Teaching Assistants' Experiences of the Mediational Language Approach and Peer

Supervision in Their Professional Practice: an Exploratory Study

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of East

London for the Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

April 2018

Abstract

This thesis explored the experiences of Teaching Assistants (TAs) in relation to the training on mediational language approach and group discussions as an event in their lives. TAs' job expectations have changed in the recent years, with a focus on their pedagogical role, however, literature available suggests limited support in terms of training and supervision for this group of practitioners. Additionally, there is also research available (Blatchford, Basset, Brown and Webster, 2009) that proposes that TAs' in-class support may produce a negative effect on children's outcomes. Recent literature (Radford, Bosanquet, Webster, Blatchford and Rubie-Davies, 2014) emphasizes the need to improve the quality of interactions between TAs and children.

Six participants took part in the current research and narrative analysis was used as a method to explore their stories about their experiences of accessing a training and subsequent group discussions. Analysis revealed that engagement with the training materials and interests on the links between theory and practice, reassured their value within the school. Information sharing generated discussions about peer support, which was regarded as a valuable aspect of their practice. Changes in practice appeared to be linked to belief systems about children's abilities, which were displayed by changes in patterns of classroom approaches or reflections about practice.

The researcher suggests further research exploration around the application of the mediational language approach, as an alternative method of TA-child interaction to support children's independent learning skills. Possible implications for the use of structured models of peer supervision for TAs in schools for the practice of Educational Psychologists (EPs) are discussed.

Keywords: teaching assistants, independent learning skills, supervision

Student Declaration

Student Declaration Form

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank all the Teaching Assisitants who agreed to take part in this project and share their stories with me. I have also learned many different things from this experience and hope that I can ultimately make some difference in children's learning.

I would like to thank my parents, Airton and Gladis, and my siblings, Marcos, Cristine and Fernanda, for believing that I could accomplish this and for supporting me, even from so far away, by always having a word of encouragement to motivate me and help me keep going. My cousin, Cadu, who had to put up me during some diffiult periods in the last three years and was able to give a positive twist to most situations.

Also, I would like to thank Sylvia October, who saw something in me and gave me that push necessary to enter this doctorate programme and follow my dream of persuing this amazing profession.

Finally, I would like to thank my Supervisor Dr Helena Bunn, who has accompanied me throughout this journey, guiding my thinking and reflection, every step of the way, so that I could develop as a researcher, and explore the questions that I was interested in answering. Also, for your consideration and appreciation about the challenges and strengths I've encountered, providing that reassurancing voice that inspired me to carry on.

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List of abbreviations

BPS	British Psychological Society
CA	Conversation Analysis
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DA	Dynamic Assessment
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department of Education and Skills
DNA	Dialogical Narrative Analysis
DISS	Deployment and Impact of Support Staff
EP	Educational Psychologist
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
HLTA	Higher-Level Teaching Assistant
LA	Learning Authority
Ofted	Office for Standards in Education
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
LPAD	Learning Propensity Assessment Device
MLE	Mediated Learning Experience
MITA	Maximizing the Impact of Teaching Assistants
MAST	Making a Statement

SDT	Self-determination theory
SENCo	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
TA	Teaching Assistant
TEP	Trainee Educational Psychologist
WPR	Wider Pedagogical Role

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Overview of the chapter

This chapter will set out the focus and aims of the research. It begins by introducing the practice of TAs, outlining the importance of the existing research and government policy in this area. This is considered in terms of the changes in TAs' roles and responsibilities within schools over the recent years and the impact of these changes on children's learning. The research is then described in terms of the author's own journey and how this may have contributed to its development. Mediational language is proposed as an approach to be applied by TAs in promoting independent learning and problem-solving skills. Finally, a summary is given, providing an understanding of how the current context, in relation to educational policy, theory and practice, has informed the rational for the development of this research.

1.2 Defining Teaching Assistants

For the purpose of the current research, the use of the term TA refers to all school support staff with a direct role of supporting learners; these may include classroom assistants, learning support assistants or paraprofessionals. In different schools, TAs may work in a variety of ways, however their role is not always identified clearly. Bosanquet, Radford and Webster (2016) identified some key roles TAs might perform at different times. These might be related to: one-to-one support, class-based support, faculty-based support, intervention, classroom management, administration, and behaviour support. These roles place TAs in a position of direct contact with pupils for a significant part of their time in school.

1.3   Context of the research

1.3.1   Wider Context

The use of TAs in education seems to be a growing trend in many different countries (Giangreco & Doyle, 2007). Nonetheless, both in the UK and internationally, there has been some ambiguity about the role of the TA in relation to the teaching and inclusion of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

It has been found that TA support may encourage dependency, rather than helping pupils to think for themselves, as they tend to prioritise task completion (Moyles and Suschitzky, 1997). The tendency to close talk down and 'spoon feed' answers to pupils can, over time, limit pupils' understanding and weaken their sense of control of their learning. This may reduce their capacity to develop independent learning skills and interfere with ownership and responsibility for their learning (Giangreco, 2010).

One central issue faced by school leaders is to determine the appropriate pedagogical role for TAs, in relation to teachers. If it is expected that TAs have an instructional teaching role, then it is important that they are properly trained and supported in making this expectation achievable.

1.3.2   National and political context

In the past recent years, it has been reported a significant increase in staff providing classroom support in schools across the UK, making nearly a third (28%) of the employees in mainstream schools (Department for Education, 2017). The number of full-time equivalent TAs in mainstream schools in England has more than trebled since 2000, from 79,000 to 265,600 (DfE, 2016). Presently, teaching assistants represent 34% of the workforce in primary schools and nurseries and 15% of the workforce in secondary schools. The Department for Education (2017) reported that the overall number of TAs

have increased further, by 1 percent between 2015 and 2016. This represents an increase of 1.8 percent within the primary/nursery phase (from 174.5 to 177.7 thousand). However, there was a decrease of 4.2 percent within the secondary phase (from 52.3 to 50.1 thousand).

1.3.2.1   *National Workload Agreement*

One of the main policy developments in the UK, which had a direct impact on the role of TAs, was the National Workload Agreement, introduced by the government in 2003, with the intention of raising pupil standards and tackling teacher workload (Department for Education and Skills, 2003). The Agreement led to a reform of support staff roles and responsibilities to help teachers and raise standards for pupils; including planning, preparing and delivering lessons, assessing, recording and reporting. Radford et al. (2014) argued that the Agreement gave less attention to the role of TAs, providing ill-defined terms such as 'supporting' or 'supervising', as being distinct from 'teaching'. This represented a fundamental change in the role of the TAs and raised issues around whether they should engage in traditional teacher roles.

In response to the National Workload Agreement (DfES, 2003), the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) has conducted a number surveys to evaluate the effectiveness of these changes. A small-scale study reported by Ofsted (2010), conducted between 2008 and 2009, showed that the workforce reform had made a considerable difference to pupils' learning, as a result of school leaders ensuring that all their staff had clear professional status, were well trained, were deployed effectively and held accountable for contributing to pupils' learning and well-being. One of the key findings was that all members of staff understood how they contributed to pupils' learning and what they needed to do to make the school more effective. It was recommended that staff were

properly trained to secure knowledge and understanding about the national standards, for teacher and TAs to work collaboratively, being clear about responsibilities for improving teaching and learning. It was also recommended for TAs to work with a range of pupils across the class, so that they would not become too reliant on the support and lose their ability to work independently.

1.3.2.2   *Code of Practice*

The increased number of TAs in primary and secondary schools has also been influenced by the push for the better inclusion of children with SEND in mainstream schools, often facilitated by the provision of TAs in the classroom. The SEND Code of Practice (2015) recommends that the teacher works closely with TAs who are involved with a child with SEND, ensuring that planning and assessment of support and intervention is linked to classroom teaching; adapted so that the needs of the child are met. Additionally, the Code states that teachers should be accountable and responsible for the development and progress of children in the classroom, that includes the pupils receiving support TAs assistants or specialist staff.

1.4   Impact of Teaching Assistants

1.4.1   DISS Project

In a report informed by the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) project (Blatchford et al., 2009), completed between 2003 and 2008, a strong negative impact on academic progress for pupils receiving support from TAs was revealed. Those pupils who were receiving the most support from TAs made less progress than those pupils who were receiving little or no support. This negative impact was most marked for those pupils with the highest level of SEND, who often received the most support, according to the study.

According to Blatchford et al. (2009) these findings could not be attributed to pupil characteristics, such as SEN status or attainment levels, nor could it be explained in terms of TAs' decision-making in the classroom. Instead, these results might be related to the deployment of TAs by school leaders, resulting in children receiving more pedagogical support from the TAs than from their teachers, factors which are out of the control of the TAs.

Information provided by the DISS project suggests that teachers favour this arrangement as it allows them to spend more time with the rest of the class, whilst the TA provide individual attention to struggling students. Giangreco, Yuan, Mackensie, Cameron and Fialka (2005) argued that an implicit type of discrimination has been developed as a result of the current models of TA deployment, where the pupils who are least able and most disadvantaged are receiving less educational input from teachers than other pupils.

1.4.2 Reassessing the Impact of Teaching Assistants

Findings from the DISS project were later discussed by Blatchford, Russel and Webster (2012) within a wider context, stressing that, holding TAs personally responsible for the impact of their support would be too simplistic. The authors presented a conceptualized picture of the work of TAs and demonstrated how the effects of their support needed to be seen in relation to the decisions made about their deployment and preparedness, by school leaders, which was outside their control. Thus, recommendations were made in rethinking policy on TAs, ensuring that they receive appropriate training, support from teachers and, in particular, changes in the school itself, so that senior staff can ensure that TAs deployment and expectations regarding their roles and responsibilities are reviewed.

1.4.3 Making a Statement (MAST)

In light of the findings from the DISS project the MAST study (Webster and Blatchford, 2013) looked at the daily experiences of teaching and support received by children with a Statement of SEND. The study revealed that children with SEND spend over a quarter of their interactions with a TA, separating them from the learning from their teachers and peers. With such separation, the TA could end up taking the responsibility for teaching pupils with SEND, meaning that the quality of instruction these pupils received from the TAs could be inferior to the one received by a qualified teacher.

The study showed that TAs had a high level of responsibility for pedagogical decision-making, modifying and explaining tasks set by the teachers, who often had little involvement in the planning and teaching of pupils with SEND. As a result, children with SEND were not accessing the benefits of high quality teaching, being 'handed over' (Lamb, 2009) to personnel without the necessary pedagogical qualification. A consequence of having high levels of support has also been argued to be the development of 'learnt helplessness' (Giangreco, 2010), making children over reliant on adults in telling to tell them what to do. This will, in turn, have an effect on the child's opportunities to develop and practice problem-solving and self-regulated learning skills.

1.5 Possible ways forward

Although the findings mentioned above outline a number of challenges related TAs' professional practice and the consequent impact on children's learning outcomes, a number of responses have been proposed to address these issues.

1.5.1 Professional Standards

With the main purpose of raising the status and professionalism of TAs, the Professional Standards for Teaching Assistants (2016) has been recently developed, positioning their

role within the community of professionals working together to improve outcomes for children. TAs are recognised as an integral part of the school workforce, which represents a substantial investment of school funding. Their role should be in conjunction with teachers to raise the learning and attainment of pupils whilst also promoting their independence, self-esteem and social inclusion. TAs should give assistance to pupils to help them access the curriculum, participate in learning and experience a sense of achievement. It was also recognised that TAs require support and the opportunities to reflect on their own practice to identify their training needs.

1.5.2   Maximizing the Impact of Teaching Assistants (MITA) programme

The MITA programme (Webster, Russel and Blatchford, 2016) aimed at supporting school learders to rethink and reform the way TAs were used in their shools. Headteachers and SENCos (Special Educational Needs Coordinators) from different schools met over two terms, to think about strategies, at the organisational level, to ensure that they were making the best use of TAs, ensuring that they were making contributions that were meaninful to childrens' learning. The programme included the support from a team of experienced pratitioners, consultants and advisors, in developing a vision about what they wanted the TA role to be within their school. This entailed exploring changes in the school management, classroom practice, deployment and preparedness of TAs. School were also provided with frameworks and ideas regarding further training.

1.5.3   Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants: Guidance Report

Informed by the findings from recent research, Sharples, Webster and Blatchford (2015) developed Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants: Guidance Report, in which they introduce recommendations to maximise the impact of TAs in primary and secondary schools. The recommendations were arranged in three sections: 1) the use of TAs in

everyday classroom contexts; 2) TAs delivering structured interventions out of class and 3) linking learning from work led by teachers.

It was also recommended that TAs help the development of pupils' independent learning skills. Essential skills underpinning learning, such as self-scaffolding could be developed by pupils with the support from TAs by encouraging them to ask themselves questions when faced with a challenge. To achieve this, TAs should be properly trained, so that they can fully understand the principles underlying the approach and the techniques required to use it.

1.6   Researcher's journey

Having worked for over six years as a TA in a variety of educational settings, from nurseries to secondary schools, it was possible to notice the relationship between the amount of support given to each pupil and how much they overly relied on that same support to access the curriculum. Even with the development of a good rapport with pupils, which may have helped to promote motivation, confidence and self-esteem, the support usually consisted of repeating the instructions given by the teacher, explaining tasks and telling them what to do. Finally, the lack of time to discuss lesson plans and the individual needs of each child with their teacher meant that the work became quite reactive to each situation, without the necessary reflection and discussion with colleagues.

As a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP), I became familiar with concepts and principles related to Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) and the different questioning techniques used during Dynamic Assessment (DA), as well as the theory of social cultural learning developed by Vygotsky (1978). Additionally, in the Local Authority (LA) where I am currently doing my placement, I have had the opportunity to experience peer

supervision with other colleagues, which gave me the time and opportunity to share best practice and engage in joint problem-solving.

The development of this research originated from my personal experience and interest in this area of study. Further research in this area and practical application of the techniques mentioned above, in my individual work with children as a TEP, motivated the exploration of the use of these by TAs in the classroom. The experience of peer supervision influenced my decision of having group sessions with the TAs participating in the study,

1.7   Rational for the research

As described above, the development of this approach was supported by the researcher's individual experiences, previously as a TA and most recently as a TEP, and driven by interests and beliefs about cognition and learning. Interactive models of cognition, such as Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and Feuerstein's MLE, view mental functions as changeable or modifiable, which can be achieved with the use of language and through social interactions. This is in line with the researcher's beliefs that children have the potential to learn and achieve better outcomes, with the appropriate support, regardless of their difficulties.

