CHAPTER SIX

Reading *The Three Little Pigs* at Home

6.1 Introduction

I will begin discussion of the results of the semantic message analysis by considering three situations in which the same traditional story, *The three little pigs* was read. The occasions involved mothers reading to Paul and Ashley from the LAP group and Rachel from the HAP group. This move will serve both to further illustrate the use of the semantic network and to complement the perspective from the whole data set, which will be presented in Chapter Seven.

More specifically, I will consider what differences in patterns of interaction there might be when the story content is held as constant as could reasonably be achieved in naturally occurring interaction. It is an interesting question because so often in the emergent literacy field it is narrative content which is projected as amongst the most important sources of children's literacy learning. 'Motivation' for reading is often held to derive from children's 'identification' with characters. While one would not want to disagree with the assertion that referential content of object texts is important, it is also interesting to enquire about resources for children's learning other than differences in, broadly speaking, the subject matter of object texts.

Additionally, the interaction has a more general theoretical significance, since it is a rather unusual set of occasions in natural conversational data in which the referential domain of talk is held fairly constant but in which other regions of meaning are able to vary relatively freely. The mothers and children talk about the referential 'world' of the story, and it happens that on these occasions they do not refer to very much outside this 'world'. Two possibilities for theoretical analysis therefore arise. One is to enquire closely about

what meanings other than referential meanings seem to be implicated in any observed differences between the data for the social groups. The other is to consider Hasan's proposition, looking from the perspective of context of situation, that the same contextual variables (and the expanding sub-variables) might be variantly realized.

To situate the reading occasions I will begin in Section 6.2 by describing some social features of the three families. Then in Section 6.3 features of the linguistic interaction which are common to all three occasions of joint book-reading will be considered. This will allow me to do two particular things: to explore some relations between these data and previous findings; and to argue that these occasions are appropriately regarded as tokens of the one situation-type. Then in Section 6.4 I will analyse significantly contrasting features of linguistic interaction and describe commonalities between the two LAP dyads and the contrast with the HAP dyad. The comparisons will indicate important semantic variation and will oblige me to elaborate the preceding argument. In Section 6.5, therefore, I will discuss how semantic variation in this interaction might be understood in relation to the expanded description of contextual variables advanced in Chapter Four, Section 4.6.3.

Since approximately 12 pages of transcript comprise the three joint book-reading sessions they are not presented in full in this chapter. Instead, extensive excerpts from them will be included to illustrate specific points. For ease of reading in this mode of discussion the excerpts are presented without message boundary marks or numbers. The full transcripts of the sessions, together with message boundary marks, may be found in Appendix 7.

6.2 The children and their families

It happened that Paul's and Ashley's families lived in the same suburb of Sydney, though they did not know each other. The boys attended the same state-funded ECE Centre, built in

the grounds of the local primary school because the area is identified as 'educationally disadvantaged'.

The suburb is on the northern edge of the main western axis of Sydney's suburban development. It was formerly a rather distinct community, built around a large factory with a set of small businesses servicing local needs. However, technological change resulted in the factory's closure several years ago and there are few businesses left. The suburb now provides cheap private and rental housing for workers who travel some distance to an air force base, a naval repair facility or to the Blacktown urban centre. As the community has been incorporated into metropolitan suburban development, housing development has extended into the surrounding farmland.

Paul was 3:7 years at the time of the study. His family rented a small fibro house on the outer edge of the suburb, surrounded by large stretches of farmland. He had two brothers, one aged five who had just commenced school and the other aged one year. His mother was not in paid employment but his father was, working as a boilermaker at the naval facility. Before the birth of the first child the mother worked as a shop assistant, having left school in Queensland at the minimal leaving age. She had not undertaken any post-school study. The father had completed a boilermaker's certificate.

Paul's mother said that she was the family member who read to him, almost exclusively, and that she usually did so once a day. (In fact Paul's father did not join in any of the conversations I had over coffee with the mother. He was a shift worker and therefore often at home during the day. He waved and called cheerfully when I arrived but kept on with his work in the back yard.)

For Paul's mother the primary reasons for joint book-reading were to share an activity which Paul enjoyed very much, to

create an interest in reading and to teach him new vocabulary. She commented that she mainly read picture story books, information books and collections of nursery rhymes to him. The audiorecorded occasions all involved reading picture story books. Generally books were obtained through purchases at a supermarket or as gifts from relatives and friends.

Though Paul had been seriously ill with bronchitis just before I met him, this was regarded as a very unusual episode. His mother thought of him as an active child, who liked particularly to play with large mobile toys and to build with Lego materials. He also enjoyed television very much. During my visits the TV was left on in the loungeroom and Paul wandered in and out of the room, occasionally listening to the talk and then returning to watch TV when he became bored with it.

Ashley's family lived several kilometres away, on the opposite edge of the suburb, in a small brick house they were purchasing a short distance from the main arterial road. Both he and his younger sister, aged two, were adopted. He was also 3:7 years at the commencement of the study.

Ashley had been physically abused as a baby and taken permanently from his biological parent by the State at one year of age, moving more or less directly to his adoptive family. His mother mentioned this background briefly but quite openly in Ashley's presence, following her comments by hugging him and saying 'But you're OK now, aren't you mate?'. At the time of the study he was committed to becoming a train driver, but his mother joked that she felt equally strongly that he would be a brain surgeon because he seemed very bright.

Like Paul, Ashley enjoyed playing with large mobile toys and construction materials, usually outside in the back yard. Also like Ashley he very much enjoyed watching TV, though there appeared to be more regulation of time for this activity

in his family. His mother stressed that their joint book-reading was one of his favourite activities. She read to him about three times a week, usually before bedtime. The major purposes, she said, were to engage him in an enjoyable activity, to get him ready for school work and to help him to recognise some basic written words. Similar to Paul's family, they mainly obtained books from a supermarket or through gifts. They sometimes also bought texts through mail order catalogues. The mother commented that they read picture story books fairly exclusively, and this was so for each occasion of reading audiorecorded for this project.

Ashley's mother left school as soon as she was able, at the end of Year 9, and had not completed any further formal education. His father finished school at Year 10 and completed a blacksmith's certificate at TAFE. At the time of the study he was employed as a welder by the State Rail Authority but was hoping shortly to be promoted to ganger. His mother worked some evenings as a part-time waitress at a Pizza Hut.

Rachel was just four at the time of the study. She had an elder brother, aged seven. Her family lived in a suburb on the edge of natural bushland, close to the coast on the north eastern perimeter of Sydney. The family had only recently moved into a newly constructed house, which they were purchasing. Their street was a cul-de-sac and all the houses were large double-storied brick constructions less than five years old. Rachel attended the fee-paying Early Childhood Centre conducted in the hall of a local church.

Her mother worked part-time as secretary to a private company, supervising the preparation of accounts and business reports. Her work also involved making business contacts extensively by phone from the home. She completed secondary education to Year 12, then studied both shorthand/typing and surveying/drafting at TAFE. The father held a law degree and worked as a sales manager and company director.

Rachel and her mother usually read a book before bedtime, which the mother said was 'not necessarily the best time - but the most requested time'. She tended to follow Rachel's request because 'it does tend to be a settling influence to bedtime, provided the stories are not scary'. Joint book-reading was obviously a ritual given some priority. On the specific occasion to be discussed here the audiorecording caught a moment before reading began when the father came into Rachel's room for family prayers. When the mother explained that they were about to read a book together, he left. At the end of the session Rachel was sent to fetch her father for prayers.

Their discussion and reading are the most extensive of all mother-child pairs. On this occasion it extends to approximately six pages of transcript and the session only ends at the mother's firm insistence in the face of Rachel's resistance. This part of their exchange, which will have further significance at a later point in the discussion, is presented as Example 6.1.

Example 6.1

Mother:	(COMPLETES READING OF THE STORY)
Rachel:	Can you sing it *again?
Mother:	*What the whole book again, the whole book again? Well it's very late now and you've had a long day. *It's time
Rachel:	*Please can we have one more, not one of these. I need um a story, not those on.
Mother:	A story of what?
Rachel:	Um a a story of
Mother:	No no more stories tonight darling.
Rachel:	Only one story, *not what's in there
Mother:	*We've got to have we've got to get to sleep now.
Rachel:	Oh! Nothing's nothing.

Obviously the comparatively long discussions did not exhaust Rachel's enthusiasm. There is a strong sense in the interaction that the mother regularly makes a lot of time available for joint book-reading.

The major purposes for joint book-reading which Rachel's mother mentioned were similar to those given by the other mothers. She aimed to create an interest in reading and to

engage in an activity which was very enjoyable for the child.
Additionally, she stressed the importance of the activity's
role in 'creating Rachel's imagination'. She thought of
Rachel as a very active child, who particularly enjoyed
sharing routine household tasks, drawing and painting, and
playing with other children. Like Paul and Ashley she also
enjoyed watching TV very much. The books she and her mother
read together were usually picture story or information books,
or religious stories obtained through their local church.

The family obtained titles from a wider range of sources than
the two LAP families. Though, as with those families, books
were received as gifts and purchased from a supermarket they
were also purchased from newsagencies and a local bookshop,
and borrowed from a local library. These sources were close-
by in the large shopping centre about five minutes drive away
from their home, whereas for the two LAP families there was no
local suburban bookshop or library. For them, the nearest
children's bookshop and library was about half an hour away by
car.

This, then, is some part of the home situations of the three
children who happen to have read *The three little pigs* with
their mothers at the time of audiorecording. Growing up in
the same city and about to enter the same education system,
they were already enthusiastic about reading partly because of
the commitment of their families to sharing enjoyable stories
and information texts with them, and generally encouraging
them in other ways to read the written code. Both Ashley and
Rachel, for example, liked to try to read labels on everyday
household items, and to 'pretend read' books. In many ways
they quite closely resemble the children whom Wells (eg,
1985a; 1985b) identified as making strong early progress in
school. There are also some striking commonalities in the
linguistic interaction between them and their mothers, as the
discussion in the following section will highlight.

6.3 Some commonalities in the occasions of reading *The Three little pigs*

From the transcripts each of the three children appears to be already familiar with the story of *The three little pigs*. They spontaneously accompany their mother's reading of the wolf's chant, and occasionally anticipate the plot excitedly. Paul, for example, identifies the building materials well before his mother has read the relevant stretch:

Example 6.2

Mother: Soon the little pigs met a peddler, hauling straw. The first little pig said, 'Please *sir

Paul: *That's straw and that's sticks.

Mother: 'Please, sir, give me some straw ...

They also appear to enjoy the story intensely. Their contributions are often animated, on occasion contributing dialogically to the reading of the story. Paul is very eager as his mother reads, 'Little pig, little pig, let me come in!" and calls out 'No! Silly, silly thing!'. Similarly, Ashley calls out enthusiastically as his mother reads:

Example 6.3

Mother: 'Away raced the little pigs, straight to the third little pig's house of bricks. *"Don't worry

Ashley: *Look!

Mother: Yeah. He blew him all away, didn't he?

Rachel's mother plays with her about her familiarity with the story, suggesting that since she knows it already they might stop reading. Rachel is not impressed with this idea and demands that they continue.

Example 6.4

Mother: Do you know this story already?

Rachel: *The three little pigs.*

Mother: *The three little pigs.* Do you know this story already? Well, maybe we shouldn't bother reading it.

Rachel: I want to.

Mother: You want to. Mm.

The three children actively initiate conversation during the reading; they do not simply respond to questions or comments made by their mothers. Sometimes their initiating turn is a question, as when Paul asks, 'Mum, why the wolf can't come up

230

there?' or Rachel inquires 'What was he doing?'. Ashley does
not take up this option, sometimes preferring instead to
direct his mother's attention to an interesting feature of the
illustrations, as in Example 6.3. All three children comment
directly on the events of the narrative, usually to predict
what is about to happen, as Rachel does in Example 6.5 and
Paul in Example 6.6.

Example 6.5

Mother:	(READING) **This made the big bad wolf perfectly furious.**
Rachel:	And he was in the chimney. Look at his feet in the chimney.
Mother:	Yeah.
	"Now by the hair of my chinny chin chin," he roared ...

Example 6.6

Mother:	(READING) **and I'll**
Paul:	No you
Mother:	**blow**
Paul:	no you doin' the walls because the wolf's climbing in and the pig's up in bed.
Mother:	Yeah.
Paul:	And he that little pig made him (?that burned the house).
Mother:	Oh.
	And I'll blow your house in," roared the wolf ...

A relatively high degree of reciprocity is evident in the
exchanges. Almost all demands for information, and for
sharing of attention to some detail of the illustrations, are
acknowledged linguistically by the mothers and the children.
Children and mothers clearly share the process of text
construction.

