their child to participate in teaching, and to be video-recorded in groups, and also whether they would be interested in participating in a parent interview after the project. Also, each pupil was asked to state whether he/she agreed to participate in teaching and to be video-recorded. All children agreed to participate in my teaching and research, and all parents granted me permission to both teach and video-record their children. I, in turn, promised that the pupils' names would be changed so that they could not be identified, that the data would be used strictly for my research purposes only, that I would personally be saving

and storing the material, and that no-one not involved in my research would have access to the material. I have kept my promises and will continue to do so.

I thanked the school for granting me access by donating English-Swedish dictionaries and a class set of one of the books used in my study (*I Want to be an Angel*). The school will also be receiving a full report of my research. I thanked the children at the end of the project by handing them a diploma for EFL-reading and organizing a party in one lesson after the project had ended.

Pupils and reading groups involved in the study

As we saw above, the EFL-class involved in the study was a natural EFL-setting, an existing EFL-group which I took over for the course of the project. It included both weak, average- and strong learners and readers. The 14 children were 11-12 years old, with seven girls (for whom I have used the pseudonymns Cecilia, Mikaela, Susanne, Katja, Annika, Lotta, Barbara) and seven boys (with the pseudonymns Tomas, Markus, Nils, Felix, Kasper, Melker, Lars). All but one of the children came from homes which were either monolingual Swedish or bilingual Swedish/Finnish, whilst Cecilia, who had recently moved from Denmark, had Danish as her L1. Her parents had elected to send her to a Swedish medium school because of the closer proximity of the language to Danish. All children except Cecilia had been learning English and Finnish in school prior to the study and they were literate in Swedish, Finnish, and English. Cecilia was literate in Danish and English.

Because I was not looking in any detail at individual pupils (single cases), there was no pre- or post testing of individual children's reading ability or EFL-proficiency.¹⁸ Instead, the study deliberately took a broader view of reading groups and the class as a whole (the class as 'the case'). Thus, I was not investigating the reading development of individual children but instead *the kinds of issues which emerge when using English language multicultural literature with groups of children*. Because I acted as the teacher, I was able to learn more about children's abilities and about where help was needed during the course of the project. This was made easier by the fact that the children were encouraged to ask me for help (see Chapter 3). Also, from a pedagogical perspective, I regarded it as motivating for the children to be able to have their say as to which book they would like to read. All in all, they had to choose two compulsory books from the selection of six books, and they were divided into groups based on their choices of books (rather than on testing). This proved to be a viable way forward, as children did indeed gravitate towards books which they perceived as matching both their interests and their levels of competence in English; a few children, in fact,

¹⁸ No EFL-reading test was conducted on these children prior to this study. Further, school grades for 'mother tongue' and EFL in Finland consisted of many different elements, and it is difficult to separate scores for 'reading' from the general 'mother tongue' grade, or 'reading' or 'language proficiency' from the EFL-grade.

changed to an easier or more demanding book if the one they had chosen was not suitable (see 4.1.1).

During the first half of the project, the pupils chose one book from a group of three books (*Seven Weird Days...*, *Grandpa Chatterji*, and *Operation Gadgetman*). The story either dealt with positive aspects of multiculturalism, or included minority members in important character roles without reference to culture, heritage, or skin colour (see 1.5.2). During the second phase of the project, children chose one book from a further group of three books (*Secret Friends*, *I Want to be an Angel*, and *Troublemakers*), but this time the content was more complex, involving, for instance, explicit discrimination or racism, or a main character's experiences of being 'different'. In brief, the rationale behind the two phases of the project was that the pupils first familiarise themselves with reading books in English, concentrating on language and understanding of the text, before continuing with a novel which was more demanding in terms of content, an arrangement which I arrived at partly as a result of experience gained from a previous reading project in 1998. Teaching methods are outlined in Chapters 3-5 below.

Reading groups were formed based on children's book choices, so that in each of the two phases of the project children reading the same book were placed together (see also section 4.1.1). The book titles, names of the groups (A-D), and the number and names (pseudonyms) of children reading a certain book in phase I are illustrated in the following table:

Book title	Group reading the book	Names and number of children reading book
<i>Seven Weird Days at Number 31</i>	B	Tomas, Markus, Cecilia = 3
<i>Grandpa Chatterji</i>	D	Susanne, Mikaela, Annika, Katja = 4
<i>Operation Gadgetman</i>	A C	Felix, Casper, Lars; and Nils, Lotta, Barbara, Melker = 7

Table 1. Books read by reading groups and children, phase I

The following table illustrates the number and names of children choosing each book, and the reading groups (E-I) which were formed based on book choices in phase II of the project:

Book title	Group reading the book	Names and number of children reading book
<i>Secret Friends</i>	F	Markus, Barbara = 2
<i>I Want to be an Angel</i> <i>The Private World of Rajiv Ray</i> (two short stories)	E I	Felix, Katja, Annika, and Lars, Mikaela, Susanne = 6
<i>Troublemakers</i>	G H	Nils, Cecilia, Tomas, and Lotta, Melker, Casper = 6

Table 2. Books read by reading groups and children, phase II

Thus, each pupil needed to read two books during the course of the project – working with different peers in the two phases.

As I began to analyse the data, I realised that I needed terms to distinguish between those groups in which highly proficient EFL-learners and readers were working, and all other groups. Because children had chosen books which they felt able to read, those who were the most EFL- and reading proficient had generally chosen the most demanding book. The expression ‘most proficient group’ is used in Chapters 3-8 for the groups reading the most demanding books. Children reading the most demanding book also generally managed to read independently of the teacher, needed little pre-reading help, and understood what they were reading. In the first half of the project, *Operation Gadgetman* was the most difficult book and the two groups reading *Operation Gadgetman* were the ‘most proficient groups’: Group A (Lars, Casper and Felix) and group C (Barbara, Nils, Melker, and Lotta). In phase II, *Troublemakers* was the most demanding book and the ‘most proficient groups’ were those reading *Troublemakers*: Group G (Nils, Cecilia and Tomas; of whom Nils had read the most demanding book in the first half of the project, while Cecilia and Tomas chose a more demanding book as their second book), and Group H (Melker, Lotta, and Casper, all of whom had also read the most demanding book in the first half of the project).

Those who were less EFL- and reading proficient had generally chosen the less demanding books. The average- and weaker groups are defined here as those groups reading the less demanding books: *Seven Weird Days at Number 31*, *Grandpa Chatterji*, *I Want to be an Angel*, and *Secret Friends*. Children in these groups also generally needed more support from the teacher before reading, whilst reading, and after having read.

It is notable, however, that in all groups, both proficient and less proficient, there was variation between individual pupils. And there was great variety between the most

independent readers reading the most demanding books, and the least independent readers reading the less demanding books. While the former became increasingly independent, the latter sometimes had difficulties comprehending what they were reading, and needed continuous support from the teacher, as we will see in the chapters that follow.

2.2 DATA SOURCES AND METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected from three categories of informants: the pupils; the teacher-researcher; other teachers. The data collection techniques employed are grouped according to written and oral sources, and outlined below.

2.2.1 Written sources

Field diary based on observation

Throughout the reading project, my observation was an important tool in data collection. I used unstructured observation in the beginning, and both semi-structured and unstructured observation later, as I developed a notion of the important issues that were emerging. I functioned as a 'participant-observer', participating with the EFL-group in an interactive way, whilst not disguising the fact that I was also involved in research (see Cohen, et al., 2000; Wiersma 1995b; Wolcott, 2001). I was both 'insider' and 'outsider'. The 'insider' risk of 'going native' was avoided, since my role as teacher was clearly distinct from that of the pupils. The 'outsider' risk of missing out important aspects of the setting was minimised by checking observations against the pupils' responses and my background knowledge (see Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; see also 10.1). The greater the number of observations, the greater the reliability of the data, enabling emergent categories to be verified: I was present in all lessons in the course of the project. Additional methods of gathering data are recommended to ensure that reliable inferences are drawn from reliable data (Cohen, et al., 2000). I used several other methods of gathering data, for triangulation purposes, as explained below.

Field notes were written in connection with my observations. Field notes are detailed notes taken by researchers in the setting as they observe (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Wiersma, 1995a). Because I was teaching, I could not make detailed accounts of events during lesson time. Instead, I jotted down key words (see Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993), which were written up into more extensive field notes immediately after each

lesson. In my field diary, I outlined my observations, thoughts, perceptions, and reactions to what happened in the lesson (see Athanases & Brice Heath, 1995; Eskola & Suoranta, 1998). During lessons I walked around the classroom, getting an overview of how pupils were doing in their groups. I moved between groups, and attended to the pupils' needs as in ordinary teaching.

Reading diaries—children's ongoing writing

The children's perspectives are visible in several written data sources: reading diaries, notebooks, and question sheets. The main source of children's written responses, however, was their reading diary, which was ongoing throughout the project. The children used an A5-size notebook, which functioned as reading diary, dialogue journal, and response log (see Chapter 3). Some time was spent introducing the reading diary. The children were told that they could write freely about anything that came to their mind whilst reading or after having read a chapter. They were also given examples – scaffolding – of types of things that one might want to write about (see 3.6.1), and sometimes I gave them questions to answer. The children were asked to complete their diaries at home. I usually read their entries every other week, asking questions, but in keeping with suggested practice (see Peyton & Reed, 1990) I did not correct mistakes. The children were told that they could write in either English or Swedish.

I was interested both in how the children managed to express their views, and in what they said about the texts. I was also open to any other significant issues emerging through their writing. Responses from these reading diaries tended to be more spontaneous than the other written data sources. They also presented an ongoing account of the children's thoughts. This explains why the reading diaries have been used as a primary source of data.

Children's notebooks—written tasks on the texts

The children also had a larger notebook (A4), in which they did various tasks related to vocabulary and content and kept a personal glossary of words which they picked out from the texts (see fig. 5). They also wrote essays after finishing each of the two books, and wrote a 'cultural topic' essay. The tasks in notebooks varied significantly between the reading groups, depending on what book they were reading (see Chapters 3-5). The children's notebooks have not been coded and did not function as base for developing analytical categories. Instead, this material served as secondary data used to supplement, when relevant, categories developed through the main data sources.

Question sheets—retrospective written accounts

Because I wanted to complement the interviews (see below) with children's private thoughts which might not be expressed in front of their peers (see Cohen, et al., 2000;

Miles & Huberman, 1994), children were also asked about the project retrospectively in writing. Two question sheets were filled in at the end of the project. These allowed pupils to express themselves open-endedly, and to say things which they might not have wanted or had the chance to say in a group situation. The task question sheet (see appendix 2.2.1.A) provided feedback on tasks used during the project and was completed during the last lesson. The children's answers allowed me to check my understanding of their enjoyment/progress against their own views, and to receive more detailed feedback on individual tasks used during the project. The *question sheet about the project* (see appendix 2.2.1.B) was filled in at home and handed back in a sealed envelope. These two question sheets were not used as main sources of data, but were instead used to check whether new or different information emerged in relation to the primary sources of data (see 2.2.3).

2.2.2 Oral sources

Two types of video-recorded material were collected in lesson time: video recordings of children working independently in their groups, and video-recorded conferences involving reading groups and the teacher. This material contains evidence of reading, vocabulary discussions, thoughts and ideas about chapter content, and of other discussions and tasks which took place within the groups throughout the project. Oral data also included retrospective interviews with each group after they had finished a book, a group interview with parents, and interviews with the head teacher and the class teacher (deputy head). These are outlined below. In appendix 2.2.2.A and 2.2.2.B, all samples of oral data of the children which were used in analyses are listed.

Video recordings of reading groups working independently — ongoing record of group work

Each reading group was recorded working independently at least once during the project. Most groups were recorded twice. The rationale was that each pupil be recorded in both phases of the project. 14 recordings have been fully transcribed and analysed, and these served as primary sources. I was interested in how the children were reading and discussing in their groups, how they managed without the teacher, helped each other, understood readings, and what they were saying about the texts. The types of data depended on what the children were doing at the time of recording.

The duration of each recording was approximately 50 minutes. Because I did not want to draw attention to the camera (see Wiersma, 1995a), I did not move or touch the camera during lesson time. Instead, I turned it on just before the pupils entered the class and turned it off when they had left. Recordings freed me as the teacher from having to write down observations, allowing me to act as a 'normal' teacher, whilst

simultaneously (through the video camera) obtaining a more detailed insight into issues emerging in the selected group. Video recordings helped me as a sole researcher in the field to enhance validity (see Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993; see also 10.1).

Video-recorded student-teacher conferences with reading groups

Each group was recorded discussing with the teacher. Sometimes, two groups reading the same book formed a larger group. The rationale for sampling was that each pupil be recorded discussing with the teacher at least once during each phase of the project. In all, nine conferences were recorded, varying in length between 15 and 30 minutes. These recordings were used as main sources of data in analysis, and they were fully transcribed.

The video-recorded discussions were semi-structured (see Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993). In practice, I had a list of issues or ‘example questions’ (see Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; see also Chapter 3) which focused on pupils’ responses, comprehension problems, understanding and meaning-making when reading, and ability to talk about what they had read. Sometimes, I asked about particular issues in order to clarify or verify issues which had emerged during the course of the project. The pupils were also free to raise topics and move the discussions on. Questions varied from one group to the next and pupils used either English or Swedish.

Video-recorded group interviews with pupils—retrospective oral data of pupils’ views

Video recordings of group interviews took place after each group had finished reading a novel, first in the middle of the project (groups A, B, C, D), and then at the end (groups E, F, G, H, I). The interviews allowed pupils to express their views, and took the form of semi-structured ‘theme interviews’, in which themes (in practice, ‘example questions’) are decided beforehand but the order or way in which themes are discussed varies between groups (see Eskola & Suoranta, 1998). The interviews allowed me both to gain insights into children’s views, and to check my own understandings when necessary, thus validating findings (see Cohen, et al., 2000; Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993).

Children were taken out of their classes for the interviews. The children had in front of them the novel which was being discussed, and could look up places in the book when needed. The focus was on the pupils’ thoughts and feelings about the literature project, how they were managing, their reactions to and understanding of the texts, and, in some cases, on sociocultural and multicultural themes. Interviews at the end of phase II also included questions about what the pupil thought about the project as a whole. I functioned as ‘chair person’ posing questions, probing, reflecting on remarks, and introducing new topics. The children were free to raise topics but seldom did so. A

total of 9 recordings were made, each lasting approximately 40-60 minutes. These recordings were used as primary sources of data in analysis, and were fully transcribed.

Interviews with parents

The pupils' parents were invited to participate in a video-recorded group discussion of semi-structured nature, which was conducted after the literature project, in November 2000. The aim was to inform the parents about what their children had been doing, to ask how they felt the children had managed, and to provide parents with an opportunity to ask questions. The purpose of the interview was to provide data-source triangulation. In practice, only two fathers participated. The class teacher said afterwards that an important parents' meeting on bilingualism had prevented several interested parties from attending. Because only two parents were present, they were not representative of the whole group. Therefore, I have excluded this interview from analysis.

Interview with the headteacher

An informal interview with the headteacher, the former head of EFL-teaching who was familiar with using literature in language teaching, took place at the end of the reading project in November 2000. She was given questions before the interview, so that she could think them through beforehand. The interview centred around issues important to the organisation of the reading project, questions which might need further attention in future development of projects of this type, and views on the usefulness of this kind of project in a Finnish primary school setting. It permitted triangulation and was used as a secondary source of data.

Interview with the class teacher

The class teacher of the EFL-group was an experienced teacher of Finnish and the deputy head of the school. She was given questions, similar to those for the head teacher, to think about beforehand. She proved a valuable source of information on how the children's other school work had been affected by the project, and on experiences from her previous use of literature in Finnish language teaching. This interview also permitted triangulation, and was used as a secondary source of data.

2.2.3 Summary of data sources

As we have seen, several sources and methods of data collection were used in this study. They were meant both to complement each other in the sense that the weaknesses or biases present in one data collection technique were compensated for through other techniques, and they also enabled triangulation of data sources and methods (see Miles & Huberman, 1994). Certain differences are thus evident in the data collection techniques. Firstly, the children responded to the content of their books both *orally* and *in writing*. Secondly, in the reading diaries, reading conferences, and group discussions in lesson time, the pupils expressed themselves *whilst reading* (real time perspective), whereas in the interviews, essays after each of the books, and question sheets after the project, they gave their thoughts *in retrospect*.

Thirdly, in the oral responses, the children were working or discussing *in groups*, and in the written sources they were expressing themselves *individually* and *privately*. A distinction can also be seen between the more *spontaneous* written responses in reading diaries, and the *responses triggered by the teacher's questions* in tasks related to reading (see section 5.2.2). It needs to be noted, however, that *all* sources of data were to some extent influenced by teaching practice and, for this reason, in the chapters that follow, teaching practice has where relevant been outlined in detail. A fifth distinction can be seen between the *main* sources of data (field diary, children's reading diaries, video recordings of independent group work, reading conferences, and interviews with groups), and *secondary* data sources (notebooks, question sheets, interviews with other teachers). A sixth distinction is represented by the perspectives portrayed in the *different voices* which were heard: the teacher-researcher's (field diary), the pupils', other teachers'.

These various dimensions helped to ensure both a holistic, rich and thick description of issues involved, and the validity of the data (see Chapter 10.1). The dimensions can be summarized in the following way:

written	-	oral
real time	-	retrospective (after finishing a book)
individual (private)	-	group discussion (public)
triggered	-	more spontaneous
main sources	-	secondary sources
3 voices (pupils, teacher-researcher, other teachers)		

Fig. 1. *Dimensions of data collection techniques*

The main data sources were transcribed, coded and analysed in detail, and form the basis for the analytical categories for the case study, whereas the secondary sources provided further sources for triangulation and additional information.

A summary of *all* data sources, primary and secondary, is illustrated in the following model, in which upper case letters indicate the voices being heard (T-R = teacher-researcher, P = pupils, OT = Other teachers). Primary sources are written in bold:

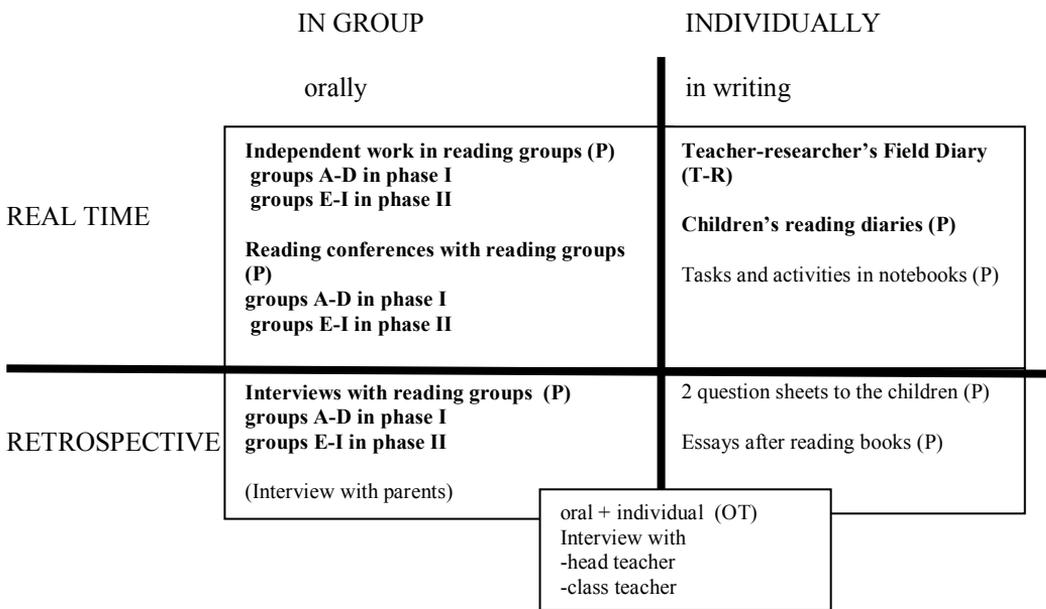


Fig. 2. Summary of all data sources

2.3 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

2.3.1 Research process before analysis

The research process before data analysis could begin involved several different phases, during which I was based both at the University of Reading, England, and at Åbo Akademi University, Finland. First, I studied background theory on a number of theoretical issues involved in EFL-literacy, multicultural teaching, teaching approaches, and research methodology. I read around 100 authentic multicultural children's books while based in Reading, from which I made my selection of six. I planned the structure of the reading project, including teaching approaches and theoretical underpinnings. A preliminary sampling plan was developed for data sources and data collection.

After my return to Finland, measures were taken to consider ethical aspects involved in using children as subjects. Permission was sought from the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities at Åbo Akademi University, the Local Education Authority (Skolcentralen), the Head and deputy head/class teachers, and consent was requested from the pupils and their parents (see above). Technical matters involving preparing for recordings were also considered. School materials for the pupils were bought (notebooks, dictionaries), the books for the project were ordered. Some books were also borrowed from the children's library in Turku. Meetings were held with the head and deputy head of the school when planning the practical implementation of the reading project. The research methodology and sampling plan were revised, and background theory was updated as an ongoing process. The two main research questions were specified. Teaching was planned on a more detailed level.

2.3.2 Framework for analysis and interpretation

Since the aim of this study was to obtain a holistic, complete picture of the phenomena being studied (see Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993), the approaches to analysis and interpretation had to be chosen accordingly. Because the topic of this study has not been investigated in this way before, it was not relevant to test previous theories. Nor was the purpose to build 'a theory'. Thus, grounded theory (as in Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 1998) is not used in the present study, although I do use some processes common to grounded theory, as described below. The aim of the present study was to describe and understand the complexity of issues involved, as is common for ethnographic research. The goal was to make the abundance of data intelligible by reducing it without losing important information, thereby producing new knowledge (see Eskola & Suoranta, 1998; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Wolcott, 1994, 2001). The present findings are therefore based on data from the case study.

Data handling or data transformation proceeded in three main stages (see Wolcott, 1994): *description*, *analysis*, and *interpretation*, as described below (there are some similarities with Miles & Huberman's (1994) data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification, and Strauss & Corbin's (1998) description, conceptual ordering, and theorizing).

Description

During description, the researcher addresses questions such as 'What is going on here?' 'What issues emerge?' (Wolcott, 1994). Description involves familiarising oneself with the material, and telling a story without stepping back to explain or interpret events (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 1998). This is how I began working with the material. Because samples were very small, quantification was not appropriate. However, I have noted whether a phenomenon or feature was rare or common (see Wolcott, 1994). Although ethnographic research often remains descriptive, the present study also aimed at understanding and interpreting to some extent. Therefore, the research process also involved analysis.

Analysis

Analysis, which is more scientific than description (Wolcott, 2001), had already played a part in decisions taken during data collection, and in the descriptive phase. During analysis, the researcher identifies essential features, and describes interrelationships between them in a systematic way (Wolcott, 1994). *Analysis* or *conceptual ordering* thus involves classifying events and objects without necessarily relating the classifications to each other (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

An important step was to break down elements into small units, and then build up the analysis from there (see Wolcott, 1994). *Coding* and *categorizing* were central features of my analysis. During the first stages of coding, the material was read through in detail several times in order for me to form an overarching picture of the data (see Eskola & Suoranta, 1998). Texts were then coded according to a system which I developed as I went along. For example, children's ways of dealing with difficult words were divided into several units, such as 'reading for meaning', 'asking a friend for the meaning of a word', 'ignoring a difficult word'. At this stage I used *open coding* (*descriptive coding*, Miles & Huberman, 1994), which refers to 'the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 61). During the process of coding, the coding structure altered, becoming more precise (see Eskola & Suoranta, 1998).

Each segment was then grouped with other similar concepts under a larger more abstract heading (see Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 1998). For example, 'reading for meaning' and 'looking up difficult words in a dictionary' were grouped under 'reading

strategies’, which became a category. Codes were merged to form larger themes (see Cohen, et. al, 2000; Eskola & Suoranta, 1998; Wolcott, 1994). Each segment was stored under all categories to which it was relevant. For example, ‘asking a friend for the meaning of a word’, was grouped both under the category of ‘reading strategies’ and under ‘interaction in groups’. I summarized and also noted cases or situations which did not fit the common trend.

Similarly coded data were compared and contrasted with each other, to form more clearly understood categories and subcategories (see Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 1998). Information from different data sources were synthesized and merged together, as described in 2.3.3 below. Data was regrouped under new categories as I went along. The ultimate aim of coding and categorizing is to reach a position in which one has a stable set of categories and has carried out a systematic coding of all data within those categories (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Categories became more stable as time went by, but the categories were none the less regrouped when necessary, even at the last stage of writing up results chapters (see below).

My research questions were broad and general (see Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995), allowing me to pursue those issues which emerged as important. Both data collection and analysis became progressively more focused over time (the ‘funnel approach’), as I proceeded from general to the more important issues (see Delamont & Hamilton, 1993; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

Whilst I was actively involved in the classroom, I was able to check with pupils to clarify my understandings. However, once the case study had ended, it was not possible to collect further data for the purposes of respondent validation according to principles described by Strauss & Corbin (1990; 1998). It also needs to be noted that because of my dual role as teacher and researcher, I could not always code the previous set of field notes before the next trip to the site (see Miles & Huberman, 1994), even though my weekly summary reports on emerging issues complemented this procedure as much as possible. Therefore, most systematic analysis was, in fact, conducted *after* the reading project had ended, as described in section 2.3.3.

Interpretation and reasoning

During interpretation, the researcher addresses questions of meaning and context such as ‘What shall I make of all this?’, notes regularities, follows up surprises, uses triangulation, notes patterns and themes, makes contrasts and comparisons, and tries to see things and relationships more abstractly (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Wolcott, 1994). I used all these techniques for interpreting qualitative data.

My previous experience as a teacher was helpful in interpretation (see Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 1998). Since I had used authentic literature with young EFL-readers prior

to the present study, I was sensitized to issues which might emerge. An important challenge, however, was to relate the issues and themes which emerged to existing literature and theory (see Wolcott, 1994). Technical literature in this study includes research reports, concepts and theories derived from influential scholars in the fields, teacher's accounts, handbooks for teachers, and empirical studies of teaching practice. Throughout the course of the present study, I was reading relevant technical literature in order to develop theoretical sensitivity and to make sense of the data (see Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). In this study, the issues which emerged from the data are viewed against theory established by previous research. Both interpretation and understanding of phenomena are built into the reporting of findings in Chapters 3-8.

2.3.3 Stages of analysis and interpretation

Because of the large number of data collection techniques, analysis needed to proceed systematically. I have attempted to describe how my research process, involving description, analysis, and interpretation as outlined above, related to the emerging categories. It is possible to identify seven overarching and overlapping stages in the analysis and interpretation of my data.

STAGE I: teaching the project and collecting data

Data analysis began during data collection (see Wiersma, 1995ab). As I observed children working and wrote entries in my field diary, certain issues emerged as more important than others. Observations gradually came to centre more around these issues. At all times, however, I was open to new issues. In reading conferences, I asked children about things which had seemed to me to be important, and when planning interviews, the most significant issues were clarified and further developed. In addition, children's comments in lesson time and interviews helped me plan teaching to better fit pupils' needs. Children's entries in reading diaries offered insights into their private thoughts around the texts. Thus, while I was teaching the project, I was already getting a feel for what was important.

I tried to transcribe video recordings of children working independently before the following lesson, and responded regularly to children's reading diaries, but some recordings were transcribed after the project had ended. Most recordings were fully transcribed in detail. The last few lessons, however, were only transcribed to the extent that they involved central issues which needed to be considered. I had the strategy of rather transcribing too much than too little, in order not to miss important data (see Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 1998). Weekly reports on issues which had emerged helped me to keep track throughout the fieldwork. The pupils filled in and handed back the two question sheets at the very end of the project.

STAGE II: collecting last sources of data and making security copies, computerizing into manageable form

Stage II of data transformation (see Wolcott, 1994) began after fieldwork had ended. At this stage, the various sources of data were at different stages. The field diary was in computerized form; all recordings of groups working independently, and of reading conferences between reading groups and the teacher had been collected; a large number of video recordings of independent group work had been fully transcribed; children's written work – reading diaries and other written tasks in notebooks – had been collected (but not computerized); and the question sheets had been handed in (but not computerized). All of these forms were ready for the second stage of transformation: making security copies and transforming data into manageable electronic form.

Other sources – last interviews with the pupils after having finished their second book, and interviews with the head teacher and deputy head/class teacher – still needed to be collected at the very end of my time in school.

During stage II, I security-copied all different sources of data, both oral and written. Data storage was an important aspect of the initial stages of analysis. I kept written documents, field notes, and videotapes filed, labelled and organised (see Athanases & Brice Heath, 1995; Wiersma, 1995a, 1995b).

STAGE III AND IV: further computerizing into manageable form, transcribing, coding, categorizing, merging together separate data sources

The main data transformation process in stage III was to transcribe video recordings and computerize written material into manageable form. The boundary between stages III and IV was not clear-cut. For some sources of data, I was transcribing and computerizing, for others this phase had been completed and I began the first stages of coding and categorizing. I did not use a computer program for coding. Instead, I coded manually using the Sort function of Word, a text processing programme. Analysis was based on the primary sources of data, illustrated in the following model in which I have numbered (1-4) the chronological order in which the sources were coded and categorized:

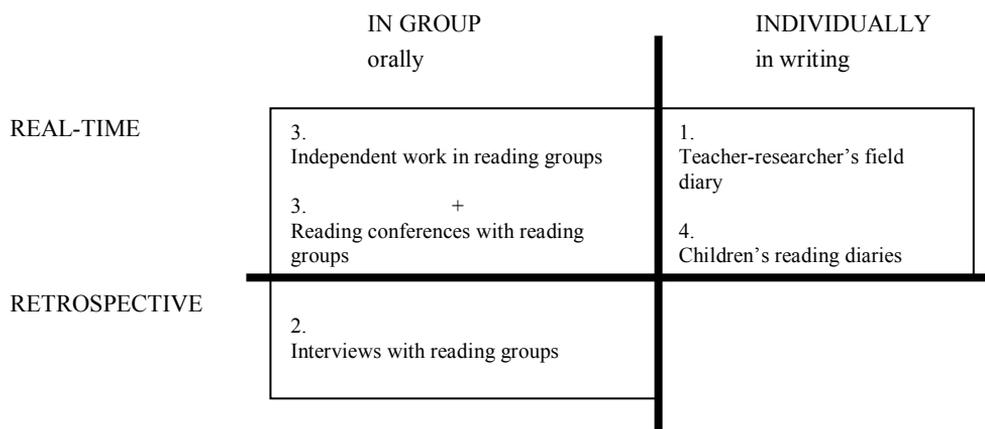
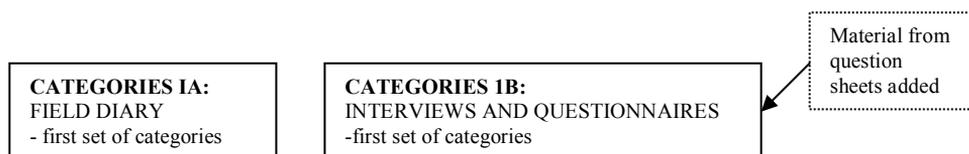
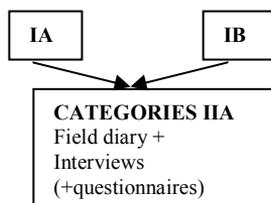


Fig. 3. The order of analysis of primary data sources

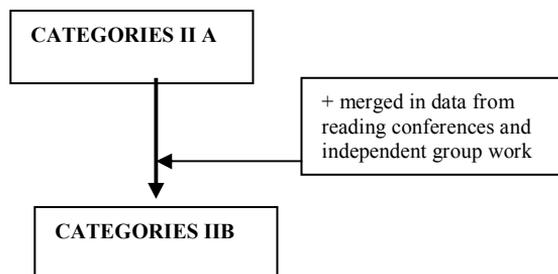
My field diary was the first data source to be fully coded, and the one from which the first set of overarching categories were developed (categories IA). The next source to be fully transcribed and coded was interviews with reading groups, which formed categories IB. Information from the written questions sheets (secondary data sources) was added to the categories emerging from the interviews (IB), since some of the questions from interviews were similar to those in the written question sheets:



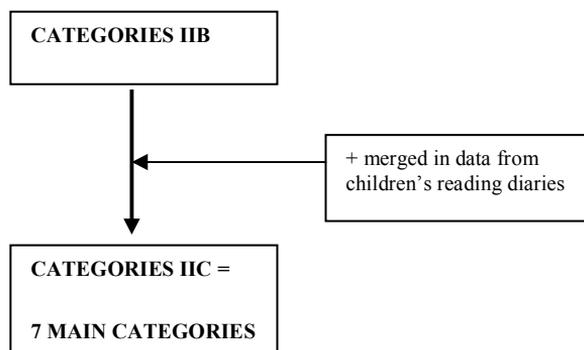
The categories from the coded field diary (IA) were then merged together with the categories developed from interviews (+ question sheets) (IB). The merging of the two sets of categories formed the overarching base of categories (IIA), and marked the beginning of stage IV of analysis, when codes and categories from the separate primary data sources were being merged together:



Next, the two remaining primary oral sources from children (independent group work in lesson time and reading conferences with the teacher) were transcribed and coded. They were then merged in with category base IIA, forming a larger base of overarching categories (IIB):



The fourth main source of data, children’s written responses in reading diaries, were then computerized and summarized, and merged in with the main base of categories (IIB), forming category base (IIC), which now included categories developed from *all* the main data sources. All main data sources had now been transcribed, computerized, coded, and merged together forming the one overarching set of categories:



STAGE V: developing core categories and writing up data (results) chapters

The overarching set of categories was further developed through more detailed analysis, summarization, comparison, pattern identification, and merging of units which belonged together. Throughout this process, relevant theoretical material was read, new articles and books were ordered. The total set of categories gradually fell into seven separate main issues or themes. These main themes came to form the basis for the first version of seven separate data chapters.

Because the themes and issues were very different (for example, one theme concerned reading and understanding, while another concerned group interaction), it was important at this stage to analyse and develop only one main category at a time. This marked the beginning of an ongoing spiral process, in which each chapter was developed in the following way: Categories were further summarized and, when relevant, re-grouped, and refined. Relevant theoretical material was read to aid analysis, and the first version of a data/result chapter was structured and written, including both my summaries and interpretations, and extracts from original data (children's original comments). The original material was re-read and the chapter was revised accordingly. The same process was conducted with the six remaining main themes/issues, which also developed into data chapters. When completed, each chapter was sent to my supervisor for feedback.

STAGE VI: Further developing data chapters, and linking results to theoretical literature

Stage VI involved making alterations to each chapter in response to feedback from my supervisor, further summarizing, tightening the text, and continued interpretation in relation to relevant previous research and theoretical material in the fields. Then connecting, this time in writing, the data which emerged from my study with relevant theory.

STAGE VII: Re-categorizing and organizing, tightening, finalising data chapters

In stage VII, each chapter was revised according to the same spiral process as in stages V and VI. The chapters were further summarized and tightened, and the theoretical material was updated. Re-categorization occurred to some extent. Thus, the seven original chapters were re-grouped into the six final results chapters in which theory was connected to data (these chapters now form Chapters 3-8 of the thesis). After correcting each chapter in the light of feedback, analysis and interpretation was completed.

2.4 OVERVIEW AND STRUCTURE OF THESIS

The findings from this study suggest that EFL-learners as young as 11-12 are able to engage in authentic reading material, orally and in writing; and that they are also able to engage empathetically in issues of culture and diversity. In the thesis text, the findings from the research are organised in two main parts according to the two underpinning research questions. Part I discusses issues related to EFL-literacy. Chapter 3 examines EFL-reading, EFL-writing, and EFL-literacy support. Chapter 4 looks at how teaching

was organized and how pupils managed group work based on the texts. Chapter 5 considers how pupils responded to texts orally and in writing, and their thoughts around the texts.

Part II reports on cultural and multicultural matters in EFL-reading and teaching. Chapter 6 explores issues around culture and reading in language teaching, Chapter 7 considers multicultural and anti-racist aspects, and Chapter 8 discusses teaching perspectives on multicultural issues in relation to reading in EFL.

The contents of the Results chapters – Parts I and II of the thesis – can be visualized in the following way:

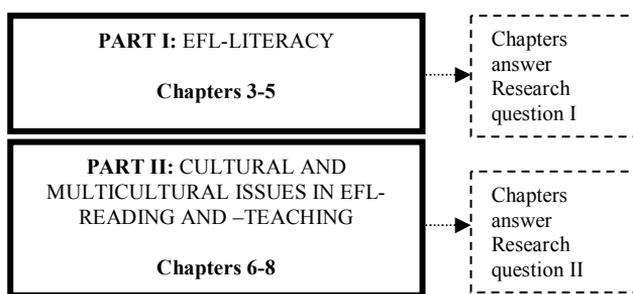


Fig. 4. Visual presentation of Parts I and II

In Chapter 9, the results presented in Chapters 3-8 are summarized and discussed according to the underpinning research questions. Chapter 10 offers a concluding discussion, which evaluates the research methodology, suggests implications of findings and possibilities for futures research, and pulls together findings from the two separate parts of the thesis.

Part I: EFL-Literacy

3. EFL-READING, WRITING, AND LITERACY SUPPORT

During the present project, the children were reading longer texts in English for the first time. How they managed to read and write, and also the teacher's literacy support were of central importance. In fact, a significantly larger proportion of my time as teacher was spent in helping children manage the texts and reflect on their reading, than in discussing specifically multicultural or cultural issues. Findings from this study indicate that the children were able to engage in and enjoy longer authentic texts in the target language. Several issues were involved. These will be outlined in the following three chapters on EFL-literacy, group work on the texts, and the children's literary responses.

Literacy issues, discussed in the present chapter, which emerged from the study include understanding the text (section 3.2), vocabulary support in relation to reading (3.3), reading strategies in EFL-reading (3.4), children's reading preferences, fluency of reading, and reading ability (3.5), and writing (3.6). First, however, I offer a short introduction to reading in EFL-settings (3.1).

3.1 READING IN EFL-SETTINGS

The children in the present study were already literate in three languages: Swedish as a L1, Finnish as a SL (or second L1), and English as a FL. Therefore, models of emergent L1-reading (see Goodman, 1997; Dillon, O'Brien & Heilman, 2000; Ruddell & Unrau, 2004), and teaching approaches and models of the initial stages of SL/FL reading (see Gibbons, 1991; Gregory 1996; Bernhardt, 2000) are not directly relevant. The present study is concerned rather with how primary school children already literate in their L1, SL, and FL managed and experienced longer stories in the target language.

3.1.1 L1, SL, and FL reading

SL/FL-reading research has explored topics very similar to those of L1-reading research (Bernhardt, 2000), but there are certain differences between SL/FL and L1 readers. For example, the SL/FL reader might be disadvantaged in relation to the L1-reader: the knowledge of SL/FL readers of the target language vocabulary, rhetorical and cohesive devices, synonyms, superordinates, and collocational expressions is not as well developed as that of L1 readers. SL/FL readers therefore need to compensate by reading

every word, which places demands on memory and concentration and might prevent them from reading for *meaning*. (Day & Bamford, 1998; Gregory, 1996; see also 3.1.3).

Secondly, SL/FL learners do not necessarily know the meanings of words that they are trying to decode. Furthermore, differences between language in its spoken and written forms might put SL/FL readers at a disadvantage, because the language proficiency practised in the classroom (concrete, and restricted to simple vocabulary and grammatical forms) is often different from that required when reading. Finally, SL/FL readers' content schemata (knowledge of topics and sociocultural knowledge) is unlikely to be at the same level as native readers', causing 'cultural gaps' when they encounter unfamiliar cultural references. ESL/EFL-readers therefore need additional reading support. (Aebersold & Field, 1997; Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Kramsch, 1998a; Littlewood, 1991; Nuttall, 1982).

However, there are also some *advantages* for beginning FL readers: in many cases, they are already reading fluently in one language (Carter & Long, 1991; Chamot & O'Malley, 1994); and because they are often older than beginning L1 readers, their conceptual sense, factual knowledge, and experience of life are often more developed (Day & Bamford, 1998; Swaffar, Arens & Byrnes, 1991). The fact that languages are related to each other and share a knowledge base and alphabet can be a further aid for some SL/FL learners, such as Swedish language readers of English FL (Ringbom, 1986, 1987, 1992). These strengths can be built on in the SL/FL reading classroom.

Although SL and FL readers are often treated together in the literature, there are nonetheless differences. For example, SL-readers are sometimes perceived by teachers as being weak in either their language proficiency or cognitive abilities, in relation to native language students. This is often based on the misconception that weakness in language proficiency shows a lack in cognitive ability (Cummins, 1994; see also 7.4.2). EFL-pupils in mainstream schools, on the other hand, are learners of a foreign language in a classroom. The whole class has generally been learning English for the same amount of time; it is therefore rare for EFL pupils to be compared with native English pupils as are often ESL learners in English language schools. Another difference concerns the learning environment. Children *acquire* a second language in a society where the target language plays a central role; children consciously *learn* a foreign language in settings where the target language plays a less prominent role (Buttjes, 1990; Ellis, 1994). For the ESL-pupil, literacy skills in English are crucial for the management of all school subjects, since the medium of learning is English. This is not the case for mainstream EFL-learners at primary school level in Finland.

The EFL-pupils in the present reading project were learning English in a language classroom setting in a society where English is not spoken as an official language. In this sense, English language learning meets the criteria of "foreign language teaching", as described above. However, children in Finland are exposed to English language

youth culture, computer language and literacy, and various forms of media influences in English, making them significantly more exposed to English than to any other foreign language (such as German or French), thus increasing their motivation to learn the language.

In spite of clear differences between the experiences of L1, ESL and EFL-readers, some theorists argue for greater dialogue between those working in these areas (Kennedy & Jarvis, 1991). My own approach lends support to arguments of this kind. I draw on research evidence from all three settings for three reasons: the fact that much FL-reading research rests on paradigms from the L1-reading setting; the limited evidence from the EFL domain; and the similarities between SL and FL readers.

3.1.2 When to begin reading longer texts in a foreign language

An important topic within EFL-reading is when to begin reading longer texts such as novels. Some writers offer suggestions in terms of *how long* the pupils should have been learning English beforehand. Fitzgerald (1994), Silberstein (1994), and Swarbrick (1990) suggest immersing students in literacy situations as early as possible. In the present project, the children had been learning English for three years, and were familiar with reading from English language textbooks. They had not read fictive texts in English in school before, and few children had read longer texts in English outside school with the exception of Melker, who had lived in the US for a year. Children were, however, familiar with reading longer texts in Swedish, both in their sparetime and in school, and they had also read fictive texts in Finnish in school.

Other writers suggest that a basic level of language proficiency is required before students can enjoy texts in a foreign language. Swaffar, Arens & Byrnes (1991), for instance, review evidence from various studies which suggests that a vocabulary of between 1,500 and 5,000 words is necessary for students to be able to read a text for comprehension. A more recent review undertaken by Blachowicz & Fisher (2000) points to studies suggesting that students need to know between 2,000 and 3,000 words, and also reach a threshold level of L2 proficiency (see also section 3.3.1). The students considered in this review, however, were generally older than those in the present study. The size of the present students' vocabulary was not tested either prior to or at the end of this study.

3.1.3 The process of reading

An understanding of how we process reading is necessary for the structuring of teaching. Two opposing views have been influential, both within L1 reading, and within the ESL/EFL-reading setting. In the 1960s and 1970s, the so called 'bottom-up' (text-

based) theories prevailed. The reader was believed to construct the text from the smallest units (letters-words-sentences) and, in order for reading to be successful, this decoding process needed to be automatic. The 'top-down' (reader-based) models of reading which emerged in the 1970s, by contrast, assumed that the reader brings knowledge, expectations, assumptions and questions to the reading process. Here, the emphasis is on understanding and reading for *meaning*. Children construct meanings based on what they already know about the conventions of stories, and about life. (See overviews by Anderson, 1999; Goodman, 1997; Gregory, 1996; Lehr, 1991; Ruddell & Unrau, 2004; Swaffar, Arens & Byrnes, 1991)

As a result of work by scholars such as Marylin Adams, David Rumelhart, and Keith Stanovich, it is now recognized that efficient readers move back and forth between detail and the larger whole. Although they vary in emphasis, many scholars now believe that comprehension of text requires simultaneous interaction of *bottom-up* (text based/data driven) processing on word-, sentence-, and discourse levels, and, *top-down* (knowledge based/ conceptually driven) information processing and interpretation. Skilled reading is a process of constructing meaning from written language, building up from sounds and letters, then to syllables/morphemes, words, sentences and the whole text, and also relating what is seen on the page to one's background knowledge about the world (see Adams, 2004; Cunningham & Fitzgerald, 1996; Goodman & Niles, 1970/1982; Rumelhart, 2004). Readers match the text to their previous knowledge, predicting, sampling, confirming or disconfirming, reprocessing and correcting, and actively seeking meaning, by using graphophonic, syntactic, and semantic cues (Goodman & Niles, 1970/1982: 107-108). As proficiency increases, readers sample cues selectively, and predict effectively. This is sometimes termed 'interactive reading'. These models of reading are based on the L1-setting.

The present study is concerned not with the *process* of reading, nor with models of reading, nor with reasons why a skilled or unskilled EFL-reader reads in a certain way. Instead, my concern is with what is directly visible to the teacher's eye, with EFL-pupils' own views, and with issues related to EFL-reading which emerged in the real classroom situation.

3.1.4 The importance of background knowledge

Much ESL/EFL teaching practice is based on the notion that background knowledge is important for reading. *Schema theory*, developed by psychologists in the 1970s and 1980s, offers a way of explaining what happens when we read. Here the term *schemata* refers to the readers' previous experiences, background knowledge, and expectations about the text, which they use to make predictions (Bensoussan, 1998; Pressley, 2000; Swarbrick, 1998). Two categories of schemata are particularly important for SL- and FL-reading: *formal schemata* (language proficiency, knowledge about vocabulary,

grammar and register, knowledge of rhetorical structures) and *content schemata* (knowledge of the content of the text, such as sociocultural knowledge). If an EFL-reader cannot evoke appropriate schema during reading, then the reading may result in non-comprehension. (Carrell, 1984; Silberstein, 1994)

Schema theory has also received criticism from theorists who feel that a more critical approach is needed (see Carver, 1992b; Sadoski, Paivio & Goetz, 1991). Carver (1992b), for example, developed a theory of 'rauding', according to which there are five basic processes of reading: skimming, scanning, rauding, learning, and memorizing. Rauding is then the normal or ordinary reading process used by most people most of the time.

What, then, can the teacher do in the actual classroom? Several writers (see, for instance, Swaffar et al., 1991; Carrell, 1984; Kramsch, 1998a, 1998b; Silberstein, 1994) have discussed the role of prior knowledge schemata in ESL/EFL reading comprehension. Teachers need both to think about what *type* of background knowledge pupils might need (language, content), know how to make the information available to the students, and see to it that the students know how to use the information. Kramsch (1993) and Anderson (1999) offer practical examples of how schema theory can be applied to teaching of ESL-reading.

Because of the young age of the EFL-readers in the present project, I considered aspects of previous knowledge, vocabulary and content, by dealing with basic vocabulary before the pupils started to read the following chapter. Information books were provided, so that those who wanted to could find out more. Discussions after reading each chapter were meant to fill any gaps which the children might have had.

3.1.5 The approach to reading in the present study

Common approaches to the use of literature within ESL/EFL-settings include the *cultural model*, the *language model*, the *personal growth model* (Carter & Long, 1991; Lazar, 1993), and *literature as content* (Lazar, 1993), all of which have different aims. The cultural model helps pupils appreciate other countries' literature as a cultural product. The language model (or language-based approach) focuses on the process of reading and analysis of language. The personal growth model draws on personal experiences, feelings, and opinions. Literature as content involves the *study* of literature in an academic sense. In the present project, the approach to literature involved a combination of literature for personal growth, enjoyment and enrichment, and literature for development of cultural/multicultural awareness (see Chapter 6). My focus on language and vocabulary could, perhaps, suggest a language-based approach, but was, in fact, intended only as a measure of reading support/scaffolding (see Littlewood, 1991).

Classroom practice was influenced by aspects from several teaching approaches without following any one approach to the full: the *whole language approach* (see Goodman, 1997; Stanek, 1993), including authentic literature, understanding of meaning, and a range of activities involving all the four skills (reading, writing, discussion, listening); *reader response*, which emphasizes the relationship between the reader and text, and the reader's active role in creating meaning (see Chapters 5 and 6); and *student-centred* teaching (see Vygotsky, 1978; see also 4.2.1 & 4.4). Tasks before, during, and after reading allowed the children to form and express their thoughts about the texts (see Collie & Slater, 1987; Lundahl, 1998). The present reading project was physically organised mainly around *collaborative* reading in groups or pairs. As homework, children also engaged in *individual* and independent reading and writing.

The approach to reading was based mainly on *extensive* reading but also included some elements of *intensive* reading (see Aebersold & Field, 1997; Day & Bamford, 1998; Nuttall, 1982). Extensive reading is a way of reading large amounts of text for comprehension and meaning, without a focus on detail, based on the notion that the more students read, the more they learn. In this project, students chose books; different reading groups read different books; students read longer authentic texts (novels and short stories); and students were encouraged to read for meaning without worrying about individual words. All this is typical of extensive reading programmes (see Day & Bamford, 1994). Features more typical of intensive reading were that pupils read out aloud in the classroom, and there were follow-up and pre-reading activities. Furthermore, I set 'homework' in order for members in each reading group to have reached the same place in the story by the following lesson. Teaching was also individualised (see Chapter 4). In short, I tried to encourage the children to read for *meaning* and overall understanding, without worrying too much about individual words, but I also recognized that, for young EFL-readers who might lack efficient linguistic and decoding skills, this might not be possible without support on word- and sentence level. One of the most significant findings yielded by the present study concerns the variation in the types of literacy support which children needed.

Activities already known to L1 and SL/FL teachers were adapted to the primary school EFL-setting. Thus, the creation of new literacy activities was not an aim. In fact, a large number of SL/FL tasks suggested by writers in the field (see Klapper, 1992) seem to be based on common-practice literacy tasks within L1-reading (such as Benton & Fox, 1985). Furthermore, most resource books for teachers describe activities which are valuable in *both* SL and FL settings (Aebersold and Field, 1997; Collie & Slater, 1987).

Five overarching EFL-literacy issues emerged as particularly important: understanding the texts (3.2), vocabulary support (3.3), reading strategies (3.4), children's reading preferences, fluency of reading, and reading ability (3.5), and writing in English (3.6).

3.2 UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

My perception of the children's understanding and comprehension was based on my impressions as the teacher when talking to pupils in reading conferences and lesson time, on my analyses of their oral and written responses to texts, and on their own evaluations of their understanding. The most important issues which emerged concern the level of difficulty of texts, the children's own experience of understanding, and the rationale for reading support.

3.2.1 Difficulty of text

Several writers discuss issues involved in the text as discourse, and the implications for SL-reading comprehension (Carrell, 1987; Gregory, 1996; McCarthy & Carter, 1994). Various textual features, such as lexical familiarity, organisation of text, syntactic complexity, discourse structure, irony, unfamiliar rhetorical structures, coherence, and lack of pictures to support the text are known to affect SL-reading comprehension. Idioms, transfers of meaning, words with several meanings, subtechnical vocabulary, superordinates, synonyms, and autonyms can be particularly difficult for ESL/EFL-readers (see Allen, 1994; Lazar, 1993; McCarthy & Carter, 1994; Nuttall 1982; Wray, 1994). Text-related aspects also include the degree of difference between the writing systems of one's L1 and SL/FL (see Ringbom, 1986, 1987, 1992). In this project, textual features of these kinds have not been analysed.

Traditionally, texts for language learners have been simplified (also referred to as graded, abridged, adapted, or pedagogical) so as to meet the needs of ESL/EFL-readers, either by adapting books originally written for native speakers, or by writing specifically for second language learners (see Day & Bamford, 1998; Davies, 1984). During the 1970s, advocates of authentic reading proposed that second language learners should read materials written for native speakers instead of specific language learning materials. Authentic texts were considered interesting, motivating, culturally enlightening, and relevant for genuine discourse. However, Day & Bamford (1998) suggest that most native language texts (books, magazines, newspapers) are too difficult for language learners, if they are not modified or read with the support of the teacher. Some writers believe that reading material for extensive reading needs to be slightly below the pupils' actual linguistic ability. This is termed 'the comfort zone' by Day & Bamford (1994).

When choosing texts for the present project, I did not engage in analysis of readability level, use graded cloze tests, or study the children's background knowledge. Instead, I used my judgement as a teacher (see section 1.5.2 above). The present project involved six books of varying level of difficulty, from which the pupils chose two. While my aim

was that the children should be able to grasp the overall meaning of the story, it was not possible to foresee what *they* would find difficult when reading in a foreign language. Therefore, the children's *own views* on this subject were of interest.

The children confirmed my feeling that finding a book at a suitable level of difficulty was important to the enjoyment of reading, and that the books read in the second phase of the project were generally more demanding than those in the first. On the whole, the children's evaluations of the level of difficulty of individual texts matched my own prediction, with an important exception: at the outset of the study, I had thought that *Seven Weird Days...* would be an easy book for the weakest readers, which is why I chose it regardless of its limited cultural content. However, two girls who initially chose the book found it so difficult that they changed to *Grandpa Chatterji*.

Some of the children were able to articulate what made the texts feel difficult. A large number of new or difficult words was the main cause for both weak and strong readers. In relation to *Operation Gadgetman*, the amount of text (see Silberstein, 1994), and in relation to *Grandpa Chatterji* and *Seven Weird Days...*, varying levels of difficulty in the same book were also mentioned. Only one girl, Katja (reading *I Want to be an Angel*), felt that a lack of pictures made the text feel difficult (see Allen, 1994). Description was more difficult to understand than action. Extended dialogue was also sometimes perceived as difficult. Cecilia reported that she could not always follow which character was saying what, which could confirm a suggestion made by Nikolajeva (2002) that dialogue can make the text difficult for young readers, especially if tags are left out.

3.2.2 Reading comprehension

Text comprehension involves decoding words, processing words in relation to one another, and then operating on ideas in the text in order to gain an overall understanding (Pressley, 2000). If word-level processing is not automatized, then higher order processing will be difficult (Nuttall, 1982; Lazar, 1993). Factors related to the reader, the text, and the context (the teaching environment) affect reading comprehension (Almasi, 2003). Several EFL-scholars offer overviews of factors specifically related to the reader which affect SL/FL reading comprehension. These include age, expectations, level of social and intellectual development, experiences of the world, types of reading skills and strategies used in the L1 and L2/FL, and previous experience of SL literacy. Other personal factors, such as L1 and SL/FL language proficiency, and knowledge of grammar and syntax also affect reading comprehension, as do cognitive styles, such as ability to question, adapt, and monitor L1- strategies, and cultural and sociocultural familiarity. Some degree of metalinguistic (especially phonological) and syntactic, lexical, grapho-phonemic, and semantic awareness, and awareness of book language is

also needed. (Aebersold & Field, 1997; Cameron, 2001; Gregory, 1996; Nuttall, 1982; Tunmer, 1997; Wray, 1994.)

Teaching styles can also affect reading comprehension, reflecting the relative importance attached to bottom-up and top-down approaches (see 3.1.3). An important aim of my teaching was to find a balance between encouraging independent reading for meaning and active involvement (see Silberstein, 1994), on the one hand, and giving enough support to weaker readers (see Gersten & Jiménez, 1994), on the other hand. During lesson time, in reading conferences and in interviews, children talked about their reactions to the reading. Most felt that they had understood the overall meaning, although they had not understood every word. For instance, those reading *Troublemakers* and *Operation Gadgetman* had understood what was going on in the story even though there were difficult words on every page. Several stronger readers had in fact found *Troublemakers* - the most difficult book - the most enjoyable. As Goodman (1973a/1982) suggests, good readers have learned not to be put off by a few unimportant words, but can read efficiently using appropriate strategies.

My greatest concern was for the weakest readers. Several relied heavily on scaffolding in order to understand, as will be discussed below. However, it is noteworthy that no-one felt that reading was *too* difficult. The children ‘allowed’ for some amount of difficulty when reading in the foreign language. Their comments matched my own observations. Even the weak readers in group D, for instance, very much enjoyed *Grandpa Chatterji*. Ollmann (1993) found, similarly, that (L1) students chose to read stories with subjects that interested them, even though the text might have been challenging. Casper made the point that, since he sometimes does not understand the text even when reading in Finnish, he does not expect an English text to be easy, either. Silberstein (1994) notes the importance of reminding readers that they also stumble over difficult words when reading in their mother tongue (so therefore they should not be surprised if this happens when reading in an FL).

In summary, most children enjoyed reading their chosen books, even when they contained words that they did not understand (‘The chapter was very good, I think. But there is much words that I don’t understand’ (Susanne, *My Name is Jasmine Grey*); ‘I don’t understand every word dey say, but I understand very well what they talk aboyt’ (Katja, *Grandpa Chatterji*)). In fact, tolerance of uncertainty would seem to be an important part of the experience for readers of all kinds (see Brumfit, 1991). However, when experiencing passages as ‘even more difficult’ than the rest of the text, or when a text felt more difficult than pupils could ‘allow for’, help was needed. It seems that there was indeed a certain “comfort zone” or allowance zone (see Day & Bamford, 1998); this ‘zone’ was, however, different for different children. Therefore, individualization emerged as an important aspect of this reading project (see Chapter 4).

It needs to be emphasized here that what children say they have understood is not necessarily the same as their real understanding. As Nuttall (1982) and Wray (1994) suggest, a reader might not recognize a comprehension problem. There is a real danger, for instance, that young children might say that they have understood a message when this is not the case. Another problem relates to the tendency of younger children to blame themselves for not understanding a description, whereas older children tend to blame the quality of the information given. Younger and poorer readers focus on decoding the written words, rather than making sense of what they read. In addition, for second language readers, the reading does not always begin with the assumption that comprehension will occur (Wray, 1994; Anderson, 1999). However, children's judgements of how they managed to read and understand often matched my own impressions as the teacher in the classroom.

3.3 VOCABULARY SUPPORT IN RELATION TO READING

One of the main literacy goals was to help the children read independently. Much attention was directed to supporting reading and understanding, including help with new and difficult words (see Gersten & Jiménez, 1994; Sen & Blatchford, 2001; Carter & Long, 1991). The most important issues which emerged concern types of vocabulary task; differences between groups and pupils; the timing of vocabulary tasks; and whether words should be selected by the teacher or pupil.

3.3.1 EFL-reading – a reading *and* a language issue

Sometimes, it is difficult to disentangle reading and language issues. Writers in the L1-setting have argued that vocabulary skills are important in children's reading.¹⁹ The link between language proficiency and reading has been recognized by writers within the SL/FL settings as well.²⁰ Alderson (1984) and Carrell (1991) note that SL/FL-readers at a low language proficiency level might need help with language skills. Words which the reader knows are easier to keep in short-term memory, which aids reading (Cameron, 2001; Koda, 1994). Bernhardt (2000) draws attention to the reliance within second language processing on the first language (which both facilitates and interferes), and to the influence of second language proficiency and grammatical knowledge on SL-reading. Teachers, therefore, need to offer simultaneous support for reading *and* language development (see Gersten & Jiménez, 1994; Sen & Blatchford, 2001). It is

¹⁹ See for example Cunningham, Perry & Stanovich (2001), Cunningham, Perry, Stanovich & Share (2002).

²⁰ See Bernhardt (2000), Burke & Brumfit (1991), Carter & Long (1991), Chase & Duffelmeyer (1990), Wallace (1989).

important to remember also that knowing many words in a second language does not automatically mean that one understands what one reads (see Andersson, 1999).

Because of the age of the pupils in the present project and their short period of prior EFL-learning, issues of language proficiency were perhaps even more important than would be the case with adults or young adults who are the common focus in EFL-reading research. Language support was provided throughout the project, and became especially important for some children's management of the novels and short stories.

3.3.2 Working with vocabulary

Because empirical evidence related to vocabulary learning in the primary school EFL-setting is scarce, we need to look at: advice concerning slightly older ESL/EFL-readers;²¹ vocabulary work in general (not specifically related to reading literature); and vocabulary work related to reading in L1-settings.²² However, a note of caution should be sounded: tasks set for older readers are often too difficult for younger children; similarly, tasks widely used in L1-reading might not be suitable for FL-learners. Nonetheless, practical examples and research evidence both from L1-settings and older EFL-readers can be a useful starting point.

Since the late 1990s, several empirical studies have investigated vocabulary work and vocabulary learning in relation to L1-reading. For example, Scott & Nagy (2000) offer a helpful overview of issues in the development of word knowledge, highlighting incrementality (different degrees of knowing a word and learning step by step), multidimensionality (several different *types* of word knowledge), polysemy (words often have several meanings), interrelatedness (knowledge of one word is linked to knowledge of another word) and heterogeneity (we know different words in different ways). Scott & Nagy suggest that vocabulary knowledge should be learned through means other than explicit instruction, and that knowing a word is more than knowing a definition. Rupley et al. (1998/1999) found that L1-reading instruction that focussed on vocabulary development enhanced children's ability to infer meanings and comprehend what they were reading. However, in my opinion the tasks used would be too exhausting for young EFL-learners, who might encounter new words more frequently than L1-readers.

Empirical evidence from the EFL-setting includes Chase & Duffelmeyer's (1990) study, in which the VOCAB-LIT technique was used in relation to reading texts, so that students chose the words that they wanted to study as they read a novel. Another study undertaken by Krantz (1990) tested the use of reading strategies and vocabulary learning in connection with reading a novel with Swedish university EFL-students. By a

²¹ See Anderson (1999), Laufer & Hustijn (2001).

²² See Dole, et al., 1995; Gardner (2004), Rupley, Logan & Nichols (1998/1999).

combination of so called READ-ONLY and READ-LOOK-UP strategies, readers increased their vocabulary knowledge in different degrees. Empirical evidence from primary school mainstream EFL-teaching is, however, very scarce.

Features of vocabulary learning and the nature of vocabulary tasks

Two main aims for dealing with vocabulary in relation to reading are visible in the current literature: to help children *understand* difficult words in order to enhance reading comprehension (thereby building a receptive or passive vocabulary), and to use the text as a springboard for *learning* new productive vocabulary (see Dole, Sloan & Trathen, 1995; Frazer, 1999; Schifini, 1994).