Findings from recent studies (Radford et al., 2014; Radford, Bosanquet, Webster and Blatchford et al., 2015; Sharples et al., 2015) suggested that TAs are placed in a vital position to develop meaningful interactions with children and young people in developing their independent learning and problem-solving skills. TAs' developing role in support for learning of children and young people has been found to foster independence when strategies such as open-ended questions, prompting and clueing are used to open-up talk during interactions with pupils (Radford et al., 2011).

EPs have the theoretical knowledge of psychological research and practice, which can be valuable in providing alternative approaches to support the development of TAs' practice and promote better outcomes for children. For instance, mediational teaching techniques, developed by Deutsch and Mohamed (2010) and Haywood (1993), can provide practical tools, such as specific questions and prompts. The principles from DA, such as the input, elaboration and output phases, later discussed, can provide a framework to organise the use of different questioning techniques.

1.8   Summary of the chapter

This chapter have provided an overview of the current situation involving the development of TAs' professional practice. It then set out the national context in which this research was conducted, by outlining recent educational policy, research and practice in the area. Next, it described current recommendations, in response to the challenges encountered, and possible ways forward. The researcher's own journey was then disclosed and the rational for this research was stated. The following chapter will explore the literature related to some of the issues presented, focusing on TAs' experiences of training and supervision in their professional development.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Overview of the Chapter

This chapter begins by defining the main concepts relevant for this study. It then follows by considering the current literature of how TAs have been supporting children's learning, how they are currently supported in terms of supervision and opportunities for professional development. The chapter continues by outlining the details of three systematic literature searches, over the following areas: TAs' support for learning and professional development, TAs' supervision and professional development; and MLE in schools. The studies related to each of these areas are then critically evaluated. Finally, implications are drawn from the findings of this evaluation, which are then used to inform the focus of the current research.

2.2 Definition of terms

This section defines the terms used during the systematic review, with the purpose of providing clarity about the terminology used during the searches. Each of the terms used is briefly explored below.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the term TA is used throughout this paper to refer to members of staff who provide one-to-one support, in-class support or small group interventions for children and young people. The term may include roles such as Higher-Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA), special needs support staff, early years practitioners and bilingual assistants.

The term supervision on this paper refers to the support TAs receive in schools from teachers, senior members of staff or from other colleagues with the opportunity to discuss and reflect about their practice. French (2001) recommends that teachers, when

supervising TAs, should provide orientation, on-the-job training, also planning, monitoring and directing their work.

The term professional development defines opportunities, within a work environment, to learn new skills and practices to enhance career development. These may include in-service training, mentoring, reflective practice and supervision.

The term support for learning refers to a range of practices that might be applied in the classroom by teachers or TAs related to pedagogical practice (Radford et al., 2014). These may include different teaching methods such as scaffolding, questioning or prompting.

MLE is defined as a special interaction the happens between the child and environment, in which the mediator puts himself between the child and the stimulus in an active, systematic and controlled manner (Feuerstein, Feuerstein and Falik, 2010). Kozulin and Presseisen (1995) explained that the fundamental aim of MLE is for the child to develop the processes of cognition necessary for direct learning. In this interaction the adult has the intention to convey a particular meaning and encourages the child to transcend, relating the meaning to other experiences.

2.3 Systematic search

A systematic review of the literature was conducted to identify the current research in four main areas related to this research: teaching assistants, supervision, support for learning and professional development. Fink (1998, p. 8) defines a literature review as a 'systematic, and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating, and synthesising the existing body of completed and recorded work produced by researchers, scholars, and practitioners'. Booth, Papaioannou and Sutton (2012, p.7) outlined that the purpose of the review is 'to place each work in the context of how it contributes to an understanding of

the subject under review, to describe how each work relates to the others under consideration and identify new ways to interpret, and shed light on, previous research'.

A comprehensive search was performed of the following online databases through EBSCOHOST: PsycINFO, Academic Search Complete, British Education Index, Teacher Reference Center, Education Research Complete and ERIC. Additionally, the researcher adopted a range of searching methods in order to review the literature. Hand searching (Booth et al, 2012) was widely used, examining the content of key journals. Citation searching and scanning of reference lists were also used, following a chain of references from various sources, such as books, academic articles and dissertations to identify if more research could be found. Finally, consultation with experts in the topic areas, via email, academic tutorial and informal conversations also supported the search for relevant studies.

The thesaurus function from PsycINFO and Academic Research Complete were used to identify the relevant synonyms or other terms related to each of the key terms. For example, journals from the United States tended to use the terms "paraprofessionals" or "teacher's assistants", thus additional terms were incorporated in the search to ensure these articles were also included. Boolean logic was then used to ensure that the search included each of the identified terms. A full list of the search terms used for each key term can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1 – Key terms used literature research

Teaching Assistants	Support for learning	Supervision	Professional development
Teacher's assistants Teacher aides Classroom assistants	Mediated learning Independent learning	Peer supervision Peer support Group support	Continuous professional development

Learning support assistants Paraprofessionals	Self-regulated learning Scaffolding Metacognition		Career development Training

2.3.1   Search 1 – Support for learning

The articles that were included in the first search were published in peer-reviewed journals, written in English. From the first search a total of 32 articles was identified. Titles and abstracts were then reviewed and a total of nine key studies were selected for in-depth critical analysis below. Articles that were excluded from the search referred to studies related to TAs working at college or university level, studies focusing on behaviour support or classroom management, studies related to TAs support for children with complex needs, such as medical or physical disabilities and book reviews. Details of the final inclusion and exclusion criteria used and the search results can be seen in table below.

Table 2 - Systematic Search 1

Key term	Related Search terms	Refinements	Number of results	Exclusion criteria	Selected articles
Teaching Assistants	Teacher's assistants OR Teacher aides OR Classroom assistants OR Learning support assistants OR paraprofessionals OR paraprofessionals in education	Peer reviewed English language	32	Higher Education (13) behaviour support or classroom management (3)	4
Support for learning	mediated learning OR independent learning OR self-regulated learning OR				children with complex needs (2) book reviews (1)	

	scaffolding OR metacognition			
Professional development	Continuous professional development OR Career development OR			Not related to learning (9)

2.3.2 Search 2 – Supervision

The articles that were included in the second search were published in a peer-reviewed journal, written in English and Academic Journals. From the second search a total of 53 articles were identified. Titles and abstracts were then reviewed and a total of nine key studies were selected for in-depth critical analysis below. Articles that were excluded from the search referred to studies related to higher education, not supervision of TAs, not related to education, children with complex needs and behaviour needs. Details of the final inclusion and exclusion criteria used together with the search results can be seen in the table below.

Table 3 – Systematic Search 2

Key term	Related Search terms	Refinements	Number of results	Exclusion criteria	Selected articles
Teaching Assistants	Teacher's assistants OR Teacher aides OR Classroom assistants OR Learning support assistants OR paraprofessionals OR paraprofessionals in education	Peer reviewed English language	53	Higher Education (26) behaviour support (2) Not supervision of TAs (5)	8

Supervision	Peer supervision OR peer support OR group support	Academic journal		complex needs (7)	
Professional development	Continuous professional development OR Career development OR Training			Not related to education (5)	

Interestingly, neither of the two previous searches identified articles that explored the use of MLE by TAs as an approach to support for learning. Consequently, a third search was conducted to identify the current research in relation to the use of MLE in schools to support children's learning.

2.3.3   Search 3 – Mediated Learning Experience

The articles that were included in the third search were published in a peer-reviewed journal written in English. A final refinement of major headings related to learning was included. From the third search a total of 22 articles were initially identified. Titles and abstracts were then reviewed and a total of seven key studies were selected for in-depth critical analysis below. Articles that were excluded from the search referred to studies related to higher education, not MLE, parental mediation, computer assisted MLE, complex needs, assessment and not related to learning. Details of the final inclusion and exclusion criteria used together with the search results can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4 – Systematic Search 3

Key term	Related Search terms	Refinements	Number of results	Exclusion criteria	Selected articles
Mediated Learning Experience	Mediated learning	Peer reviewed English language	22	Higher Education (2) Assessment (4)	5

16

			Parental mediation (5)
Schools	Education OR teachers	Academic journal Major heading: learning	complex needs (1) Computer assisted MLE (1) Not related to learning (4)

2.4 Critical Analysis of key research articles

2.4.1 Support for learning and professional development

A total of nine articles were selected regarding TAs´ support for learning and professional development. All studies were conducted in the United Kingdom. From these, a total of four articles used qualitative methods of research (Cockroft and Atkinson, 2015; Radford et al., 2011; Radford et al., 2014; Radford et al., 2015). The different approaches used included focus groups, grounded theory, thematic analysis and conversation analysis. Mixed methods design was used by two articles (Burgess and Mayes, 2009 and Devecchi and Rouse, 2010), including questionnaires, in-depth interviews, ethnographic observations and analysis of school policy documents. Another two articles reviewed the literature about TAs´ pedagogical role and their deployment by schools (Groom, 2006 and Webster, Blatchford, Basset, Brown, Martin and Russel, 2011). One article used quantitative methods (Dew-Hughes, Brayton and Blandford, 1998). A complete list of the nine selected articles and corresponding details can be found in Appendix 1 and a critique of the studies follows.

In a review of the literature, Groom (2006) explained that, as the number of TAs in classrooms increased, their role has also undergone a rapid transformation from that of 'helper', to one that is more directly involved in supporting the teaching and learning process. However, it is argued that by providing individual support, it is also important to consider children´s ability to cope without this support, which could have a negative

effect on their self-esteem and their ability to work independently. However, Groom (2006) also argued that TAs can play a critical role in building and sustaining positive relationships for learning, underpinned by trust, respect and understanding. Pupils are more likely to engage in the learning process if they feel listened to and responded by trusting adults. The article identified the need for greater clarity regarding TA training and opportunities for career development. Such opportunities should be supported by effective leadership and management from the school, focusing on approaches for continuous professional development that foster collaborative work, sharing of good practice and the development of problem-solving strategies to improve teaching and learning. The introduction of performance management and appraisals appeared to be welcomed by TAs, as it helped to raise confidence about their work, making it more directly recognised and appreciated. Opportunities for reflective practice and peer support may also help to foster a culture focused on improving children´s learning.

In a quantitative study performed by Dew-Hughes et al. (1998), 274 TAs were asked to complete a questionnaire regarding their qualifications, experiences and views about their posts. Information from the survey revealed confusion over their role, responsibilities and different approaches used by TAs. The areas of most concern raised by participants included in-post professional development, qualification and training and initial induction, with 80% of the participants reporting to have had no induction when they started. Half of the respondents had never met TAs from other schools, even though nearly 90% expressed interest in doing so regularly if they had the opportunity. TAs were expected to understand their roles in the school, work collaboratively with teachers and other professionals and develop their knowledge in supporting children to maximise their achievement and independence; however discrepancies were reported about their job description in relation to their daily work.

Burgess and Mayes (2009) interviewed 17 teaching assistants who had completed the HLTA Phase 1 training. This training was developed in response to the National Workforce Agreement (DfES, 2003) which had the aim of raising the professional status of TAs, by encouraging them to be more involved in the support for teaching and learning. The study used a mixed methods design, with an initial questionnaire, followed by an in-depth interview to explore HLTAs' perceptions about the training programme and their evolving role in classroom support. Findings suggested that, although the role of TAs has changed radically since the emergence of the Agreement (op. cit, 2003), there are still challenges in relation to effective training programmes, which are essential in promoting the role. Overall TAs had positive views about the programme, feeling that the training improved their knowledge and skills and supported their professional development. This had a positive impact on their confidence and professional understanding.

In accordance with the findings from Dew-Hughes et al. (1998), TAs also demonstrated positive views about opportunities to talk with other TAs and working in groups to share best practice. The development of theoretical and reflective underpinnings to their range of skills and work-based experiences was also valued by the participants. However, it is argued that the range of learning support activities which TAs undertake is not in balance with the overall range of HLTA professional standards, nor with the design of the training programmes.

A study exploring the collaborative work between TAs and teachers (Devecchi and Rouse, 2010) took an innovative stance in applying an ethnographic approach, involving the participants in discussions and reflections about their practices. The study aimed at unravelling what was ´special´ about how teachers and TAs work collaboratively. The authors put forward the case that the impact TAs have on children´s learning should be

assessed not only in terms of academic achievement, but also by the support TAs receive from teachers and the school. It was argued that successful inclusion is dependent on how schools can support the inclusion of adults working in their organisation. Both teachers and TAs valued the role of collaboration in achieving inclusive goals and implementing effective support for children´s learning. It also argued that for the collaboration to be effective it should be a result of not only clearly defined roles and responsibilities, but also the respect and trust from team members in relation to each other´s competence, knowledge and experience.

Similar to findings from Dew-Hughes et al. (1998) and Burgess and Mayes (2009), TAs regarded induction and training as essential to their ability to support children´s learning. Although teachers expressed positive views about the pedagogical support children receive from TAs, they also expressed a sense of guilt for not being able to give more individualised attention to children. Both teachers and TAs agreed that working collaboratively to support TAs involved sharing understanding, knowledge and skills, emphasizing the need for TAs to participate in the decision-making process and to have access to relevant knowledge.

Webster et al. (2011) described a model called Wider Pedagogical Role (WPR) as an organisational framework which had the aim of interpreting the findings from the DISS project (Blatchford et al., 2009), which suggested that TA support had a negative effect on pupil´s academic progress. The article considered how the model set out TA effectiveness within a wider context, with the argument that organisational factors, such as TA employment and deployment, may provide a more likely explanation for the findings. The framework proposed ways in which the components of preparedness,

deployment and practice can be redeveloped and modified, to improve the impact of TAs on pupil outcomes.

A small-scale research, involving a focus group with eight TAs, explored their views regarding barriers and facilitators to effective practice (Cockroft and Atkinson, 2015). The research used the WPR model as a framework to conceptualise these according to the headings of practice, deployment, conditions of employment, preparedness and characteristics. Findings supported the usefulness of the model, as TAs identified facilitators and barriers to each of the components. More specifically, the study suggested that TAs did not feel adequately prepared for their role. They highlighted the benefits of training from teachers and more experienced TAs and the sharing of information and resources, although they also highlighted limited training as a barrier. TAs also described the challenges related to their pedagogical role, in relation to the teaching they carried out and how this was linked to the amount of responsibility they had within their role. TAs expressed not being able to work effectively without the necessary training.