Considering the interaction more from the perspective of the
mothers, there are again many commonalities. It is evident
from the audiorecording that all three mothers read fluently
and dramatise their presentation of the object text. They all
physically position themselves so that the children can
readily see the pages from which they are reading, in the
manner that Holdaway (1979) and other writers on the pedagogy
of joint book-reading espouse. All three mothers address some
questions to the children and all appear to be concerned that
adequate answers are given. When, for example, Ashley cannot
remember a specific term his mother wants him to provide she
perseveres until he appears to understand.

Example 6.7

Mother: (READING) And off he danced down the road to see how his brothers were getting along.
              What's he playing? What's he got in his mouth?

Ashley: Umm ... a tar.

Mother: A what?

Ashley: *A t

Mother: *It's a flute em flute.

Ashley: Flute.

Mother: Yeah.
              The second little pig was building himself a house too.

Similarly, Rachel's mother makes sure that Rachel possesses the correct information at the beginning of the session, when she appears to be confused about multiple significations of 'straw'.

Example 6.8

Mother: He quickly built himself a house of straw.

Rachel: No, Um I want to call ... They're not straws.

Mother: What are they?

Rachel: They're sticks.

Mother: That's sticks. Straw is like grass.

Rachel: Oh.

Mother: It's funny sort of grass.

Rachel: Mm. They're straws.

Mother: Not straws like you drink out of. Did you think it was straws like you drink out of? Did you?

Rachel: No.

Mother: Drinking straws? You did, didn't you?
              (MOTHER AND CHILD BOTH LAUGH)

This small incident is an evocative example of the warmth of relation between all three mothers and children, which is evident throughout all three sessions. It also instances the mothers' ability to 'track' the child's processing of information very closely, and to provide relevant assistance as it is needed.

The length of the object text read to the children is very similar. Using semantic message as the unit of measure, Rachel's mother read 133 object text messages, Paul's mother 142 and Ashley's 133. Typically the mothers read for eight or ten messages before either they or the children initiate linguistic interaction. Though in other sessions mothers may read for long stretches in both LAP and HAP groups, here the length of object text stretches is quite short. It is a

pattern largely accounted for by the children's excitement and
the shared reading of chants.

Given the extent to which these and other obvious features of
interaction are common to all three dyads there are strong
grounds for arguing that the specific contexts of situation
can be grouped as tokens of a general situation type.
However, as the linguistic interaction is probed more
specifically an expansion of this perspective is necessary.

6.4 Reading difference in family readings of *The three little pigs*

Perhaps the most obvious difference between the three contexts
of situation, consistent with the general findings, is the
extent of linguistic interaction about the story. Between
Ashley and his mother a total of 67 complete interactive
messages were exchanged; between Paul and his mother, 41; and
between Rachel and her mother, 187.

Information on the distribution of progressive, punctuative
and interactive messages is presented in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Distribution of punctuative and progressive messages in readings of *The three little pigs*

Message Type	Ashley's Interaction	Paul's Interaction	Rachel's Interaction
Progressive	54	27	136
Punctuative	13	14	51
Incomplete	2	2	10
Total	69	43	197

The extent to which each partner contributes to the exchanges
is obviously an important further question. It might perhaps
be supposed, on the basis of commonly held educational views
about the language of working class children, that they would
tend to contribute a rather smaller share of the interaction.

That is not the case on these occasions. Table 6.2 presents
the relevant distributions.

Table 6.2   Distribution of numbers of messages contributed
                 to interaction by mothers and children

Message Type	Ashley's Interaction		Paul's Interaction		Rachel's Interaction	
	Mh	Cd	Mh	Cd	Mh	Cd
Progressive	33	21	9	18	73	63
Punctuative	7	6	3	11	20	31
Incomplete	0	2	0	2	1	9
Total	40	29	12	31	94	103

All the children actively contribute a substantial proportion
of progressive messages to the interaction, so difference in
extent of interaction cannot be attributed to a passivity of
the children in the LAP group. Since all three children
accompany their mothers in reading the chants the punctuative
messages in these transcripts comprize extensive selection of
the semantic feature [object text collaboration:
accompaniment].

When the difference between the extent of interaction in
progressive messages is probed further it is clear that
frequency of demands for information is significantly
implicated. In the interaction between Ashley and his mother,
15 demands for information are made by the mother; Ashley
himself makes none. In the interaction between Paul and his
mother there are seven, of which Paul asks two; and for Rachel
and her mother there are 43, of which Rachel asks only five.

Turning specifically to some of the qualities of this
interaction, it is interesting to consider the results when
Paul made his two requests for information. In one case he
appeared to enquire about some object in the material
environment, asking 'That's yours?'. His mother made no
linguistic response, but rather continued reading the story.

On the other occasion he asked for an explanation but his mother responded by disclaiming, as the excerpt in Example 6.9 indicates.

Example 6.9

Mother:	READING) **Quickly he scrambled up on the roof of the brick house and made his way to the chimney.**
Paul:	**Mum, why the wolf can't come up there?**
Mother:	**Oh I don't know.**
	(READING) **The smart little pig ran to the fireplace and whisked the lid off a pot of steaming water.**

It is unlikely that Paul's mother actually lacks the relevant knowledge to answer his question, so why this reply? One interpretation might be that she somehow lacks 'sensitivity' to his interests in not responding to his question, but it is difficult to sustain that view in the light of so much other evidence of her solicitude and responsiveness across the four sessions. That she is responsive to his initiatives is evident in her reply to his initiative in Example 6.10.

Example 6.10

Mother:	(READING) **... and I will show you the big apple tree in Merry Garden".**
Paul:	**There's the apple tree.**
Mother:	**Yeah. Look at all the apples.**
	(READING) **The next morning the little pig got up at six o'clock and hurried to the tree.**

Adopting the explanation of a general psychological attribute of 'insensitivity' would involve a further assumption of inconsistency. A different kind of explanation seems to be needed, which takes the analysis beyond an explanation based on the individual's idiosyncratic predispositions.

There is an interestingly contrastive moment when Rachel asks her mother to explain an ambiguous illustration.

Example 6.11

Mother: (READING) ... but he had covered himself with a sheep's skin and was curled up in a big basket looking like a little lamb.
Oh ah. Look!

Rachel: What is it?

Mother: He's pretending to be a sh a sheep. That's what you call a wolf in sheep's clothing.
(LAUGH TOGETHER).

Mother: Isn't it? A wolf pretending to be a sheep.
(READING) "Who's there," called the second little pig.

Rachel's mother reacts enthusiastically to the illustration. Rachel is puzzled by it and seeks some clarification. The response to Rachel's question becomes not just a textual site for providing information relevant to the point of her query. It also extends beyond this specific message, providing an additional semantic resource which gives the child contextualized access to the possibility of tracking allusion to other narrative texts. It is also a good example of a 'text-to-life' move, relating the textual instance to more general textual practices. It is a moment in which the child is apprenticed to particular ways of saying and meaning.

To use terminology from earlier research in this field, Rachel's mother would obviously be regarded as sensitive to Rachel's interests because she directly responds to the question with relevant information. Specifically in terms of Tizard and Hughes' categories she gives a 'full' answer (Tizard and Hughes, 1984:151ff). However, this attribution does not really capture the discursive resources which are accessed through her response, and these are a significant further difference requiring some theoretical interpretation. It will be argued in Section 6.5 that such an interpretation can be developed using the descriptive stratum of context of situation.

Generally it is the mothers who lead the dance in the question-answer exchanges, so it is relevant to enquire more closely into the kinds of demand they make. Table 6.3 presents some findings about the distribution of types of questions asked by the mothers.

Table 6.3 **Distribution of selection of options in demanding information**

Option	Ashley's Mother	Paul's Mother	Rachel's Mother
demand;information:confirm:			
[reassure]	8	0	7
[probe]	0	0	1
[ask]	2	4	17
[check]	0	0	0
demand;information:apprize:			
[explain]	0	0	5
[circumstance]	0	0	0
[event]	0	0	1
[actant:specific]	0	0	2
[actant:nonspecific]	5	1	5
[tentative]	0	0	0
Totals	15	5	38

It is clear that there are considerable differences in the function played by demands for information in the mothers' talk. For Paul's mother, though the number of progressive messages she speaks is small (a total of nine), more than half are demands for information but only one of these requires Paul to apprize his mother of information. All of the mother's other questions select the feature [demand; information:confirm:enquire:ask]. When these messages are further considered from the perspective of the experiential metafunction, it can also be seen that all but one of these select the features [mental] and that Paul is the reference of

the [effecting] element[1]. Example 6.12 illustrates the
typical fashion of her questioning.

Example 6.12

Mother: (READING) One was a lively little pig, who liked to dance, and one was a happy
little pig, who liked to sing, and one was a smart little pig, who remembered
that the wolf was always about.
See them three little piggies?

Paul: There's the first one, there's the happy one and there's the happy one.

Her main specific interest in asking questions seems to be to
ensure that Paul notices key features of the narrative encoded
in the illustrations.

Ashley's mother also asks a high proportion of questions, 15
out of a progressive message total of 33. Of these, five
select [demand:information:apprize:precise:specify:actant:
nonspecific] but three follow in quick succession and are
concerned with the one item, the name of the instrument played
by one of the pigs.

Example 6.13

Mother: And off he danced down the road to see how his brothers were getting along.
What's he playing? What's he got in his mouth?

Ashley: Umm ... a tar.

Mother: A what?

Ashley: *A t

Mother: *It's a flute em flute.

Ashley: Flute.

Mother: Yeah.

In Ashley's case too, therefore, very little of the dialogue
functions to require the child to display information
explicitly. In fact, the more typical fashion of questioning
is the mother's selection of [demand:information:confirm:
verify:reassure]. The longest exchange in the transcript
deploys this meaning resource extensively.

---

[1]   The one exception is a message, 'See the wolf chasing the apples?', which selects
[prefaced] and in which the activity obviously involves object text figures. However,
even here the prefacing element of the message is in some respects very similar in
constructing Paul as the 'perceiver'. The analysis of the prefacing element is
[subjective:other:addressee:child;nil;experiential:idea:perception]

Example 6.14

Mother:	(READING) "Ho, ho, ho, ha, ha, ha," laughed the two lazy little pigs, dancing along to the tune of the fiddle and the flute.
	He's getting very cranky, isn't he? Because he wants a very strong house, doesn't he?
Ashley:	Yeah, 'cause fox can blow them sticks house down, and he doesn't blow the bricks house down.
Mother:	Yeah, and the wolf can't blow bricks down, can he? And what what's your house made of?
Ashley:	Umm, bricks.
Mother:	Yeah, and no wolf no wolf can blow our house down, can he?
Ashley:	No, 'cause it we haven't got no sticks.
Mother:	That's right, we haven't got any sticks.

Of the 73 progressive messages which Rachel's mother contributes to their interaction, 38 are demands for information. So from one perspective, that of their density across the whole interaction, their role in the exchange is approximately the same as with the other mothers. However, a difference in their significance is clear when the semantic choices made in her messages are considered. Of the total 38, 13 select the feature [apprize]; of these five select the further options [precise:specify:actant:nonspecific], two [precise:specify:actant:specific] and five select [precise:explain]. Of the 25 questions which select [confirm], 17 select [enquire:ask].

The demand to explain phenomena is in complete contrast with the practice of the other mothers. Neither Paul nor Ashley were asked, either here or in any of the total of eight occasions of their talk about object texts, to provide an explanation. However, for Rachel, an overview of all the transcripts shows that requests for explanation are not an unusual experience. In total, she is asked 19 times to provide explanations so the frequency here closely approximates the mean for all the occasions. This type of interaction in the home is closely associated with a form of school practice in joint book-reading to which attention has been drawn by many scholars (for example, Green and Harker, 1982:203).

Providing an explanation is not an easy demand for Rachel to meet at this stage of her literacy development. She is still

very much an apprentice in formulating her reasoning
explicitly, as for example, when her mother asks her to
explain why a wolf can easily blow down a house made of
sticks.

Example 6.15

Mother: (READING) so he had decided to build a quick and easy house of?
Rachel: Sticks.
Mother: sticks.
Rachel: That's not easy house 'cause the wolf can blow it easily.
Mother: Can he? Why?
Rachel: Look ... See? ... It's all huffed in.
Mother: But why why can the wolf blow houses down of sticks?
Rachel: Here he comes. Look.
Mother: Wooah that's the next page. Wait a minute.
            (RESUMING READING) Soon it was finished too.