Most empirical research and practical teaching examples for vocabulary instruction focus on the second kind: readers explicitly *learning* new words (see Anderson, 1999; Collie & Slater, 1987). For example, language-based approaches to literature in language teaching have focussed on learning the foreign language through reading (see Burke & Brumfit, 1991; Little & Singleton, 1991). Examples also include Chan (1999), who discusses what literature can do to enhance language awareness among secondary school EFL-readers, and Gwin (1990) who uses literature to teach language as communication. Wide reading, vocabulary instruction, personalized learning, relating to learners' existing vocabulary, tasks which require learners to be active, and basing learning on multiple sources and repeated exposure have commonly been used in relation to learning vocabulary in L1-settings (see for example Rupley, et al., 1998/1999; Blachowicz & Fisher, 2000). In the present project, in contrast, the main aim of vocabulary work was to *support* the children in *understanding* the texts. Only occasionally were pupils asked to learn words. But we are dealing with something of a paradox here: as soon as we start giving children tasks around words, these words are highlighted. Thus, there is not a clear-cut division between *supporting* reading and explicitly *learning* words through supportive tasks.

Another feature of vocabulary learning is *incidental word learning* through listening or reading. Various writers have observed gains in students who have engaged in extensive reading instruction, including development of a large sight vocabulary, and an increase in reading comprehension, reading interest, vocabulary knowledge, linguistic competence, writing, and spelling skills, both in L1 and SL/FL-settings (see Day & Bamford, 1998; Mason & Krashen, 1997). Opinions on the nature and extent of incidental learning, however, differ. Swanborn and de Gloppe (2002) found that although low ability L1-readers did not learn many words incidentally when reading texts, high-ability L1-readers learned a large number of new words. Blachowicz & Fisher (2000) raise the question of whether wide (L1) reading is sufficient in helping pupils broaden their vocabularies, or, if instruction is needed. Some studies (Frazer, 1999; Paribakht & Wesche, 1999) show that reading for comprehension in an L2/FL can be a productive source for incidental vocabulary learning. Laufer and Hulstijn

(2001) argue that different (SL) vocabulary tasks elicit different levels of motivation and involvement, offering different opportunities for learning words.

Incidental vocabulary learning emerged as important in the present study, because the majority of children reported that they had learned a large number of new words and expressions. They had also learned to understand English better, to spell new words, and to use synonyms for some words. For example, Katja mentioned having learned descriptive words: 'Jag har också lärt mig bättre att skriva. När man har sett den där texten här, så har jag lärt mig myc...alltså...mer ord som kan beskriva något, så det är lättare att skriva långa texter på det sättet'. ('I've learned to write better. When I've seen the text in the novel, I feel that I've learned more words for describing things, so it's now easier for me to write longer texts' [My translation]). Although the children's *actual* learning was not measured, their reports on their experiences match both my own intuitions as the teacher and my findings when analysing video recordings and writings: several children became more verbal and used new vocabulary, especially when writing in reading diaries (see fig. 7). It seemed that receptive vocabulary had, to varying degrees, become active, and that extensive reading and efforts to support reading resulted in vocabulary learning.

Types of vocabulary task and patterns among the present children

A variety of suggestions for vocabulary instruction are offered by writers in the field. However, it is not always clear *how* the tasks might support pupils' ESL/EFL-reading. Encouraging students to read for overall comprehension is a widely recommended strategy, especially within L1-reading (see Goodman, 1973a/1982; Gwin, 1990) but also within SL/FL reading (see Nuttall, 1982), and was important for the present project: the children were taught to focus on those words which, unless understood, hindered them from understanding what was going on in the story (see Dole et. al, 1995; Silberstein, 1994). The term 'significant word' (Silberstein, 1994) (or 'important word', 'key word') is used to signify that some words in the text are more important for general understanding than others.

Other suggestions involve having pupils take notes as they read. Fowler (2002) documented an attempt to use vocabulary notebooks in a secondary school EFL-programme in Thailand. Students were generally aware of the words which they had chosen to record in their notebooks and could return to them to refresh their memories. The notebooks therefore fostered independence. Napheas (1992) also described how a list of difficult words was made, this time when reading a poem with ESL students. In the present project, children also made lists, creating a 'personal glossary' at the back of their notebooks. They recorded words which they found difficult, new, or interesting, or which I had asked them to think about. In the early stages, they filled in the new word in English, the whole sentence containing the word, the translation of the word into Swedish, and the meaning of the whole sentence as they understood it in Swedish:

using words from the text, or noted what they thought a word meant before and after reading it in context. Other tasks used in connection with reading are outlined in Chapter 4.

Views vary as to whether SL/FL students should be encouraged to use dictionaries. Some argue that they should learn to read 'for meaning', using guessing- and predicting strategies and thus not be tempted to look up words (Day and Bamford, 1998; Nuttall, 1982). Views also differ on the best type of dictionary. Silberstein (1991) and Swaffar, Arens and Byrnes (1991) recommend English monolingual dictionaries. Krantz (1990), however, found no differences in efficiency between students who used monolingual or bilingual dictionaries (among university EFL-readers). In my project, the children's age and inexperience made bilingual dictionaries more appropriate. The children used dictionaries as one of several reading strategies. Most children had dictionaries at home; in the classroom, each reading group had 1-2 copies and, in the early stages of the project, were given a variety of *dictionary tasks* (discussed in section 3.4.2).

3.3.3 Differences between groups and pupils

During the project, it was important to offer *enough* support for the pupils to be able to understand and enjoy the chapters on the one hand, while not interrupting their reading with too many tasks on the other hand. I agree with Chase & Duffelmeyer (1990) that we need to ensure that enjoyment in reading is not compromised by overemphasising vocabulary work. Recognizing and respecting the different needs of different pupils thus became an important issue.

There were differences in the help that children wanted (see Anderson, 1999; Hall & Myers, 1998). Children fell into two main categories: those who felt that it was useful to do pre-reading vocabulary tasks, and those who felt that they could manage reading without pre-reading help. The children wanting support fell into two further groups: the weaker or average readers who needed reading support in order to understand the chapters, and the more proficient readers who would have managed without help but felt that the tasks were nonetheless useful. Some children were able to express opinions as to *why* they felt that scaffolding and pre-reading tasks were helpful. Lars, for instance, commented that if you found a word difficult whilst reading, then you could go back and look it up in the pre-reading task.

During the course of the project, however, children in the most proficient groups were increasingly reading independently. Later, there was little pre-reading work around vocabulary in these groups, and more emphasis instead on reader-response related tasks. In weaker groups, children had expressed an interest in doing vocabulary tasks. There was thus a clear division between the weaker and stronger readers in the second half of the project.

3.3.4 Timing of vocabulary tasks

The timing of vocabulary tasks became important. Use of pre-, during- and post-reading tasks have, as we saw above, extended into the SL/FL reading setting (see Collie & Slater, 1987; Lundahl, 1998). The most important goal of the *pre-reading* phase is to activate or develop students' background knowledge. Tasks are designed to help readers build formal or linguistic schemata (see section 3.1.4) and to understand the text. *During-reading* activities are used to monitor comprehension and keep the reading going. *Post-reading* activities help pupils evaluate and reflect on their own learning, and apply new knowledge to the real world. (Aebersold & Field, 1997; Johnson, 1998; Lazar, 1993.)

Children in the present project had different views about the timing of the tasks. At the beginning, many preferred to deal with new words before reading. Both stronger and weaker readers felt this way. Some children, however, preferred to pick out words and work around them *whilst reading*. Towards the middle and end of the project there was more variety. Lars looked at the words in the pre-reading tasks before reading, and then when reading he returned to the pre-reading tasks if something was unclear in the text. Some children placed an emphasis on picking out the words from the text *whilst reading* but finding out the meanings after having read a whole chapter, and some tended to deal with words only *after* having read the chapter. Children developed individual and personal preferences.

3.3.5 Who selects the words to work on?

Another important question was whether the teacher or pupils should select the words. It is common for the teacher to choose the words, especially if she wants all children in the group to learn the same words (this was not the case in this project, since the children were reading different books, and *learning* was generally not the focus for the tasks; see above). Swaffar et al. (1991) and Chase & Duffelmeyer (1990), however, recommend letting the pupils choose words and build individual vocabularies. Dole, Sloan & Trathen (1995) found that students who used certain criteria for selecting important words later successfully remembered the words in a vocabulary and comprehension test. Studies reviewed by Blachowicz and Fisher (2000) also suggest that this approach is effective, provided age and language proficiency are taken into consideration. Although approaches vary, many practitioners agree that at least some responsibility should be given to the students.

Since the goal of the present project was to foster independent readers, the question of whether or not the teacher should select vocabulary from the texts is important. In the beginning, I made the selection of words for pre-reading tasks. However, as the project evolved, the children were increasingly encouraged to select words that they needed in order to understand the text (see Gwin, 1990; Chase & Duffelmeyer, 1990).

One issue which emerged was, in fact, whether or not it is possible for the teacher to pick out the “right” words. This was a question that I had wondered about in my field diary, and which was confirmed by the children’s comments. While several felt that my selections were helpful, some pointed out that these words were not necessarily ones which they experienced as the most difficult. In practice, it was easier for the highly proficient children to choose words themselves. The fact that the weakest readers needed help before reading the next chapter made it more difficult for them to choose the words themselves. One solution to this problem was suggested by Mikaela: that they choose which words they would like to work with, from a selection made by me. Another problem for the weakest readers was that the difficult words appeared so frequently that they would have spent a great deal of time looking them up had the teacher not made a selection. Most children in groups D and E thus felt that it was easier if the teacher made the selection and offered tasks or glossaries which dealt with vocabulary.

In summary, the most proficient and some weaker readers liked to pick out words themselves, whilst the weakest wanted the teacher to prepare words and tasks. More children preferred making their own selections than relying on the teacher.

3.4 STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH COMPREHENSION PROBLEMS

Helping the children resolve problems independently when comprehension broke down was another important focus, both as regards children’s own management of reading, and as regards measures which the teacher took in order to provide necessary support. Children’s metacognitive awareness of their reading, and their choice of personal strategies emerged as particularly important.

3.4.1 Metacognitive awareness and independent reading

There is substantial evidence to suggest that readers who are aware of problems in their comprehension can adopt a range of strategies to ‘fix’ these problems (Almasi, 2003; Goodman, 1973a/1982; Hall & Myers, 1998). However, this requires a degree of metacognitive awareness – awareness of one’s own thinking. Metacognitive awareness of the reading process is one of the most important skills that second language readers can use whilst reading (Anderson, 1999; Wray, 1994). However, little is known about metacognitive awareness in relation to EFL-reading, or about metacognitive awareness

in EFL-teaching in general. Wenden (1998), an exception to this general trend, discusses how the insights provided by L1 studies can be used to inform learner-active approaches to second language acquisition, highlighting the ways in which metacognitive knowledge has been shown to help learners plan, evaluate, monitor, and self-regulate their learning, and has proved important in task analysis and in transfer of learning. Wenden proposes that teachers should try to gain an understanding of pupils' beliefs and knowledge about language learning, and help language learners develop a reflective and self-directed approach to learning the target language. Development of learner independence has, in fact, been recognized within some forms of EFL-teaching: Self-directed Language Learning (SDLL) and Learner Strategies in Language Learning (LSLL) have influenced language teaching in Europe (Wenden, 2002). These approaches were not used as such in my teaching, although I did encourage children to work independently and to find personal strategies.

Thus, pupils in the present project were encouraged to think about their own reading (see Anderson, 1999; Hall & Myers, 1998; Swaffar et al, 1991). All of them became, to a greater or lesser extent, aware of what strategies they used, and of help which they needed when reading in English, as described below. Metacognitive awareness also extended to choosing suitable texts. In general, the children made sound judgements about their own reading level and the suitability of the books. They were also able to express what they were thinking about their reading. This helped me individualise teaching and plan tasks for the different groups (see 4.1.3-4.1.4). But there were differences in students' ability to describe what they do when reading. Some expressed themselves spontaneously, whilst others needed prompting.

Caution is needed, of course, in any discussion of children's metacognitive awareness of reading. Some readers are conscious of a reading strategy before they begin to use it. Others unconsciously start using a strategy before becoming aware of their use of this strategy. Thus in some cases, metacognition precedes strategy use, whereas in other cases, strategy use precedes metacognitive knowledge (Wray, 1994). Also, there is the question of whether what children report represents their *actual* strategies.

3.4.2 Strategies when reading independently

Goodman (1973a/1982) identifies scanning, selection, confirmation, and correction as strategies which readers use in order to get meaning from print. Almasi (2003) distinguishes strategies that can be taught to emergent readers which aid reading: text anticipation strategies, text maintenance strategies, and fix-up strategies. The reading support which I introduced focussed on what the reader can do when he or she notices that comprehension has broken down: 'correction' or 'fix-up' strategies. Within L1-reading teaching, children are commonly taught independence using various reading strategies (see Almasi, 2003; Chase & Duffelmeyer, 1990; Johnson, 1998; Moore &

Wade, 1995/1997; Pressley, 2000). Baumann, Hooten & White (1999), for example, found that L1-pupils became more strategic readers with enhanced aesthetic understanding when reading strategies were integrated into reading lessons. Further, Dowhower (1999) refers to pre-, during- and post reading strategies, which can be used to help students take control of their own (L1) reading. Cooper (2000) and Soderman et. al. (1999) also offer examples of strategies which (L1) readers use when reading.

When reading in a SL or FL, both weak and strong readers can benefit from being shown what they can do when the text becomes too difficult (Dole, Sloan & Trathen, 1995; Frazer, 1999). Within FL-reading, however, little is known about reading strategies or ways of coping with comprehension problems, especially where young readers are concerned. Evidence from the SL-setting offers some relevant insights. Anderson (1999: 82-83), for instance, identified three main strategies needed by the reader: cognitive, metacognitive, and compensatory. Gersten & Jiménez (1994) defined 'productive practices' in SL-reading as those which lead to high levels of student involvement, foster high-order cognitive processes, and enable students to engage in extended discourse. Paribakht & Wesche (1999) found that inferencing (informed guessing) in SL-reading was the most common strategy for trying to understand word meanings, though in more than half the cases students made no effort with unknown words. Parry (1993) calls for evidence of individuals' reading strategies and of how those strategies are developed in different communities and among readers of different cultural backgrounds.

SL/FL writers such as Anderson (1999), Aebersold & Field (1997), Dole, Sloan & Trathen (1995), Lundahl (1998), Collie & Slater (1987), and Swarbrick (1998) discuss reading strategies, often based on L1-reading, which can be used specifically in ESL/EFL-reading:

- reading for *meaning*
- dealing with significant/key words
- reading and pausing
- ignoring difficult words (the skilled reader has an ability to decide what words to ignore)
- figuring out unknown words
- analysing parts of the word to guess its probable meaning
- examining the grammatical function of the word
- visualizing
- making connections
- making inferences
- using the context to guess meanings
- predicting
- asking oneself questions whilst reading
- reading the sentence without the word to see if it can be understood

- re-reading a sentence
- re-reading a paragraph
- summarizing passages
- organising ideas
- recognising the structure of a text
- being helped by a friend in the group
- using a dictionary
- taking notes

Although the strategies suggested by different writers vary, there is agreement on some points. For instance, it is believed that the teacher needs to train the pupils in using strategies, and that different strategies can be used in combination with each other.

When applying L1/SL strategies to my teaching, I made a conscious attempt to adjust them to the primary school EFL-setting. As well as focusing on reading for meaning, I was concerned to give the children appropriate levels of help and encouragement. In the early lessons, I offered examples of strategies. I also handed out a sheet with bullet points in Swedish which the children could use as an aide memoire. The children were asked in reading conferences, lesson time, and interviews about how they dealt with difficult words in the text, which strategies they used, and what help they might want. In summary, their personal reading strategies when reading silently were (in no order of importance):

Re-reading
 Stopping and thinking, guessing
 Relating to similar-sounding words in Swedish, or consciously using
 L1-reading strategies
 Asking grown-ups or siblings
 Note-taking
 Discussing words in the group
 Reading ahead and/or skipping words
 Using dictionaries
 Asking the teacher
 Combinations of different strategies

These strategies were used slightly differently by different children. The main patterns in relation to each strategy are worth some brief mention:

Re-reading

Several children, both weaker and more proficient, mentioned re-reading as a strategy. This strategy was used in connection with guessing the difficult word.

Stopping to guess

Several children reported guessing the meaning of words. This strategy was common among both weaker and more proficient readers. Some children used guessing when other approaches (such as asking one's mother or the teacher) were not available, whereas for others it was the strategy of first choice. Lars specified that first he re-reads the sentence twice to see if he understands, and then he guesses.

Relating to a similar-sounding word in Swedish, then reading ahead, or consciously using L1-reading strategies

Few children reported relating to similar sounding Swedish words. However, Lars mentioned that English is similar to Swedish, and that he tried to think of what Swedish word the English word reminds him of. It is possible that more children used the strategy but did not report it.

There is a range of views within ESL/EFL-reading on the question of transfer of L1-reading skills (see Koda, 1994; Chamot & O'Malley, 1994). Parry (1993), for example, notes that there is still no clarity about the extent to which reading skills may be transferred from one language to another. Some writers propose that reading is *universal* across languages, whereas others view reading as a *language -specific process*. Cummins (2001), the most influential writer in this area, has proposed a model of common underlying proficiency in which skills such as literacy acquired in one language do not have to be re-learned, but are automatically transferred to second and subsequent languages. Similarly, writers such as Carrell (1991) propose that reading difficulties in a second language may be due to poor reading skills in the first language. On the other hand, if reading skills are *not* transferred, how pupils read in their first language will not be relevant for understanding their SL/FL reading. Walter (2004), for example, relates poor L2 reading to poor structure-building of mental representations and L2 working memory: the better the readers' L2 structure building, the better their L2 reading comprehension.

In the first round of interviews, both weak and strong pupils felt that there were differences between reading in Swedish and English. Several children mentioned knowledge of the target language as an example: it is easier to guess the meaning of a word when reading in Swedish, since you know more words in that language. These children clearly connected reading with the issue of language proficiency (see 3.3.1). Another difference mentioned was that using a dictionary as a resource is more common when reading in English. Further, Barbara noted that she would not be able to skip words

when reading in English, as she does when reading in Swedish, because she would not understand the meaning of the text. Group C explained that in English, reading an individual word takes longer, and one reads more carefully. Reading in Swedish is quicker, one only glances at the text and still understands the meaning, although one might not understand every single word: ‘man läser mycket noggrannare, faktiskt...att man, om man läser i en engelsk bok ... så läser man mycket noggrannare alla ord. Men om jag läser en svensk bok så är det bara sådär...och jag förstår ändå ändå vad det betyder, fast inte varje ord, jag hoppar över nån gång en eller två meningar’ (Nils, OG, 21.9).

Other children, however, felt that there is *not much difference* between reading in Swedish and English. Casper, for instance, noted that he reads in the same way in every language (Swedish, English and Finnish). Markus explained that, whether he were reading in Swedish or English, he would ask someone for the meaning of a word if he did not understand.

Asking a grown-up or older sibling at home

Approximately half the group reported sometimes using their parents or an older sibling as a resource when reading at home, after having tried other strategies first. Few children used this as their first strategy.

Note-taking

Some children mentioned making a note of words that they did not understand, and then dealing with them after reading the chapter. In fact, all children were encouraged to use their ‘personal glossaries’ at the back of their notebooks (see 3.3.2). These glossaries were used more in the first half of the project. Some used note-taking as a first strategy, others used other strategies first. Some readers made notes of difficult words when reading at home and then asked a group member in the following lesson.

Discussing the word in the group

The children were encouraged to talk about difficult words and to help each other when reading aloud (see 4.4). In most groups this worked well but in some groups, children needed to be reminded to help one another. In some of the weaker groups, especially group D, there was a lot of discussion about new words.

Reading ahead and/or skipping the difficult word

Over half of the class reported reading ahead and/or skipping difficult words. A few highly proficient readers developed effective strategies for reading for meaning. Lotta explained that she read the sentence containing the difficult word, and if she had some kind of understanding, she continued reading and went back to the word after she had read the whole chapter. Nils and Felix commented that they skipped the difficult word, read ahead, and often understood the meaning when they had read some more.

Using a dictionary

Initially, I encouraged children to try guessing meanings before turning to a dictionary (see Day & Bamford, 1998). However, children varied as to *when* they looked up the word in a dictionary, and *what* they did *before* looking up the word (see above). Most children tried other strategies first. Some did not use a dictionary at all. The children's previous experience with dictionaries varied. Some had used dictionaries, others had tried but were not sure about how to use them. For those who were uncertain, I developed *dictionary strategy sheets* (see example in appendix 3.4.2). Barbara needed personal instruction before being able to use the dictionary.

It sometimes seemed to me that looking up words in a dictionary interrupted the reading process. Some children felt that it did; others, including both average and weaker readers, felt that it did not. Lars pointed out that it was important not to forget the word itself when looking through the alphabet. Felix, an average reader, reported that on one occasion it took him such a long time to find the word he was looking for that he had forgotten what the paragraph he had been reading was about. Weaker readers clearly risked spending disproportionately large amounts of time on dictionaries if they were left to cope with difficult words by themselves. They clearly needed support with difficult words.

Teacher help

The pupils were encouraged to try other strategies before asking me. Nonetheless, children regularly asked for help. Especially in the case of weaker readers, the only practical solution was sometimes to intervene, since too many difficult words slowed down their reading. See also Chapter 4 on discussion of the teacher's role.

Combinations of strategies

Both weak and proficient readers used combinations of strategies, and many could articulate what they did. Although, as we have seen, children used similar strategies, they used them in different ways. Markus, for instance, was a weak reader. After reading *Seven Weird Days...*, he noted that he used the following strategies: guessed the meaning, re-read, wrote down the word, and used a dictionary.

Tomas, an average reader, reported after reading *Seven Weird Days...* at the start of the project that he used a dictionary, and if he did not have a dictionary available, he guessed, or phoned his mother at work. He also read ahead and re-read. Later in the project, Tomas reported that he re-read the difficult word, tried to guess the word, and then read the sentence again. This time he had not asked his mother or needed a dictionary but had instead acted more independently.

After reading his first book, Nils, a highly proficient reader, reported using a dictionary. However, the words that he looked for were not always there, and in these cases he asked his parents. If they did not know, he sometimes wrote down the word and asked Melker in his group. He used different reading strategies flexibly, giving different answers each time he was asked.

Although there is a need for caution in all discussions of children's strategies, the children's responses provide insights into their *own* experiences of reading, strategies used, and help needed, which are important when developing appropriate support.

3.5 CHILDREN'S READING PREFERENCES, FLUENCY OF READING, AND READING ABILITY

The interviews, reading conferences and group work also shed light on children's reading preferences, how they managed to read aloud, and the relationship between fluency, stamina, accuracy, and comprehension. These aspects were important because of the group-work approach to teaching.

3.5.1 Individual reading preferences

There are several different ways of reading texts in the classroom (see for example Benton and Fox, 1985). Different modes of reading were used in this project: the children read aloud to each other in groups - some of them in pairs - and they also engaged in silent reading at home. They were encouraged to take turns when reading aloud so that everyone had a go, and to read as much or as little as they wanted. Most reading in class occurred as group reading. Various benefits of group reading have been found, outlined, for instance, in Reid and Bentley (1996): it can extend reading comprehension by letting children identify difficulties or misunderstandings; the children have the opportunity to reach a deeper understanding of the text, since different children might hold different opinions; it gives pupils practice in reading with pace, intonation, and modulation; and it may also enhance motivation. For learners acquiring a new language, it provides a non-threatening atmosphere. There are, however, opposing positions. Swaffar, Arens, Byrnes and Kern (1991), for example, do not recommend reading aloud as a technique in language teaching. Empirical evidence is very scarce for young EFL-readers reading aloud to each other in small groups. How the children in this study went about their reading might therefore offer some insight.

Most children, both more and less proficient, clearly enjoyed reading aloud to each other in groups. Several indicated a particularly strong interest in reading together: Casper and Lars were sometimes disappointed when the lesson ended and they had to stop reading. Nils, similarly, often wanted to read such long chunks of text that Melker, who was waiting for his turn, needed to ask when he could start reading. Some felt that reading aloud was easier than reading silently, because what you have read aloud 'stays in your memory' ('nå om jag det där läser högt, ja, så då det där stannar det i minnet'), whereas if you read silently at home, it often disappears so that you do not remember it so well.

A few children, such as Lotta, did not show as much enthusiasm but nonetheless enjoyed reading together. Annika, the weakest reader, was the only one who did not like reading out aloud. Towards the end of the project, a few children liked reading silently to themselves rather than in groups. Interestingly, the groups that chose to read silently often included pupils who felt that they were quicker readers than the others in the group. Katja pointed out that it was quicker to read silently to oneself, because you did not need to think as much about pronunciation. Barbara, on the other hand, felt that it was easier to read silently at her own pace, because she was slower than the other readers in group C and found it hard to keep up with their pace.

3.5.2 Managing reading aloud

Reading ability is often measured through miscue analysis, which is based on the assumption that reading proficiency is related to oral reading fluency (see for example

Goodman, 1973b/1982; Bloome & Dail, 1997; Martens, 1997). Within the scope of the present study, a full miscue analysis was not relevant. Instead, I have simply identified the most frequent types of decoding mistakes. Children's *actual* understanding has not been measured by, for instance, tracing the origin of miscues. Instead, reading comprehension was considered in reading conferences, in recordings of independent group work, and through the children's entries in reading diaries.

With only one exception, the children in the present project managed to read aloud either fluently or fairly fluently, so that the other children in the group could follow and enjoy the story. But there were significant variations. The children displayed the whole range of behaviours associated with the reading of native speakers of English (see Goodman & Burke, 1973/1982), including insertions and omissions, pauses and hesitations, self-corrections, hypercorrections and losing their place in the text.

They also made mistakes related to the fact that they were language learners. For instance, miscues concerning past tense forms were particularly common among both weak and strong readers. In most cases this involved pronouncing *-ed* as separate from the rest of the word, e.g. *talk-ed*, *sniff-ed*. In Williams' (1998) study, past tense *-ed* was the most common pronunciation problem which did not alter meaning. In some cases, children in the present study left out the past tense morpheme altogether, e.g. *decide*, *start*, *swish*. Occasionally, they used the *simple present* for *strong* verbs: e.g. *know* for *knew*, indicating top-down processing (see Williams, 1998; see also 3.1.3). Some children in this project were clearly reading for meaning and overall understanding, while others seemed to focus on decoding individual words. There was also a tendency in all readers to mispronounce long words. In some cases, this involved leaving out endings of words: *stubborn* for *stubbornly*, *glass-front* for *glass-fronted*, *shadow* for *shadowy*. Another common practice was to segment unfamiliar words into syllables, e.g. *am-aze-ment*, *pro-mi-sing*, *hor-se-men*. Some mispronunciations did not change the meanings of words. Other mispronunciations resulted in changes in meaning (e.g. *inscription* for *instruction*, *boring* for *bothering*, *true* for *throat*). Sometimes these words were real words but the incorrect ones, and at others times the sounds produced were non-words (*knocked* -> *knacked*, *enviously* -> *envisoly*, *suggestion* -> *suu-ge-ss*). Williams (1998) argues that such mispronunciations suggest bottom-up reading processes. In many cases, the expressions were unfamiliar to these children (*whirl-wind* -> 'while-wild'). Thus, they were decoding words which they did not know (see 3.1.1).

Interestingly, although weaker readers made miscues more *frequently*, the highly proficient readers made the same *types* of mistakes. Even a few children with a high level of reading comprehension (Nils and Casper) made frequent miscues, which sometimes altered meanings of individual words (*shoot* for *show*, *stayed* for *stared*). Martens (1997) makes a similar observation, arguing that readers do not simply 'graduate' from using cues in the text to automatically recognising words.

The weakest readers in the current study tended to get stuck on words which they could not pronounce. Annika made significantly more mistakes than all other readers. She was a very slow reader with frequent interruptions and was clearly experiencing difficulties both in decoding and making meaning of text. Markus was another weak reader who was often corrected by others in his group. In general, though, children only corrected or helped each other when the reader indicated uncertainty. This may have been because they did not *notice* the miscues; alternatively, they may have *tolerated* them and were being respectful. In either case, children's mispronunciations and misreadings did not adversely affect their enjoyment of reading aloud or listening to others read. Only in Annika's case were the decoding problems so severe that the others in the group found it difficult to follow the story. She often chose not to read aloud, but instead enjoyed listening to others read.

As we saw in section 3.2.2, pupils felt that they could read for overall understanding. This, despite the fact that mispronunciation sometimes resulted in changes in meanings of individual words. Many children made frequent self-corrections, but in other cases they did not notice their miscues (see Williams, 1998). Weaker readers, especially, might continue reading without realizing that they have not understood. As suggested by Almasi (2003), the teacher has an important role in recognizing such behaviour, and helping pupils understand. Good readers and strategy users, in contrast, are metacognitively aware of their reading processes, and they can judge where they need to make adjustments, choosing between a variety of strategies (Almasi, 2003).

While the present children's perceptions do not necessarily match their *actual* understanding (see Wray, 1994; see also 3.4.1), the fact that they *felt* that they were understanding and were highly motivated to read is nonetheless a positive and important sign for EFL-reading.

3.5.3 Fluency, stamina, accuracy and comprehension when reading aloud

Reading comprehension was discussed in section 3.1.1. In the present section, the relationship between reading fluency, stamina and accuracy, on the one hand, and comprehension, on the other, are considered in brief.

There is a wide (L1) theoretical base for viewing oral reading fluency as a measure of reading comprehension. Efficient word recognition, it is often argued, frees capacity for higher level comprehension processing (Fuchs, Fuchs, Hosp & Jenkins, 2001; Pressley, 2000). Thus, instantly recognised vocabulary promotes faster reading, which enables the reader to focus on reading for *meaning*. Poor readers, conversely, spend longer on individual words (Koda, 1994). According to this line of thought, increasing L1/SL students' reading rate allows them to devote greater cognitive capacity to comprehension skills (see Anderson, 1999; Carver, 1992a; Swaffar, Arens and Byrnes,

1991). Some L1-scholars highlight teaching strategies that enhance word recognition (Almasi, 2003). In the SL-setting, Swarbrick (1998), for example, discusses various ways of increasing ESL-readers' reading speed, and proposes teaching of prediction strategies to help SL learners focus on meaning. Another solution is for SL-readers to practice language, as more automatic word recognition would give more time for processing unfamiliar words. Importantly, however, some writers both in the L1 and SL domains have argued that automaticity does not guarantee comprehension (Martens, 1997; Swaffar, et. al, 1991). Taguchi, Takayasu-Maass & Gorsuch (2004) also note that fluency is no guarantee for successful FL-reading. The specific EFL-perspective needs further investigation.

Certain ways of reading in the classroom have also proved effective for developing reading. In L1-classrooms, modeled reading, repeated reading of familiar texts, wide independent (extensive) reading, coached or assisted reading, chunking of text, and word reading practice have been used to develop fluency in reading (see Pikulski & Chard, 2003; Cunningham & Stanovich, 2003). There is also some evidence from ESL/EFL-settings that reading fluency, word recognition, and sight vocabulary can be developed through extensive reading (see Nuttall, 1982; Swarbrick, 1991), and through assisted repeated reading (Taguchi, et. al., 2004). In short, processing capacity and time, language proficiency, exposure to written texts, and supportive teaching methods have all been argued to affect fluency of reading and the construction of meaning and understanding.

In the present project, there were significant differences in *fluency* and in the *amount of text* that children read. In the most proficient groups, the children tended to read long chunks of text fairly fluently. In the average/weaker groups, children tended to have less stamina and were less fluent. The variation in stamina between the strongest and weakest readers was significant.

Sometimes, reading accuracy, fluency, the amount of text read aloud, and reading comprehension were related, as in the cases of Lars, Felix, and Melker, who made few mistakes, read fairly fluently, and generally understood what they were reading. Similarly, Annika, the weak reader, was poor at decoding and comprehending, and equally a slow reader.

In other cases, however, the children's reading accuracy did *not* coincide with reading comprehension or fluency. Lotta read the largest number of extra books at home and generally comprehended what she was reading, but did not eagerly volunteer to read aloud in the group. Nils was one of the most competent readers in that he read quickly and had an exceptionally high level of reading comprehension. Although he made frequent miscues, these did not appear to interfere with his understanding of the overall meaning of the text. The work of Goodman (1973a/1982) is interesting here, since he notes that accuracy (correctly identifying wordparts and words) is not necessary for

understanding: if readers read *too* carefully, they risk losing meaning because they become too bogged down in detail. Thus, efficient readers sample from the graphic display, and then make predictions which are confirmed or disconfirmed. This model offers a possible explanation for why Nils was able to read fluently for comprehension despite his frequent miscues. In contrast, Markus, who was also a quick reader, made frequent miscues, and had poor reading comprehension.

Therefore, it was not necessarily the case that rapid readers also comprehended well. Nor that those who made mistakes necessarily had low reading comprehension or read slowly. Williams (1998) also found a discrepancy between accuracy in decoding and understanding in some of her Finnish speaking EFL-readers: in fact, accurate decoding and pronunciation in some cases disguised comprehension problems, which were revealed when children were questioned after reading the texts. Gregory (1996), too, warns against assuming that ESL-readers have understood a text that they are able to read.

The reading behaviours of children in the present project suggest that miscues were not necessarily indicative of comprehension problems. However, in the absence of more systematic miscue analysis and tools such as comprehension tests (see Stanovich & Stanovich, 2003), these findings remain speculative. Nevertheless, they do suggest that children who are comfortable talking about their reading comprehension, helping each other, and admitting misunderstandings and need for help, are likely to feel more motivated to read in a foreign language. In addition, we need not be afraid of requiring primary school EFL-readers to read aloud to each other in groups. In this study, children enjoyed the activity, although there were significant differences in reading fluency, stamina, accuracy, and comprehension. They were able to follow the story-line despite miscues made by those reading aloud; and despite making miscues themselves, all children except Annika volunteered to read aloud to the others in the group.

3.6 EFL-ASPECTS OF WRITING

Another activity which emerged as important was writing. In fact, within L1, SL and FL settings, it is commonly believed that there is a mutually supportive relationship between reading, discussing and writing (see Cooper, 2000: 334, Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Farman, Flood & Lapp, 1994). Writing engages the reader in a deeper understanding, for one is involved in a variety of mental processes. In addition, writing allows the mental representations created whilst reading to be captured and reconsidered at a later point (Wells, 1991). Writing also enables readers to reflect consciously on what they have read (Meek, 1988; Martin, 1999a). Carrell (1987) suggests that if reading comprehension and ESL composition research were to complement each other, this could lead to more powerful theories of ESL reading and writing, and thus to more effective ESL pedagogy.

According to Cumming (2001), second language writing research has focused on three main areas: textual features of ESL learners' texts, the composing process, and the sociocultural context of writing. Much theory is based on findings from the L1-setting (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996), although there are clearly differences between L1 and L2 pupils. For example, L2-writers' linguistic abilities are often limited. On the other hand, there is evidence for transfer of skills from one language to another. If students are used to expressing themselves in writing in the L1, then this can aid L2 writing (Cummins, 1997; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Ringbom, 1987). In a study of eighth grade Dutch English students' writing, Schoonen et al. (2003) found that L2-writing proficiency correlated more with L1 writing proficiency, than with L2 linguistic and metalinguistic knowledge. These issues are further discussed below, in relation to the children's texts.

In SL-classrooms, process writing approaches have been particularly influential, encouraging meaningful writing topics, writing as a contextualized activity, feedback options from peers, and free writing and journal writing (see Grabe & Kaplan, 1996) – similar tasks to those conducted in the present project. However, one obstacle for *primary* school EFL-teachers is, as Cameron (2001) points out, that written tasks for adults or older learners are not necessarily suitable in the primary school setting. Thus, expecting FL-children to respond to literature in writing, especially at primary level, requires an awareness on the part of the teacher of the children's capabilities, and of the demands of the tasks. Such issues were the focus in this study.

EFL-issues which emerged as particularly important in the present study were related to the children's reading diaries, the frequency and lengths of entries, language use, and features of writings in relation to how children managed to put their message across. The contents of the children's writing (their opinions about the books) are discussed in Chapters 5-8. The present analysis is mainly based on children's entries in *reading diaries* which they completed at the end of each chapter. These were an excellent source of data for a number of reasons: all children participated, writing was ongoing

throughout the project, and they were not subject to teacher correction. Thus the diary entries throw some light on issues involved in young EFL-children's management of writing in relation to reading.

3.6.1 Reading diaries, journals, and response logs in ESL/EFL

Reader response logs, reading diaries, and dialogue journals are increasingly common in L1 settings, and also in some SL-settings (Swarbrick, 1990; 1998; Pearson Casanave, 1994; Holmes & Moulton, 1995). Peyton & Reed (1990) offer a helpful account of how dialogue journals can be introduced to non-native speakers (although not for the specific use with literature). They describe dialogue journals as conversations between a teacher and an individual pupil, which are written, private, and regular. The teacher writes back without grading or correcting, and becomes a partner in a conversation. Sometimes, the pupils choose what to write about, sometimes the teacher decides the topics. According to Peyton & Reed, dialogue journals have a number of benefits for language learners: the pupils have the opportunity to communicate through writing, to express thoughts, and to receive interesting and meaningful replies. The journals also give the teacher information about the students' language and writing ability, and the pupils have an additional opportunity for reading: every time the teacher writes, an individualized text is produced which models language.

In this project, the pupils' diaries functioned as *diary*, *reader response log* and *dialogue journal*. The pupils jotted down thoughts and reactions after reading each chapter, either spontaneously, or by using scaffolding and answering the teacher's questions. They made notes either about the plot or about reactions to the texts. I read the journals at regular intervals, responded, posed and answered questions, and encouraged without correcting, in ways similar to those described by Peyton & Reed.

3.6.2 Frequency, length of entries and interest in writing

Several children (such as Katja, Lars, Lotta, Susanne, and Nils) eagerly wrote diary entries after each chapter, while others needed to be reminded. Although most children seemed to enjoy this activity, there were two notable exceptions, Barbara and Felix. Predictably, these two pupils, having reported that they did not like writing, were amongst those who did not write frequently. Similarly, those who expressed enjoyment of the reading diaries, were amongst the children who took writing seriously. Thus a lot of thought and effort was put into some children's entries, whereas others were shallow, hasty, or very short.

Length of entry is not in itself an indicator of quality in writing, language or content (Grabe & Kaplan 1996). However, in the present study, there was a relationship

between length of entry and both the fluency of children's writing in English, and the eagerness with which they undertook writing tasks. The children's entries varied significantly from around 10 to 330 words. (See appendix 3.6.2 for samples of different lengths.)

Several factors might have influenced length of entries. Firstly, the children had been encouraged to choose books according to their own reading ability and EFL-proficiency, so that they would be able to manage the chosen book. In practice, therefore, the most proficient children tended to choose the longer and more difficult books. In general terms, children reading the easier books (*Grandpa Chatterji*, *Seven Weird Days at Number 31*, *Secret Friends*) tended to write shorter entries than those reading the more demanding books (*Operation Gadgetman*, *I Want to be an Angel*, and *Troublemakers*). For instance, Nils, who read the most difficult books in both phases of the project, also wrote the lengthiest entries (47-324 words). And Annika, the weakest in the class who read the easiest books, wrote shorter entries than all the other children. Length of entries might thus well have been affected by EFL-literacy ability and/or language proficiency. Another possible reason might be related to the content of the books. The more difficult books were longer and had more complicated story-lines and may therefore have elicited more responses than shorter books with simpler story-lines. Thirdly, the amount of work set for different books might have affected the length of responses for the weaker readers: they were also asked to do vocabulary- and reading comprehension tasks, which might have affected the time available for writing responses in the reading diaries.

But there were also exceptions to the rule. Mikaela's, Susanne's and Lars' longest entries (reading *I Want to be an Angel*) were sometimes as long as Nils's responses to *Troublemakers*. Furthermore, Lotta who read the most difficult book in both phases of the project, did not write lengthier entries than Susanne, who read easier books in both phases of the project. There were also differences between children reading the same book, and some children varied significantly in length from one entry to the next, though there were also children who wrote similar amounts throughout. Some children wrote more in the second half of the project, such as Susanne (see fig. 7); others wrote less towards the end of the project.

3.6.3 Language use

Many EFL-educationalists, such as Swarbrick (1990, 1998) recommend the exclusive use of English in writing. For the present purposes, however, the children were allowed to use either English or Swedish, in order that they should be able to express what they wanted. In practice, they were not afraid to write in English. All used English in reading diaries at least once but there were differences in the extent to which they used each of the two languages. Some children (such as Nils, Mikaela, Susanne, Lotta, Casper) used

English almost exclusively, whilst others used both Swedish and English. Markus and Annika, the least proficient in English, used Swedish almost exclusively.

The ways in which both languages were used in individual entries varied. In most cases, entries were written entirely in either Swedish or English, although some children used English and Swedish in the *same* entry. Lars, for instance, sometimes indicated change of language by using arrows to show that he was using Swedish for the part he could not say in English. In a study of adult L2 writing, Woodall (2002) found that language-switching of this kind was affected not only by the difficulty of the task or by L2 proficiency, but also by the closeness of the L1 and L2 languages. Similarly, Wang & Wen (2002) found that Chinese students used both L1 and L2 knowledge when producing L2 texts, but in different ways depending on the task at hand. Wang & Wen related the reduction of L1 use to the students' increasing L2 proficiency.

Sometimes, more difficult issues in the present project (such as a character's feelings) were discussed in Swedish, and straightforward story re-tellings were given in English. This pattern is thus similar to that of oral language use (see Chapter 4). However, there were also some striking examples of thoughts, feelings and opinions – more 'difficult' content – expressed in English (see Chapters 5-7).

In other cases, a Swedish expression was inserted when the English equivalent was unknown. For example, Mikaela used a personal bilingual strategy, underlining the Swedish words she used when she did not know the English equivalent as a signal to the teacher. When reading her diary entries, I filled in the missing English words for her:

"My name is Jasmine Grey" /
9.10.2000
Jasmine thought that she and
Rachel wasn't friends anymore.
Lena didn't understand why
Rachel and Jasmine would not
be friends. The same thing
happend every day. That Jasmine →

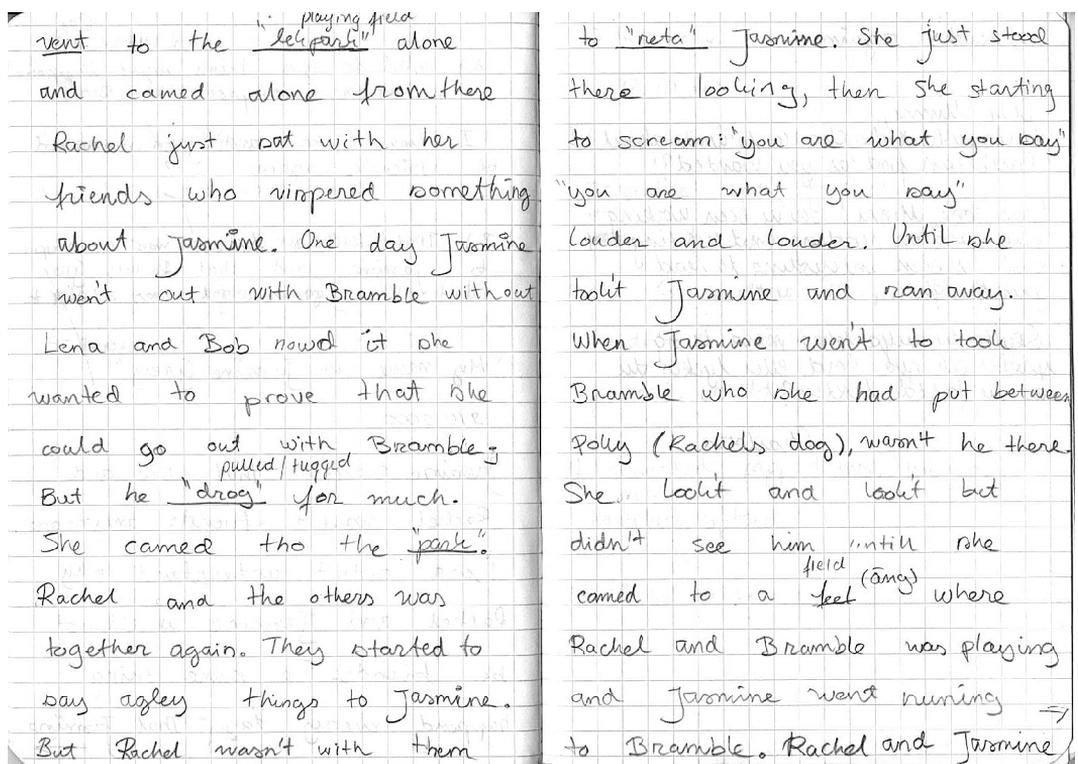


Fig. 6. Mikaela's personal writing strategy

3.6.4 Features of children's writing and cross-linguistic influence

Some children wrote fluently and extensively in English, while others were less verbal and fluent. There were varying degrees of accuracy in their spelling and grammar.

Although L2 learners and native speakers might make similar mistakes in writing, there is generally a wider variety of errors in L2 writing. Problems stem from L2 learners' limited linguistic resources, inadequate vocabulary, and incomplete knowledge of rules and patterns of the target language. Typical L2 writing errors involve the misspelling of words because of mispronunciation (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Ringbom, 1987, 1992). Various spelling mistakes and grammatical errors were common in the present children's writing, some of which involve Swedish or Finnish influence. These include:

- Swedish or Finnish wording and sentence construction ('Well, I liked the chapter because that it did happen very much things in it')
- Swedish subject-verb inversion in questions ('Why gave I...?')
- Swedish use of preposition ('But he can't do nothing to that thing')

- Swedish spelling (*'The chapter was intresting'*)
- Use of a Swedish word when the English one was not known (*'But he "drog" for much.'*)
- Concord errors (*'I were disappointed... '...the girls was findig...'*)²³
- Incorrect imperfect forms of regular and irregular verbs (*'It was godd that Beans founded the induction oscillator instructions', 'She came'*)
- Incorrect uses of verb tense (*'that He came and Speak something about...'*)
- Swedish expressions translated word-by-word into English (*'I think that they did do right when they set up traps'; 'Beans said that she was alone home.'*)
- Incorrect punctuation (*'Lucy came to Rafaella for tea there she met Rafaella's Dad but she couldn't belive it was her father because he was so old, they lived in an old, small house neir me'.')*
- Spelling of first person singular as 'i' (*'i liked the...'*)
- Mixing between words (*'All Mike's stuff had flow out of he's room to the Landing'*).
- Incorrect use of v/w (*'It did hapen wery weird things.' 'I we...'*)
- Incorrect genitive forms (*'Robbies Gran...'*)
- Incorrect use of indefinite and definite articles (*'...have to go to the hospital.'*)
- Incorrect spelling of 'th'-sound (*'...every word dey say...'*)
- Displacement of -h in '-th' words (*'whit' for 'with'*)
- Compounding (*'football team' -> 'Footballsteam;* 'dance classes' -> '*dancingclasses*')
- Mixing between 'he' and 'she'²⁴ (*Robbie can go and have dancingclasses and football as her hobby at the same thime*)

Most children made some of these mistakes, with some children making more than others.

Signs of both positive and negative linguistic transfer – incorporation of features of the L1 into the knowledge system of the L2 resulting in correct or incorrect outcomes – were visible in children's writings. Ringbom (1986, 1987, 1992), who has been particularly concerned with Swedish and Finnish speaking EFL-learners in Finland, argues that the closeness of the L2 to L1 can play a positive part in L2 written production, although 'the potential L1-based vocabulary across related languages is not as easily available for writing as it is for reading' (Ringbom, 1992, p. 104). In other words, it requires more effort to produce the L2 than to understand it when listening or reading. In general, it is hard to determine the extent of positive transfer, since the only obvious signs of cross-linguistic influence are the negative ones, errors.

In many cases, the Swedish influence brought the children in this project so close to the English sentence or lexical item that there were no problems in understanding what they had meant (...'*because that it did happen wery much things*'...; '*makaroni*' for

²³ In Swedish, verbs do not have different singular and plural forms.

²⁴ It is worth noting, here, that in Finnish, the genitive form of third person sing (his/her) only has one form (hänen). Swedish, however, has two (hans/hennes) which correspond with the English 'his/her'.

'*macarony*'). Interestingly, although spelling mistakes often caused words to look different from the ones intended, the children generally used authentic Swedish or English spelling patterns. For example, the word 'shore' (= sure) in the sentence: '*Now im shore that...*' is spelled with appropriate English letter-sound correspondence. And 'shoud' (= showed) in ...'those kidnappers shoud up' is spelled using authentic Swedish spelling patterns. In other cases, Swedish spelling might not be comprehensible to an English ear, or could give an incorrect impression: '*wapen*' for '*weapon*'; '*looking after some clues*' for '*looking for some clues*'; '*god*' for '*good*' (see discussion of false friends, wholesale incorporation of Swedish words into English, and lexical transfer, in Ringbom 1987; 1992). Closer examination of circumstances surrounding Swedish-speaking children in Finland, for whom English is generally the third language, would be necessary for a deeper understanding. Williams & Hammarberg (1998), for example, argue that the role of languages other than the L1 in the production of a new language might be of importance. In the case of L1 English learners of L2 German and L3 Swedish, they found that L1 and L2 played different roles in L3 acquisition and production. This, they suggest, calls for a new model of polyglot capacity.

Further, as was mentioned above, reading and writing are often held to be mutually supportive. In his review, Cumming (2001) points to several studies which show that learners use ideas and phrases from their source documents appropriately in their own written production. Some of the present children showed particularly strong evidence of transfer from their reading to their writing, using new vocabulary or constructions which they encountered in the texts. In the following example, Susanne was making use of what she was learning through the text, and was able to produce a fluent entry in her reading diary:

p. 117-123

Rachel didn't want Jasmine to call her the next day.
So Jasmine thought that Rachel didn't want to be her friend.
Lena said that everything was gonna be alright tomorrow. Lena asked if Jasmine would like to come shopping with her. But Jasmine wanted to be home.

For a long while Jasmine didn't
 move. But then Bramble came and
 make little noises, because he wanted
 to go out. Jasmine was happy
 because Bramble was her friend and
 she took him out for a walk in
 the park.
 There she saw Rachel. Jasmine went
 to her and showed Bramble.
 But Rachel went red and look
 embarrassed, because everybody looked
 at her.
 e. Jasmine went to the seesaw.
 The children started to whisper.
 And a big boy called out: Hey,
 what's that smell?
 Then another cried: It is coming from
 the seesaw. Everybody turned to
 Jasmine, and somebody said:
 look at her funny hair and her
 scudgy nose and her silly
 face.
 Then she saw Rachel walking
 towards the chanting children.
 Rachel stopped beside Jasmine and looked
 at her. Rachel's head went red again
 and Jasmine muttered: what you say is
 what you are.

Fig. 7. Diary entry where the pupil is making use of expressions from the text, My Name is Jasmine Grey.

It was not uncommon that readers wrote fluently after reading a chapter. Nils, Mikaela, Lars, and Lotta were other examples of this kind ('They walked through bushes and brambles...Beans jumped up and yelled!' (Nils, *Operation Gadgetman*)). Other pupils were less fluent, and tended to use vocabulary which they had already mastered from before, or gave chapter summaries in their own words.

It is also worth considering some issues raised by essays which children wrote on a cultural topic. They started by brainstorming on what they knew about their chosen topic, and what they wanted to find out. In some cases, I needed to assist them both in finding information on their chosen topics, and in using and finding vocabulary. They

used dictionaries, and were also able to ask me or other children for help with words and expressions. Cameron (2001) notes that information texts provide young EFL-learners with further language learning opportunities, develop reading skills at text level, and provide a model for writing information texts in the foreign language. However, the present study has also highlighted some problems: the children had access to a limited range of information books and it was sometimes difficult to find the material which they required for their essays. Though, after initial problems in finding information, all children became engaged in their topics, and many would have liked to spend longer on this task. They clearly enjoyed writing information text.

The findings from this section suggest that when receiving appropriate scaffolding, the young EFL-readers were able to express themselves in writing about what they had read. When looking beyond spelling errors, many children were actually using English fluently. In fact, even some very fluent writers (Lotta, Nils) had problems spelling English correctly. There was significant variety in length and fluency of writing within the same class. An interesting finding was that when allowing these children to choose which language to write in, the majority of children used English whenever they could express what they wanted to in English, and resorted to Swedish when they could not say what they wanted in English.

3.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

There was significant variation in the types of literacy support which the different reading groups and children needed. The most important issues concerned understanding the text; vocabulary support (types of vocabulary tasks and patterns among the children, differences between the groups, timing of tasks, and who selects the words); strategies for dealing with comprehension problems (metacognitive awareness, strategies when reading independently); reading preferences, fluency of reading and reading ability (individual preferences, decoding and reading out aloud, and fluency, accuracy, stamina and comprehension); and EFL-aspects of writing. These themes are discussed in 9.1.1.

4. GROUP WORK AROUND THE TEXTS

The children in the present study engaged in several types of discourse: whole class discussions, reading conferences in small-groups with the teacher, and most frequently, independent group-work in reading groups. Within these groups, they were involved in four main areas of activity: a) reading aloud, b) writing, c) discussing what they were reading, and d) working on tasks related to the reading. Reading aloud and writing were discussed in chapter 3. The other two activities, discussing and working in groups, are the focus for the present chapter.

Group work was a central feature of class activities, both as regards the teacher's planning and management of teaching (sections 4.1, 4.2), and in terms of how the children related to the books in their groups (sections 4.3 and 4.4). Analysis of video recordings and my own observations during lessons reveal a number of key issues which will be discussed below.

4.1 SETTING THE SCENE AND MANAGING GROUP WORK

4.1.1 The composition of reading groups and choosing the books

Much literature on group work focuses on psychotherapeutic groups or task-oriented groups with decision-making goals. Other writers focus on group processes in general. In this chapter, 'group work' is used in a specifically pedagogical sense, referring to groups of pupils at primary school level working together (see Cohen, 1994). An important aim for their group work was collaboration (see Jacob, 1999; Stensaasen & Sletta, 1996).

There are various criteria for grouping children, including children's free choice, ability, gender, age, or choice of book (Cohen, 1994; Reid & Bentley, 1996). The main criterion for placement in groups in this project was the novels which the children chose to read at the two different points in the project – at the beginning and in the middle. On both occasions, I read short extracts from each novel in whole class, we made story-predictions together, looked at the book covers, and discussed what had happened in the opening paragraphs (see Samway & Whang, 1996). The children then looked at the books, read the blurb, read a page silently to see if they could understand what was going on, and thought about how many difficult words they found on the page. They

were then given slips of paper to write down their first and second choices. In principle, children were given maximum control. In practice, teacher intervention was sometimes necessary (see Close, 1992; Jewell & Pratt, 1999) when a pupil had chosen a book which was clearly too easy or too demanding.

Another criterion was the number of children. The groups were to consist of 3-5 children so that they would be able to function if someone was away from school but still be small enough to allow everyone to be heard (see Cohen, 1994; Stensaasen & Sletta, 1996). In the first half of the project, I divided the pupils into groups based on the book they had chosen and how I thought they would get along together, and also on ability so as to ensure a good mix. For example, I made sure that the two weakest readers were not working alone. All the children seemed happy with their groups at this stage in the project. It is, of course, difficult to satisfy several criteria simultaneously when class sizes are small. In the second half of the project, I found it necessary to change the criteria slightly. For instance, I was less concerned about the number of children (group F consisted only of Barbara and Markus). The children also seemed happy about their groups in this phase of the project with one notable exception: Lars openly objected to being placed with two girls.

Some children, such as Susanne and Mikaela wanted to make their book choices at home, and were allowed to do so. Others, such as Lars, Casper and Felix, wanted to change from the book they had originally chosen, either because it was too demanding, or not demanding enough. The composition of reading groups also altered when the person changing book moved to sit together with others reading the same book.

In the beginning, children's choices were sometimes affected by their desire to work with a friend. In one isolated case this was not beneficial: Barbara chose a book which was too difficult for her. Therefore, in the second half of the project I emphasized that they should choose a book that they would, realistically, be able to enjoy. Barbara was more independent when choosing for the second time.

4.1.2 The teacher's role

The management of reading groups was a complex task: the children were working in small groups without the teacher present; there was a range of books; and also a range of levels of ability. Evidence of group work in EFL-settings is scarce, but various writers discuss this issue in an L1 setting. In a study of British primary classrooms, for example, Galton & Williamson (1992) identify key teaching strategies which might help foster collaboration among pupils. They argue for the careful planning and structuring of activities by the teacher, and for the need to teach children how to collaborate. They also suggest that group work should begin with structured tasks, gradually moving towards more open or abstract tasks. Another helpful practical and

theoretical guide to group work in the primary classroom, also in the L1-setting, is offered by Cohen (1994) (see below). When using group work, the teacher needs to monitor and prepare work for the groups, and needs to ensure that tasks are interesting and at appropriate cognitive and linguistic level (see Brewster, 1991; Close, 1997). Instructions need to be clear so that students know what to do, and how they should behave (Nystrand, Gamoran & Heck, 1993; Galton & Williamson, 1992). Thus, even student-centered approaches require active involvement from the teacher.

As regards the activity of *reading*, Eriksson (2002) highlights the potential conflict between (L1) pupils' freedom to read for pleasure, and the teacher's pedagogical task of controlling the reading activity. In a *primary school EFL-setting*, however, it can be argued that this conflict is minimal, because some level of control is necessary in order to help children understand the text and share their reading experiences. This is particularly important when they are expected to work independently. For example, although Swarbrick (1990; 1998) strongly believes that EFL-learners should take responsibility for their reading, she emphasises the importance of order and organisation. One way of helping readers achieve independence in a structured way is by teaching them reading strategies and helping them build on their prior knowledge, as recommended by Shifini (1994) and Swarbrick (1990; 1998). In my own teaching, I carefully structured lessons and tasks from the outset, and also helped children to find ways of dealing with comprehension problems, as we saw in Chapter 3. I thus aimed to support both independent reading, and group work. After trying various activities during the first weeks of the project, I felt better able to respond to children's expressed needs in my planning. It was important to be open to new situations as they unfolded: I was learning as I went along (see also Cohen, 1994).

Lessons always started with a whole class discussion, in which I explained organizational matters: how we would be working, how they had managed in previous lessons, and any issues with their homework. Lessons mostly finished with me summing up, and checking that everyone knew what to do for next time. Sometimes, we had mini-lessons on particular topics, such as how to use a reading diary, or reading strategies. During lesson time, I visited each group several times, in "chatting" rather than "teaching" mode. Sometimes, I simply audited discussions; in other cases, I intervened as necessary (see Cohen, 1994). Some groups were independent whilst others needed more attention. In the most proficient groups, children seldom called on me for help. In the other groups, children were generally eager to discuss new words and often wanted me to intervene.

Cohen's (1994) approach to helping (L1-) groups is very much focussed on the teacher assisting as little as possible, and getting the children to help each other. Sticking strictly to this approach would not have been fruitful in this EFL-setting. Although my aim was to encourage independent group reading, I tried to be flexible. On some occasions, I asked if someone else in the group knew the word. I also gave hints about

the meanings of words, summarized, or took discussions further. On several occasions, in both more and less proficient groups, I needed only to confirm and sometimes build on children's hunches, as for example in the following discussion with two weaker pupils, Markus and Barbara:

- Markus: Nå, vad är det där 'a-ma-zon'?
 'So, what's that 'a-ma-zon'?'
(Markus asks what 'amazing' means, pronouncing it 'a-ma-zon')
- Teacher: 'Amazing'?'
(I ask if he means 'amazing')
- Barbara: Ja, de är det är sån där...jag kan inte förklara
 det..det är sån där..en så ..jag fattar inte den här när
 'Yes, it's a..it's a kind of...I can't explain it.. it's a kind of.....I don't get this when...'
(Barbara says that she has a notion/hunch about the meaning but that she cannot find the right words to describe what she means)
- T: Something's amazing...
(I try to help by giving them a hint as to how the word might be used)
- Barbara: Det är liksom perfekt nej men sådär...
(It's kind of 'perfect'...')
- T: Det är ett bra förslag
 Barbara: Ehhhh
 'That's a good suggestion'
- T: Amazing, perfekt eller fantastiskt, otroligt
 'Amazing, perfect or fantastic...'
I continue by building on what Barbara said)
- Barbara: ja, just så
 'Yes, I see'
(Barbara understands)

Trans. 1: Barbara and Markus discussing the meaning of 'amazing' with the teacher

In summary, I set work for each group, explained how they should go about their work, sometimes gave them estimated times for how long they should spend on tasks, commented on how they were working, helped individual children and groups, monitored what each group was doing during lessons, collected and read writings and other tasks, answered questions about their reading (concerning, for example, pronunciation and word meanings), and either audited or joined in discussions. Because of the practicalities involved in giving homework for several different groups,

I started to prepare printed home-work slips for each book, from which I agreed on individual homework tasks for each pupil. Therefore, although the groups were working independently, group work and lessons were nonetheless structured (see Nystrand, Gamoran & Heck, 1993; Galton & Williamson, 1992).

4.1.3 Tasks and activities around the texts

In chapter 3, tasks related to new vocabulary and reading strategies were discussed. In the present section, the focus is on tasks related to reading comprehension, and reader response. Pre-, during-, and post-reading strategies and activities are known to enhance critical reading and thinking (see also 3.3.4). *Pre-reading tasks* included discussions about expectations and predictions. Various oral and written *during-reading activities* were used in some groups. *Post-reading activities* extended reading into discussion and discussion into writing. For example, various activities which are known to enhance the readers' comprehension of the story and plot were used. These included oral and written story re-tellings and chapter summaries, story maps, a story structure sheet (see Appendix 4.1.3), placing events in the characters' lives in the right chronological order, and thinking about characters' personality, appearance, and attitudes. Children also made connections between their own life and the lives of the characters, and engaged in critical thinking about the texts. (see Carter & Long, 1991; Collie & Slater, 1987; Martin, 1999a; Lazar, 1993; Lundahl, 1998)

The most important *oral tasks* – discussions around the texts and sharing of responses – are outlined in a separate section below (4.2). Various writers offer a range of other oral tasks for FL reading, many of which are appropriate also for the primary school setting. Drama strategies, for instance, are commonly used in both L1-reading and ESL/EFL-settings to focus children's attention on specific questions, events, issues, and concepts, and to help children gain a deeper understanding of the text. (see, for instance, Collie & Slater, 1987; Clipson-Boyles, 1999; Schmidt, 1998; Heathcote & Bolton, 1998; Trousdale & Harris, 1993). Oral tasks used by groups in the present project did include drama strategies.

The most important *writing task* was the *reading diary* (see 3.6), which also functioned as reader response log. Other broader writing tasks, such as essay-writing, were given after finishing each of the two novels. Children had a choice of between 10 and 20 essay topics, and could also think up a topic of their own if they wished. Essays offered opportunities for imaginative writing and reader response. The children also undertook an extended piece of writing about a cultural topic (see 3.6.4 and 6.2.4).