The articles above suggest that TAs' roles are varied within the school environment and their contribution is valued by the teachers; nonetheless, it seems that a discrepancy between their skills and the responsibilities required from them is still apparent, despite efforts to provide them with opportunities for Continous Professional Develoment (CPD). The WPR model seemed to provide a useful framework to address issues related to preparedness, deployment and practice.

2.4.1.1 *Pedagogical role of the TA*

This section provides an in-depth analysis of three articles which proposed a possible framework to be used by TAs, within their pedagogical role, when interacting with children in the classroom. All three studies analysed the data from the DISS project

(Blatchford et al., 2009), providing the analysis of 130 recordings and transcripts of interactions between TAs and pupils and teachers and pupils.

A number of studies (Blatchford et al., 2009; Groom, 2006; Webster et al., 2011) have outlined the increasing number of TAs being deployed to offer alternative support for children in the classroom. Radford et al. (2011) pointed out the importance of having a better understanding of the quality of interaction between TAs and pupils. Conversation analysis (CA) was used to compare teacher and TA talk with pupils; in terms of turn allocation, topic generation and repair. The authors found that teachers tended to open-up conversations with pupils, by adopting inclusive teaching strategies and ensuring oral participation. Teachers were also found to use strategies for generating topic and to withhold correction with hints and prompts. TAs, on the other hand, tended to ´close down talk´ by the use of closed questions, with a ´yes or no´ format, with a focus on task completion, and often providing the correct answer when pupils found obstacles.

This focus on task completion could be originated from beliefs that teachers value written work over oral discussions. Alternatively, if TAs were to use questions that required justification, pupils would participate more actively in the interactions. In fostering independence, TAs should employ scaffolding strategies such as clueing, prompting, hinting and supplying a model for children to work, instead of using direct correction. Radford et al. (2011) argued that the use of such strategies meant that children would have more opportunities to think for themselves. Although teachers also used closed down questions, these were usually used to help students recall prior knowledge. Teachers tended to use open feedback strategies, which encouraged children to justify their reasoning. Such feedback is crucial as it provides opportunities to enhance thinking and foster independent leaning.

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The study provided valuable insight regarding the differences in interactions between teachers and TAs. The choice of conversation analysis as an approach to compare the data provided a detailed recording of the interactions, which allowed the identification of subtleties in naturally occurring interactions.

According to Holton & Clarke (2006), heuristic scaffolding has the purpose of empowering pupils by helping them to become more aware of different approaches to problem-solving, with the goal of transferring the responsibility to the learner. The work of TAs in the classroom is mainly oral, which usually involves the use of verbal differentiation of written materials or explanations given by the teacher in a moment by moment basis. Radford et al. (2014) argued that TAs may not be making the best use of such interactions with children and, as result, may be creating passive learners.

Radford et al (2014) analysed 42 recordings of the interactions of teachers and TAs during the same lessons. From those, 16 teacher-TA pairs were then chosen for further analysis. A grounded approach was used to the analysis, which was informed by the procedures of CA. The benefits of using CA include the level of detail gained from the moment-by-moment and sequential analysis, which also takes into consideration the pupils' turn during the interactions.

Findings suggested that TAs do not use heuristics widely within their practice, as most lessons analysed produced very few examples of such strategies. Rather than representing current practice, the study proposed to develop a theory to illustrate potential practice for TAs. The data identified three types of strategies, according to the degree of support provided by the TA. These were: heuristic models, questions and prompts. According to Radford et al. (2014) the heuristic model can be used by the pupil to self-scaffold when attempting to solve a problem independently. The use of self-questioning may provide

evidence that they are taking responsibility for their learning. Students need to listen to such heuristic strategies from the adult first, to internalise and use them spontaneously.

It appears that, if TAs are to have a pedagogical role, the theory of scaffolding, with the supervision of the teacher, could be used to support the learning of pupils in the classroom. However, it would be helpful for them to become familiar with the techniques and to understand their implications to the learner, allowing them to lead the interaction.

The principles of scaffolding are informed by the social cultural theory of Vygotsky (1978). The theory proposes that young children develop their higher mental functions, such as problem-solving, thinking and reasoning, through their social interactions with others. TAs are then in a key position to help children develop these functions, using high level questions.

In a following study, Radford et al. (2015) proposes the development of a theoretical model of scaffolding to be used by TAs, offering a unique framework to support the understanding of how pupils can be supported through interaction. Using CA as a method of analysis, data from interactions during maths and English lessons was analysed. Episodes demonstrating the use of scaffolding by TAs were then selected. From these, three scaffolding roles were identified: 1) support role – important for children with attention or language difficulties, as it helps to maintain the learner engaged on the task and supports motivation; 2) a repair function – which focused on fostering independent learning and problem-solving; and c) a heuristic role – which encouraged pupils to make use of their own learning strategies. The purpose was to encourage students to develop and discover solutions independently, with the aim of 'self-scaffold', which is the internalisation of these strategies. This could enable the transfer of responsibility to the learner when the adult is not present. This scaffolding model pays attention to the extent

TAs use contingent strategies; how opportunities are provided to the learner to take responsibility to think about their learning and how TAs can then fade their support.

Findings from the above studies suggest that TAs are in a unique position to support students in using independent learning strategies, which encourages them to verbalise as they attempt to solve a problem. However, if TAs are to benefit from such professional development, attention should be given to the implications in relation to qualifications, recruitment, training and supervision of these professionals.

2.4.2   Supervision and professional development

A total of nine articles were selected in relation to TAs' experiences of supervision in their professional development. Interestingly, most of the studies were conducted in the United States, with only one study from the United Kingdom (Morgan and Ashbaker, 2011). From the selected articles, two used quantitative methods of research (French, 2001 and Breton, 2010), with questionnaires being sent to TAs and teachers; and one article used qualitative methods (Downing, Ryndak and Clark, 2000), using interviews and content analysis. One article provided a literature review from 32 studies between 2000 and 2007 (Giangreco, Sutter and Doyle, 2010). The remaining articles provided a review of current research, outlining possible approaches to the supervision of TAs. A complete list of the nine key references and corresponding details can be found in Appendix 2.

Both quantitative studies used questionnaires, which were developed from pilot studies and had their content reviewed by national experts (French, 2001) to establish content validity. The sample size for both studies was considered good and included views of both teachers and TAs. While French (2001) examined the practice of 321 teachers who had responsibility for supervising TAs, Breton (2010) investigated the perceptions of 258

TAs regarding their preparedness to work in special education. It could be argued, however, that the length of the questionnaire (91 items, utilizing a 5-point Likert-type scale) in Breton's study may have impacted on the number of respondents who responded.

Findings from both studies suggested that teachers' method of supervision was varied (e.g. oral instructions about behaviour management) and it was recommended that teachers should be appropriately trained to provide adequate supervision. French (2001) reported that most teachers did not plan for the TAs, expressing concerns that TAs might be working without any direction or with directions that are usually quickly created and easily misunderstood. Even for teachers that had experience with supervision, issues with timing were apparent, with only 13% of the respondents reporting they planned for TAs in their lessons. Higher educational levels, as well as training and preparation to provide supervision, were correlated with perceptions of adequacy as a supervisor. Breton (2010) indicated that most TAs felt unprepared to perform their roles and responsibilities successfully, receiving minimal preservice or in-service training and supervision. This adds to the discussion that the least qualified educational personnel are used to provide the instruction for the students with most need. Limitations from these studies include issues of the generalization of the findings, as it focuses on the perceptions of participants from populations within the United States.

Similar findings were found in a qualitative study which interviewed 16 TAs with the purpose of identifying their perceptions about their roles and responsibilities in inclusive classrooms (Dowling et al., 2000). TAs reported high levels of responsibility for education programs and independent decision making. TAs also expressed concerns regarding their qualifications to make such decisions. On-going training and supervision

was recommended for TAs, as well as for teachers in developing competencies in management and supervision.

A systematic review of the research on TAs working in special education, exploring issues and practices in U.S. schools between the years of 2000 and 2007 (Giangreco et al., 2010) identified similar findings from 32 studies. Consistent with previously mentioned studies, the review also identified issues regarding the availability and quality of training and high levels of autonomy and decision-making about teaching and learning, without proper professional direction. Most teachers reported to have little or no training on how to supervise TAs, usually having to rely on their on-the-job experiences. Time was also identified as a limiting factor in one study, where teachers reported to devote only 2% of their time to each TA they supervise. Many TAs expressed feelings of disrespect and frustration, being asked to assume teacher's responsibilities, without the adequate training, supervision or preparation.

Findings from two different studies, reported by Chopra et al. (2011), established a connection between the supervision of TAs by teachers, their CPD and performance in the classroom. The authors identified the following as the responsibilities teachers have in relation to the supervision of TAs: assignment of specific tasks, on-the-job training, planning, monitoring and directing of day-to-day activities and providing coaching. Although each of the reported studies examined different aspects of TA employment and utilisation, the major finding they both had in common was the importance of the teacher in their supervision. It was found that, although TAs were recognised as valuable members of the team, they were most effective when the teacher clearly understood their role and provided them with proper guidance and direction, notifying them about training opportunities available. The TAs who later became teachers described a work

environment which gave them the opportunity to practice and learn about aspects of the teaching. The authors suggested that the most effective method of supervision for TA would be one that is designed individually, according to the job description of each TA, based on the input from them and their supervising teacher; which builds on their abilities, strengths and interests.

A systematic approach for teachers supervising TAs, which included in-service strategies and problem-solving strategies, was described by Carnahan, Williamson, Clarke and Sorensen (2009). They pointed out the importance of a shared philosophy to facilitate the effective management of the classroom, arguing that people may have different values and beliefs about what is best for the children. Addressing differences early can help to set the tone for the year. The use of written protocols and explicit, concrete language may support a non-emotional communication. It was recommended that teachers should provide TAs with opportunities for problem-solving, attend regularly staff meetings and be formally observed to assess their performance. Before achieving proficiency in certain strategies, TAs should also be given the time to practice these. The teacher, as a supervisor, should conduct on-going assessments of their practice, to ensure effectiveness and student learning. As part of this process, positive feedback should also be provided to ensure TAs understand the reasons behind their work. The use of reflective teamwork was described by Morgan and Ashbaker (2011), in which teacher and TAs meet for 15 minutes daily to review previous lessons, to enhance planning, communication and review. During these meetings both teacher and TA identify two things that went well and two things they would like to improve, using these reflections to plan future lessons. Causton-Theoharis et al. (2007) outlined situations in which TAs have been successfully used to improve the reading skills of students. The examined situations included TAs being used for supplemental rather than primary instruction, reading approaches used

were evidence-based, so that TAs were not inappropriately asked to make pedagogical decisions, TAs were explicitly and extensively trained in the evidence-based reading approaches, TAs also received training in behaviour management strategies, and finally, teachers provided TAs with ongoing supervision monitoring, and feedback about their instruction.

Findings from the articles mentioned above suggest that lack of training and support in performing their role successfully is an ongoing issue experienced not only by TAs, but also by teachers. While TAs are given autonomy in decision-making of teaching and learning, without direction or adequate supervision, teachers also appeared to be put in a position where they are expected to take roles and responsibilities they have not been properly trained for. It seems however that when both TAs and teachers receive the appropriate support, with opportunities for training, reflective practice, problem-solving strategies and shared understanding about roles and responsibilities, positive outcomes may be found.

2.4.3   Mediated Learning Experience in schools

A total of seven articles were selected regarding MLE and schools, which were conducted in a variety of countries, including Israel, United States, United Kingdom, Czech Republic and Italy. Two articles used quantitative methods (Schur, Skuy, Zietsman and Fridjhon, 2002 and Vedovelli, 2014), comparing experimental and control groups. One article used qualitative method (Pokorná et al., 2015) to report the results of case studies. The remaining articles provided qualitative reviews of the literature and suggested different approaches related to MLE. A complete list of the seven key references and corresponding details can be found in Appendix 3 and a critique of the studies follows.

From the selected articles it was possible to note that many studies focused on the integration of Feuerstein's mediated learning theory within the school curriculum, by either training the teachers or the pupils. Pokorná et al. (2015) reported the results of educational methods based on Feuerstein's Instrument Enrichment Program in schools and consultation centres in Czech Republic. This qualitative study reported case studies involving 6 teachers and 99 pupils. Teachers who were trained in the program reported to apply this method to reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils were asked to talk about previous knowledge about the lesson, make detailed observations of what they were learning, voice their conclusions and explain their answers. Teachers also reported changes in their own approaches and thinking about the children's potential to learn and progress.

The integration of Feuerstein's MLE principles into school curriculum was also described by Vedovelli (2014). The study consisted of a two-year quasi-experiment in a primary school. A total of 82 students were trained on the program; trained teachers were also involved. They were divided into four independent groups (which are equivalent to four classrooms): two experimental and two for comparison. Quantitative and qualitative assessment tools were used before and after the process. Interesting results were observed regarding the quality of teachers' learning mediation. At the end of the first year, the teachers in the experimental group had higher scores than those in the control group in a number of mediations. This suggested that, using the principles and tools of Feuerstein's method, it was possible to develop a curriculum which can monitor pupils' improvement, and with the guidance of teachers, they are able to automate effective cognitive paths. Mann and Hinds (2007) conducted a study with the aim of determining the effect of MLE on teacher practice, when working with pupils at risk of academic failure. Mediation was used as a type of interaction between teacher and student to develop basic attitudes and

competence towards self-regulated learning, having a positive influence on teaching and learning.

A quantitative study carried out by Schur et al. (2002) presented the theoretical background for a constructivist and MLE based approach to teaching science in a secondary school. A sample of 32 students participated in the study involving experimental and control groups to test the effectiveness of the approach. Data analysis identified that the experimental group had a significant improvement in comparison to the control group in measurements of cognitive functioning and problem solving abilities, suggesting that the combination of the constructivist approach and MLE theory was effective with low achieving students.

Kozulin and Presseisen (1995) proposed a learning theory and cognitive education based on a combination of Vygotsky's 'psychological tools' paradigm and Feuerstein's MLE approach. They argued that the cognitive functions required by the educational system might be hindered by insufficient MLE and lack of experience with higher order psychological tools. The centrality of a mediator in learning is emphasized, suggesting appropriate teacher preparation to support students in acquiring strategies of independent learning and problem-solving skills, preparing them for the constant changes in curriculum content. Lidz and Haywood (2014) discussed how teacher as a mediator can engage students in complex interactions involving specific skills related to reading comprehension, such as stop and summarizing, formulation questions, clarification about inconsistencies and prediction about what happens next. Other strategies suggested to address issues on self-regulated learning included modelling and encouraging self-talk in relation to the task and to role play with teacher.