It is much easier for the child to respond with the aid of the
illustrations than to explain verbally.

On this specific point it is interesting to contrast the
interaction with Tizard and Hughes' (1984) general notion of a
passage of intellectual search. Rachel does seem to be
actively involved in interpreting the plot, and in formulating
aspects of causality explicitly. She says, for example,
'That's not easy house 'cause the wolf can blow it easily'.
Nevertheless, it is the mother's consciousness of particular
forms of interpretive activity which appears to be a primary
resource for the development of these behaviours.

It is important, of course, that this aspect of the mother's
agency is not exercised to the exclusion of the child's
initiatives. Rather, as in this interaction, there is an
intricate, complex arrangement of semantic point and
counterpoint. The child's initiatives, and also on occasion
her responses, are the point of origin for the mother's
systematic moves to require her to construct a more extended
explanation or set of observations. Throughout the transcript
there is a sense of the mother explicating, requiring the
child to go beyond the information immediately available.
Rachel is learning through her talk what to attend to, how to
say and how to mean.

One particularly interesting aspect of the intricacy of the
exchanges is the selection of the option [develop]. In
Example 6.15, when Rachel comments 'Look ... See? ... It's
all huffed in' the mother selects [develop] when she responds
by asking, 'But why why can the wolf blow houses down of
sticks? This option is selected by Rachel's mother on 29
occasions throughout their conversation, whereas in Paul's
mother's discourse it is not selected at all. Though Ashley's
mother selects it six times, in two of these cases it actually
follows his silence in response to a prior question.

Individual states of consciousness are constructed explicitly
in language much more frequently in Rachel's interaction than
is so for Ashley's and Paul's. The resources of prefacing
are, par excellence, linguistic means for building individual
points of view, and in these transcripts there is a clear
difference in the frequency of selection of [prefaced]. For
example, early in the discussion Rachel's mother asks her,
'Did you think it was straws like you drink out of?', and a
little later 'Do you think so?' and 'Why do you think bricks
are better?' In sum this feature is selected 12 times, and on
ten of these occasions it is specifically to Rachel's state of
consciousness that reference is made. There is also an
important co-patterning with the asking of questions, since
eight of these occasions are demands for information. In
contrast, the feature [prefaced] is selected only once in
Ashley's conversation, and in Paul's twice only. All three of
these messages are again concerned with what the children can
perceive.

The entailed questions, to be taken up further in Section 6.5,
are the following:

   i   are these linguistic behaviours merely idiosyncratic
         characteristics of these mothers, their relative
         'sensitivity' for example, or could they be
         constructed by supra-individual contextual features?

ii   if supra-individual contextual features are
     implicated, how are they to be theorized?

A comprehensive discussion of the typicality of these and
other aspects of interaction within the two social groups
follows in Chapter Seven. However, there are clearly
advantages in using these specific occasions to begin to
theorize some implications of differences in interaction
precisely because the mothers were reading stories which,
speaking informally, involved very similar 'content'. In the
following section I present an initial exploration of how the
observed differences might be interpreted within an SFL
conceptualization of context of situation.

6.5   Joint book-reading as situation-type

By drawing attention in Section 6.3 to many commonalities
between these occasions it was possible to argue that they do
represent, at one level of delicacy, tokens of the one
situation-type. They appear to derive, that is, from the same
contextual configuration up to a certain point in delicacy.
But the observations presented in Section 6.4 also suggest
that this perspective must be expanded by some other
description, since there is consistent evidence of semantic
variation between the interactive texts of the LAP pair and
the HAP instance.

The focus of this section is an initial exploration of how
such differences might be theorized, drawing on the discussion
in Chapter Four of Halliday's and Hasan's proposals for the
description of context of situation. One general advantage of
comparing these three transcripts is that contexts of
situation constructed in the object texts are so similar as
not to be of any major significance to this analysis. It also
happens that in all three dyads the conversation is closely
focussed on the object text, so the interactive text is a
rather unusual example of sustained discussion of the same
broad subject-matter.

Taking field as a point of departure in the contextual
descriptive stratum, the **referential domain** of the interactive
talk is derivative from the referential domain of the object
text, the fictive quasi human world of pigs, houses, wolves
and huffing and puffing. The other major source of reference
is, predictably, the mother and child themselves. Just
occasionally a child refers to the material situational
setting in which joint book-reading is taking place, as when
Paul asks his mother 'That's yours?', but these instances are
rare.

As one, partial description of the referential domain it is
possible to examine the signification which occurs through the
experiential features [effecting] and [element], since these
are obligatory choices dependent on [activity] and [being]
respectively. Obviously such a test by no means exhaustively
describes the referential domain, but nevertheless it does
productively describe the *range* of items which are available
to participate in configurations with other aspects of
referential signification.

The results of this analysis are presented in Figure 6.1. The
analysis shows that those classes of signification most
commonly chosen are the child (1), the mother (3), a fictive
character (5), non-character object text elements (7),
exophoric reference to a graphic feature (11). References to
the child and the mother are almost always in demands for
service, and there is very little departure from the
referential domain of the fictive world in the exchange of
information.

The selection of social activity, considered in terms of the
three specific sub-types described by Hasan is also very
similar. At a primary level of description it might be
represented as shared enjoyment of entertaining narrative, and
more delicately as an instructional activity between adult and

Figure 6.1   Frequency of categories of items occurring
                    as the options [effecting] or [element] in
                    the discussions of *The three little pigs*
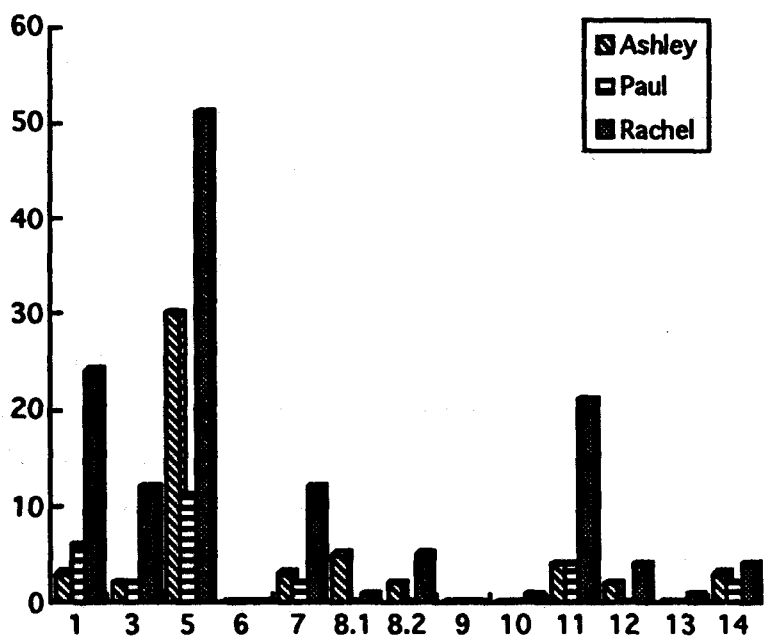
The numbers on the x axis of Figure 6.1 refer to the following categories of items introduced in Table 5.1, Chapter 5:

1	child	3	mother
5	character	6	other family member
7	non-character object text element	8.1	`we' inclusive
8.2	`we' exclusive	9	object text title
10	metalinguistic item	11	exophoric reference to graphic feature
12	extended text reference	13	unknown
14	other		

child. Examination of the whole of each transcript shows that virtually all of the talk is **reflection-based activity** in the sense Hasan has identified, which was discussed in Section 4.6.3 of Chapter Four. The only occasion of **relation-based** activity is the interaction quoted in Example 6.1, in which Rachel attempts to persuade her mother to read another story and her mother explains that it is too late to do so. The analysis points strongly to the conclusion that the differences between the interactive texts cannot properly be accounted for on these specific occasions by major differences in the extent to which the three general types of social activity contribute to the session.

Using the mothers' statements about what they mainly wish to achieve by engaging in the activity, the **local goal orientation** of the occasions also appears to be very similar. All three mothers stated that one of their major purposes was to provide an enjoyable activity for their children. Both Paul's and Rachel's mothers also nominated creating an interest in reading for the child as an important long-term goal, as it was for Ashley's mother judging from her conversations with me. Additionally, all the mothers were concerned to prepare the child for entry to school literacy.

From the perspective of **mode**, there is little difference between the specific contexts of situation. In the three contexts language is obviously constitutive, the medium is spoken, the channel is aural and there is process sharing in the development of the texts.

From the perspective of **tenor**, the **social distance** is minimal in all three cases - there is no suggestion of reserve in the interaction or of lack of a longstanding personal intersubjectivity. The **agentive role** is largely with the mothers, as has been shown partly through an analysis of the distribution of demands for information, though all three children do exercise some degree of agency at various phases of the talk.

A particularly interesting (and complex) feature is the **social institutional status** of the mothers. Obviously they are all 'mothers' and there are, equally obviously, many aspects of this status which are equivalent. At the crudest level the equivalence is indicated by the legal entitlements and obligations of these three women as mothers. But, as the introductory discussion to this chapter has attempted to show, there are also important and relevant differences in their locations in social formations with respect to social institutional status, and these contribute to differences in their socially constructed roles as mothers. This is to argue that the social category of 'mother' is non-equivalent between the social groups, and that it is primarily (though not exclusively) determined by the location of the family in relations in the social division of labour.

Using Hasan's concept of the permeability of contextual variables, it is then possible to argue that relevant conditions are established for two field variables, social activity: reflection-based activity and supra-local goal orientations to be variantly realized in the semantic choices made in the interaction. That is, aspects of the interactions represent variant realizations of the *same* contextual variables.

Though the selection of social activity is reflection-based activity in all three cases, there is variance in its linguistic realization between the LAP and HAP mothers. Similarly, though a significant long-term goal of joint book-reading is to prepare the child for school entry, this appears to be variantly realized in the interactive texts. The contextual configuration, that is to say, 'has' a potential for variant linguistic realization and these possibilities are taken up systematically and differentially by the LAP and HAP mothers. The key contextual feature through which the potential for variant realizations is mediated is the social institutional status of the mothers.

There appear to be different principles governing the
relevance of the production of various kinds of meanings in
these sessions. Here I will draw attention to some of these
principles, and turn to the more general problem of
interpreting relations between the principles in Chapter
Eight, following a discussion of results for the full data
set.

One principle which appears to differentiate the HAP and LAP
conversations is the contextual relevance of explicating bases
of judgement. For example, to both Ashley and Rachel it is
obvious that stick houses blow down and brick houses do not.
Therefore brick houses are to be preferred. Almost certainly
it is also commonsense knowledge to Paul since he, like the
other two, seems to have no trouble in understanding the plot.
For Rachel's mother, though, reflection-based activity *also*
requires that the information on which this understanding is
based is sometimes formulated explicitly in language, even
though this is difficult for Rachel to achieve at her age.
The significance of her attempt (and presumably very many
other occasions of similar interaction) for the development of
a particular literate subjectivity lies not so much in whether
she actually was able to give a viable explanation. It is
rather that she was learning a principle regulating
interaction which is crucial for success in the more advanced
stages of schooling. This is the principle of explicitly
justifying the grounds on which assertions about states of
affairs are made. For Rachel's mother it is important that
the child learns to explicate *bases of judgement*, as well as
to understand the plot relations.

Such an orientation to ways of meaning is clearly evident in
an excerpt, included as Example 6.16, in which Rachel and her
mother talk about whether a figure in an illustration is a
wolf or a puppy dog. Rachel knows it is a wolf, so she has no
problem with understanding the narrative development. But,
crucially, she has to say how she knows. The episode is
similar to the light teasing which some mothers employ to

check the child's understanding of correct labels, to which De Loache (1984:90) drew attention, except that here the mother also requires Rachel to reveal the basis of her knowledge.