In summary, tasks were both oral and written, and focused on both reading comprehension and reader response. Children sometimes worked individually while

seated in their groups or when working at home but for the most part they worked collaboratively (see Galton & Williamson, 1992).

4.1.4 Individualisation

Individualisation is common within both L1- and ESL-reading, but still rare within EFL-classrooms, where the main activity involves texts from a language text book with everyone reading the same text and, in some cases, the same novels (as in Rönqvist & Sell, 1994, 1995; Rönqvist, 2002). This is, in part, caused by the difficulty of obtaining a varied selection of texts. However, the use of a single text is also a deliberate choice on the part of the teacher, because it enables whole-class discussion and sharing of thoughts on one text, and it also enables a more teacher-led approach to discussions. In the process, it also involves less planning for the teacher. My previous experience of reading with *young* EFL-learners indicated, however, that reading interests, and levels of English proficiency were so varied that using only one text risked frustrating the weakest readers and boring the strongest. Therefore, when planning the present project, I aimed to individualise reading, both as regards materials and actual teaching, as we saw in Chapter 3.

The six optional books from which the children chose two compulsory ones have already been discussed in section 1.5.2. Individualisation extended to reading support for weaker readers. Gersten & Jiménez (1994) note that many L1 instructional practices for students at risk can be modified for use with ESL-pupils. Some ESL/EFL-writers also offer practical suggestions of ways of helping slow or poor readers. Moore & Wade (1995/1997), Samway and Whang (1996), Day and Bamford (1998), and Swarbrick (1998), for instance, suggest that inexperienced readers or students with special needs be given the opportunity to read together with a friend, read with an adult, read shorter and less complex books, and listen to books read on tape. In the current project, those needing extra support were offered tape recordings of the stories read by British English native speakers. In practice, however, only a few children borrowed a story tape. As already described in Chapter 3 (see also Sell, 2000b), I had planned to help the children find suitable reading strategies, and had devised tasks and opportunities for collaboration in their reading. As the project evolved, however, the extent of individualization broadened, as different groups were given different types of tasks, as we will see below.

In addition, there was a selection of supplementary multicultural books for those who had completed their tasks quickly or who wished to engage in reading over and above requirement. These books included picture books and novels on a variety of different themes, at varying levels of linguistic difficulty, by a range of popular authors of multicultural texts, and some information books on ethnic and religious minority groups in Britain. Reading support from the teacher was not provided for extra reading

material. Several children, including weaker readers, chose to read additional books. Children varied, however, in their interest and ability to read additional texts. Lotta, a proficient reader, was able to read demanding books without difficulty. She liked thrillers, and wanted the book to be long so that it ‘wouldn’t finish when you’ve just got started’. It was therefore important to have enough books to feed her reading appetite. Nils and Melker, in contrast, although good readers, did not want extra reading. And some weaker readers, such as Katja, Annika, Susanne, and Mikaela were eager to borrow more books but experienced difficulty when attempting to read without reading support from the teacher.

4.2 A TEACHING PERSPECTIVE ON DISCUSSIONS

Helping the children manage discussions without my presence was a challenge in the early stages of the project. Various issues emerged, including the scaffolding of group discussions, types of questions about the texts, the use of reader response, and reading conferences with the teacher.

4.2.1 Scaffolding independent group discussion around texts

Because three books were being read simultaneously by different reading groups, whole-class discussions were impractical: I could not listen to all groups, or pose questions to children reading different books at the same time. I therefore needed to find other ways of scaffolding discussion which would allow independent work, as I moved from group to group. In the EFL-setting, evidence of group work in connection with literature is very scarce, although the work of a number of L1-writers offer support for this approach. Wienczek & O’Flahavan (1994), for instance, argue that it is perfectly feasible for (L1) students to work and discuss literature independently of the teacher. Similarly, Maybin (1991) found when investigating English L1 primary school children’s informal talk that the pupils were able to construct meanings collaboratively: although at first sight, the discussions might have seemed fragmentary, a number of themes were woven through their talk (see also Maybin & Moss, 1993). Some teachers focus on building interpretative communities within their classrooms (see Close, 1992; Spiegel, 1996), arguing that different readers will have both similar and different reactions to texts. Hall (2000a; 2000b), one of the few scholars to investigate group work in the language classroom, found that fostering a sense of community can help build a motivating learning environment.

There are some issues involved when expecting pupils to engage in independent group discussions. For example, Van der Meij (1993), and Wiencek & O’Flahavan (1994) suggest that explicit instruction is necessary to help pupils generate questions. Similarly, in a study of small-group work with EFL-students at college level, Foster (1998) questioned whether meaning-making had actually taken place, and drew attention to the large variety in participation between the students. And Jacob (1999) found that cooperative learning did not reach its full potential for SL learners. Galton & Williamson (1992), too, highlight various complexities involved in collaborative work. Writers such as Jewell & Pratt (1999), Reid & Bentley (1996), Windschitl (1999), and Wray (1994) argue that pupils need models of how to respond to fiction, opportunities to explore responses, and training, in order to function both independently and collaboratively.

As the present project was based on children sharing views in groups, scaffolding from the teacher was required. An important concept which underpins teachers’ scaffolding is the *Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)*, first defined by Lev S. Vygotsky (1978) as the ‘distance between the actual development 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’ (p. 86). Thus children have the potential to perform above their own *actual* level of development, when appropriate scaffolding is provided. Vygotsky (1978) also emphasized the importance of *dialogue*, and the different roles that language can play in mediating cognitive growth. He viewed learning as a highly social process, and emphasized the human cognition which enables us to share our understandings with other human beings. Sharing understandings was encouraged in all reading groups in the present project. Further, constructivism has often focussed on small-group work, collaborative work with texts, and social aspects of learning. Strategies in the constructivist classroom include scaffolding, modelling, coaching, guiding, and advising (see Spivey, 1997; Windschitl, 1999). Because activities of this kind, described below, were present in my classroom, my teaching can to some extent be described also as social constructivist.

In my classroom, there was initially very little spontaneous group discussion of the books and it was therefore necessary to spend time helping children get discussions going, and introducing them to new ways of working with texts. We discussed questioning and prediction strategies, and I modelled various types of questions. In whole class discussions, I modelled ways of discussing texts. In reading conferences I acted as chair, modelling what a chair person can do. I then introduced the roles of ‘chair person’ to lead discussions, and ‘group secretary’ to take notes of decisions made in the group (see below).

Various measures were taken to create a safe atmosphere for discussion. The children were encouraged to express their views and we talked about respecting other people's points of view. They could use English and Swedish (see section 4.4.5). Trust was important: teachers need to trust students, students need to trust teachers, each other, and themselves, to assume responsibility for their discussions of literature (see Close, 1992; Jewell & Pratt, 1999; Spiegel, 1996). The children were entrusted to do tasks which I had set, and to discuss their reading (see Cohen, 1994). Video recordings reveal what occurred in my absence.

Another important focus was the need to build on the comments or topics raised by peers, because when someone *did* express their view, there was often no response from the others. We therefore talked about how to acknowledge another person's contribution and take discussions further (see Spiegel, 1996) with expressions such as: 'I agree', or 'I don't really agree, because...', or 'Yes, that's a good idea but have you thought about...'. The children were given examples of expressions which can be used in English, and we practised commenting on what other people had said.

Children were also encouraged to pose and answer questions (see Close, 1992; Jewell & Pratt, 1999). They were told that they were always welcome to respond freely, openly, and spontaneously to texts in both their reading diaries and in discussions, but that in the absence of their own ideas they could refer to handouts with examples of questions and suitable vocabulary (see appendices 4.2.1.A, 4.2.1.B, and 4.2.1.C). Questions were given in both English and Swedish.

Various approaches were used to help children prepare what they wanted to say. They could talk to the person sitting next to them before addressing the whole reading group, or to their own group before saying something to the whole class. Sometimes, they prepared questions as part of their homework, again allowing them to prepare their thoughts before sharing them. At other times, questions were made up and answered in groups in lesson time.

Discussion Sheets which developed during the project offered important scaffolding. These resemble what Cohen (1994) terms 'activity cards'. They were based on the current chapter in the novel and were handed to the chairperson in each group at the beginning of the lesson. Instructions such as 'share your views', 'ask each other questions', and 'comment on what other people have said', acted as a catalyst for discussion. The topics and tasks varied according to the book and the needs of the group (see Appendix 4.2.1.D). In groups B, D and F, for example, much of the discussion time centred on helping children understand significant vocabulary or events in the chapter, whereas in groups A, C, G and H there was a stronger focus on encouraging the children to express their ideas and reactions. The chair person read out a topic, gave others in the group turns to talk, rounded off the discussion, and made sure

that they continued with the following task or question. In summary, the Discussion Sheets asked children to do the following kinds of things in their groups:

- discuss homework, and other issues relevant to the group or novel
- share vocabulary which they had picked out or worked around at home
- do post-reading tasks around the chapter
- share thoughts, responses, and ideas around the text
- share understandings and misunderstandings
- answer the teacher's questions on the chapter
- re-tell events of the story
- pose questions to each other
- dramatise parts of the chapter
- discuss characters, events, sociocultural or cultural aspects
- do written tasks on the chapter
- share story-predictions for the next chapter
- do pre-reading vocabulary tasks for the next chapter
- read the next chapter aloud to each other

The Discussion Sheets developed during the course of the project, and teaching became increasingly individualized (see section 4.1.4).

4.2.2 Questions

Approaches to questioning emerged as important in several classroom activities: in discussions with the teacher, in children's independent discussions, and in writing. According to writers such as Benton & Fox (1985), Chambers (1993), and Rosenblatt (1978, 2002), literature needs to be read in an atmosphere where it can be debated, making it essential to move away from asking questions which 'test' children's reading, to ones which invite exploration.

Questions posed in the present project were sensitive to the children's levels of language proficiency and included both yes/no questions and how/why questions which allow for more expression (see Nuttall, 1982). Other types of questions were also used. Several writers make a distinction between questions which ask for literal meanings, and questions which require pupils to read between the lines. Questions inevitably vary according to whether *reading comprehension* or *reader response* is the aim. Questions that focus on language or lower-level cognitive skills help build literal comprehension of texts, whereas questions that focus on analysis, synthesis or evaluation are less text bound, and demand higher-level comprehension skills (Aebersold & Field, 1997). In Carter & Long's (1991) terms, 'low-order' questions relate to factual information and literal meanings, while 'high-order' questions relate to learners' responses of a more

interpretative nature. Nuttall (1982) identifies questions of literal comprehension, questions involving reorganization and reinterpretation, questions of inference, questions of evaluation, and questions of personal response. Van der Meij (1993) identifies text-explicit questions (the answer is explicitly mentioned in the text), text-implicit questions (that require inferencing), opinions, and experiential questions. In this project, both literal level (lower level) and inferential (higher level) questions were used, and both reading comprehension and personal interpretation were emphasized.

Another distinction has been made between closed and open-ended questions. Closed questions require answers that can be right or wrong, whereas open questions are amendable to personal views and interpretations. Many writers believe that questions need to be open-ended in order for pupils to make the text their own (see Carter & Long 1991; Collie & Slater, 1987). Both closed and open-ended questions were used in this project. Open-ended questions included the following: ‘What was going through your mind while you were reading?’ ‘How did you feel when reading this?’ ‘What type of book did you think it would be?’ (see, for example, Soderman, Gregory & O’Neill 1999; Reid & Bentley, 1996). Finally, Benton & Fox (1985) recommend questioning as a means of developing (L1) students’ skills of picturing, anticipating or retrospectively, interacting, and evaluating: ‘What do you think will happen next and why?’ ‘How do you think it will all end?’ Questions of this kind were also encouraged in the present project, as were questions involving judgements about characters and their roles in relation to specific events (see also Wells, 1991).

This project was focused on creating a positive environment for book discussions, reminiscent of the Tell-me approach (Chambers, 1993), which builds on ordinary conversational mode and does not assume a right answer. A central assumption behind this approach is that participants discover more about the text than they would have on their own, and that children are able to be critics, since they know a lot about the world around them. The Tell-me approach encourages pupils to share enthusiasms, puzzles, and connections (see Chambers, 1993: 16-20), through a range of questions (p. 83-92). In the present project, however, there was more flexibility in questioning, and instead of teacher-led whole-class discussion, the groups were working independently for most of the time. Thus, although some ideas from this approach were used in my teaching, I did not follow the approach as such.

In summary, a combination of different kinds of questions was used during the present project, in a variety of ways. They could be:

- focused on language, content, or both
- yes/no or how/why questions
- literal-level or inferential questions
- closed or open questions
- focused on reading comprehension or on reader response

Further, questions were asked by the teacher and by other pupils; answered individually, in pairs, in groups, and as a whole class; done as homework and in class; and they were answered orally and in writing.

My initial plan was to gradually hand over the responsibility for posing questions and responding to the children. The teacher's role would then become that of a facilitator with the students setting the agenda for discussions. What in practice occurred during the project will be discussed in sections 4.3. and 4.4.

4.2.3 Reader response

As we saw in 3.1.5, reader response was encouraged in this project, both in group work and in the children's writing. Reader response, which originates in the field of literary studies, emphasises the active role of the reader in creating meaning. Meaning, Rosenblatt (1978, 2002) argues, is located in the interaction or transaction between the text and the reader. The text triggers different responses in different readers, as do features such as grammar, the point of departure, and spatial and temporal frames of reference. The meaning which a reader makes might not be exactly the same as that initially expressed by the writer, and may also differ from that of other readers with different backgrounds, beliefs, and assumptions.²⁵ Thus it is possible to interpret a given text in more than one way.

Many meaning-centred approaches to literacy have acknowledged the importance of pupils' personal responses to texts (see Benton & Fox, 1985; Lehr, 1991; Lehr & Thompson, 2000; Maybin, 1991; Maybin & Moss, 1993; Meek, 1988). In the classroom situation, reader response allows pupils to communicate in a more open-ended way, moving them away from 'right/wrong' answers. Important aims include increasing student awareness of involvement with the text, and providing authentic opportunities to verbalise thoughts and hear different voices. The abstract becomes more concrete, as the literary experiences are related to personal life. The teacher should not impose his or her own interpretation, though interpretations need to be plausible (see Chambers, 1993; Rosenblatt, 1987, 2002).²⁶

Cooper (2000: 297) distinguishes between *personal* and *creative* responses. Personal responses involve information about what the students thought or felt about what they read. Creative responses can involve art, music, and drama, through which readings have been further built on in creative ways (see also Benton & Fox, 1985; Trousdale & Harris, 1993). In an L1 context, Jewell & Pratt (1999) noted a variety of positive

²⁵ This is further discussed in 5.2.1.

²⁶ This is further discussed in later chapters (see 5.2.1, 6.2.1, 6.2.3, 8.1, 8.2)

outcomes for a reader response approach with younger children, including a greater degree of inferential thinking, greater use of supporting evidence, and an overall increase in student motivation. McGinley, Kamberelis, Mahoney, Madigan, Rybiki & Oliver (1997) found that when children responded to literature, they gained an understanding of both the conceptual content of stories, and they were helped to understand themselves, others, and the world around them.

Reader response criticism in educational contexts originally related to older L1-readers. Evidence of reader response in relation to *young EFL*-readers is very scarce. Suggestions for ESL/EFL-settings (see Swarbrick, 1990;1998) are often based on examples from the L1-setting. Day and Bamford (1998) suggest ways for ESL-students to respond to literature: through answering questions generated by the teacher or other pupils, writing summaries, writing reaction reports, writing book reviews, and giving oral reports which are planned in advance. In the present project, attention was directed towards helping the children respond to texts. Responses were:

- oral and written
 - oral discussions in groups (reading conferences, independent group work, interviews)
 - written responses (in reading diaries and written tasks on the texts)
- real time and retrospective
 - real time in during-reading tasks, and in spontaneous reactions to texts whilst reading in groups
 - retrospective after reading each chapter (reading diaries and tasks around the text, reading conferences and group discussions)
 - retrospective after reading the whole book (essays after finishing the book, interviews)
- private and public
 - private in reading diaries, essays, and some tasks
 - public responses in group discussions, reading conferences and interviews
- spontaneous and triggered/scaffolded response²⁷
 - more spontaneous in discussions and reading diaries
 - more triggered/scaffolded in relation to questions from the teacher or other pupils, and in relation to Discussion Sheets and tasks around the texts

The contents of children's actual responses – what they said about the books – are discussed in Chapters 5-7.

²⁷ See also 5.2.2

4.2.4 Reading conferences with the teacher

Reading conferences offered a chance for me to talk with individual groups. I used them to speak to the children about what they had read, including any difficulties that they had experienced. We clarified meanings, and focused both on linguistic and content issues, through story re-tellings, reader response questions, and discussions of new vocabulary – issues similar to those mentioned in relation to ‘Discussion Sheets’ (see 2.2.2 & 4.2.1).

I was the chair person in reading conferences, posing questions, affirming, raising topics and keeping discussions going. I checked if everyone had understood, asked how they had gone about finding meanings, and how they had looked up words, and also gave hints if no-one could guess meanings of words, confirming or disconfirming students’ suggestions (see Boyd & Maloof, 2000). In reading conferences with *weaker* groups much time was spent discussing difficult vocabulary and things which the children had not understood.

In the very early discussions in all groups, I tended to pose closed questions, sometimes even yes/no questions, because open questions often resulted in few replies, as we can see in the following example from a proficient group reading *Operation Gadgetman*:

- T: Do you have any thoughts about what might happen in the next chapter?
Nils: yeah
T: Nils?
Nils: hmm, something
T: Do you have any ideas?
Nils: *(shakes his head, shrugs his shoulders = no)*
- T: No? Melker, do you have any ideas?
Melker: About what's going to happen next?
T: yeah? What what do you think?
Melker: It's like, hmmm..... *(can't be heard from tape)*
T: Would you like to speak up please
because I can't hear you over here
when everybody is talking *(other groups were discussing in the background)*
- Melker: Ok, well what I think will happen is that... Gadgetman will
come back. He'll se... He'll probably send another letter, like
to say he won't come back like in a week or so.
- T: Hmm, Does Barbara have any ideas?
Barbara: *(shakes her head = no)*
T: Does Lotta have any ideas?
Lotta: *(shakes her head = no)*

Trans. 2: Reading conference, group C, phase I (Operation Gadgetman)

The children were clearly not used to this way of working. Early discussions with another proficient group, group A, and also with weaker groups, revealed similar patterns.

As the project progressed and the children became more talkative, I tried gradually to pose more open questions which would allow the children to raise issues of interest, and express their views. In the following example a few lessons later in the project, the children from groups A & C had no problem answering a more open question:

- T: Ehmm...Did you at any point when you read this chapter feel that you would have done something different to what Beans did?
- Nils: Yes
- Lars: yes
- Nils: yes, yes
- Melker: yes
- T: Now we've got several people here....eehmm..
I want you all to say what you think, so if we start with Lotta
- Lotta: *(...can't hear from the tape)*
- T: Okay, thank you, and Melker?
- Melker: I would have taken the finger prints to the police to see if they could match anybody up with them
- T: So, you've got pretty similar opinions?
- Melker: hmmm. *(yes)*
- T: Okay, and Nils?
- Nils: Nå, nå, *(Well, well)* I would go to the police after they ...see her father in the car with the other car with Lucas and the other guy. They know the Lucas' name and where he lives and everything
- T: So, you agree with.... *[the others]*?
- Nils: yes
- T: Okay, and Lars?
- Lars: Hej, där när den där Lucas kom efter dem så sku jag ha slått honom på käften
'Hey, there when that Lucas came I would have punched him in the face'
- T: Vad sku du ha gjort?
'What would you have done?'
- Lars: Slått honom på käften
'Punched him in the face.'
- T: Slått honom på käften?!
- Lars: *(laughs)*...ja, jag sku ha
'Yes, I would have'
- T: Do you think that if you were Beans...
- Lars: jā
'yes'
- T: ...you would be able to do this?
- Lars: ja, jā, hon är så stor

'Yes, yes, she's so big'

- Casper: yes, if she... would be very angry
- Lars: så sku jag ha klätt ut henne i mig i henne
(...I would have dressed myself up as...)
- Casper: Om hon skulle ha varit jätte-arg, säkert!
'If she had been very angry, surely!'
- T: hmmm, and Casper, did you have something you wanted to say?
- Casper: jä, hon sku int ha borda springa efter bilen
'Yes, she shouldn't have run after the car'
- T: you think... it was stupid of her to run after the car?
- Casmir: ja 'yes'
- T: Okay, and Melker?
- Melker: I would have copied down the licence plate
- T: Good point. Did anybody else think of that?

***Trans. 3: Open-ended discussion during reading conference, groups A & C, phase I
(Operation Gadgetman)***

This time, the children were more comfortable about expressing themselves. Yet although children in all groups became more verbal as the project progressed, they nonetheless continued to require a great deal of prompting. Boyd & Maloof (2000) found, similarly, that the role of the teacher was crucial for encouraging student talk, and McCormick & Donato (2000) found in text-based discussion among university ESL-students that the teacher's questions aided the students' reading comprehension.

The same pattern can be seen in *story re-tellings* with the teacher: a high level of teacher involvement was required in the beginning of the project. Children in all groups needed to be prompted, and encouraged to take turns, listen to each other, and express their views. In the weakest groups, story re-tellings were often fragmented and incoherent. On one occasion in group B, because of the children's inability to recall what had happened in the text, we finally resorted to looking at the text, reading extracts together, and discussing what the children had read. At the time, I interpreted the failed attempts as a memory-problem, a lack of understanding of the text, and unfamiliarity with this way of working. I subsequently instructed the children to flick through the chapter before each lesson – especially if they had read it some time before – so that they would remember what the chapter was about. Later story re-tellings were more successful in this group, and the same children were able to respond more coherently.

A few weeks later into the project, other issues were visible in story re-tellings, particularly in the more proficient groups: members of groups A & C were eager to have their turn. In these groups, in fact, there were sometimes situations in which

someone took such a long turn that others felt that there was nothing left for them to say. I started to encourage the children to make just a few short points and then to hand over the turn to the next person, as in the following example:

- Melker: ...ehmm cause that would have given a way that they [Beans, Ann and Louisa] knew about kidnapping and stuff so that they were on to them [the kidnapers]
- T: thank you, just a little bit. Next?
- Nils: yes, and yes yes yes yes and, they...then somebody I can't remember if it was Ann or Louisa...eh.... went after Lucas and...where he was going and Beans and which one of them were there stay out of the building society
- T: Thank you
- Nils: eh
- T: shall we let somebody else continue?
- Casper: Ehhh...ehh....eh.. it was Ann who go to the follow Lucas and eh....Louisa vad hon nu hett..
... *'Louisa, whatever her name was'*
- T: Louisa
- Casper: ..did go and knock the front door but the building society
- T: Thank you. Lars
- Lars: Nå [*Well*], Ann knew that is was the same guy.....
- Nils: Hej, du behöver inte läsa
'Hey, you don't need to read...' (Nils is telling Lars not to look in the novel)
- Lars: ...who was involved with...ehm det här [*ehm*] Beans's father kidnapped... alltså [*that is*]. Den här... den här mannen som hon hade sett tidigare så var hon säker på att den var det som var med och kidnappade den där pappan, alltså den där Beans pappa
(Lars switches to Swedish when he cannot explain what he wants in English (see 4.4.5). He says that Beans was sure that this man whom she had seen before was the one to take part in her father's kidnapping)

Trans. 4: Story re-telling in proficient groups, later in phase I (Operation Gadgetman)

In the extensive discussion which follows, the children eagerly re-tell the story. In later story re-tellings when children were handing over turns more frequently, I stopped interrupting the re-tellings.

The eagerness to retell the story was by no means an isolated example. Children in less proficient groups were also keen. In a joint reading conference with groups E & I, phase II, for instance, some children were particularly eager to re-tell what had happened, though mostly in Swedish:

- Lars: Det är en flicka som bor på daghem [barnhem], liksom mamman kunde int sköta om henne så, hon har gått på daghem, och en dag så har en man fru och en man har sett, de har varit gifta fem år och de har försökt få barn med de har inte fått, så vad heter det så ser dom en annons i tidningen om den där flickan, och hon heter då Jasmine.
(There is a girl, who lives in a children's home because her mother could not look after her. One day a wife and husband who have been married for 5 years and have not succeeded in having a child of their own, see an advertisement in the paper about this girl. Her name is Jasmine.)
- T: hmm
(yes)
- Lars: Och sen vad heter det så så får dom vad heter det nu och titta på henne vad heter det nu och så säger dom att dom har väntat jätte-länge på att få se henne.
(And then...ehm... the husband and wife go...ehm... to see her [Jasmine]...ehm.. and they tell her that they have waited long to meet her.)
- T: Okay, thank you. Who would like to continue? Felix?
- Felix: Jag kommer inte ihåg
'I can't remember.'
- T: Ni behöver inte berätta i detalj, bara ungefär vad det handlar om
'You don't need to say in exact detail, you only need to know what the story was about.'
- Mikaela: Jag kan berätta
'I'd like to tell you.'
- Felix: och sen vad heter det nu så hon fick väl komma dit och liksom testa och bo där hemma hos dom och men så visade dom ett fotoalbum av den här hunden, jag kommer inte ihåg vad den hette. Men hon ville liksom leka med den men hon kunde inte.
(and then...ehm... she [Jasmine] was given the chance to try staying with Bob and Lena. And but then they showed her a photo-album of their dog, I can't remember what it was called. But she [Jasmine] wanted to play with the dog, but she couldn't.)
- Mikaela: Och sen...sen... fick hon [Jasmine] ett foto på den [hunden] och sen en gång när dom [Bob & Lena] kom dit och se på henne, så då hade dom den där hunden med.
(and then she was given a photo of the dog, and once when Bob and Lena came to visit her, they brought the dog with them.)
- T: hmm, thank you. Mikaela
- Mikaela: Nå, sen blev hon dit [hos Lena och Bob för att bo] och...den här eller...

ok, sen så nå så fick hon en vän och det är Rachel
(Well, then she went there [to stay with Lena and Bob at their house] and then she found a friend and that's Rachel)

T: hmm
(yes)

Mikaela: och så ...eh...klädde dom [Jasmine & Rachel] på sig eller sådär och, ja nå...ja vad heter det... så något sådänt... sen så..dom... nå i alla fall så jag berättar int alla detaljer...men sen vad heter det nu så en dag när hon [Jasmine] gick dit till parken, lekparken så vad heter det var inte den där Rachel där så hon vänta hon där en tid och så gick hon hem. Och sen så...gick hon någon annan dag dit. Hon gick till den här Grandma och vad heter det fråga att om den här Rachel är hemma...och...

(and then they [Jasmine & Rachel] played dressing up, but I am not bothering about all the details. But then one day when Jasmine went to the park, playing field, Rachel wasn't there. So she waited for a while and then she went home. And then she went back another day. She went to Rachel's house and asked Rachel's Grandma if Rachel was home...and...)

Trans. 5: Story re-telling by groups E & I, phase II (My Name is Jasmine Grey)

The re-telling continues in this way. Children in all groups clearly became more eager and able to express themselves as the project progressed. The weakest readers had the least to tell, and their re-tellings continued to be short. In general, however, the teacher was talking less than in the beginning of the project, in all groups. The children were adding information to each other's statements and listening to each other. They also developed in their ability to re-construct the story collaboratively, building on what the previous person has said, as we will see below.

Some methodological issues emerged during conferences. In order to minimize interruptions, it was important, for instance, to make sure that the other groups in the class were working independently before I started a reading conference. Occasionally, domineering behaviour limited the contributions of other members of the group. I also found it important to respect the need of a few children to stay silent.

4.3 DEVELOPING IN INDEPENDENCE

Up until this point, discussion has focused on the teacher's role and pedagogical aspects of planning and scaffolding group work. However, my observations and video recordings also yield insights into children's developing independence, patterns of collaboration and interaction, and meaning making, and it is to these issues that I now turn.

Children's discussions in this project have not been analysed on the micro level, as would be the case in discourse analysis, conversational analysis, or within systemic-functional linguistics (as for example in Rampton, Roberts, Leung & Harris, 2002; Mori, 2002), since I have not been interested in studying features of language, pronunciation variants, or language proficiency (as in Stenström, 1994). Thus, detailed linguistic or interactional features have not been coded. Nor has speech been categorized according to speech acts (such as markers, starters, elicitations). Negotiations have not been broken down into small units, or quantified. Instead, the focus has been on aspects of group interaction on a larger scale. Features of the children's collaborations and interactions which were visible to the teacher's eye in lesson time have been further analysed on the basis of the video recordings. In addition, issues which emerged as important from video recordings have been studied. Analysis is thus grounded in observations and video recordings based on interaction between pupils in an authentic learning environment.

This section focuses on children's developing independence. Functioning together as a group (4.3.1) and discussing without the teacher (4.3.2) emerged as important aspects of independence.

4.3.1 Functioning as an independent group

Empirical evidence of independent group work in EFL-settings is scarce. The L1- and ESL-settings, in contrast, offer evidence of a wide range of issues in relation to cooperative and collaborative small-group work, and also in relation to literature discussions in groups (see for example Noll, 1994). Examples from the ESL setting include, for instance, Jacob's (1999) study of sequences of interaction in cooperative learning among elementary level SL learners, and Samway & Whang's (1996) discussion of literature study circles in multicultural classrooms. In Scandinavian schools, group work has been popular since the 1980s (Steensasen & Sletta, 1996).

During the early lessons of this project, children sometimes found it hard to focus; several asked questions about how they should be working, and wanted me to check what they were doing. Children in all groups needed help to begin with. However, relatively quickly they began to work independently, allowing me to focus my attention

where I judged help was most needed. There were differences in independence between both groups and individual children. For instance, the groups in which Markus was working needed a lot of help and encouragement, especially with vocabulary.

Children clearly became more independent as the project progressed, and I therefore intervened less often. Towards the end of the project, even Markus and Barbara, who normally needed the teacher's support and reassurance, were able to work more independently and make decisions for themselves. In the later stages, some children and groups worked so independently that I seldom needed to help them.

Different groups *managed to get started on tasks* differently. In most lessons, groups were able to take quick decisions about how to tackle a task. But in group D, freedom and flexibility sometimes caused confusion. On such occasions, time was spent on *metatalk*, discussing *who* should be doing *what*, and *what*, exactly they were supposed to do rather than actually engaging with the task in hand, as in the following example.

- Mikaela: Alltså skall jag nu skriva upp dem?
'So should I now write them down?'
- Katja: Alltså, du är en sekreterare i gruppen
'Well, you're a secretary to the group'
- Mikaela: Nå vad jag skall jag då skriva? Varför
är jag en sekreterare?
'So what, then, should I write? Why am I a secretary?'
- Katja: Du kan skriva några franska streck och
skriva vad vi har pratat om och vad vi har...
*(You can list what we've been talking about
and what we've...)*
- Mikaela: Nå, ni skall säga vad jag skall
skriva, annars är det ingen sekreterare. *(in a slightly agitated voice)*
*(Well, you should tell me what to write,
otherwise I'm not a secretary.)*

Trans. 6: Metatalk about what one should be doing, group D, phase I (Grandpa Chatterji)

In this lesson, Katja who was acting as chair, was trying to bring the others back on task but it required several attempts before they finally focused. It is notable, however, that although the children were not actively engaged in the task they had been set, they were nonetheless talking about the task rather than exchanging views, for instance, on last night's television programmes. Almasi, O'Flahavan & Arya (2001) also found more metatalk in less proficient groups; they propose that, while necessary and helpful in the beginning stages, too much metatalk interrupts the flow of content talk, making it difficult to sustain topics successfully. This was sometimes the case in group D. In group H, a proficient group, Casper, Lotta and Melker also had trouble getting started

on their task on one occasion when they had differing opinions about what they had been supposed to do for homework. More time was spent on this discussion than on the actual story re-telling. But on the whole, this type of group behaviour was rare.

Staying on task was another important aspect when working without the teacher. The groups quickly got used to working with Discussion Sheets (see 4.2.1) and stayed on task most of the time, as far as I could see. This was confirmed by video recordings. There were, however, differences between groups. Some groups, such as group A, B and H stayed on task with few interruptions and off-target discussions. In group D, the girls sometimes became disorientated, with Annika, the weakest one, sometimes initiating parallel discussions about out-of school issues. I noticed this behaviour only when viewing tape recordings. The general trend, however, was that groups were working well.

The open or closed nature of tasks seemed to affect work in some groups. Although the tasks were structured, they often allowed for personal interpretation and decision-making within the group (see Cohen, 1994; Nystrand, Gamoran & Heck, 1993). In groups D and F, time was spent agreeing on how things should be done. In other groups, however, the same instructions caused no problems at all, and children quickly decided on how they should precede. Some groups *turned to me for help* if there was confusion about how to go about a task. It seems, then, that different groups needed different details and levels of instruction.

The level of engagement/involvement in tasks, especially oral tasks, such as discussions and drama activities, varied between groups. For instance, most groups seemed to enjoy drama activities and took them seriously, but some children had trouble staying in role. In the following transcript from group G with Nils as Chester Smith and Tomas as Robbie (reading *Troublemakers*), the discussion between the characters was so short that it is questionable whether the pupils “got into” the mind of the character and “felt” what it might have been like to be in that situation (see also Chapters 5 and 6):

Nils (Chester): Du ska prata om någöt, du har sparkat mig hit i huvu
‘You should say something, you’ve kicked me here in the head!’

Tomas (Robbie): I’m sorry man, I didn’t mean to
Nils: Yeh, right, yes sure, go home!
Tomas: Okay!
Nils: And don’t talk to anybody that I was here. I’m not Chester Smith.
Tomas: no, no
Nils: Go!
Tomas: Ok, hej då! *‘Okay, good bye!’*
Nils: Hej då *‘Bye!’*
Nils: Så var det på riktigt!
‘That’s how it really happened!’

Trans. 7: Drama activity with little engagement, group G, phase I (Troublemakers)

Other groups were more engaged and took drama tasks seriously. Unfortunately, there are only a few samples of drama activity in the data.

Some groups took discussions particularly seriously and showed serious engagement. Felix and Casper, for example, were eager to re-tell the events of the story without requiring the presence of the teacher:

- Melker: Well, it began with them, with detective Warner and and ehmm...
Felix: Seargant Packman?
Melker: yeah, kom (*came*) sen började sergeant Packman [Paxman] trumma med fingrarna och sen visste de [flickorna] att det var Lucas, OK
(Yes, [they] came, and then sergeant Paxman began to drum with his fingers and then they [the girls] knew that it [he] was Lucas. Okay)
- Kasimir: Eller att de int visste, eller märkte
'Or that they didn't know, or noticed'
- Melker: OK *(okay)*
- Lotta: Nåå, hon [Beans] gav dem hon gav dem [männen]ett glas apelsin-juice att sådär att dom [flickorna] sku få fingeravtrycken på glasena. Åå, ja,Ok.
(Well, she [Beans] gave them [the men] a glass of orange juice so that they [the girls] would get fingerprints on the glasses. Oh, and, okey)
- Kasimir: Å, sen han [hon, Ann] tänkte ta i glaset som vanligt, men Beans ropade att 'don't you dare touch that glass,' emm.. och hennes hand frös nästan när hon sku ta i glaset. Eller just då när hon sku ta i glaset
(And then he [she, Ann] was about to touch the glass, but Beans shouted 'don't your dare touch that glass', ehmm... and her [Ann's] hand froze when she was about to touch the glass)
- Felix: ehmm. ...Sen sa hon [Beans] att att om dom kan att att hon ska söka de där papprena ti det där ti den där 'induction oscillator' så att dom [männen, Detective Warner och Sergeant Paxman] kan komma och hämta [pappren] på kvällen och sen och sen sa hon [Beans] att det är bättre att ni [männen] far nu men sen hade dom och sen när dom [flickorna] börja prata om det där så sen [när männen avlägsnat sig] var han [Detective Warner] i dörren ännu och sen börja han [de, männen] jaga dom [flickorna].
(Then Beans said that they would try to find the blueprints for the Induction Oscillator, if they [Detective Warner and Sergeant Paxman] could come back and get them in the evening. So it would be best if they [the men] left now. And [after the men had left] when they [the girls] started to talk about those things, it

turned out that he [Detective Warner] had been listening in the doorway and then started to chase them [the girls].)

- Melker: [Männerna hade lyssnat] i fönstret egentligen
(The men had been listening through the window, actually.)
- Felix: nå, ja... *pause*...något sånt
(Well yes, something like that)
- Melker: ja 'yes'
- Felix: Och sen började han [Julian Warner] jaga dem
'And then he [Julian Warner] started to chase them'
- Melker: ja, nä, sen börja han skrika, come back here, och sen...
'Yes, no, then he [Julian Warner] started to shout: come back here! and then...'
- Kasimir: Stop right there!
- Melker: ja, och sen, de [männerna] kunde inte komma in och sen söndra de fönstret och och sen kom sergeant Packman in och sen ehm öppnade de dörren, bara en liten stund och sen stack han ut handen och foten men sen stampade Louisa på foten och slog ner fingrarna och sen slä-stängde de dörren.
(yes, and then, they [the men] couldn't get in and then they broke the window, and then sergeant Paxman came in and opened the door, just for a little while, and he stuck his arm out and his leg, but Louisa stamped on his foot and hit his fingers, and then they [the girls] shut the door.)
- Kasimir: Nu är det du! *(to Lotta)*
'Now it's your turn!' (to Lotta)

Trans. 8: Group A displaying engagement in story re-telling, phase I (Operation Gadgetman)

The extensive story re-telling continues in this way. In comparison with the initial story re-tellings, both with and without the presence of the teacher, this type of story re-telling clearly shows that children became used to this way of working, and that they even without the teacher's intervention managed to sustain a focussed discussion about the text.

The groups also differed in the *amount of work* completed in a lesson. Groups B and F were quick to get started, went through tasks quickly, which sometimes resulted in shallow interpretations and short discussions with few turns on each topic. Others had more thorough discussions and took more time. There were also differences in the *amount of scaffolding* needed. The more proficient groups wanted to focus on reading

and to have fewer tasks, whereas some weaker groups needed more pre- and post-reading vocabulary support, and spent more time on teacher-prepared tasks.

4.3.2 Discussions with no teacher present

The effect of the teacher on children's talk has received some attention in the L1-literature. Galton & Williamson (1992), for instance, discuss ways in which teacher encouragement of pupils to work independently and assume responsibility affects the quality of work in the group. Haworth (1999) found that some Year 3 L1 children were not confident in expressing their personal taste and judgement because they were highly teacher-dependent. In a similar vein, Haworth (2001) shows how a seven-year-old boy made a shift towards full participation in interactions, as he became less dependent on the teacher's voice. Although these results would indicate that group work can be beneficial to students, we should not, however, automatically assume that this is the case, especially in FL-classrooms.

My own efforts to support the children's discussions (see 4.2.1) assumed considerable importance within the project. From the very beginning, it was clear that the children needed questions, guidance, and prompting, because they did not spontaneously raise topics for discussion. They were, however, generally able to answer concrete questions when asked directly.

As we saw in 4.2, time was spent introducing reader response-type questions, and *practising ways of posing and answering questions*. The following example demonstrates one of group C's early efforts to take turns posing questions to each other using scaffolding (teacher's examples of questions that one can ask on texts):

Lotta: What would you like to ask or tell the author about this chapter?
Nils: nothing
Melker: It was ahhh...funny
Nils: It was a very scary chapter
Melker: What did you like or did...did you not like in this chapter?
Nils: I liked one thing in this chapter. I liked the dad's letter. It was so funny

Trans. 9: Initial efforts to pose questions to each other using scaffolding, group C, phase I (Operation Gadgetman)

A range of questioning techniques (see 4.2.2) provided scaffolding for the children, allowing them to express their opinions. As the project evolved, pupils started to pose their own questions, both open and closed, in Swedish and in English. Examples include: yes/no questions ('Was Mike over night at Scot?'); questions eliciting a literal comprehension of the text ('What did Mike hear during the night?'); inferential questions ('Why was Chester Smith there to watch them?'); character questions ('Who's Beans?'); questions about word meaning ('What's cellotape?'); questions about personal response to characters' actions ('Would you have done something

differently than what Beans did?'); reader/personal response questions ('Did the chapter remind you of something that has happened to you?'); and prediction questions ('What do you think Beans will do next?').

The children generally understood the questions posed by their peers, with the exception of some of the weakest readers. In situations where someone did not understand, other children explained, translated, repeated, or clarified:

Tomas: Was Mike over night at Scott['s]
Markus: va? 'What?'
Tomas: Was Mike over night?
Markus: night?
Tomas: over night
Markus: Nå....Alltså, frågade du: var Mike var över natt?
'Well....so, did you ask 'did Mike spend the night?''
Tomas: ja 'Yes, I did'
Markus: nå 'No, he didn't'
Tomas: int var han heller 'That's right!'

Trans. 10: Weaker group clarifying question, group B, phase I, (Seven Weird Days...)

Most of the children were comfortable posing and answering questions. Nils, however, sometimes openly dismissed other people's questions in the beginning.

The Discussion Sheets helped children to keep the book discussions going. Increasingly, pupils were able to discuss independently of the teacher, as we can see in the following example from a weak group:

Barbara: OK, 'how do you think Lucy is feeling now?'
'Are there any places in the text where we get to know Lucy...what Lucy is thinking or feeling?'
(reads from the Discussion Sheet)
Markus: hmm
Barbara: not so much, maybe some place,
OK, har du något att säga?
'Okay, do you have anything to say?'
Markus: no
Barbara: OK
Barbara: OK, 'How was Lucy feeling in her new school? Do you think she was afraid or uncertain. What feeling do you think you would have when starting a new school?'
(reads from the Discussion Sheet)
Barbara: I think she is scared. Eh...I would be scared, too.
OK... What du, då? 'What about you, then?'
Markus: Inte jag 'Not me'
Barbara: OK, eh... 'how is Rafaella feeling at the moment?'

‘How would you be feeling if you were her?’
(reads from the Discussion Sheet)

Barbara: Rafaella feels sad and I would feel sad...

**Trans. 11: Independent group discussion based on Discussion Sheet, group F
(Secret Friends), phase II**

Although their answers were very short and shallow in this example, they were nonetheless engaging independently with the text. Even Nils gradually began to cooperate as demonstrated in the following example where Cecilia, acting as the chair, posed questions, and instructed Nils to ‘think’ when he was not being serious. In fact, the chair person became an essential feature of the groups, as will be outlined in closer detail below.

Cecilia: ‘How did Robbie's trial go in Mr Pitt's class?’
(reads the following question on the Discussion Sheet)

Nils: Okay, its' very very bad....he okay, when he got the pass, his feet didn't move and he couldn't shot a goal and then....and then everybody was angry

Tomas: everybody laughed, uh-huh-huh

Cecilia: ‘What were you thinking when you read about what happened?’
(reads the following question)

Nils: hmmm....

Tomas: nothing

Nils: Int kommer jag ihåg
‘I can't remember’

Tomas: någo *‘something’*

Cecilia: think!
(Cecilia instructs Nils to be serious)

Nils: Nå, jag tänkte på någon som spelar fotboll
‘Well, I thought about someone playing football’

Tomas: hm
(yes)

Nils: eller sån där ful...liten sån där där skidi som spelar fotboll
(or some ugly little kid playing football)

Tomas: ja, miniskidi som spelar i nån nappulaliiga²⁸
(yes, some little kid in a football team for little ones)

²⁸ ‘nappulaliiga’ is a Finnish insertion. See section 4.4.5

Nils: fast han är säkert...fast det här är säkert sån häna som är på högstadiet, jag tror det i alla fall. Man vet inte. Han där är säkert på sjuan.. han där jassen...int vet jag
(yes, but he's...but these are in secondary school, at least I think so. One dosen't know, but this one is probably in year seven, that guy...I don't know)

Trans. 12: Group G discussing independently using Discussion Sheet, phase II (Troublemakers)

As time passed, the children became increasingly used to discussing independently and to posing and answering reader-response questions, and contributed more spontaneously to discussions. However, they still relied heavily on my prompts and questions. Even the most proficient groups still clearly needed discussion support. This pattern can be seen throughout the project, in all groups, both in reading conferences with the teacher (see 4.2.4), and in independent group work.

On the one hand, it is unrealistic to expect children to keep a conversation going without teacher support; on the other hand, it is important to recognise that teacher guidelines may sometimes hinder children's spontaneous discussion. The children in groups G and H, for instance, who mechanically made their way from one question to the next, might sometimes have been more profitably following their own spontaneous trains of thought. A balance between these two extremes was clearly needed. I encouraged children to ask each other questions. At the same time, they could always draw on my suggestions for discussions if they wished. There was evidence that the different groups did in fact find ways of balancing the need for scaffolding, and the need for freedom. In the second half of the project, some groups did not follow the Discussion Sheet strictly. Instead, they chose which questions to discuss, how long to spend on a given topic, and how to go about doing a task. Therefore, when two groups reading the same book were given the same Discussion Sheet, they worked in different ways, generating very different discussions.

So although teacher input was required to give focus and direction to discussions of all kinds throughout the project, there was a very obvious development during the course of the project, with children becoming noticeably more reflective and talkative. There were, however, differences between discussions in which I functioned as the chair, and discussions in which I was not present. The children's responses when working independently were shorter, more shallow, and less developed, though they were nonetheless able to express and develop their thoughts, and discuss their own reactions and understandings without the presence of the teacher.

4.4 COLLABORATION, INTERACTION AND MEANING-MAKING

Empirical research on *group interaction* among primary school EFL-pupils is scarce. One needs therefore to look at the L1- and SL- settings, keeping in mind that EFL-pupils are negotiating in a foreign language. Brewster (1991) notes that the success of group work depends on the types of tasks given by the teacher, on instructions, and on the students' ability to negotiate meaning. Language learners, she notes, need all the more support: she recommends that students be taught strategies within their mother tongue lessons, and that teachers collaborate on awareness-training within different school subjects. In EFL-settings, the work of Vygotsky (1978) on communication and children's active construction of meaning has been particularly influential. Vygotsky's ZPD (see 4.2.1) highlights the important role which learning in interaction with peers or grown-ups can play in the development of skills, a point fully recognized in many teaching approaches within EFL (see Hall, 2000a; 2000b). Hall & Verplaetse (2000) draw attention to the social constructivist nature of learning in the SL and FL classroom in a series of articles which demonstrate what a Vygotskian-inspired sociocultural perspective on language learning might look like in practice.

In ESL/EFL classrooms, language proficiency includes being able to contribute to conversations and understand others (Boyd & Maloof, 2000). If children are to use their meaning-making capacities, they need support, since discourse in a foreign language is more demanding than in an L1 (see Cummins, 1997; Cameron, 2001). Historically speaking, the development of communicative competence in the target language has been an important goal of many language teaching programmes (see Larsen-Freeman, 1986), especially within the 'communicative framework'. Communicative competence has been emphasised also within Finnish primary school EFL-teaching (see Utbildningsstyrelsen, 1994, 2004).

Communicative competence is in fact discussed by several writers both within the L1-domain (e.g. Bratt Paulston, 1992; Saville-Troike, 1982), and in relation to non-native speakers and SL/FL teaching (see Loveday, 1982). Writers such as Alptekin (2002), Chick (1996), Byram (1997b) and Young (1996) further use the notion of *intercultural communicative competence*,²⁹ which recognizes English as a world language: ESL/EFL-students need to become successful bilingual and intercultural individuals, capable of functioning both locally and internationally. When negotiating with others in the 'real world', pupils will need to have developed communicative competence, involving skills to negotiate with those who are different. Such skills, also emphasised within multicultural frameworks (see section 1.4), need to be practised in the classroom.

On a more concrete level, Bygate (1999) distinguishes communicative language teaching tasks from activities in which language is not used to communicate meaning.

²⁹ 'Intercultural communication' is discussed in section 6.1.

Cummins (1994) proposes that not much knowledge of the target language is required for communicating meaning, and that the teacher's role is to help ESL students gain confidence in their own abilities. Boyd & Maloof (2000) study ways in which the teacher can organize for discourse which fosters active student talk and promotes SL-learning. The teacher can thus structure teaching in ways which support the development of communicative competence. Sharing one's ideas promotes extended interaction, and thus also contributes to target language development (Hall, 2000b). These findings coincide with Bruner's (1990) proposition that (L1) children learn language through language *use*.

Studies of communication in *young EFL*-learners are, however, few and far between. Cameron (2001) makes the link between communication skills and children's social and cognitive growth. Younger and older language learners, she suggests, can be differentiated not only in their L2 language proficiency, but also in their ability to negotiate and communicate in general. In order for children to learn discourse skills, they need to have both an opportunity to participate in discourse and an ability to build knowledge from participation. The children in the present project were encouraged to listen to each other, respect what others had said, and to try to negotiate meanings together. As we have seen above, most interaction and communication between pupils occurred in small groups. Some scholars, in fact, draw attention to the role of *group work* within a communicative methodology. Brumfit (1984), for example, notes that work in small groups provides a greater intensity of involvement for each pupil than whole-class work, and that the setting is more natural, since the size resembles that of normal conversational groupings. Cooperation is also made easier than in whole class language teaching. Moreover, the anxiety of performing in front of the whole class can be avoided.

Certain patterns emerged as important in the present EFL-pupils' efforts to interact in groups. These involve general patterns of collaboration and negotiation (4.4.1), roles within the groups (4.4.2), the case of weaker readers (4.4.3), group strategies for meaning-making (4.4.4), and language use (4.4.5).

4.4.1 Patterns of collaboration and negotiation

To some extent, I was able to observe for myself how groups were negotiating in lesson time, but video recordings provided considerably greater detail. An important area in which the children improved was their ability to collaborate within the group. There were thus differences between the beginning and later stages of the project. In the beginning, children often worked independently instead of collaborating. Thus, when Markus wanted a word to be checked out in the dictionary, the children all turned to separate dictionaries instead of using one dictionary and thinking together. They were proceeding as 'working groups' instead of 'collaborative groups' (using Galton &

Williamson's, 1992, terminology). Although I had discussed the importance of collaboration with the whole class at the outset, this was a notion which needed reinforcement.

As the term progressed, my own observations and the video recordings, as well as comments from the children themselves, indicated that they were generally behaving in a more cooperative way. There was evidence of more sharing of responsibilities. In phase II, Barbara and Markus, for instance, shared some of the tasks – 'You look up this word, and I'll look up this word'. Group I was an exception to the general trend: Lars had objected to being placed with the girls, but also the girls in his group often wanted to work by themselves. Almasi, O'Flahavan & Arya (2001) found that students need to be taught how to resolve their interactional dilemmas, and the groups need to develop their own conventions for interacting with one another. Despite my efforts, however, this group often chose to work individually.

The nature of interaction changed over time, with the children both engaging more in each other's ideas and taking more turns as the project evolved. In the beginning, children shared their ideas as required but they seldom commented or built on each other's contributions. They thus 'shared' but did not negotiate or become involved in each other's work. One example concerns Felix, who shared the words he had chosen, explained in Swedish what he thought they meant, and then read out the sentences which he had written containing the words. No-one, however, commented on his words, sentences or understandings. This was a clear case of 'reporting' or 'sharing without engaging', and was typical of group work in the beginning.

Later, in contrast, there was more evidence of interaction and negotiation. I noted in several field diary entries that the children were interacting better as time passed. Video recordings confirmed these impressions. For example, on 10 October, the children in one of the more proficient groups were discussing the meaning of 'chanting':

(The children had been asked to discuss the meanings of words from the text.)

Nils:	OK, 'chanting'?	
Tomas:	Vad?	'What?'
Nils:	Int vet jag	'I don't know'
Tomas:	Vad för något, får jag se?	
		'What's that, can I have a look?'
Nils:	inte vet jag, inte vet jag	
		'I don't know, I don't know'
Tomas:	chanting...	
Nils:	hmm, just det	'Yes, exactly'
Tomas:	...vad är det för något?	
		'What is it?'

(I come up to the group and stand silently behind Cecilia, watching how they are doing. Cecilia is sitting smiling, while the boys are talking.)

Nils: Vi ser, vi ser på 32?
'Let's look, let's look at [page] 32'

Nils: chanting, chanting...

Tomas: chanting, chanting...

(They all look through their novels to find the word on page 32. Tomas finds the sentence containing the word, and reads out the sentence.)

Tomas: Här, hej: 'people were chanting things'
'Here, look: people were chanting things'

Nils: Var, var, var...? *'Where, where'...etc.*

Tomas: 'people were chanting things at him and...'

Nils: ja, chanting, kasta eller vad det nu sen är någo...
'Yes, chanting, throw, or whatever it might mean'

(Nils gives his first guess, the discussion then continues in this way.)

Trans. 13: Group G discussing the meaning of 'chanting', independent group work, phase II

Here, the children were listening to each other, working together, building on what the others had said, taking more turns. Later in the discussion, Tomas, Cecilia, and Nils all came up with suggestions and finally, with a little help from the teacher, reached an understanding of what the sentence containing the word might mean.

Group atmosphere varied between groups and lessons, and group composition emerged as important. Two weaker groups (B and F) were particularly admirable in their friendliness, respect, patience, and helpfulness towards each other. In group B, which clearly enjoyed group work and took tasks seriously, Tomas was a valuable help to Markus, always checking that Markus had understood:

Tomas: 'share the sentences that you wrote at home. How have you understood the words?' *(reads from the Discussion Sheet).*
Dom här ordena här, vi skall liksom.....
läsa dem, tror jag...
'These words here, we should, kind of...read them, I think'

Markus: Med fet stil?
'[The ones] in bold?'

Tomas: Ja, alltså, dom här meningarna. Förstod du Markus?
Du skall inte läsa dem för dig själv

'Yes, that is, these sentences. Did you understand, Markus? You shouldn't read them by/to yourself'

Trans. 14: Group B checking that Markus had understood, phase I

In another weaker group in phase II, group F, similarly, Barbara and Markus were collaborating to great effect, preceding together step by step, respecting each other. Some other groups (A, E, G and H) were also characterized by friendliness and by taking work particularly seriously.

Group atmosphere is also visible in the way in which pupils made suggestions on how to go about tasks. For example, in group C, Barbara and Nils sometimes came close to blows about the best way forward. The same sometimes happened in group D, as we saw above (see trans. 6). In other cases, group D agreed on how to work in a friendly way and were respectful of each other:

- Mikaela: Susanne, alltså vill du läsa högt din?
'Susanne, so would you like to read yours aloud?'
- Susanne: *(Shakes her head to indicate that she would not)*
- Mikaela: Annika vill du läsa själv eller vill du att nån annan läser?
'Annika, would you like to read [yours] yourself or would you like someone else to read [it for you]?''
- Susanne: Jag vill att nån annan läser
'I'd like someone else to read'
- Mikaela: OK, jag också
'Okay, me too!'

Trans. 15: Group D negotiating how to work, phase I

The atmosphere therefore varied both between groups and from one occasion to another.

Atmosphere and interaction also seemed to be related to *personal chemistry*. For example, Barbara clearly found it difficult when working with Nils in phase I, but got on well with Markus in phase II. Similarly, while Nils had difficulty with Barbara, he got along better with Cecilia and Tomas. Susanne and Lotta were more talkative in their second groups, whereas Mikaela, in contrast, seemed more comfortable and talkative in her first group (without Lars). For this reason, it is difficult to judge the extent to which the greater success of the second half of the project should be attributed to the fact that children were now more experienced at working in groups, or also to group dynamics.

The level of interaction was, however, not always an accurate predictor of the *depth or content of discussions*. For example, whereas group F (Barbara and Markus) were collaborating to great effect, preceding step by step together, respecting each other, helping each other, and having ‘natural’ dialogues (not steered by one of them acting as the chair person (see below)), they had few turns on each topic and said little about the texts. They were therefore very successful in terms of developing communicative competence, but not successful from the perspective of literary discussions. The same pattern can be seen in group B (Markus, Cecilia, Tomas). Other groups, however, not only functioned well but also tended to say more about the books. Talking turns varied between children in the same group. In groups A and F, talking time tended to be even whereas in some groups there were children who seldom spoke (Lotta in group C; Susanne in group E).

Some groups were silent on a few occasions, either because they had finished tasks or, as in the case of group A, because they were unsure about how they should be working. As the project progressed, however, silences of this kind decreased. I told the children that they should always call for me when they had finished their Discussion Sheets. On a few occasions, I wrote as the last point on the Sheet that the children should ‘tell Charlotta that you have finished’. A third source of silence occurred in some groups when the children were asked to pose questions to each other. Some children wanted to think carefully through their questions and write them down, which caused others to sit silently and wait for the discussion to begin. When questions were prepared at home, there was less silent time of this kind.

In most cases, my impressions as the teacher were confirmed by the video recordings. On a few points, however, the recordings showed a slightly different picture. Thus, at one point, I had thought that group D were working effectively on their tasks, whereas in actual fact, as has been discussed above, much time was spent on metatalk about how one should set about one’s work. In general, the children were acting in similar ways when I was present and when I was not. Nils, however, expressed serious interest in the text when I was present, but sometimes tried to rush discussions and dismiss questions when the group was working independently.

At the end of the project, several children mentioned that they had enjoyed working in groups. They commented, for instance, that it is easier to express oneself in groups of 3-4. Several children specifically mentioned having been helped by peers when they did not understand. Working with a chair person and with Discussion Sheets was also mentioned as pleasurable. Only Nils felt that there was too much group work and that he would have liked more individual written tasks.

In summary, children sometimes took turns asking questions and then answered without necessarily building on each other’s comments at the beginning of the project.

However, as time passed, they worked together as a group, collaborating more effectively, and sharing responsibility for finding meaning. There was evidence of development in their communicative competence, listening skills, collaborative skills, and their ability to get their message across.

4.4.2 Roles within the groups

Galton & Williamson (1992) found that the group behaviour of (L1 British English) children could be classified according to the roles which they played in discussion: leaders, active participants, willing followers, and saboteurs. Successful group interaction, they found, went through stages of orientation (stage setting), development, and conclusion. Children in the present project also took to some roles 'naturally', that is, without being assigned a position by the teacher. For example, Susanne, who often sat silently in group D, sometimes put in a word for someone who was being overlooked, or when she felt the need for order. Markus tried to help Barbara focus on some occasions, and interestingly, on other occasions, Barbara tried to get Nils to work seriously. Mikaela assumed the role of dictionary master in group D.

Other scholars, such as Close (1992) and Soderman, Gregory & O'Neill (1999: 160) propose assigning specific roles for group members, such as discussion director, literary passage master, connector, summarizer, and vocabulary enricher, that help children organize their work. In the present project, I assigned children two roles in order to help them become more active and independent in discussions. I introduced the role of secretary to take notes on decisions taken by the group, and of chair person, as we have seen above. The position of chair person proved popular, in general, with children keeping track of whose turn it was. In most cases, turn taking functioned well and the intervention from the chair significantly improved the groups' ability to converse, comment on each other's ideas, take turns, create dialogue, and stay on task. Other children generally respected the person who was in the chair, and acted according to his or her instructions.

Different patterns of chairing emerged in the reading groups. In some groups, I noticed later in the project that children were moving away from the strict 'roles' as recommended by the teacher, towards a more 'natural turn-taking' in discussions. Such was the case with Markus and Barbara, for example, with neither of them acting like a chair. Instead, they were both expressing themselves spontaneously. In group D, Mikaela, Annika and Katja contributed spontaneously to discussions, although the chair introduced topics and kept the discussion together. There were also groups that kept more strictly to 'roles' until the very end, with the chair person directing questions to the others and keeping the discussion going (groups E, G and H). Some groups thus reached a level of independence which allowed them to leave out the teacher's imposed roles, whereas in other groups, scaffolding was used throughout.

There were also *differences in the dominance of the chair person*. In group H, for instance, Melker steered the discussion without much spontaneous contribution from the others. At one point in the second half of the project, he did most of the talking and also tended to answer the questions himself! He also established that the others in his group did not know ‘his’ word – *faltered*. He instructed them to write this word in their notebook, going well beyond the normal expectations of what a chair should do. I sometimes needed to encourage others in his group to express themselves. This pattern of behaviour, however, was the exception rather than the rule, since in the other groups the chair person gave others talking turns.

4.4.3 The case of weaker readers

The different levels of ability in the same group were an issue on a few occasions. Since the children were choosing books of suitable levels of difficulty and were placed with others reading the same book, they were generally working with *peers of similar reading ability level*. However, in all groups, there were slightly stronger or weaker pupils. For most of the time, having children of slightly different levels of ability worked well. Van den Branden (2000) (in relation to reading in groups) and Stensaasen & Sletta (1996) (in relation to group work in general) note that both for higher and lower level pupils, group heterogeneity can be an asset. Further, Galton & Williamson (1992) find that (L1) groups function best when they are of mixed ability. In the present study, I needed to monitor a few situations closely to ensure that the weaker pupils were not overpowered by their more domineering peers. For example, I wondered at times whether Barbara was receiving the help that she needed in group C when working with Nils.

There are varying views as to whether children should show their weaknesses to others in the group. Brewster (1991), Bloor (1991), and Van den Branden (2000) suggest teaching students to share comprehension problems, so that unnecessary tension and misunderstandings can be avoided. Negotiation of meaning, they argue, can be particularly effective when learners signal their problems. In contrast, Foster (1998) notes that showing fellow students that one has not understood can sometimes be problematic: teaching students strategies to pretend that they understand allows them to grasp the meaning from the context later. In the present project, the children were actively encouraged to share problems and to help each other (see Cohen, 1994); I tried to foster an atmosphere in which it would be ‘natural’ to bring up comprehension problems.

In the weaker groups, children were usually supportive of those needing help. In these groups, the weakest pupils were not afraid to ask for help, or to show that they had not understood. This applied both when I was present, and when I was not. The following

example gives an indication as to the level of support offered in the weaker groups (see also trans. 14):

(Tomas has gone ahead with the following expression in a close task, and after having thought about it for himself, he reports what he thinks the expression means in Swedish)

Tomas: 'kommer du med med oss om du vill', så är det!...
'Would you like to come with us if you like', that's what it means!'...

(Markus and Cecilia read the English version of the expression)

Markus: 'You can hang out with us if you want'
Cecilia: ...'with us if you want'

Markus: Vad betyder det? *'What does it mean?'*

Cecilia: *(Cecilia explains in Danish, her L1)*

Tomas: ja *'yes' (Tomas confirms, agrees with Cecilia's explanation)*

Cecilia: *(Cecilia explains again in Danish, using other words)*

Tomas: hm *'yes' (Tomas confirm again)*

Markus: vara med oss? *(Markus checks his understanding, says 'be with us?' in Swedish, wants more confirmation)*

Tomas: ja *'yes' (Tomas confirms)*

Markus: Du kan va med oss?
(Markus checks his understanding again, wants even more confirmation, asks if the sentence means 'you can be with us')

Tomas: ja *'yes' (Tomas confirms)*

Trans. 16: Group B offering support to each other, phase I

Here the children were discussing, questioning, explaining, helping, asking for help. The same tendencies emerged in video recordings of Barbara and Markus later in the project. These findings provide further support for evidence from other language learning settings that even young learners are capable of intellectually rich interaction, and are able to help each other in the learning process (see Hall, 2000a). Thus it seemed that children in most cases were supportive of each other, particularly in the generally weaker groups.