A derivative of Feuerstein's MLE which can be applied by teachers in classrooms was proposed by Haywood (1993). Using a mediational teaching style, the mediator uses strategies such as process-questioning, challenging (requiring justification), bridging, sequence, predictability and order. Haywood (2003) later proposed the Bright Start: A Metacognitive Mediated Learning Curriculum for young children using the mediational learning style. The research provided encouraging results related to children's logical thinking, improved access to education and learning benefits for children with SEND and disadvantaged background. The findings discussed the effectiveness of the program in a variety of countries, including US, Canada, Israel, Belgium, France and Italy. In most studies, children who received the program demonstrated significant improvement in comparison with control groups.

Two articles also examined the use of DA by school staff in the development of process skills in the delivery of curriculum content. Yeomans (2008) suggested that Assessment for Learning, which recommends interactional approaches such as questioning techniques, shares some common ground with MLE. The paper discusses ways in which teaching and mediation could be incorporated in the classroom. Tzuriel (2000) reviewed the research on the DA approach, describing intervention perspectives and suggesting future research. The paper conclude that the DA approach was found useful in assessing outcomes and recommending intervention strategies aimed at enhancing ''learning how to learn'' skills.

2.5   Summary of literature review and possible gaps

This review focused on identifying the current practice of TAs in classrooms and their developing role in the support for teaching and learning of children and young people. It also sought to find out opportunities for professional development TAs receive in their

work place, in order to further enhance their skills. Finally, this review focused on identifying the level of supervision and support TAs receive from teachers and school leaders in further developing their practice. It found an increasing amount of studies in this research area, especially on the interactions TAs have with children in supporting or maybe hindering their learning skills.

In relation to supervision, it was clear from the reviewed literature that there was a lack of a shared method or guidelines for effective supervision. TAs were reported to have high levels of autonomy when supporting pupils and making pedagogical decisions, without the direction of a qualified teacher. Issues related to timing for planning and preparation were raised, as well as lack of opportunities for further training and career development.

Across the majority of studies regarding support for learning, lack of training opportunities for TAs and constant confusion over their roles, was identified, which in turn raise feelings of frustration and lack of confidence. Collaboration and effective communication with teachers was considered beneficial in supporting their role, as well the opportunity to meet with other TAs to share good practice and problem-solve. Studies also suggested that issues related deployment and impact of TAs may be at an organisational level, suggesting a lack of research and support in this area. Additionally, it was possible to identify a growing body of research addressing the pedagogical role of the TA within the classroom, providing a theoretical framework of practice, informed by teaching and learning theories.

The principles underpinning MLE focused on effective interaction between child and adult and seemed to provide useful strategies to promote positive learning outcomes for children. There were a few studies focusing on the implementation of these principles by

teachers within the curriculum. However, there was a gap on the research in which MLE

principles were used in practice of TAs, with regular peer supervision to ensure they were

adequately supported in their professional practice.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Overview of the chapter

This chapter will outline the methodology adopted by the researcher in conducting this study. It will start by discussing the alternative worldviews in relation to ontological and epistemological positions and stating the researcher's position within these philosophical paradigms. The purpose of the research, together with the research questions to be explored will be outlined, followed by the design and method adopted by the researcher. Approaches for data collection and data analysis will also be discussed, with a detailed discussion of the principles of narrative analysis and the stages of analysis adopted by the researcher. Finally, issues related to trustworthiness, validity and reflexivity will be addressed, as well as ethical considerations and protection of participants.

3.2 Development of the current qualitative research

The findings from the previous chapter suggest that there might be a gap in the literature regarding TAs' perceptions about training, group learning and peer supervision in schools. Opportunities for career development and further training were considered beneficial by TAs, as well as opportunities for peer support and reflective practice (Dew-Hughes et al., 1998; Groom, 2006; Devecchi and Rouse, 2010 and Burgess and Mayes, 2009). However, there seemed to be a lack of research exploring TAs' lived experiences of these practices and their perceptions about how these might impact their own practice. The review also suggested that there has been a growing body of research in relation to TAs' pedagogical role in supporting children to develop independent learning skills (Blatchford et al., 2009; Radford et al., 2011 and Webster et al., 2011). Although the principles from MLE (Schur et al., 2002; Vedovelli, 2014 and Pokorná et al., 2015 and) and DA (Tzuriel, 2000 and Yeomans, 2008) seemed to provide useful strategies to

promote children's independent learning skills in schools, there also seemed to be a gap in the literature in relation to the application of such principles by TAs in their everyday interactions with children in the classroom.

Taking into consideration the findings from the literature review, the current study consisted of a training session with a group of TAs, as part of their CPD, followed by two group sessions, to promote problem-solving and shared practice. The training in mediational language, discussed in more details later in the chapter, involved the use of principles from MLE and DA to provide TAs with a framework to support children's independent learning skills. Qualitative analysis was used as a method of exploring TAs' lived experiences of the event of the study and their perceptions about possible impact on their practice.

3.3   Ontological and epistemological positions

Philosophical worldviews still influence research practice and need to be identified and made explicit when choosing research approaches (Creswell, 2009). Paradigms, or worldviews, refer to ways of seeing the world; these are formed by different assumptions, which can guide the thinking and actions of the researcher (Mertens, 2010). Such worldviews define the nature of the world, the place of the individual within it, and the possible relationships (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Positions about reality and knowledge may influence the approach used in the development of a research study.

The following paragraphs will explain how the researcher's worldviews informed the way this research was carried out. Two main paradigms will be briefly discussed in the next section to identify which has the theoretical and philosophical positions to guide the research approach taken by the study. The two paradigms discussed will be post-positivism and social constructionism.

3.3.1 Post-positivism

According to Creswell (2009) the post-positivist stance challenged the traditional notion about absolute truth, held by the positivism, recognizing that, in the study of human behaviour and action, is not possible to be 'positive' about the nature of knowledge. As explained by Phillips and Burgules (2000) post-positivism sees knowledge as speculative; such speculations are supported by strong justifications, however, these are always subject to reconsiderations. Thus, this position rejects the idea that knowledge has its origin in absolutely secured basis, accepting that the fallibility and imperfection of the evidence established in research is unavoidable.

Ontologically, this position agrees that a reality does exist, however, because of human limitations, this reality can only be known imperfectly, making its discovery certain only within the realms of probability (Mertens, 2010). In terms of epistemology, while positivism assumed that researcher and participants were independent from each other (Lincoln and Guba, 2000), post-positivism recognises that the researcher's beliefs and personal biases can influence the outcome of the research, making it necessary for him or her to take a neutral position and follow procedures rigorously to prevent them from influencing the work (Mertens, 2010).

In the context of the present study, it could be argued that the reality of the event existed and each participant would perceive it independently from each other and from the researcher. Additionally, such position would require the researcher to take a neutral position in relation to the study, rather than constructing the understanding together with the participants.

3.3.2   Social Constructionism

This stance offers a perspective that reality is socially constructed, recognising that the influences on individual constructions are preceded by and derived from social interactions. Reality is dependent upon the way groups of people collectively negotiate their ideas (Raskin, 2002). Thus, it is possible to assume that an infinite variety of realities exist. This relativistic perspective is considered to create a society that is more open and flexible, moving people towards interpersonal collaboration (Gergen, 1994)

This perspective emphasizes the world of experience as it is felt and lived by the people active in social situations, placing the production of knowledge within meaning generated through interactions (Raskin, 2002). While for epistemological constructivism, knowledge is a compilation of human made constructions, hermeneutic constructivism considers knowledge as a product of the linguistic activity of those involved. Thus, the role of language is central in understanding how knowledge systems are developed and maintained.

The researcher therefore, rejects the notion of an objective reality, considering that there is no direct access to the nature of such reality. Rather than a direct perception of the reality, our knowledge is constructed through the versions of realities between us (Burr, 2015). It is then, the task of the researcher, to understand the multiple socially constructed knowledge from the point of view of those living the experience. The researcher and participant influence each other in an interactive process (Robson, 2002).

By using language, multiple mental constructions about reality can be presented, which may conflict each other. Willig (2015) described the notion that there are 'knowledges' rather than knowledge, and emphasized the importance of language as a social action which helps to construct reality with a particular purpose. As concepts are constructed,

they may have different meaning for different people, however, perceptions about reality may change during this process (Mertens, 2005). The researcher aims to understand how meaning and knowledge are constructed, allowing the concepts of importance to emerge as they are constructed by the participants using language as a tool to convey meaning.

Another important aspect outlined by Gergen (1991), in relation to the social constructionist perspective, refers to identity. Rather than highlighting permanent qualities for each person, it is understood that people may present multiple or fluid identities, which are linked to the variety of contexts in which they are likely to be identified, talked about and to interact with others. The role of language is also critical in this context, as people's identities may be negotiated according to how people talk about themselves, within specific interpersonal relationships.

3.4   Research paradigm

Social constructionism was therefore the ontological and epistemological position taken by this research, accepting that the knowledge would be socially constructed between the researcher and the participants, and between the participants themselves, through social interactions and dialogues during the study. As a social constructionist, it is assumed that knowledge is local and transitory, as it is negotiated with the people present in each context (Raskin, 2002). Thus, the participants' experience could be understood as a social construction during the study, as well as a meaning making negotiation between researcher and each individual participant during data collection.

This could have repercussions in terms of the type of data obtained, thus particular emphasis was placed on collecting data within context of the study (discussed in more detail below). The researcher sought to understand participants' lived experience about the event from their point of view (Mertens, 2005). This position also accepted that the

study was a result of the researcher's own beliefs systems, interests and values, and not independent from them.

3.5   Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research was exploratory and aimed at understanding how TAs experienced the event of the study, in relation to their professional practice and the development of their work with children and young people. The event, which will be further described below, consisted of a training session in the mediational language approach, delivered by the researcher, and two follow-up group discussion sessions about its application.

The research sought to understand how was the TAs' journey in making sense of this event and how this may have impacted on their professional practice. Robson (2002) states that an exploratory research involves a detailed discovery of a specific experience or event. This research explored how the constructs presented during the training were made real (Willig, 2013) through the use of language and social interactions. The interpretations of this event, by the participant and the researcher, contributed to the process, looking at how the participants made sense of the approach through discussions with the researcher and interactions with the other participants.

3.6   Research Questions

The study focused on exploring the following questions:

- How did Teaching Assistants experienced the initial training session?

- How did Teaching Assistants experienced the group discussions?

- How was the experience of training and group discussions perceived to have impacted on Teaching Assistants' professional practice?

3.7   Qualitative method

In deciding which method of data analysis to use, two different approaches were considered in relation to research questions of this study. Given that the purpose of the research was to explore participants experiences of a particular event, the approaches considered were: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and Narrative Analysis. Both approaches will be discussed in more detailed in the sections below.

3.7.1   Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

According to Smith and Osborn (2015) IPA is interested in exploring in detail how participants make sense of experiences within their personal and social world. The focus is on the meanings that such experiences or events have for the participants. In that sense, IPA is described as phenomenological, as it involves the investigation of the participants' lived experiences in detail, being concerned with their perception about a particular event, rather than trying to objectively produce an account of the event itself. Thus, the theoretical underpinning for IPA is idiographic (Smith, Harre and Van Langenhove, 1995). Although not avoiding generalisations, the researcher carefully works with individual cases in order to make more general claims (Smith and Osborn, 2015). The researcher is interested in learning something from the participants' experiences and it is the meaning of these experiences that is important, with the aim of understanding the complexity of those meanings, rather than measuring them.

Within the context of IPA, research is seen as a dynamic process where the researcher has an active role. According to Smith and Osborn (2015) the researcher attempts to approximate the participants' personal world, to understand their perspective from within, however they argue that this cannot be done directly or completely as this access depends on and is further interfered by the researcher's own views and beliefs. Thus, IPA involves

an interpretation process with two stages, a double hermeneutics. In this process, while the participants are trying to make sense of their world, the researcher is also trying to make sense of the participants' attempt to make sense of their world. Ashworth (2015) described psychology as an interpretative activity, with all types of psychology being a form of construction, thus, research conclusions need to be understood as interpretations.

3.7.2   Narrative Analysis

Narratives can be understood as the means by which humans make sense of the ever-changing world. Bruner (2004) argues that narrative is the only form to describe the 'lived time', explaining that telling life stories are cognitive achievements of memory recall, and thus, are interpretative feats. Narratives can then be understood as a version of reality that is ruled by it's own necessity, rather than empirical or logical requirements (Bruner, 1991). Through narratives, we can bring a sense of order and start to define ourselves, within the disorder in the world, having an understanding about our temporal continuity, and apart from others.

According to Murray (2015) "a narrative can be defined as an organised interpretation of a sequence of events. This involves attributing agency to the characters in the narrative and inferring causal links between events" (p. 87). Ricour (1988) argued that by telling stories about our lives to ourselves and to others, we create a narrative identity. We recognise ourselves from the stories that we tell about ourselves. Thus, he argued, in addition to the sense of order and meaning, narratives also give us a structure to our sense of selfhood.

We, as human beings, use stories to structure our thinking and imagination; making sense of the meaning of our action, through the organisation of symbols in a temporal sequence (Sarbin, 1986). Stories have a beginning, a middle and an ending, holding together

patterns of events. Within these events we describe our difficulties and efforts to find resolutions, which influence the flow of actions that construct our narratives, allowing the inclusion of our motives, as well as the causes of what is happening. Sarbin argued that we impose a structure to our experiences, this structure is present in our views about ourselves and the experiences that are shared with others. The organisation of experiences in terms of stories and narrative structures is universal across human cultures. The emergence of this structure in human thought is dependent upon the perception of time. As we remember, we retell events in a story with beginning, middle and end, placing events within time and space, which is, according the Sarbin, the fundamental defining feature of narratives. Additionally, Sarbin proposed the concept of self-deception, in which people make claims about themselves contrary to the evidence encountered, seeming, to an observer, that the person believes on his or her own story. In order to maintain or improve self-identity, it is assumed that the self-deceiver lives according to a plot structure, telling stories to themselves as well as an audience.

Murray (2015) argued that, as active agents, we recall actions about our achievements as well as the actions that have been suppressed by others. Through the continuity of these actions, put in a narrative form, we are able to define ourselves and to convey our lives to others. The construction of personal narratives, enables us to select aspects of our lives in a certain order, connecting them in a sequence of events.