Example 6.16

Mother:	(READING) So slap, slosh, slap away he worked laying bricks and smoothing mortar between them.
	What's that?
Rachel:	A wolf.
Mother:	Isn't it a puppy dog?
Rachel:	It's a wolf.
Mother:	You sure?
Rachel:	Look at his sharp teeth ... that doesn't look like ... Look at it. See it standing up?
Mother:	What's standing up?
Rachel:	Look.
Mother:	Do wolves walk on their back legs, do they?
Rachel:	Yes.
Mother:	Oh. Why don't they walk on four legs like a puppy dog?
Rachel:	'Cause they they don't have they don't they don't have um they don't have dogs or things the same ... only all of the dogs.
Mother:	Mm?
Rachel:	Only all of the dogs.
Mother:	They look like a dog's head.
Rachel:	No. Look at ... They look like their ears.
Mother:	Yeah, they've got ears like a dog. Do wolves only walk on their back legs, do they?
Rachel:	They haven't got that big mouth.
Mother:	Dogs do. And they've got sharp teeth like that.
Rachel:	I know. Well they ... well they well they don't ... they don't ... they don't eat they don't eat pigs.
Mother:	Oh I see.
Rachel:	They eat bones. They have bones.
Mother:	Dogs eat bones and wolves eat pigs. Is that right?
	(RESUMING READING) "Ha, ha, ha," laughed the first little pig

Learning the standard taxonomic relations between dogs and wolves seems of relatively minor importance in comparison with the formulation of some explicit justification for the original answer (cf. Tizard and Hughes, 1984:108ff). It is as though Rachel doesn't have to be right here, she just has to learn to reason explicitly. It is a conversational episode which Paul and Ashley would almost certainly find very puzzling.

Another differentiating principle is the contextual relevance of using orders of meaning and relation beyond the specific instance explicitly. The moment in which Rachel's mother introduces an allusion to the biblical metaphor of wolves in

sheep's clothing is apposite. Using the instance of a simple, playful illustration the mother draws in a discursive resource at first glance somewhat remote from conversation with a four-year-old, and in doing so extends for her the range of the text's relations. But the pedagogic principle of showing a child the potential of a text to allude to other texts, important as it is in itself for school success, is significant for other reasons. It also an instance of use of an orientation to orders of meaning and relation beyond the local, particular instance and, consequentially, an opportunity for Rachel to learn this orientation. In this sense the moment has a double significance: both as interpretive practice in itself, a way of saying and meaning commonly used in a type of pedagogic discourse; and as an abstract and powerful way of meaning commonly used by only some fraction of the population.

Consistent with this mode of argument, different principles appear to regulate the relevance of producing individuated meanings. This difference is evident in the covariation of patterns of demands for information and metarepresentations of states of consciousness. Rachel, for example, is frequently asked to reveal what she as an individual thinks. Paul and Ashley are never asked to do so in this talk. To use an evocative term from Bernstein's early writing, Rachel's conversation with her mother implicates an orientation to the individuation of her *person*.

6.6   Summary

There have been two purposes for this discussion. The first, rather practical purpose was to analyse patterns of interaction in naturally occurring contexts in which the same story was read to children, to gain a first perspective on variable interactive practices possibly associated with families' position in social formations.

The second purpose was more theoretical. Beginning from some relevant detail of the situations of the three families, the

discussion has attempted to show how the three contexts of situation which the interactive texts realize are usefully regarded as instantiations of a type of cultural practice, but also to argue that between the instance and the culture lies the intervening variable of social stratification which constrains the realization of contextual variables in text. These texts are then importantly different means of semiotic mediation through which children's orientation to literacy is likely to be built.

From the perspective of situation-type these are instances of the one contextual configuration. From the perspective of the semantic stratum they are variant realizations of the same general set of contextual variables. The problem then is to provide a theoretically well-motivated account of why the variant forms of realization might occur in association with position in social class formations. Since the problem is a semantic one some principle which predicts differences in orders of meaning located within social class practices is required. The interpretive problem will be considered at some length in Chapter Eight, following a presentation of analysis results for the whole data set.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Results of the Message Semantic Analysis of the Interactive Text

7.1 Introduction

A total of 15,337 interactive messages was analysed through the semantic networks presented in Appendix 6, selected fragments of which were discussed in Chapter Five. This chapter presents results of the analyses.

The features which will be of particular interest are:

i   those which, described in some reasonably comparable form, have been the focus of major interest in previous research;

ii   sets of relevant features selected from those which Hasan and her colleagues (eg, Hasan, 1989, 1991b, 1992a; Hasan and Cloran, 1990) have found to load significantly on the principal components describing variance in their data;

iii   those which have not been widely discussed in previous research but which are of particular theoretical interest in joint book-reading as a context for literacy learning.

7.2   Statistical description of the results of the linguistic analysis

The statistical technique used to examine the results of the linguistic analyses was a test of significance of difference between median scores. Fisher's Exact Test was used, avoiding the requirement that the data be distributed in equal intervals, as is so for a more commonly used test such as Mann-Whitney. Differences between medians rather than means were examined in order to obviate the effects of extreme scores, where for example a large amount of interactive text in the one dyad might create an environment in which the volume of messages in itself might result in certain semantic

features occurring more frequently than they might in another briefer interactive text.

Use of statistical comparison is made not so much to determine actual significance levels, but as an heuristic device to consider the status of observed differences in configurations of semantic features. Given the relatively small number of cases a significance level of $p<.025$ is set as the point below which results will be considered probably to be implicated in linguistically important variation. This strategy also assists in lessening the possibility of Type 1 error in a situation where a large number of analyses of features is to be undertaken.

Statistical comparisons between the family and school data sets were not possible since the general constraints on the frequency of occurrence of semantic features could not be assumed, for statistical purposes, to be the same in the two environments. However, this restriction does not prevent comparisons of *tendencies* to select sets of semantic features between the two family and school groups. The central question in these comparisons will be: if x semantic features, or constellation of features, appear to be implicated in variation in linguistic interaction between the two family social groups, is there any evidence that x (constellation of) features achieves prominence in linguistic interaction in joint book-reading in Kindergarten classroom discourse?

A valuable critical perspective on any statistically significant differences in this data can be achieved through comparisons with results from Hasan's study, since the two data sets are quite independent. A fairly high degree of consistency between the linguistic features implicated in variation would be anticipated, especially with respect to linguistic resources for individuation of children's consciousness, though of course some differences from these

results might also be anticipated as register-specific aspects of joint book-reading.

On occasion it has also been useful to examine the distribution of individual data to clarify the findings from the comparison of medians. Where this level of detail is investigated the information is reported as a graph of the frequencies across individual dyads.

Where statistically significant findings have emerged from the family data, the median frequency of the occurrence of the feature per lesson in the school data has been described, in order to test the extent of contribution of the significantly different features to school literacy discourse during the children's first school term. These frequencies are for individual lessons involving joint book-reading, and are compared with medians for four sessions in the family data.

For economy in the subsequent discussion it is useful to give the general finding that no significant differences were found between the sets of classroom discourse data in the two social locations. There appears to be no statistically significant difference which is associated with the social area location of the schools on features relevant to this discussion. Further, this finding is parallel to those in Hasan's project. It has therefore been most useful to collapse the two sets of classroom discourse data and describe median frequencies of features in the interactive talk for the whole set, thus providing twenty examples of classroom discourse across which comparisons with the family data could be made.

7.3 The extent of object text reading in the two social groups

The first issue to be addressed was the basic one of the extent of object text reading in the two social groups.

The total number of object text messages read by mothers was very similar, though mothers were not constrained by the

project instructions to choose any particular length or type of text. This finding is perhaps not very surprising given the age of the children and the conventions of publishing which determine fairly standard lengths of text for this age group. Some mothers did, of course, read more than one text per session, but those who did so tended to be distributed evenly between the two social groups. Table 7.1 presents the totals of object text messages read during the four joint book-reading sessions for each mother-child dyad.

Table 7.1   Total number of object text messages read by mother-child dyads in four joint book-reading sessions

LAP Social Group Child's Name	Total	HAP Social Group Child's Name	Total
Anthony	117	John	231
Philip	189	Simon	288
Wayne	281	Stephen	304
Angela	459	Ben	346
Paul	456	Glenn	220
Ashley	562	Michael	354
Rhonda	652	Emily	552
Dennis	763	Rachel	568
Janet	764	Andrew	692
Robin	796	James	1261
Total	5039		4816

The mean number of object text messages read is similar in the two social groups: for the LAP group it is 503.9 and for the HAP 481.6. Interestingly, the median indicates a greater difference, with the LAP frequency of 510.5 a good deal higher than the HAP of 350.0. However this difference is not statistically significant (p<.6563). The HAP frequencies are distributed across a larger range, from 231 to 1261, in comparison with the LAP range from 117 to 796. For both groups the dyad with the highest frequency of object text messages is not that with the highest number of interactive text messages. Neither is the dyad with lowest object text message frequency the same as that with the lowest interactive text frequency. Clearly the extent of talk around a text is not directly related to the amount of object text read in a session. Therefore, any differences between median

frequencies for the selection of semantic features cannot be explained as a function of the *extent* of object text reading.

In the classroom discourse data the extent of object text reading was also found to be quite similar for the two data sets. Table 7.2 presents the frequencies for each class in each location. (Two K classes participated in each location. The locations are identified by number in the left column for each of the social locations, and the individual class in the adjacent column.)

Table 7.2   Total number of object text messages read within each school class

LAP Social Group   HAP Social Group

School Location	K Class	Total	School Location	K Class	Total
1	1	35	1	1	165
	2	46		2	55
2	1	3[1]	2	1	38
	2	133		2	56
3	1	27	3	1	27
	2	145		2	23
4	1	133	4	1	135
	2	56		2	52
5	1	22	5	1	118
	2	38		2	21
Total		638			690

The means are again remarkably similar: for the LAP social area schools, 63.8 and for the HAP, 69.0. The medians vary somewhat more, (42 to 53.5 respectively) but even so it is not a significant difference for a lesson usually extending over approximately 30 minutes. Nor is the difference between medians statistically significant ($p < .6563$). Interestingly, there is a substantial range in the extent of object text reading in both social locations.

---

[1]   In this lesson the teacher discussed the picture book *Rosie's walk* (Hutchins, 1968) with the class, and though she commenced reading the language she did not continue to do so. She did, however, read the final message of the object text.

7.4 Interaction during joint book-reading between mothers and children

A comparison of the total number of interactive linguistic messages exchanged in joint book-reading sessions is of primary interest. Table 7.3 presents the results of this analysis for totals of punctuative and progressive messages, and Table 7.4 the medians of the distributions for the two social groups.

Table 7.3   Total mother-child interactive messages

LAP Social Group				HAP Social Group			
Child	Punct	Prog	Total	Child	Punct	Prog	Total
Philip	2	3	5	Glenn	20	133	153
Angela	12	35	47	John	49	125	174
Dennis	7	47	54	Andrew	126	243	369
Anthony	36	28	64	Ben	72	335	407
Paul	40	162	202	Simon	61	374	435
Ashley	59	188	247	Michael	98	593	691
Robin	65	198	263	James	84	649	733
Wayne	62	214	276	Stephen	93	663	756
Rhonda	96	281	377	Emily	102	791	893
Janet	58	425	483	Rachel	318	1329	1647
Totals	437	1581	2018		1023	5235	6258

Table 7.4   Median frequencies of mother-child interactive messages

Social Group	Punctuative Median	Progressive Median	Total Median
LAP	49.0	175.0	224.5
HAP	88.5	483.0	563.0

There is a statistically significant difference between the median scores for total interactive messages and for progressive messages ($p < .0230$ in each case). The difference between the median scores for punctuative messages is not significant ($p < .1789$). Despite the similarity of extent of object text reading the total number of interactive messages exchanged by the HAP group is more than 300% greater than for the LAP group. This percentage difference also holds for the

total number of progressive messages exchanged. The median scores for total interactive messages differ by approximately 250%, and for the progressive messages by 275% ca.

Underscoring this difference is the fact that the HAP dyad transcripts selected for intensive analysis were those which approximated the mean number of interactive messages for each dyad (see Chapter Three, Section 3.13), whereas for the LAP social group it was the four transcripts with the highest number of interactive messages.

It is also important to emphasise, however, that even though there is a significant difference between the social groups extensive linguistic interaction does nevertheless occur in the LAP social group around object text for most dyads. The results do *not* imply some general lack of linguistic interaction since, typically, mothers and children in this group exchange about 50 messages per joint book-reading session.

In both the LAP and HAP groups there is a substantial difference between the highest and lowest frequencies. In the LAP group Philip and his mother exchange a total of five messages across the four sessions, while Janet and her mother exchange 483 messages, and Rhonda and her mother 377. In Philip's case it is useful to note in passing an aspect of the manner of reading. Philip's mother appears to read with pronounced attention to tone contours, perhaps suggesting a particular interest in helping Philip learn about this aspect of the patterning of written language. Consistent with this interpretation, she does not to take up any of Philip's initiatives in commenting on the object text.

In the LAP group the results for Janet and Rhonda are strikingly different from the other eight dyads. In subsequent analyses it will prove useful to monitor specific results for these dyads in relation to medians for both the

HAP and LAP group, to ascertain the extent to which they approximate the HAP central tendency.