4.4.4 Group strategies for working out the meaning of words

As we have seen, the children were encouraged to interact in their reading groups, to help each other and to share ideas. In this section I look at one particular type of work: how the children managed to interact and make meaning around new vocabulary in the texts, and what patterns emerged in the negotiations of meaning. These findings are particularly interesting in view of the paucity of research on meaning-making around literature with groups of young EFL-learners. The discussions are based on words which children identified themselves, expressions which I asked them to discuss, or structured tasks on vocabulary.

Differences between reading groups

Because children in the more proficient groups generally understood the overall meaning of the texts (see Chapter 3), their discussion of vocabulary was limited. Even in cases when they did not know what a word meant, it did not take them long to reach an explanation. The other groups received more help, and their discussions and reading conferences centred on vocabulary and text comprehension more often. Therefore, more samples of discussions from weaker groups are also present in the analysis for this section.

Pronunciation

Children's mispronunciations when reading were discussed in section 3.5 above. When negotiating meanings of words, pronunciation-related issues emerged on a few occasions. Among both the more proficient and less proficient readers, children sometimes knew what a word meant but could not pronounce it. Occasionally, however, they neither knew the meaning of the word, nor how to pronounce it. Some less proficient children indicated that they wanted to know how the new word should be pronounced before they could start thinking about what it meant (seeing it in writing was not enough). There were also instances when someone wanted to see the word in writing in order to start thinking about its meaning (hearing it pronounced was not enough). In fact, Ringbom (1992) notes that learners might not always be able to recognize a word in a spoken context, although they might be familiar with the word in writing.

Learning from one another

There was ample evidence that group discussion allowed children to negotiate and explain meanings of words. Lars, for example, had not understood the word 'gaining' until it had been discussed in his group. On another occasion, Nils explained the word 'cellotape' to the others in his group: 'Det är sån dän specialtejp som man som man det där sätter t.ex. på ett nå dörrhandtag och sen kan man få det där fingeravtryck och sen tar man på ett vitt papper och så blir den där fingeravtrycken där, eller sen vad det du

råkar va för papper så blir det de fingeravtrycken blir där, ser du?’ (8.9). In weaker groups, too, there was ample evidence that children were able to explain, negotiate, and help each other, as we have seen. Takahashi, Austin & Morimoto (2000) also found that both the teacher and other pupils assisted learning among FL students of Japanese, and that collaboration facilitated learner development.

Using dictionaries

In general, children in the more proficient groups made less use of dictionaries in small-group situations than those in the weaker groups, no doubt because their vocabulary was larger. On some occasions, children could not find the word that they were looking for in the dictionary or felt the explanation given was illogical. Sometimes they rejected a word that felt counter-intuitive, but at other times they chose the ‘best’ of the explanations available, even if this was incorrect. Because the most proficient groups seldom checked outcomes with me, they sometimes settled for a solution which was incorrect. The less proficient pupils, however, had a tendency to check outcomes with me more often, and thus arrived at a plausible interpretation. Children in weaker groups also sometimes used the dictionary to check outcomes of their guessing strategies (see also 3.4.2).

Linguistic knowledge

In cases where the children knew the words from experience, or felt that expressions were easy, they used direct translation, without checking outcomes. On some occasions they showed evidence of using linguistic knowledge to determine word meaning. When looking up ‘rugs’ in the dictionary, for instance, Markus used sentence-level grammar when realizing that if ‘rug’ is a little ‘matta’, then ‘rugs’ probably means several of them. Some children were also aware of homonyms – knowledge which they could use when determining word meanings (for example ‘glasses’, for which Barbara and Markus suggest two uses). However, in most cases it is not possible to determine what linguistic knowledge the children used when guessing meanings of words, or how they arrived at their translations, because they were seldom thinking aloud, and the design of the present study has not made such analysis possible.

Referring to the primary source and inferring meanings collaboratively

Children in the more proficient groups regularly referred to the primary source – the novel – when they did not understand a word. Children in the less proficient groups tended to do so less frequently. For instance, upon discovering that no-one knew the word ‘chanting’, the children in group G (see trans. 13) all turned to the novel, and tried to find meanings together. Some pupils used other strategies before turning to the primary source; others turned to the primary source as their first strategy.

Combining several strategies

A far richer picture of the children's meaning-making strategies in groups emerges, however, when larger stretches of dialogue are examined. Among other things, it becomes clear that the groups often used a wide range of strategies in combination, depending on members' knowledge of specific vocabulary and the task in hand. For instance, in the discussion of 'chanting' quoted above, they reached an understanding through the following strategies: looking up the word in the text, thinking about the word in context, giving suggestions, being put on the right track by the teacher later in the discussion, giving new suggestions, and building on each other's comments. This was a highly proficient group at work.

Examples from weaker groups also demonstrate not only the range of strategies but also how these strategies combine to considerable effect when children negotiate the meanings of words. One example involves group E in phase II reading *My Name is Jasmine Grey*. The girls were first concerned with what the word 'seesaw' looks like in writing and how it is pronounced. Then they started thinking about the meaning, turning to the primary source, the novel. When Mikaela tried to discuss the meaning, no-one could answer her questions because they still had not found the place in the book. Mikaela decided to use a dictionary, while the others were still looking through the novel. There were now two different strategies proceeding in parallel in the same group; inference from context, and use of the dictionary. When Katja finally found the sentence in her book, the children listened to her read the sentence out aloud, and then tried to determine the meaning of the sentence. Katja, having noted the word 'seaside' earlier, thought that 'seesaw' had something to do with sand. Mikaela then turned to the dictionary again, whilst Katja continued trying to think what the whole sentence might mean. She inferred from context: realised that *seesaw* is 'something that Jasmine is sitting on' and that 'it must be a "thing"' (a noun). She also noted that it is something which can go 'up and down'. Annika pursued this line of thought, suggesting 'rocking chair'. Mikaela then noted that she had found the word in the dictionary and that it means 'gungbråde' in Swedish. The other girls commented that they had thought that this was what it must be, and that they had come close to the right answer. A combination of two different strategies had brought them to a plausible explanation, and in the process both the weaker and the stronger members of the group had the chance to express their views. Everyone's contribution was important (although those inferring from the primary source did not arrive at the *precise* meaning). Examples of this kind occur in both more proficient and weaker groups. If we compare this example with the one in section 4.4.1 where all children turned to separate dictionaries to find the same word individually, we see that collaboration and interaction has developed a great deal.

Limitations of children's knowledge

The examples so far have focussed on the development of successful strategies for meaning making. However, it is also important to recognise the limitations of children's knowledge. Thus in many cases the children managed to arrive at plausible explanations and understandings of words, but conclusions were sometimes incorrect, both in the proficient and less proficient groups. Melker, for instance, being the most EFL-proficient pupil in group H, sometimes made errors which showed evidence of transfer from Swedish (see Ringbom, 1992; 1993; see also section 3.6.4). Because of his high EFL-proficiency, the others in his group did not question his translations.

Sometimes, the failure of a dictionary to explain idiomatic expressions led children to incorrect explanations. This phenomenon has been recognised by McCarthy & Carter (1994). Take, for instance, the attempts of the children in group C to understand the expression 'to take the mickey':

- The children note that they do not understand the expression 'taking the mickey', and start by looking up the place in the novel (they all look in their own books)
- Cecilia finds the place in the text and reads it out aloud. ('the fans were always taking the mickey')
- Nils doesn't understand and wants to see the place himself
- Nils reads the sentence aloud
- All children indicate that they do not know what the sentence means
- Nils takes a dictionary and tries to look up the expression
- Nils can't find the word/expression in the dictionary
- Later, he finds definitions involving the river, drink, knock-out drops
- The children are confused
- Tomas tries to explain to Cecilia what the drink is, and Cecilia says she knows what a drink is
- Nils concludes that it's a drink
- Tomas agrees that this is likely
- The children go on to discuss the following word

The children, however, do not check the outcome with me, and their interpretation remains incorrect.

Furthermore, children were not always able to correct each other, or determine if they had understood a word. For example, when Markus was reading out a sentence that he had written at home, he mispronounced 'allowed', and also used it incorrectly. Other members of the group commented on Markus' pronunciation but not on his incorrect use of the word in context. Especially in the weakest groups, I tried to be present when pupils were discussing key vocabulary, but this was not always possible. More teacher

attention would have been important in the weakest children's discussions of vocabulary.

In addition, there were limits to the weaker children's ability to help one another. Take Barbara who fails to notice that Markus did not understand (see Appendix 3.3.2 C):

(Barbara reads out an alternative expression for a close task)

Barbara:	'On the corner of [the] street'	
Markus:	OK....'counter', vai?	
		<i>'Okay, do you mean 'counter'?''</i>
Barbara:	Nej, 'corner'	<i>'No, 'corner''</i>
Markus:	vad är det, då?	<i>'Whats' that, then?'</i>
Pause		
Markus:	corner.....of.....street	

(Markus writes what Barbara suggests without understanding what the word means or why he could not use 'counter' instead)

Trans. 17: Failed attempt to support peer, group F, phase II

Barbara concludes that this is the right word without noticing that Markus still has not quite understood, despite her efforts to explain. Therefore, although weaker students were able to help each other to an admirable degree, they did not always detect problems and they were not always able to help.

Lastly, children's efforts sometimes resulted in confusion and the need for teacher intervention, as exemplified in the following extract from group D, where the girls were discussing the expression 'mixed-race family':

(Katja turns to a meaning of 'race' which she is familiar with, suggesting 'game' = competition)

Katja:	Mixed betyder ju blandad, mixed....race, vad betyder det? Race betyder tävling.	
		<i>'Mixed' means 'mixed', doesn't it? Mixed.... race, what does that mean? Race means 'competition.''</i>

Mikaela:	tävling?	<i>Competition?</i>
----------	----------	---------------------

(Katja tries to relate this word to the context in which she has heard it before – a game called snake-race - and to explain this to the others)

Katja:	Race, snake race, vi spelar det där 'snake race'-spelet, Mato-peli ³⁰	
		<i>'Race. Snake race, we play that game, the 'snake-race-game'</i>
Annika:	Alltså ormtävling	<i>'So you mean snake-competition?'</i>
Katja:	ja, snake	<i>'yes, snake'</i>

³⁰ 'Matopeli' is a Finnish insertion. She codeswitches when trying to explain the English expression 'snake race'. See section 4.4.5.

Annika: Snake är orm (Katja tries to make sense again and says what snake means in Swedish)

Trans. 18: Unsuccessful attempt to negotiate meaning, group D, phase I

The girls continue by building a long dialogue in which they become increasingly confused, and they ultimately fail to make sense of the expression. The discussion ends with them asking me for help.

In summary, the groups were in general able to find meanings collaboratively, using a variety of strategies. However, slightly different patterns emerged. The most proficient groups were more independent, and generally managed to determine meanings of new words, although they sometimes made mistakes which they did not notice. The weaker readers were more concerned, discussed new words more frequently, and took longer to find meanings of new words. They also needed more teacher support and reassurance. However, all children were able – to some extent – to correct and help each other, and although they did not always pick up on the things that the teacher would have identified, they were nonetheless able to address issues which they themselves felt were important. The centrality of the teacher's presence despite the independent nature of work was evident: the teacher needed to monitor group work and to help when necessary.

4.4.5 Language use in discussions

There are different views as to whether EFL students' mother tongue should be used in the language classroom. Most educationalists in ESL/EFL settings assume the exclusive use of the target language. This is often justified because it is believed to maximise the learners' exposure to the L2. However, the target group is often assumed to be older learners. Cameron (2001), an exception to this general trend who is concerned with *young EFL-learners*, suggests flexibility in language use, and does not exclude the possibility that using the L1 in certain circumstances might aid foreign language teaching.

Because of the age of the pupils and the relatively low level of EFL-proficiency, exclusive use of the target language was not appropriate in this project (see Cummins, 1994). Instead, the children were encouraged from the beginning to use English as much as they could. They were reassured that it would not matter if they could not find a word, because we would all try to help each other. They were also told that they could switch to Swedish whenever they wanted. Certain patterns emerged.

Teacher's language use

In the first lessons, I gave most instructions in Swedish, with translations into English. But as the children came to understand more English and I realized how much they understood, I started giving instructions first in English before repeating them in Swedish to check that everyone had understood. I also increasingly used English first, then Swedish, in discussions of books.

As the project evolved, I noticed that I was varying the language according to pupils and groups. Annika and Markus, for example, asked me to speak to them in Swedish, whereas with the more proficient pupils I used English almost exclusively. In the weaker groups, I tended to use both English and Swedish on task sheets. For the more proficient groups, however, the instructions and Discussion Sheets were mainly in English, with occasional translations of individual expressions into Swedish. The children's understanding of English was clearly increasing as the project evolved, which made it possible for me to use English far more than I had anticipated at the outset. This is confirmed by video recordings and by some children's comments at the end of the project.

Children's language use

This was a bilingual classroom, with the children naturally switching between English and Swedish (and sometimes using Finnish insertions, see below). My own observations, which were also confirmed by the video recordings, left no doubt that even the weakest children tried to speak in English sometimes – the only one who chose Swedish exclusively was Annika. At the end of the project, Katja commented that she felt she was able to say what she was thinking and that no-one laughed if she said something silly in English. In group F, the children said that the knowledge that they were free to speak in Swedish gave them the courage to try to speak in English. The children managed to get their message across in English surprisingly well, with help from other children or myself when they could not find the words they wanted.

Many children tried in English first and then switched to Swedish. At other times, questions were posed in English and answered in Swedish, or posed in English, then clarified in Swedish, and answered in English or Swedish. It was noticeable that weaker students switched to Swedish more quickly than the more proficient ones, sometimes in the middle of a sentence 'How did the footsteps...? Vad tror du? ...Vem gjorde?' (Markus, group B, 13.9). Some children started out in English and stopped to ask for a word, or used a Swedish word, when they got stuck. Sometimes, they switched back again to English, and at other times they continued in Swedish.

The language which the children chose to use within groups also varied. In some groups, English was sometimes used extensively. At other times, Swedish was the main language, or both languages were used. The groups which made the most extensive use

manifested in the child's strategies of language choice and code-switching' (p. 296). Although this study has not focussed on code-switching, it seems that the children might have used code-switching for a different purpose in relation to L3 English: when it was quicker or easier to recollect a word in Finnish, or when the Swedish word was not known. Knowledge of L2 use in L3 acquisition and production is scarce. Williams & Hammarberg (1998) looked at the role of the L2 in the production of the L3 for English L1 speakers. They note that if the L2 (and not the L1) acts as supplier language in L3 acquisition, then perhaps previously learned L2s should be given greater significance within language acquisition research. In the present project, the fact that Finnish might be the dominant language for some of the bilingual participating children is a complicating factor.

4.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has discussed children's independent group work from two perspectives, that of the teacher (the planning and management of teaching) and that of the children (how the children managed to work independently without the teacher and relate to the books). The main issues in relation to the teacher were: the composition of reading groups and aspects involved in choosing books; the role of the teacher; tasks and activities around the texts; individualization; teaching reader response; questions on the texts; scaffolding independent group discussions; and issues involved in reading conferences.

Two main issues emerged from the perspective of the children. Firstly, their developing independence in terms of how the groups functioned, and secondly, their collaboration, interaction and meaning-making. A more detailed summary and discussion is offered in section 9.1.2.

5. RESPONDING TO CONTENT

Up until now, this thesis has reported on issues involved in young EFL-learners reading, understanding, writing about, and discussing books in groups, that is, *how* they went about and managed these tasks. From this point onwards, the focus will be on the *content* of children's discussions and writings, that is, what they actually said about the books. In this chapter, the children's thoughts, reactions, and interpretations are discussed. A division has been made between children's general responses, discussed here, and the responses related to culture or multiculturalism, outlined in Chapters 6 and 7.

This chapter discusses children's ability to respond, the nature of their responses, and their general opinions about texts, in two main sections: the nature of children's responses (5.1), and children's personal opinions and evaluations (5.2).

5.1 THE NATURE OF CHILDREN'S RESPONSES

5.1.1 Types of written response in reading diaries

Most children managed to think of things to write about the books but they needed prompting and scaffolding. My questions or questions from the reader-response material provided necessary support (see 4.2). Gradually, they began to write spontaneous responses to the text, and became aware of the kinds of things they liked to write about, and many developed personal styles.

The main written source of response was the reading diary (see 2.2.1 and 3.6.1), in which various patterns emerged. Responses tended to take two main forms: story retellings (or summaries) as in the examples below:

In this chapter Beans thought that she have to do something about that her dads kidnapped. She don't like Detektive Warner. She want to find some clues. First she didn't find something but then she find a clue. A long thin piece of plaid material. She didn't now what to do with the clue. Beans, Ann and lousia think out a name to the upperAtion. it was Opperation Gadgetman (Nils, *Operation Gadgetman*)

Jasmine and Rachel meet almost every day. One day when Jasmine were waiting for Rachel, she didn't come. Later Jasmine saw Rachel with some other girls and Rachel didn't take any notice of Jasmine. (Susanne, *My Name is Jasmine Grey*)

or personal, evaluative comments about the chapter, specific events, or characters:

This was a good chapter again. But I don't understand Robbie's dad....' (Casper, *Troublemakers*);

I think it's sad that Sumi left, for Rajiv. And it's strange that she would be married when she's so young. (Mikaela, *The Private World of Rajiv Ray*).

Sometimes, children gave both personal evaluative responses and a summary of chapter events in the same entry:

The chapter was pretty good. You've got to learn about their avfull geography teacher. It could have been more about Beans other friends. I'm really looking forward to continue reading (Lotta, *Operation Gadgetman*)

The balance between re-tellings and personal evaluative responses varied a great deal from child to child, and from one entry to the next. Some children were able to express their personal views spontaneously, whereas others needed prompting. Some tended more towards personal responses than story re-tellings, whereas others favoured story re-tellings.

Sometimes, entries took the form of a written dialogue between an individual pupil and the teacher (see Peyton & Reed, 1990). My questions to the children homed in on how they were reading, understanding, managing, enjoying reading, and using reading strategies. I also probed issues which pupils had raised, commented on what they had said, or tried to help them express themselves more clearly:

How do you think the scratch marks got there? (teacher to Tomas)

I think that the scratch marks was made by a ghost dog. (Tomas, *Seven Weird Days...*)

What do you like the most about the book so far? (teacher to Markus)

När kläderna flög ut. ('When the clothes flew out') (Markus, *Seven Weird Days...*)

What do you think you would be feeling if you were Mike? What would you do? (teacher to Tomas)

I would be very scared. And would say to my mum and dad that they could sleep om his room so that they could hear the sounds. (Tomas, *Seven Weird Days...*)

My questions to the children were written mainly in English. However, I tended to use Swedish with Annika and Markus, because they sometimes had difficulties understanding my questions in English.

Another source for extensive written response was essays produced after reading a book. The children could choose from an extended list of topics, or think up one of their own. The most popular topics were: altering some aspect of the story, a character's diary, a story re-telling, a different ending to the book or what happened later, a book

review, and a letter to the author. In the essays, the children could, for example, resolve problems in the story, create their own literary work, extend stories, imagine themselves in the role of a character, or give a story re-telling or book report requiring less creativity. The essays are written mostly in English. They have not been coded or analysed for research purposes, but examples are included in appendix 5.1.1 for the purpose of illustration.

5.1.2 Children's story re-tellings

Story re-tellings have received attention within several fields and are also a well-established teaching method. For example, within mother tongue teaching re-tellings are commonly used as a holistic and authentic assessment technique, by which teachers can check whether students have understood what they have read. Story re-tellings also offer possibilities for students to share understandings with peers. Re-telling helps young readers — who might not be able to read many pages at one time — to fix the story in their memory. (Cooper, 2000; Soderman, Gregory & O'Neill, 1999; see also Fry, 1985).

Psychologists have been concerned with story narratives, and narrative understanding. For example, Jerome Bruner (1990) sees narrative as one of the most powerful discourse forms. At an early stage, he argues, children's interest is focussed on human interaction, people and their actions. It is part of human nature to organize things into narrative structures. Also, children learn early on that getting parents to give them what they want means arriving at the right story. Narrative is therefore a familiar form for children.

Findings from several disciplines suggest that developmental aspects are involved in children's narrative understanding and story re-tellings. Jean Piaget's theory of stages of intellectual development has underpinned the work of many scholars in the fields of reading and literary criticism (such as Appleyard, 1991; Tucker, 1972; 1981), as will be discussed in section 5.2.4 below. Also, in a study of 3–9-year-olds' oral narratives of personal experiences, Peters & McCabe (1983) found that, as children grew older, they improved their narratives, increased their level of coherence, and produced more complicated episodes. Applebee (1978), in an extensive empirical study of children's own stories, also found that the stories became more complex as children grew older. Similarly, Mäarak (1994) traced developmental aspects of children's re-tellings and found that those of 6-year-olds were less coherent than those of older children, and that there were also differences in re-tellings of children from different sociocultural backgrounds.

These findings are based on children in L1-settings. Studies of children's story re-telling and narrative understanding in EFL-settings are still scarce, although a number

of writers highlight the usefulness of this technique in L2 teaching (Gregory, 1996; Edwards, 1995). Re-tellings allow SL readers to transfer what they have read and understood into their active language repertoire. Failure to reproduce the story can indicate a memory problem, a language problem, or a problem in understanding the text. L2 readers need many opportunities to practice discussing and re-telling texts before they can make the stories their own (Gregory, 1996: 172).

In the present study, oral story re-tellings were used to help children share understandings, thus offering reading support. Written and oral re-tellings made it possible for me to check whether the pupils had understood what they had read. Written re-tellings allowed the children to express their private feelings about events in the story. These re-tellings have not, however, been analysed from literary critical, linguistic, psycholinguistic, or psychological perspectives, as in the research mentioned above. Instead, the focus has been solely on pedagogical and practical aspects of story re-tellings in the EFL-classroom.

Children's written story re-tellings

Certain patterns emerged in children's written re-tellings. For instance, children sometimes retold the story in their reading diaries in a few main *summary points*, which either involved one or two overarching statements about what the chapter was about, or a few events from the chapter.

- Sanjay and Neetu thought that their mums dad would be like their dad's dad. (Susanne, *Grandpa Chatterji*)

- Grandpa Chatterji and the children wanted to go to the fair.
 - Grandpa thought that the fair would be like in India.
 - Chatterji gleamed with pleasure, when they went to the fair
 - Everybody liked the fair.
- (Susanne, *Grandpa Chatterji*)

At other times, re-telling took on a more *narrative form*, varying in length (see 3.6.2), degree of pupils' personal involvement, and empathy. Some were *non-personal and plot-orientated*. These narratives focused on outlining events 'objectively'. The following chapter summary, for instance, shows little personal involvement with the main protagonists in the story:

Ok it started like this Lucy and Rafaella dumped in in eichother in the door and they said their name to eichother and so on. (Barbara, *Secret Friends*)

Barbara makes no reference here to the fact that Lucy was feeling guilty because of calling Rafaella 'earwig', although this was one of the most important themes in the chapter; nor does she show any sign of empathy towards Rafaella, or introduce the characters or setting. Tomas gives a similarly impersonal response after reading a passage from *Seven Weird Days at Number 31*:

All Mike's stuff had flow out of he's room to the Landing. This time Mike didn't get the blame. He spent an hour putting back all the things. He slepped whit he's mothe and father that night. That night he didn't hear any sounds

Written in the past tense, this diary entry is a factual summary of events. We are not involved in the thought-world of the character. Events are recounted with little engagement.

The more personal *emotively/affectively orientated* narratives, on the other hand, dealt with how the character was thinking or feeling, and/or, in some cases also how the pupil was feeling about the event. Nils, for example, gives a more personal re-telling in the following example from *Troublemakers*.

Robbie tried to came in to a school-Footballsteam But there is a stupid trainer Mr Pitt just take the best. -Hey Mr Pitt can I play. Robbie asked. -You are not a big boy but i think you can try. Robbie played but no-one Gave the ball to him but Suddenly he got a pass near the goal but when he was going to shot his leg didn't move. What was that Robbie? Mr pitt asked. You can't play anymore. Robbie walked home.

There are similarities between Tomas's and Nils's entries: both begin with an introductory statement before explaining what happens next; in both there is development or crisis, or a change in state; both have interrelated events; both end with a resolution (see Toolan, 1988/2001). However, there are also important differences. Nils's narrative has a more evaluative personal dimension. His use of dialogue strengthens this effect, as do his switches between verb tense-forms. His introduction to Mr Pitt – 'There is a stupid trainer Mr Pitt' - shows us where Nils positions himself, and creates the impression that he empathizes with Robbie (see section 7.3). In a similar vein, Peters & McCabe (1983), when investigating children's oral narratives of personal experiences, found that narratives not only provided the listener with information (the older the child, the greater variety of contextual information), but also included a large evaluative element.

There was also evidence of children going one step further. For example, in one of her reading diary entries on *My Name is Jasmine Grey*, Katja not only shows involvement in her narrative but, also that she has been able to infer feelings and perspectives from the text; she has 'read between the lines':

Jasmine är ledsen för att Rachel inte kan och inte vill vara med henne för att hon är också med sina [andra] kompisar. Hon är också ledsen för att hon inte får gå ut med Bramble och Rachel för gå ut med Polly, men ändå för hon [Jasmine] ut med Bramble utan lov!

Jasmine is unhappy because Rachel cannot and does not want to be with her because she [Rachel] is also with her [other] friends. She [Jasmine] is also unhappy because she cannot take Bramble out for a walk and Rachel is allowed out with Polly. But she [Jasmine] still went out with Bramble without permission! (My translation)

In what is probably meant to be a summary of events, Katja is, in fact, analysing character emotions. In the process, she demonstrates both a literal and inferential understanding of the text. There is also a moral dimension to her response. When Jasmine takes the dog out without permission, Katja understands why she acted in this way but nonetheless demonstrates her disapproval. Her story re-telling thus not only indicates involvement and an appreciation of Jasmine's perspective, but also demonstrates Katja's own position on the matter.

Drawing on Rosenblatt (1987; 2002), Many (2004) distinguishes between efferent responses which focus on the facts of the text without reference to characters' or the readers' view or emotions, and aesthetic responses which focus on the readers' thoughts and feelings. Many found that aesthetic responses demonstrated a higher level of understanding than efferent responses, regardless of the text, and concludes that teachers who wish their students to find personal meaning in literature should use aesthetic teaching strategies which promote readers' individual evocations. To use Rosenblatt's terms, both efferent and aesthetic responses were visible in the present children's written story re-tellings.

The chapter summaries/re-tellings also differ in the degree to which they demonstrate *reading comprehension*. For instance, in some of the very short summaries, it is not always clear whether the chapter as a whole has been understood. Take, for instance, Barbara's short comment: 'It was a nice and short chapter and I liked it really much.' Similarly, Felix's response does not reveal whether he understood the chapter: 'Sergeant Paxman seems a little bit Weird. Nothing really happened in this chapter. But it was still pretty good.' However, in other summaries and narratives, reading comprehension is clearly visible:

These chapters were when Gran and Robbie were at a Fottball mach. When Chester Smith got to play some people started chanting mean things and thrrowing banans on the pitch. Gran went to the troublemakers, who were Shane, Darren and Barry (!), and said how mean they were. Then somebody pusht her so she Fall ower: Then the police picked up the troublemakers and the doctors helped Gran. I don't understand why Barry is with Darren and Shane. (Lotta, *Troublemakers*).

Rajiv was playing football in school with the others and Ben chosed the teames and he chosed Rajiv to his team and then the other childrens didn't like it. After the game when they haave loosed "they" started to say to Ben that chosed Rajiv just because he was Bens friend. Ben was on Rajivs side and tried to protect him. After the game Rajiv started skream to Gary because he had liked Sumi so much that Sumi mast back go India. Ben camed to Rajiv after that he haved went home and tell his mom that he would go to Rajiv. When he camed to Rajiv he was mediteting and dancing, and Ben started to dance to. (Mikaela, *The Private World of Rajiv Ray*).

In appendix 3.6.2, more samples from reading diaries are displayed.

Children's oral re-tellings

In addition to the written story re-tellings/chapter summaries in reading diaries, there were three types of oral story re-telling in groups: story re-tellings with the teacher present as discussed in 4.2.4 (reading conferences), story re-tellings without the teacher present (independent group work), and, retrospective story re-tellings after finishing the book (interviews). In Chapter 4, oral re-tellings were discussed in relation to group work with a focus on how children *managed* re-telling. In the present section, the *content* of oral re-tellings is the focus.

From the outset, the group-story re-tellings generally indicated that the pupils had *understood the story* and plot (see section 4.2.4). It was clear, for instance, that the children understood some of the main events of the story, even though they sometimes jumped between episodes without setting the scene, bridging gaps, or connecting events. Later in the project, both weaker and more proficient groups showed evidence of more coherent story re-tellings, of bridging gaps more often, and of collaboratively building meaning, and also of setting the scene in a way which would have allowed someone unfamiliar with the text to follow: ‘..there was a girl, Beans, and there were three girls, Beans, Anne, Louisa. And Beans dad was a funny guy, a gadgetman’ (Nils). The children were often engaged by the action and excitement of the story, and showed evidence of reading comprehension, as we can see in this example a few weeks into the project:

- Lars: It was ehh Beans and her Beans got two best friends and their name were Ann and Louisa. And ehh they were...och de var ganska sådär ihop alltså dom var nästan varje dag ihop sådär.
(...and they were rather kind of together, I mean, they were together almost every day, sort of)
- T: spent a lot of time..
- Lars: ja ‘yes’
- T:together
- Lars: ..and they one day when they come-came from school there was an letter on the table and then theirs Beans looked at the table... at the letter and then...
- Felix: there was a secret secret code
- Felix: then they started to look for clues and..
- Casper: and then..
- Felix: ..then they find some finger prints and..a.. cigarette ash, something like that
- Casper: you forgot the detective

Trans. 20: Story re-telling, group A, phase I, Operation Gadgetman

The re-telling continues in this way with the children actively contributing and re-building the story together.

Applebee (1978) notes that the ability to classify concrete operational thought enables children to summarize the events of the story rather than re-tell them in detail. There was evidence of a range of skills in the present project. In the same discussion from group A (trans. 20), for example, attention was paid to the detailed and long outlining of specific events, while some important episodes were left out. Group C reading the same book, however, gave a more over-arching summary with less focus on detail. Significantly however, in both groups A and C, reading comprehension was clearly evident.

In contrast to the story re-tellings of more proficient groups, the average groups made far greater use of Swedish even with me present. Still, they often demonstrated both reading comprehension and serious engagement in the story (see section 4.2.4, trans. 5). Some children were particularly eager to share their re-tellings. Mikaela and Casper often demonstrated an impressive ability to remember details from the story. I sometimes needed to stop them to ask if someone else wanted a turn.

Interestingly, in some groups, there was not much difference between re-tellings where I was present and where I was not. In other groups, however, re-tellings were shorter with fewer turns and shorter comments from each pupil in my absence. In the case of the weakest groups, the story re-tellings without the teacher present tended to be very short and without depth. In the following example, for instance, Barbara's summary of events misses out on much of the essence of the chapter:

- | | |
|----------|---|
| Barbara: | 'Please re-tell what happened in the story'
<i>(reads from the Discussion Sheet)</i> |
| Markus: | OK, jag minns inte så bra...
<i>'Okay, I can't remember that well'</i> |
| Barbara: | Lucy came to...eh... Rafaella's house |
| Markus: | Jo, det är...
<i>'Yes, that's...'</i> |
| Markus: | Yes |
| Barbara: | OK, yes |
- (they then continue with the next question)*

Trans. 21: Oral story re-telling in weak group, group F, phase II, Secret Friends

Markus does not contribute any information and it is therefore not possible to determine whether or not he, nor even Barbara, have understood the chapter. The teacher's presence was clearly important in the weakest groups in order to ensure that the children understood.

There were some differences between accounts in reading diaries and oral re-tellings: the diary re-tellings were sometimes more personal, whereas the oral ones were longer, more detailed and included a larger number of episodes and events. In oral re-tellings,

the group generally outlined the main points in the chapter together, whereas in some written re-tellings, children only mentioned one or two things which had caught their attention. Thus, oral group re-tellings, particularly when prompted by the teacher, demonstrated a general awareness on the part of the group as a whole of the main events, whereas it was not always evident in written re-tellings whether individual children had understood.

However, there was great variation between groups and children. Nils, Susanne, and Mikaela, for example, also regularly produced long written re-tellings which captured important events (see Appendix 3.6.2). So for those who were highly verbal in writing, written accounts provided the chance to show how much they had understood and remembered. These children sometimes expressed more in writing than in oral retellings, although the general trend was that children expressed more orally.

Finally, oral story re-tellings offered a chance for those who had not understood to listen to the story being retold or summarized and thus to grasp the essence of the chapter. It also allowed them to ask both the teacher and other group members about things which were unclear. Thus, for several children, particularly the weakest, oral re-tellings were an important means of reflecting on what had happened and thus an aid to reading comprehension.

5.2 PERSONAL OPINIONS AND EVALUATIONS IN ORAL AND WRITTEN RESPONSES

As we saw in 5.1.1, the other main category of both oral and written response involves children's personal opinions and evaluations, which are discussed in the present section. These were present in all types of discussions (independent group discussions, reading conferences, interviews), and in reading diaries. Data from both oral and written sources has been used.

Before discussing what the present children said, a brief introduction is given to some theoretical issues involved: reader response in practice, the spontaneous versus prompted nature of responses, reality versus fiction, and children's cognitive and psychological development (sections 5.2.1-5.2.4).

5.2.1 Reader response and transaction between the reader and text

The literacy approach adopted in the present project was described in detail in Chapters 3 and 4. One of the main influences was reader response, a group of approaches to understanding literature which emphasise the reader's role in the creation of meaning. Winner (1982) notes that most response theories recognise the active role of the reader, and the reader's need to predict, infer, and revise hypotheses about what is happening. While the reader needs to understand the structure of the text, the structure of the text also influences the structure of the reader's experience. Rosenblatt (1987, 2002) has argued that it is not necessary to find the exact intention of the author, or to agree on one single interpretation, although it is possible to reach agreement that certain interpretations are *not* plausible. Reader response has sometimes been criticized for accepting any comment about the text, and ignoring the author's intentions. Rosenblatt (1987: 137), however, emphasizes repeatedly that we must not forget the text itself:

The transactional view also assumes close attention to the words of the text. But it assumes an equal closeness of attention to what that particular juxtaposition of words stirs up within each reader [Rosenblatt's italics]. We cannot look simply at the text and predict what a reader will make of it; but he and we can turn to the text to judge whether his reported evocation, that is, his interpretation, either ignores elements in the text or projects on it experiences for which there is no defensible basis in the text.

Rosenblatt's readers were undergraduate English L1-readers, in contrast to the present ones who were primary school EFL-readers. In addition to the text itself, EFL-learners' construction of meaning is, of course, related among other things to reading strategies (see 3.4), language proficiency (see 3.3.1), reading ability, and their schemata (see 3.1.4).

Teaching also impacts on children's interpretations. Rosenblatt (2002) argues that certain pedagogical principles can be adopted in the classroom in order to allow pupils a genuine literary experience, based on personal understanding rather than on answering in "correct" ways. The students need to feel that their own reactions and ideas are important, and should be allowed to express themselves spontaneously and exchange ideas freely. Two separate goals need to be achieved: a critical knowledge of one's own reactions and knowledge of the possibilities of the text. By answering questions, students can be helped to clarify their judgements. In the present project, group discussions and tasks allowed pupils to form opinions and express their own views. How reader response was used in the classroom was discussed in 4.2.3.

When interpreting texts, it is noteworthy that children and adolescents do not have a 'theory' of interpretation although they might interpret (Appleyard, 1991: 112). Some scholars, both educational, and literary critical, judge children's responses according to a more critical or 'schooled' reading. Such was the case in Mäarak (1994), where children's interpretations were judged in relation to her own more 'schooled' reading. In the present study, in contrast, the *children's own* thoughts and ideas are at focus. I have been interested in how these young readers perceived and responded to novels

written in a language which was foreign to them; in the types of things that caught their attention; and in whether any patterns can be identified.

5.2.2 Spontaneous versus prompted responses

Another important issue involves the spontaneous versus prompted nature of responses. Since teaching affects responses (see Fry, 1985; Rosenblatt, 2000), what the children said, both orally and in writing, needs to be viewed in the light of what was asked of them, and of what was going on in the classroom (see Chapters 3-4). As we saw in 4.3 and 4.4, groups needed the scaffolding provided by the teacher's questions in the early stages. Later, some were able to express their personal views on what they had read spontaneously, whereas most children still needed prompting in order to make more personal statements. The children generally became more spontaneous as the project evolved.

In a similar vein, we might also want to make a distinction between first- and second-hand responses, that is, thoughts which enter our mind as we are reading versus what we actually say. Vygotsky (1962) discusses the relationship between thought and word: a speaker might take several minutes to explain one thought, whereas in the mind, the whole thought is present at once. Our very first response — that which occurs in our minds — precedes what we are able to express. When we utter a response to a text we are trying to find an objective way to express our subjective experience. Along similar lines, Piaget (1955/1974) makes a clear distinction between those thoughts which we tell other people and thoughts which we keep to ourselves. In egocentric thought we are intuitive, our mind leaps, and reasoning is not made explicit, whereas in communicated intelligence there is more deduction, proof finding and collective judgement of value. In his discussion of literary responses, Benton (1996: 33) makes two similar distinctions: first, between what he calls 'primary/natural' responses versus 'stated/artificially elicited' responses in speech or writing; and second, between the comments that readers make about what happens when they are reading (the process of response) versus their considered responses after this process is over. He uses the term 'introspective recall' to signify 'the stated responses of students as they are in the process of reading'.

These distinctions may well have implications for both reader response in general, and for the EFL-classroom, since it is questionable whether young EFL-students are able to express the same thought in the foreign language as they would in their mother tongue. And there might also be a risk that some children might not want to say what they really think in front of their peers. Of course, in a study of this kind, it is not possible to capture children's very first responses, nor responses which they choose to keep to themselves. But all students were allowed to use Swedish whenever they felt that they were not able to express what they wanted to in English, and children were offered a wide range of options for responding to the text: oral and written, private and public.

5.2.3 Real life versus fiction

Literature plays a role in the socialization of the young, since it deals with personal experiences, social relationships, thoughts and feelings (Applebee, 1978; Rosenblatt, 2002; see also section 7.1). According to Rosenblatt (1987, 2002), the teacher should help students develop ethical judgement. Although she should not force her own judgements on the students, she should avoid creating an atmosphere in which values are underplayed. Rosenblatt was one of the first scholars to connect literary transaction with the theme of democracy (see Chapters 6 and 7).

However, the role of literature also raises important philosophical questions about the representation of reality in fiction. Several writers within the domain of both literary criticism and education have emphasized the importance of distinguishing between real life and fiction when interpreting texts. The notions of “mimetic” and “semiotic”, used in literary criticism to describe approaches to literary characters, are of relevance for this discussion. A mimetic approach involves viewing fiction as a direct reflection or representation of reality, which sometimes requires that we go outside the text and construct the character from our own experiences. The danger of this approach is that we might ascribe characters features that the author had not intended, or that we ascribe to literary characters traits of real people. A semiotic or thematic approach, on the other hand, supposes that characters are made of words and have no reference in the real world; they are textual elements. (Nikolajeva 1998, 2002; Parkinson & Reid Thomas, 2000)

The nature and role of characters has been discussed in a similar vein. According to E. M. Forster (1927/1949), novelists make up word masses which roughly describe characters. Even if they use characters from their own environment, they can choose whether to reproduce them accurately, or to understand and remember them in whatever way suits them. Authors can choose whether to build flat types of characters (which represent one single idea or quality) or round (more developed) characters. They can describe the characters from the outside as an onlooker, or from within. Alternatively, they can place themselves in the position of one of the characters (Forster, 1927/1949; Nikolajeva, 1998, 2002). The characters are thus a literary construction by the author, and the author’s choices affect how we perceive the characters.

Where, then, is the link between the author’s constructed characters and the real world? And wherein lie readers’ understandings and responses to literary texts? Some scholars have discussed this relationship, although not with reference to children. Bakhtin (1981) notes that there is a sharp and categorical boundary between the actual world as a source of representation and the world represented in the work. There is an important and ongoing interaction between real and represented worlds through the creative perception of listeners and readers. Vandergrift (1986) comments on the difference between real people and literary characters. All stories, she says, deal with some aspect of the human condition. However, the world of the story exists only in words and in the

minds of those who come into contact with it. Realistic fiction involves characters, settings, and events which *could* exist in the actual world. Yet realistic literature does not necessarily seek to represent the actual world. Rosenblatt (1987) notes that our notion of the "real" world depends on what we bring to it from our past and present "reality" and also from the world of other pieces of fiction and the imagination. The link between the world of "reality" and the world of poetry is in the reader. Transaction means both the reader's relationship with, and the reader's continuing awareness of, the text.

Booth (1988) discusses the way in which a narrative can present one of many *possible worlds*. The story which the author tells is a chosen version abstracted from innumerable other stories about what happened. The other stories might imply a world that is possibly as true, and in some cases even truer. We are able to recognize that there are many true narratives. We compare each new one with the other worlds that we have "tried on for size". From our collection of worlds we experience a summary of the "real". But a powerful new narrative can throw a critical light on our previous collection: 'We can embrace its additions and negations vigorously, so long as we remember that like all the others, this is a metaphoric construction: a partial structure that stands in place of, or "is carried over from," whatever Reality might be.' (Booth, 1988: 345).

Pedagogical perspectives also deserve consideration in relation to child readers. Much literacy teaching practice, such as reader response, is based on the position that relating characters and events to real-life helps children engage more deeply in the text. Thus, thinking about what it feels like to be in another time, place, or situation, or to be someone else for a little while, helps children understand both the text, themselves, and others (see Chapter 7). Stories allow children to explore worlds beyond their immediate situations. In fact, coming to know and understand literary characters is one of the first ways in which children make sense of what it is to be human. Literature also helps sharpen our observations and perceptions of the world. Two positive outcomes may result from reading realistic literature: getting a perspective on one's own experiences, and extending one's capacity to understand other situations and people through identification with characters unlike oneself (Vandergrift, 1986). This is, in fact, one of the key reasons for using literature within a framework of multicultural teaching (see Chapters 6-8). Reading and responding with others offers opportunities for pupils to make sense of both text worlds and real worlds (Galda & Beach, 2004). A balance needs to be found, however, between giving an honest and realistic picture of the world, and not robbing young children of their idealism.

There is, I feel, something of a contradiction involved between teaching approaches on the one hand, which allow children to relate texts to their own worlds in order for them to gain deeper understanding, and viewing the text only as a literary construction, on the other hand. Some educationalists have solved the problem by helping pupils

understand that the text is not a description of reality: ‘the existence of real-life events or characters does not guarantee a true-to-life literary representation.’ (Carter & Long, 1991: 13).

As we saw in Chapter 4, in my teaching a variety of tasks and activities encouraged children to think about characters and events in an attempt to help them understand and engage in the texts. This approach could be considered as positioning characters at the mimetic end of the continuum, although my judgements are based purely on pedagogical concerns, not literary criticism. However, I agree with other educationalists and literature teachers (such as Rosenblatt, 1978, 2002) that it is the teacher’s responsibility to ensure that students do not mistake the literary experience for the ‘real’. The boundary between reality and fiction is particularly complex, of course, in cases where the fictive text provides the *only* representation of a foreign culture for an EFL-reader. This issue is further elaborated in Chapters 6-7, in relation to aspects of culture and multiculturalism.

5.2.4 Cognitive and psychological development and children’s responses to fiction

A wide range of factors affect children’s responses to fiction. In fact, Tucker (1972; 1981) notes that psychological generalisations covering all children’s responses are invalid, since not all readers will react in the same way. That said, writers in the field have been interested in *types* of responses for children in certain age groups. There is now a growing body of theory on children’s literature and children’s readings (such as Nikolajeva, 1998, 2002). There is a gap, however, in *empirical* findings of readers’ and specifically EFL-readers’ responses. Some of the more influential studies of mother tongue reading can offer insights into possible issues involved (see for example, Fry, 1985; Tucker, 1972, 1981; Appleyard, 1991; Applebee, 1978; Harding, 1962). Many of these scholars relate children’s responses to their cognitive and psychological development. The developmental stages which have been identified in relation to literary responses, and that are relevant to the 11-12-year-old pupils in the present study, can be organised into two clusters, each of which is discussed in greater detail below:

- Early fiction (7-11 years) (Tucker, 1981)
- Later childhood: The reader as hero or heroine (Appleyard, 1991)
- The concrete operational stage (based on Piaget in Applebee, 1978)

and

- Literature for older children (11- 14 years) (Tucker, 1981)
- (early) Adolescence: The reader as thinker (Appleyard, 1991)
- The formal operational stage (based on Piaget in Applebee, 1978)

Early fiction/ later childhood/the concrete operational stage

Jean Piaget's developmental stages are often applied to children's literary responses. The concrete-operational stage (7 –11 years) involves the acquisition of operations which can be reversed and organised into greater systems. Applying operations to abstract ideas is, however, difficult. According to Appleyard (1991), the child's entry into schooling and the wider social world clearly affects cognitive development, and also the child's role in terms of reading. Reading changes from being a pleasurable experience into being a compulsory demand. At this stage, action is more important than analysis in the stories (Tucker 1981). Characters in children's stories are often the same type of person in the beginning and end of the story. One does not necessarily get to know about their inner feelings, thoughts or motivations. In terms of complexity, characters might seem both simple and static. However, even though characters might be portrayed in stereotyped ways, there are opportunities for dynamic and affective relationships (Appleyard, 1991).

Adventure stories are popular at this stage. Certain elements such as supernatural agents, semi-human figures, weapons, special verbal forms (riddles, spells), and magic, are typical. Conventional values, type characters, simple plots and one-sided ideals are common. Other characteristics include uncomplicated sentences, short paragraphs, and limited description of people and settings. For children, there is something to be learnt through repetition of the same simple story lines (Appleyard, 1991; Tucker, 1981).

Seven- to twelve-year-olds generally cannot, according to Appleyard, imagine how and why a good person's life ends in a failure, or that good and evil might be interwoven. This might be why adventure stories and romance are the first literary forms which children can grasp; they fit well with the way in which they view the world.

Literature for older children/ early adolescence/ the formal operational stage

Piaget's formal-operational stage (from 11 years) involves children reasoning abstractly, logically, and deductively, and there is a growing understanding that meaning might be hidden in the text (Appleyard, 1991: 112). Formal-operational children and adults tend to look for possible solutions and determine which is the real one, testing their theory to see if their prediction holds. They also look for logical relations between several propositions (Lutz & Sternberg, 1999). The more children learn about the world, the more they realize that romance might offer a false picture of the world. While recognizing that there is more than one possible view of the world, they might reject texts which do not realistically present the world as they experience it (Applebee, 1978). Early adolescent readers thus judge the story according to its truthfulness to their own experiences. They also demand stories which reflect the darker side of life. However, the discovery that the world is complex can be a daunting experience (Appleyard, 1991: 110).

Books for this age group typically cover more complex intellectual and emotional processes, with characters who reflect analytically on what is happening. When children begin to understand contradictions between surface appearances and inner reality, and have greater insight into reasons lying behind other people's behaviour, stories no longer need to focus mainly on action (Tucker, 1981). At this stage, children are interested in thoughts and feelings and prefer stories where people are not presented simply in terms of good and bad (Appleyard, 1991).

11-14 year-olds are also preoccupied with personal identity, as is commonly reflected in literature for this age group. The adolescent's discovery of self is accompanied by an intensified emotionality and conflicting feelings, which can also affect how they respond to texts. There is more complexity in personal or subjective responses. Analyses may cause readers to empathise with a character, or note similarities between their own lives and something in the text (Appleyard, 1991). According to Applebee (1978), the recognition of one's own involvement can psychologically distance one from the experience: in contrast with the direct, immediate response of younger children. Teenagers tend to respond to a story in three ways: indicating involvement, discussing the realism of the story, and expressing that the story has made them think (Appleyard, 1991: 100).

The present project

The findings of scholars mentioned above concern L1-readers. Because children differ developmentally, the subjects in the present study might fall into either of these larger groups, or neither. The EFL-dimension adds another layer of complexity: where do EFL-readers' responses stand in relation to L1-readers'?

The main source of *spontaneous* personal responses during the present project was the reading diary. Comments from interviews, reading conferences, and independent group work were more *triggered* by questions posed by the teacher or other pupils. Comments from the reading diaries have been supplemented here by comments from the other, more prompted sources. What, then, did the children say about the books? Let us now take a look at their responses.

5.2.5 Analysis of characters, their behaviours and actions

One of the largest categories of personal response in the present project involved comments about characters, their behaviours and actions. Nikolajeva (1998, 2002) has shown how in some narratives for children, characters are important and psychologically motivated, while in others, actions are more important and characters are only elements in the plot design. In plot-orientated novels, characters are seldom highly developed. This was the case in the present project in *Seven Weird Days...* and

Operation Gadgetman. In contrast, in the Rajiv and Jasmine stories the characters are slightly more developed and we get to know more about them. What, then, might young EFL-readers comment on?

In this project, children sometimes made spontaneous comments about a character. Susanne, for instance, remarked in her diary when reading the *The Private World of Rajiv Raj* that ‘Ben was the only one who sometimes talked to Rajiv’ and that ‘Sumi was sixteen years old, and went to India to be married.’ At other times, the children’s description was prompted by questions (such as ‘What characters have we met so far?’ ‘What do we know about them?’). Several children, in fact, needed the scaffolding before they began to express what they thought. With teacher support, even the weaker students were able to reflect on ‘personality traits’. With the support of tasks such as the personality continuum, for instance, Markus and Barbara indicated that Rafaella had low and Lucy average self-esteem; that Rafaella was not cruel at all, while Lucy was slightly so; that Rafaella was highly anxious and Lucy moderately so. Character descriptions were also scaffolded by *mind-maps*. Some children were able to list several traits:

Character: Jasmine (in *My Name is Jasmine Grey*)

- like roller-skating
- she listen to reggae music
- like dogs
- is half black. half white
(Katja, RD)

while others made only one or two comments. The children also discussed and described characters in their groups.

Although initially the children often needed prompts, towards the end of the project there was evidence of group discussion of characters even when the teacher was not present; on some occasions, strong personal opinions were expressed, such as when Group G and H referred to Mr. Pitt (*Troublemakers*) as a very strict teacher whom they did not like.

Literal or inferential, shallow or in depth comments about characters

The data reveal evidence of both literal and deeper character analyses. For instance, some descriptions of Jasmine (*My Name is Jasmine Grey*) include aspects of her looks and situation, and her likes and dislikes as explicitly mentioned in the text, a common feature in children’s fiction (see Nikolajeva, 2002). Jasmine, they noted, was nine years old, had Afro-curls and dark skin, was half black, half white, and did not have a family. She was adopted by Lena and Bob, liked roller-skating and dogs, had a friend called Rachel and listened to music. Similarly, most children pinpointed in their reading diaries that Jasmine was given a new family when Lena and Bob adopted her, and that she found a new friend in Rachel.

Questions and tasks triggered more reflection. Thus, the same children were able to make *inferences* about the character's situation, thoughts and feelings. For instance, Katja wrote in her notebook that Rachel (*My Name is Jasmine Grey*) could not play with black people because her grandmother did not like them. This reflection involves analysis of behaviour. Similarly, some children reading *Troublemakers* based their character descriptions on reflections about situations, actions or events: 'Robbie the main character is a football craysi boy. He has just bean to a soccer match whit hes gran'. 'Robbie has gone to some united games and all of a suden he decides to start playing football.' 'He is a dancner who all of a sudden wants to play fottball'.

Sometimes, children such as Susanne and Lars combined aspects which they picked out explicitly from the text ('he has owlsh spectacles'), with aspects which they infered ('The other children don't like him', 'he's a mysterious boy', 'he's in a world of his own', 'he lives in a big and strange house', 'other people do not treat him well', 'one doesn't know what he is doing', 'he doesn't have so many friends because hes so "shy"', 'he behaved like there wouldn't be no one else in the world'). Similarly, when asked to compare Grandpa Leicester and Grandpa Chatterji, Annika wrote bullet points which reflect both literal and inferential reflection:

- grandpa chatterji was nice.
- grandpa Leicester was strict.
- grandpa chatterij lives in india and grandpa Leicester lives in England.
- grandpa Leicester is fussy.
- grandpa Leicester is selfish.
- grandpa chatterji has different clotes or granpa chatterji.
- grandpa chatterji eat different food.

(Annika, NB, *Grandpa Chatterji*)

Some children, then, analysed characters more deeply, conforming to a more mature reading, particularly when prompted by tasks. Other children, however, even when prompted by questions or tasks, were able to demonstrate only a shallow understanding. Markus, for example, wrote in his notebook simply that the characters in *Seven Weird Days....* are Mike and Scott. When asked later to say a few words about them, he noted only that Greg 'is very stupid', that he did not like Mike and that Scott was 'cool'.

Complexity in characters and in one's own thinking

Tucker (1981) noted that because younger readers are unable to appreciate ambiguity, their sense of moral judgement leads them to praise or condemn characters mainly for surface acts. Even slightly older children may prefer moral judgements on a simpler level than grown-ups. This requires children's authors to simplify connections rather than develop complexity. In fact, the grandfathers in *Grandpa Chatterji* are portrayed as good/bad in the beginning of the *Grandpa Chatterji*-story, which is also how the children reading the book interpreted the grandfathers (see Annika's comment above). Therefore, the children's interpretations also reflect how the story was written.

Prompting the children to consider *both* positive and negative ‘traits’ in a character, however, encouraged them to reflect more deeply. It also helped them understand that there are usually more sides than one to a personality. Some children were thus able to comment on the complexity of characters. For instance, although empathising with Jasmine’s situation (*My Name is Jasmine Grey*) when she was exposed to racist remarks and ostracized, Katja *also* felt that Jasmine could sometimes be rather selfish. Similarly, the children reading *Secret Friends* commented that Lucy’s wish to be friends with Rafaella was positive, but her decision to leave her because of peer pressure was negative. As regards *Troublemakers*, children noted not only that Robbie ‘has a positive attitude to everything’, ‘likes football’ and ‘defends black people’, but also that: ‘Robbie believes that he can get everything he wants’, and that ‘he doesn’t think about anything other than football’. Some children were clearly showing signs of reasoning associated with the formal operational stage in which children around the age of 11 become able to think in both abstract and concrete terms, and reflect analytically on what is happening (see Tucker, 1981).

Within literary criticism, characters are often viewed in relation to their complexity and development. Main and secondary characters can be both static (without much change) and dynamic (changing throughout the story) (Forster, 1929/1945; Nikolajeva, 2002). Adult readers might expect main characters to be more developed (round) than less important characters, to possess both positive and negative traits, and to change in some way (to be dynamic), although this change might be less visible in plot-orientated novels (Nikolajeva, 1998, 2002; Vandergrift, 1986). How child readers perceive characters may or may not coincide with how adults view them. Findings from the present project provide support for Mäarak’s (1994) suggestion that children are able to map character development. For instance, those reading *My Name is Jasmine Grey* commented on how Jasmine’s feelings of loneliness and rejection gave way to happiness on finding a friend:

In the beginning Jasmine was shy and not so happy, but then she get happy because she get a friend but of a while Rachel and Jasmine didn’t any more be friends (thought Jasmine) (Mikaela, *My Name is Jasmine Grey*)

In the beginning Jasmine was lonely, and she just liked Bramble. But then she get a friend, Rachel. (Susanne, *My Name is Jasmine Grey*)

This was by no means an isolated example. As the children became more involved in the story, they detected changes in character feelings and actions. They also discussed how relationships changed or developed. Susanne noted in a group discussion that, while Jasmine was the same all the way through the story, Rachel was nice in the beginning, weird in the middle and nice again in the end. Comments about Chester Smith (*Troublemakers*) included that he was a “cold person” in the beginning, and then became warmer. Barry also became kinder towards Robbie in the end, and accepted him. Although not much was said about character development by those reading *The*

Private World of Rajiv Ray, several children felt that Rajiv had changed during the course of the story, and some felt that this change was caused by the fact that it was important for him to see his sister Sumi again. Some felt that Rajiv seemed more happy and talkative after having seen Sumi. Others, however, felt that Rajiv was rather much the same all the way through but that Ben had become nicer towards the end.

Even weaker readers were able to detect changes of this kind, indicating that they had an understanding of the story on a deeper level. Markus commented about the way in which Lucy in *Secret Friends* was nicer in the beginning of the story than later. He also felt that Sophie and Kate became a little kinder towards Lucy in the end, possibly because of the death of Rafaella.

On a few isolated occasions, children voiced opinions about the *nature* of a change. When discussing Grandpa Leicester, for instance, Mikaela commented that she found it strange that his behaviour changed just because of a dinner. Similarly, group D came to the joint conclusion that Grandpa Chatterji had contributed to Grandpa Leicester's change.

On the whole, then, some children spontaneously analysed character behaviour more deeply, by inferring meanings; others gave more shallow descriptions, based on explicit information in the text. Most children gave more detail when prompted by tasks or questions. Children also managed to ascribe complex personalities to some characters, thus showing that they could think about traits more maturely than in terms of 'good/bad'. There were also differences between responses triggered by the individual books (see below). The deeper character analyses tended to be based on the books that the children read in the second half of the project.

Likes and dislikes

Children's favourites were often the main character(s) in the stories. Such was the case with Grandpa Chatterji, for instance, who was liked because he was 'funny', 'meditated', and 'had more energy than old people usually have'. Similarly, Rafaella, one of the main character in *Secret Friends*, was appreciated, because she 'was always friendly although other people were unkind to her'. In *Operation Gadgetman*, Beans was admired because she was 'clever' and came to think of things [clues] to look for:

hon var sådär fiffig och hon hittade på [saker] t.ex. där när det här hon gav den där juice glass-en [glaset] så var hon fiffig där när hon tänkte att hon tar fingerprints [fingeravtryck] och alla dom där. Så hon använde sitt huvve ganska mycket och det var bra, så därför tyckte jag om [henne], (Lars, *Operation Gadgetman*).

She was sort of clever and she came to think of [things], for instance, when she gave that juice glass, she was clever when she thought that she would get some fingerprints and all that. So she used her head rather a lot and that was good, so that's why I liked [her]. [My translation]

In *My Name is Jasmine Grey* Jasmine was liked because ‘she’s nice’, Ben in *The Private World of Rajiv Ray* because he was sympathetic and tried to be friends with Rajiv. Rajiv, in turn, was appreciated because he was calm and clever with a football. In *Troublemakers*, Chester Smith was admired by all children because he was a good person, and because he made time to train with the school football team, even though he was a professional player.

However, the main character was not *always* the one that the children liked the most. Markus and Cecilia liked Greg more than the two main characters in *Seven Weird Days...* because he was braver, nicer and calmer.

Only a few children made explicit reference to the author’s intention. Nils, for one, mentioned that Malorie Blackman ‘told us a lot about what Beans was thinking’ and therefore we got to know her the best. Susanne liked the characters in the Rajiv story more than the ones in the Jasmine story, because ‘more things were told about them’. Another example of this phenomenon is *Grandpa Chatterji*, where Susanne felt that ‘not much was said’ about the other characters, so Grandpa Chatterji was the character that she got to know the best, and the one she liked the most. Some children were able to specify whose point of view they felt the story was told from. In group F, for instance, Barbara and Markus note that the story was written from Lucy’s perspective, and that she was the one that they got to know the best.

In summary, what the children found attractive in characters was: 1) their behaviour towards others (such as being nice, kind, sympathetic or friendly); 2) admirable traits (being funny, different, calm and happy, good at football, brave, clever, and having special skills); 3) something interesting, special or different (meditating, being more fun than is common for old people); 4) complexity, having more sides to their ‘personality’; 5) that the character was visible in the story; and 6) that the character had been portrayed by the author in a positive light.

Children were also able to articulate why they *disliked* characters. Those reading *Seven Weird Days...* did not like Mike and Scott because ‘dom är fast hur rädda för allting’ and ‘och sen när dom inte är så snälla till Greg’ – that is, they are so afraid of everything, and they are not particularly nice towards Greg. In group D, all children agreed that they disliked Grandpa Leicester because ‘he’s so strict’ and ‘he’s not nice’. The children generally agreed on characters they did not like. Markus and Barbara reading *Secret Friends* felt that Sophie and Kate were not very nice. Barbara liked Kate the least because she led the others into bullying Rafaella, and Markus disliked all girls who were nasty towards Rafaella. Interestingly, Melker brought up the issue of author’s intention and way of portraying the character, in saying that ‘we aren’t supposed to like Shane’. Thus in the majority of cases, negative behaviour towards other characters was the reason why children did not like a character. There were also cases in which a

character was disliked because of traits which were not 'heroic' or admirable (being scared/afraid).

Individual actions and events

Children also commented specifically on individual actions and events in relation to characters (see Vandergrift, 1986), both spontaneously and when prompted by questions. *Operation Gadgetman*, for instance, triggered a number of spontaneous comments in children's reading diaries, particularly in relation to Beans' behaviour when trying to find her father's kidnappers: 'It was good that she told her gran about Dad', 'I think it was smart to put cornflakes there... ', 'they did do right when they set up traps', and 'Beans was very smart when she tok the fingerprints from the juice glasses...?'.

Children sometimes judged a character's actions in terms of what they would have done differently: 'I would have taken the fingerprints to the police to see if they could match anybody up with them', '...I would go to the police after they ...see her father in the car with the other car with Lucas and the other guy. They know the Lucas' name and where he lives and everything'. *Operation Gadgetman* triggered most judgements about character actions of this kind. Lars and Casper often related to Beans as being 'clever' or 'smart'.