3.7.3 Summary of both approaches

In line with the epistemological positions and methodology adopted by this research, it can be argued that both approaches possess underpinning principles necessary to an in-depth understanding of the participants experiences. Both approaches are interested in investigating the person's lived experiences of particular events in their lives, having a

focus on their perception about the events, in all their complexity. While IPA is interested in the perceived meaning of these experiences to the participants, narrative approaches involve the organisation of these experiences in a sequential order with a beginning, middle and end when making sense of the ever-changing world. Mishler (1986) argued that the interest of qualitative researchers in identifying themes can often dislocate the storytelling nature of interviews, ignoring their narrative quality. Both approaches accept the active role of the researcher within the process, addressing the interpretive nature of the research.

It is the view of the researcher that narrative analysis would provide the most well-suited approach in relation to the research design. The temporal sequence of events experienced by the participants (training, group discussions and interviews) is in line with the described narrative structures. Additionally, concepts of identity and self-definition through the narratives also address the research questions of the study. In-depth considerations about models of narrative analysis will be discussed below.

3.8   Research Design

To answer the questions a qualitative research design with multiple case studies was adopted. Such design sought to understand the individual stories told by the TAs about their journey during the study; and to explore how their experience of this event may have impacted in the development of their professional practice.

Qualitative research looks at the participants "as someone who has been changed by the experience" (Willig, 2013, p. 3), capturing the subjective 'feel' of this particular condition or experience. Riessman (1993) argued that the primary way that people make sense of their experiences is by placing them in a narrative form. She explained that the 'stories

do not mirror the world out there. They are constructed, creatively authored, rhetorical replete with assumptions, and interpretive' (op. cit., p.5).

A case study can be defined by interests in the individual cases, not by the methods of investigation, focusing on what can be learnt from each case. The research is then, designed to enrich understanding about the case instead of generalization (Stake, 2000). The rational for choosing such approach is guided by the ontological and epistemological positions taken by this study.

3.9   Procedure

As previously mentioned, the method implemented in this research involved the delivery of a training session to a group of TAs, followed by two group discussion sessions with the participants, facilitated by the researcher.

3.9.1   Training session

The initial training session was delivered by the researcher, during the first week of the study, in the staff room provided by the school. It lasted approximately one and a half hour. In the beginning of the session participants were made aware the researcher's own journey towards the development of the study and introduced to the principles underpinning the training (see Appendix 4 for training presentation).

The session then introduced the participants to mediational language approach, which was underpinned by the theoretical principles from MLE (Feuerstein, Klein and Tannenbaum, 1994), the three phases of cognitive functioning (input, elaboration, output), proposed by Feuerstein, Rand and Hoffman (1979), and sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978). A more in-depth description of the training session and the structure of the presentation will be discussed below. The groups sessions are described in 3.8.2

and 3.8.3, whereas the theoretical background which informed the development of the training session is described in 3.8.4.

An initial activity invited the participants to reflect on their practice and their own learning strategies, sharing their views about what works well. Afterwards, alternative views on independent learning and problem-solving skills, based on concepts related to MLE, were discussed in more detail with the participants. The principles related to the input, elaboration, output phases was also discussed in more detail and proposed as a framework for TAs to use in organising their questioning techniques.

During a group activity, participants were given the opportunity to put into practice some of the concepts discussed. In groups, they were provided with an A3 paper, separated into the three learning phases (see Appendix 5). They were then given a list of questions, cut into strips of paper, each supporting each of the phases (see Appendix 6), and asked to discuss amongst themselves which question would support each phase.

Later each TA was asked to reflect on a child they worked with and to make a plan to investigate how they could use the approach to support their learning. At the end of the session, TAs were given a pack (see Appendix 7) containing further information about what was covered during the training and suggestions for additional questioning techniques they could use during their practice.

3.9.2 First group session

During the second week of the study, participants were asked to take part on the first group discussion, which aimed at facilitating further discussions about the training, clarify possible questions about the approach, share good practice and possible challenges encountered during the first week. Additionally, to facilitate further discussions,

participants were provided further resources related to levels of support (see Appendix 8) to address possible challenges related to pupils' responses to their new approach.

During the third week participants were encouraged to meet again, without the researcher, and use that space for further discussions about their practice and to support each other in using or making sense of the approach.

3.9.3   Second group session

Finally, on the fourth week, participants were invited to attend the second and final group discussion. This session followed a similar structured of the first, with the sharing of positive experiences and challenges encountered during the past weeks. Participants were also encouraged to share experiences about the different techniques they had used since the beginning of the study and support each other in addressing any challenges that they might have encountered.

Towards the end of the session, participants were also introduced to solution-circles (Forrest and Pearpoint, 1996) as a model for group problem solving. However, due to timing, and other issues later discussed on Chapter 5, it was not possible for the participnats to practice the model during this session.

3.9.4   Theoretical underpinning of mediational language training

3.9.4.1   Sociocultural theory

Vygotsky (1978) proposed that while material tools serve as means to conduct human influence on an object of nature, which is externally oriented, psychological tools are used to mediate people's psychological processes. He described how children make use of egocentric and socialized speech while solving problems, arguing that the link between these two language functions can be best illustrated when children realise that they are unable to solve a problem themselves. The child then turns to the adult in search for

strategies. Vygotsky explained that the greatest development in the child's use of language as a tool to solve problems occurs when their socialized speech is turned inward. At this point language takes an intrapersonal function, whereas instead of appealing to the adult, they appeal to themselves, using their own internalised tools.

3.9.4.2 *Mediated Learning Experience*

Feuerstein's theory makes a distinction between developmentally predictable 'changes' and 'modifiability', which is actively produced (Kozulin, 2002). According to Feuerstein, Feuerstein and Falik (2010) MLE is different from learning through direct exposure as it introduces order to human interaction with the world.

Mediated interaction consists of groups of parameters which are involved in the phenomenon of human modifiability. The first group contains the three fundamental parameters that create the conditions to make an interaction mediational. Those three parameters are: intentionality and reciprocity, transcendence, and the mediation for meaning. Feuerstein argued that, together, these qualities create the potential for structural modifiability, regardless of cultural, ethnic, racial or socioeconomic differences.

3.9.4.3 *Input – Elaboration – Output*

In the development of the Learning Propensity Assessment Device (LPAD), which has been in existence for over fifty years, Professor Reuven Feuerstein proposed a new field of thinking related to the assessment of cognitive functions – dynamic assessment (Falik and Feuerstein, 2005). Using the LPAD, the examiner could assess the level of cognitive functions of the individual and which deficiencies could be overcome. Such deficiencies are manifested in the three phases of mental act: the input phase, the elaboration phase and the output phase.

According to Feuerstein et al. (1979), deficiencies during the input phase are concerned with the quality and quantity of the data gathered during the attempt to solve or even appreciate the nature of a given problem. The elaboration phase include factors that impede the efficient use of the available data. Finally, deficiencies during the output phase relate to inadequate communication about the final solutions.

Mentis, Dunn-Bernstein and Mentis (2008) succinctly describe each of these phases as follows:

1. Input phase: taking in information (reception); how the information is gathered in ordered to be used to solve a problem.
   e.g. What do you need to do first?
2. Elaboration phase: working on the problem (proce The initial event will produce ssing); how the information is processed.
   e.g. What do you need to do next?
3. Output phase: Communication of response (expression); how the information is communicated or presented.
   e.g. How did you work it out?

3.9.5 Participants

In a case study design, purposive sampling allows cases to be chosen to illustrate features or processes in which the researcher is interested. (Silverman, 2013). Stake (2000) explained that a case study is not a choice of the methodology to be used, but rather a choice about of what is going to be studied. A total of 16 TAs attended the initial training session on mediational language as part of their CPD, provided by the school on a weekly basis. From these, six participants had already agreed to take part on the study and had signed the consent forms prior to the start of the training.

Due to difficulties related to timetable and school schedule, one participant was not able to attend the initial session. One additional individual session was provided for this

participant at a later date, to ensure that the content of the training was understood. However, this participant decided to withdraw from the study after the third week. Another participant, who had demonstrated interest in the study during the training was then contacted and agreed to take part. It is important to point out, however, that this participant was only able to attend the second group discussion, as the first one had already taken place. From the six participants that were involved in the study, two worked within the early years phase of the school, three worked in Key Stage One and one worked in Key Stage Two.

3.9.6   Recruitment

The participants were recruited from a London LA. Initial contact was made with the school's SENCo where the researcher works as a TEP. The purpose and structure of the study was presented and the school interested in participating was asked to distribute the Information Sheet (Appendix 9) and Consent Form (Appendix 10) to all teaching assistants. Participants were recruited on a 'first come, first serve' basis. As part of the agreement with the school, the researcher also provided the training for the TAs who did not wish to participate in the study.

3.9.7   Data collection

In order to gather the data for the purpose of the current research, the author used an interview technique. The interview style was informed by the research design and method of analysis. As the interest of the research was to explore the participants' stories about their journey through the course of the study, narrative interviewing was adopted. Given the specific nature of the event involved in the research design, the interviews were carried out using a semi-structured approach (Appendix 11), with topics such as the training and group discussions being addressed using opened ended questions. This

approach encouraged participants to take the lead in the discussion, constructing their answers in a way that is meaningful to them, and at the same time addressed the research questions of the study.

Although the interviews are symbolic interactions, they still provide the possibly to rigorously collect and examine knowledge about the social world (Miller and Glassner, 2011). Interviews are narrative occasions (Riessman, 2008), with the goal of generating detailed accounts instead of general statements. Both interviewer and interviewee are active participants in jointly constructing meaning. Longer turns are required in order to generate narratives, as one story can lead to another. Riessman explained that it is useful to explore shifts in topic with the participants, including specific incidents and turning points, as these might be associated with meanings connected with different stories. She also pointed out that, as the narrative interview need to follow the interviewee down their trail, which creates possibilities for extended narration, the researcher might be required to give up control of the interview. This may also support in shifting the power relations between participant and researcher.

According to Esin (2011), like semi-structured interviews, narrative interviews use open, non-leading questions. Narrative interviews give priority to the elicitation of participants' stories with minimum intervention from interviewers. This accumulative process turns into collaborative meaning making rather than simply imposing or receiving the interviewer's framework of meanings. Therefore, interviewing and the analysis of the interview require 'close attentiveness to what interviewers and respondents say to each other, and how they say it.

3.10 Data analysis

3.10.1 Narrative analysis

Narrative analysis was adopted by this research in order to analyse the collected data. According to Riessman (1993), the purpose of narrative analysis is to "see how respondents in interviews impose order on the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives" (p.2). Murray (2015) argued that narratives help people to interpret a sequence of events in an organized manner, attributing agency to different characters and making links between the events being told. Analysis of how they interpret the sequence of events and attribute agency to the characters involved in the narrative support the understanding of how they make sense of this event. Riessman (2008) explained that the analyst has interest in how the sequence of events is assembled by the speaker and how language is used to communicate meaning. Additionally, the analyst questions the intention of language, looking at how and why events are told, rather than the content of the language. According to McAdams (1993) most narratives share six features: settings, characters, initiating events, attempts, consequences and reactions. The initial event will produce attempts to reach a certain goal, leading to consequences which may require a reaction from the involved characters. This also reflects on the design of the study, as the training session and group discussions may influence TAs' everyday practice, by attempting to use the approach and discussing their experience.

Two key epistemological approaches can be identified in narrative analysis: the naturalistic and the constructivist approach (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997). The naturalist approaches explore interpersonal relations, using rich descriptions of people in specific conditions, such as trauma. The constructivist approaches are interested in how talk and interaction help to create a sense of social order, being useful when considering the

construction of identities in different contexts, such as within families or education. Esin (2011) explained that, although both approaches are interested in people's experiences, the naturalist views the social world as 'out there', as an external reality to be observed. The constructivist approach, on the other hand, see the world as constantly 'in the making' (Elliot, 2005). Both approaches also differ in the types of questions asked during the process of analysing the narratives. While the naturalistic approach asks questions such as: "What experiences have people had?". The constructivist approach focuses on questions 'how' questions, which might include: "How do storytellers talk about their experiences?"

Ontologically, it was anticipated that the TAs would construct their stories about the event differently, based on their own experiences. Epistemologically, it was accepted that the TAs would co-construct their stories about the training and group discussions with the researcher and the other participants, and that the researcher's own background would inform the study.

Narrative research, different from other qualitative approaches, provides no predefined starting or finishing points (Andrews et al. 2008). Different from content-based thematic approaches, there are no evident categories to focus on, which is arguably linked to disputes over how 'narratives' can be defined. Narratives, however, can enable the researcher to explore different layers of meaning, which can at times be contradictory to each other, bringing them into a useful dialogue, which expands understanding about individual and social change (Andrews et al., 2008).

This methodological approach examines the participants' stories, analysing how they are put together, providing a powerful way to give meaning to the experiences, investigating not only the way in which stories are structured, but also who produces them and by what

means (Andrews et al., 2008). Narratives can be seen as a means to mediate the inner and outer worlds (Mattingly and Garro, 2000), providing a vehicle to talk about our lives, ourselves and our worlds. However, narratives are not created individually, they are created within the relationships between individuals and their external worlds (Smith and Sparkes, 2008). Narrative analysis also provides a useful tool which integrates the complexity of individual's experiences in the construction of stories, rather than using predetermined categories to describe such experiences (Andrews et al, 2008).

3.10.2 Structural model

Labov and Waletzky (1967) developed the structural model of narrative analysis, which examines how the narrative is formed. This model focuses on how an event is told, treating narratives as text that represents past events in a story form. The text is viewed as monologue, rather than co-constructed during the interview. This model assumes that events contain clauses, which have beginning, middle and end. However, other elements can also be found in fully developed clauses. The structure of narratives can be analysed using a six-part model, which uses a 'question-method' to categorise clauses according to each of the elements. Narratives are assumed to provide answers to underlying questions and the clauses have the function of answering these questions. Riessman (2008) argued that the strict use of the structural model can have the effect of decontextualizing the narrative, as it might omit broader narratives and interactional factors that shape the context of the story.

A point of divergence within narrative research concerns whether the stories represent internal states or social circumstance. The assumption that there is a link between narrative and agency can be most commonly found in approaches focusing on personal experience (Andrews et al., 2008). The understanding about individual's thinking and

feeling is one of the most interesting features of such narratives. For Riessman (1993) individuals include actions and past events in their personal narratives to make claims about their identities and construct their lives. What gets included in the narrative and how events are plotted to convey meaning are determined by the individual's agency and imagination.