For the HAP group there is also a substantial range in totals, from Glenn with a total of 153 interactive messages and John with 174, to Rachel with 1647. The two lowest totals fall a little below the median for the LAP group, though the next in order, Andrew at 369, is more than one and a half times greater than the LAP median so despite the range there is a very substantial general difference between the two groups. Nevertheless, this extent of intra-group variance in the HAP group will again be worth considering further. Instances of intra-group variance will be briefly remarked on in subsequent sections and more substantially discussed in Section 7.10.

The school class groups, as would be expected, tend to engage in sustained discussion of object text, though there is considerable variation across the individual classes. Table 7.5 presents the number of interactive messages for each lesson, and Table 7.6 the median frequencies.

Table 7.5   Total school class interactive messages

LAP Social Location				HAP Social Location			
School Class	Punct	Prog	Total	School Class	Punct	Prog	Total
1.1	112	429	541	6.1	63	95	158
1.2	149	341	490	6.2	87	331	418
2.1	81	365	446	7.1	172	361	533
2.2	102	389	491	7.2	11	118	129
3.1	50	72	122	8.1	47	126	173
3.2	64	87	151	8.2	91	479	570
4.1	42	103	145	9.1	165	306	471
4.2	48	161	209	9.2	128	382	510
5.1	47	397	444	10.1	87	481	568
5.2	99	297	396	10.2	48	48	96
Totals	794	2641	3435		899	2727	3626

Table 7.6　Median frequencies of school class interactive messages

| Social Group	Punctuative Median	Progressive Median	Total Median
LAP location School classes	72.5	319.0	420.0
HAP location School classes	87.0	318.5	444.5

Strikingly, there is only 0.5 difference between the medians for progressive messages in the two school locations.

7.5　Initiating interaction: children

The frequency with which children initiated interaction during joint book-reading is a useful indicator of the degree of their active involvement in the sessions.　Given the difference in extent of interaction it might be concluded, as is often the case in pedagogical discussions, that the LAP children are relatively less interested in the object texts, or even perhaps that they demonstrate much less initiative in linguistic interaction about the meanings of books.

It is useful therefore to enquire into the frequency of selection of [initiate] by child speakers.　The median frequency is 15 for each of the two social groups, so the suggestion of a relative passivity of the LAP group children can be rejected with confidence.　Figure 7.1 presents a graph of the frequencies of selection of the semantic feature [initiate] by individual children in the two social groups.

Figure 7.1   **Frequencies of [initiate]: individual children**
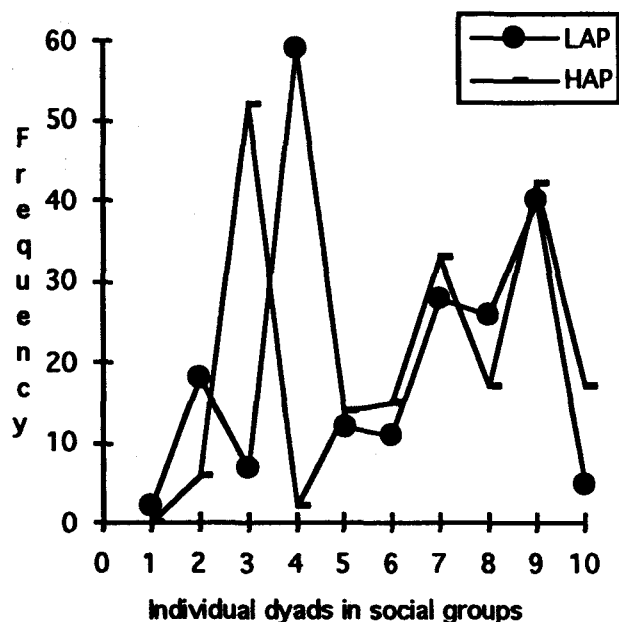
Rhonda (at LAP Case 4 on the x-axis) initiates interaction more frequently than any other child, and Robin (LAP Case 9), Ashley (LAP Case 7) and Paul (LAP Case 8) also commence interactive talk more often than the majority of HAP children. In fact the frequencies for all the LAP children except Philip (LAP Case 1) lie within the range spanned by those for the HAP children. Simon (HAP Case 1) and Ben (HAP Case 4) fall below nine of the LAP children, and Stephen (HAP Case 2) is below eight of them. It will be seen subsequently that the pattern of these distributions is quite different from those for other features, strongly suggesting that taking initiative to begin interaction is not closely associated with the selection of other significantly different meanings.

Though the HAP children did tend to initiate interaction specifically by making a demand for information somewhat more frequently than the LAP children, the result was not significantly different. The median frequency for selection of [initiate;demand;information] was 2.00 for the LAP children, and 6.00 for the HAP group (p<.1789).

7.6   Demands for information

Since Ninio and Bruner's pioneering research on changes in a
mother's questioning as the child's understanding of literacy
developed, questions during interaction have been at the
centre of previous research in this field. They have assumed
particular importance in descriptions of differences in
literate practice within different social formations, as well
as more generally in studies of variation in mother-child
interaction.

A semantic network analysis of messages enables a description
of types of questions, or more precisely, demands for
information in terms of specific semantic features dependent
on the primary system [confirm] versus [apprize], and also the
co-selection of these features with others such as options
dependent on [prefaced]. In this section an initial
comparison will be made between frequencies with which various
types of questions themselves are selected, then in subsequent
sections further comparisons of questions with simultaneously
selected features will be presented.

7.6.1   Mothers' demands for information

Almost all mothers asked questions of their children during
the interactions. No significant difference between the
social groups was found in the total number of demands for
information made by mothers. However, when the selection of
more delicate options was examined, significant differences
were found in some options dependent on [apprize], and for one
option dependent on [confirm]. Table 7.7 presents median
frequencies and levels of significance for these features.

Table 7.7   Median frequencies of selection of some types of
             demands for information in the two social groups

Semantic Option	Social Group		Probability
	LAP	HAP	
[demand;information:confirm:]			
[check]	0.5	5.5	0.0055
[reassure]	3.5	26.5	0.6563
[probe]	0	0	1.0
[ask]	10.5	28.0	0.1789
[demand;information:apprize:]			
[explain]	0	4.5	0.023
[circumstance]	0	5.0	0.0055
[event]	1.5	6.0	0.1789
[actant:specific]	2.5	5.5	0.6563
[actant:nonspecific]	6.0	16.0	0.0198

The option [explain] is selected significantly more frequently
by the HAP mothers (p<.023). Selection of this feature is
exemplified in a question James' mother asked him while they
were reading *The magic pudding*: 'Why do you think Bill got in
such a rage?' In the LAP group only Janet's and Rhonda's
mothers select the feature, while in the HAP group eight of
the ten mothers select it at least once.

The option [circumstance] is also selected significantly more
frequently by the HAP mothers (p<.0055). In this data the
type of demand frequently required the child to specify
information about the location of a character or feature of
the setting in a visual image, as when Emily's mother asked
'Where's Hannah?', and Emily replied 'Hannah? She's the big
girl, isn't she?'. The type of question is interesting in
that, though in a sense it is closely related to questions
which require the child to label object text features, it is

somewhat more complex in that it assumes prior knowledge of the visual representation and requires the child to locate a narrative figure *in relation to* other figures in the image.

Consistent with this finding, [non-specific actant] was also selected significantly more often by the HAP group (p<.0198). However, the difference for [specific actant] was not statistically significant, nor was the difference for [event].

The option [check] is the only one of those dependent on [confirm] to emerge as significantly different (p<.0055). Only half of the LAP mothers select the option at all during the four occasions of reading, but in the HAP group all except Glenn's mother do so. A discussion between Michael and his mother about some troubles at the Early Childhood Centre provides a typical example.

Example 7.1

Mh:	01	Did you cry at kindy
	02	when you hurt your foot?
Cd:	03	No.
Mh:	04	So it was a bit sore
	05	but it wasn't quite sore enough to make you cry?
Cd:	06	No.
Mh:	07	Dear me.

Message 05 exemplifies the selection of [confirm:enquire: check]. The difference between the social groups appears to be associated with a broader characteristic of the HAP group of requiring children to expand on a comment, either about an object text feature or about some aspect of individual experience, an issue further addressed in Section 7.6.2.
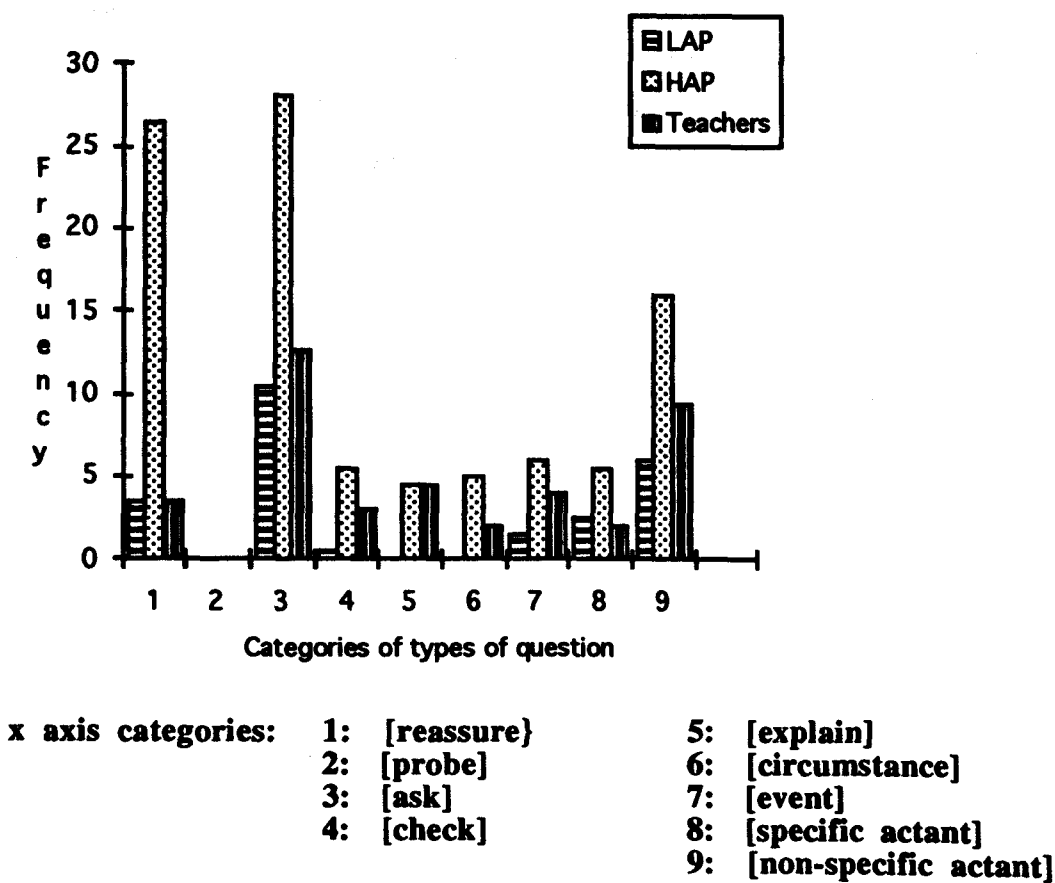
The medians for the classroom data show that all of the options included in Table 7.7 make some contribution to classroom discourse. Comparisons of the family and school medians are reported as a graph in Figure 7.2.

The sharpest contrast appears to be on the feature [explain], where the median frequency per individual lesson is 4.5, a prominence which is not typical of the LAP families.

Recalling that the school median frequency is for an individual lesson, [non-specific actant] appears also to be comparatively more similar to the HAP practice.

Though the median scores for [reassure] appear very different, there is considerable variance in individual dyad scores for both the LAP and the HAP groups, resulting in the statistically non-significant findings. (The median for all the family data on this option is 15.) The extent of variance for the frequencies of [ask] in the two groups also accounts for the non-significant finding, though it can be seen from Figure 7.2 that this option did play an important, if not clearly contrastive, part in classroom discourse.

Figure 7.2   Median frequency of mothers' and teachers' selection of some types of questions

x axis categories: 1: [reassure}   5: [explain]
                      2: [probe]   6: [circumstance]
                      3: [ask]   7: [event]
                      4: [check]   8: [specific actant]
                                             9: [non-specific actant]

7.6.2 Selection of [demand;information;follow:maintain topic:develop]

One specific function of mothers' questions is to expand children's responses in some way, to go beyond a first specific comment by requiring children to expand a comment. They do so by selecting the feature [develop]. The option is dependent on simultaneous prior selection of [demand; information] and [follow:maintain topic]. In the excerpt presented as Example 7.2, Michael's mother selects the option in Messages 04 and 06.