5.2.6 Personal involvement

As we saw in 5.1, some story re-tellings displayed personal involvement. Such involvement was also present in children's evaluative and personal responses to texts. Our involvement changes as we respond to the different invitations in the text (Fry, 1985). Langer (1990) classifies involvement in terms of changing relations that the reader adopts toward a text. When 'being out and stepping in', readers make contacts with the genre, structure and language using prior knowledge and surface features. When 'being in and moving through', readers are immersed in the text world. They use text and background knowledge to develop meaning. When 'being in and stepping out', readers use what they have read in the text to reflect on their own lives. Lastly, when 'stepping out and objectifying the experience', readers distance themselves from the text world, reflect and react, relating it to other texts and experiences. According to Wells (1991), it is difficult to say what mode of engagement real books in the classroom might elicit. Much depends on the purpose for reading, and it varies from teacher to teacher. In the present project, the children engaged in the stories on a personal level, related their reading to their real-life experiences, and reflected on readings through different tasks and activities, as we saw in Chapters 3 and 4 (see Langer, 1986, 1990; Booth & Thornley-Hall, 1991; Wells, 1991).

Some responses indicated serious involvement in the text. For example, a small number of spontaneous *abstract thoughts on life-issues* were reported. When discussing *My Name is Jasmine Grey*, Katja reflected: 'I think: I'm lucky because a [I] have a mum and dad ho don't have give me to a child hom [children's home]!'. They also offered opinions on issues raised by their reading. Lars, for instance, said that it was sad when people let their children down by giving them up for adoption. But he also felt that it was good that some people cannot have children of their own, because otherwise children in children's homes would not be given families. Katja noted that she had learned through reading *Grandpa Chatterji* that one needs to keep in touch with one's grandparents, and, that it is acceptable to be a little childish even though one is elderly.

In their *questions to each other* - discussed in Chapter 4 - the children also showed involvement in the story, and ability to understand and infer meanings. The weaker children generally engaged in more concrete and literal questions on the texts. However, the literal plot questions which Markus, for instance, asked often indicate that he had understood the content. The questions posed by more proficient children to each other sometimes required others to infer meanings, or interpret what they had read, so calling for engagement: 'Why was Beans so surprised with the letter?', 'Why do you think Lucas might do what Beans says he will?'

Children also showed involvement *through story predictions*, both spontaneously and through tasks and questions. Most of the spontaneous predictions were related to *Operation Gadgetman*, where some children were eager to guess how the detective story would unfold: '...now I think something going to happen, something exciting.' Some children also expressed how they would like the story to develop: 'I hope we get to find out hwo those drivers were.'. Some entries in reading diaries referred to the outcomes of earlier predictions: 'I was right last time about De.Warner and Ser.Paxman. And I wonder why Ann and Louis didn't recognice Ser. Paxman!' (*Operation Gadgetman*). Some comments also involved surprise or disappointment: 'det var harm att man just hade städad i pappas jobbrum' (What a shame that the father's work room had just been cleaned [my translation], *Operation Gadgetman*); 'Jag blev mycket förvånad av att Rafaella är på sjukhus och jag är inte säker om jag läste fel att Rafaella är död.' ('I was very surprised that Rafaella is in hospital, and I'm not certain whether I read correctly that Rafaella has died' [my translation], *Secret Friends*).

Drama activities also offered opportunities for involvement in some cases. Opportunities and tasks varied between the groups. At one point, group D put on a performance which they had rehearsed, showing the rest of the class their favourite parts of *Grandpa Chatterji* and, in the process, displaying creativity:

Mother:	Neetu and Sanjay come back!
Grandfather Leicester:	What terrible names you have...given to my grandchilds
Mother	I'm sorry
Grandfather Leicester:	You should be!

Trans. 22: Extract from drama activity, group D, phase I, Grandpa Chatterji

This small addition to the story highlights Grandpa Leicester's personality. The children's performance demonstrated both reading comprehension and serious engagement in the story. In just a few words, the girls managed to convey some of the essence of the first chapters. Unfortunately, there was not time for all groups to stage a performance, although several children indicated that they would have wanted to. *Diary entries in the role of a character* and *essays* also triggered personal involvement (see appendix 5.1.1).

Readers indicated involvement, too, by making *inferences about the thoughts and feelings of characters*, discussed in chapter 7 below (Vandergrift, 1986). Mäarak (1994) found that around half of the 6- and 8-year-old L1-readers in her study were able to express opinions about characters' behaviour and that the majority were—to some degree—able to shift perspective and reason in a decentralized and non-egocentric way. EFL-readers in the present project, too, were able not only to put themselves in the position of the characters, but also to express opinions about their actions. Lars, for instance, is clearly thinking about intentions behind actions, when he notes that “maybe because the mother and grandmother did not let Rachel play with Jasmine, she got some funny thoughts” (see Chapter 7).

Sometimes, children displayed involvement by *expressing opinions on the morality of the characters' actions* (see Chapter 7). For instance, Barbara and Markus felt that it was rude of Lucy (*Secret Friends*) to run away when Dani confronted her. Similarly, in *Troublemakers*, the children expressed disapproval for Mr Pitt because he did not give people a chance to show that they were good at football, and approval for Chester for allowing girls and boys to train together. Some children reacted strongly, using value-laden terms:

But I dont understand Robbie's dad, why do he think that football is shit? And he don't understand that Robbie can go and have dancingclasses and football as her hobby at the same thime. But robbies gran did do the right thing to her son. (Casper, *Troublemakers*).

In summary, most children became—to a varying degree—involved in the stories on a personal level, sometimes spontaneously, and sometimes through tasks and activities.

5.2.7 Reading books as literature

Both written and oral sources reveal children's thoughts on the books as works of literature. Comments varied between the stories and groups, so that all groups did not discuss the same types of issues. The text sources are indicated in the discussion below.

Some comments related to *expectations and surprises*. For some children, the story was what they had expected it to be. For others, there were surprises. In group B, they thought that *Seven Weird Days...* would be a ghost story, as indeed was the case. However, Tomas felt that there were more things going on than he had expected, which he liked. These children were clearly interested in action and preferred the plot-orientation of the story (see Tucker, 1981). In the *Grandpa Chatterji* group, Katja and Annika noted that they could never have expected the book to be as much fun as it was. As regards *Operation Gadgetman*, some children were surprised, whereas for others the story turned out to be what they had expected. Lars knew from the cover that the book would be exciting, and Felix had thought it would be some kind of mystery story. Nils, on the other hand, had thought that Beans' dad would be the 'bad guy'.

In phase II, the children reading *Secret Friends* had not expected Rafaella to die. The Jasmine-story was closer to expectations than the Rajiv-story. The groups reading *Troublemakers* raised some interesting points about football stories. For example, Nils, Melker and Tomas had expected the book to be a story where one of the teams is bad to start with, but as the story unfolds they become experts. However, it transpired that *Troublemakers* was about one character's personal development, not about a whole team.

The question of *realism versus simple heroism and uncomplicated plots* was brought up by a few students, although they did not use these terms. Melker made the point about *Operation Gadgetman*: 'I thought it was kind of ehm typical how they just like out of the blue like had everything they needed like the ehm animal crunchies that would like blow up if you threw them'. Barbara thought it was a 'typical' book in which some characters are very good at something. She clearly signals an ability to think about the book in a more abstract sense, and that she has gone beyond the stage of wanting simple, one-dimensional, heroic characters. Thus, Tucker's (1981) and Appleyard's (1991) observations that children grow out of heroic characters who have everything they need (such as Blyton's *Famous Five*) seems relevant in some cases. In contrast, group A reading *Operation Gadgetman* had no such thoughts, and were clearly reading a book of a suitable level. There was thus variation between children reading the same book.

The *pace* of the novel received some comments. The duration of a children's novel is limited, sometimes involving just a few days. Rather than describing a long process, the plot focuses on some turning point in the protagonist's life (Nikolajeva, 2002). Without knowledge of theoretical issues related to temporality, some children picked up on the

way in which more things were happening at a quicker pace in *Troublemakers* than in *Operation Gadgetman*. When comparing the two books in retrospect, *Operation Gadgetman* was perceived by a few readers as drawn out in relation to *Troublemakers*: in *Operation Gadgetman* only a short time passed between episodes, whereas in *Troublemakers* several days could pass in one chapter. According to Appleyard (1991: 106), feeling that a text is drawn out is a typical reaction of an adolescent reader.

Some *gender related issues* emerged. At the end of the stage of early fiction – ages 10-11 (Tucker, 1981) – there is a split between stories for boys (hectic adventure stories) and girls (domestic and school stories). In the adolescent years, although the division remains, many books, including friendship stories, are enjoyed by both sexes. Some groups in the present study made comments about gender issues. Interestingly, Lars noted that he generally likes stories with boys as main characters. However, he also agreed with Susanne that gender does not need to be a problem. The boys reading *Operation Gadgetman* did not feel there was a problem with three girls as the main characters. Only on one occasion did Nils feel that Beans as a girl was worrying too much (which he himself would not have done). Nor did Susanne feel that it mattered that *Grandpa Chatterji* was a man. In this sense, both sexes were able to enjoy the characters in these two stories. In a similar vein, all children reading *I Want to be an Angel* felt that the book was suitable for both girls and boys. And, although Lars felt that it was silly of Jasmine and Rachel to ‘always play the same game, dressing up or putting on make-up’, he nonetheless enjoyed the story.

Some children were concerned with *story endings*. Typically, children’s stories end happily, not just because adults want to shelter children, but also because children have less capacity than grown-ups for dealing with fear or depression in literature (Tucker, 1981). In addition, young children may not have developed reading strategies which would allow them to identify double readings (Stephens, 1992/1996). In the present project, the children reading *Grandpa Chatterji* were pleased that Grandpa Leicester changed for the better towards the end. Similar comments were made about the Jasmine-story, which the children appreciated for its positive ending. However, some children reading *Troublemakers* felt that the story ended rather abruptly. Cecilia wanted to know whether the football match was a final or just a school match. Casper wondered what happened after the football match. Melker felt that there could have been two more chapters or so, to explain how things ended, if the team qualified, and whether or not Chester continued coaching, or if he went to Italy and then came back. The death of Rafaella (*Secret Friends*) caused the greatest surprise. Markus wanted Rafaella to rise from the dead and described how he thought it should have happened: he would have wanted Lucy to go into Rafaella’s room and find her lying on the bed; then she would have started to cry, and her tears would have fallen on Rafaella and woken her up. Both children reading *Secret Friends* thought the story should have ended differently. Markus thought that it was strange that the main character died. It

disturbed him to the extent that he chose to re-write the conclusion as his essay-topic (see appendix 5.1.1).

Children also offered comments about *literary merit* and *their enjoyment* of the text. They generally enjoyed both the activity of reading and what they were reading. Lotta, for instance, remarked after finishing chapter 2 of *Operation Gadgetman*: ‘I’m really looking forward to continue reading.’ The children were also able to offer comments around what they liked or did not like about the stories. Thus, all those reading *Grandpa Chatterji* felt that it was a funny book, and they very much enjoyed reading it. They added that Grandpa did funny things and that it was a rather easy book to read. They liked the fact that it had pictures, was about an Indian family, and had plenty of things ‘happening’. The children reading *I Want to be an Angel* felt that the two different stories were good/nice, and exciting. In fact, all six children reading this book borrowed it at the end of the project, to read the two remaining short stories in their spare time. All children reading *Troublemakers* enjoyed it. Lotta said that, although she had not liked the football stories she had tried previously, this one was different. Casper said that he could read the book again because he liked it so much. Enjoyment was also expressed in terms of liking one story more than another. In general, the children enjoyed their second book more than their first. For instance, some of those reading both *Operation Gadgetman* and *Troublemakers* enjoyed *Troublemakers* more. ‘Beans could always do everything perfectly and never was bad at anything’. *Troublemakers* was more realistic, and there was more action, which made it more interesting.

Comments about *excitement* stemmed almost exclusively from children reading *Operation Gadgetman*: ‘...And it was exiting when Beans and her friends were looking for clues when i thought would they find any. It was sad to when thei didn’t find anything much’; ‘The end of the book was very exciting how she thought out all that stuff under a lot of presure but still I don’t understand how she can be so smart.’ Excitement is closely related to another aspect of enjoyment which emerged in the children’s diary entries, namely *action*. For some children reading *Operation Gadgetman* and *Troublemakers*, the amount of action seemed to determine whether or not they liked the story. And Susanne observed when reading *The Private World of Rajiv Ray*: ‘In this chapter did happened meny things and it was good’, while Casper liked chapter 12 of *Operation Gadgetman* because ‘it did happen wery much things in it.’ Children did not always, however, agree. For instance, Nils once noted that he thought a chapter in *Operation Gadgetman* was boring, because nothing ‘awful’ happened, while the others in the group felt that the same chapter was both engaging and exciting. Several children were engaged by the action of *Troublemakers* and *Operation Gadgetman*.

Books were also appreciated because they provided a chance to learn new words, and because they were fun. Individual scenes were also reported as enjoyable. Markus, Cecilia and Tomas, reading *Seven Weird Days...*, liked the scene where Greg was

telling Mrs Mullish that she was dead. Tomas also liked the noises and sounds, because it was scary to hear footsteps come up the stairs. Another issue which affected children's enjoyment was humour: 'The chapter was really funny! It's easier to read to chapter if you like it, and I liked it!' (Katja, *Grandpa Chatterji*). However, although the children generally enjoyed the books, they were not uncritical. Everyone reading *Seven Weird Days...* felt that it was a good book, but not brilliant. The two groups reading *Operation Gadgetman* had differing opinions. Group A very much enjoyed the story, whereas some children in group C reported that it was boring in the middle.

Difficulty in reading and understanding were mentioned by some weaker readers. For some children, enjoyment of the story was connected with illustrations. Group B found it hard that *Seven Weird Days...* had a large amount of text, many difficult words, and no pictures other than in the very beginning. In contrast, children reading *Troublemakers* and *I Want to be An Angel* felt that the absence of pictures allowed them to imagine things for themselves, which they appreciated. Also in this respect, then, there were important differences in the needs and preferences of individual readers.

5.2.8 Responses to individual books

Different books gave rise to different responses. In phase I, opinions expressed in the diaries and notebooks of children reading *Seven Weird Days...*, for instance, were short, and showed little reflection. The focus was mainly on the action and excitement of the story. *Grandpa Chatterji* tended to trigger responses on issues such as the book as literature, chapter length (which the children felt was suitable), and enjoyment. The responses to *Operation Gadgetman* were, on the whole, more frequent and longer than those triggered by *Seven Weird Days...* and *Grandpa Chatterji*. Mainly, these consisted of descriptions about what Beans did, and what clues she and her friends had found. Most children indicated that the story was exciting and enjoyable. In some cases, a chapter triggered a thirst for even *more* action.

In phase II of the project, the two children reading *Secret Friends* responded spontaneously with short comments about a chapter being of suitable length, and good. *My Name is Jasmine Grey*, however, triggered a large number of personal spontaneous responses, analyses of feelings, and evaluative judgements. Story re-tellings and chapter-summaries often included a 'personal' dimension (see above). Responses to *The Private World of Rajiv Ray* included emotional reactions ('I think it's sad that Sumi left, for Rajiv. And it's strange that she would be married when she's so young'), and comments about how characters behaved towards one another. *Troublemakers* triggered both long written narratives, and many spontaneous oral reactions to events and behaviour. Personal involvement in character's situations was often visible, as in this example:

- Casper: Varför var Chester Smith där och se på..männe när dom...?
(Why do you think Chester Smith was there to watch when they..?)
- Melker: Han var inte där och se på, han försökte komma iväg från de där andra, reporters
'He wasn't there to watch, he wanted to get away from those others, the reporters'
- Casper: hmm
(yes)
Pause
- Lotta: Varför tror ni att den där Chester spelar så dåligt?
'Why do you think Chester Smith is playing so badly?'
- Casper: ehmmm...
- Melker: hmm...han saknar London. Och han ehmm var int riktigt liksom van vid laget
'He misses London, and he ehmmm wasn't quite used to the team'
- Casper: Kanske han inte är sådär riktigt van vid att det är så många folk och se på.
'Maybe he isn't that used to having such as large audience whatching'
- Melker: hmm
(yes)
- Casper: och så ropar dom 'bu' och...
'and then they shout 'bu' and'
- Melker: ...varje gång han gör en liten moka
'each time he makes a small mistake'
- Casper: ja, han blir helt osäker, han är så osäker att han klarar inte av det...
'yes, he becomes very uncertain, he's uncertain as to whether he'll manage...'

Trans. 23: Children asking questions on the text, group H, phase II, Troublemakers

In both phases of the project, all stories received significantly more and deeper responses when children were engaged in tasks and activities, and when prompted by the teacher's questions. The three books read in the second half of the project triggered the most engagement in the characters' thoughts, feelings, behaviours and actions.

5.3 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has discussed how children responded to texts orally and in writing, and what they said about the texts. The main written source of responses was the reading diary, in which children gave story re-tellings, summaries, personal evaluative comments about the texts, or both. Further, the chapter discussed theoretical aspects

related to children's evaluations and personal responses to texts, such as reader response, spontaneous and prompted responses, real life versus fiction, and cognitive and psychological development in relation to children's responses. The main categories of the present children's general responses involved analysis of characters, their behaviours and actions; personal involvement; and comments about their readings as literature. There were also differences in responses expressed around different books. In general, books in the second phase of the project triggered more involvement and engagement in character thoughts, feelings, behaviours, and actions.

Part I of this thesis – on EFL-literacy related issues which emerged in relation to using authentic texts – has now come to its close. A summary and discussion of main points are offered in Chapter 9.1. Now let us turn to Part II of the thesis, which concerns those issues which emerged in relation to the second main research question, the multicultural dimension to EFL and the multicultural nature of the texts. Whereas the present chapter has discussed children's responses in general, the two following chapters discuss responses of a particular kind: those which related to issues of culture or multiculturalism.

Part II: A multicultural dimension and multicultural texts in EFL

6. CULTURE AND READING IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Findings from this study suggest that children were able to engage in the cultural and multicultural content of the stories and to respond empathetically to the experiences of story characters. The main issues which emerged as important in this kind of teaching are outlined in the following three chapters, which cover culture and reading in language teaching (Chapter 6), multicultural and anti-racist aspects (Chapter 7), and issues related to the teaching situation (Chapter 8).

The present chapter explores issues related to culture. ‘Cultural’ and ‘sociocultural’ dimensions are in fact a common focus within EFL-teaching today. Section 6.1 discusses theoretical foundations for dealing with culture in language teaching, and the theoretical underpinnings for the multicultural dimension to the present project. Section 6.2 considers the present children’s reactions to cultural information in the texts, and issues which emerged in relation to general discussions about culture.

6.1 CULTURE IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Interest in culture in language teaching has its origins in social and cultural anthropology (Stern, 1992). The cultural dimension has been recognised as a valuable enrichment for broadening students' views also within applied linguistics, pragmatics, and educational theory (see for example Buttjes, 1991; Hall, 2002; Hinkel, 1999; Byram & Esarte-Sarries, 1991). Ethnography, American studies, British studies, and contemporary cultural studies, too, emphasize the important links between culture and language. As we will see below, intercultural studies have formed the focus for an influential body of research with relevance for foreign language teaching since the 1990s (Buttjes, 1990, 1991; Barro, Jordan & Roberts, 1998).

6.1.1 Approaches to culture within FL education

The foreign language learner needs to learn both conscious cultural knowledge, and knowledge required for social interactions which is unconscious among native speakers. Several EFL-scholars have developed methods for incorporating cultural and

sociocultural dimensions into language teaching, in order to help language learners become socialized into the target culture. (Buttjes, 1990; Byram & Esarte-Sarries, 1991; Byram & Morgan, 1994; Neuner, 1997)

Language and culture have, however, been emphasised differently in teaching during different periods of time (see Neuner, 1997; Risager, 1998). In the nineteenth century, 'cultural studies' introduced pupils to the educated elite of the target group with an emphasis on Christian cultural heritage, and the presentation of great men or events in history. Learning to read and write in the target language, knowledge about the language, and studying the philosophy, literature, and science of native speakers were important. Later, the study of realia changed the objectives into a focus on information about others, and encyclopaedic knowledge. The history, geography and institutions of the target country were emphasized. Around World War I, the emphasis changed to the relationship between language and national character, and typical aspects of national traits (Neuner, 1997; Byram & Esarte-Sarries, 1991). Guest (2002) recognizes the vast anthropological scholarship which has isolated elements of various cultures and helped teachers in applying insights into other cultures. He also distinguishes a new body of literature which is critical of this way of teaching culture, since foreign cultures have sometimes been misrepresented through reinforcement of popular stereotypes, as static 'others'.

After World War II, actual contact with native speakers was emphasised, thus extending the earlier demand for linguistic competence into a demand for communicative competence as well. Students, it was argued, needed to learn how to survive in the target culture (the tourist approach). In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a focus on language use in everyday situations, and pragmatic social roles became important. Universal sociocultural experiences, such as birth, death, and relationships, were emphasised (Neuner, 1997; Byram & Esarte-Sarries, 1991; Stern, 1992). Hall (2002) offers an overview of how language and culture are dealt with from a sociocultural perspective, including norms and standards for curricula and instruction.

Culture in language teaching continues to develop in new directions. Risager (1998: 243) surveys four approaches to culture within language teaching which are visible in Europe:

1. The foreign-cultural approach, which has been losing ground since the 1980s;
2. The intercultural approach, which has replaced the foreign-cultural approach, and is the dominant one today;
3. The multicultural approach, which has made its appearance since the 1980s, but is still in a marginal position;
4. The transcultural approach, which is just beginning to appear as a result of internationalisation.

The *intercultural approach* takes into consideration the relationships between different cultures. According to Risager, the intercultural approach recognises that different cultures are related to each other. Teaching deals with both the target country/countries,

and the learner's country, and stresses national identity. Teaching goals include the development of intercultural and communicative competence (see below) (Risager, 1998). A *sociocultural* dimension in intercultural FL-approaches implies that learners receive information about the daily lives of people in the target culture, about attitudes, beliefs and ideas. This is held to help the learner deal with possible communication problems. Different perspectives on sociocultural topics are presented. Learners try to make sense of new information by relating it to their own knowledge and experiences (Neuner, 1997).

The *multicultural approach* (Risager, 1998) is based on the assumption that several different cultures can coexist in the same society. There is a focus on the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the target culture. Intercultural and communicative competence are stressed, and this involves developing in pupils the ability to communicate with both linguistic majority and minority members of a target culture, through a common *lingua franca*. Risager emphasises the increasing importance of this approach due to growing multicultural school populations, and the large number of exchanges between students from different countries. However, she believes that the multicultural approach ignores the fact that national borders are becoming blurred. The *transcultural* approach, in turn, has as its ideal the cultural and linguistic coexistence of individuals in culturally complex societies.

Byram and Esarte-Sarries (1991) propose an approach which sees both students and teachers as ethnographers — language and culture should be learnt as a whole, the focus being on 'language for cultural understanding'. Students and teachers act as co-learners interpreting the target culture, and reflecting on their own culture from the viewpoint of an outsider. Barro, et al., (1998) advocate a similar approach which stresses that pupils should be socialized into the target culture through longer stays in the target society. Pupils should learn 'everyday culture', rather than 'school culture'.

Since some of these established approaches to language teaching (sociocultural, intercultural, multicultural) have goals in common with a "multicultural dimension" in teaching in general (see Chapter 1), incorporating the aims of multicultural education into language teaching would seem appropriate. However, my aim has not been to "teach" or adopt any of these language teaching approaches as such, but instead to investigate issues raised when using multicultural children's literature in the EFL-classroom.

Cultural aspects have long been recognised as important within Finnish EFL-teaching at primary school level: the national curriculum of 1994 (Utbildningsstyrelsen, 1994), the version current when fieldwork for the present project was undertaken, and also the new national curriculum (Utbildningsstyrelsen, 2004) both emphasise the importance of culture, and note that through learning a foreign language, pupils can broaden their perspectives of the world and strengthen their own sense of identity. Ability to communicate with members of different cultures is also seen as important. The 1994

curriculum states that the students should gain knowledge about countries, people and cultures in the target language area and develop unprejudicial attitudes towards their members. Students should also become interested in foreign languages and cultures. Because the curriculum is not specific as regards cultural content, age group or level of language development and the aims are abstract, interpretation and implementation has remained the responsibility of the individual teacher³¹. In fact, very little is known about how Finnish teachers particularly at primary school level are implementing the culture-specific goals of the EFL-curriculum. At secondary school level, however, such teaching has received some attention (see Larzén, 2005).

In the present study, I chose to interpret the curriculum in a broad sense, including the multicultural perspective on EFL-teaching, on the grounds that British culture and social life today are very much affected by the presence of different ethnic minority groups. How this worked out in practice will be discussed below.

6.1.2 Broadening views within language teaching

How, then, can a multicultural dimension – as proposed by the present project – be implemented within language teaching? And, conversely, in what ways does the present project recognize issues which are current within language teaching?

New terminology and perspectives

The politics of late twentieth century Europe, against a background of increased migration and tourism, have had an important impact on the aims of language teaching (Byram & Essarte-Sarries, 1991). There has been, for instance, a blurring of national boundaries and a growth in cross-national relationships on political, economic, cultural and linguistic levels. This, Risager (1998) notes, raises questions about the appropriateness of teaching from the perspective of ‘national’ language and culture. The idea of ‘nation’ in itself can also be seen as inadequate to describe a foreign culture since membership of a cultural community can also be expressed through other variables, such as gender roles, local identity, and ways of thinking (Hall, 2002; Byram, 1997b).

How, then, should language teachers address these issues? Byram (2000) argues that teaching should start with cultures and identities on a national level, since these are the dominant ones. After this, other social identities (such as those of groups in minority position) should be discussed. In addition, learners should reflect on their own social identities and cultures. Nonetheless, Byram notes, there is still a tendency among language teachers to talk about national cultures rather than the many different cultures

³¹ In practice, it is often the content of the school’s language textbook which steers the cultural content of language teaching.

within one and the same nation. Prior to this project, the present pupils had been learning about British majority culture. During the project, however, minority groups within the British setting were recognized, as were general aspects and experiences of belonging to a multicultural society.

A further issue arises from disagreement about what native-like competence entails, and what native-speaker norms and sociocultural contexts should be addressed by foreign language learners (see Neuner, 1997; Kramsch, 1998b). These questions are commonly resolved in the English language classroom by teaching pupils a standardized version of either British or American English language and culture (see Byram, 2000). Within the Finnish EFL-curriculum for primary schools, British English and British culture have traditionally been prioritised over other English language societies in textbooks, especially in the first years of language study. The present project focussed on the British setting which was already familiar to the students. It was a deliberate choice that all texts should be set in Britain.

Sociocultural elements, intercultural language competence, and tolerance in EFL

Within the European branch of FL-teaching, there has been a growing interest in the past decade in communicative situations, tolerance, and sociocultural elements. This is referred to as fostering *intercultural competence* (Neuner, 1997). The notion of intercultural competence in language teaching was developed in works such as Byram & Morgan (1994), Byram (1997b), and Byram & Zarate (1997), which argue that the aim of foreign language teaching should be that students acquire an awareness of new perspectives and learn how to interact with people with different views, acting as mediators between cultures. Some scholars, such as Kramsch (1998b), suggest that we should change the focus from 'native' linguistic or cultural proficiency towards adaptability and ability to get by in the target language in a range of social situations and environments. We need to foster 'intercultural speakers' (Kramsch, 1998b: 27).

In Byram & Fleming (1998) and Byram (1992; 1997b), the notion of 'intercultural communicative competence' is used to describe competence which non-native speakers of a target language need in order to interact successfully in the foreign language. Linguistic-, sociolinguistic-, communicative-, and discourse competence, and non-verbal communication, ability to gather knowledge about another culture, empathy, and adaptability, are all important elements. 'Intercultural communicative language competence' implies that communication typically results in mutual or joint production of meaning, and that in the course of communication the meaning systems of both native and target culture are challenged (Buttjes, 1990, 1991). Thus, learning a foreign language requires learners to be socialised into a new set of values and meanings (Byram & Morgan, 1994; Zarate, 1995). It also requires that they are able to imagine the 'other's' way of viewing the world (Byram, 1997b). According to Bredella (2003: 39), intercultural understanding within language teaching means that 'we can

reconstruct the context of the foreign, take the others' perspective and see things through their eyes.' In this sense, intercultural communicative language competence has much in common with a multicultural dimension in teaching in general (see Chapter 1). For these reasons, too, a multicultural dimension as applied in the present project seems appropriate within language teaching.

Intercultural communication is not, however, neutral. Zarate (1995) argues that the relation between the foreign culture and the learners' culture is based on a power struggle, and that cultural studies in the classroom require the management of a balanced relationship between foreign and native cultures. Learners need to know how to interact successfully with individuals with different views and values, and to analyse and manage unexpected situations (Byram & Esarte-Sarries, 1991; Neuner, 1997). They need to know that from other peoples' point of view *they* are the 'foreigners,' and that *their* mode of thinking and acting might seem unnatural (Neuner, 1997). Being intercultural, Bredella (2003) argues, means that we become aware of ourselves as cultural beings, and accept others' beliefs and values, even if we cannot approve of them. It also means that we are aware of tensions which might arise in the intercultural experience. Byram & Morgan (1994) and Byram, et al. (1997) argue, further, that tolerance and insight into the foreign culture will not emerge simply by concentration on communication skills in the classroom; goals involving tolerance need to be incorporated into language teaching. At the upper comprehensive school level, Larzén (2005) investigated whether language teaching in Finland-Swedish schools can be described as *intercultural* (promoting intercultural understanding, tolerance and empathy). She found that only a few teachers were truly *intercultural* in their teaching, and that teachers experienced a lack of competence, time and appropriate teaching materials to carry out intercultural teaching.

The present project recognizes the importance of tolerance and understanding highlighted by EFL scholars already mentioned. On the surface, I feel, intercultural EFL-teaching and multicultural teaching (see Chapter 1) share several goals, and teaching methods have much in common. A fundamental difference in theoretical positions, however, is that tolerance and acceptance within intercultural *FL-teaching* are focussed on the development of positive attitudes towards members of the *target* language society, whereas the goal of tolerance and understanding within *multicultural education* (see Chapters 1 and 7) is to improve relationships between members of different groups in *one's own* society. In this study, these two fundamental theoretical positions are combined in that aspects of empathy and tolerance are dealt with in relation to ethnic minorities in the target language society, the UK (see Chapter 7).

6.1.3 Teaching culture in EFL in practice

Although there is no shortage of theory concerning culture in language teaching, actual teaching practice and empirical research have often lagged behind. Not much is known about how teachers incorporate cultural aspects into language teaching, and few guidelines offering concrete teaching examples have been available to teachers (though see Utley, 2004).

In theory, however, scholars from various backgrounds have attempted to define and categorize cultural topics in relation to language teaching. Stern (1992), for instance, distinguishes six aspects of culture teaching: places (physical locations), individuals and ways of life (what people think and do, how they live), people and society in general (how native speakers view various groups in society), history, institutions, and major achievements such as art, music, and literature. Byram & Esarte-Sarries (1991: 15) and Buttjes & Byram (1991: 20) offer a model of language teaching, which emphasises Language Learning, Language Awareness, Cultural Experience, and Cultural Awareness; they indicate the content focus for each area; and suggest which language (L1 or FL) should be used in teaching.

Neuner (1997: 54-58), coming from an intercultural perspective, argues that there is no 'hard core' of sociocultural topics for FL-teaching that would be valid for all groups of learners. Instead, he distinguishes three main sociocultural objectives in foreign language didactics that need to be considered in relation to the needs and abilities of a particular group of learners: 'pragmatic' (use of foreign language, skills), 'cognitive' (knowledge/information), and 'emotional' (attitudes). Neuner further makes a distinction between *explicit* and *implicit* sociocultural phenomena. The former is seen in textbooks where a certain phenomenon is being explained, and the latter occurs in the more 'hidden' forms, in vocabulary, pictures, and in the situational contexts of dialogues or authentic text types. It is the latter that is relevant when pupils are reading authentic target language texts, as in the present project. Neuner (1997) also distinguishes the teachability/learnability of sociocultural phenomena as a factor worth considering, while Shotton (1991) notes that few teachers are social scientists or have the confidence to teach cultural issues. My own teaching experiences in relation to cultural and multicultural matters in this project are discussed in chapter 8.

Practical approaches to teaching culture also vary. Stern (1992) outlines eight possibilities: 1) creating an authentic classroom environment (posters, displays); 2) providing cultural information; 3) cultural problem solving (questions of manners or customs related to specific situations); 4) behavioural and affective aspects (dramatizations, mini-dramas); 5) cognitive approaches (reading literature, lectures, discussions); 6) the role of literature and the humanities (contact with the arts and humanities); 7) real-life exposure to the target culture; and 8) making use of cultural community resources. My teaching would fall into categories two, four, and six.

Kramsch (1993: 205) identifies four current trends in teaching culture within language teaching. The first concerns the need to establish a 'sphere of interculturality' which allows students to *understand a foreign culture by relating that culture to their own*. Byram & Morgan (1994) and Byram & Fleming (1998) also emphasize the roles of comparative methods, and contrastive analysis between the target culture and the students' culture. This approach was also a feature of my own teaching and will be discussed below. Looking at one's own culture from the eyes of others, and looking at foreign cultures from the perspectives of natives of that culture, are important steps in developing both intercultural and multicultural competence.

The second trend concerns teaching culture as an interpersonal process, which contributes to *understanding foreignness or 'otherness'*. For instance, Buttjes (1990) proposes that priority be given to contexts, theme, and meaning, and sees the foreign language student as being in a process of 'extended acculturation' or intercultural perception. Tseng (2002) also discusses the process of learning, suggesting that students need to generate meaning through transaction, by recognizing their own culture, transacting with cultures outside their own, and reflecting on these transactions. He offers examples of tasks which allow recognition, exploration, and reflection. The third trend (Kramsch, 1993) concerns moving from traditional ways of thinking of national identities as fixed or homogeneous to *take on board the growing multiculturalism and multiethnicity*. Such recognition was present in my teaching.

The final trend concerns the *crossing of disciplinary boundaries* to include the insights of scientists, ethnographers, and sociolinguists in students' readings (see Esarte-Sarries, 1991, and Barro, et al., 1998). These goals, however, are highly abstract and would, I feel, be relevant for EFL at primary level only if teachers were able to refer to suitable teaching guidelines incorporating the underlying principles. Some of the activities in the present project fall into Kramsch's first, second and third categories, and will be further discussed below in relation to findings from the present project.

The assessment of cultural, sociocultural, or intercultural learning clearly needs to be connected to teaching goals. Although the guidelines for learning objectives and assessment proposed by Byram & Zarate (1997: 18–20) and Byram (1997b: 56–64), for instance, might be too general and demanding in a primary school EFL-classroom, they offer valuable advice for teachers. My aim, however, was not to assess children's performance in relation to a set of learning objectives but rather to observe which issues emerged in the primary EFL-classroom when dealing with multicultural literature for the first time. Let us now look at these issues.

Section 6.2 exemplifies how, in practice, cultural and sociocultural issues were dealt with, and which issues emerged in relation to reading the novels.

6.2 CULTURAL AND SOCIOCULTURAL ASPECTS OF READING

EFL-readers' reactions to cultural and sociocultural information in a text are interesting for at least two reasons. First, the more children experience new cultural information or lack of cultural knowledge, the more difficult they might find the text. Second, responses to information of this kind offer interesting insights on the potential of literature as a medium for cultural mediation. Many writers have argued that literature has the potential to provide the reader with access to the culture of the people whose language they are learning, and that readers learn both from their own experiences and from the representations of experiences they encounter through fiction (Fry, 1985; Hill, 1986). These are common arguments in favour of using literature within EFL-teaching. However, especially within the primary school EFL-setting, empirical evidence of these processes is very scarce.

In the present project, the children's novels were selected with an eye to their *multicultural* aspects rather than to their sociocultural or cultural richness in general. During the project, however, we were dealing with *both* the British setting of the stories *and* the multicultural theme. It became evident that any discussion of diversity also required some consideration of general cultural awareness. Because the children had never explicitly dealt with the concept of culture before, it was necessary to start with what they knew already: their own culture, and British *majority* culture, which they had been learning about in previous EFL-teaching. The most important cultural and sociocultural issues (as opposed to *multicultural* issues discussed in chapter 7) which presented themselves concerned children's reactions to information in the text (6.2.1), reading comprehension (6.2.2), and cultural comparisons and perceptions of the story setting (6.2.3). Each of these issues is outlined below. In addition, some attention is devoted to essay-writing on a cultural topic (6.2.4).

The aim has not been to analyse each novel for cultural content. Instead, the focus has been on the opposite: thoughts and responses which the selected books and related teaching materials have triggered in *the children*.

6.2.1 Reacting to cultural and sociocultural information in the text

Some writers have offered examples of tasks related to texts which might help to raise cultural awareness. Collie and Slater (1987), for instance, provide useful examples, and some practitioners (such as Rönqvist & Sell, 1994, 1995) engage in whole-class study of authentic texts in order to help students appreciate their cultural richness. Because the focus for the present project was on the reactions of *children* to three different books being read in class at the same time, teacher-centered whole class discussions would not have been practical or desirable (see Chapter 4). Nor did I test cultural knowledge, since this was not my focus. Instead, I posed open-ended questions which

allowed children to explore their own ideas. Was there anything in the text that indicated that the setting was Britain (rather than Finland). Was there anything culturally 'new' or unfamiliar in the text, and so on. The same pattern of response to books emerged as described in Chapter 5: most views on culture were expressed in relation to questions or tasks; they were not spontaneous.

In fact it was not always easy for the children to think in terms of 'culture' and 'sociocultural' information in the texts, especially in the beginning. On only a few occasions were spontaneous issues raised. Katja, for instance, who had been doing an essay on Hinduism, alluded to the bronze statue of Shiva in *The Private World of Rajiv Ray*, and showed the others in the group a picture of Shiva. In the same story, Mikaela noted that it was strange that Sumi could be married when she was so young. She also wondered how it was possible that *Grandpa Chatterji* had never seen his grandchildren before. Children gave more examples of sociocultural or cultural aspects when prompted. Katja, Mikaela and Susanne, for instance, noted when reading *Grandpa Chatterji* that in India a common dress for women is called a sari. Mikaela volunteered that 'Indian peapop use saris and they mediteit.' 'Fish and chips', and tea-drinking in England were mentioned as sociocultural items in relation to *Operation Gadgetman* and *Seven Weird Days...*

Cultural responses varied between the books, with *Grandpa Chatterji* allowing a wider range than the other books. Some responses included comments about interpersonal relationships and cultural confrontations, when the children noticed that Grandpa Chatterji's behaviour differed from what might be expected in England. The children also noted that Grandpa Chatterji 'spends more time with the children', 'wears different clothes' and 'eats different food' from Grandpa Leicester. Even so, the attention paid to cultural matters was relatively small in relation to the opportunities offered in the text. For example, two pages are devoted to baking *pooris* in the kitchen but gave rise to no comment from the children.

There was also some evidence of possible dangers in presenting a culture solely through one work of fiction (see 5.2.3). Mikaela, for instance, wondered whether or not 'men make food at all in England'. She had begun wondering because the other characters in the family expressed surprise that Grandpa Chatterji was making food. As Lazar (1993) explains, some novels and short stories may create an illusion of representing reality even though they are, in essence, works of fiction. Bredella (1996) also discusses the question of reality, noting that we tend to view a literary text about a foreign culture as information (facts) and that students should therefore be encouraged to treat texts critically. Rönnqvist (2002) has found similar dangers in her work with lower secondary school pupils. Since the children in the present study were unfamiliar with people from India living in Britain, the novel which they were reading might provide their *only* insight into this minority group (see also 8.2.3).

Sometimes, it was easier for the children to think in terms of more stereotypical or ‘tourist views’ of culture. For instance, they found it easy to relate Grandpa Chatterji’s visit to the funfair to what they would show foreign guests in their own hometown; the town centre, the castle, the Cathedral, the museums Aboa Vetus & Ars Nova, and the new maritime museum near the river.

In summary, although some children picked up on cultural elements in the text, there was variation between both children and books. *Seven Weird Days...* and *Operation Gadgetman* triggered the least thought around cultural and sociocultural matters, whilst *Grandpa Chatterji* triggered more. Even in real life, most children, according to Ramsey (1998), are not always aware of their own or other people’s culture, and do not necessarily see behaviour as being ‘cultural’. Thus, there might be developmental limits as to what can be expected from children when reading books. Equally pertinent, a large amount of information can be conveyed across cultural boundaries. As we will see in section 6.2.3, the universality of some stories actually became an issue in the present project.

6.2.2 Reading comprehension and culture

Children’s understanding of the texts was discussed in general terms in chapter 3. In the present section, their understanding of cultural aspects is considered. Although native-speaking readers also respond differently to the abstract and theoretically constructed ‘implied reader’ (as in Iser, 1978, 1983) or ‘model reader’ (as in Eco, 1990), young EFL-readers may face additional challenges, since texts imbed cultural meanings (see McCarthy & Carter, 1994; Stephens, 1992/1996). When constructing meaning, each person relates events to his or her experiences and fields of perception. One text-based source of difficulty for foreign language readers involves the cultural coherence of the discourse, including both semantic and pragmatic perspectives (Lazar, 1993). Kramersch (1998a) draws attention to the ways in which cohesion, icons, images, cultural encodings, and referents, as well as relationships between the signifier (sound, word) and the signified (concept) affect how we understand a text in a foreign language. EFL-readers might be at a disadvantage relative to native language readers, since they might supply connections not explicitly spelled out in the text, might not be able to make appropriate connections, or might interpret an utterance inappropriately (Byram & Morgan, 1994; Kramersch, 1993).

As we saw in chapter 3, readers’ schemata and expectations influence how we understand and interpret texts in a foreign language (see Kramersch, 1998a). Scholars within several fields share the view that readers are actively responsible for the meaning which they create from the text, and that there is a process of communication between the writer, reader, and text (Iser, 1978; Kramersch, 1998a; Langer, 1990; Rosenblatt, 1987). Literature and reading as processes of communication have further been

discussed by some writers, both literary pragmaticists (Sell, 2000, 2001; Van Peer, 1989), and educationalists (Langer, 1990; Wells, 1991).

In the present study, evidence of reading comprehension was visible in reading diaries and group discussions, as discussed in previous chapters. This does not, however, mean that children necessarily understood cultural connotations in the same way as native speakers would, but rather that they were able to enjoy the texts at their own level of understanding *despite* possible misinterpretations, and without sometimes even knowing that their interpretations were incorrect.³² Rönnqvist & Sell (1994) point to the possibility that students interpret the foreign culture through their own ‘cultural spectacles’ – without realizing that they might lack information.

In my teaching, I decided not to problematize issues that the children themselves did not perceive as problems. Especially since this was their first attempt at reading a longer text in English, I did not feel it appropriate to highlight all sociocultural elements in the text (as would be the case in a teacher-led discussion in which the teacher wishes to ‘teach’ culture through reading a novel). Inevitably, various items of cultural and sociocultural information which might have provided useful teaching points (see Rönnqvist, 2002) were left unnoticed. Instead, my strategy was to deal with cultural elements that the children noticed, or which were significant to the understanding of the story, but otherwise to let the children enjoy the story at their own level. I helped when children asked. For instance, when faced with ‘poppadum’, an Indian savoury snack, children in group D called on me to help. Meanings then evolved as a joint exploration of concepts, with me asking questions, and children in the reading group adding ideas (see Lehr & Thompson, 2000).

Post-reading tasks sometimes encouraged children to think about expressions from the texts. In general, the children were eager to find out meanings of new words and they often arrived at plausible explanations (see section 4.4). However, there were some exceptions to the rule which in some cases affected understanding of cultural elements. Melker, for example, was unchallenged by other children in his group when he translated ‘Union Jack’ into Swedish as ‘Onion-coloured Jack’ (an onion-coloured boy). In cases like this the teacher’s assistance is needed.

Further, it is sometimes difficult to separate linguistic from cultural issues. According to Bredella and Delanoy (1996), language students often do not know whether their reading difficulties are due to lack of linguistic or cultural knowledge, or to gaps or contradictions in the texts. Many words do not have an exact correspondence in the foreign language, or a particular foreign word might not have an exact referent in the learner’s L1. One needs to take a closer look at the contexts, Neuner (1997) suggests, drawing on sociocultural knowledge. In such cases, teacher assistance is clearly necessary, and this also proved to be the case in the present study. Katja, for instance,

³² See also 4.4.4. on the limitations of children’s knowledge

had been wondering about the size of the *town* where the *Grandpa Chatterji* story is set. I explained that in England, ‘big’ places like London are called ‘cities’ and ‘small’ places are called ‘towns’. In Swedish, cities and towns are all termed ‘stad’. Nils also gave the notion of ‘town’ some thought: *Operation Gadgetman* must be set in a little town, he said, because they only had to walk a short distance before they reached the outskirts.

Strategies for overcoming cultural problems when reading are discussed by Lazar (1993) and Mc Carthy & Carter (1994). Lazar’s strategies are similar to the general guidelines for dealing with culture in the EFL-classroom described by Simpson (1997), Shotton (1991), Byram & Morgan (1994), and Byram & Zarate (1997). These strategies involve cueing students into the topic or theme, providing explanations and glosses, providing questions which help students infer cultural information, brainstorming, making cultural comparisons and associations, providing cultural background information, and extending activities into discussions and project work. In the present project, the reading groups engaged in activities of these kinds (see Chapters 3-4).

The children sometimes lacked the frames of reference which would have allowed them to infer cultural information from the text. For instance, when trying to pin-point Rafaella’s ethnic and cultural origins, Markus and Barbara picked up on the ‘spicy food’ which Rafaella’s parents were serving. When thinking about which countries have traditions of spicy food, Barbara suggested Italy but she also noted that Rafaella did not look Italian. The children’s limited experiences of different foods hindered them from making further suggestions. However, in other cases, such as the ‘poppadums’, the children were able to arrive at a joint understanding with the help of the teacher.

Few scholars have drawn attention to the language medium of instruction in relation to cultural learning. Byram (1989), however, doubts whether it is possible to describe a culture in another language (such as EFL-students’ mother-tongue), although he notes that using only the target language would be very difficult for young language learners at elementary level. He sees the solution in authentic teaching materials. Later, Byram (1997) and Byram & Esarte-Sarries (1991) modify this view by distinguishing between different areas of cultural learning, and recommending use of the target and mother tongue for different purposes (see section 6.1.3 above). In the present project, the target language was used differently for different purposes and by different students (see 4.4.5). It was sometimes important when discussing cultural matters to use the children’s L1, particularly in weaker groups.

6.2.3 Perceptions of story setting and cultural comparisons

As we saw in section 6.1, cultural comparisons are common in some forms of language teaching (see Byram & Morgan 1994; Byram & Fleming 1998; Kramsch 1993). When

such tasks are carried out in relation to reading in a primary school EFL-setting, we are clearly placing abstract demands on children: they are required to compare several realities with each other, that of their own culture, the target culture, and also that of the fictive world presented in the text (see also 5.2.3). Kramsch (1993: 207) offers an extensive account of the notion of reality in relation to reading in a foreign language. She describes four aspects which face the language learner: the first culture's perception of the second culture, the second culture's perception of self, the second culture's perception of the first culture, and the first culture's perception of self—versus actual reality. These perspectives are in themselves multifaceted views of reality, representing many subcultures. Kramsch suggests that the only way of building a complete understanding of both cultures is to develop a third perspective, which would enable learners to take both an insider's and outsider's view on both cultures, a third space. As language learners become more and more proficient in their second language and familiar with this culture, they try to articulate their new experiences within their old one, making them relevant to their own lives.

Neuner (1997) presents a slightly different view. He points out that FL-learners' view of the foreign world is always based on their own sociocultural background knowledge, to which they add new insights. Contact with the 'foreign world' is often an indirect experience through media: texts, pictures, films. Therefore, contact with the 'foreign' triggers an inner event (*inneres Ereignis*). Learners create a 'fictional scenario' of the foreign world in which things are arranged on the basis of their own knowledge and experiences. They might rearrange the scene on the basis of limited information until the scene makes sense. This view of reality is, however, embedded in their own sociocultural background and may be far from the reality of the foreign culture.

Other scholars have also offered opinions on how new cultural knowledge relates to learners' prior knowledge. Tseng's (2002) progressive theory of culture in language learning is based on the notion that meaning is generated through a transaction between a person's conception of the world (individual culture, IC) and the world outside (social culture, SC). Tseng focuses on culture as a process of learning rather than pieces of knowledge to be acquired. Differences between IC and SC allow us to form new perspectives. In a similar vein, Byram (1989) argues that our cultural competence is representative both of the culture which members of our society share in general, and of our own personal (individual) character. We need to remember that each pupil has multiple identities. Bredella (2003) proposes a flexible model of intercultural understanding which would allow us to mediate between relativism and ethnocentrism, and develop a third position which mediates between our own values and those of the foreign culture.

How, then, did the present children perceive culture in relation to the texts? The universality of some texts was apparent from some children's responses. While texts by writers of a similar cultural background are often more accessible, texts from other

cultures which deal with themes relevant to one's own life or interests may work equally well because a large amount of universal information can be conveyed across cultural boundaries (Lazar, 1993; Steffensen, 1987). Views varied among the present children. Some children reading *My Name is Jasmine Grey*, *Troublemakers*, and *The Private World of Rajiv Ray* felt that events could just as easily have taken place in Finland, whereas others were not sure, or felt that they could not.

In a similar vein, some children reading *Troublemakers* and *Operation Gadgetman* said that they were not thinking of anywhere in particular and that the setting could have been 'any English speaking country'. Was it the universality of the 'detective story' (*Operation Gadgetman*) which made the story so accessible to some of these foreign language readers that they could follow the story without reacting to cultural or sociocultural information? And, if this were the case, is it a positive feature for EFL-reading that the text was accessible to the young readers, allowing them to enjoy the story without struggling with cultural gaps, or is it a negative feature in terms of the potential of cultural mediation through this text? Further, could it be that the pupils were interpreting the scene as being closer to their own reality than was actually the case, creating what Neuner (1997) describes as the learner's creation of a 'fictional scenario' based on his personal knowledge and experiences? Or, could it be, as Ramsey (1998) points out, that children do not necessarily interpret the world as being 'cultural', and that they, therefore, were not tuned into thinking in cultural terms whilst enjoying this story? For example, when prompted, the same children were able to find examples in the text which pointed to the British setting of the story. These questions were raised during the present project, but not answered.

The present project left no doubt that different children perceived one and the same story in different ways. Thus, while some children felt a story could have taken place in Finland or another English speaking country, others pointed to things in the texts which indicated the actual setting. Lars (reading *My name is Jasmine Grey*) suggested that we do not adopt as many children from other backgrounds in Finland; he felt that the children of visible minorities [my term] in Finland generally have their own mums and dads with them. School life and school culture were also perceived as different by some students. Nils felt that the school and teachers in *Operation Gadgetman* were much stricter than in Finland, and that our schools seem more 'fun'. School uniforms were noticed by children reading *Troublemakers*. Some children reacted to the fact that children in England call their teachers 'Miss', 'Mrs', or 'Mr' plus surname rather than by their christian names. There were also comments about food. For instance, when Rafaella died (*Secret Friends*), Lucy was given a cup of tea. Markus and Barbara noted that in Finland she would have been given cocoa, or a glass of water. Melker also commented that people in Finland do not eat 'macaroni and cheese' as they did in *Operation Gadgetman*. Thus, several children picked up on cultural information even in a detective story such as *Operation Gadgetman*, which was not particularly rich in sociocultural or cultural elements.

However, children sometimes found it challenging to make cultural comparisons. Barbara, for instance, noted quite honestly in her diary that it is difficult to think about such things: ‘Maybe this was different than in Finland, I don’t know, because I haven’t ever hear about anything like this before’. In fact, only a small number of students spontaneously made cultural or societal comparisons. It was clear, however, that some events had triggered thought. When children were prompted, it emerged that *Troublemakers* was the catalyst for a wide range of comparisons of football culture, including football hooligans, the larger size of British football grounds, the importance of football in England versus Finland. Tomas, for instance, observed in a group discussion that in England ‘there are more hooligans, because there are more people there. There would probably be the same situation in Finland, if football matches were as big a happenings as they are in England’. Other children noted that Finnish spectators are generally more calm and collected than in *Troublemakers*, where people screamed and threw things, and even shouted abuse. Melker wrote in his notebook that ‘If Chester Smith were playing in TPS [a Turku-team] he would be captin because the standad is very low compared to Englis clubs’, while Lotta noted in her reading diary: ‘i thought that enghllish FootballFans are more aktive then finish football-fanns. English Fans are even more aktive than Finish ice-hockey fans.’ Nils suggested that in a Finnish school setting, everyone would be allowed to join in the football team (as opposed to what happened in *Troublemakers*). And Melker pointed out when reading *Troublemakers* that football in TPS is not as important or prestigious as in The United, and that ice-hockey in Finland is more like football in England.

In the present project, the children were thus occasionally comparing the British setting of the novel with what they knew about their own culture and, in some cases, minority target culture issues with the Finnish equivalent. However, on one isolated occasion, something even more demanding occurred: I had asked the children a commonplace reader-response question concerning what Grandpa Chatterji might have been thinking or feeling when coming to Britain for the first time. In effect, I was asking the children to compare two unfamiliar cultures with each other – Grandpa’s Indian culture and the British setting of the novel. The children responded:

- Mikaela: it’s cold maybe a little and then, it’s so maybe it’s raining because it’s always raining in England (*everyone giggles*)
- T: You mean it’s sunnier where he comes from?
- Mikaela: Yeah, and it’s more sand..sån hån damm vad är det (*dust, kind of, what is it [in English]*)?
- T: dust
- Mikaela: dust and
- T: in India or in England?
- Mikaela: India
- T: hmm (*yes*)
- Mikaela: and I would...ja, hmm...and it’s eh.ehhand...people maybe have...clothes are different

use.’ At the end of the project, several reported that they would have liked to spend more time on this task. They were particularly interested in the foods and history of the culture that they had chosen. Only one pupil, Nils, felt that he would have preferred to simply read the children’s novels. Mikaela made the point that you might learn more facts from an information book, but that it is more fun to read about a culture in a story book (see Rosenblatt, 2002; Wikinson & Kido, 1997).

At the end of the project, the children shared their essays in a whole-class session. In general, the topics presented were new to the children. However, on a few notable occasions, someone shared what they already knew about the topic. For instance, Kasimir, who had been to Thailand and seen a Buddhist temple, explained what Buddhist monks look like in their orange costumes. In some cases, the children referred to difficult expressions which they could not understand, for instance ‘reincarnation’ in relation to Hinduism. The discussions after each presentation allowed other children to offer their opinions. A few difficult ethical questions were raised: Nils, for instance, wondered how relief organisations could agree to help in times of famine in India when people refuse to eat cows, and this generated a great deal of interested debate.

Occasionally, the children posed questions which I did not know how to answer. In these cases, I promised to find out answers for next time. In fact, some advocates of a cultural dimension to language teaching, such as Byram and Esarte-Sarries (1991), stress that the teacher does not need to be an expert on sociocultural knowledge or foreign cultures. Instead, the teacher and pupils can work together as co-ethnographers finding out information together. I felt on several occasions that my knowledge of ethnic minority groups and their cultures was limited (see also 8.2.1).

6.3 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter discussed approaches to teaching which have recognized cultural learning. The theoretical underpinnings for including a multicultural dimension in this study, how current trends of language teaching were taken into account, and practical issues involved in teaching a cultural dimension, were also discussed. The second half of the chapter discussed cultural and sociocultural issues as they emerged in the present project: reacting to cultural information in the text, reading comprehension and culture, perceptions of story settings and culture, and writing cultural topics essays were particularly important categories. These findings are summarised and discussed in 9.2.1.

7. MULTICULTURAL AND ANTI-RACIST ASPECTS

In this thesis, a ‘multicultural dimension’ refers to multicultural education which is inclusive of anti-racism (see section 1.4), with a focus on EFL-teaching. In many ways, using multicultural literature is consistent not only with a multicultural dimension in teaching in general, but also with sociocultural and intercultural approaches to language teaching (see 6.1).

The present chapter discusses the multicultural and anti-racist issues – as opposed to the cultural and sociocultural ones – which emerged from the present study: children’s engagement and familiarity with diversity (section 7.2), their powers of empathy (7.3), and their thoughts about bullying, discrimination, and racism (7.4). The chapter begins with a brief discussion of theoretical issues underpinning multicultural socialization and reading (7.1).

7.1. CULTURAL SOCIALIZATION AND READING

7.1.1 Children’s cultural socialization

How is culture learned? Several writers have suggested that coming to know, accept and internalise the values of one’s culture is a gradual developmental process. Values, attitudes, and behaviours are initially learnt or shaped at home (Alexander, 1997; Bruner, 1990; Piaget, 1955/97). The expectations of adults are passed on as norms of behaviour, which the child internalises. Older siblings, grandparents, and friends complement the parents’ structuring of the child’s experience. Differences occur not only between cultures but also within cultures and individual families. Secondary socialization takes place in day-care, pre-school and school, as the child’s circle of significant people grows. Acceptance by the peer group becomes important. Childhood and children’s cultural socialization today are often seen as contested areas, in which a variety of interests and influential adults might have conflicting views. (Keats, 1996; Kendall, 1983; Myers, 1999; Morgan, 1997).

The children in the present study were 11-12 years old, in the beginning of their last year of Finnish primary school. They had thus already acquired social and cultural values, behaviours, and norms through their homes, formal schooling, and peers. Many

of the children came from bilingual (Finnish/Swedish) homes and were part of both Swedish-language and Finnish-language traditions. One girl had recently moved to Finland from Denmark. The children were generally not in daily contact with members of visible minority groups, except for some pupils of other ethnic origin in the same school and class.

One of the most common activities in school, also central to the present study, is reading. Let us now consider reading in relation to children's socialization.

7.1.2 Reading and multicultural socialization

The relationship between reading and life is complex, as has already been discussed in section 5.2.3. Literature is often seen as one of many instruments of socialization within a culture. Bettelheim & Zelan (1974/1983), for instance, argue that already in the beginning stages of reading, children need authentic texts which make reality more accessible. They need books with rich language that inspires them; they also need to be convinced that reading will open up new intellectual and imaginative experiences. Bettelheim (1975/1976) outlines how, through the medium of story, children learn about the truths of human nature. Fairy tales, which deal with universal human problems, are a particularly rich source, speaking to the child's inner world and encouraging intellectual and emotional development. Parents often feel the need to protect their children. However, Bettelheim argues, although the fairy tale raises the issue of the evil sides of human nature, it also shows that it is possible to overcome hardships. It thus 'confronts the children squarely with the basic human predicaments'.

In the present project, the children were not, of course, reading fairy tales but modern children's novels and short stories, some of which addressed difficult societal problems experienced by members of minority groups. Various scholars argue for the effectiveness of this approach. Rosenblatt (2002), for instance, claims that by reading about other people's problems, children can put their own problems into perspective, distance themselves, and think more clearly. Fry (1985: 75) makes the point that: '[b]y the activity of our reading we give ourselves the sense of having 'lived through it', but because we have not actually done so, we are able to contemplate that experience in ways that are just not ordinarily possible in our lives'.

Through literature we also come into contact with cultural patterns from the past, from other societies, or from sub-cultures within our own society (Rosenblatt, 2002; Johnson & Giorgis, 2000). As we saw in 1.5.1, two major reasons are often given for including *multicultural* children's fiction in literature programmes: to develop students' knowledge of and respect for religious, racial, and ethnic diversity; and to familiarise them with the literary traditions of other peoples and countries around the world (Roberts, 1998; Stotsky, 1994). Reading multicultural literature can thus be *one* way for

white students to come face to face with the experiences of, and attitudes towards, culturally diverse peoples, a belief which underpinned the decision to introduce literature in the present study. Little attention, however, has been paid to instructional strategies which might help accomplish these ends, or to the effect of such texts on *real* readers, particularly in the EFL-setting. Marshall (2000) notes that the study of response to multicultural literature is so new that appropriate pedagogies are only under development.

Nonetheless, there is now a growing body of research and advice for teachers on the use of multicultural literature with *L1-English* readers (see, for instance, Roberts, 1998). Rogers & Soter (1997) offer accounts from classrooms in which pupils and teachers have engaged with multicultural texts. For example, Enciso (1997) investigated how Jerry Spinelli's *Maniac Magee* was received by fourth- and fifth-grade students. Meanings were negotiated in the classroom, providing space for all children, not only those in privileged positions. McGinley, Kamberelis, Mahoney, Madigan, Rybiki & Oliver (1997) studied how (L1-) reading and writing among third, fourth, and fifth grade readers might function as sources for personal, social, or political understanding and reflection. They found that literature functioned as a means by which to envision possible selves, roles, and responsibilities through the lives of the characters, both fictional and real. It also helped them understand and negotiate social relationships, reflect on problematic emotions and situations, and become aware of important social issues.

MacPhee (1997) used multicultural literature featuring African-Americans as central characters with American first-graders. She encouraged dialogue among students as a way of confronting social issues and experiencing other sociocultural contexts. Her pupils frequently addressed issues of racial prejudice and called them unjust. In a similar vein, Samway and Whang (1996) found that reading books led to increased knowledge among pupils about different places and people living there, and that open-ended discussions of controversial issues contributed to deeper understanding and meaning. Luke & Myers (1994/95) discuss the use of literature in helping children settle conflicts in the classroom, including those which stem from discrimination and fear of otherness. In addition, Short and Klassen (1993) used literature as a tool for learning about social, political, and cultural issues. Children became willing to discuss complexities of life in a pluralistic society. Lehr & Thompson (2000) also argue that books can be catalysts for examining moral issues.

Beverley Naidoo (1992a, 1992b) explored issues of racism in an attempt to develop anti-racist awareness among white 13-14-year-old native British students. Her goals were to investigate the potential of certain children's books to extend white students' empathy towards 'otherness', and to challenge ethnocentric and racist assumptions. For a number of students, the texts appeared to have considerable potential for challenging aspects of racist thinking.

Adult reactions have also been studied. Wilkinson & Kido (1997: 262) found when using reader response methods and literature study groups in connection with multicultural fiction in teacher education courses in the US that '[e]ven without diversity in the [literature study] groups, students can ask questions and offer answers for others to consider as they draw nearer to the characters and stories.' They also discovered that teacher trainees can be encouraged to use multicultural literature in their classrooms.

All of these studies suggest that literature is a potential source of multicultural socialization. There are also some guides for teachers. Roberts & Cecil (1993), for example, offer practical examples of how to teach a range of multicultural texts, and Stones (1999) is a useful practical guide to multicultural children's books (see also 8.2.1).