The narrative analysis of this study was divided in two phases, as described by Murray (2015), one descriptive and the other interpretive, which was preceded by a thorough reading of the transcribed narrative. Once the researcher was familiarized with the structure and content of the narrative, short summaries were prepared in order to identify key features (beginning, middle, end) and sub-plots. A coding frame was then developed, which can be applied to different narratives and capture the overall meaning. The second phase was the connection of the narrative with the theoretical literature used in the interpretation of the story. Stories can be examined for specific elements, such as structure and tone, main themes, which images and metaphors are being used and the underlying values and beliefs. Table 5 provides a brief description of the concepts used for data analysis, related to the structural model.

3.10.3 Dialogical Narrative Analysis (DNA)

According to DNA stories are often told within dialogues. As a representation of our lives, stories can situate people within groups, reshape our past, revive our sense of self, and project our future (Frank, 2005). DNA is interested in understanding how multiple voices can find expression through any single voice. This method of analysis sees stories as composed by fragments from other stories, which are artfully rearranged, but not original, assuming that stories are never entirely anyone's own.

Two conceptual terms are offered by Bakhtin (1984) to describe dialogue within any speaker's story: polyphony and heteroglossia. The former emphasizes how the speaker's voice resonates the voices of other people, who the speaker listens to and also anticipates responses. Heteroglossia relates to the multiple codes of language and genres in which stories are assembled. Heteroglossic dialogue include generalized others from the speech community, rather than specific individuals, within anyone's speech multiple communities intersect. Gergen (2001) discusses the idea of 'social ghosts'; with whom we have private dialogues when reflecting on our experience and in constructing our narratives. Furthermore, we are heavily dependent upon the willingness of co-actors in the construction of our story; our stories must be compatible with those of the other people who are featured in our accounts about ourselves. Thus, our identity is dependent upon the willingness of others to support our version of events. When trying to represent ourselves in particular ways, we are dependent on the willingness of others to allow us to paint a picture of their part in the action that suits our story.

According to Frank (2005) one of the aims of narrative analysis is to bring together diffuse voices, enabling them to be heard alongside other voices that expressed similar experiences, giving shape to what could become a dialogue. In that sense, stories are both internal, as well as external: When considered closely, stories are always borrowed in parts and never anyone's own. Stories need human being in order to be told and human being need stories in order to represent their experiences (Frank, 2012, Mattingly, 1998).

Another commitment in Bakthin's understanding of dialogue is the unfinalized nature of people. In order to understand research as a dialogue, it is important to respect the participants' capacity for continuous change. People tell their stories to revise their understanding about themselves. Any story can be revised by subsequent stories. Tension

is created as the analyst requires that something remains constant. What remains constant, however, are the narrative resources, rather than the storytellers (Frank, 2005). The stability of the narrative resources, such as the character types, plot lines and genres, allows the researcher to draw conclusions, however, this stability of resources should not be confused with the finalisation of the storytellers themselves. Table 6 provides a brief description of the structure used for data analysis, related to the dialogical model.

Table 5 – Description of structural concepts

Structural concepts	Definition
Orientation (OR)	Orientation clauses funtion to provide a setting in which the events of the story are told. It is essential in preserving the context of the narrative.
Complicating action (CA)	Complicating action clauses relate the events of the story. These clauses usually represent time in a linear way with a chronological order folowing the 'then, and then' structure They may relate to a series of events
Resolution (RS)	These are the clauses that tell the listener how the story ends. The result ofnthe narrative.
Evaluation (EV)	The evaluation clauses represent the narrator's perspective on the events. They mediate the 'point' of the story. The narrator may step out the complicating action and tell the poin to the listener; tell how he feels, without interrupting the flow of the story; or reveal emotions as a part of the story
Coda	These clauses link the past world of the story to the present world. They may have the fundtion to 'sign off' the story

(adapted from Labov and Walesky, 1967 and Esin, 2011)

Table 6 – Description of dialogical concepts and questions used during analysis

Dialogical concepts	Description	Questions
Polyphony/ Heteroglossia	The speaker's voice is resonant with the voices of others. Story assembled muiltiple codes, genres and language of a generalized speech community	Who are the people that share the story? What is their role in the story?

Resources	The stories already circulating in the setting, recognizable character types, plot lines, genre choises.	What are the voices' contributions to the story? What are the benefits for the narrator of their involvement?
Identity	Identities that are claimed, rejected or experimented with. Stories enable people to take up identities and delimitate possible identities.	What does the story teach about the narrator? Their becoming in regard to who they are and in regard to whom they might be?
What's at stake	Life as primarily a condition of vulnerability. Storyteling is an act of holding one's own, as a response to this vulnerability.	How does the narrator hold their identity through the story given the event?

(adapted from Frank, 2012)

3.11 Phases of analysis

Before engaging in the stages of narrative analysis, the researcher transcribed each audio recorded interview themselves. During this phase, the recordings were paused several times to adjust the text, in case inaccuracies in typing were recognised. The transcribed interviews were then read, while listening to the audio recording, to allow note-making and the recalling of the interview setting and the participants' interpersonal factors (e.g. laughs, smiles, pauses), to give a more accurate description of their account (see Appendix 12 for a sample of one transcript).
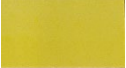
3.11.1 Stage one: Structural Analysis

During the first phase of analysis the researcher re-reads the transcripts, keeping a set of questions in mind to guide the analysis. This process required multiple readings of the transcripts and involved the use of codes for different parts of the narratives. Table 5 provides a brief description and codes for each structural concept. Table 7 provides the questions and colour code used by the researher in order to identify the different forms

used in narrative. For example, the resolution may at times, also have the function of coda, by signing off the story (see Appendix 13).

Table 7 – Questions and colour code used during analysis

Structural concept	Questions	Colour code
Orientation (OR)	Who is the story about, when did it happen? What happened? Where did it happen?	
Complicating action (CA)	Then what happened? What happned next?	
Evaluation (EV)	So, what? What's is the point of the story?	
Resolution (RS)	What finally happened?	
Coda	Returns to the present time of the telling. Signing off the story.	

(adapted from Esin, 2011)

3.11.2 Stage two: Themes within the structure

Once the structure of the transcripts had been analysed, each structural concept was further analysed to identify the themes present in each structure (*orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, coda*). This process enabled the researcher to identify the small stories within the narrative and recognise the story-telling patterns for each participant. Appendix 13, provide examples of how this analysis was completed for each participant.

3.11.3 Stage three: Dialogical Narrative Analysis

The third stage of analysis involved an in-depth examination of the resources used by each participant, providing an insight about the identity they held within the story and the risks or concerns they may have experienced. During this analysis, the researcher also used a number of questions to guide the analysis (see Table 6). The dialogical analysis focused initially on the different resources (*polyphony/heteroglossia*) each participant used to help them with their story. The use of those resources is questioned further, to

analyse how they contribute to the portrait of the participant's identity within the story and what are the risks for them or other characters in the story.

3.11.4 Stage Four: Small stories

This stage involved the selection of the small stories from each of the narratives, according to their structural and dialogical concepts. The selected stories were then transferred to table of analysis (Appendix 14) which enabled the researcher to re-order the stories in sequence of events, with a beginning, middle and end, whenever possible, depending on the narrative style of each participant. The different voices invited by the participants were arranged within the structural concepts, according to the previous stages of analysis.

3.11.5 Stage Five: Summary of small stories

The next stage required a further analysis of the data, which involved the use of the orientation, main themes from the structural concepts and the dialogical concepts related to each of the stories. This allowed the researcher to summarize each story according to the main events, participants' perceptions and resolutions. Additionally, these events were analysed in relation to the identities and stakes identified in the stories. Please refer to Appendix 15 for examples of this stage.

3.11.6 Stage six: Writing the individual narrative

Finally, the information obtained from the previous stage enabled the researcher to write a narrative account for each participant, described in the following chapter. The narratives were re-told using the following structure: each narrative began with an abstract, which was written based on the information provided by the participants during interview and the orientation presented (e.g. English lessons, children, staff meetings). The second element of the narrative involved the exploration of the narrative, in which the events

were re-ordered according to the research questions (e.g. training session, group discussion, impact on practice). Structural and dialogical concepts were described throughout the narratives, which allowed the identification of significant events, participant's perspectives and resolutions.

3.12 Establishing trustworthiness, validity and reflexivity

3.12.1 Trustworthiness

Qualitative research is often evaluated in terms of 'trustworthiness', which is defined by Stiles (1999) as: 'How well can readers trust the methods to have adequately exposed the investigator's ideas to empirical observations and how well can they trust the interpretations to improve people's understanding of the phenomena that was investigated' (Stiles, 1999, p.100). Qualitative researchers acknowledge their subjective position within the research process and instead of attempting to reduce it, reflect on it.

3.12.2 Validity

Yardley (2015) described participant feedback as a way of validating the analysis, ensuring that their views are not misrepresented or influenced by the researcher's values and beliefs. The participants were free to challenge and correct the researcher's assumptions about the meanings investigated by the research. Firstly the researcher attempted to obtain feedback on the study findings from the participants (participant validation). According to Ashworth (2015) interview is a record of the process in which the researcher makes interpretations about the participant's constructions of the world. He argued that, consistent with the hermeneutics of meaning-recollection, the analyses of the interview transcripts should be done in a way that elicits the participant's experiences faithfully. After the analysis has been done, it is then important to check with the participants themselves, in order to ensure that the research interpretation is faithful to

what was meant by them. Secondly, the data collection took place within the participant's workplace, resulting in higher ecological validity (Willig, 2008).

A thorough literature review was carried out to ensure that the researcher remained open to alternative interpretations during the analysis. Regular reflection enabled the researcher to consider the potential impact and importance of the research. The researcher demonstrated sustained engagement with the data. To ensure that the findings emerged from the data, rather than the researcher's pre-conceived beliefs, the Director of Studies reviewed the accuracy of the analysis. All participants received their individual narratives in order to obtain their validation.

3.12.3 Reflexivity

A reflexive approach was maintained throughout the study, in order to encourage as many true responses as possible and manage biased responses from the participants. Maintaining a conscious awareness about how participants can be affected by the researcher's beliefs, whilst at the same time supporting a non-judgemental position and neutral approach during the interview process. The researcher acknowledged how his influences could have shaped the research process, both as a person and as a theorist/thinker (Burr. 2015). While personal reflexivity involves reflecting on how the researcher's own values, beliefs and interests can shape the research; epistemological reflexivity requires the engagement with questions related to how the choices made about the research questions, design and methods of analysis may have influenced the constructions of the findings. This may influence the way in which the research questions could define or limit what can be found and ways in which the design and methods of analysis may 'construct' the data and findings.

Reflexivity encourages the researcher to reflect upon how he might be implicated in the research and its findings. Reflexivity, however, means not only the acknowledgement of personal biases, but it also invites the researcher to reflect on his own reactions to the context of the research. This requires the awareness of the researcher's contributions to the constructions of meaning throughout the research process, also acknowledging the impossibility of remaining outside this construction while conducting the research. Reflexivity then urges us to explore the ways in which a researcher's involvement with the study influences, acts upon and informs research (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999). Reflecting on how this might have also changed his or her way of thinking about the research. It is important to include reflections clearly, honest and informative.

To ensure that the research process is scrutinised throughout, the researcher continuously reviewed his role in the research. This discouraged impositions of meaning by the researcher and thus promoted validity (Willig, 2008). The importance of the role of language was acknowledged, emphasizing the contributions of the researcher' own beliefs, experience, interests and values had in the construction of meaning. Additionally, critical language awareness (Fairclough, 1995) is important in the use of words to describe experience and the meaning attributed to these experiences, as labels and categories used by the researcher may shape the findings. The words we use to describe our experiences play a part in the construction of the meaning that we attribute to such experiences. Language has a constructive dimension, it does not simply mirror reality. This means that the categories and labels researchers use during the research process will shape their findings.

From the beginning of this research I acknowledged and actively reflected upon my role within this study. My personal interests, experiences and views, as a researcher and as a

psychologist, were the driving force behind the choice of conducting this research. It was necessary to address such interests throughout the research process. For example, during the training session I explicitly told the participants my personal journey towards the development of the study. I also emphasized that I was interested in understanding their experiences of using the approach, rather than evaluating its effectiveness. Even though I felt passionate about this approach, as a researcher, I was interested in finding out their personal and professional experiences. However, I understand that this was harder to accomplish than previously anticipated. During individual interviews, especially the first ones, I saw myself asking questions that were in a way evaluating the approach I had proposed. Although unintentional, my personal interests and expectations about this approach influenced my conduct during the interview process. After ongoing reflection, careful considerations about these issues with my Director of Studies and further engagement with the literature related to my research design, I was able to change my approach to the interviews and carefully developed questioning techniques which intended to bring about the participant's stories, rather than leading them towards specific answers.

Another point to be made refers to the language used during the study, which also changed my own way of understanding the research. The term 'mediational language' was a choice made based on my own experience and understanding of what the approach entailed. However, such term could be viewed as quite technical, which could also make it meaningless to someone unfamiliar with it. Such issue was addressed in the beginning of the initial training. I openly explained to the participants that this was the language I had chosen to describe the approach; however, I was also interested in how we could further discuss the use of another term that could be more meaningful to them. Towards the end of the training, after the concepts and principles had been discussed and the participants

had the opportunity to put those in practice, we returned to the discussion of alternative term to describe the focus of the session. The participants decided as group that it would be more appropriate to call it 'questions for learning', which in their view better described the approach.

3.13 Ethical considerations

The current research required approval from the researcher's institution (Appendix 17) and Research Governance Panel from the Local Authority. Addressing a range of regulations, principles and standards of good practice, to ensure the research respected participant's rights, safety and wellbeing, values diversity within society, in accordance with the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (2018) and BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (2014).

3.13.1 Informed consent

After participants have been given the invitation letter (Appendix 9) and had time to ask any questions about the study, participants were given a consent form to signed prior to the beginning of the training session. The study did not involve any deception, as participants were fully included in the research process, during training, group discussions and interviews, participants were informed that the interviews would be audio recorded.

Participants were clearly advised, through the invitation letter and verbally, that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time, without being obliged to give any reason. They were also informed their right to withdraw their data from the study.

3.13.2 Anonymity and confidentiality

Participants contact details were kept in a safe place, only accessible to the researcher, who ensured this was not shared with anyone else. During interviews participants were

ensured that their names and identifying references would changed in the transcription of the interviews. Additionally, participants were given the option of using a different name during those sessions, so that anonymity and confidentiality could be ensured.

3.13.3 Protection of participants

Participants were part in group discussion during the study to support them to reflect and problem-solve about any issues that might come up during the duration of the study. The sessions focused on positive achievements and ways forward, ensuring that ground rules for those meetings (e.g. expectation, confidentiality) were established from the onset, making use of a structured approach for the discussions.