Example 7.2

Mh: So he got ready to go to camp.   He packed his
     01   What would you pack ...
     02   if you were going away to camp?
Cd: 03   Lots of toys.
Mh: 04   And what *else?
Cd: 05   *And that's all.
Mh: 06   What would you wear?

On this feature there was a marked contrast between the social groups. For the LAP group the median frequency was 7.00, and for the HAP group 58.50 (p<.023). For the school data the median frequency was 24.50 per individual lesson, so the school practice is again much more closely approximated by the typical HAP practice.

Since the variation on this feature is so stark it is interesting to consider the distribution of the frequencies within the social groups. Figure 7.3 presents this information for individual dyads.

Figure 7.3   Median frequencies of selection of [develop] by individual dyads in the two social groups

Individual dyads in social groups
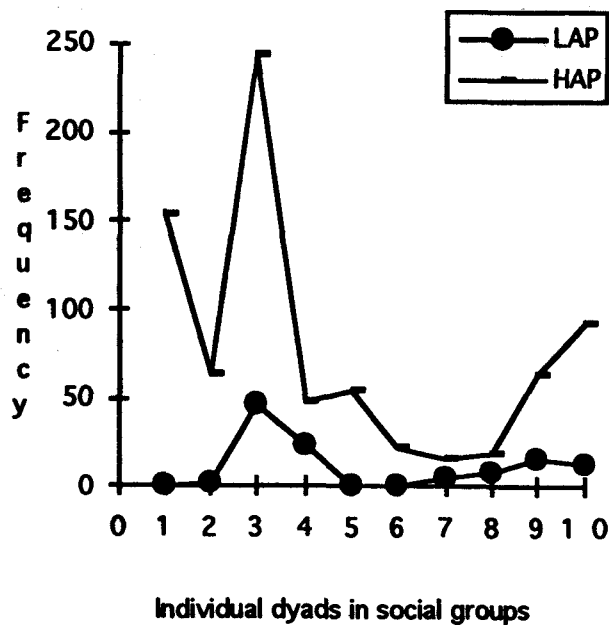
All mothers in the HAP group select this feature, and for most of them it is used quite frequently in each session.   The remarkable exceptions are John's, Andrew's and Glenn's mothers, respectively Cases 6, 7 and 8, for whom the frequencies fall well within the LAP range.   They are not without experience of this aspect of discourse, but on this evidence unlikely to be as familiar with it as the rest of the HAP children.   For the LAP group it is only Janet's and Rhonda's mothers (Cases 2 and 3) who select the feature with a frequency comparable to the HAP dyads.   (The frequency for Robin and her mother (Case 9) falls at the bottom of the HAP range.)   In the K classroom discourse the feature is selected frequently by most teachers: the median is 24.5, and the range between 6 and 73 messages.

The result is interesting theoretically since it suggests that the HAP mothers and the teachers both seek to extend children's talk beyond the local and specific instance of the object text, to develop a form of literate practice in which explicit linguistic reasoning about written text is valued.

The reasoning does not necessarily take the form of an explanation - it can sometimes simply be a comment on a further aspect of the object text instance. Nevertheless the interaction, because of the semantic function of the question following the child's initial response, is always extended beyond the first, specific observation. With a larger body of data it would be both possible and theoretically useful to extend the delicacy of the description by distinguishing between types of demands for information. However, this was clearly not possible given the small number of instances occurring in the LAP data set.

### 7.6.3 Children's demands for information

Children's questions have been a major focus of research interest in the emergent literacy field, and in studies of social class differences in language use. In pedagogical literature children are almost stereotypically represented as actively enquiring about characters and events in narrative text in particular.

This data was examined, first, to ascertain whether there were significant differences between the median frequencies of children's questions. All except two children asked questions at some point during the sessions, but there was a clear difference between the medians for the two groups. For the LAP group the median frequency was 5.00, and for the HAP group 18.00 (p<.0011). As a consequence the data was probed to a further level of delicacy, in order to examine the medians for children's selection of the features [confirm] and [apprize].

For [confirm] there was, again, a significant difference: the LAP group median was 1.50 and the HAP 10.50 (p<.023). Though the median figures are quite small it is notable from the raw frequency data, presented in graph form in Figure 7.4, that the difference tends to be sustained across individual dyads. The frequencies for Rhonda (Case 4) and Ashley (Case 8) fall at the top of the LAP range, and those for three HAP children

fall below them, but these three frequencies are themselves higher than for the other LAP children.

Figure 7.4   Frequencies of [confirm] in children's questions

Individual dyads in social groups
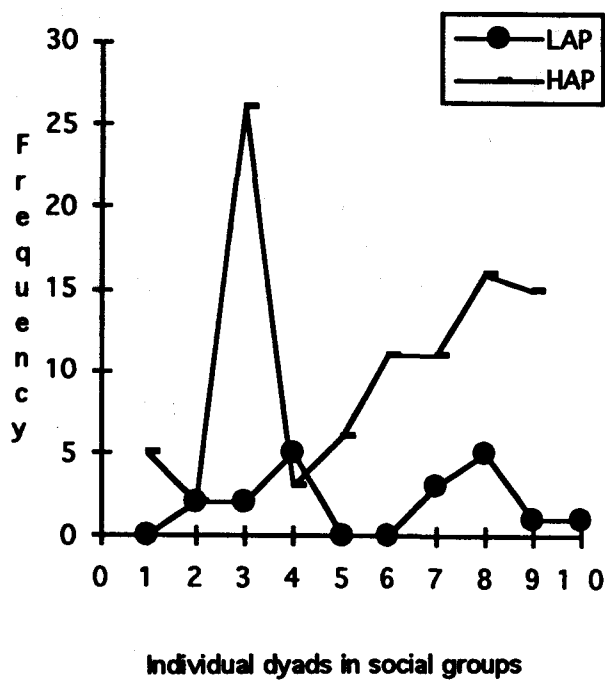
There was also a significant difference for [apprize], where the LAP median frequency was 3.00 and the HAP 8.50, (p<.0011). The raw frequency difference is consistent across the dyads, with only one HAP dyad falling within the LAP range, though in this case there is much more variation in the frequency for the LAP children. Figure 7.5 presents a graph of this raw frequency data.

Figure 7.5   Frequencies of [apprize] in children's questions

Individual dyads in social groups
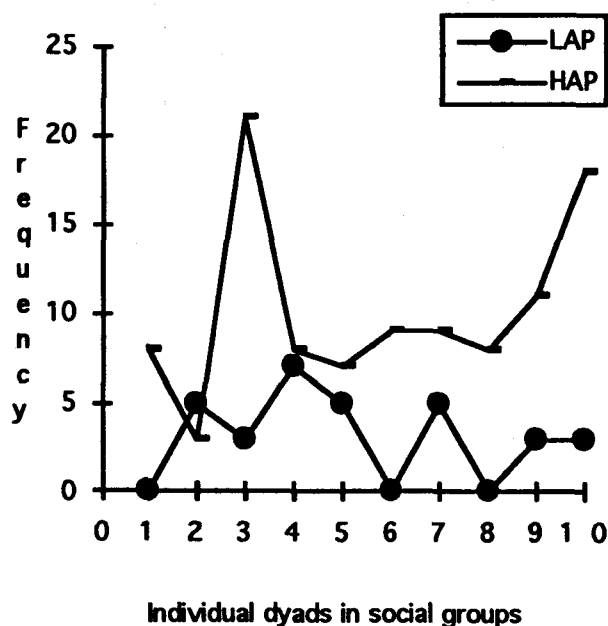
Though it was technically possible to pursue differences to a greater level of delicacy by examining children's selection from systems dependent on [confirm] and [apprize], the very low frequencies for selection of these more delicate features in the LAP group made this comparison fruitless.

In the classroom discourse there were few questions asked by children, consistent with results in the work of previous scholars. The median frequency for both types of questions was 2.00, and for both [confirm] and [apprize] it was 1.00. If children in the two social groups enter school with variable experiences in asking questions in joint book-reading, it is not likely to impact directly on school literacy learning. However, Heath's finding (1983) that some effects of difference in home and school literate traditions between Roadville and Gateway did not appear until much later in a child's school experience may be apposite to these results, since it is in the more advanced stages of schooling such experience would be particularly relevant.

7.7   Prefacing of messages

A range of perspectives will be taken on the selection of the
feature [prefaced] and its dependent sub-systems, considering
differences in the deployment of various features by the two
social groups. In particular, selection of the features
[prefaced:interpersonal:possibility] and [prefaced:
experiential:idea:knowledge] will be scrutinised in some
detail. Additionally, the simultaneous selection of
[prefaced] and demands for information will be examined since
in the contexts of everyday talk between mothers and children
studied by Hasan and her colleagues the prefacing of questions
was implicated in the observed variance between the social
groups (Hasan, 1991b). The simultaneous selection of
[prefaced] with [demand;information] is exemplified in Example
7.3. James and his mother were discussing an event in *The
magic pudding.*

Example 7.3

Mh: (T01) For you was both singing out 'Yoo heave ho' for half an hour (T02) and
          him trying to hold on to Bill's beard."
   01   Who do you think's got the right story?
   02   The pudding reckons they pushed him off.
   03   They think that he fell off.
   04   Who do you think's got the right story?
Cd: 05 Pudding.
Mh: (LAUGHS)
   06   I think you might be right.

All the interactive messages in this stretch select
[prefaced]. (In 05 it is very likely to be taken as an
ellipsed element.) Messages 01 and 04 are prefaced demands
for information.

From an initial comparison of total prefaced messages,
selected by both speakers, it was clear that there was likely
to be variation in this semantic region for more delicate
options. On this very general contrast there was a
significant difference between the medians: for the LAP group
the median frequency was 7.00, and for the HAP group it was
51.00 (p<.023). In the classroom discourse data the feature
was selected at some point by all except one teacher, and the
median frequency per lesson was 35.00.

7.7.1   The linguistic construction of subjective states of consciousness

The extent of the difference in total justified further
probing of the more specific means through which individual
points of view were constructed. From the network fragment
presented in Figure 5.2 (See Chapter Five), it is clear that
there is a variety of resources available for this purpose.
One particularly interesting resource for this project is that
through which mothers implicated some aspect of the child's
subjective state of consciousness in their talk. Formally,
this is the feature [prefaced:subjective:other:child],
selected by the mother. In Example 7.3 Messages 01 and 04 are
examples of this choice. Amongst the LAP group seven of the
ten mothers selected this feature on some occasion, and in the
HAP group nine of the ten, so its use was widely distributed
in both social groups.

Despite this overall scope of use there was a significant
difference between the median frequencies: the median for the
LAP group was 2.50 and for the HAP group 14.50 (p<.023).

Analysis of the classroom discourse again shows that this was
a resource teachers frequently selected, despite some
diversity across individual K groups. The median frequency
per lesson was 9.50.

The frequencies of a related feature, children's selection of
[prefaced:self:exclusive] were also compared. Informally
these are messages in which the children construct a
representation of their own subjective states of
consciousness. When Emily and her mother were reading *The
great Wungle-Bungle aerial expedition*, for example, the mother
commented 'He's playing a didgeridoo' and Emily replied,
selecting this feature, 'I wish I had a didgeridoo'. For this
feature the medians for the LAP and HAP groups were 2.00 and
9.50 respectively, but the results were not significant at the
.025 criterion level.

7.7.2 Prefacing messages through some experiential and interpersonal resources

Selection of options dependent on the system [prefaced: interpersonal] versus [prefaced:experiential] were examined. Of these resources [prefaced:interpersonal:nonattitudinal: modal] and [prefaced:experiential:idea:knowledge] were by far the most important. Other features were selected only infrequently in both groups and are not further discussed. The selection of [prefaced:interpersonal:nonattitudinal:modal] is exemplified by a message such as a mother's comment, '<u>I think</u> he's using it as a paintbrush', and [prefaced: experiential:idea:knowledge] by one such as '<u>He didn't know</u> how they hooked on'.

Taking first a comparison of the frequency of selection of [prefaced:interpersonal:nonattitudinal:modal] by either mother or child, there was a significant difference. The LAP median was 0.50 and the HAP 21.00 (p<.023). The feature was also quite extensively implicated in classroom discourse, where the median frequency of selection by either category of speaker was 10.00 per lesson.

More specifically with respect to the mothers' speech, the selection of this feature was again significantly different between the two social groups. For the LAP group the median frequency was 0.50 and the HAP 18.00 (p<.023). In classroom discourse the feature was prominent in the teachers' speech, where the median frequency was 7.00

In the children's speech the feature was not selected so frequently but nevertheless there was again a significant difference between the medians for the two social groups. No LAP child selected the feature, but the median for the HAP group was 1.5 (p<.023). Six of the ten HAP children selected the feature at some point in the interaction. In the classroom discourse the median frequency of selection was 2.00 occasions per lesson.