A note of caution is needed, however. Galda, Ash & Cullinan (2000) highlight the danger that readers will reject texts in which their own ideologies are violated. Beach (1997) studied reasons for stances (ideological positions) of resistance to multicultural literature among L1 white suburban high school and college students reading a range of multicultural texts, and found that some students resented generalizations about their own white group. Others denied racial difference. There was also a reluctance to adopt alternative cultural perspectives, and to challenge the status quo. Pupils had problems knowing how to channel their shame when responding to racial conflict. Therefore, despite the positive outcomes reported above, teachers do need to be aware of the dangers and demands of using multicultural literature in their teaching.

Various writers from the foreign- and second language settings (see for example Bredella & Delanoy, 1996; Hill, 1986; Silberstein, 1994) have argued for the use of children's literature in EFL-teaching. In all of these cases the focus has been on students older than those featured in the present study, and in addition, cultural and sociocultural issues related to the target language *majority* have been the focus. Let us now, in contrast, take a look at what happened in the present classroom, where *young* EFL-readers were reading and responding to *multicultural* texts.

7.2 ENGAGEMENT AND FAMILIARITY WITH DIVERSITY

What was evident throughout the project was the children's general inexperience with visible minority groups. Engagement with issues diversity occurred in some reading groups. Characters' culture or country of origin served as a catalyst for some group discussions. For example, pin-pointing Rafaella's (*Secret Friends*) country of origin, as we saw in chapter 5, was not easy. As Lucy says in the text (p. 37): 'I never asked what the country was. Somehow, I didn't want to know. Rafaella's parents seemed like magic people to me, and their house was an Aladdin's cave, full of treasures whose meaning I couldn't understand.' In this case, both the text and the children's inexperience of other cultures prevented them from making informed guesses. *Grandpa Chatterji* differs from *Secret Friends* in this respect. Here, 'foreign' cultural information is explained to the reader, and the fact that Grandpa Chatterji is Indian is highlighted rather than inferred.

Physical differences triggered some responses from children. When watching the *Grandpa Chatterji* video, for instance, some children wondered how Grandpa Leicester's skin colour could be so light when the other family members had darker skin. This gave rise to a discussion in one group about how children's eye-, hair-, and skin colour depend on a combination of factors from both parents, and the possibility of people in the same family looking different. A discussion of *The Private World of Rajiv Ray*, in contrast, focused on how skin colour depends on which part of the subcontinent people come from. Chester's skin colour, too, was discussed explicitly in *Troublemakers*, as was Jasmine's in *My Name is Jasmine Grey*.

In Chapter 6, evidence was presented of the ability of some children to make comparisons with their own real-life situations. This pattern extended to multicultural issues. Some children reading *My Name is Jasmine Grey*, for instance, identified themselves with Jasmine except for skin colour, and also recognized similarities between her situation as a member of a minority community in England, and their own position as members of the Swedish language minority in Finland. Thus, Annika noted that in England there are many black people and people from other cultures, and that there are fewer Swedish-speakers in Finland than black people in England. However, comparisons of this kind were rare, and were often triggered by questions or tasks.

Sometimes, a character's behaviour was experienced as odd. For instance, children wondered about Rajiv's behaviour in the *Rajiv Ray* story, which they experienced as 'different', 'mysterious', and 'strange'. Similarly, Susanne and Annika commented in a reading conference that Grandpa Chatterji was 'weird.' The children reading *Secret Friends* reacted to the 'strangeness' of Rafaella. Both Rafaella and Grandpa Chatterji, however, were much liked by the children. In fact, group D reported liking Grandpa Chatterji *because* he was different. There are differences, of course, in how 'otherness' is portrayed in the texts. While *Grandpa Chatterji* deals with 'culture' in an enriching

and positive light, the 'different' characters in the other two stories experience difficulties because of their minority position. These difficulties are further discussed below.

Again, it should be emphasised that reactions to diversity were relatively rare, with most discussions occurring in response to *Troublemakers*, *Secret Friends*, *My Name is Jasmine Grey*, and *The Private World of Rajiv Ray*, which were read in phase II of the project. Even so, children's interest in and awareness of diversity, both as regards physical appearance, and cultural behaviour, definitely increased.

7.3 EMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING

As we have seen in chapters 1.4 and 6.1, empathy and understanding for the perspectives of others are considered important both as part of intercultural and sociocultural dimensions of EFL-teaching, and within a multicultural dimension in teaching in general. Empathy emerged as an important aspect of children's multicultural responses to texts.

Firstly, what is empathy? Responses to this question vary. Verducci (2000) argues that writers have been conflating related phenomena into a unitary concept. Empathy as *feeling* encompasses aesthetic empathy (related to perceptions of artistic form), and compassion (sorrow or concern for the misfortunes of another group); but it can also be viewed as cognitively *knowing* and *understanding*. Best (1998) argues that at least four kinds of understanding are relevant to education for tolerance. Firstly, you can perceive a situation in your own way, but at the same time appreciate that an alternative perception is acceptable. Secondly, you can recognize the values influencing another person's behaviour without agreeing with the reasons. Thirdly, you may have little or no sympathy for the alternative view, but understand the reasons that underpin it. Fourthly, it is possible to appreciate how certain circumstances influence people to think and act, but at the same time to be baffled by behaviours which seem morally repulsive. Educationally, the three former ways of understanding might lead to consensus, or discussion of diverse points of view, without threatening one's fundamental beliefs.

EFL-writers such as Byram (1989) and Neuner (1997) make a distinction between tolerance, which involves acceptance of others and a willingness to live and work with people who are different, and empathy, which goes a step further, requiring understanding and an active acceptance, and also changing of viewpoints. Sell (2000, 2001) discusses a further distinction – empathy versus sympathy – in relation to reading literary texts. Empathy can be experimental and momentary. When we empathise, we

(simply) ‘try on’ the other person’s perspective. Sympathy, on the other hand, involves a more long-term standpoint, a commitment to another person’s point of view. Empathy is, I feel, a more realistic goal for a short term reading project like the present one.

7.3.1 Problems when discussing empathy and understanding

Dealing with empathy in schools raises ethical, moral and practical questions. A basic dilemma facing schools is whether they should reflect the society in which they are set, or act as agents for change. Preston (1994) recommends a type of ethics education which develops a critical perspective that empowers individuals and fosters community. Advocates for multicultural education, such as Leicester (1989, 1992), argue that moral education in pluralist societies should aim to develop those qualities and values which will contribute to a just and harmonious pluralism (see also section 7.4.5). In Finland, the ethos and fundamental values of the primary school establishment in the past decade (Utbildningsstyrelsen, 1994, 2004) have included the goals of valuing Human Rights, democratic thinking, equality, equal opportunity, pluralism, and cultural diversity. Therefore, there are strong grounds for dealing with empathy within the framework of Finnish education. However, scholars from several fields, including Byram and Morgan (1994) and Brown (1998) foresee a problem: the encouragement of positive attitudes may be interpreted as brainwashing or indoctrination. We therefore need to be careful when dealing with sensitive issues in the classroom, so as not to threaten students’ fundamental beliefs (Best, 1998: 331). These questions are complex and classroom implementation might raise further issues.

Further, empathy can sometimes create a false sense of involvement. For instance, Rosenberg (1998) found that when white adult students expressed their care for others, their expressions sounded naive; they had no experience in relation to the ‘other’, and their understanding of the pain and anger of the ‘other’ was limited to reconstructing the ‘other’ in the image of themselves. The expressed feelings of identification could just as well be responses to their own feelings of helplessness in relation to racism rather than a genuine desire to learn about and know the ‘other’. The pedagogical question, then, is how to build on students’ ‘emotional recognition of sameness toward an intellectual understanding or critique of differences’ (Rosenberg, 1998: 9). Naidoo (1992a, 1992b) and Rosenblatt (2002) suggest that educators need to understand that increasing students’ *capacity* to empathize will not necessarily affect their actions in real life. However, it is not unreasonable to think that engagement with literature might have *some* positive influence. As Byram (1993: 79) points out ‘The emotional and imaginative force that art, literature, and nature exert can be instrumental in directing student attention to moral issues, which can lead to moral understandings’.

We also need to recognize that emotional appearance is not the same as emotional reality: what we show others is not always what we feel (Thompson, 1999). As far as

reader response in EFL classrooms is concerned, we need to be aware as teachers that students might not be saying what they *really* feel (Marshall, 2000).³³ It is also important to bear in mind that cognitive and affective change is unlikely to result from short courses (Byram, 1993). Thus, although literature is widely believed to offer new insights in readers, some caution is required when interpreting responses.

In the present project, I was interested in both whether or not children could cognitively *understand* characters' behaviour, and whether or not they demonstrated empathy as *compassion* for other people's situations (see discussion below). What is difficult to determine, however, is whether, as Rosenberg (1998) and Verducci (2000) suggest, the children's empathy was *genuine*, or naive. The depth of their understanding, whether such empathy extends into sympathy in a real-life situation, and what possible long-term effects teaching might have on real-life situations are matters beyond the scope of the present study.

7.3.2 Empathy and reading among young EFL-learners

Empathy and understanding in relation to reading

When reading, we will always respond to the text according to our own psychological processes (see Rosenblatt, 1978, 2002). Our ability to empathize or identify with other people's experiences is also guided by our interests; our own problems and desires affect what we react to in the text. Readers also differ in their degree of empathy (Rosenblatt, 1987; Tucker, 1981). Vandergrift (1986) notes that the reader is able to see inside the 'minds' of characters. Literature gives us the opportunity to 'live through' in contrast to 'learn about' (see also 5.2.3 & 7.1.2). Children's books can enable children to identify their own emotions, also difficult ones, and they can therefore offer a starting point to allow strong emotions to be discussed (Humble, 1993). According to Applebee (1978), works which involve a struggle between different representations of experience make us expand and reformulate our views, whereas works within the realm of accepted systems and values confirm already existing views. Books which offer new experiences and perspectives *may* help broaden readers' minds, especially young readers', and texts vary, of course, in the opportunities they offer for participation.

Byram & Morgan (1994) and Verducci (2000) (see above) distinguish two important dimensions in relation to understanding others; the personal and affective, and the scholarly and cognitive. When reading, Rosenblatt (1987; 2002) argues, students need to read for *both* intellectual understanding *and* personal connections. Her notion of *effluent* and *aesthetic* reading is widely used in relation to readers' responses. Delany (1996) has connected Rosenblatt's concept of aesthetic reading with EFL-reading. He

³³ See also section 5.2.2 on spontaneous and prompted responses

introduces a multi-dimensional approach to learning in the language classroom, which involves: the aesthetic dimension; the dimension of language learning; the intercultural dimension; the dimension of the educational setting; the political dimension; and the dimension of personality development. Aesthetic reading in the EFL-classroom can, according to Delanoy, be seen as somewhat different from that of L1-reading; more factors are involved in complex ways.

In applying literary theory to EFL-reading, Bredella (1996) notes that the main goal should be to enable students to develop their own interpretations by bringing their own experiences to the text. Aesthetic reading means responding to the text and becoming aware of one's responses. Students who are encouraged to respond to texts and discuss their responses with peers achieve a better understanding of both the text and of themselves (see 4.2.3). According to Bredella (1996: 18), aesthetic reading can also 'promote intercultural understanding because it encourages us to see the world from different perspectives and because it explores our images of foreigners and foreign cultures.'

EFL-scholars such as Byram (1989), however, wonder whether it is *really* possible to understand another culture. In practice, he believes, an interpreter from one culture will find some cultural and linguistic meanings in the other culture which are familiar, and others that are not. In order for us to understand meanings that are unfamiliar we need to make an *imaginative leap* into the experiences of members of that culture. Bredella (1996, 2003) takes a positive view, arguing that we do not need to *be* a Russian in order to understand a problem expressed by a Russian (see also Best, 1998, above). Nor does identification mean that we reduce 'the other' to our own experiences (Bredella, 1996: 21). Instead, it means that we put ourselves into the position of the other and thus experience an enlargement of our own identity. This means that we can discover sides in ourselves that we were not aware of before. We *know* that we are putting ourselves in the other's position. We can feel the compassion and fear of a character because we can imagine what we would feel like in a similar situation (Bredella, 2003: 39). It is therefore perfectly feasible, Bredella (1996, 2003) argues, to ask pupils how they would have acted in the position of the protagonist, as in the present project (see Chapters 4 and 5).

Sell (2000, 2001) argues that the wider the sociocultural gap between the contexts of writing and reading, the more difficult the empathetic effort. He stresses, however, that this can also be a stimulating challenge. We can use our empathetic imagination to try on different identities, leading in some cases to change. Readers, according to Sell, are even able to project themselves into a persona very unlike themselves for the purpose of communication. The effects of Sell's mediating criticism on real readers have not been tested empirically, but it may well have potential within a multicultural framework, inasmuch as the mediating approach allows us to see human beings as both part of their

sociocultural formation, and as capable of communicating with others whose formations are different.

However, for some scholars, an understanding on a personal and empathetic level is not enough if we wish to challenge discrimination on an institutional level as well. Galda & Beach (2001: 71) argue for the need for students to ‘go beyond inferences about characters’ actions to contextualize these acts as social practices within larger cultural worlds’ (see also Galda & Beach, 2004). Here, there is a difference between reading literature for cultural enrichment as in some forms of EFL-teaching (see Chapter 6), and the anti-racist approach suggested by more radical forms of multicultural education,³⁴ in which intolerance, discrimination, inequality, racial attitudes, and institutional forms of racism are central areas of concern. Thus, the fundamental goals underpinning teaching would determine what one would wish the students to gain from their reading experience, and thereby also the teaching methods employed (see section 8.1.2).

What can we expect from young EFL-readers?

What, then, can we expect from young EFL-readers, and how might they empathize with characters, and position themselves? Empathy is sometimes linked with the process of socialization (see 7.1.1-7.1.2), in which the family plays an important role. Emotional experiences change as we develop, and are tied to factors such as personality, self-understanding, general maturation, social groups, ethnic and national identity, age and gender. The growth of empathy involves emotional and cognitive awareness, and development in interpersonal relationships. Important aspects of this process include understanding and applying social rules when showing emotions, and the ability to interpret other people’s feelings. (Byram & Morgan, 1994; Thompson, 1999)

As we saw in 5.2.4, Tucker (1981), Applebee (1978), and Appleyard (1991) have related L1-children’s reading interests and responses to their psychological development. Tucker’s stage of early fiction, between 7 and 11 years, is important for learning basic role-taking skills. Children at the top end of this age-range are able to take account of different points of view. ‘An involvement in a good, convincing story at an appropriate emotional and intellectual level can help children, without their necessarily recognising it, towards understanding why people act in the more puzzling ways that they sometimes do...’ (Tucker, 1981: 131).

Around the age of 10 to 13, children are interested in the thoughts and feelings of other people. They can think hypothetically about different possibilities and alternative realities. They also observe and evaluate themselves and others, are able to both be involved in the story and to reflect on it (Appleyard, 1991). An important aspect of the process is also that the reader knows that the characters of the novel are not real people

³⁴ See 1.4.1

but personae created by the author (Harding, 1962; see also 5.2.3). Developmentally, children in middle school years are capable of genuine empathy and understanding of others (Byram & Morgan, 1994; Thompson, 1999).

Hypothetically, the children in the present study could either still be limited in their understanding of conflict and of good and evil (see Appleyard, 1991), or be interested in the thoughts and feelings of other people and demand stories with more elaborated points of view. However, it should also be noted, that they were reading novels in a foreign language and it was not self-evident that their responses would correspond with those of L1 readers. Their reactions in terms of empathy or understanding are therefore of considerable interest, especially because of the lack of empirical evidence of this kind from EFL-settings. Let us now take a look at what the children said about the stories.

7.3.3 Empathy in the present study

Some children reading *Grandpa Chatterji* showed an understanding of how it might feel to *experience a new society* for the first time. Katja commented in a group discussion that it feels as if you are a little child and you don't know anything. She also explained what it had felt like for her family to take a tram in Helsinki for the first time. Similarly, Mikaela talked about an experience in a car park in Sweden, when her family did not know the conventions for paying and leaving your car. Although they had not had the *same types* of cultural experiences as Grandpa Chatterji, these children nonetheless recognized the feeling of things being unfamiliar. They could make an imaginative leap into his situation (see Bredella, 1996, 2003), and also relate to personal experiences, demonstrating both an intellectual understanding and feeling through personal connection (see Verducci, 2000; Rosenblatt, 1987; 2002; see also trans. 24).

Harding (1962) explains that the reader of a novel is in the position of a ghost, who watches the behaviour of the characters. The ghost can watch so closely that he/she feels part of the events. Harding uses the terms 'onlooker' and 'spectator'. Some theorists (Rosenblatt, 1978; Bredella, 1996) believe that an aesthetic experience requires that we are both involved and also distanced to the involvement, so that we can reflect on our response. Aesthetic reading also requires that we bring our own experiences to the text. Bredella (1996) distinguishes two levels of emotion: the emotions of the characters, and the reader's own response to these emotions. As part of reader response tasks in the present study, some children offered comments on how *they themselves felt* when reading a chapter: 'When I read the chapter i felt angry becaurs Robbie's father didn't pay much [attention?] to Robbie. I think that Robbie's father souldn't kritiser him all the time.' (Lotta, *Troublemakers*). They also expressed happiness about positive outcomes in personal relationships, such as about the two

grandfathers who were very different and had become friends (*Grandpa Chatterji*). Some children also revealed their own position, offering confirmation for Applebee's (1978) observation about adolescent responses to fiction. For instance, Mikaela commented in her reading diary on *The Private World of Rajiv Ray* 'I think it's sad that Sumi left, for Rajiv' [It is sad for Rajiv that Sumi went to India to be married], and 'I think that the capter was good but sad that no one that [but] Ben cares about Rajiv'. In *Troublemakers*, Lotta voiced strong opinions about how badly Robbie and Chester were treated. Similarly, after reading a section of *Secret Friends*, Markus noted that 'Det är ganska synd om Rafaella' [*poor Rafaella!*]. Barbara and Markus both reacted strongly against Rafaella being bullied. Here, they were expressing compassion and empathy for the characters (see Verducci, 2000). In fact, several children displayed personal engagement in the interactions between characters, especially in relation to the books read in the second half of the project (*Troublemakers*, *Secret Friends*, and *I Want to be an Angel*). Lotta voiced particularly strong emotions:

När jag läste kapittel 7 var jag arg. Jag var arg på Robbies pappa för att han inte lyssnar på Robbie, jag är arg på Barry som hellre tror på sin vänn Shane (som försöker förstöra livet för Robbie) än på sin egen bror! Jag tycker värkligen syns om Robbie. (Lotta, *Troublemakers*)

When I read chapter 7 I was angry. I was angry at Robbie's dad because he doesn't listen to Robbie, and I am angry at Barry who rather believes his friend Shane (who is trying to ruin Robbie's life) than his own brother! I feel really sorry for Robbie. (My translation)

Some children offered comments on *how they themselves would feel* in a similar situation (see Bredella, 1996, 2003; Vandergrift, 1986). Barbara, for instance, commented on the disappearance of Beans' father in *Operation Gadgetman*: 'This was not nice, I think, it was tarrible if that would be my father I could not think of anythin else than help him.' Markus and Barbara noted that Lucy must be feeling ashamed and embarrassed for treating Rafaella badly. Annika noted that she would feel strange and sad if she did not have a friend (Jasmine's situation in *My Name is Jasmine Grey*), while Katja tried to imagine both what Jasmine felt and how she herself would react in a similar situation: 'I think she want to be white because Rachels grandma don't like black people. If I was Rachel I should play wit Jasmine fast -> *på engelska*³⁵ [although] my grandma should say so.' Barbara managed to put herself in Lucy's shoes in saying that Lucy might be feeling that she would like a close-knit family, such as Rafaella's. And Nils, in relation to *Troublemakers*:

I think that Barry's parents are very angry about what Barry did. If I was them I would say that he cant meet Shane anymore exept in school of cours.

In homework tasks and essays, children occasionally wrote *in the 'role' of one of the characters*. For instance, when Markus was reading *Secret Friends*, he wrote from the perspective of Rafaella: 'Jag tycker att ingen tycker om mig. I dag har jag varit med om något sorligt' (I feel that nobody likes me. Today I have experienced something sad

³⁵ Here, Katja signals to the teacher that she uses a Swedish word when she does not know the right word in English.

[my translation]); and also Lucy: 'sorligt att Rafaella är död' (It's sad that Rafaella has died [my translation]). Similarly, Lotta wrote in the role of Robbie when reading *Troublemakers*:

This was one of the best and worst day i've ever lived. It started bad when I nolas me [made a fool out of myself] in front of the kids in the PE-leson and Mr. Pitt. But then it changed. First I got to show my talet [talent] to the bigmout Shane and then i met Chester Smith! So the day ended god [well].

Susanne, too, successfully picked up on the emotional content of the text in diary entries in the role of Jasmine (*My Name is Jasmine Grey*):

When I moved here I was lonely, but then Rachel beomed [became] my friend. We were together for a time, but then everything changed. Rachel went red everytime she looked at me when somebody saw it. One day Bramble vanished when I was in the park with him. I couldn't find him, but then Rachel came to me with Bramble. He had went home. Then we were friends again and we were alomst all the time together.

Some children were able to understand the feelings and perspective of *grown-up characters as well as child-characters*. Mikaela's chapter summary, and her diary entry for Lena (the adoptive mother) showed a sensitive appreciation of both the adoptive parents and the adopted child in *My Name is Jasmine Grey*:

Mr. Bob Jacobs and Lena Jacobs is a cople who can't have childrens. Dat's why they wan't to abopt a child. One day they saw an advertisement in the paper: Fostering and Adoptions; there was a photo of girl of something about nine years old. Lena showed the picture to Bob and said that they would go and look at the girl. They wrote letters, made telephone calls and had lots of interviews with people wanting to know if Lena and Bob would be good parents to Jasmine. then they get a short meeting with Jasmin. Jacobs look at Jasmin and thought, will she love us, could they love her like their own. Jasmin had already being one or two times adopted, but it didn't worked out. Jasmin vanted a family, she wanted not to be alone.

'Dear diary!' (Diary entry in the role of Lena, *My name is Jasmine Grey*)

I think it's sad that Peapol don't like black peapol, so they don't expect [accept] Jasmine. One day Jasmine said to me that no ones loves her but I said that i isn't trought [true]. She has been so said [sad] thes fve days. In the biginning she was "blyg" (shy)³⁶ and not so happy but then, she got Rachel to her friend and not so happy. Then it start Rachels other friends didn't want Jasmine with them. I don't know so much because Jasmine isn't so open with her thought's but something happened and know everything is okay, Rachel and Jasmine i friends and is always together. And Jasmine is happy, and when she is happy me and Bob are happy.

Melker showed a similar understanding when writing about his thoughts in relation to *Troublemakers*:

Chester Smith is a football player hwo [who] has been sold to "united" and is playing bad. I think it is because he is having a hard time adapting. Robbie is having a hard time with all the other kids hwo hate Chester Smith.

Further, some children were able to appreciate the private worlds of both the 'victim' and the 'oppressor'. Markus and Cecilia, for instance, could *understand* why Mike and

³⁶ Mikaela underlines the Swedish word and indicates that she wants me to fill in the right word in English.

Scott were annoyed with Greg but did not agree with them. They were also able to see Greg's annoying behaviour from his perspective:

Cecilia: I think they [Greg] did that because he wants more friends
T: so you feel he was trying to make friends?
Cecilia: yes because I know a lot of people there do this way
T: hmm
Cecilia: to make friends

Trans. 25: Group B understanding character behaviour, Seven Weird Days at Number 31

Here, Cecilia draws on her real-life experience. Similar responses were displayed in relation to *Secret Friends*. Barbara notes that Lucy did not really mean to harm Rafaella, and that she simply wanted to be friends with the other girls as well. She felt that what Lucy did was wrong, but she could see *why* Lucy acted in the way that she did (see Verducci's, 2000). Such examples, however, were rare.

Children were on occasion able to identify *conflicting emotions*. On the one hand, Barbara said, Lucy (*Secret Friends*) was missing Rafaella and feeling bad; on the other hand, Lucy did not want to be with Rafaella in school and probably felt that she was wrong to join the gang who treated Rafaella badly. Children's ability to understand several perspectives is a good starting point for intercultural communication (see Byram, 1997b, 2000; see also 6.1).

In summary, books, particularly those used in the second half of the project, evoked personal involvement, emotions, empathy and cognitive understanding of characters' situations. As we have seen, some children showed an awareness of several characters' perspectives, conflicting emotions, and of their own position in relation to what was happening in the text. Such understanding varied in degree between both children and texts (see Rosenblatt, 1978, 2002). Children were able to position themselves and to think about how they themselves would feel (see Best, 1998, and Vandergrift, 1986, as discussed above). Children were both involved in the story and reflected on it (see Appleyard, 1991, and Rosenblatt, 1978, 2002, as discussed above). In several examples, they displayed an imaginative capacity to understand feelings and positions which they had probably not experienced themselves, such as being kidnapped or being a target for racism (see Bredella, 1996, 2003, as discussed above). However, as some scholars have suggested, literary responses should be interpreted with caution: it was often a task or question that triggered involvement, rather than what the children offered spontaneously (see Brown, 1998; Delanoy, 1996). In addition, we will never know whether pupils said what they *really* meant. Nor can we know how they would act in a real-life situation. We can only trust that their responses were genuine.

7.4 BULLYING, DISCRIMINATION, RACISM

When dealing with multicultural awareness in the classroom, one is in effect also dealing with aspects of bullying, discrimination and racism, common problems in multicultural societies. The three stories in the second half of the project included such “difficult” topics associated with belonging to an ethnic or visible minority group. Children’s responses to such issues are discussed below (7.4.6), after an introduction to some theoretical aspects involved (7.4.1–7.4.5) .

7.4.1 Cultural identity and attitudes among children

Cultural identity and attitudes play an important part in children’s social relationships and in the treatment of minorities in multicultural societies. Keats (1996: 87) defines ‘cultural identity’ in the following way:

Cultural identity is that component of the concept of the self which is concerned with one’s sense of embeddedness in one’s family past, present and future and one’s place in the wider cultural milieu.

Cultural identity has its roots in one’s ethnic background but encompasses other psychological attributes: it is affective in that it includes feelings; it is perceptual in that it involves the observation of similarities and differences in perceptual cues; and it is cognitive in that it is a concept of what one is. How one feels about what one perceives oneself to be is one’s level of self-esteem.

The question of identity in the contemporary world is, however, complex, since people can have mixed and multiple identities (Appiah, 1999). Some minority members identify with a particular group by participating in its traditions, customs, and organizations. Others may identify with two or more national origins. Some adapt well to dual cultures; others find themselves between two cultural groups, belonging to neither. Schools that focus only on the white dominant perspective have often failed to meet the needs of dual-heritage pupils (Davis & Evans, 1997; Hallan, 1994; Keats, 1996; see also 7.4.2). Root (2004) discusses consequences of the reality of mixed-race and multiracial identities in schools, and proposes a framework for thinking about racial identity. In fact, identity in relation to ethnic minority students has received attention in Western societies, such as the UK and US. In Finland, too, as we saw in 1.4.3, some scholars have studied issues related to minority children in mainstream schools.³⁷

The sense of identity of ethnic *majority* members is also important in a multicultural society, since it affects their attitudes towards minority members. Different aspects of identity are at the forefront at different times. For instance, when children mix in all-white or all-black groups, individuals’ ethnicity or racial identity is less likely to be in the spotlight. However, when someone from a different group arrives, attention and

³⁷ See for example Alitolppa-Niitamo (2004), Liebkind, Jasinskaja-Lahti & Haaramo (2000b), Miettinen & Pitkänen (1999).

group consciousness might change: the in-group, what we are (us), excludes the out-group (them) (see Myers, 1999; Epstein, 1993). McLaren (1995) suggests that white people, in fact, universalize the 'Other' as ethnic and themselves as existing metaphysically beyond forms of ethnic signification. A new trend can be seen in the British situation where, according to Kundnani (2000), 'Englishness' has become an ethnicity like any other. Aspects of 'hybridity', whereby dominant groups incorporate cultural products of subordinate groups and are open to transforming and abandoning some of their own central cultural symbols, further complicate the pattern (Anthias, 2001).

How, then, is the question of identity related to that of attitudes? Some studies indicate that racial attitudes are visible in children from the age of three. From around the age of five, versions of adult stereotypes are reproduced. Attitudes are communicated and sustained in every day life. For instance, parents may warn children of the dangers of mixing with or talking to strangers, especially if those strangers are members of ethnic groups of which they do not approve (see Brown, 1998; Milner, 1983). The values of a society at large affect children's perceptions of themselves and of their cultural heritage, encouraging acceptance of or antipathy towards their own or others' cultural groups (James, 1997; Keats, 1996).

Personal contact with members of other ethnic groups has been found to have a positive affect on attitudes. Godwin, Ausbrooks, & Martinez (2001), for example, found that the presence of interethnic friendships increased tolerance. In Finland, too, knowing someone from another culture closely or in person has been found to help develop positive attitudes (Jaakkola, 2000; Liebkind, Haaramo & Jaskinskaja-Lahti, 2000a; Sarkkinen, 1999). However, inter-ethnic friendships (see Deegan, 1996) are difficult if children have limited possibilities to interact with cultural minorities in their daily lives, as is the case in Finland. Therefore, investigating whether other means, such as the use of multicultural fiction, could open up possibilities of familiarizing children with issues of diversity, becomes important.

The children in the present study were themselves in an interesting position in terms of identity in that they attended a Swedish minority language school in Turku. Several children came from bilingual homes, and many of them were proficient in the majority Finnish language as well. The main Church to which both official language groups belong is the Lutheran State church. Interestingly, then, the children were in some respects part of a linguistic minority, but in other respects part of general Finnish culture. What was new to them was personal contact with members of other ethnic minorities, and reading multicultural stories was also a new experience.

7.4.2 Inequality, discrimination, and racism in schooling

Prejudice, ethnocentrism, stereotyping, discrimination, and racism are common in multicultural societies. Judgements are made, for example, on the basis of eye-, hair- and skin colour, stature, distinctive dress styles, language use, food preferences and habits, motivations for school, attitudes to work, interpersonal relations, and religion. Peer-group racism generally takes the form of name-calling, racist jokes or other verbal or non-verbal abuse (De Genova, 1995; Keats, 1996; Milner, 1983). Issues of these kinds are increasingly receiving attention in Finland.³⁸ However, despite official endorsement in Finland for multiculturalism (see section 1.4), studies continue to reveal the negative attitudes of Finns towards refugees and other immigrants. Although the number of foreigners is steadily increasing, and attitudes towards all immigrants have become slightly more positive (Jaakkola, 2000), Pitkänen (1998c) and Anttonen (1998) find that Finnish society on the whole is not tolerant. Racism has taken on more hidden forms than before, and newcomers from different ethnic groups are received differently (Jaakkola, 2000). Jasinskaja-Lahti et. al. (2002) investigated experiences of racism and discrimination among Kosovo Albanians, Arabs, Russians, Vietnamese, Estonians, Somalis and second generation immigrants. Discrimination and racist incidents were common experiences for members of these groups, both in daily life, and in the workplace. Liebkind (2000b) found that there are differences in attitudes among Finnish people, and that Finnish rural males who have little contact with foreigners were the most negative whilst more positive attitudes were present in the population as a whole.

Much attention in the UK and US has been directed towards educational inequalities experienced by ethnic minority children because teachers, peers, educational- and intelligence tests, the curriculum, teaching styles, methods of assessment, or the school establishment as a whole, all discriminate against them. Educational inequality has long been recognized as an important social issue, and there is a considerable amount of research dealing with it. There is concern for equality of opportunity as well as attainment demands. Language issues have also been discussed.³⁹ However, matters are complex since, as Phoenix (1998) argues, new forms of racism are appearing: policies which may appear to be neutral and fair may be presented in non-racial terms, even though they might imply negative consequences for racial equality.

In Finland, as we saw in 1.4.3, some studies have focused on immigrants' adaptation to mainstream schools. However, this field is still new, and issues are not yet as well understood as in countries with longer histories of multicultural education. In Finland, the education of immigrants has as its goal both the integration of pupils into Finnish society, and that pupils preserve their own language, national identity and culture (Pitkänen, 1998a; Utbildningsstyrelsen, 2004). Some attention has been given to their

³⁸ See for example Anttonen (1998), Antikainen (1998), Jaakkola (2000), Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind & Vesala (2002), Liebkind (2000ab)

³⁹ See section 1.4.1.

special educational needs.⁴⁰ Other Finnish studies involve integration politics and curricular recommendations for immigrant children;⁴¹ the rights of immigrant children to learn, and the importance of learning a majority language.⁴² Few studies report how the teaching of immigrant children has worked out in practice (though see Miettinen, 1998; Hämäläinen-Abdul-Samad & Mattila, 1998). Some studies have included discussion of teachers' perspectives on having immigrant children in their classes.⁴³

It can be argued that finding ways of reducing negative attitudes towards newcomers should be a high priority in Finland (Liebkind, 2000c). Prejudice, discrimination, racism, and intolerance are examples of 'difficulty' which ethnic minority children might experience. Such experiences were also present in novels used in this project. For instance, some characters were experiencing discrimination. How children responded to issues of this kind is clearly an important consideration.

7.4.3 Fostering tolerance and positive attitudes

The interaction of two people, each of whom has limited experience of the other's culture, can lead to problems of communication, especially when the concerned parties have preconceived attitudes about the 'other' (Keats, 1996; McIntyre, Bhatti & Fuller, 1997). Many writers believe that education is one of the best means of countering intolerance, and that misconceptions and discriminatory attitudes can be 'unlearned'. Within multicultural education, the aim is to combat racism within society and foster positive attitudes towards ethnic minorities (Best, 1998; Brown, 1998; Godwin, Ausbrooks, & Martinez, 2001). In a similar vein, some EFL theorists also aim to foster positive attitudes, recognising that foreign language learning involves contact with the target culture (see Byram & Morgan, 1994; Zarate, 1995; see also 6.1). Thus, multicultural education in general, and sociocultural and intercultural approaches to language teaching share the goal of fostering positive attitudes towards the 'other'.

As we saw in 1.4.1, there has been a gradual evolution regarding how best to achieve these aims, from the narrowly multicultural, which focuses on surface aspects of culture, to more radical anti-racist perspectives in Britain. These perspectives have been based on different philosophical underpinnings and on different political approaches (see Banks & McGee Banks, 2004). In the early years, the main emphasis was on the importance of teaching materials and learning aids which reflect the cultures present in the school, and check-lists became available to help teachers recognize unbiased and balanced materials. More recently, the emphasis has changed to more structural matters, such as the importance of understanding that all cultures undergo change and that

⁴⁰ See Ikonen & Pakarinen (1998), Viitalahti & Silvennoinen (1998), Peltonen (1998), Kauhanen, Luokkanen & Manner (1998), Öster (1998), Soutamo, Säily & Wilhunen (1998).

⁴¹ See Yli-Renko (1997), Alitolppa-Niitamo (2004)

⁴² See Martin (1999b), Lind (1999)

⁴³ See Miettinen & Pitkänen (1999), Pollari (1999).

people can have multiple identities. Attention has also been paid to helping students understand oppression and giving pupils the skills they need to challenge and prevent racism. Encouraging critical thinking is commonly believed to be an important step in combating racism and promoting cultural awareness (Baker, 1994; Gillborn, 1996). There has been a focus, too, on the need to address these issues not only in ethnically diverse inner city schools, but also in predominantly white schools. The operation of racism, however, is both complex and differentiated. Some teaching programmes have explicitly focused on reducing discrimination and racism (see Schofield, 2004; Stephan & Stephan, 2004; Gaine, 2000).

The new Finnish national curriculum (Utbildningsstyrelsen, 2004) differs from the previous one (1994) in the extent to which multicultural issues are encouraged. Human rights, the equal worth of all people, democracy, tolerance and willingness to preserve multiculturalism are emphasized among the fundamental values of the school. There is a requirement that national minority groups be considered in teaching, and that the school foster tolerance and understanding towards other people and cultures. The national curriculum further emphasises seven main strands, the second of which is 'Kulturell identitet och internationalism' (Cultural identity and internationalism). The Finnish educational establishment has thus clearly taken steps toward incorporating respect, tolerance, and awareness of multicultural issues into the fundamental goals of the school. However, what has been lacking, as we saw in section 1.4.3, is empirical studies of classroom settings, handbooks for teachers, and multicultural teaching materials. This study focuses on how multicultural matters can be dealt with within mainstream teaching, with all children. This project represents one attempt to raise such issues in the classroom, by using multicultural fiction.

7.4.4 Tolerance and anti-racism in literature teaching

Many books today allow black children to recognise themselves in a modern, urban setting (see section 1.5). These books are also said by some scholars to help broaden white children's perspectives: 'Storybooks provide a vehicle for reflecting, questioning, discussing and growing.' (Marshall, 1998: 197). This is a complex issue, however. On the one hand, the teacher plays an important role in the development of social understanding by encouraging discussion and tasks around the texts; on the other hand, respect for each child as a reader and thinker needs to underpin every literary discussion (Rosenblatt, 2002; Rosenthal, 1995). Marshall (1998) provides guidelines as to how teachers can use storybooks to bridge gaps between the known and the unknown in fostering an environment of understanding and respect for difference. Pinsent (1997) and Hvitfeldt (1997) suggest that students be encouraged to talk exploratively about their reactions to the text and that the teacher, in turn, be open to different interpretations and reactions. Rosenblatt (2002) argues that the teacher should neither force her own judgements and morals on the students nor be completely objective. For

the teacher to appear as neutral while not actually being so is, according to Epstein (1993), likely to lead to a belief on the part of students in the dishonesty rather than the neutrality of the teacher.

In the present project, I was not seeking to impose my ideas on the children. Had there been evident racist intrusions I would have intervened, but this was never the case. Instead, I was interested in the children's views on the books that they were reading. The types of tasks given to the present children were described in Chapters 3-4. Teaching perspectives on the present project are discussed in Chapter 8.

7.4.5 Moral judgement and children reading books

Story has been argued to have considerable potential as a teaching tool. Coles (1989) discusses the impact which literature can have on our moral conduct, using examples from his own life and the lives of his patients and students. Among other things, he shows how life experiences such as death portrayed by Tolstoy gave a patient revelations about dying, and taught important wisdom which helped the patient deal with his problems. Coles also shows how he himself searched for, and found, answers to ethical and moral questions in some of the great classics: 'The more I became immersed yet again in Tolstoy's stories, in Tolstoy's own story, the less unyielding I became to my patient...' (p. 171). Coles further describes how stories can be moral tales with immense impact on our own lives, and how sharing their views can help adult students 'respond to the fictional world and its moral quandaries', and 'their response is deeper, more strongly felt, and more lasting' (p. 181).

So what is the relevance of morality for the present project? When students express views on actions and events in a story, they are also exercising moral judgements. Piaget (1932/1960) distinguishes two stages of morality: moral realism, which is associated with the constraints and social rules communicated by adults (right is to obey, wrong is to have a will of one's own); and autonomy, which appears when mutual respect is strong enough to make children feel from *within* the desire to treat others as they themselves would like to be treated. Around the ages of 7-8, justice is based on adult authority; around the ages of 8-11, there is progressive development of autonomy; and around the ages of 11-13, there is feeling of equity. At this stage, children do not apply the same punishment to everyone, but take into account different circumstances. Best (1998) suggests that understanding the intentions behind other people's behaviour is important for the development of tolerance and understanding. According to Piaget (1932/1960), it is through generosity or sympathy that we can start to understand intentions behind other people's actions.

Reader response theorists have been interested in the functions of stories and in readers' responses on a personal and social level, including moral aspects. Although empirical research on children's moral ideas in relation to reading is scarce, Tucker (1981) (see also 5.2.4), who bases much of his work in Piaget, notes that children before the age of eleven tend to praise or condemn characters mainly for surface acts and are not yet ready for deeper explanations of motivations and values. It is only after the age of 11 that they begin to question conventional morality and to understand contradictions between surface appearances and inner reality. At this point, young readers are able to hold two contradictory abstract ideas together at the same time, and they become capable of understanding different types of personality and other influences on people (Tucker, 1981).

There is some evidence of children in L1-settings responding to multicultural works of fiction, which display their thoughts also on moral issues, as we saw in 7.1.2. How these young EFL-readers judged character actions, and how they reacted to issues of bullying, discrimination, or more explicit racism, is important for a project of this kind.

7.4.6 Children's thoughts about bullying, discrimination and racism in the present study

In the present project, children were encouraged to explore their reactions to racial incidents in response to questions discussed in groups rather than as a whole class (see Brown, 1998). Some children knew what racism meant but others were not familiar with the term. Some were aware of racism in Finland but, at the same time, felt that they had never seen such incidents themselves:

I haven't seen a situations where someone is treated differently because his/her skin colour is dark. But I have heard things and seen films, and other things. I think there might be someone in Finland who might be experiencing racism. (Mikaela, NB)

In Finland there are meny people who are behaving bad to dark people. I have never seen when someone has been picked on. But I have heard of racism. (Susanne, NB)

Other children, such as Nils, pointed out that racism is, in fact, a common theme in daily newspapers in Finland. There was therefore variety in children's awareness.

Some books raised thoughts about reasons for being excluded or bullied. Children reading *Troublemakers* and *My Name is Jasmine Grey* sometimes used the term 'racism' in relation to issues of skin colour:

In the footballs match happend things that is hard to understand. I think that Shane and Barry did that thing becose they are angry to Chester about that they can't go in the footballteam. But it could be racism to [too]. What Gran did can be a good thing becose she know about racism going on and she wontid to do something about that. (Nils, *Troublemakers*)

Barbara and Markus reading *Secret Friends* reacted strongly to the exclusion of Rafaella, but did not relate the other characters' behaviour specifically to skin colour. Instead, they wondered whether it was her ears that caused the others to tease her. Barbara and Markus were unable to understand why Rafaella was being bullied, because they felt she was the nicest character of all. Mikaela had similar thoughts around Rajiv in *The Private World of Rajiv Ray*. She raised the question in a reading conference of whether he was teased because of his skin colour, or because he was quiet and withdrawn. Katja added that sometimes you are teased because you look different or have different tastes in clothes. There was thus reflection on hardships experienced by people on both personal and social levels, and on reasons behind such hardships (see Bettelheim, 1975/1976; McGinley et. al., 1997).

Reader response tasks allowed the children to explore questions related to bullying and racism. The children were asked, for instance, what they thought Chester, the black football player and football coach in *Troublemakers*, might be feeling. Lotta wrote in her notebook: 'He knows that you have to ignore everything that people say about his skin color ... He's used in that people shout things at him'. Melker commented: 'I think that Chester Smith is beginning to think about his team mates and fans and can't concentrate'. In a similar vein, the boys in group H pointed out that if Chester made a mistake, everyone was much more angry with him than they would have been with someone else. Some children clearly saw racism as a complex issue, thus developing an understanding of possible complexities of life in a multicultural society (see Short & Klassen, 1993; Lehr & Thompson, 2000).

Different books triggered different types of responses (see Tucker, 1981; Rosenblatt, 2002). All children reading *My Name is Jasmine Grey*, for instance, had views on Rachel's refusal to play with Jasmine. Felix suggested that one might want to tell Jasmine: 'Vissa bara inte tycker om mörka människor men det betyder inte att du skulle vara sämre än de ljusa på något sätt' (Some people just don't like blacks but that doesn't mean that you are less worth than whites in any way [my translation]). Similarly, when thinking about what to say to Melanie and Tracey, Mikaela said: 'I think you should take Jasmine to your games because she needs a friend to. What has she done to you, and what is it that makes you think that black people would be less worth'.

The extent of personal involvement, however, varied from one pupil to another (see also 5.2.6). For instance, although Susanne and Mikaela called the grandmother in *My Name is Jasmine Grey* a racist and found her behaviour unjust, they did not seem as emotionally affected as Lars, who had talked about it with his mother, and spontaneously raised questions in his group. Similarly, group G (reading *Troublemakers*) were not as disturbed by how Chester Smith was treated as were the children in group H. Thus, some children, such as Casper and Lars, became very

engaged in characters' fates, whereas others reacted less emotionally but none the less expressed the view that what was happening was wrong.

Children's own positioning was often apparent (see also section 7.3.3). Lars and Felix offered views on *why* Rachel was not allowed to play with Jasmine, and in the process revealed their own standpoint on this issue. Lars wrote in his reading diary: 'I think that gran doesn't like black people so she won't let Rachel play with Jasmine, and i feel sad.' Other children, such as Mikaela also rejected the behaviour of the grandmother, calling it unjust: 'I think Gran is a racist. She's maybe thinking that's better that Rachel's not playing with Jasmine because Jasmine is black'. Several children reading *Secret Friends*, *Troublemakers*, *The Private World of Rajiv Ray* and *My Name is Jasmine Grey* suggested that being racist or bullying or teasing other people is wrong: 'I think it was good that Jasmine and Rachel had been friends again but the Gran was stupid. You couldn't think that an old peapol could be a racist' (*My Name is Jasmine Grey*). Pupils' disapproval of the racial prejudice of characters in the stories they were reading replicates the findings of writers on this subject discussed in section 7.1.2 (see, for instance, MacPhee, 1997).

As was noted in chapter 5, some children were able to see characters' behaviours in a more mature way than simply in terms of good/bad, and to appreciate ambiguity (see also Tucker, 1981). The ability to reconcile two different perspectives is considered important within multicultural education. Lars and Tomas were able to note both positively and negatively that Chester Smith (the black football coach who experiences racial abuse), was good at football and as a person but, that he couldn't keep his mind on the game, and had given up on the football team. And in Lotta's words in her notebook: 'Chester Smith is a football player. He wants to have a normal life. Hes [he's] afraid of doing a mistake in a football match.'

Occasionally, children displayed clear evidence of thinking more deeply about race or culture. Nils, for instance, expressed the view that skin colour was neither an issue for black players in the best Finnish football teams, nor in the English teams, since there are so many black footballers who play well. In contrast, he considered racism as a problem more generally in Finland today, and one of the issues you read about in newspapers. Melker brought up the issue of how to respect something that one does not believe in oneself. Examples such as these, however, were very rare, and as with the children's responses in general, they were triggered by questions.

In summary, books in the second half of the project placed discussion of bullying and/or racism on the agenda; most children reacted, but not always spontaneously. The comments were, however, more spontaneous than those expressed in relation to culture (see Chapter 6). How characters were treated by other characters seems to have caught the children's attention more than cultural or sociocultural information in the texts. Tasks and questions offered opportunities for children to form and express opinions.

However, as was the case with cultural responses in chapter 6, comments on multicultural and anti-racist issues were relatively few in number, since only a few children were reading each book. Some children displayed strong emotional involvement, whereas others were not as deeply affected, but none the less felt that racist behaviour was wrong. If understanding other people and compassion for others is important for accepting diversity (see Baker, 1994), then the children reading these stories displayed such understanding towards the fictive characters.

Although I was not aware of negative attitudes towards minorities on the part of the children, on a few isolated occasions it was evident that children had no experience of the issue being discussed. These children were highly motivated to read and did not display any obvious preconceived ideas about ethnic minorities.

It is important, however, to sound a note of caution: literature written from a strongly anti-racist perspective is unlikely to challenge racist assumptions unless pupils are open and ready to hear (Naidoo, 1992a, 1992b; Tucker, 19981). Books which challenge readers' prejudices are uncomfortable reading - readers need time and space to digest the experience and to come to terms with the content (Beach, 1997; Whitehead, 1988: 22). Lastly, assumptions and ideas which are presented in literature function together with other social factors; the potential of a text to have a deep effect cannot be planned (Rosenblatt, 2002). Equally pertinent, the effect of a learning experience may not be apparent until some time later (Naidoo, 1992a, 1992b). This study has not aimed to capture children's attitudes before or after the project. Instead, the focus has been on issues raised in the classroom situation, and on the potential of the books for raising awareness around multicultural matters. Thus, any long-term effects or effects on real-life encounters with difference would require a different study.

These books also raised several questions in relation to culture and multiculturalism for the teacher to think about, which are presented separately in chapter 8.

7.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has discussed multicultural and anti-racist issues –as opposed to cultural and sociocultural ones– which emerged in the present study. The chapter began with a theoretical section on issues involved in multicultural socialization and reading. After this, three main categories which emerged from the present study were outlined: engagement and familiarity with diversity; empathy and understanding, including discussion of problems dealing with empathy and understanding, empathy in relation to

EFL-readers, and aspects of empathy in the present study; and lastly, the issue of bullying, discrimination and racism was discussed, including a brief discussion of cultural identity and attitudes among children, inequality, discrimination and racism in Western multicultural societies, fostering of tolerance and positive attitudes, tolerance and racism in literature teaching, moral judgment in relation to children's readings, and the present children's thoughts around bullying, discrimination and racism. The main findings are summarized and discussed in 9.2.2.

8. TEACHING PERSPECTIVES ON CULTURAL AND MULTICULTURAL ISSUES

Combining a multicultural dimension to EFL-teaching with use of novels at primary school level not only raised important issues in relation to the children, but also in relation to the *teacher*. Since I was acting as both teacher and researcher in the present study (see 2.1.2), it was not always possible to draw a clear line between issues which emerged from the teacher's perspective and those reflections which are researcher based. However, in order to make this separation as distinct as possible, the present chapter illustrates the views and experiences of the teacher. This perspective is important in itself because of the dearth of evidence on teaching experiences of this kind.

The three strands which emerged as important from the teacher's perspective, and which are discussed below, are the use of texts in exploring social issues (section 8.1), the teacher's experiences and lessons learned (8.2), and the supportive climate which made it possible to undertake the reading project (8.3).

8.1 THE USE OF TEXTS IN EXPLORING SOCIAL ISSUES

The attempt to raise awareness of multiculturalism through children's reading raised challenging questions for the teacher in terms of book choices and teaching approaches, which are discussed here.

8.1.1 The use of 'issues' books

Some theorists, such as Nikolajeva (1998) and Vandergrift (1986), argue that books which deal with 'issues' (such as multiculturalism, divorce, step-parents, abortion, war, drug addiction, violence, and mental handicap) may strike children as not very enjoyable. In these books, the problem orientation might give the story an explicit didactic tone of voice. Rosenblatt (2002) also warns against viewing only socializing aspects of reading at the expense of literary quality. Tucker (1981), too, notes that whenever possible, literature should be free from political interference, although he does suggest that multicultural texts can help white children recognize black children in modern urban settings. I agree with Naidoo's (1992a, 1992b) observation that we must not lose sight of multicultural books as literature to be enjoyed and shared for their

literary qualities. Interestingly, Booth (1988) explains that the boundary between literature which is 'didactic' (rhetoric) and that which is not (genuine literature or poetry) is very fuzzy. In fact, he says, all narratives are didactic in some way.

Although discussing literature theoretically goes beyond the scope of the present study, it is worth noting that the titles chosen for the present project dealt with issues of culture and race to varying degrees (see 1.5.2). What has been of interest in this study is how the *pupils* perceived the books, since enjoying reading and sharing reading experiences with peers were central goals for the project. Lehr (1991) argues that young (L1-) readers are already able to differentiate themes in stories. Lehr found a variety in responses between children of different ages, and between children with high or low exposure to literary texts. Older children and children with high exposure to literature tended to display more knowledge about the world in their responses. Lehr found, also, that it was easier for children to identify themes in realistic fiction than in folktales. Although the L1-readers in her study were younger than the readers in the present study, it seems at least plausible that the present *EFL-readers* would, too, be able to identify themes. How, in fact, did they perceive themes in the stories?

The main themes offered by the children were adoption, friendship, family life and football. For instance, Barbara explained that in *Secret Friends* two girls became friends and one of them was unpopular, although nothing was wrong with her, really. Nils recognized the friendship between Robbie and Chester and that there was also a lot about the family in *Troublemakers*. Casper made the observation that *Troublemakers* tells us about how suddenly someone's life can change. In some groups, children identified 'treatment of other people' and even 'racism'. Racism was, however, ascribed as one of many other themes, and to only two stories: *Troublemakers*, and *My Name is Jasmine Grey*. Not all children used the word 'racism' to describe racist behaviour. Lars, for instance, described a theme in the Rajiv story (*My Name is Jasmine Grey*) as 'teasing those who are different'. Similarly, Felix used 'leaving dark-skinned persons outside'. Nor did children always agree on the themes of the book: while some felt that racism was one theme in *Troublemakers*, other children argued against this, and identified football. As Pinsent (1997) notes, there might be other aspects that are more important to readers than race or ethnicity, such as age, hobbies, or position in the family. Interestingly, very few children elaborated spontaneously on the anti-racist motivation of the stories in retrospect for instance, by giving examples of racial incidents.

The majority of books in this study clearly whet children's appetite for reading. For instance, the children reading *Grandpa Chatterji* reported in an interview that they would like to read another book with Indian culture present, preferably one set in India. I gave them the sequel to *Grandpa Chatterji* (*Grandpa's Indian Summer*). The children reading *The Private World of Rajiv Ray* and *My Name is Jasmine Grey* enjoyed the two short stories so much that they wanted to read the two remaining stories as well,

although the project had ended. All children in groups (E) and (I), therefore, kept *I Want to be an Angel* after I had left the school. Several children reported spontaneously at the end of the project that they would like to read novels within EFL-lessons on a regular basis.

It might be, as the head teacher and class teacher suggested, that reading books in general was experienced as a treat, something special for these EFL-readers, and that they therefore were highly motivated and eager to read. Further, because some children knew English well, they might occasionally need something out of the ordinary in order to feel interested and challenged. Thus, although books that challenge prejudice are uncomfortable reading (see Whitehead, 1988: 22), there was no evidence that the anti-racist dimension was off-putting to these EFL-children. And although some of the books had the potential to raise awareness and stimulate discussion of cultural, multicultural and anti-racist issues in the classroom, as we saw in Chapters 6 and 7, these themes seem not to have impacted negatively on children's pleasure in reading. Instead, children were also aware of other themes present in the books.

8.1.2 Approaches to teaching

Teaching approaches and tasks around the text affect children's responses to novels. Hines (1997), for instance, drawing on case studies of four literature teachers, investigated how different approaches to L1-literary study can engage students in different ways, resulting in different levels of cultural criticism and social enquiry. According to her, not only the text, but also teaching approaches determined whether students were encouraged to explore a multiplicity of meanings and ideological functions of texts in society. Reader response orientations, Hines found, placed a premium on students' knowledge and experience and encouraged student-centred discussion, but because responsibility was placed on the students alone, opportunities to explore complex social, historical, and ideological issues were missed. At best, the most politically oriented students reacted, while others did not. Hines argues that in order to fulfil the goals of multicultural education, students need to be invited to both acknowledge diversity and trace the effects and sources of difference. Hines recommends a 'social justice' or 'cultural criticism' framework, which allows students to be active, and involves the teacher initiating discussions.

In the present project, the young EFL-readers were engaging with longer texts in EFL teaching for the first time. Therefore, as we saw in Chapters 3-5, much effort was put into managing the reading and understanding of texts. It would not have been appropriate to highlight every sociocultural (see Chapter 6) or multicultural (see Chapter 7) element, since this could have adversely affected pupils' enjoyment of reading. A question which I confronted in my teaching was what the teacher should do when trying to develop multicultural education if the children do *not* take up the

opportunities to discuss racism (see also Epstein, 1993). What should be the balance between pushing an agenda and keeping agenda-setting within the power of the children? I found that this question needs to be clarified when using multicultural literature.

In fact, because the pupils in this project were not used to responding open-endedly to texts in EFL and few topics were raised spontaneously (as we saw in Chapters 4 and 5), there were *also* few topics raised spontaneously around multicultural issues, although sometimes, children indeed responded spontaneously to racial incidents in the texts (Lars for instance, reacted strongly to the ways in which Jasmine was treated, and to the grandmother's attitude in *My Name is Jasmine Grey*). In general, I attempted a compromise solution, posing open-ended reader-response questions, which allowed pupils to form and express their thoughts and feelings. Such general reader-response questions triggered cultural and multicultural responses, too, as we have seen in previous chapters. Therefore, the way in which reader-response was used in my teaching allowed the children to reflect in an open-ended way on their reading. In this sense, discussions were, in fact, also teacher initiated *despite* the reader-response framework. My reader response approach, therefore, differed from that described by Hines (1997), above, in which the sole responsibility for discussion was placed on the students.

In addition, because this was a new area for the children, I introduced some basic vocabulary on a few occasions which I felt were needed (such as 'minority', 'stereotype', see below), a strategy which sometimes in itself served as a starting point for discussion.

Another pedagogical issue which can usefully be considered at this stage concerns the limits of using a text as a springboard for social topics discussions. Some professionals would argue that a text should 'speak for itself', and that not much elaboration of social issues is required on the part of the teacher, and some would advocate that children be encouraged to express their view on issues which have been raised by the text. Both these positions would, I feel, allow the children to enjoy the text, without using the text *only* as a springboard for dealing with social matters. These approaches contrast, then, with the 'cultural criticism and social justice inquiry' position (Hines, 1997), in which the text would be used more or less for teaching readers about social issues. In my teaching, I tried to draw a balance between the extremes, aiming for a middle position; other teachers, of course, might come to other conclusions. What needs to be remembered, however, is that texts are not neutral, and that all texts require the teacher to take a stand as regards teaching goals. Teachers also need to be aware of the attitudes that they themselves present (see Banks, 1986; Barret, 1993). During the course of the project, I had to stop on several occasions to remind myself of what my goals were as the teacher before deciding how I should proceed.

8.2 TEACHER EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The present project also raised issues of teacher experience. Given that most teachers in Finland have had limited exposure to cultural diversity and multicultural teaching, what might be the pitfalls that await them as they attempt to introduce multicultural literature, or to make cross-cultural comparisons?

8.2.1 Teacher inexperience and available help

I had received no training for including a cultural or multicultural dimension in EFL-teaching or other school subjects. As we saw in Chapter 1, it is only recently that teacher education in Finland has begun to address multicultural matters. In many ways, I felt I was a novice, learning as I went along. These feelings are not unusual in those attempting to address cultural or multicultural awareness. It is difficult for teachers to know what and how to teach if they themselves have not learned about incorporating issues of difference. Various writers discuss the need to help white teachers develop cultural sensitivity (see, for instance, Roux, 2001; Rosenberg, 1998). Brown (1998) also recognizes the need for continuing professional development and offers guidelines for in-service training on anti-discriminatory practices.

Since 1994, the national school curriculum has required teachers to teach intercultural understanding and respect for difference (Utbildningsstyrelsen, 1994; 2004). The Finnish syllabus for teacher education, however, is both mono-cultural and ethno-centric (Pitkänen, 2004). Western ways of life and Western values are considered self-evident, despite the fact that there is recognition on a theoretical level that each teacher should acquire the skills to teach multicultural groups (see Kosonen, 2000; Pitkänen, 2004). A multicultural dimension which would permeate all areas of teacher education has not been implemented in general teacher training (Matinheikki-Kokko, 1999d). In-service schooling and optional courses have been available, but they have not reached all teachers who deal with multicultural school classes (Matinheikki-Kokko, 1999a). A broader base has been offered within a few optional courses for teacher trainees at some Finnish-language universities (see Fossi, 1999; Pihko, 1999; Matinheikki-Kokko, 1999a; Räsänen, 1998). These courses have, however, been specially constructed programmes reaching only a very small number of teacher trainees.

Thus, although teachers have generally had positive attitudes towards immigrants (Sarkkinen, 1999; Kosonen, 2000; Miettinen & Pitkänen, 1999), they have, traditionally, not received training in how to teach multicultural groups (Yli-Renko, Killen, Yoder & Siyakwazi, 1997). Other studies have also indicated that teachers and teacher trainees have shown a discrepancy between their positive attitudes towards pluralism, on the one hand, and their lack of necessary knowledge to implement such goals, on the other hand (see Miettinen & Pitkänen, 1999; Pitkänen, 2004; Yli-Renko,

1997; Yli-Renko, Killen, Yoder & Siyakwazi, 1997). Several writers acknowledge that in the field of internationalism and cultural pluralism teacher educations needs to be further developed.

In recent years, new attempts have been made within teacher training in Finland. At Åbo Akademi University (the Swedish-language university in Finland), for example, there is now a compulsory introductory course in multicultural education for all teacher trainees, which covers knowledge of socialization and teaching from a multicultural perspective (PF1, 2005-06). Optional courses are available for those who wish to specialize. Within an optional programme in didactics for multilingual classrooms (Flerspråkighetsdidaktik), there is a part which covers Swedish as a second language and the multilingual classroom (PF2, 2005-06). And within a broader optional programme, also in didactics for multilingual classrooms (Flerspråkighetsdidaktik), there is a separate part which covers multicultural education.

In the USA and UK, where there is a long history of multicultural education, there are resource books to support teachers who wish to include a multicultural dimension in teaching (see Ramsey, 1998; Dilworth, 1998; Brown, 1998). Cochran-Smith, Davis & Fries (2004) offer a synthesis and overview of multicultural teacher education in the United States, 1980-2001. Ramsey (1998) is particularly informative on issues of diversity in primary school settings and practical applications of multicultural education. School textbooks also cover aspects of racism and tolerance (see Gundara & Hewitt, 1999), and various resource materials offer practical help for teachers (for instance Dadzie, 2000; Richardson, & Wood, 1999). Writers such as Whitehead (1998), Roberts & Cecil (1993), and Stones (1999) consider the use of multicultural fiction in a L1-setting. Rather less, however, is known about what happens in the real classroom (though see Jones, 1999; Walker & Tedick, 1998).

As we saw in section 6.1, within the field of language teaching some writers offer suggestions concerning development of cultural awareness (see Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993). While empirical evidence of such teaching is scarce, Utley (2004), for one, offers a useful handbook for language teachers, with practical examples of how to deal with culture as a concept, stereotypes, group cultures, and cultural communication.

At the time I embarked on my fieldwork (in Autumn term 2000), there was very little information available to help me in planning a project of this kind. I tried to adapt insights gained from English L1-settings to my EFL-setting. Although there have been developments in the intervening years such as the ones described here, the literature still offers little practical guidance for EFL-teachers, particularly for the Finnish primary school mainstream EFL-setting.

8.2.2 Challenges in introducing culture

It was difficult for the children in this project to identify examples of culture in the text without knowing, first, what ‘culture’ meant. The initial discussions, therefore, were very general. We started with the culture which the children knew the best (their own), discussing as a whole class what people eat in Finland, ways of life, how they spend their spare time, etc. The children eagerly suggested examples, such as cycling, football, ice hockey, and other winter sports, Finnish winter, foods, etc. Finnish customs were contrasted with what children knew about the UK, giving rise to cross-cultural comparison (see section 6.2.3). Markus, for instance, said that people in England did not have saunas, and he thought that school subjects were different. Each pupil drew a mind-map in their notebook of things which we had discussed.