Mertens (2005) explains that this is an interactive process, where each one influences the other, resulting in a more interactive mode of data collection. However, values and beliefs from the researcher that might be influencing the research should be made explicit. Assuming that data outcomes and interpretations are within the contexts of the participant's own experience, and apart from the researcher, so that data can be tracked back to the original source, where the interpretations become explicit.

3.14 Summary of the chapter

The current chapter presented the methodology and research design adopted by the researcher in the study, with reference to the research aims and research questions. Considerations regarding the design were discussed in terms of the ontological and epistemological positions, adopting a social constructionist paradigm. Research procedures were described, outlining the theoretical underpinnings of the mediational language approach, the details involved in the delivery of the training session and group discussions. Then, considerations were made in terms of the selection of narrative analysis, with the stages of analysis also described. Finally, issues related to ethical

research, validity and trustworthiness were discussed, with reflexivity matters being

addressed.

Chapter Four: Findings

4.1 Overview of the chapter

This chapter will focus on presenting the findings following the narrative analyses of each participant. The analytical process used in this study will be revisited, this time with a more detailed description of the context in which they were used. Following this, the individual story of each participant (representing the findings following analysis) will be presented. The chapter will end with an overview of the findings, in relation to the narrative concepts, outlined in Methodology Chapter, which will be discussed and evaluated in more detail in the concluding chapter of this study.

The following sections will begin with a brief introduction to the story of each participant. The structural concepts (*orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution and coda*) were used to analyse how each narrative was formed when telling the past events. The dialogical concepts (*polyphony, heteroglossia, identity and stakes*) were used to provide an in-depth analysis of the participants' experience of the event, by examining how the dialogues, with multiple voices invited into the story, allowed the expression of their views and demonstrated how they were able to hold their identity in each situation. The narratives have been ordered according to the sequence of events experienced by the participants during the course of the study, which is in accordance with the research questions from this study. In that sense, the narratives begin by exploring TAs experiences of the training session, followed by their experiences of the group sessions and finally the impact of the event on their practice.

The reference to citations will be taken from each specific transcript and will be signposted using the formal (page: line) format.

4.2 Individual narratives

4.2.1 Paula's story

4.2.1.1 Abstract

Paula is a HLTA, who likes interacting with children in a creative way and wants them to enjoy their learning. She values being part of a supportive team in the school and challenges herself in developing as a professional. Paula tells the story of someone who has learnt from her experience of the training; changing the way she worked and thought about the children. She used a range of dialogical resources to demonstrate how she reflected about the event and the impact this had on her everyday practice. She gave voice to the children she works with, putting herself in their place as an attempt to understand how they responded to her new way of working. She also used dialogues with her work colleagues to express her views about team work and peer support and their impact on her professional development. Paula used a consistent structure whilst telling her story, providing details about the settings and characters involved and keeping the point of the story and her perspective clear throughout.

4.2.1.2 Exploration of the story

The initial training session was "what triggered it all" (Paula's transcript – 19:397). Paula felt that the sorting activity "was really good because we don't realize these are some of the questions we ask day to day, but what stage is that?" (4:80). The dialogue ("that's the input question, that's the elaboration question"; 4:79) exemplifies a discussion with the other TAs about the stages of questioning. Her own voice in the dialogue is affirmative, emphasizing her engagement with the approach. This helps her to hold the opened minded and flexible *identity* she has developed after experiencing the event. "So, it's nice to see, again, how people are adapting to the different stages" (4:86). Paula uses a dialogue with

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a child (1:14) to provide an everyday scenario and exemplify the change from giving answers to asking questions. Using her inner voice, she reflected about her work back to class; demonstrating that she was thinking about what she had learnt ("Oh, this question I just asked that child, is this output?"; 19:400)

Paula's describes her insights and: "Making sense of that theory, like that point, has then made me conscious and reflective" (19:409), continuing with the *complicating action* that she "didn't consciously think: I'm going to take that theory" (6:110), because the "theory doesn't go hand in hand with what is practical in schools" (5:103). However, the resolution for her is her acknowledgement that "the theory has some points behind it, it definitely backs it up, so there is evidence to say that it works to an extent" (5:121). She reflected about the dependence children have on adults, and how her change in position about children's capabilities ("No, the child can do it"; 6:127) can impact on their learning.

Although Paula described the training session as "quite technical" (15:314), she provided an insight into the 'Eureka moment' when she made sense of the training. "We are using questions for learning, and learning can not only build on, I cannot only just be related to children, but it's about us, coz we are learning about ourselves" (15:321), a higher-level *resolution* for Paula.

In relation to the group discussions with other TAs, Paula explained that "it was nice to share, because everyone brought different feedback. How they are using the different techniques" (1:19), which could be considered a coda for Paula's story. She used voices from the group, giving different arguments about an issue (10:228). This benefited the story by creating a scenario where she could reflect about her position in relation to others ("then you realise where you stand"; 11:231). She described her own experience of group

discussions with teachers and TAs, during the 'phase meetings' within the school, as "the best things we do" (10:206), "because not one perspective is always right" (10:218). Here, the *orientation* is Paula being part of her team ("We are a team of HLTAs"; 12:258), explaining that "it's good to have that support of similar people" (13:269). Using an example of a playground conflict, during lunch time, she described an example of *resolution*, i.e. how they worked together to solve the problem (14:284), showing her ability to work as part of a team and make use of peer support. She also described a conversation with her line manager, demonstrating she is aware of her skills, challenges and she understands what she needs to do develop as a practitioner ("Oh, you know, I'm really enjoying this; I push myself to do this"; 12:251).

Paula's *coda* is her *identity* of a professional who uses a range of techniques to support and assess children's learning, by reflecting about her current and former practice and the impact on the children (Are they learning? What are the different questions I could ask the children? What are the different ways I can assess?"; 2:30). The dialogue with the child (24:506) helps to exemplify the point about helping them take ownership of their learning, which demonstrates that she promotes independence. The previous inner voice (24:515), presenting different views about the child's abilities, demonstrates change and growth. The child's voice gives the ideal scenario where a child has developed independent thinking skills (25:518). The change in her point of view about the children's ability ("No, they can do this"; 26:533), demonstrates that the change in approach has given the results she wanted ("That's how it should be"; 26:550).

The *resolution*, a change in approach, is echoed on her dialogue with children in the classroom (2:37), where she now uses questions to talk through problems (3:61), demonstrating her application of the input-output framework. In the process of adapting

to this approach, she reflects about her practice ("I'm here. I'm shadowing what they are doing but taking a step back"; 4:56), and becoming "more opened minded… have to adapt myself… made me more flexible" (4:71). Using role play during a maths lesson, Paula demonstrated that she was able to respond in a meaningful way to children's needs by putting herself in their place, empathising with them and joining their world to help them through the problem (7:134). By switching roles, Paula demonstrates children's engagement in learning in a way that they get excited about (7:162). "So, I became them and they had to become me" (7:146). "At the end, they all completed their work" (8:167). Role play is also used during an English lesson, where she makes mistakes on purpose and the children need to explain what was wrong with the sentence. Paula switches roles back and forth, from child to adult, during role play; however, she switches back to adult role when explaining the point of the task and next steps ("You should have put a coma there Paula, silly; See? Now this is what you need to do to you own work…"; 9:177).

She reflects on her previous approach and views of the children's abilities ("Ah, it's gonna confuse them"; 9:184) in comparison to her current beliefs about children's capacity to 'pick-up' the mistake (9:186). Paula sums up her interactions with children by saying that "literally is me asking, questioning their answering" (3:65) and "they are teaching themselves through their own answers" (4:67).

4.2.2 Sarah's story

4.2.2.1 Abstract

Sarah is an experienced early years practitioner, who cares about children's well-being and values the development of their independent thinking skills. She described her experience of the event of the study in relation to her current practice and previous experience. Sarah used a range of dialogical resources to tell her story, such as inner voice

to demonstrate reflective thinking, classroom voice to describe sequences of events in the lesson and children's voices to show the impact of her practice on their learning. The use of these features helps her to hold her *identity* in the stories, set the tone and present *what is at stake*. Sarah provides stories with a good level of context, which helps to orient the listener and presents the point of the story and a *resolution* throughout. Finally, she makes use of *coda* in a few instances, which helps to bring the stories back to present tense and finish off.

4.2.2.2 Exploration of the story

At the beginning the *orientation* is provided by Sarah explaining that a lot of the questions included in the significant event (the training) she was already using on a daily basis, which she found reassuring, because it made her realise that "you are on the right track" (Sarah's transcript – 1:15), "you are doing the right thing to support the children…" (1:15). Even though the questions were similar, Sarah demonstrated commitment to try to use the questions and "incorporate everything… during the day" (1:8), so that the child does the talking, expressing themselves and extending their learning. "We model for them…, next time they're going to say it correctly" (2:35).

She described a writing activity she did with a group of children in which they first model, then share ideas, with lots of questions and then writing. She said that sometimes she makes mistakes on purpose. "We act like we don't know and then they are the ones who correct"; 3:53), so that the children spot the mistake and correct the adult. The point is to show that it is ok to make mistakes. Sarah uses a dialogue in the classroom to demonstrate her use of a range of skills and techniques to support the children's thinking skills in the classroom (2:44). The child's voice benefits the story because their reaction to the mistake confirms the efficacy of the technique in supporting their thinking skills and helps to make

the story more interesting and fun. This story's *coda* is that Sarah portrays herself as an experienced professional, who promotes independence by using a range of techniques.

This is present throughout Sarah's narrative, for instance in another classroom situation which she recollects, where children are making models using construction kits, to provide an example of the questions she was already using. Although the children are a silent presence, the dialogue (4:81) suggests they are responding to the questions. This benefits the story because they are the characters who need help and demonstrates that children like to interact and show her their work. Sarah's professional *identity* and knowledge of her role ensures that those interactions can provide children with the opportunity to think independently and develop a range of skills. "We always encourage them to think about the next steps" (4:99). She thinks it is important to sometimes switch position with the child, which help to reflect on their responses and see if they have understood. "…so, they learn from us, but as much as we learn from them as well. So, it' like it goes both, in both ways" (6:123). Sarah holds her *identity* as a reflective and conscious professional, who promotes such skills to children. Her ability to support children's independent and reflective thinking might be at stake and her reflection about their responses help to address this issue.

Sarah's *resolution* is being reflective of her practice, aided by practical experiences, both with adults and with children, in the form of discussions with TAs, working with children, or phase meetings. For instance, she views the group discussions with other TAs as good way to hear about what others are doing and what strategies they use as well, which helped to reflect on her own practice, "in other ways we work all the same" (6:142). She explained that working with children at the foundation stage is about helping them to get used to boundaries and to deal with problems independently, by explaining and repeating

the same things to them, "lots of talking and lots of modelling" (9:203). As part of her practice Sarah takes part in weekly phase meetings, where nursery staff have discussions about different children's needs and share their experiences. This helps them to talk through problems, try different strategies and think about next steps. Sarah thinks that "the reflection time is really important" (11:245). Explaining that "we need to look at the bigger picture and then find out more about it" (11:257). The dialogue with colleagues demonstrates how they share information and discuss ways forward. The inner voice ("What a day!"; 11:247) expresses her feeling at the end of the day. This self-dialogue set the tone of the story by demonstrating she was tired, it was a difficult day, and so this will be discussed with the team. Sarah shows that she is part of a supportive team, who help each other in difficult situations and work together to support children. She also holds herself as caring and sensible to the problems children may have outside school. Children's well-being is *at stake*, as their ability to 'look at the bigger picture' may have an impact on how well these children will be supported on a daily basis.

In Sarah's experience, the event of the research could be summarised as "having the training, putting into practice and then come back and feedback to the group" (7:149). So, it was about reflecting more and learning from each other's experiences. Reflecting about how this helps them [TAs] and the children, "learning from experience and then from one another as well" (7:167). She uses her inner voice ("Ok, I know what's going on"; 7:155) to demonstrate her thought process in understanding or making sense of the event. Holding herself as participative and reflective; being able to demonstrate that she understood the process.

What stood out for Sarah from this experience was being more aware of the theory behind what she was already doing, understanding the "theory side of things" (12:273). She uses

her inner voice to provide examples of her reflective thinking about the links between theory and practice ("Ok I'm doing these questions because I need to…. get them to do, thinking independently"; 12:270) demonstrates that she thought about what was discussed and about her own practice. Sarah reflected about children's reactions to the use of questions. She said that "it's things we were doing anyways" (14:306), concluding that they responded spontaneously, but in different ways. She believes it is important to ask them questions at their level of understanding, giving them time to respond. Finally, she said that "what this session helped… having in mind things we do… we do it for a reason" (14:313).

4.2.3 Jenny's story

4.2.3.1 Abstract

Jenny is a HLTA who works with Year One children, with different levels of ability. She supports their learning in the classroom, through one to one sessions, group interventions and covering lessons. Jenny values being part of a supportive team of HLTAs. She uses a range of dialogical resources to tell her story, inviting multiple voices to provide different points of view and help her reflect about the event. Jenny's story has a consistent structure, which helps to keep the flow of the story and provides a clear insight about the point of the story and her perspective.

4.2.3.2 Exploration of the story

Jenny tells a story of someone who has changed with the experience of the event. She changed her way of thinking about her role and responsibilities in the school, she changed her beliefs about what children could do independently, which made her realise that she "had to move away" (Jenny's transcript – 7:270). Jenny cares about children's learning and worries about them becoming "lazy and dependent" (6:256); and thinking: "I'm not

gonna do it. You are going to be there to keep me going" (6:258). In a conscious effort to prepare them to this change, she uses her inner dialogue with the children to explain that "it's happening! Nothing can be done about it! It's going to happen. So, just gonna have to get used to it" (7:280). However, at the same time, she reassures them by saying "you've got those skills" (7:291) and also reassures herself about this change ("I'm not going to just got back to my old ways"; 7:283). Although Jenny wants to help the children to learn, she becomes frustrated when realising that they may expect her to give them the answers. She wants to challenge them by questioning them, but she is also worried, because she doesn't want "to put that much pressure on them and they switch off" (3:107).

When talking about the group discussions with other TAs, Jenny felt that "there were some good things you pick on" (3:88), because she could see that other colleagues were using similar techniques with different age groups. This gave her a better idea of what children were able to do. She said that working together and sharing information with the other two HLTAs, who have different experiences with the same children that she works with, impacted on her views about what children can and cannot do. She wants children to enjoy their learning and her previous views of not putting too much pressure on them changes as she shares information with colleagues. Jenny invites different voices into the story to demonstrate how these dialogues took place (3:97). She also uses her inner dialogue to show her change in position about the children, which is a turning point on her approach to work with them ("No, I can challenge you, because you do have the information, you do know what you are doing"; 3:110).