A further interesting aspect of the mothers' speech was the
potential for the simultaneous selection of [prefaced:
interpersonal:nonattitudinal:modal] with demands for
information. Initially the total for all types of demands for
information was tested and, since the results were
significant, further analyses were completed on the more
delicate options [confirm] and [apprize]. Table 7.8 presents
the details of these data. (A comparison of selection of this
feature in the children's speech was not made since no child
selected it.)

Table 7.8   Median frequencies for mothers' selection of
               [prefaced:interpersonal:nonattitudinal:modal;
               demand;information] with the options [confirm]
               and [apprize]

Social Group	Median Frequencies		
	Total	[confirm]	[apprize]
LAP	0.50	0.00	0.00
HAP	7.00	4.00	4.50
probability	0.023	0.0698	0.0198

For the total of both types of demands for information and for
[apprize], there is a significant difference between the
median frequencies. Given the relatively low frequencies and
the stringency of the significance test, it seems
inappropriate to attach any particular importance to the
different significance levels occurring for [confirm] and
[apprize].

In classroom discourse the configuration of features did
appear to play some role, even for children in their first
school term. The median frequency for prefacing of all types
of demands for information was 4.50, and for [confirm] 2.5 and
[apprize] 1.5. The highest total for both types of questions
for a K class was 39, and in seven of the 20 classes the
configuration of features is selected on more than ten
occasions in the one lesson. Conversely, there were six
classes in which the frequency was either one or zero.

The other most frequently selected feature within this region
was [prefaced:experiential:idea:knowledge]. Message 03 in
Example 7.4 exemplifies the selection of this configuration of
features.

Example 7.4

Mh:		(T01) "I've never been this high before," said Sugar Glider (T02) as they searched *behind the clouds
Cd:	I01	*Where's
	01	There's sugar glider.
Mh:	02	That's right.
	03	Know what a sugar glider is?
Cd:	04	No.
Mh:	05	A possum.

Though the medians for total messages were not significantly
different (p<.0698), the fact that many mothers' in the HAP
group tended to deploy this resource frequently indicated the
usefulness of a further examination of [prefaced:experiential:
idea:knowledge;demand;information] to check its co-selection
with [demand;information].

Since children's speech contributed a total of only four
messages with these features it was not relevant to test their
distribution. Table 7.9 presents the results of the
statistical analyses for the mothers' speech.

Table 7.9   Median frequencies for the selection of
              [prefaced:experiential:idea:knowledge;demand;
              information] and the options [confirm] and
              [apprize] by mothers

Social Group	Median Frequencies		
	Total	[confirm]	[apprize]
LAP	0.00	0.00	0.00
HAP	4.00	2.00	1.50
Probability	0.023	0.0198	0.1698

The LAP mothers rarely select the configuration but the HAP
mothers do so occasionally, and to a significantly different
extent. The significance levels for [apprize] and [confirm]
were again different in this configuration but are not further

discussed for the reasons given earlier in relation to [modal]. Scrutiny of individual messages suggests that HAP mothers' enquiries are often about children's memories of events, either in the actual experience of the child or in the fictive text. An example occurred when James and his mother discussed *Noddy and the Bumpy Dog*. Message 03 in Example 7.5 exemplifies the selection of these features.

Example 7.5
Mh: 01   *And while they were eating their ice creams
     02   which were huge,
     03   remember they were really big?
     04   there was a terrible noise outside.
     05   A big crash and lots of noise

The median frequencies with which teachers selected the configuration was very low. For all types of questions the median was 2.00, and for [confirm] and [apprize] 0.00 and 1.00 respectively.

In summary, these data appear to be consistent with Hasan's findings with respect to distributions of the selection of prefaced messages within the two social groups. Additionally, the different statistical procedure adopted for this study enabled exploration of the selection of configurations of more delicate features dependent on [prefaced]. Perhaps the most striking finding has been the extensive use of prefacing to create modalities of possibility specifically with respect to individual states of consciousness. Very typically, lexicogrammatical structures deployed for this purpose are 'I think' or, in the case of demands for information, 'Do you think?'. The further significance of these findings will be taken up following presentation of results for other metafunctions.

7.8   Supplementation of messages

In both social groups speakers supplemented messages frequently, and used both overt and covert means to do so. When the data was examined for all types of supplementation of messages there was no statistically significant difference

between the two social groups. However, when supplementation was examined more specifically in several ways - with respect to category of speaker, more delicate features of supplementation itself, and its configuration with certain speech functions - theoretically interesting significant differences were apparent.

Mothers' selection of the feature [supplementing] was significantly different between the two groups, the median for the LAP group being 8.50 and for the HAP group 45.50 (p<.023). Scrutiny of the data showed that the more delicate features [additive] and [cause/condition] made by far the most prominent contribution to the interactive discourse. For the first of these features there was no significant difference - almost all mothers and children used the resource extensively, as would be expected in spoken medium. However, there was a significant difference in mothers' use of [cause/condition]. On this feature the median for the LAP group was 2.00 and for the HAP 12.50 (p<.005). In the classroom discourse the teacher's speech involved some use of cause-condition in each lesson, in some cases as frequently as 30 messages. The median frequency per lesson in the classroom data was 10.00.

Two types of speech function were also differentially supplemented within the two social groups. Questions were supplemented by mothers in the HAP group significantly more frequently than the LAP group (the medians, respectively, were 7.00 and 0.50, p<.003). In the classroom discourse most teachers also asked several questions with supplementing messages, the median frequency for the individual lessons being 3.5. This too is consistent with Hasan's findings (1989; 1991b; Hasan and Cloran, 1990).

Replies to questions were supplemented by the HAP mothers significantly more often, consistent with results obtained by Hasan (1991b) and comparable with analyses by Tizard and Hughes (1984). Obviously there was a potential for this result inherent in the fact that the children in the HAP group

asked significantly more questions of both the [confirm] and
[apprize] type. For the LAP group the median frequency for
mothers' supplementing messages to children's questions was
0.50 and for the HAP group 4.00 (p<.023). Four mothers only
in the LAP group supplemented a reply to a child's question
more than once, but eight of the ten mothers in the HAP group
did so, and two of them on more than ten occasions. Since
there were so few questions from children in the classroom
discourse data a comparison with teachers' language on this
feature would have been meaningless.

7.9   Experiential meanings

In previous research in this field there has been general
discussion of the significance of text-to-life and life-to-
text moves (eg Cochran-Smith, 1984) but there does not appear
to have been any very close linguistic analysis of the role of
experiential meanings in contributing to the development of
children's orientations within, and to, literate practices.
These issues are of both theoretical and practical interest.
For example, the degree to which some categories of
experiential meanings are typically selected or excluded in
interactive talk is likely to be directly related to the
strength of the implicit boundaries which classify joint book-
reading as a context relevant to the production of particular
types of experiential meanings. In environments where
contents are strongly classified, by definition some
categories of referential signification which it is quite
possible to introduce in other environments are unlikely to
appear much at all. This is, so to speak, looking from the
context down; conversely, looking from the language up, from
the experiential selections the mothers and children typically
make, it is possible to infer the strength of classification
of categories of experiential meanings which it is
'legitimate' to introduce.

Because there appear to be no clear precedents for an analysis
of experiential meanings in previous work in the emergent
literacy field, initially a general survey was made of the

selection of categories of meanings such as referential
signification of the child, the mother, fictive characters and
so on (see Chapter Five, Section 5.5) in association with
selections from features dependent on the system [doing]
versus [being]. In fact the data closely clustered into only
some of the categories. These were 'child', 'mother',
'character' and 'non-character object-text element'. It was
therefore possible to make the selection of features for more
intensive analysis quite clearly. Those configurations of
referential signification and features dependent on the system
[doing] versus [being] which were found to be significantly
different were then further analysed to test differences in
contributions by children and mothers.

Additionally, since use of metalanguage has been prominent in
recent discussions of effects of literacy on cognition and of
children's development of knowledge about language, selection
of this category of referential signification was examined,
though it was selected to only a limited extent.

7.9.1   Some differences in the selection of
               experiential meanings within the two social
               groups
When the four categories of meanings which were selected most
frequently were examined - namely, 'child', 'mother',
'character' and 'non-character object-text element' - no
statistically significant differences were found for any
configuration involving 'non-character object-text element' so
these are excluded from the subsequent discussion. For the
categories of the fictive character and the mother, one aspect
of the interaction in each instance was significantly
different, and these will be considered shortly. By far the
most consistent and far-reaching differences were found in
references to the child. Table 7.10 presents an overview of
these findings with respect to the selection of reference to
the child as the [effecting] element.

Table 7.10   Selection of some features of experiential
              meanings simultaneously with the child as the
              referential signification of the option
              [effecting] within the two social groups by both
              speakers

Semantic Features	Social Group Median Frequency		Significance Level
	LAP	HAP	
[doing:material]	0.50	12.00	0.001
[doing:mental]	8.00	30.50	0.023
[doing:verbal]	0.50	4.50	0.023

Consistent with this finding, significant differences were
also found in the co-selection of the 'child' options
dependent on [being], as the results in Table 7.11 reveal.

Table 7.11   Selection of some features of experiential
              meanings simultaneously with the child as the
              referential signification of the option
              [element] within the two social groups by both
              speakers

Semantic Features	Social Group Median Frequency		Significance Level
	LAP	HAP	
[being:pertinence]	0.00	2.50	0.012
[being:state]	0.00	4.00	0.023

Clustered together, these results suggest a theoretically
important general difference between the two social groups in
the degree to which reference is made to the child in the
interactive talk. Except for the feature [doing:mental], the
median frequency for the LAP group dyads is very low. Close
scrutiny of messages in which [doing:mental] is selected in
the LAP interaction shows that it is often realized by a
Mental Process of perception, as when Robin's mother asks her,
while they are reading *Jump, Frog, Jump*, 'See the fly?'.

There is an additional interesting finding concerning
representations of the child as the referential signification
of the option [effector], co-selected with the option

[material]. In the interactive text presented in Example 7.6
these features are densely clustered in talk between Michael
and his mother.

Example 7.6

Mh: (T7) So he got ready to go to camp. (IT1) He packed his
        01   What would you pack ...
        02   if you were going away to camp?
Cd: 03   Lots of toys.
Mh: 04   And what *else?
Cd: 05   *And that's all.
Mh: 06   What would you wear?

In four of the six interactive messages Michael is referred to
in the [effector] role, simultaneously with selection of
[material]. The exceptions are Message 02, where he is
referred to in the [effecting] role, and of course 05 where
the option [being] is selected and no reference is made to
Michael in the clause realizing the message.

The difference between the medians for the two groups for
these features was quite marked: for the LAP group the median
frequency was 0.50 and for the HAP group 7.50 (p<.0198).

There is also some evidence that there are different strengths
of classification defining joint book-reading in the two
social groups, concerning the category 'other'. There is a
significant difference in the selection of the category as the
[effecting] element simultaneously with [material]. Since
this is a residual category of referential signification it is
important not to press its significance in describing semantic
variation very far. Nevertheless, the difference is relevant
insofar as it is consistent with the contention concerning
different boundary strengths regulating the referential domain
which may be implicated in the talk. The details of the
median frequencies are: LAP group, 0.00; HAP group, 10.00;
p<.023).

7.9.2   Selection of experiential meanings by the two categories of speakers in the two social groups

Given the consistency of this pattern of results the interactive texts were further investigated to test whether the difference was distributed across the contributions of one or both speakers. To this question there was quite a clear answer. Where significant differences were sustained, it was the mothers' speech through which the variance was constructed. For the options dependent on [doing] the significant difference was sustained for [doing:material] only: the LAP mothers' median frequency was 0.5 and the HAP mothers 9.0. For the two options dependent on [being], significant differences were sustained for the mothers' speech. These results are reported in Table 7.12.

Table 7.12   Mothers' selection of some features of experiential meanings with the child as the referential signification of the option [element] within the two social groups

Semantic Features	Social Group Median Frequency		Significance Level
	LAP	HAP	
[being:pertinence]	0.00	1.00	0.0198
[being:state]	0.00	3.00	0.0055

It is also only the mothers' speech which is implicated in the difference in frequency of selection of the child as the reference of the [effector;material] configuration: LAP median = 0; HAP median = 5.50 (p<.023).