According to Byram (1989), an important aim of cultural studies should be to affect change in pupils’ attitudes towards other cultures. When teaching a foreign language, we should not only describe the behaviours and institutions of the foreign culture but also those of our own; pupils need to be made aware of their own ethnicity and identity if we want to influence their schemata of what is foreign. Thinking in terms of how someone from elsewhere would view one’s own culture is also important for a cultural and intercultural dimension to language teaching (Kramsch, 1993, 1998; see also 6.1.2-6.1.3). Byram (1989) argues that by starting with students’ schemata of their own ethnic identity, before presenting a foreigner’s view of their ethnicity, teachers can help students consider their own views of foreigners. However, students cannot jump from the perspective of one culture to another without guidance; as Jin & Cortazzi (1998) explain, raising cultural awareness implies that the learner challenges his or her own cultural assumptions. Children in this project were encouraged to think about aspects of Finnish society which might be unfamiliar to someone who has never been to Finland. Most children, including Katja, gave a ‘tourist’ perspective, talking about the sights they would show a foreigner: ‘If a boy/girl from England come to Finland they must now the Suomen Joutsen [a local museum ship], Turun Linna [Turku castle] and they must have been in Helsinki city. Lappi [Lapland] is a famous place to the tourist because there are (revontuli) [Northern lights] and much of snow. And if you come to Finland and like Muumi [Tove Jansson’s Moomin character] you must go to Naantali [a small town near Turku] to Moomin world. Every Friday/Saturday the most people from Finland go to sauna’. Although a ‘tourist’ approach is not fruitful from the perspective of multicultural awareness, it arguably has a place in initial attempts to think about culture from an EFL-perspective. This might present a discrepancy between EFL-goals and the goals of a multicultural dimension in teaching in general (see 6.1).

Further, it seemed that it was easier for the children to discuss concrete phenomena, such as sauna culture and Father Christmas, than more implicitly sociocultural phenomena, such as ways of life. Attempts to compare Finnish and British ways of life sometimes triggered ethnocentric responses. Barbara, for instance, noted that our ‘own’

culture is 'normal' and therefore she found it difficult to think of things to say about it. Lack of knowledge of British culture, or, the perception of both Britain and Finland as modern 'Western' societies, may also have prevented Barbara, and several other children, from being able to compare the two. Byram (1989) warns against stereotyping another culture from the standpoint of one's own culture. I found, however, that this might easily happen when discussing culture with EFL-children for the first time, and that it might be unrealistic to expect young EFL-learners *not* to discuss other cultures from the perspective of their own. Is this not how we all perceive other cultures, particularly when inexperienced with issues of culture and multiculturalism? How, then, should culture be discussed with young EFL-pupils? What can we expect from young EFL-pupils and what do we want them to learn? This study has only highlighted these questions. It would require a different study to understand and further elaborate on practical solutions for teaching.

8.2.3 Dangers of cross-cultural comparison

Much multicultural teaching practice has rested on the assumption that knowledge about the unknown will lead to more positive attitudes (see 1.4 and 6.1). However, we also need to be aware of dangers involved. For instance, if readers have already formed negative impressions, increasing information about the target culture might not be enough to change them. In fact, a text might suggest ammunition to the real enemy [offering information/knowledge about the 'other' that can be used against the other], causing confrontation when the teacher is no longer present (Whitehead, 1998: 12). Similarly, Nemetz Robinson (1985/1987: 71) notes in relation to language teaching, that information about the target culture may not be sufficient to remedy misunderstandings, if negative impressions have already been formed. These are lessons which teachers of multicultural education programmes have had to learn, and which we need to take seriously. Although the children in the present project did not express negative views, this does not mean that they would be tolerant in real life. In fact, the project raised questions about possible long-term effects of introducing children to multiculturalism through literature (see 9.2.3).

Another danger lies in how we regard the behaviour of people from other cultures. Bredella (1996) mentions the importance of remembering that other people's behaviour is not necessarily determined by their culture. Guest (2002) is also critical of the way in which we regard the behaviour of foreign people as representative of their *culture*, whereas when we see negative qualities, such as rudeness, within our own culture, we tend to treat this behaviour as part of a *person's character* (not as a cultural feature). In the present study, not only the foreign but also our own behaviours were discussed in both a 'cultural' and 'personal' (individual) sense (see below; see also 6.2.3).

A further danger lies in the fact that too great an emphasis on difference can mean that similarities go unnoticed and this, in turn, may decrease positive affiliation and contribute, instead, to negative evaluations of the other (Nemetz Robinson, 1985/1987: 66). Nemetz Robinson (1985/1987: 67), who is concerned with development of crosscultural understanding through anthropology and psychology, argues that instead of introducing the target culture through a description of its unique characteristics, language teachers should focus on similarities. Similar thoughts are expressed by EFL-scholars such as Lothar Bredella and Clair Kramersch (see Chapters 6 and 7). When discussing story characters or aspects of target culture in the present study, the students were asked to think about *both* similarities and differences. Because initial discussions of culture had emphasized differences, I felt the need at a later stage to bring up the issue of similarity. It is noteworthy that children did not generally reflect on either similarities nor differences spontaneously. Nor were invitations to consider what they might have in common with a character from the story always successful. In some cases, children did not know what to say. And interestingly, in one case a question of this kind triggered comments about differences instead. Mikaela felt that she had nothing in common with Neetu, ‘because she looks different and speaks English in a different way’.

Contrastive analysis, much favoured by advocates of both multicultural education and cultural dimensions to language teaching (see section 6.1), has other dangers, too. According to Guest (2002) it can lead to oversimplification of the richness of cultures, reduction of cultural understanding, failure to represent complex realities, and misrepresentation of cultures. Guest is also critical of educational materials for reducing the richness of cultures to ‘static caricatures’. In fact he argues, that even with the best intentions, teachers might be using questionable, stigmatizing, and monolithic notions of the ‘other’. Classroom discussion in this project did raise the issue of stereotypes and generalizations, which the teacher clearly has the responsibility to challenge. In discussion of culture, some children offered comments such as ‘in England they...’, or ‘Finnish people...’. I felt this could not pass without some comment. In the earlier discussions about culture, children clearly found it easier to relate to more concrete examples, such as tea-drinking in England, and Finnish sauna-culture (see above). Later, it seemed important to move away from generalizations of this kind, and I began to wonder whether there might be different stages of cultural learning and understanding. I approached this question by discussing the concepts of ‘stereotype’ and ‘generalization’ with the whole class. The children drew mind-maps in their notebooks and showed a good understanding of these concepts. They were able to modify earlier statements such as ‘English people drink tea’ to ‘There are many people in England who drink tea’. At the end of the project, most children still remembered what the terms had meant, and several could give examples. Lars, for instance, made the point that, although we can talk about a certain country as having certain traditions, it might not be the case that everyone in that country celebrates those traditions. This

was a thoughtful comment from a 12-year old considering cultural or multicultural matters for the first time.

Another concern was ensuring that children understood the difference between individual and group identity (see 6.2.3). Kramsch (1998b) describes the plurality and multiplicity of cultural identities within one individual. In the second half of the project, I encouraged children in some groups to think in terms of the different groups they themselves belong to. They were able to identify a number of different groupings, including the Swedish-speaking minority, the Lutheran State Church, and Finnish/Swedish culture. They noted the festivals that they celebrate, their hobbies and their sports teams. They were also able to distinguish between group membership and individual characteristics, identifying personality traits such as cheerfulness, irascibility, quick-wittedness, and untidiness, as well as various hobbies such as playing the piano and cycling. They identified, too, characteristics which they might share with others in the same group. The pupils seemed to understand that, regardless of the groups we belong to and things we have in common with others of the same group, everyone has their own personality, and that there are also differences between members of the same group (see Tseng, 2002). These issues were not, however, discussed in all reading groups.

With those groups in which multicultural matters were discussed to a greater extent, I explained the terms ‘majority’ and ‘minority’. The children seemed to understand the terms. Some also managed to relate to their own position as a minority/majority member of our society: ‘Jag hör till minoriteten om man tittar på språket för jag hör till finlandssvenska språket. Jag hör också till majoritet[en] om man tittar på att jag hör till lutherska kyrkan som de flesta finländare hör till.’ (I belong to the minority if you look at the language because I’m Swedish-speaking. I also belong to the majority if you look at the Lutheran church to which most Finns belong [my translation]). Because the children themselves belonged to a minority group, either as Swedish-speakers, or as bilinguals in Finland, belonging to the minority group was an experience they identified with. There was evidence of both positive and negative personal experiences in belonging to the Swedish-speaking minority group. Some children, for instance, mentioned the value of knowing more than one language, and some felt that they are occasionally teased by Finnish speakers because of their Swedish: ‘I’m feeling a little bit different, but my mum speak finich [Finnish], so it’s help me’ (Katja, RD).

As was noted above, discussion of racism occurred in the groups reading *Troublemakers* and *My Name is Jasmine Grey*, and discussion of exclusion occurred in relation to *Secret Friends*, *Seven Weird Days at Number 31*, and *The Private World of Rajiv Ray*. The children’s thoughts sometimes appeared in more general discussions (‘I think white people don’t like black peoples because they want to be best.’ [Katja, NB]; ‘I feel it is unfair that people judge other people by their skin color’ [Melker, NB]), whereas other comments were related directly to the texts (‘I think it’s wrong to pick on

someone who is black. If Jasmine would be white, maybe everybody who has been nasty to her, would be nicer...' [Susanne, NB]).

In summary, both the themes of some of the books, and topics of general discussion initiated by the teacher demanded teacher attention. Bringing multicultural texts into the classroom clearly brought with it responsibilities and challenges for the teacher, some of which I came to understand as I went along. I needed to be alert and to find solutions to problems as they emerged in my teaching.

8.3 A SUPPORTIVE CLIMATE

I was fortunate in being able to undertake this project as part of the EFL curriculum. Some considerations come to mind in judging whether the lessons learned might be applied by other teachers in Finland and other EFL settings.

8.3.1 Fitting the project into the school

The opportunity to undertake this project was of course to a large extent dependent on my access to the school setting as a site of research (discussed in sections 2.1.3 and 10.1). However, other issues were also involved.

As teachers we are generally required to follow a curriculum, or at least we try to teach in a way which does not threaten the fundamental goals for the school as a whole, and for the individual subjects. The 1994 and 2004 national curricula in Finland, as we saw in Chapters 1.4.3 and 7, support the implementation of both a multicultural dimension in teaching in general, and a cultural and intercultural perspective on EFL-teaching, thus providing both opportunity and relevance for a project of this kind. Furthermore, the fact that this school attached particular importance to reading, both in L1 and in language teaching (I, CT, 14.11.2000; I, HT, 13.11.2000) made it easier to enlist support for a project of this kind.

School organization also made it relatively easy to proceed with the project. I was using the scheduled EFL-lessons for the class in question (three lessons of 45 minutes per week), and so was not encroaching on other school subjects. However, the interview with the class teacher for these children revealed that she had, in fact, postponed project work within another school subject for the duration of the present reading project, so that the pupils would not have too much to read in one go. This, of course, suggests that cooperation between teachers of different subjects is needed for EFL-reading projects

of this kind to work successfully in a primary school. Further, I found that the work set for EFL-reading needed to take into account that year 6 pupils normally have homework in many other subjects as well.

Mine was a one-off project which focused on only one school subject, for a short period of time; I was teaching and working alone. There are, of course, many opportunities for collaboration and the whole-school-approach advocated by many writers requires the incorporation of multicultural thinking into all school subjects (see, for instance, Banks, 2004a; Edwards, 1998). The class teacher for the children involved in the project in fact commented on the potential for integrating the reading of novels in English with a multicultural theme into other school subjects, such as history and geography, in year 6. A further note on practical implementation concerns time constraints. Although both the head- and class teacher felt that the goals of EFL-teaching can be achieved through reading and were very supportive of this project, they also expressed the view that some teachers might be concerned that a reading project would take time from 'ordinary' teaching.

Lack of class sets of books is another potential obstacle for teachers wishing to use literature in EFL. The fact that I had the opportunity, through research funding, to buy a collection of books enabled me to offer book choices and a varied collection. However, the collection of class sets of English children's novels (CLELE), donated by the British Embassy, and held at the Åbo Akademi University Library, enables all EFL-teachers in Finland to order novels to use within their teaching. This would enable future teaching of the kind described in this dissertation.

8.3.2 Individualization and reader response

As was noted in Chapters 3-5, the tasks related to reading became more individualized as the project progressed in order to meet the needs of the weaker and stronger reading groups. Tasks also differed according to the content of the stories. In the case of books such as *Seven Weird Days...* and *Operation Gadgetman*, in the first half of the project, for instance, a focus on multicultural issues would have been inappropriate. When reading these books, multicultural issues were not discussed. Instead, multicultural issues were discussed in relation to books that did include such content.

Similarly, it was a challenge, as we saw above, to find a balance between setting tasks which would encourage children to explore multicultural issues, and allowing children to raise issues themselves. General reader-response questions triggered responses to texts, including cultural and multicultural responses. Therefore, the literacy approach adopted in the project triggered multicultural and cultural thinking.

8.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has discussed issues related to the teacher and teaching situation which emerged as important when introducing the multicultural texts. Firstly, this involved the use of texts in exploring social issues, including text selection, the use of 'issues' books, and approaches to teaching. Secondly, it involved the teacher's previous experiences and lessons learned, including challenges of introducing culture, and dangers of cross-cultural comparisons. Lastly, it also involved aspects related to the supportive climate both of official policies and the field work school, and of opportunities provided by individualization and reader response.

Summary, discussion and conclusions

9. READING AND MULTICULTURAL TEXTS IN EFL

Two research questions have shaped this study:

- I What issues arise when authentic reading material is introduced into the EFL classroom?

- II What is the impact on children's understanding of diversity, and what issues are involved, when incorporating a multicultural dimension and using multicultural children's fiction in EFL-teaching?

This chapter discusses the main findings in relation to the first of these questions in section 9.1, and the second in section 9.2.

9.1 USING AUTHENTIC READING MATERIALS IN THE EFL-CLASSROOM

Three main issues emerged in relation to reading of authentic texts in the EFL classroom, and were discussed in part I of the thesis. The first concerns children's reading, understanding and literacy support, which is discussed in section 9.1.1 below. The second issue concerns children's literacy work in reading groups (section 9.1.2), and the third main issue concerns how children responded to the texts and what, in essence, they thought about the books (section 9.1.3).

9.1.1 EFL-literacy support

Several issues need to be considered regarding EFL-reading, -writing and -literacy support. Finding a book at a suitable level of difficulty was important for children's enjoyment. The main reason for a text feeling difficult, both among weaker and stronger readers, was a large number of unknown words. The length and amount of text were also mentioned. One chapter being more difficult than another caused problems for some weaker readers. Description was perceived as more difficult than action. In general, the children's evaluation of the difficulty of a text matched my own. It was important that pupils were given the option of changing to another book.

Most children felt that they could understand the overall meaning and enjoy the stories even when they encountered difficult words. Thus, all readers ‘allowed’ for a certain amount of difficulty, and they were highly motivated to read despite the amount of effort it sometimes required.

But when the level of difficulty exceeded readers’ ‘tolerance zone’, help was needed. Findings from this study support claims made by scholars such as Silberstein (1994) and Day & Bamford (1998) that *EFL-readers need support* when reading authentic texts. Much *teacher attention* was directed towards the weaker readers, who sometimes relied heavily on scaffolding in order to understand the texts. They were encouraged to talk about their reading comprehension, help each other, and admit misunderstandings and ask for help.

Although my main aim was to encourage reading for *overall understanding*, reading needed to be supported *at the level of words* as well. Reading ability and language proficiency seemed to be strongly connected for these young readers. When adequate support was provided, it was possible to understand texts containing new words (see Edwards, 1997; Burnaby, 1997; Gregory, 1996).

Vocabulary work in the present study focused on helping the reader *understand* the text, in contrast to most writers, who offer advice and evidence of vocabulary *learning*. However, there is something of a paradox here, since highlighting words might in itself contribute to learning. Incidental vocabulary learning, much discussed in the field, was visible in this project.

There were significant differences in the amount and type of help that individual children and groups needed. In the beginning, tasks were prepared for all reading groups. However, as the project evolved, the more proficient readers became increasingly independent, while the weaker readers continued to receive help. It was important for the teacher to draw a balance between offering enough help, on the one hand, and not interrupting reading with too many tasks, on the other hand.

There were differences as regards *when* pupils wanted help: before, during, or after reading. There were also varying preferences as to whether the teacher or pupils should select vocabulary to work on. Children tended to prefer making their own selections. The weakest, however, wanted the teacher to select words and prepare task on these words. These questions are important when fostering independent readers is a goal.

Helping children find *strategies for solving problems when comprehension broke down* was important. In fact, several writers have stressed the need for the teacher to structure ESL/EFL-reading with this aim (see Swarbrick, 1990, 1998; Carter & Long, 1991). Within L1-reading, there is substantial evidence to show that teaching children

strategies aids their reading. Very little, however, is known about the strategies that EFL-readers use. In the present project, the most common strategies were re-reading, stopping and thinking (guessing), making connections to a similar sounding word in Swedish or using their knowledge of mother tongue reading, asking a grown-up or sibling, note-taking, discussing vocabulary in the group, reading ahead (skipping words), using dictionaries, and asking the teacher. Children developed ways of using these strategies in different orders and combinations.

Most groups enjoyed *reading aloud* to each other, but in a few cases, readers became immersed in the text and wanted to read at their own pace. A brief analysis shows that the children not only displayed a range of reading behaviours which are also common to English L1-readers, but also made mistakes which related to the fact that they were language learners. The children clearly enjoyed and understood other children's reading in groups, despite the fact that decoding mistakes were made. Although their *actual* understanding has not been tested, the fact that they felt they could understand and follow the story is a positive sign. Sometimes, reading accuracy, fluency, the amount of text read aloud, and reading comprehension were related. But there were several notable exceptions. The teacher therefore needed to be alert, since a correct decoding did not always indicate that the text had been understood. In the absence of systematic miscue analyses and comprehension tests, these findings remain speculative.

Reading was extended into *writing*. The main source of writing was the reading diary, which also functioned as a response log and dialogue journal. Children's frequency and length of entries, their language use, interest in writing, degree of effort, and features of writing varied significantly.

Allowing pupils to choose which *language* to use when writing was important. Some children used English almost exclusively, whereas the two weakest, Markus and Annika, used Swedish significantly more. Some children used Swedish and English flexibly, even changing within the same entry. Swedish was sometimes used to express more difficult things, such as characters' feelings. Several wrote long texts fluently but still made frequent spelling mistakes. Others were less verbal with varying degrees of accuracy. Various features of children's spelling and grammar were visible. Children were using authentic Swedish spelling patterns and grammatical rules which sometimes brought them so close to the English equivalent that their text would be comprehensible to an English ear. There was clearly evidence of transfer of skills from L1 to FL. Thus, Ringbom's (1987, 1992) argument that the closeness of one's L1 to the L2 can play a positive part in L2 written production seems relevant to these children. Another important feature of some children's writing was that they produced texts in which they used words and phrases that they picked up from the novels.

9.1.2 Group work with the texts

Pupils were seated in reading groups and working independently of the teacher. Issues emerged both as regards the teacher's planning and management of teaching, and in terms of how pupils related to the books and to each other.

Very little is known about how EFL-teachers *structure group work*. The most important consideration for placement in groups in this project was the novel that the pupils chose to read. Teacher intervention, however, was necessary if pupils chose a book which was clearly above or below their capacity. Group work required active involvement and planning on the part of the teacher. Similar findings have been reported by writers such as Close (1997) and Galton & Williamson (1992). Lessons generally started and finished with a teacher-led whole class discussion. The teacher visited the groups, and helped as necessary. Children were encouraged to collaborate and help peers. Some groups worked very independently, whilst others often signalled that they needed help.

The readers engaged in many different *types of tasks* before, during, and after reading, including vocabulary and reading comprehension, and more creative and open-ended reader response tasks. Tasks were both oral and written, undertaken individually and as a group. The reading diary provided a continuous writing activity. It was possible to adapt tasks suggested by ESL/EFL-writers and tasks common to L1-reading to this primary school setting.

One of the most important aspects which emerged was *individualization*: teaching materials, book choices, tasks and activities, vocabulary support, and homework, became increasingly differentiated as the project progressed. Although individualization is not common in EFL-settings, it proved essential not only for individual pupils but also for groups. There was also a collection of extra reading material of varying levels of difficulty. Support was provided for weaker readers in the form of reading together with peers, reading shorter and less complex texts, and listening to the story read on tape. Furthermore, tasks were structured to meet the individual needs of each reading group. Attention was paid to creating a supportive climate where pupils felt free to express the type of help that they needed (without feeling embarrassed in front of peers). Individualization was assisted by the fact that readers of different proficiency levels were reading different books and seated in separate groups. Therefore, it was 'natural' for tasks to differ from group to group.

A central issue for the teacher was how to *scaffold independent group discussions*. Since three books were being read in class simultaneously, whole-class discussions would have been impractical. To begin with, however, pupils were reluctant to take the initiative in their groups: they did not know what to talk about, how to start a discussion or to keep it going. This required intervention on several levels. Scaffolding was needed in order for this to work: an important underpinning theory is Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which highlights children's ability to perform above

their own level of ability when provided support. Initially, time was spent introducing children to ways of sustaining discussion. The teacher modelled questions and ways of discussing texts. The roles of group secretary and chair person were introduced, and measures were taken to create a safe atmosphere. Children were also encouraged to practice responding to what other people had said. The development of 'Discussion Sheets' handed to the chair person of each group was an important element in structuring teaching and offering ideas for the pupils to engage with. Evidence from this study supports claims made by writers such as Close (1992) and Wray (1994) that pupils need models of how to work in groups and respond to fiction, and training in order to function independently and collaboratively. Discussion Sheets became increasingly individualized as the project progressed. Therefore, groups were increasingly engaged in different types of activity in lesson time.

Questions were also an important focus for scaffolding group discussions. Appropriate interrogatory expressions were introduced and practiced. Handouts with example questions and whole-class practice were helpful in the initial stages. The goal was to create a positive environment for sharing thoughts. A combination of questions were used: they focussed on language, content, or both; they included yes/no and how/why questions, literal level and inferential questions, reader response and reading comprehension questions. Further, questions were asked by the teacher or by peers; and they were answered individually, orally and in writing, in pairs, in groups, and either in lesson time or as homework. Questions encouraged exploration and were sensitive to pupils' levels of language proficiency.

Reader response helps readers express their own views, allowing them to communicate freely, without worrying about answers being right or wrong (Rosenblatt, 1978, 2002). Several types of responses were encouraged: oral and written, real time and retrospective, private and public, and spontaneous as well as triggered by tasks or questions. In addition to providing children with a fruitful basis for expressing their views, reader response allowed the researcher to collect evidence of children's own thoughts about the text (in contrast to teacher-led whole class discussions that force or offer a 'correct' or schooled textual interpretation).

Reading conferences in lesson time were important from a teaching perspective, since they allowed the teacher to both model discussions and monitor children's reading and understanding, and to provide help when needed. They were particularly important because of the absence of whole-class discussions of text. Reading conferences involved questions similar to the ones that children engaged in during independent group work; and they also became individualized with the weaker groups spending more time on vocabulary. The children gained significantly in spontaneity and also built on what others had said.

Two main issues emerged in relation to the *pupils' work in groups with no teacher present*: their developing independence, and collaboration in meaning-making. The focus in the present study was on group interaction on the macro rather than the micro level.

With regards to *developing independence*, all groups needed help with what to do in the beginning. However, relatively quickly they began to work independently, so that the teacher could focus her attention where help was needed the most. There were significant differences in independence within and between groups. The open or closed nature of tasks affected work in some groups. Groups varied in how they got started and stayed on task. There were also different levels of engagement and differences in the amount of work completed in a lesson, and in the amount of scaffolding needed. Having pupils of slightly different levels of EFL- and reading proficiency working together raised issues on a few isolated occasions. In general, however, group work functioned well. The pupils enjoyed this way of working and felt that peers had been helpful.

Another aspect of developing independence concerns *group discussions* without the teacher. The children practised ways of posing and answering questions. In the beginning, questions needed to be more concrete and closed, but children learned to respond also to more open and abstract questions. After some practice, they were also able to pose a range of questions to each other, and they generally understood each other's questions. The Discussion Sheets were important, and the chairperson became an essential feature of group discussions, posing questions, and keeping the group focused. However, different patterns of chairing, and levels of domination by the chair affected group interaction. Although some groups became particularly independent, all needed teacher support and structured activity until the end. A balance needed to be found between allowing the groups enough freedom to express themselves spontaneously on the one hand, and offering enough structuring and scaffolding, on the other hand. In some groups, the fact that pupils skipped questions from the Discussion Sheets which did not interest them illustrates this balance. Groups also decided how long to spend on each topic. Some topics generated more engagement, whereas others were discussed briefly. Groups differed, then, in how strictly they kept to the teacher's suggestions.

Another central issue was pupils' *collaboration, interaction and patterns of meaning-making*. Research on group work in EFL-settings is scarce, although many writers have emphasized the development of communication skills, classroom discourse, and children's active construction of meaning. Most interaction in the present study occurred in small groups. Children improved in their ability to collaborate in groups. They developed from wanting to do things individually to sharing, and working through tasks together. The nature of interactions also changed over time, so that they engaged more in each other's contributions, built on what others had said, and took more turns

on topics, thus creating dialogue. True collaborative work (see Galton & Williamson, 1992) was thus visible during the project. Children asked for help from peers, and helped each other in the groups. An interesting finding was that weaker readers were particularly interactive. They were not afraid of asking others for help, they questioned, explained, and often engaged in each other's work to greater effect than more proficient pupils.

Generally, pupils took tasks seriously. Interestingly, however, successful group interaction was not always an indicator of depth of discussions, since some children were particularly collaborative, respecting each other, listening to each other, building on what others had said, but still had rather little to say about the texts. In these groups, reading conferences with the teacher were important in terms of encouraging deeper textual interpretations. In contrast, children who expressed more views on the texts were not necessarily working collaboratively or engaging in each other's ideas.

Further, certain patterns were prevalent in pupils' efforts to *make meaning around new vocabulary in groups*. There were differences between the groups, particularly between stronger and weaker readers. Sometimes, issues related to mispronunciations occurred. There was ample evidence of children helping and learning from each other. Strategies for meaning making involved using dictionaries, using linguistic knowledge, referring to the primary source and then inferring meanings collaboratively, and combining several different strategies. Interestingly, the weaker groups tended to check outcomes with the teacher or a dictionary, and thus often arrived at plausible results. More proficient children often arrived at plausible explanations quickly and were able to continue reading, but in a few cases their overconfidence resulted in faulty translations.

Despite many successful negotiations in both weaker and stronger groups, there were also limitations to children's knowledge. The failure of dictionaries to explain idiomatic expressions sometimes led children to incorrect explanations. In addition, children were not always able to help each other understand or to correct each other, and they did not always agree within the group, in which case teacher intervention was necessary.

In general, however, the groups were able to negotiate meanings of new words to an admirable degree. Evidence from this study supports claims made by writers such as Cumming (1997) and Cameron (2001), that when offered enough support, FL-learners are able to use their meaning-making capacities. This study has also shown that the teacher can structure primary school EFL-teaching in ways that support negotiation of meaning and collaboration.

In this project, the pupils were encouraged to use English as much as possible, but they were free also to use Swedish, or to switch to Swedish. The rationale was that they should be able to express the thoughts they wanted. The teacher modified her language use according to the proficiency of the pupils, and in relation to the type of discussion.

There was variation between the pupils, with the weakest using Swedish almost exclusively. Use of English varied between groups, between pupils in the same groups, and according to the topic of discussion. For example, story re-tellings were often in English whereas meta-talk when discussing understandings was in Swedish. Questions which were prepared beforehand were often posed in English. The teacher's presence affected language use in that English was used more when the teacher took part in discussions.

9.1.3 Responding to chapter content and children's responses

Children's responses to the content of their readings, discussed in chapter 5, formed the third main category of literacy-issues emerging from the study. Issues involved the children's ability to respond and the nature of responses, on the one hand, and thoughts that the books triggered, on the other hand. The main written source of response was the reading diary. In group tasks and discussions, pupils expressed their views orally without the presence of the teacher, whereas in reading conferences and interviews, the teacher was leading the discussion.

First, a few words about the nature of responses. Story re-tellings were of two types: written private re-tellings in reading diaries, and oral re-tellings in groups. *Written re-tellings* could be overarching plot summaries or more detailed narrative accounts, and they displayed variety in terms of personal engagement. Some were objective, whereas others contained a personal dimension in which thoughts about character feelings or pupils' own reflections were visible. Both efferent and aesthetic responses (Rosenblatt, 1987) were thus visible. Varying degrees of reading comprehension were evident in writing. The written retellings provided those who were fluent in writing an opportunity to express themselves open-endedly and to show how much they had understood and remembered.

Oral re-tellings involved group re-tellings after each chapter, and retrospective re-tellings after finishing the book. Scaffolding and questions were needed (see Chapters 3-4). Reading comprehension and serious engagement in the story were visible in many oral re-tellings, particularly when the teacher was present. The re-tellings developed in coherence over time, with children clearly building on each other's comments, adding information and bridging gaps. Sometimes, re-tellings consisted of overarching summaries, whereas at other times, detailed descriptions were given.

Oral re-tellings were often longer, more informative, and more detailed than written ones. In the weaker groups, Swedish was used to a large extent, and the teacher's prompting was often needed. It was not uncommon in groups of all levels of proficiency for re-tellings to be shorter and more 'Swedish' in the absence of the

teacher. Especially in the case of the weakest readers, re-tellings with the teacher provided opportunity to share and check understandings. In other groups, in contrast, the children were so eager to retell the events of the chapter, that the teacher needed to make sure that everyone had the chance to have their say. The oral retellings provided opportunity for readers to share their understandings. Those who had not understood the chapter could listen to their peers explaining, and ask questions.

Oral and written personal opinions and evaluations offer insights into children's thoughts about the texts. These responses need to be viewed in terms of the teaching approaches adopted in the project (see Chapters 3-4). The present pupils were encouraged to express their *own* thoughts, without preconceived ideas from the teacher about what is 'right' or 'wrong'. Since there might be differences between a thought which we hold in our mind, and that which we are able to or want to express (Piaget, 1955/1974; Vygotsky, 1962), it has not been possible to capture thoughts which pupils did not express. Analysis is based on what they *did* say. Although children were often encouraged to relate the text to their own lives, to think about characters as a means of helping them gain a deeper understanding and engagement in the text, it is also important to consider the constructed nature of the characters, and the relationship between fiction and reality. These are complex questions. The tension between the fictiveness of fiction and teaching approaches which relate fictive characters to pupils' own lives cannot be solved in a study of this kind, though as teachers we need at least to be aware of this paradox.

Children's interpretations and enjoyment of texts are held to be related to, among other things, their social, psychological and cognitive levels of development. Empirical evidence of children's interpretations in EFL-settings is very scarce. Some studies from L1-settings (such as Applebee 1978; Appleyard 1991; Tucker, 1981) offer valuable insights into what we can expect from children of different ages. The children in the present study were 11-12-years old. They might fall into either the stage of 'early fiction' (up until the age of 11), or the stage of 'literature for older children' (Tucker, 1981). There could, hypothetically, be a range of maturity represented even in this small-case study. Whether theories of L1-reading are applicable to young EFL-readers has not received much attention to date.

How then, did these children respond? Some patterns were visible in children's responses. The questions and tasks around the texts allowed them to form opinions and express thought to a significantly greater extent than they were doing without this scaffolding. Even the weakest EFL-readers showed evidence of analysis through tasks and discussions. This study therefore supports Rosenblatt's (1978, 2002) view that discussions and tasks around literature encourage more in-depth analyses. It also supports Vygotsky's (1962) proposition that scaffolding can bring children to more reflective thinking.

Several children enjoyed the element of action. Others analysed the texts more deeply, and craved complexity in plots and characters. It needs to be noted that children were, in fact, enjoying very *different* kinds of books. The need to offer a collection of books from which pupils could choose therefore proved important for this age group. This study cannot throw light on whether reading would have been enjoyed as much had the whole class been reading the same text.

A further general pattern concerns *differences in comments between the first and second halves of the project*. In the second part, a larger number of comments about characters and their actions were offered, and deeper levels of character analyses were visible. In part, this must relate to the fact that the pupils were becoming used to this way of working and responding to texts (see Chapter 3). The fact that novels with more demanding content were read in the second half of the project may also explain this trend. In these books, characters' experiences have to do with different cultures, skin colour, racist remarks, bullying, or difficult situations – in contrast to the 'lighter' themes of the stories in the first half of the project. Thus, even though this study has *not* involved a 'literary' perspective, the actual texts must not be forgotten.

The largest category of personal opinions and evaluations consisted of *comments about characters, behaviours and actions*. Both literal character descriptions based on information explicitly present in the text, and comments based on personal reflection, occurred. Not all children reasoned on a more abstract level. The weakest showed limited ability to analyse characters. However, tasks that asked children to compare characters encouraged deeper thought. For example, when asked about both positive and negative traits, children were often able to reflect on different aspects of characters, and sometimes on character development through the course of the story.

Most children were able to express why they *liked or disliked a character*. In general, the main characters were the ones which the children appreciated, but there were exceptions. On a general level, children liked characters who had admirable traits, who were special or different in some way, or who were complex. A few children were able to reason abstractly, pinpointing the author's intention and presentational technique for a character ('more things were told about them', 'not much was said'). They disliked characters who were not admirable, or who behaved unkindly towards other characters. It was possible to discern examples of both 'young' thinking for this age (liking heroic characters, having strong moral views), and more mature thinking (analysing the author's intention, reasoning on a deeper level).

Personal involvement was also seen in the children's responses to texts. Various tasks, including discussion, writing, and drama, allowed the children to engage in the stories on a personal level. Children's predictions and questions to each other showed particular engagement. Diary entries in the role of a character, and essays after reading a book demonstrated much personal involvement. A small number of deeper reflections

on life issues were offered. Involvement was also expressed in terms of empathy and putting oneself in the character's shoes (see Chapter 7). Several children showed that they could *understand characters' thoughts and actions*, and behaviour was sometimes related to children's own real life experiences. However, not only were there differences between children; in a few cases, the same child came across as rather mature sometimes, whereas at other times more immature reasoning was evident.

Comments about *the books 'as literature'* were also made. For some, the book turned out to be what they had expected. For others, the story offered surprises. All stories except *Troublemakers* and *Secret Friends* were appreciated for how they ended. Although all children enjoyed the books they read, they were not uncritical. *Seven Weird Days* was experienced as good, but not brilliant. The other books, however, were very much enjoyed by everyone reading them. *Operation Gadgetman* was perceived differently by the two groups reading this book. Qualities which were generally appreciated included the story being funny, action, excitement, the theme of football, and the suitability of a book for both girls and boys. Most children enjoyed their second book more than their first.

9.2 CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND MULTICULTURAL FICTION IN EFL-TEACHING

The second research question concerned the impact which reading of multicultural fiction might have on children's understanding of diversity, and issues involved in a multicultural dimension to EFL-teaching. Evidence from the present study suggest that multicultural fiction contributed to raising awareness among children of issues of culture (see Chapter 6) and diversity (see Chapter 7). However, teaching approaches which encouraged children to form and express their views played a vital role in achieving this result.

Three main issues emerged in relation to the second research question and were outlined in Part II of the thesis. These concern, firstly, culture in language teaching and reading in relation to cultural content, discussed in section 9.2.1 below; the anti-racist and multicultural dimension in the texts and the inclusion of a multicultural dimension in EFL-teaching (9.2.2); and teacher-related aspects of using multicultural fiction and introducing a multicultural dimension in EFL (9.2.3).

9.2.1 Culture in language teaching and reading in relation to cultural content

Chapter 6 discussed culture and reading in language teaching. It marked the beginning of Part II of the thesis, starting with a theoretical discussion of the rationale for and history of culture in FL-teaching. It has long been recognized that foreign language learners need to learn both conscious cultural knowledge, and the kind of knowledge required for social interactions that is unconscious among native speakers. Some current FL-teaching approaches (such as sociocultural and intercultural language teaching, see 6.1.1) share theoretical underpinnings with a more general framework of multicultural teaching, such as that in the present project. However, there are also some fundamental differences between language teaching approaches, on the one hand, and a general multicultural dimension in teaching, on the other hand. Notably, the focus of language teaching is on attitudes towards members of the *target language society*, and that of multicultural education is on the development of positive attitudes towards members of *the same - one's own - society*.

The Finnish national curriculum of 1994, the version current when the fieldwork was conducted, emphasized the importance of culture in language teaching, although the interpretation of culture was left to the teacher. I interpreted the curriculum in a broad sense, including *multicultural* aspects of Britain – the target culture that the pupils were already familiar with – on the grounds that British culture and social life today are much affected by the presence of members from different ethnic minorities. Some activities of the present project fall within the boundaries of, for instance, Kramsch's (1993) notion of trends within language teaching: children were relating the target culture to their own, comparing and contrasting, discussing similarities and differences. They were also familiarizing themselves with the growing multiculturalism in the target (British) culture.

It became clear at the outset that discussions needed to begin with those cultures with which the children were familiar from before: their own, and British majority culture. Open-ended questions were put to the children which allowed them to express their views. What, then, did the children say?

The same patterns were visible as in responses of other kinds (see Chapter 5): questions or tasks were generally required to trigger cultural responses; not many spontaneous comments on cultural or sociocultural elements were offered, particularly in the beginning. However, as the children became familiar with discussing cultural matters, more comments were made, and some events described in the novels had clearly triggered thought. Responses varied between books. *Grandpa Chatterji* received the largest number of comments; *Seven Weird Days...* and *Operation Gadgetman* triggered the least.

The danger of describing a culture on the basis of just one work of fiction became apparent. It was easier, too, for children to think about culture in terms of a more

stereotypical and ‘tourist’ view, such as what sights one might want to show a visitor to Turku.

Aspects of *reading comprehension and language proficiency* in relation to culture were also important. Young EFL-readers might experience challenges, since a text imbeds cultural meanings that they might not be aware of. The present children might not have interpreted the texts in the same way as native speakers would, but they nonetheless enjoyed them at their own level of understanding. Since this was their first encounter with a longer text in English, enjoyment of reading was an important teaching goal. A decision was therefore made not to problematize issues which the children did not perceive as problems. Therefore, the teacher’s interpretations were not forced on the children, other than on occasions where I was aware there had been an obvious misunderstanding or incorrect interpretation. If cultural or sociocultural information was important for overall understanding, children were encouraged to discuss these issues either before or after reading (see section 3.3). It needs to be noted that other teaching goals and strategies would probably have elicited other outcomes in terms of ‘learning’ cultural information. This issue is further elaborated in section 10.2.

It was not always possible to separate linguistic and cultural elements in understanding (see Bredella & Delanoy, 1996); in many cases, children knew neither the word nor its cultural connotations. As we saw in Chapter 4, children often arrived at plausible explanations in their groups, but there were some notable exceptions. Thus, cuing children, providing explanations and glosses, questions which helped them to infer meanings, brainstorming, making cultural comparisons, and discussion, were all used (see Byram & Morgan, 1994; Lazar, 1993; Mc Carthy & Carter, 1994). Sometimes, lack of historical or cultural knowledge prevented children from inferring meanings. Evidence from this study thus supports claims made by writers such as Byram & Morgan (1994) and Kramsch (1993), that EFL-readers may not always be able to make appropriate connections.

Yet another issue was children’s *perception of the story setting and cultural comparisons*. When asking children to compare their own culture with the target culture as represented by the text, the teacher was in fact placing abstract demands on the children. Several writers have offered theoretical views on the notion of reality and culture (see Kramsch, 1993; Neuner, 1997; Tseng, 2000). However, relating this type of theory empirically to *young EFL-readers* is complex. The perceived ‘universality’ of some texts became an issue. Some children felt that events could just as well have happened in Finland or in another English speaking country. Whilst this enabled the readers to understand and enjoy the texts, it is possible to question the potential of cultural mediation through texts in such cases. It is also possible that the children interpreted the cultural scene – England also being a Western modern society – as closer to the Finnish scene than in actual fact it was, thus focussing on things that felt familiar, and ignoring sociocultural elements that might have been unfamiliar. Or could

it be that they were focussing their attention on aspects other than the cultural (such as finding clues in the detective story) when reading? Or that some texts were in fact culturally 'neutral' (despite the inclusion of characters from minority ethnic groups in important roles)? These questions remain at the level of speculation. However, it should also be noted that the same story was perceived in different ways by different readers, and many children also pointed to things in the texts which indicated the actual setting, such as school life, aspects related to food, etc.

Although children generally did not make sociocultural comparisons spontaneously, some events or issues had clearly triggered thought. In fact, most children found examples in their texts. Some children made associations with their real life experiences, others did not. A further way in which children engaged in cultural matters was through writing an essay on a topic related to a British minority culture. This activity was very much enjoyed and gave food for thought on issues of culture.

Cultural responses to texts were relatively few in number and therefore do not merit further elaboration. What is notable from an EFL-perspective is that the texts were generally accessible to young EFL-readers; they understood and enjoyed them at their own level. Through reading and discussing the texts, children's sociocultural and cultural awareness clearly developed, and they became more familiar with thinking in terms of culture.

9.2.2 Multicultural and anti-racist aspects

Chapter 7 began with a discussion of children's multicultural socialization and reading. Children acquire the norms and behaviours of their culture at home. Parents, siblings, other significant relatives, and peers contribute to structuring the child's experiences. Later, secondary socialization in playschool and school widen the circle of important influences. Reading, which was central to the present project and a common activity in school, is often held as an important instrument of cultural socialization, and a potential means by which we can come into contact with other cultures and societies. Very little attention, however, has been given to pedagogy in relation to multicultural literature. Since the late 1990s, several studies have revealed positive outcomes among *real* readers in L1-settings. One cannot, however, automatically assume the same effects for EFL-children, who form the focus for the present study. There is a gap in research in relation to reading multicultural literature in a foreign language. Therefore, the responses of children in the present study in terms of empathy and understanding were of some interest.

Three main issues emerged from the present children's responses. The first concerns *engagement and familiarity with diversity*. The children were inexperienced as concerns

ethnic minority groups. Characters' culture and physical differences triggered some thought. Sometimes, children reacted to cultural behaviour as being odd or different, but they nonetheless appreciated those characters whom they felt were different. Skin colour was raised as a topic for discussion both in relation to *Grandpa Chatterji*, *Secret Friends*, *Troublemakers*, and *My Name is Jasmine Grey*. In *Grandpa Chatterji*, cultural information was explicit in the text, and the children reacted to incidents and cultural information.

Empathy and understanding formed another focus. Empathy can mean many things, and different meanings are ascribed by different scholars. Some have referred to empathy as a feeling, compassion, or as knowing and understanding. In relation to education for tolerance, empathy can refer to different levels of understanding of another person's views or actions. Some scholars have made a distinction between tolerance on the one hand, and empathy which requires understanding and active acceptance, on the other hand. A distinction has also been made between empathy which is momentary, and sympathy which involves a more long-term perspective. In a short-term project of this kind, I feel that empathy is more realistic to expect than sympathy in response to literature. Dealing with empathy in schools, however, raises ethical and moral questions, since it is not value-neutral. In Finland, the ethos of the school tends to promote Human Rights, democratic thinking, pluralism, and cultural diversity, which implies the foregrounding of teaching that develops empathy and tolerance. However, students' fundamental beliefs should not be threatened through 'brainwashing'. It is also important to note both that pupils might have a naive sense of compassion without understanding the complexities, and that it is unclear whether increasing students' capacity to empathize will affect their actions in real life. Dealing with empathy in the classroom, then, is a complex matter which requires insight on the part of the teacher. Age and cognitive development also affect empathy.

According to Rosenblatt (1987, 2002), we can read both for personal connections (aesthetic reading), and for intellectual understanding (efferent reading). It is notable, that aesthetic reading in EFL might be more complex than that in L1 (see Delanoy, 1996). Some scholars have identified an imaginative 'leap' which the reader needs to make in order to imagine and understand the position of someone who is culturally different. Within a radical multicultural framework, the aim is to challenge discrimination, and understanding on a personal empathetic level is not enough (see Galda & Beach, 2001, 2004). In EFL-settings, in contrast, reading for cultural enrichment have generally emphasised 'cultural' (not multicultural/anti-racist) understanding (see Bredella, 1996, 2003). As teachers we would need to clarify our goals.

The present EFL-readers were able to relate to the emotional content of the stories, although the level of understanding varied both between children and texts. In several examples, an imaginative capacity to understand unfamiliar situations was displayed.

Some children reading *Grandpa Chatterji* displayed a readiness to experience a new kind of setting for the first time, showing both involvement and distancing: involvement in the character's fate, and reflection on one's own response (see Rosenblatt, 1978). Sometimes, strong feelings and engagement were expressed in relation to characters experiencing difficulties or being treated badly, particularly in the second half of the project. Comments were also offered on how one would feel oneself in a similar situation. When writing in the 'role' of a character, children picked up on the emotional content of the text. Some children understood the feelings of both grown-up and child characters; some were also able to identify conflicting emotions, and the perspectives of both the 'victim' and 'oppressor'; some could elaborate on intentions behind characters' behaviours. It needs to be emphasized that tasks and questions were often required to trigger such involvement. We cannot know how children would act in a real life situation, and whether they managed sufficiently to verbalize what they were feeling (see Vygotsky, 1962; Piaget, 1955/1974). We can only take seriously those thoughts that they did express and trust that the breadth and depth of data collected from multiple sources have offered accurate insights (see Chapter 10.1).

The third category which emerged concerns issues related to *bullying, discrimination and racism*. How readers react is clearly related to their own sense of cultural identity and their attitudes. Racial attitudes develop early, communicated by parents, peers and the values of society at large. The children in this project had little or no contact with members of ethnic minority groups. Therefore, encouraging interethnic friendships, which is recommended in the literature as a means by which to develop positive ethnic relations (see Deegan, 1996), is difficult. Reading fiction can thus offer an alternative means of familiarizing children with issues of diversity.

Many writers have expressed the view that education is one of the best means of countering intolerance. EFL-theorists (see Chapter 6) have also argued that positive attitudes need to be fostered among language learners, since language learning includes contact with the target culture. Debate about how best to foster positive attitudes towards difference has been a feature of many Western societies for some decades (see section 1.4). In Finland, too, there is recognition that development of tolerance and positive attitudes should be considered in schools. However, such abstract aims have not always been achieved in practice. Empirical studies from classroom settings, handbooks for teachers, and multicultural teaching materials are lacking.

How, then, have these young EFL-readers responded to issues of bullying, discrimination and racism? Some children were aware that racism exists but had never seen racist incidents themselves. For others, the concept of racism was new. Some children reading *Troublemakers* and *My Name is Jasmine Grey* used the term racism about issues of skin colour, whereas those reading *Secret Friends* wondered why Rafaella was being excluded and teased.

Conventional reader response tasks allowed children to explore their own ideas as regards issues of this kind. There was evidence that their understanding of the complex issues of life in a multicultural society became more sophisticated. Different books, however, triggered different types of responses, and the extent of personal involvement varied from one pupil to another. Pupils' own positioning, and thus their moral judgements, were apparent in several responses. Their disapproval of racial prejudice replicates the findings of other writers on this subject (see 7.1.2). Some children were able to think about characters in ways more mature than just labelling them as either good or bad, and to reconcile different perspectives.

Books read in the second half of the project placed discussion of bullying and/or racism on the agenda. Most children reacted, but not necessarily spontaneously. Some were very much emotionally involved, whereas others were less affected though nonetheless felt that treating others badly was wrong. Findings from this EFL-setting thus support evidence from those L1-settings discussed in section 7.1.2. Empathy was visible both in terms of feeling compassion, and in terms of coming to know and understand a character's situation (see Verducci, 2000). Pupils did not reject the multicultural texts, as has happened in some L1-settings. In fact, they were highly motivated to read.

Again, although evidence from this project would suggest that children's awareness of issues of diversity increased, and that several books succeeded in raising multicultural issues in the classroom, it is not possible to foresee what children's attitudes and reactions to diversity in *real life* encounters would be. Any long-term effects or effects on real-life encounters with diversity would require a different study.

9.2.3 Teaching perspectives

The third main issue related to the second research question concerns *teaching*. Multicultural books, which are often considered 'issues books', have sometimes been thought too didactic and un-enjoyable for readers. Such claims are often made by adult readers in fields such as children's literature and education. The *children's own views* on the texts are, of course, of considerable importance to a project of this kind. Interestingly, although some texts included an explicit anti-racist or anti-bullying dimension, they did not seem to be perceived as such by the children, who identified several other themes in the books, such as football, adoption, and friendship. Some children identified racial issues as one of several themes in a book, whereas others did not perceive 'racism' as a theme at all. Notably, then, although some books had the potential of raising awareness of cultural or multicultural issues in the classroom (see Chapters 6-7), this did not impact negatively on the children's pleasure in reading. All children, in fact, were highly motivated to read. Most reported that they would like to

read books in EFL on a regular basis and have more projects of this kind. Over half of the group read more than was required by borrowing extra reading material.

Teaching approaches are another matter of concern; questions and tasks on texts naturally affect readers' responses. The present reader response approach encouraged pupils both to form opinions on their readings, and to express and share views with peers. Within a framework of a more radical multicultural education, however, it would be questionable whether this approach would contribute to *teaching* about issues of diversity, and social justice (if this were the goal). Similar criticism could be voiced from advocates of more teacher-centred approaches to literacy, which emphasize a 'correct' or 'schooled' reading in which students are expected to gain as much 'knowledge' as possible about the texts. In this project, *enjoyment of reading* and *pupil-centredness* were prioritised. From a research perspective, too, the goal was not to study the extent to which children 'understand' or 'learn' the *teacher's* interpretation, but rather the opposite: to explore the thoughts and understandings that the chosen texts have elicited *in the children*.

Although I tried not to impose my own interpretation, scaffolding in terms of tasks and questions (see Chapter 4) inevitably contributed to more teacher initiated discussion than is often the case within reader response frameworks. Thus, discussions were structured by the teacher *even though* children were *also* expressing themselves openly. In general, reader response and open-ended questions encouraged children to explore their views and triggered cultural and multicultural responses among many other kinds of responses. Therefore, awareness was raised about multicultural issues *despite* the fact that I was not seeking to impose my own interpretations.

A related issue concerns the extent to which one *uses a text as a springboard for discussion of social topics*, and the extent to which *a text should speak for itself*. Some amount of instruction is needed in an EFL-teaching environment, and bringing the multicultural books into the classroom raised several questions for the teacher. I tried to set tasks which would encourage children to discuss various issues on the one hand, but allow the children to spontaneously raise topics themselves, on the other hand. Each teacher, however, needs to clarify her own views on these fundamental questions.

Previous experience also had some bearing on the project. Lack of appropriate training made me feel like a novice, learning as I went along. Several writers have, in fact, recognized the importance of helping white teachers develop cultural sensitivity and offering guidelines and support. Similarly, in the EFL-setting, despite the focus on culture (see Chapter 6.1), there is a dearth of information on what is likely to work in the classroom. A particular concern in this project was how to go about *raising the topic of culture* with children.

Certain *dangers* emerged as regards the kind of cross-cultural comparison so much encouraged in the EFL-literature (see Chapter 6), and also within multicultural frameworks in teaching (see Chapter 1). In my teaching, I tried to emphasize both similarities and differences between cultures, and the fact that we have some sides to our personalities that are culture-based and others that are individual to us. Children did not, however, reflect on either differences or similarities spontaneously. Classroom discussions were necessary to raise the issue of stereotypes and generalizations, since many of the children's initial comments on culture involved stereotyped views. Some vocabulary related to multiculturalism, such as majority and minority, needed to be explained. The themes and discussions of the books thus demanded teacher attention. I needed to be alert and find solutions to issues as they arose in the classroom.

The *supportive climate* for introducing this project was clearly important. Official school policy (national curricula in Finland, 1994/2004), school organisation, and a positive attitude to teaching of this kind in the present school made it relatively easy for me to introduce the project. Both the class teacher and head teacher noted that they would support future teaching of this kind, and that they would appreciate collaboration between different subjects. I realize that a project of this kind could be more difficult to implement in a setting which is less supportive.

Research funding offered the opportunity to buy necessary teaching materials. With regard to possible future attempts of projects of this kind, the CLELE-collection is available to all teachers in Finland.

Lastly, it emerged that the literacy approach adopted in the reading project, and the issues related to EFL-literacy were clearly linked with the types of multicultural and cultural issues that emerged from the study. This link is elaborated in the concluding chapter.

This chapter has summarized and discussed the main findings from the two research questions which underpinned the study; the first concerning issues related to EFL-literacy, and the second concerning issues related to reading the multicultural texts. In chapter 10, the research methodology and main findings are evaluated; the implications of the study and its relevance for the Finnish setting are considered; and suggestions are made for future research.

10. CONCLUSIONS

In the previous chapter, the main issues which emerged from this study were summarized and discussed in relation to the research questions that underpinned the study. In this last chapter, the research design and main findings are evaluated. The first part discusses methodological issues (10.1); the second evaluates the research findings in terms of implications, relevance, and suggestions for future research (10.2).

10.1 EVALUATION OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As we saw in chapter 2, this study was an ethnographic case study involving a year 6 EFL-group, in which I functioned as teacher and researcher. Main data sources included: my observational field diary, video recorded interviews with children after they had finished a book, video recordings of children's independent group work and of reading conferences with the teacher, and children's reading diaries. Categories from all main data sources were merged, analysed, and interpreted to form one large base of core categories from which the six final data chapters were developed. Analysis was grounded in the data. Secondary data sources were used for triangulation purposes. Certain issues related to reliability and validity, on the one hand, and to possible strengths and limitations of the study, on the other, need to be considered.

10.1.1 Reliability and validity

Disadvantages of qualitative research include the dependency on the researcher's observations, the difficulty of checking the validity of conclusions, the reactivity effect, generalizability, and biases on the part of the researcher. An important part in countering such problems is making oneself aware of possible dangers, and building in safeguards. (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Various safeguards were included in the present project.

Internal reliability within ethnographic research depends, among other things, on the extent to which two or more observers agree or interpret what they see in the same way (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 1998). In this project, I was the sole observer. However, in order to increase internal reliability, video recorded material helped to ensure that I had not missed important details. Another measure of internal reliability concerns whether the conclusions were considered to be accurate by

informants (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 275). While conclusions in the present study have not been verified retrospectively, I regularly checked my understandings against pupils' views during the project (see below).

External reliability is concerned with the replicability of both procedures and findings. Although it is difficult to replicate qualitative studies because they take place in natural settings, it is possible to provide the reader with enough information to understand how the research was conducted. (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993; Wiersma, 1995b; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 1998). Authenticity, comprehensiveness, detail, and honesty are important (Cohen, et. al, 2000: 120). In this study, the theoretical underpinnings, research questions, my own role in the field, practical implementations of teaching, the circumstances under which data was collected, and research methods and procedures have all been outlined in detail. In addition, primary data incorporating children's original comments were used in the report; theory was connected to data; and data included samples from all the different types of activity (see Athanases & Brice Heath, 1995; Wolcott, 1994).

Internal validity is concerned with the truth value of findings. The findings must accurately describe the phenomena being researched (Cohen et. al, 2000: 107). In qualitative research, this requires logical analysis of results, accuracy, and confidence that the results can be sustained by the data. Research questions need to be clear. The researcher's role and status within the site need to be described explicitly. I have tried to address these issues.

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) note that it is impossible to eliminate every aspect of *researcher effect*. Therefore, a more fruitful approach is to try to understand the influence of the researcher on the findings. Because I had already taught the children, they saw me more as their teacher than as a researcher, which I believe has increased the validity of findings. The large number of recordings also increased validity: as each reading group was recorded several times, the children became used to the video camera. Observer effects can also be diminished if the observer samples widely and stays in the situation long enough for her presence to be taken for granted by participants (Cohen, et.al, 2000; Eskola & Suorauta, 1998): I was present in the classroom for every lesson throughout the entire project. Another researcher effect involves the influence on the subjects of the researcher's purpose (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993: 401). The children, however, were not aware of the issues I was looking at as a researcher.

Observer bias refers to bias of the observer on what he/she sees (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993: 402). I have tried to outline my own starting points and underpinnings for the research in order to make both myself and the reader aware of any pre-conceived ideas that I might have had (see Thomas, 1993). I have also described the teaching methods

and rationale for their use in order to allow the reader to envision the circumstances under which data was collected (see Cohen, et. al, 2000).

Further, I used the following validation techniques as described, for example, by Cohen & Manion (1994) and Hammersley & Atkinson (1995). *Data-source triangulation* – comparing the accounts of different participants and sources in the field – included the perspectives of pupils, the teacher-researcher, and the head- and class teacher. *Triangulation of data collection techniques* was also used (see 2.2). This is a form of comparison of information to see whether there is corroboration and consistency (Cohen & Manion, 1994). Further, *face validity* requires that interview questions feature issues relevant to the lives of teachers and students. This was the case in the present project, since the research purposes grew from my experiences as teacher. I have described the studied setting and its participants. I also drew on other methods of checking validity, such as recording the researcher's thoughts and using videotapes (see Athanases & Brice Heath, 1995; Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993: 400).

External validity concerns the question: ‘How do we know that the results of this research are applicable to other situations?’ It concerns the degree to which the results can be generalized to a wider population, cases or situations (Cohen, et. al, 2000: 109; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The aim of generalizability in qualitative research is to specify the conditions under which the phenomena exist, the action/interaction that pertains to them, and any associated consequences and outcomes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). I have tried to address these issues. Because samples in the present study were small, statistical generalisation has not been appropriate. However, I have noted whether a phenomenon was common or uncommon. In addition, features of different reading groups and children allowed me to identify similarities and differences (see Miles & Huberman, 1994).

10.1.2 Strengths and limitations

All research studies have both strengths and weaknesses (Wolcott, 2001). When I was aware of possible limitations in this study, other means of ensuring validity and reliability were, as we have seen, built into the research design. Here, I would like to highlight a few important considerations involved in the ways in which validity and reliability were addressed in practice.

Firstly, *the research setting* was, I believe, appropriate for the purpose of the study. The school was chosen both on the basis that it is representative of larger urban Swedish language schools in Finland, and because it offered me the possibility to conduct research in a natural setting: it allowed me to teach a group of children who already knew me without drawing too much attention to the ‘research’ aspect. Another source

of strength lies in the supportive atmosphere which unfolded during the course of the study (see 8.3.1): I was able to do what I needed to from a research perspective, without restrictions from the school or the class teacher.

Extensive triangulation has, I believe, contributed to the strengths of this study. The aim of data collection was to increase reliability and validity by including sources of different kinds, collected from different angles. My sources included: written and oral sources; real time and retrospective sources; individual (private) and group-initiated (public) sources; triggered and more spontaneous sources; main sources and secondary sources; and various respondents (teacher-researcher, pupils, two other teachers). Triangulation was particularly important because of my dual role as teacher and researcher, and because I was working alone in the field. Another goal of triangulation was to compensate for negative effects of any given method. For example, although video recordings of reading groups allowed me to capture human interaction and a range of responses, they also brought certain biases not present in written tasks. Therefore, the most spontaneous source of children's written work, the reading diary, was included among the primary data sources to complement the group recordings (see Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993). Writing allowed children to express their own views without being influenced by the others in the group or by the presence of the teacher/researcher.

I was the sole observer. I had to choose between either interfering with the natural setting of the classroom by having another observer, or not being able to cross-check observations with another researcher by working alone in the field. I chose to prioritise the latter course for two reasons. First, because I had built in triangulation of data sources and data collection techniques, observation was only one of many sources of data. Secondly, for economical and practical reasons, it would not have been possible to have two researchers in the field. Instead, some safeguards were used: as we have seen, I chose triangulation of methods/sources with different biases so that they could complement each other; I was present in every lesson, and I asked pupils for feedback during the course of the project. I hope that the research design has compensated for any weaknesses caused by my position as sole observer.

My dual role as teacher and researcher deserves some attention. There were, of course, potential disadvantages, since I was focussing on both teaching and research; and separating the two roles in analysis might therefore have been more difficult. However, I regard the benefits of using this approach as overriding disadvantages: the dual role allowed me both to be involved with the pupils, and to distance myself (see 2.1.2). I was able to combine teaching with what I needed from a research perspective, and to test ideas as I went along. The children saw me as their teacher, not only a researcher. The large amount of data from different data sources, and the fact that I left the school and returned to my 'researcher position' when the fieldwork had ended, allowed me to 'step back', and to view issues more objectively during analysis, interpretation, and writing up of the thesis.

Some issues related to *transcription* need consideration. I was alone in transcribing video recordings. Validity could have been enhanced by co-transcribing, as is often recommended in the literature. However, my sole transcription had two advantages: because I was both the teacher and researcher, I knew the children and was able to distinguish different voices; also, because I had prepared the group tasks and observed every lesson, I was aware of themes in discussion. It is also important to note that the transcriptions did not need to be as detailed as would be the case in a study of language or grammar, or as in conversational or discourse analysis. In this study, it was the content of the discussions that was important, on a larger scale.

The *risk* of data overload, however, was real. Two safeguards were used. Firstly, analysis was very systematic. I took the time to view data from each source separately before merging categories and codes. Also, I returned to the coded material several times, re-coded and re-categorized as I went along. New perspectives and new ways of viewing the material were therefore considered throughout the process of analysis, interpretation, and the writing of the final report. Thirdly, dividing sources into primary and secondary allowed me to focus my attention on those sources which were the most important – and to transcribe and analyse these materials in-depth. Because secondary sources to a large extent offered insights similar to those of primary sources, in a future study I might leave out the secondary sources.

Another source of potential weakness was that *I did not use respondent validation after analysis*. By the time I had completed my analysis, the children were almost five years older and would not remember details from the project clearly enough. Also, because my discussion involves judgements about children's performance and behaviour, I do not consider it appropriate for them to recognize themselves in these terms. However, pupils were invited to express their views frequently during the project.

An issue which can be regarded as a strength, but which also has certain inherent weaknesses, concerns the *holistic research approach*. The strength of this study lies in the fact that the teaching situation, the classroom, and the pupils have been considered as a whole. Thus, I have aimed to outline, describe, and understand the complexity of issues involved in EFL-reading of multicultural children's fiction. However, I realize that the issues which emerged have not been studied in the same depth as would be the case had I focused on only one individual issue.

This study was conducted in a specific setting. I believe, however, that it is reasonable to assume that similar issues could emerge in similar populations under similar circumstances. I feel that the research design as such could be replicated in another field, and I hope that the processes of data collection, analysis, and interpretation, in combination with measures taken to enhance validity and reliability, have ensured an accurate picture.

10.2 IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings from the present study have a wide range of implications for what happens in the FL classroom; they also point to a number of potential opportunities for future research.