In overview, it is clear that the significant differences found in the initial analysis occur because the HAP mothers make reference to the child in the talk, and not because the children tend to talk about themselves with differential frequency. There appears to be an importantly different structure of experience about which mothers in the two social groups consider it relevant to talk during joint book-reading.

Though it would obviously be possible to describe the extent
to which children are referred to in the classroom data, and
if it were to be done it would show a high frequency of such
reference, it would not be a very useful finding because of
the extent to which these references are made by teachers in
order to manage young children as they become used to the
institutional practices of formal schooling. Such references
are not, of course, distributed solely in demands for goods
and services.

7.9.3   References to mothers
When the mother was the focus of the referential
signification, one configuration was found to be significantly
different, reference to the mother as [effector;material].
For the LAP group the median frequency was again 0.00, and for
the HAP group 4.50 (p<.023). This difference seems again
largely to be carried by the mothers' speech, where the
results were: LAP median = 0; HAP median = 3.50 (p<.023).

7.9.4   References to qualities of characters
Amongst the members of both social groups quite extensive
reference is made to characters in various roles, as one would
expect given children's enthusiasm for fictive figures. The
frequency of references to characters as the initiators of
actions, or the objects of those actions, are not
significantly different between the two social groups.
Neither are references to their roles as speakers, their
identities, or their memberships of classes.

However, with respect to talk about characters one feature did
emerge as significantly different when the contribution of
both speakers was examined simultaneously, though not when
that of the two speaker categories was examined separately
because of the variance within the two social groups. This
was selection of [being:describing:state], with a character as
the referential signification of [element]. Message 06 in

Example 7.7, an extract of a conversation between James and his mother, exemplifies this configuration of features.

Example 7.7

| Mh:		What! A dog wearing Mr Plod's helmet, digging up all his precious seeds!
	01	You wouldn't be very happy
	02	if Dapples dug up all your carrot seeds, would you?
Cd:	03	In my vegetable garden?
	04	I'd be furious!
Mh:	05	Yes
	06	and I think Mr Tubby Bear was furious.

The relevant median frequencies, taking both categories of speaker simultaneously, is: LAP median = 5.50; HAP median = 21.00 (p<.023). Since this result is not quite as clear as those discussed in Section 7.9.2 data for individual dyads for both speaker categories was examined. Figures 7.6 and 7.7 present these for the speech of the mother and child respectively.

Figure 7.6   Mothers' references to characters as the referential signification of [element] simultaneously with selection of [being:describing:state]

Individual dyads in social groups
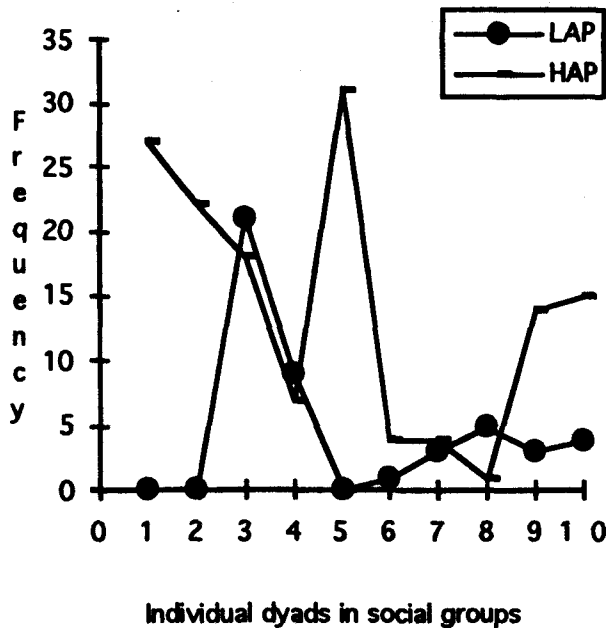
This perspective shows that six of the HAP mothers do select the feature to a marked extent more than the LAP mothers. Once again the within-group variance in both groups is associated with the specific cases to which attention has been drawn at earlier points in the discussion. The lowest frequencies in the HAP group are for John's, Glenn's and Andrew's mothers (Cases 6, 7 and 8). In the LAP group only for Janet's mother does the frequency fall within the range for the six highest for the HAP mothers. The second highest frequency is again for Rhonda's mother.

Figure 7.7   Children's references to characters as the referential signification of [element] simultaneously with selection of [being:describing:state]

Individual dyads in social groups
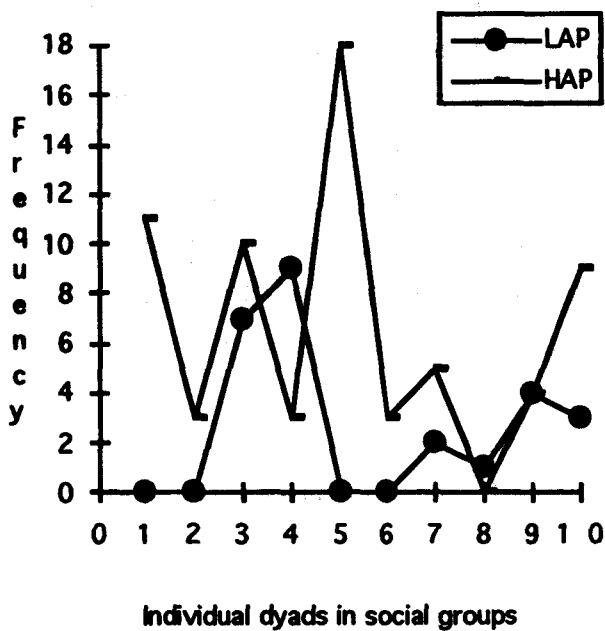
In the children's speech the results are much more variable for this feature, with relatively low frequencies across the full set. (The median score for the whole data set is 3.0.)

Overall, it does appear that there is some significant variation in this region of the interaction, and the variance at least tends to be carried by the mothers' speech.

Since evaluation of characters is so central to the upper
levels of school literate practice it is interesting to
consider whether this was a common feature of classroom
discourse at this early point in schooling. The classroom
data was again quite variable: the median frequency per lesson
was 2.0, and the range from 0 to 18. Though it might be
expected that the variability would be closely associated with
the type of text read, with highly repetitive text not
providing much opportunity for character evaluation, in fact
even with such a minimal text as *To town* (cf. Unsworth and
Williams, 1990) there were exchanges involving 11 messages
with this feature.

7.9.5   References to metalanguage

The initial survey of experiential meaning selection revealed
a significant difference between the social groups in the
selection of some metalinguistic reference as [purview].
Often the reference was to a whole text, as when Rachel's
mother asked her, 'Do you know this story?', or Rhonda
commented about a poem her mother had read 'I don't like this
one'. The typical reference is to texts, and only much less
frequently a lexicogrammatical or graphological unit.

When this general finding was pursued further in relation to
options dependent on [doing] and [being], the variance was
found to be largely associated with the simultaneous selection
of [mental]. For this set of features the medians were
significantly different for both sets of speakers. In the
children's speech the medians were: LAP = 0; HAP = 3.5
($p < .023$). In the mothers' speech they were: LAP = 0; HAP =
5.00 ($p < .023$).

The clarity of these results, despite the relatively low
median frequencies, suggested the usefulness of taking the
analysis to one further stage of delicacy. Informally, these
were messages in which the child's knowledge, or preferences
were under consideration with respect to some reference to
language. More formally, the analysis involved messages in

which reference was to the child as the [effecting] element, with a metalinguistic term realizing [purview] simultaneously with the selection of the feature [mental]. At this further level of delicacy there was again a significant difference between the medians. In the children's speech the median frequencies were: LAP = 0; HAP = 3.5 (p<.023). In the mothers' speech they were: LAP = 0; HAP = 3.00 (p<.023). The low median frequencies are to be expected, since with four year old children it is unlikely that mothers would engage in sustained discussion of some item of metalinguistic reference. Nevertheless, it does appear that the children in the two social groups tended to have somewhat different experiences in talking about text, or units at the other two linguistic strata. Amongst the LAP group Janet, Rhonda and their mothers are the only participants to select these configurations of features, apart from one message each exchanged by Dennis and his mother. Conversely, in the HAP group only John and his mother do *not* select the configuration of these features at some point.

In classroom discourse this most delicate configuration was selected across all but three of the lessons. The median frequency was similarly low, 2.00 for each category of speaker, though the range was quite considerable. The maximum frequency was 11 in children's speech and 10 in teachers' speech in an individual lesson. There was also a tendency in the classroom discourse, at least in eight of the K classes, for metalanguage as [purview] to be the reference when a message simultaneously selected the feature [verbal] and the child was the reference of the [effecting] element. A message with these features occurred for example, when a child in one of the classrooms remarked, 'I want to read it', where the reference was to a stretch of language in a large format book from which the teacher had been reading. This was not, of course, a significant configuration of features in the family data. For the whole classroom data set the median frequency for the configuration was 1.00, and the range from 0 to 11.

Though these are necessarily tentative findings, they do
suggest that as the children enter school they have had
somewhat varied experiences in their families in talking about
what they individually know and prefer with respect to text
itself.

7.10   Intra-group variation

There is some indication of consistent intra-group variation
and, from a post-hoc perspective this is theoretically
interesting.

In the LAP group the results for two dyads, Janet and Rhonda
and their respective mothers, varied consistently from the
median across the various configurations of features on which
significant differences were found. In the reports of results
for individual dyads they are Cases 3 and 4 respectively.

On the primary issue of extent of linguistic interaction these
two dyads differ substantially from the other eight. On
several of the features for which individual data was
reported, features such as mothers' selection of [develop] and
references to characters as [element] simultaneously with
[being:describing:state], the dyads fall at the top of the LAP
range and well within the HAP range. An analysis of the
frequency with which they select other significantly different
features, for which individual data could not be reported,
shows that they consistently fall well within the HAP range.
To illustrate with just one example, total prefaced messages,
Janet and her mother select the feature [prefaced] 18 times,
and Rhonda and her mother, 17, placing them at the top of the
LAP range. These scores are within the HAP range though well
below the HAP median of 51.

The question then arises: is there any social feature of the
mothers which is relevant to interpreting the variation? From
notes made during the initial negotiations and from some
informal contact with the families following the study the

factor which seems most relevant is the nature of the mothers' employment.

Janet's mother conducted family day care and had participated in some training conducted by the local council. It is arguable that this network set up some potential for different discursive relations from those which would be more typical for the other LAP mothers. Though minimal her training would also almost certainly have drawn some attention to language as one aspect of children's development.

The mother spoke of the child's rapid development of interest in reading during the preceding six months, and her particular liking for published audiorecorded readings of stories. The mother also mentioned that, though enrolling Janet in a private ECE centre was financially impossible for the family, she and her partner had made a deliberate choice of the particular ECE centre because of its reputation in giving children an excellent start to formal schooling. In fact it was necessary for the mother to drive Janet some distance across another suburb in order to achieve access to this centre. The mother also spent as much time as possible assisting voluntarily at the centre[2].

Rhonda's mother had been a private secretary prior to the birth of her children. She regarded her current position as a part-time word processing operator as temporary until the children were independent enough to attend after school care, allowing her to take a position more similar to her previous work. In this previous employment it is very likely that she would have had some responsibility for at least transmitting, if not implementing, decisions which would have affected the work of other employees.

Three HAP dyads, John (Case 6), Andrew (Case 7), Glenn (Case 8) and their respective mothers, also tend to be distinctive

---

2   Hasan reports (personal communication) that some variance in her data correlates with whether or not mothers were involved in out-of-the-home activities in schools, church etc.

in that group. The extent of their interaction is the lowest
for the social group, and the frequency of their selection of
the statistically significant features tends to fall towards
the bottom of the range, though not so strikingly as for the
two outstanding LAP dyads. Again, employment relations seem
to be important in distinguishing the situation of these
mothers, since they were three of the four mothers in the HAP
group not in paid employment.

In such small groups intra-group variation is obviously
difficult to interpret, and it would certainly be reductive to
argue that employment relations are in some way simply and
directly responsible for this variation. The point is,
rather, that the factor apparently most clearly associated
with intra-group variation is not inconsistent with the factor
which appears to be strongly correlated with variation between
the groups.

7.11   Summary
The family linguistic interaction does appear to vary as a
function of the location of participants within social class
formations. Though there are many similarities in the
practices of the two groups - in extent of reading, the
enthusiasm with which both mothers and children talk about
object texts, and in the general sense that children are
'apprenticed' to literate practice within their families -
what they are apprenticed to as literate practice is, from
another perspective, quite different.

The entailed problem for the study, then, is to find a
theoretical means to interpret why such correlations might
evolve in social relations. This task is taken up in Chapters
Eight and Nine.