10.2.1 EFL-literacy

One aspect which emerged from this study was the importance of *individualisation* (for instance, books of different level of difficulty, different types of tasks for different readers, different kinds of reading support, etc.). It is common in the EFL-classroom for the whole class to read the same text and work in the same way. Findings from this study thus point to alternative ways of working with young EFL-readers. An important practical implication of working in this way concerns resources. As noted by the head teacher, schools generally do not have the resources to buy in EFL-literature at several different levels. Therefore, use of library sources such as the CLELE collection becomes an important avenue to explore.

Another implication concerns *reading support*. Differences in reading ability required awareness on the part of the teacher of how different EFL-readers might best be supported. As the project evolved, stronger readers indicated that they did not need much support, while other readers found pre-reading activities crucial for managing the following chapter. Findings suggest that, when provided adequate support, even a class of young EFL pupils can enjoy longer fictive texts in the target language.

A further implication relates to *teaching approaches*. Staying strictly within the boundaries of extensive reading would not have been appropriate, since all readers needed help. Similarly, an intensive approach would not have been appropriate, since the stronger readers were becoming increasingly independent. A balance needed to be arrived at between providing enough support, and not interrupting enjoyment with too many tasks. In practice, this meant supporting different readers in different ways. The role of *questions and tasks* was important, with even weaker readers displaying analytic thought when prompted. Literacy skills were therefore closely linked with the opinions expressed about the texts. Interesting questions that might deserve more elaboration in future research include: How can pupils at different levels of EFL-reading ability best be supported when reading? How can teaching approaches meet the needs of individual EFL-readers? Should there be different teaching goals for different age groups and levels of EFL-proficiency in relation to reading?

Scaffolding group work was also important. Once scaffolding was in place, groups managed to read, express views on texts, and work independently to an admirable

degree. They also managed to help each other. For this approach to work, the teacher needed to provide scaffolding sensitive to the needs of different groups.

The present project required considerable *planning* for reasons already outlined. Because many L1-tasks and tasks for older EFL-readers can be adapted to the primary school EFL-setting, planning need not, however, be an obstacle for a first time teacher of authentic texts. It was also important to *trust* the children to work sensibly in their groups, and for the teacher to accept that, although the pupils might not relate to the texts in the same way as in teacher-led whole class discussions, their independent discussions can nonetheless be meaningful to them. What should we prioritize? Teacher-led whole-class discussions, that pupils learn a ‘correct’ interpretation of the text, that they learn cultural ‘facts’ from the text, that they are allowed to express their own views, or that they share their thoughts also independently of the teacher? The two latter were prioritized in the present project, but different combinations and alternative pedagogical solutions could well be studied in future research.

This study began by suggesting that there is little empirical evidence of reading in mainstream EFL-settings, that EFL reading is generally informed by L1 and SL reading theory, and that there is a lack of knowledge of young mainstream EFL-readers. Although findings from this study have offered insights into some issues, much still remains to be done. By limiting this study to reader- and teaching based issues, findings offer pedagogical insights into the classroom setting with real EFL-readers. The perspective of the author and text have, however, been excluded. They could lend themselves as interesting complements to the present study in future research.

10.2.2 Multicultural dimension in teaching

In multicultural Western societies, as we saw in Chapter 1, there has been much controversy as to the role of schools. In Finland, we can learn from the experience of countries with a long history of multicultural education, so that we do not repeat those attempts which have clearly failed. On the other hand, we must carefully consider the special circumstances of the Finnish setting. Research in Finland, it seems, has largely had a focus on minority ethnic pupils rather than on the mainstream schooling of all children. Both domains would, I feel, need considerably more attention in future research.

One implication of this study concerns *what type of multicultural teaching* would be relevant in different school populations. In the present study, there was no evidence of negative attitudes towards ethnic minorities, but questions which arise in this general area include: Does reading multicultural literature with children who are inexperienced in matters of diversity require different teaching approaches from those required for groups of children who are already familiar with matters of racism and discrimination?

In which ways should children's experiences or inexperience be considered when planning teaching? How might children in Finland with negative attitudes towards ethnic minorities behave and how could their teaching be organized? And further, how could teachers deal with issues of racism among pupils? What can teachers in Finland do, and are there perhaps already teachers with such experiences? A priority for Finland, Liebkind (2000b) argues, would be to prevent negative racial attitudes from spreading to young people who have not yet developed strong attitudes in one direction or another. How can this be done?

Another implication relates to the *teaching of culture*. This study raised questions such as: How should one discuss culture with children who have not discussed culture before? What theoretical considerations, and possible dangers and pitfalls would teachers need to be aware of? Further empirical studies would be helpful in answering these questions.

One might also want to consider *other ways to implement the multicultural goals* of the national curriculum 2004. This study has focused on *one* possible way of dealing with multicultural issues in a classroom setting. Further, this study is limited to EFL-teaching, thus representing a micro-level example. A true multicultural dimension, however, involves changing all aspects of school life (see Banks, 2004a), not only those related to one particular subject. A future challenge, then, could be to investigate how a multicultural dimension could be implemented within other school subjects and school life in general. How, for instance, could a multicultural dimension be incorporated into religious education, social studies, or Swedish mother tongue teaching?

Another question that we might need to ask is *where are we in Finland at the moment* in terms of implementing multicultural values in schooling? Little is known about how teachers at grassroot level implement such goals, and empirical evidence of the outcomes of such teaching is scarce. Questions that deserve attention include: Is practice lagging behind theory, as has been suggested? What efforts are required to make practice meet curricular goals? International classes in Finland and schools in areas that house a large proportion of ethnic minority pupils have already dealt with issues of tolerance, multiculturalism and diversity. What lessons can be learned from schools with multicultural school populations, and from teachers' experiences in these settings? Miettinen & Pitkänen (1999) suggest increasing resources within schools and teacher education. What kind of resources, then, are required?

This study has only touched on a few aspects of multicultural teaching; much more remains to be done. As we saw in Chapter 1, several factors support the relevance of future teaching and research of this kind. Firstly, the need for multicultural education has grown from increasing societal diversity, which is now a feature of life in Finland, too. Secondly, if schooling should prepare *all* future citizens, not only the minority, for life in a pluralistic society, then this goal also needs to be incorporated into the teaching

of mainstream majority pupils. Additionally, membership of the European Union, and the Finnish national curriculum require teaching of multicultural and democratic values. It is, therefore, not only relevant, but also mandatory, to undertake future studies within this field.

10.2.3 EFL-reading, multicultural teaching, and multicultural children's fiction combined

The reading project allowed pupils to engage in issues related to multiculturalism, raising their awareness of diversity in the process. Children were able to relate to the thoughts and experiences of characters and displayed an imaginative capacity to empathise (see Bredella, 2003; Byram, 1989). Several children spontaneously took a moral stance against discrimination and racism. An important finding was, however, that it was not necessarily 'natural' for the children to think in terms of culture when reading; they were more focused on the unfolding of the plot. However, questions and tasks triggered responses related to cultural issues. The use of multicultural children's literature raised several new questions that would lend themselves to further in-depth study.

Firstly, did the children display naive involvement (see Rosenberg, 1998; Verducci, 2000), or a genuine understanding which could positively affect human relations in the future? Questions were also raised in relation to *exploring social issues* through texts. For example, one might want to consider the relationship between reality and fiction in children's understanding of other cultures through texts. Does reading texts with anti-racist dimensions have the future effect of 'exoticising difference', or does it help prepare pupils to engage in diversity in a respectful and tolerant way? Thus, what possible real-life and long-term effects might there be of introducing all-white groups of children to issues of difference?

Book selection is an important issue. In the present project, the level of language and accessibility of the texts was generally prioritised over richness of culture. Might it be appropriate with older readers, however, to pay more attention to cultural richness? Should cultural richness be prioritised over anti-racism in EFL-teaching? Should we protect children from 'difficult' issues, such as racism and discrimination portrayed in multicultural books of this kind, or should white children be familiarized also with these more difficult aspects of life in a multicultural society? What might be the pros and cons? What kinds of books might be relevant for EFL-readers of different ages and levels of EFL-learning? More empirical evidence from the teaching field would be needed to answer these questions.

A further point concerns *the setting* of the multicultural novels. Could other criteria for selecting texts be used, such as having the story set in other English language societies (the US, India, South Africa, Canada, or Australia)? Further, because of the fact that there are some well-established cultural groups also in Finland – such as Romany Gypsies and Samis, and an increasing number of refugees – who might have experienced difficulties related to their minority position (similar to those of the present story characters), might it be relevant to consider the experiences of these groups in future multicultural teaching in Finland, for instance within Swedish mother tongue or Finnish language teaching? And also, could a focus on Swedish speaking children’s own minority position in Finland help the Swedish language children understand the experiences of other minority groups? The present project focused on EFL-teaching and therefore had British English cultural minority groups in focus. An increasing number of multicultural children’s books are now available in Swedish, Finnish, and in some languages of ethnic minorities. Could, perhaps, the use of such books be investigated in Finnish schools?

Some questions arise in relation to *teaching experience* and *teacher training*. The curriculum for English specialism studies for class teachers at Åbo Akademi University today includes a small section on ‘culture in language teaching’ within a larger block on ‘realia and culture’. And within the block on ‘literature’, there is a section on ‘children’s and young adult literature in language teaching’ (Institutionen för lärarutbildning, 2003-2005). A question which deserves attention is: What can be learned from the experiences of those teachers who have received this training and who have incorporated cultural goals or used authentic literature in their EFL-teaching?

Lastly, findings from this study suggest that *literacy issues*, *language proficiency*, and the *multicultural dimension* to texts are *linked* in a primary school setting: when children were struggling to decode and understand the meanings of individual words and sentences, there were limits to the kind of analytic thought that they could express around the texts. Similarly, as children understood what they were reading and became familiar with responding to texts, there was *also* more said about matters related to culture and multiculturalism.

It is possible, then, to draw two main conclusions from this study. First, it suggests that, when teaching is individualized and offers appropriate scaffolding, young pupils of EFL can cope with and enjoy longer, authentic texts in the target language. Secondly, with suitable support, they can engage with issues of cultural diversity even when the situations described might be beyond their experience. These findings, I would suggest,

have clear implications for both the teaching of EFL in Finland and possibly also in other settings; and for the practical implementation of the overarching goals of the Finnish National Curriculum.

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Appendices

LETTER REQUESTING CONSENT

Ped. mag. Charlotta Sell

ChiLPA-projektet
Åbo Akademi
Akademigatan 1
20500 ÅBO
tel: 02-215 32 51

ANHÅLLAN OM TILLSTÅND FÖR FORSKNING

Torsdag 2.3 2000
Åbo

Bästa föräldrar!

Under termin I (höstterminen) nästa läsår kommer jag att undervisa engelska i en grupp elever i årskurs sex. Som en del av mina doktorandstudier inom Åbo Akademis tvärvetenskapliga barnlitteraturprojekt ChiLPA (Children's Literature, Pure and Applied), är jag intresserad av att undersöka möjligheter för användande av engelskspråkig barnlitteratur inom engelskundervisningen. Syftet är bl.a. att kartlägga eventuella frågor och riktlinjer för utvecklande av framtida litteraturprojekt och undervisning i engelska. Jag hoppas på att kunna samla in data för min forskning under mitt arbete med en grupp elever. De elever som deltar i min forskning kommer att vara med om ett litteraturprojekt, där de får läsa engelskspråkig barnlitteratur. Projektet följer målen för Grunderna för grundskolans läroplan 1994 och för Cygnaeuskolans läroplan. Litteraturprojektet är godkänt av skolans ledning.

Under mitt arbete med en engelskgrupp kommer jag att se bl.a. på elevernas läsning och skriftliga- och muntliga produktion. Jag kommer att videofilma mindre grupper av elever som arbetar tillsammans samt gruppdiskussioner och arbete i hel klass. Elevernas anonymitet kommer att skyddas enligt följande forskningsetiska principer:

- * Elevernas namn kommer att bytas ut så att de inte kan bli identifierade
- * Den information som samlas in kommer att användas endast i forskningssyfte
- * Det insamlade materialet kommer att sparas och handhas av mig personligen
- * Materialet kommer inte att vara tillgängligt för någon utanför min forskning

Jag är också intresserad av föräldrars upplevelser av litteraturprojektet och välkomnar varmt intresserade föräldrar att delta i en videoinspelad gruppdiskussion i slutet av projektet, i november 2000. Då får åsikter vädras ur ett föräldraperspektiv. Det integritetsskydd som nämnts angående eleverna kommer också att gälla för föräldrar som deltar i gruppdiskussionen.

Kan Ni vänligen ta ställning till huruvida Ni tillåter Ert barn att delta i barnlitteraturprojektet och i min forskning, och delge Ert beslut genom att fylla i det bifogade formuläret. Kunde ni också prata om detta brev med Ert barn och sedan låta barnet fylla i den del av formuläret som berör barnets villighet att delta. Jag vore tacksam om ni lämnade in frågeformuläret till barnets klasslärare i ett **slutet kuvert** senast **den 31 mars 2000**.

Tack för att Ni läst igenom detta brev och begrundat min anhållan. Jag svarar gärna på eventuella frågor som ni kan tänkas ha. Frågor kan även riktas till skolans rektor på numret 02- 262 92 91.

Med vänlig hälsning,

(Charlotta Sell)

Klasslärare och ämneslärare i engelska

FRÅGEFORMULÄR ANGÅENDE FÖRÄLDRATILLSTÅND OCH ELEVVILLIGHET

Detta fylls i av en förälder eller målsman:

Strecka över det alternativ Du *inte* håller med om, så att det Du anser står kvar

1. Jag *tillåter/tillåter inte* mitt barn att delta i barnlitteraturprojektet
2. Jag *tillåter/ tillåter inte* mitt barn att delta i forskningen och att bli videofilmad i grupper av elever och i hel klass
3. Jag *är/ är inte* intresserad av att delta i gruppdiskussionen för föräldrar

Underskrift:

Ort, datum, namnteckning

Namnförtydligande

Detta fylls i av eleven:

Strecka över det alternativ Du *inte* håller med om, så att det Du anser står kvar

1. Jag *vill/vill inte* delta i barnlitteraturprojektet
2. Jag *går med på/går inte med på* att delta i forskningen och att bli videofilmad i grupper av elever och i hel klass

Underskrift:

Ort, datum, namnteckning

Namnförtydligande

VAR VÄNLIG OCH GE FORMULÄRET ÅT KLASSLÄRAREN SENAST DEN 31 MARS 2000! TACK!

QUESTIONS FROM THE TASK QUESTION SHEET

SJÄLVUTVÄRDERING: Namn:

datum:

VÄLJ UT EN UPPGIFT:

1) där du är nöjd med ditt arbete. Sätt en gul lapp på den uppgiften och skriv 'nöjd'

a) Varför är du nöjd?

b) Vad lärde du dig av att göra uppgiften?

2) som du tycker att du skulle vilja jobba mera på. Sätt en röd lapp på och skriv 'vill jobba mera'

a) Varför vill du jobba mera på den?

b) Vad lärde du dig av den uppgiften?

3) som var svår. Sätt en orange lapp på och skriv 'svår'

a) Varför var uppgiften svår?

b) Vad lärde du dig av att göra uppgiften?

VÄLJ UT EN UPPGIFT:

4) som du tyckte var lätt. Sätt en grön lapp på och skriv 'lätt'

a) Varför var uppgiften lätt?

b) Vad lärde du dig av att göra uppgiften?

5) som du tyckte om att göra. Sätt en gul lapp på och skriv 'tyckte om'

a) Varför tyckte du om uppgiften?

b) Vad lärde du dig av den uppgiften?

6) som du inte tyckte om. Sätt en röd lapp på och skriv 'tyckte inte om'

a) Varför tyckte du inte om uppgiften?

b) Vad lärde du dig av att göra uppgiften?

APPENDIX 2.2.1.B

QUESTIONS FROM THE QUESTION SHEET ABOUT THE PROJECT

Har uppgifterna (allt det vi har gjort) varit på rätt nivå för dig, eller finns det något som har varit för lätt eller svårt? Vad har varit bra, vad har varit lätt, och vad har varit svårt? Berätta!

Vad kunde man göra för att uppgifterna skulle kännas bättre (på rätt nivå) för dig? Berätta!

Finns det något vi borde ha gjort, som vi inte gjorde, eller finns det något som vi gjorde som vi inte borde ha gjort (eller som vi borde ha gjort på annat sätt)? Berätta!

Tycker du att du har fått hjälp av de andra i din läsegrupp? På vilket sätt har de hjälpt dig? Vad har de hjälpt dig med?

Hur tycker du att läxorna har varit? Hur har du klarat av läxorna? Har du förslag på förbättring? Berätta!

Vad skulle du ha velat ha mera hjälp med under projektet? Hurudan hjälp skulle du ha velat ha? Berätta!

Hur tycker du att våra arbetsmetoder har varit? Berätta!

Hur har det varit att arbeta i läsegrupp? Berätta!

Fanns det något som var bra eller dåligt med att arbeta i läsegrupper? Berätta!

Hur fungerade arbetet i din första läsegrupp och hur fungerade det i den andra? Vad var lika eller annorlunda? Berätta!

Tycker du att ni jobbade bra i läsegrupperna? Vad var ni bra på och vad gjorde ni inte bra?

Hur har du klarat av att läsa, skriva dagbok, skriva svar på uppgifter, prata om böcker i gruppen och samarbeta i läsegruppen? Vad har gått bra för dig och vad har inte gått så bra? Tänk på allt det vi gjort! Berätta!

Skulle du ha velat jobba mera med ord och uttryck, eller har de uppgifter vi har gjort hjälpt dig att förstå det du har läst? Har du förslag på vad man kunde göra för att du skall förstå bättre?

Vad tycker du om urvalet av böcker för projektet? Vad kan du säga om böckerna?

Vilka saker har du tyckt om? Vilka skulle du gärna göra på nytt inom engelskan?

Finns det något du skulle vilja säga och som du inte kunde säga framför de andra i din grupp? (om projektet, om vad du har tyckt om, om hur vi har jobbat eller om hur du har klarat dig) Berätta!

Vilka saker tycker du att du har blivit bättre på under projektets gång? Hur har du utvecklats? Berätta!

APPENDIX 2.2.2 A

VIDEO RECORDED ORAL DATA OF THE CHILDREN

Three types of oral data were recorded of children reading, discussing, and working around the books: recordings of groups working independently, of reading conferences in lesson time between the teacher and individual reading groups; and, recordings of interviews after each group had finished reading a book. Samples were recorded on the following dates:

A) Recordings of reading group working independently

Phase I = book 1

Group A	lesson 3, 23.8 2000, <i>Operation Gadgetman</i>
Group C	lesson 10, 8.9 2000, <i>Operation Gadgetman</i>
Group B	lesson 12, 13.9 2000, <i>Seven Weird Days at Number 31</i>
Group A & C	lesson 15, 20.9 2000, <i>Operation Gadgetman</i>
Group D	lesson 17, 26.9 2000, <i>Grandpa Chatterji</i>

Phase II = book 2

Group E	lesson 20, 4.10 2000, <i>I Want to be an Angel</i>
Group F	lesson 21, 6.10 2000, <i>Secret Friends</i>
Group G	lesson 22, 10.10 2000, <i>Troublemakers</i>
Group H	lesson 23, 11.10 2000, <i>Troublemakers</i>
Group I	lesson 24, 13.10 2000, <i>I Want to be an Angel</i>
Group F	lesson 29, 25. 10 2000, <i>I Want to be an Angel</i>
Group G	lesson 30, 27.10 2000, <i>Troublemakers</i>

B) Recordings of reading conferences between the teacher and reading groups

Phase I = book 1

Group B	lesson 4, 25.8 2000, <i>Seven Weird Days at Number 31</i>
Group C	lesson 5, 29.8 2000, <i>Operation Gadgetman</i>
Group A	lesson 6, 30.8 2000, <i>Operation Gadgetman</i>
Group D	lesson 7, 1.9 2000, <i>Grandpa Chatterji</i>
Group A & C	lesson 13, 15.9 2000, <i>Operation Gadgetman</i>
Group B	lesson 14, 19.9 2000, <i>Seven Weird Days at Number 31</i>

Phase II = book 2

Group E & I	lesson 25, 17.10 2000, <i>I Want to be an Angel</i>
Group F	lesson 26, 18.10 2000, <i>Secret Friends</i>
Group G & H	lesson 27, 20.10 2000, <i>I Want to be an Angel</i>

C) Recordings of interviews after finishing reading a book

Phase I = book 1

group A, 21.9 2000, <i>Operation Gadgetman</i>
group B, 21.9 2000, <i>Seven Weird Days</i>
group C, 21.9 2000, <i>Operation Gadgetman</i>
group D, 8.9 2000, <i>Grandpa Chatterji</i>

Phase II = book 2

group E, 31.10 & 2.11 2000, *I Want to be an Angel*

group F, 6.11 2000, *Secret Friends*

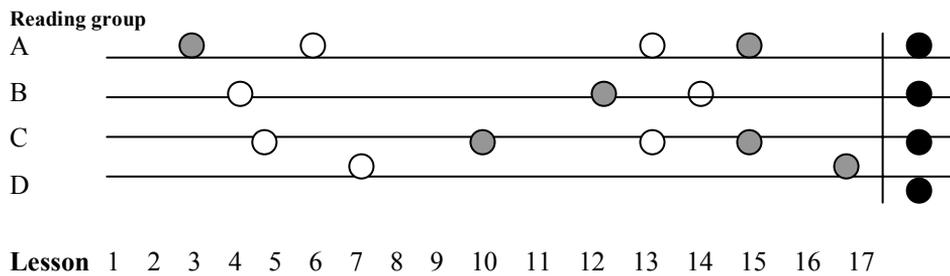
group G, 10.11 & 13.11 2001, *Troublemakers*

group H, 6.11 2000, *Troublemakers*

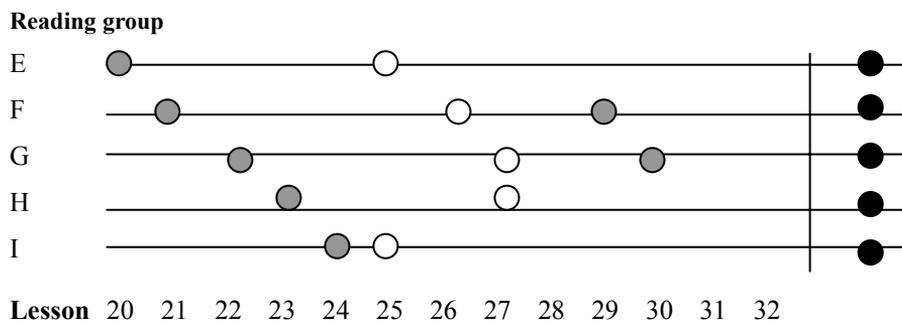
group I, 31.10 2000, *I Want to be an Angel*

SUMMARY OF PRIMARY ORAL SAMPLES

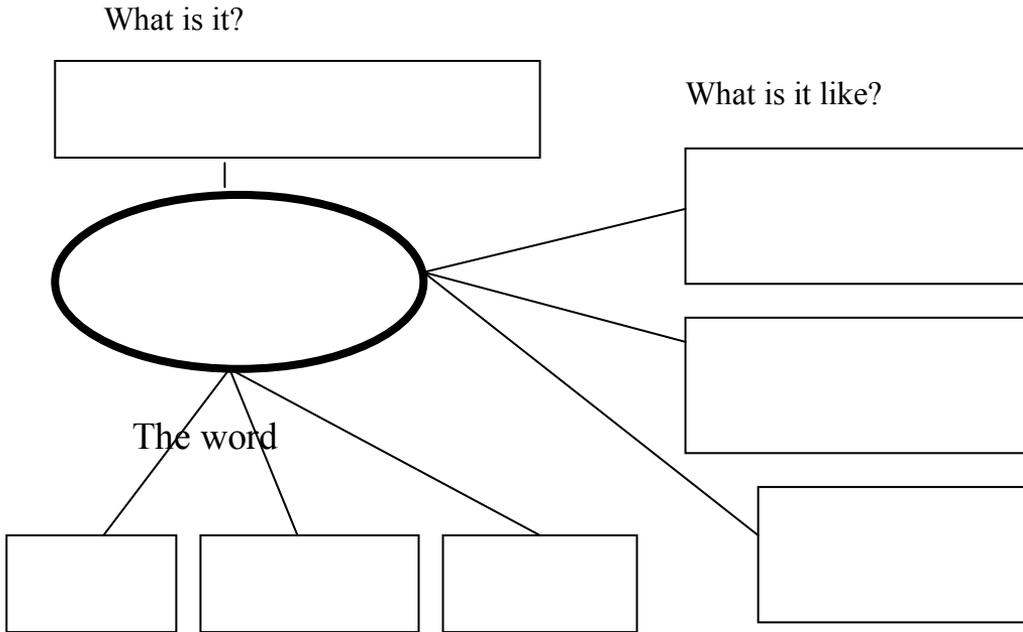
- = independent group work, real time during project
- = reading conferences (teacher-researcher + reading group), real time during project
- = interview (teacher-researcher + reading group), retrospective after finishing a book



In lessons 18-19, children were working on cultural topics essays, not reading novels



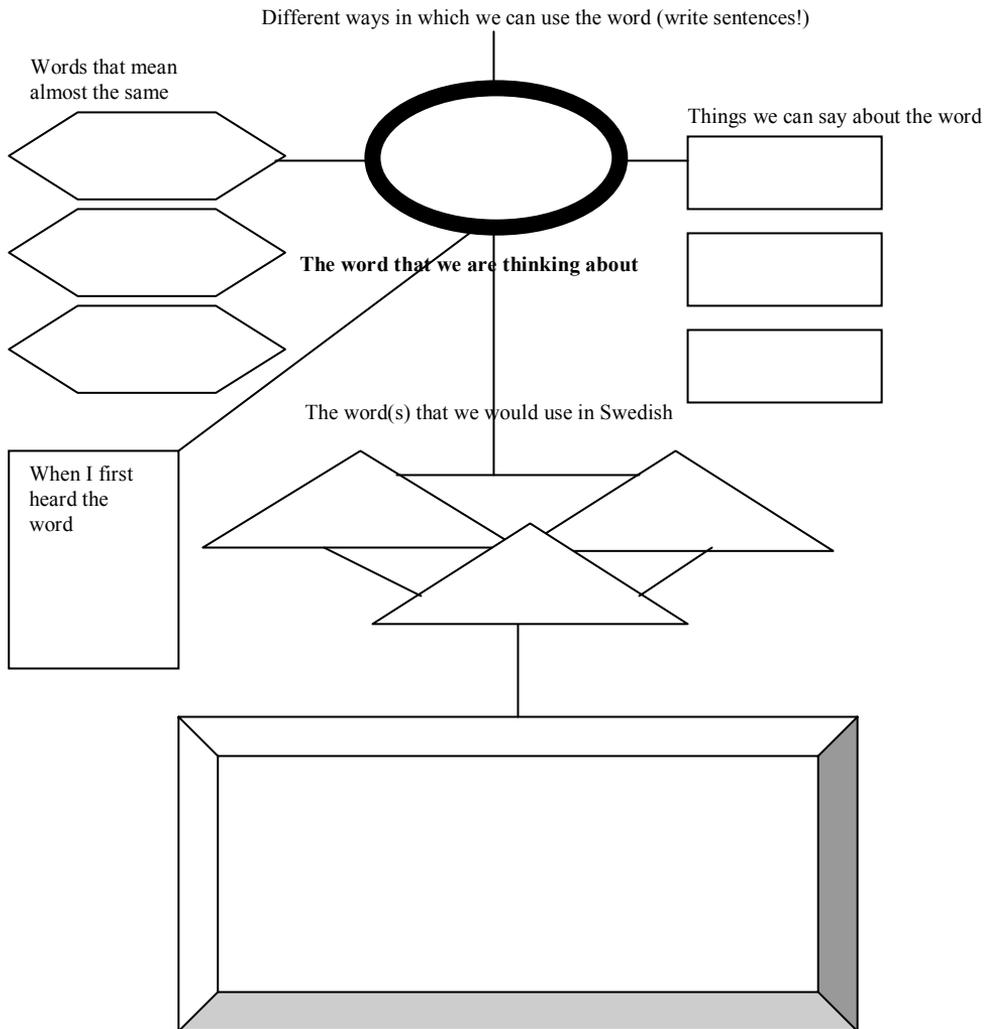
BASIC WORD MAP



What are some examples?

SEMANTIC MAP

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



APPENDIX 3.3.2.C

VOCABULARY AND READING COMPREHENSION TASK

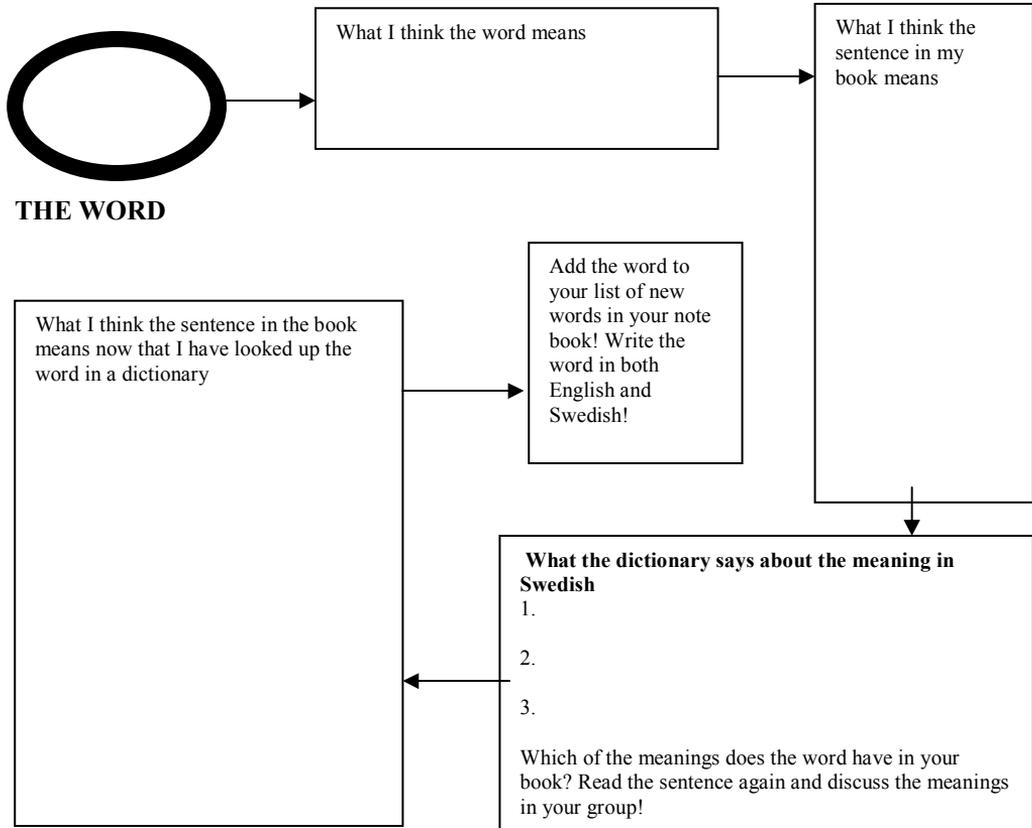
Please use the words and expressions in the box to fill in the missing gaps in the following sentences!

newsagent	old lamp	presents
turned the pages	afternoon	Christmas
(on the) corner of the street	selection	bears
nervous	the cooking	ceremonies
		envious
		(be) in touch (with her)
		counter

- Lucy missed Rafaella at school. She thought about her father sitting in his chair and recognised the glow of his _____ . She imagined him smiling as he _____ of one of his old books.
- One _____ Lucy was thinking about Rafaella, and she decided that she wanted to get Rafaella a _____ card. She wanted to be _____ with her.
- She went into the _____ on the _____ .
- There wasn't much to choose from, because the _____ wasn't very good.
- But Lucy found a nice Christmas card and some lovely _____ . She chose a blue one.
- Lucy borrowed a pen from the lady behind the _____ .
- She felt a bit _____ when she ran up to Rafaella's house.
- Lucy's Gran came over for Christmas to help with _____ . Lucy wondered if Rafaella's family were having spiced food and _____ . She was a little _____ .

DICTIONARY STRATEGY SHEET

-choosing words while reading



APPENDIX 3.6.2

SAMPLES FROM READING DIARY ENTRIES

On average, a short response of under 20 words could take the following form:

Chapter 1 is very good. It's a good start in book "Secret friends". (Markus, *Secret Friends*)

Rajiv got mad at Gary. But why? Was it Gary's fault that Sumi went back to India? (Felix, *The Private World of Rajiv Ray*)

A medium-length response of under 40 words could look like this:

The chapter was pretty good. You've got to learn about their awful geography teacher. It could have been more about Beans other friends. I'm really looking forward to continue reading. (Lotta, *Operation Gadgetman*, chapter 2).

I like that Chester did get on the pitch but, when I did read that Barry was there I did get a shock [shock]. And that what Shane and Darren did is terrible. (Casper, *Troublemakers*)

A long response of under 100 words could look like this:

Ben asked if Rajiv would want to come and play football with him, but Rajiv didn't want. Next day in school they played football and Ben and some one else chose the teams. Ben chose Rajiv first and all the others said that he was stupid when he chose the "not so good" boy in football/school. I think that the chapter was good but sad that no one that [but] Ben cares about Rajiv. (Mikaela, *The Private World of Rajiv Ray*)

MR. Pitt was walking [walking] towards his car when he heard the ripple of applause [applause] from the field. He told Miss Macgregor that he couldn't help because he had too much work. Miss MacGregor said that she heard [her] team had beaten a team of boys in football. MR PITT didn't like that. The Daily Comet [Daily Comet] interviewed [interviewed] Robbie and he's [his] gran. I liked the chapter. I got surprised when Miss MacGregor said that her girl team had beaten a boy team in football. (Tomas, *Troublemakers*)

Lastly, two very long responses (100-300 words):

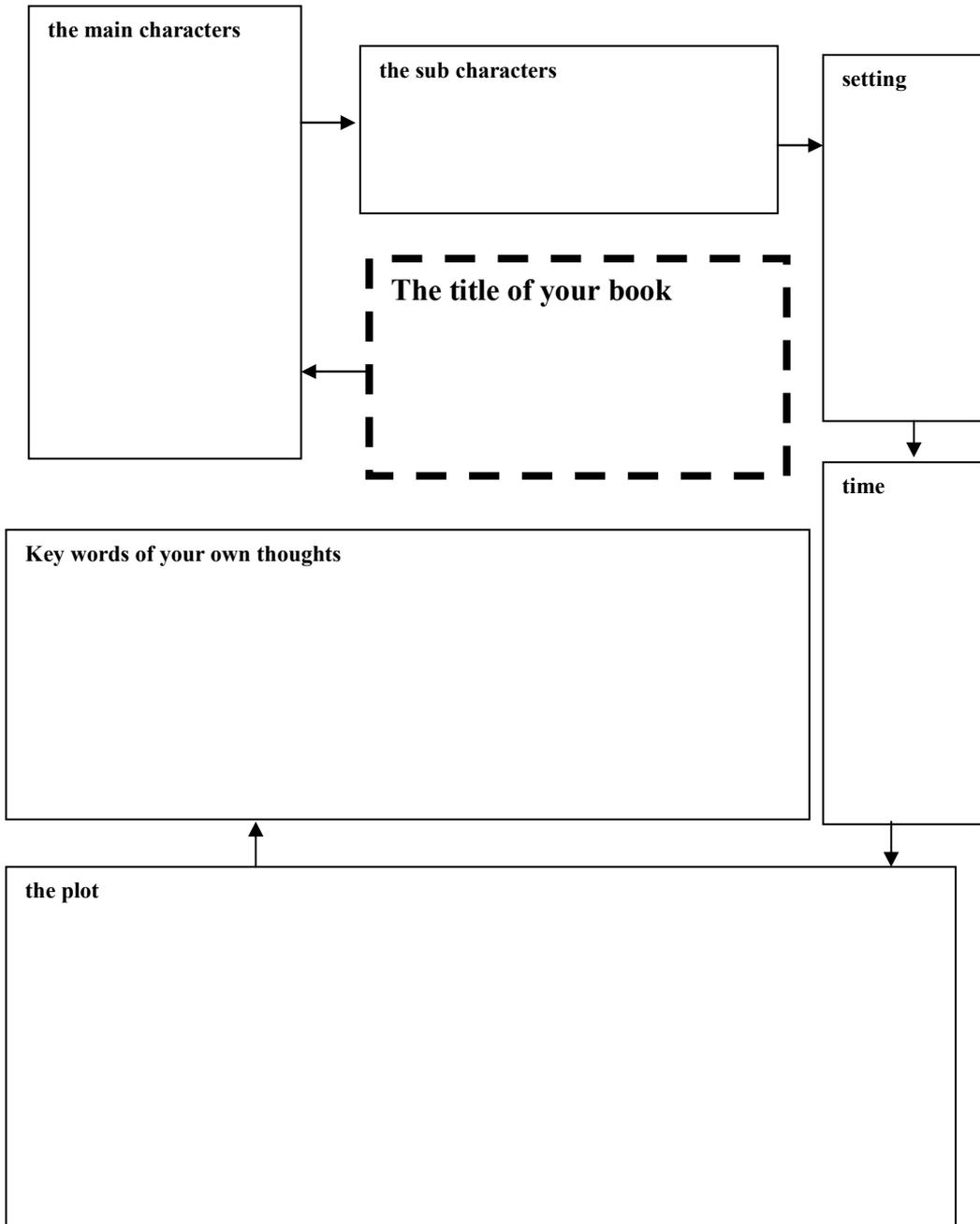
1. Ben gav en lapp åt Rajiv i skolan och sa att för lappen till Sumi. Nästa dag så Ben dem inte, och inte nästa först tredje dagen sa läraren att Rajivs morfar hade ringt och sagt att Rajiv mår dåligt, att skulle dom kunna föra läxböckerna till Rajiv och Ben fick göra det. Han kom till porten och var ej säker om han skulle sätta det på trappan eller??? Ben kom just till porten när dörren öppnades där stod Rajivs morfar. Dom gick upp till Rajivs rum efter att Ben hade fått veta att Sumi hade farit till Indien och skall bli gift. I Rajivs rum var det böcker över allt, man kunde knappt gå där. 2 Engelska-> I think that Ben loves Sumi. But he can't do nothing to that thing. I think that Ben was a little bit scared when he stepped into Rajiv's house. (Lars, *The Private World of Rajiv Ray*)

in this chapter Detektiv Warner and his friend sergeant Paxman came to Beans because they wanted to know about the oscillator. They came in and started to talk about Mr Conran. Beans asked Detektiv Warner why they didn't do something about that Mr Conran is kidnapped. Detektiv Warner wanted only know about the oscillator and he asked Beans if she had found the rules to the oscillator. Then Beans said that she will find the rules to the evening. Then Detektiv Warner and Sergeant Paxman get a drink. After the drink they left. Beans Ann and Louisa were in the kitchen while the classes because they wanted Detektiv Warner and Paxman's fingerprints because Beans thought that they are the kidnappers. Beans and her friends talked in the kitchen: Why gave I Dad's letter to the so-called Detektiv Warner. Then they checked the fingerprints. They are the same as the kidnappers fingerprints. I know it! Beans said. Then she heard that Warner was listening and he had heard everything he and Lucas came and tried to catch Beans. The girls ran upstairs and tried to hide but they could

not do that because there was SO small rooms. Lucas and Julian Warner only wanted the roles of the induction oscillator that Beans got in her briefcase and the briefcase was under a bed. Beans told to Lucas and Julian that the papers are in Dad's workroom. When Lucas and Julian was in the workroom Beans and her friends tried to find something noisy and something that you can use like a weapon. When Lucas and Julian came Beans, Ann, and Luoisia attacked with animal cringes and it was so big noise that Mr McKee came to Beans house. Beans said: call the police they are bad ... (unclear)... they have kidnapped my dad! Mr McKee called the Police and the Police get Lucas and Julian. Beans dad came home and everything was fine! THE END! (Nils, Operation Gadgetman, chapter 11-12)

STORY STRUCTURE SHEET

Now let's think about the structure of the story! Do you remember the different parts that we can talk about when we discuss a story? Talk to the others in your group and fill in the boxes together! Leave some space at the end of each box, so that you can fill in details about the rest of the story when you have finished the book.



APPENDIX 4.2.1.A

QUESTIONS TO ASK ONE ANOTHER

FRÅGOR SOM VI KAN STÄLLA VARANDRA

*** frågor om vad som hände i kapitlet**

Please tell me what happened in the chapter!

What were the main events in the chapter?

When did Peter meet Jane?

What happened after the football match?

What did they eat?

*** frågor om hur vi förstod handlingen**

Why do you think Jane wanted to meet Peter?

Why do you think Jane and Peter could not see each other that Friday?

*** frågor om vad ord eller meningar betyder**

*What does the word *** mean?*

*What do you think Peter meant when he said ***** ?*

*** frågor om vad vi tyckte eller tänkte medan vi läste, och om hur vi tolkade eller förstod texten**

What did the chapter make you think about?

What were you feeling when you read the chapter?

What is your opinion about?

What did you like in the chapter?

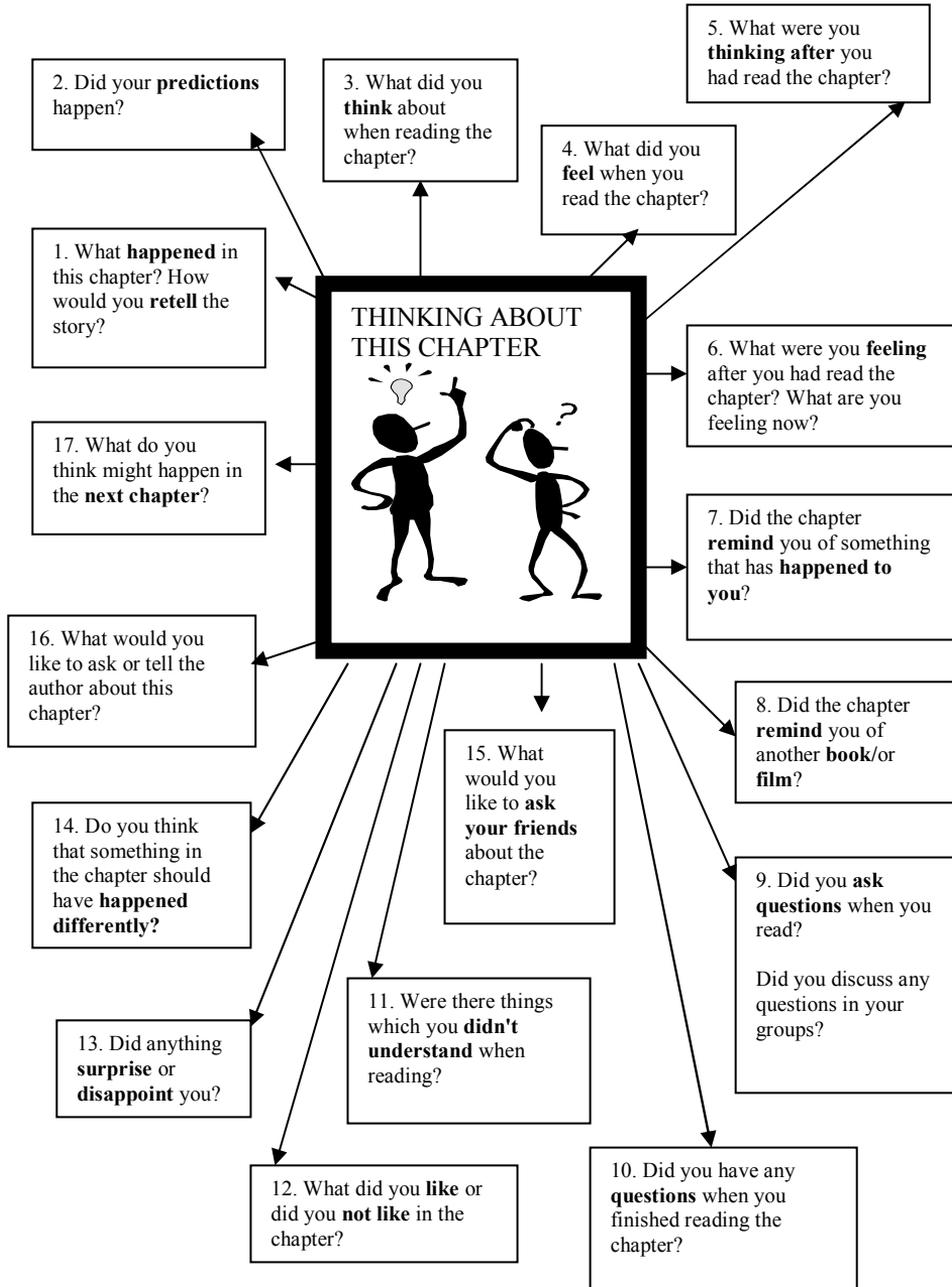
*** frågor där vi pratar om sådant som kanske inte direkt sades i texten, men som vi kan gissa att hände.**

What do you think Jane was feeling when Peter didn't come?

What do you think Peter told his dad?

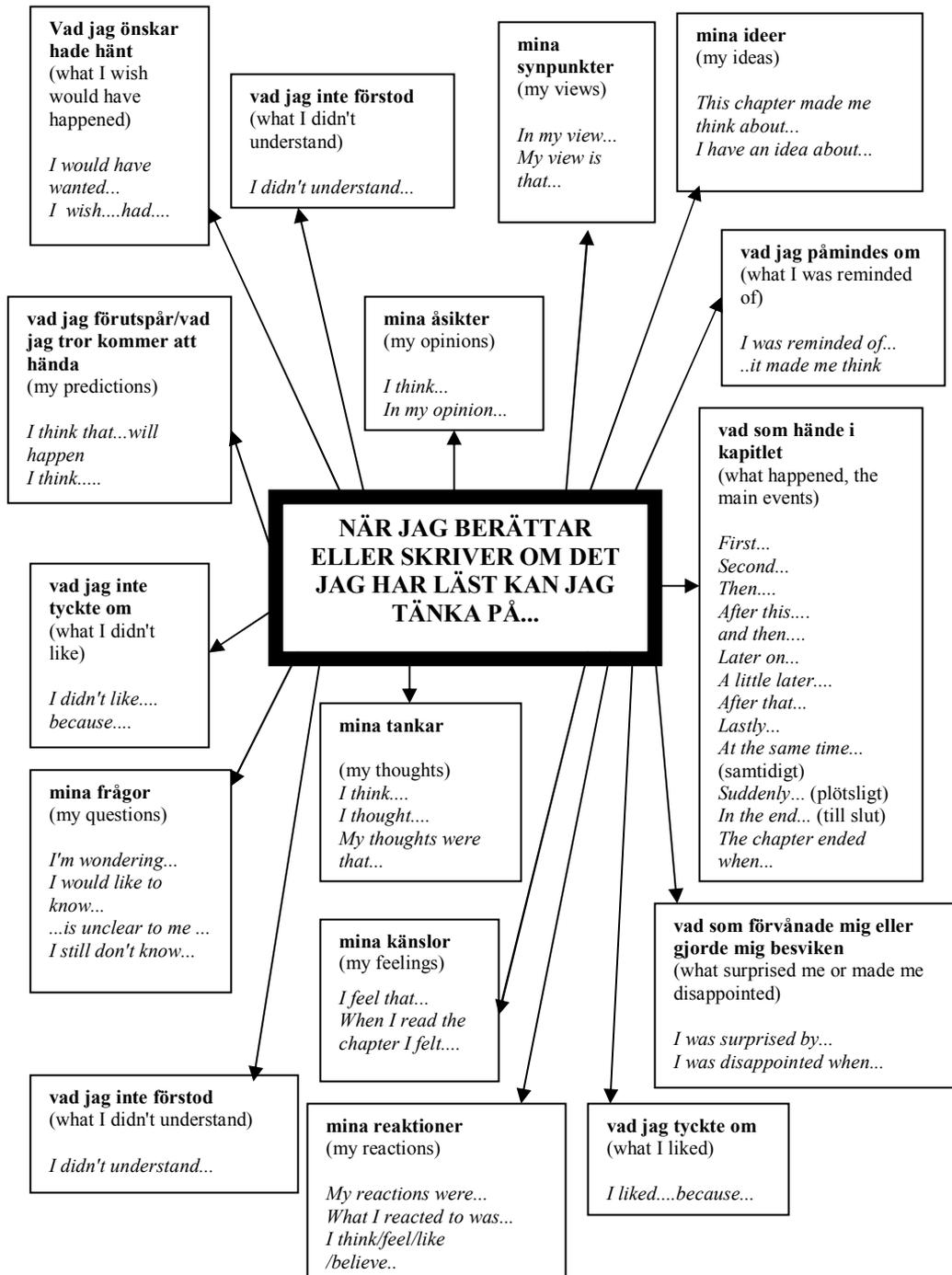
What do you think Peter wrote in his letter to Jane?

RESPONDING TO LITERATURE



APPENDIX 4.2.1.C

READER RESPONSE SCAFFOLDING



APPENDIX 4.2.1.D

EXAMPLES FROM DISCUSSION SHEETS

Group F/Discussion Sheet/4.10

1. Choose a chair-person
2. Choose a group secretary, who records what your group has discussed around the following topics
3. Explain these words: *secondary school, ears, stood up for her, noticed, stuck out*
4. Were there any words that were difficult or new? What words did you think about and write in your glossaries? What words did you look up in dictionaries?
5. What characters have we met so far? What do we know about them from the text?
6. What is Rafaella like? What is Lucy like? What do we know about them? Give examples from the text! How did you draw the mind-map?
7. Please take turns retelling what happened in the chapter!
8. What were you thinking when you read the chapter?
9. Have you ever been in Rafaella's situation? When? In what situation?
10. How do you think Rafaella felt? (*Hur tror du att Rafaella kände sig?*)
11. Have you ever felt like Lucy is feeling? (*Har du känt dig som Lucy känner sig?*)
12. What do you think Lucy should do now? (*Vad tycker du att Lucy borde göra nu?*)
13. What might it feel like to start in a new school?...

Groups G & H/Discussion Sheet/20.10

1. What would you like to talk about now that you have read these chapters? What things have you been thinking about, or were you thinking when you read the chapters?...
3. How did you feel about what you were reading?
4. Were there things that you liked especially or didn't like about the chapter?
5. Is there anything you would like to ask each other about the chapters? Any points that you would like to raise for everyone to talk about?
6. Did you recognise anything that happened in the chapters? Have you read something similar before, or has something like that happened to you?
7. Were there places that you didn't understand, or do you have any questions about something that happened? Is there anything in chapters 11-12 that is unclear and that you would like us to talk about?....

Group G & H/Discussion Sheet/25.10

1. From chapters 13-14:
 - A) One person in the group, imagine that you are Barry (from p. 133). The others can be Mum and Dad. What was Barry explaining to Mum when he came home, and what were they talking about? Take turns being Barry, Dad, and Mum!
 - B) Decide on who to be Mum, Dad and Barry. Now, each of you, write today's diary entry (in your notebook) for that person! What has 'your' character experienced today (chapters 13-14), and what is he or she thinking and feeling?
Read your diary entries for the characters to each other! And, say if you agree that that is how the character is thinking and feeling!
2. From chapter 15:
 - A) Ask Charlotta to go through the 'semantic maps' with you (that you filled in a few lessons ago)
 - B) What are the 2 questions that you decided to ask the others about chapter 15? Ask the questions, and let the others answer!
 - C) What are your thoughts about chapter 15? What did you like? What didn't you like? What were you thinking when you had read the chapter?
 - D) Why do you think Chester has decided to leave? What do you think his reasons are? Where will he go?
 - E) Will Robbie ever be in contact with Chester again? How and when?
 - F) How do you think the story will end?
 - G) How would you like the story to end?
 - H) How have you answered questions 1 A-E from the homework tasks? Please share your ideas!
3. Start reading chapters 16-17!

APPENDIX 5.1.1

SAMPLES FROM ESSAYS WRITTEN AFTER READING A WHOLE BOOK

When Grandpa Leicester came for lunch and didn't like Grandpa Chatterji at all (Grandpa Chatterji)

Grandpa Leicester was coming for lunch, and everybody was a bit worried, because grandpa chatterji was a bit weird. And they didn't know if grandpa Leicester would like Chatterji.

Neetus and Sanjays mother was in the kitchen. He said that he would make the food. He asked the children to help him. Soon grandpa Leicester knocked on the door. Sanjay and Neetu went up and changed their clothes. Then they said hello to grandpa Leicester.

-Lunch is served! Grandpa Chatterji said when he came out of the kitchen with plates and drinks.

Leicester didn't talk so much when they were eating. And it seemed like he didn't like the food at all. After the lunch the two grandfathers talked a bit.

Grandpa Leicester didn't like the fact that grandpa Chatterji was barefoot and he wasn't wearing clothes like they are wearing in England.

Grandpa Chatterji was tired so he went upstairs to get some sleep. Grandpa Leicester talked with the childrens mother and said tha he would not come to their house for a while.

After that he had went back home he didn't come back before grandpa Chatterji had gone back to India.

Did the grandfathers ever meet again? Did they ever become friends? (Teacher's questions)

Susanne's response:

One day when grandpa Leicester came for lunch Sanjay said to him that grandpa Chatterji would come to England for a few weeks. Grandpa Leicester didn't look so happy.

When he came home he started to think about the reason, why he didn't like Chatterji. And he couldn't find a good reason.

two weeks later

Grandpa Leicester came to meet grandpa Chatterji.

-I would like to come to India Leicester said

- Oh, you can come anytime you want to.

They startid to like each other. Grandpa Leicester came almost everyday to meet Chatterji. But of a week grandpa Chatterji went back to India and they didn't meet for a long time. But they were friends!

(Susanne, essay)

This essay was written as process writing. The ending was written as response to my question to Susanne about whether the grandfathers ever met again.

Jasmine's diary (My Name is Jasmine Grey)

My new parents, Lena and Bob is very nice to me but I think some peoples don't like me because I'm brown, one of them is Rachel's grandma. I want to be a friend whit Melanie and Tracy so we all four, I Rachel, Melanie and Tracy could play together. I don't understand why I don't får->på engelska??? go out whit Bramble, Rachel får go out whit Polly! I think they don't want it because Bramble is so big and I'm so small. Bob has talk to me and he say that I should not care if somebode screm to me some bad things. I'm so happy because I think Rachel and I am best friends! We do much funny things together. We go to school together and come from school together. I and Rachel has plan that I come tomorrow to her and play whit dolls. I think it would be fun!

(Katja, essay)

Rajiv's diary (The Private World of Rajiv Ray)

Ben came to visit me today. I tried to get him meditate with me but I think that he didn't really care. All the boys scolded at me because we lost the football match because of me. I suppose that they hate me now. The only way to get Sumi back is evidently to just concentrate.

And one day When Rajiv came home after school no on was home so he called to grandpa's cell-phone.

Someone picked up.-Hello, grandpa! Rajiv said but it wasn't grandpa in the phone, it was Sumi. -We are at the airport. I'm going to have my wedding right here in England! She said. Rajiv was so happy. When they got

home Rajiv found out that Sumi was going to stay in England and that Rajiv could visit Sumi and her husband whenever he wanted. They all lived happily ever after
(Felix, essay)

Mr Conran's diary (*Operation Gadgetman*)

11.8.00.

Dear diary,

I have been kidnapped! Two strangers came when Beatrice was at school. They are keeping me in a basement where I feel cold and weary. The two men have been trying to get me to tell them how the induction oscillator works but I haven't told them anything, but I fear that somehow they will get it out of me. The thing I miss most about home is Beatrice, although a wash and new clothes wouldn't be too bad of course.

Mr. Conran

12.8.00.

Dear diary,

The two men from the kidnapping have left the basement for days. I'm beginning to wonder if they have forgotten about me and left me here to die. My other thought is that they are after my daughter Beatrice Conran. The ropes that are binding me to the chair are loosening but I hope that they will untie before they find out the Induction Oscillator works.

Mr. Conran

13.8.00.

Dear diary,

The two men have come back. The fat one has shaved off his beard. He has started to get more and more frantic about getting the answer to how the Oscillator works. The only food I have been getting so far is hard bread with water from the facet.

Mr. Conran

Dear diary

14.8.00.

I hope the girls are finding my coded message. If they don't then no one will ever find me and eventually they will get it out of me. The girls shouldn't have too much trouble with the spy kits and all. But still I haven't heard any trouble from any of them trying to rescue me. I am getting a little bit curious if they are doing anything. I really hope that grandma could come so the girls wouldn't be too afraid or lonely.

Mr Conran

15.8.00.

Dear diary,

Finally the detectives have arrived and I get to see Beatrice we were so happy we almost cried when we hugged. The problem was that the men had dressed up as detective to see all the evidence. And all this was thanks to my stupid invention.

Mr. Conran

(Melker, essay)

A new chapter: Chapter 18 (*Troublemakers*)

"It's a goal!" Everyone screamed when Robbie kicked the ball in the net, at the last minute. Robbie's Dad didn't believe he's eyes when it happened. They had a party because they won the tournament. After the party they did the English Mafia kidnap Robbie and he's family and the Mafia did send them to Italy. When they arrived did the Italian Mafia meet them and they did give them one trillion Italian liars. They bought a house at the field and in the neighbour did live a girl and she was after a year Robbies best friend.

When Robbie was 20 years old did he and she move to England and to a surprise was Chester their neighbour. And they all lived happily ever after.

THE END

(Casper, essay)

A new chapter 10 (a different ending to the story) (*Secret Friends*)

Det var tidigt på morgonen och klockan bar bara 7. Lucy ville gå och hälsa på Rafaellas familj. Dani öppnade och frågade -Vad gör du här såhär tidigt? -Jag ville bara säga att... -Är det du Lucy, skrek Rafaellas mamma. - Vad gör du här?

- Inget. Alltså jag drömde förra natten om att ni pekade på mig och att det var jag som dödade Rafaella.
- Det gjorde du också och dina dumma mördarkompisar hjälpte till, ropade Rafaellas pappa.
- Bry dig inte om honom, sa Rafaellas mamma.
- Han är så ledsen nu när Rafaella är död. Förresten vill du gå upp och titta på Rafaella?
- Gärna, svarade Lucy.

Uppe i Rafaellas låg hon död och Lucy började gråta och när en tår föll på Rafaella så vaknade hon till liv igen.

(Markus, essay)

A new chapter 10 (*Secret Friends*)

I cried all night long and now I'm hysteric and I don't know what to do, my best friend is dead because of me. I don't know what to do shall I go to her house and tell her father, mother and Dani that it was my fault and that I'm really sorry, no I can't do that. What can I do.

Next day on my way to school I thought about the first day in school when I dumped in in her. And she said "Oh sorry, I'm Rafaella" I started to cry again.

Jag tyckte det var bra.

When I came to school it seemed like noone ever remembered that (two weeks ago there was a girl in this school who died in an heart attack). There was only one girl who remembered that. She was a new girl in school and her name was Tiina. She came from Finland, she was very pretty and nice girl. When you saw her you could think that she were one of the popular firls, OK she was but she was nice too (No at all like Kate and Sophie).

She said to me that: -Hi, my name is Tiina and I'm from Finland. I heard that you were a very good friend to the girl who died, and I feel sorry for you. -Yes, I know, its hard to believe that she died. Then she said again that -when I still lived in Finlan I had a verry good friend who died too her name was Liisa. Then I started to cry again and that was the end of the story. An not so happy end.

(Barbara, essay)

Book review (*Seven Weird Days at Number 31*)

"Seven Weird Days at number 31" is a good book The start is good. Becose the clothes fly out of the window. The middle is don't so good becose is difficult. The end is very good. Im don't no why the end is good but it is.

(Markus, essay 2)

Book review (*Operation Gadgetman*)

Operation gadgetman is about an inventor who invents gadgets. He usually invents harmless gadgets like animal crunchies or spy kits, but one day he invents an induction oscillator by accident. An induction oscillator is a machine that you can use to steel a lot of money from the building societiy. He sends a letter where he says that he can explain how the induction oscillator works so that they can aword someone else steel money with it. One of the kidnappers works at the building societiy and thats how the kidnappers find out about the induction oscillator. When his daughter, Beans finds out that her father has ben kidnapped she and her friends, Ann and Louisa start to look after clues, in the end the kidnappers come to Beans house and there they here when Beans explains who the kidnappers are so they cathc her and her friends and put them in the workrom whils they try to find the blueprints for the induction oscilator. When thei come back to the workroom Beans and her friends attack them with animal crunchies and light bulbs. Their neighbour calls the police and they catch the kidnappers. This book was exiting but not really my type because I dont like detectivebooks so much. In the beginning it was interesting but then it started to be boring because it was the same things on and on again and nothing really happened. It could be a better book if there would happen more.

(Lotta, essay)

Letter to the author (*Troublemakers*)

I've surprised about the book. Because I haven't read a such a good book that this was. I, think it was good because it was a good story about football. I think it was good that it was long and I learned much new words and expressions.

I liked Chester Smith because he was so good at football and I think it was nice when did start to coach Robbie's school football team. And it was great when Robbie got in to the school football team. The fan's that did treat him was evil to him and that wasn't good at all because when they did treat him he did get angry and did tackle the fan's. And when he did it the Police came and took him. His coach said that he don't get to plat [play] in some matches. And I think Robbie was nice to Chester.

(Tomas, essay)

School teachers in Finland today are increasingly using authentic reading materials in their EFL-classrooms, and primary school curricula now require that teachers incorporate issues of culture, multiculturalism and diversity in their teaching. At the same time, empirical evidence from such teaching in real classrooms has received very little systematic scholarly attention. This book is about a group of young EFL-pupils reading authentic multicultural children's fiction. Charlotta Häggbloom argues that when provided with appropriate support, young EFL-readers are able to engage with authentic reading materials, and to relate empathetically to issues of culture and diversity. Häggbloom explores issues related both to the reading of authentic texts in the language classroom, and to the introduction of a multicultural dimension in teaching. What happens when primary school EFL-pupils begin reading authentic texts? How do they manage and what kind of help might they need? How can teaching be structured to assist their reading? How might the teacher encourage independent EFL-reading and group discussions on literary texts? What might young EFL-readers react to in authentic texts? How might young EFL-readers relate to cultural or multicultural information in texts? What happens when matters of multiculturalism are dealt with in a real classroom situation?

Using an ethnographic case study technique, this book tries to paint a holistic picture of this particular kind of teaching. It will therefore be of special interest to primary school teachers, EFL-teachers, and researchers, teacher educators, and policy-makers involved in the fields of EFL-literacy and the cultural and multicultural dimensions of teaching.

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