The *coda* here is also Jenny's *orientation*, as she values children's participation in lesson and wants them to learn, but she also wants them to feel comfortable while they are learning. The change in her views and expectations about children's ability is reflected in

her new attitude and approach during lessons. As she explains that it is "about taking a step back and seeing them taking ownership of their learning" (4:149); "trying to get them to a place where they know the questions are coming" (4:159); "so, it's getting them thinking and getting them doing" (5:184). Although this new approach of taking a step back "was hard at the beginning" (5:188); because of "that seeing of them struggle" (5:189); it also helped her realise that children were still learning from each other, by speaking in their own terms.

Jenny uses a range of classroom voices to demonstrate her previous classroom dialogue with the child, before stepping back ("Come on, how do you do this, how do you do that?"; 5:206), then just after stepping back, putting the responsibility back on the child ("You know what you are doing. What do you put here?... So, what going in that box?"; 5:213); and finally, when she became more confident with the change and her role in the classroom ("No, you can do it…If you are stuck put your hand up, you can ask"; 6:234). The inner dialogues with the children ("I'm giving you too much. I'm here to help you… I'm here to explain, help you understand, help you learn"; 6:226) are used to explain how she is feeling about the change and helping her to come into terms with it. They also show possible conflicting ideas about her role and responsibilities when supporting the child.

This new approach has also facilitated changes in the classroom dynamics and in her relationship with the children by "opening up for everybody" (9:360); as they are more confident to talk and share ideas and participate in her lessons, creating a sense of unity in the classroom. So, she is not only taking the lead when necessary, but also "more involved" (10:446) and becoming a "member of the class" (10:438).

Jenny's affirmation that "obviously something had to change, because I've changed" (12:508), is her *evaluation*, as she has now "taken a more relaxed approach" (12:517) (a

mini-*coda* in her narrative). This realisation makes her question, not only her practice, but also the systems around her. The dialogue between the SENCo and a child (13:538) serves to prove the point that professionals are more concerned with task completion rather than learning. The fact that the child could not answer the questions about the lesson proves that they don't have enough time to learn. This provided another reason for her to change her approach. The reflection of not being a teacher also helps her to think about her own practice and how she can improve, reassuring herself about what she can do and the impact it will have on the children. "So, by me changing one thing, I can change ten for them" (13:574).

Jenny concludes her story by saying that "the turning point was knowing they can do it" (14:585). The different voices help to tell story of how the changes in her views about the children changed the way that she interacted with them in the classroom. This is demonstrated by the previous inner voices (14:612), reflecting about the children's abilities and her current dialogues with children (14:610), which exemplifies how she is now "pushing without knowing" (14:608). The different voices used in the story about the group discussion reflect the process she went through during the study. The inner dialogue with TA (16:699) shows that she was still making sense of the training and reflecting about her own practice, thus still defensive in taking other people's suggestions. She then uses her inner voice to demonstrate that she was able to "turn" (16:707), becoming then more willing to "have a go", rather than being stuck in her ways. The group discussion voice (18:769) confirms that she is now "at that stage" (18:769), confident and, just like the children, she was able to adjust.

4.2.4 Tracy's story

4.2.4.1 Abstract

Tracy is HLTA who works in a primary school in London with children in Years One and Two. Her story changes from different settings (e.g. classroom, meetings, training), where she works and interacts with a range of different characters (e.g. HLTAs, TAs, teachers and children). She works with children of different ability levels in Maths and English lessons and she also delivers interventions to groups of children. Tracy tells the story of how she used questioning during her work in school, describing the different types of questions she prefers to use, the obstacles of using these, such as lack of time for pre-planning, her understanding of the theory behind using questions and the impact on children's independent learning and her professional role. Tracy also talks about the importance of effective communication with teachers and other professionals within the school in supporting children's learning.

4.2.4.2 Exploration of the story

Tracy starts her story by providing a summary about her experience of taking part in the event, including the training and group sessions. Tracy expressed her views about the sessions with other TAs as "it's good to share ideas" (Tracy's transcript – 1:5). She explained her understanding about the training ("what questions do we use to help the children become independent learners"; 2:29) and outlined the *complicating action*, in the examples of some of the obstacles she encountered when attempting to put some of the concepts into practice, such as "time to pre-plan" (1:11) and being "difficult to put it into… the environment" (1:10).

Tracy explained that instead of setting aside and thinking about specific questions to ask during lessons, "you're going along, in the classroom" (1:13) and "adapt to the child and

the situation" (2:43). The concept of "thinking on the spot" (15:323) appears throughout her narrative and seems to be used to demonstrate her ability to respond to different situations which is a *resolution* in her narrative. She uses the example of a recent maths lesson in which she used a range of questions in the interactions with a child that "struggles with maths" (3:46). During these sequence of interactions Tracy invites different voices to be part of the narrative. These classroom voices help to explain what the task entailed and demonstrate how she used the questions to support the child. Tracy also uses inner voices, which provided insights about her own thought process when assessing the child's needs and level of understanding, which then informed her approach (e.g. prompts, encouragement) to support the child to complete the task independently. Tracy's initial story comes to a resolution when she "was able to see she [child] could do it herself" (3:63). In this part of the story the child is also given a voice, which seems to serve the purpose of demonstrating the child's understanding after the support. Her presence is important in confirming that she was able to complete the work ("Look Tracy I'm done. I finished it"; 4:83). This not only helps to make the story more credible, but also helps Tracy to hold her professional identity, by confirming that her approach works.

After describing her interaction with one particular child, Tracy's story then moves to the wider school context, in which she describes her relationship with work colleagues, such as other HLTAs and class teacher, in different settings (e.g. staff training, phase meetings) as well as her work with groups of children during interventions and classroom work. Although difficulties related to lack of time are still apparent; Tracy emphasizes the importance of working together and have "enough information" (7:154) when assessing children's learning needs. She also explains the different roles and responsibilities she has in relation the other TAs and describes her relationship with the class teacher ("I'm able to vice-versa, the teacher and us can have that discussion"; 9:196) when sharing

information about different children. In this part of the story, Tracy describes herself, during the assessment of children, as someone who communicates effectively with others to find out information about children; also as a source of information to others ("Yes, they managed to do that"; 9:197), giving a sense of equality in relation to other professionals. This helps her to hold her *identity* as part of a team as well as her status as a valuable and resourceful professional within the school.

Tracy also talks about the different types of questions that she prefers and their use within different contexts, such as during an English lesson, with a group of children with different abilities. Similar to her relationship with other professionals, Tracy emphasized the importance of sharing information, now between the students, who give examples of their experiences. The voices that Tracy brings to this part of her narrative represent her role in leading a classroom ("Ok, think about what you did today? What did you do this morning? How did you get ready for school today? What did you have to wear?"; 12:253) and how she responds to their answers and guides them according to their level of need ("some of them can't have the language, or they don't have the experience that they can draw on"; 12:247).

Towards the end of her narrative, Tracy revisits some of the concepts previously discussed, such as 'sharing ideas', 'thinking on the spot', 'pre-planning' and the reassurance that "ah, we do do that actually" (16:330). She describes some of the other obstacles she faces when using questions to support children, this time related to the child's lack of response or understanding. Tracy returns to the maths lesson, in which she describes how she uses a range of skills and resources to support the child moving from "nothing" towards "getting somewhere" (19:397) by talking through the task and the method with them. This helps to affirm her view of herself as a professional who thinks

on the spot and is able to respond to the child's needs, also having high expectations and clear understanding of the curriculum whilst helping a child, which confirms her value within the classroom.

Finally, Tracy reflects on her own practice in encouraging children and promoting their independent learning by standing back and not providing answers ("I didn't do much. The child did most of it"; 21:438). She then describes a situation in which she realizes that one child overheard her conversation with another child and returned to her seat without having to ask her help. Tracy uses her inner dialogue to evaluate the situation ("Ok, it is working"; 23:485), realizing the effectiveness of her work. She also uses dialogue with children from the classroom to demonstrate that they are listening to her questions and responding ("I'm finished; Ok, let's see your book"; 23:491). This validates her role in promoting independent learning, by asking questions, and her value within the classroom.

4.2.5 Emma's story

4.2.5.1 Abstract

Emma is an experienced early years practitioner, who has also worked with other year groups within the school. She values the free flow aspect of the early years settings, as this gives children the opportunity to learn through play and from each other. Emma recognised the differences in approaches between early years and other year groups and believes it is important to keep that in mind when supporting children's learning. Emma provided enough information about the characters involved in her story, presenting some of the challenges she encountered along the way and reflecting about her practice. Emma invited the voices of children she works with to demonstrate her commitment to apply the method and her understanding about their levels of need.

4.2.5.2   Exploration of the story

Emma begins her narrative by talking about the initial training session with the rest of the group, which she said contained information she already "knew about it (Emma's transcript – 1:4). She explained that sometimes it can be "difficult to apply" (1:5) this method of asking questions, because it "difficult to give that time to the children" (1:11), so she felt it would benefit older children more. She felt that the event (training) helped her become more aware of this method and the "theory behind" (5:96) and to understand why she was doing things in a certain way, confirming that her practice had a theoretical base, "so it just clicks into place" (6:106). She talked about her views on the importance of trying to use it, but also prefers avoiding to "bombard" (2:26) children with questions when they are stuck. Emma said that sometimes she forgets to ask children questions while they are playing, because she believes children learn through play and hoped they will learn independently and "move on by themselves" (5:92) – this could be a complicated action on Emma's narrative.

She described a session on magnets with a group of children, explaining that sometimes for younger children the "why questions are a bit tricky for them" (3:44). She said that she tries to encourage peer support, because they might be able to understand better if another child explains it; and also, because they can learn from each other. Emma used a dialogue with the children during this session to exemplify a situation when some of them could not answer the 'why' question she was asking ("'Why is it sticking to, like, metal and not sticking to plastic?' But they weren't ready to share why"; 3:50). This helped to demonstrate that she was attempting to use the method during her practice. She also used her classroom voice in this dialogue to demonstrate how she encouraged peer support ("well, why don't you ask a friend first?"; 4:61). However, she acknowledged that

sometimes further explanation from an adult is also necessary ("so, sometimes you need to explain some more"; 4: 63).

In terms of the group sessions with the other TAs, Emma said it was an "opportunity to get familiar with the idea first and share" (4:68) with other colleagues, having a better understanding of how to support children in the school. This was because of the differences across the year groups. She explained that having this understanding can also help them better prepare children for the "upper years" (4:74). Emma told the story of a little girl who was working on a little project at nursey and how she noticed that the child was tackling the task differently from the other children, using questioning ("Oh, it's not working. Should I try this?"; 5:80"). She recognised the child's skills to be equivalent to a Year One child. Emma's *orientation* here is her belief that it's important to understand the skills children will need in the other year groups to help them move up. During this part of the story Emma used the child's voice, questioning herself, which she recognised as the behaviour of a child in Year One. This reinforced the argument that her assessment of the child's skills was accurate. Her professional experience and knowledge were at stake in this story. She held her *identity* of an experienced and attentive professional who thinks about the school as a whole and seeks to support children according to their strengths and needs.

Towards the end of her narrative Emma's *orientation* and *resolution* combine into an emerging *coda*, as she expressed how much she enjoys interacting with children in the nursery and the importance of relating with them "not just on a work base" (6:117). However, she said she doesn't always have enough time to do this, due to work demands. Emma believes that there are more opportunities to interact with children in the nursery setting than "upstairs" (6:120), referring to the children in the upper year groups. She

explained that she prefers the free flow from "downstairs" (7:124), because children have the opportunity to play and learn "at their own leisure" (6:119); but when children go "upstairs is like, bam bam bam" (6:120), because of all the other subjects. Emma talked about her previous experience of working with children upstairs, where she had ten children, each one with "issues with their learning" (7:128) and she had difficulties in understanding their needs. She explained that, because everything is so structured, you may have less chance to interact with the children. This structure from doesn't allow the children to learn independently. However, because of how the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is, children have the opportunity to explore the environment and try to think for themselves. She used a child's voice to provide an example of how the child would be asking questions independently whilst trying to solve a problem ("if it's not successful, why it's not successful? What can I do?"; 7:134). This helped her to hold her *identity* as someone who wants to help children to progress by understanding where they are and where they are going to. Giving them the opportunity to try and learn by themselves, rather than imposing one way of thinking or 'bombarding' them with questions. Finally, she said it is about understanding the curriculum across the year groups and being aware of their objective.

4.2.6   Carol's story

4.2.6.1   Abstract

Carol is an experienced TA, who works with children with a range of language and learning needs. She cares about their learning and worries about how they will be able to cope without the support they need. The experience of the event helps her reflect about her role within the school and the importance her input has on children's learning. Carol uses many dialogical resources, such as inner voice, classroom voice and children's

voices, to reflect and express her views and hold her *identity* within the story. Carol's value is at stake in some parts of the story, as she tries to find the balance between providing support and promoting independent learning for children. The structure of Carol's story seems to focus around the complicating action and evaluation, with inconsistent use of orientation in some occasions.

4.2.6.2   Exploration of the story

Carol presents as supportive and willing to try new things to improve. She reflects about her own practice and her frustrations about how much support she gives to enable children's understanding ("Why aren't they getting it? Ok, I have to try something else then"; Carol's transcript – 2:32). This reflection also helps her to think about other ways of working ("I'm going to think of that more now"; 2:46). Although Carol found it hard to make sense of the event (training) at first, she held herself as someone who tries hard and does not give up easy ("Ok, then, what can be the input part of my, on my part?"; 3:52). She values children's contribution in lessons and worries about her role in supporting this ("So, I want children to ask a question about that specific activity"; 3:59). Using her classroom voice, she demonstrates how she supports the children by modelling and "filling the gaps… in their learning" (3:66).

Carol is aware of the importance of reflective practice, as she has attended other trainings with her colleagues. She also understands children's difficulty to process too much information ("you can see them, physically like, they're trying to digest that bit of information"; 4:94) and thus, prefers to help them one thing at the time ("I don't want to overload the children with too many questions"; 4:91).

The *coda* seems to be related in this story with Carol's *identity* being related to her having a very important role for children: "I play very important role I their learning… this

training and this… I've become more aware of that. How much my input is necessary and important to these children"; (5:112). She worries about how much children need her support ("if I wasn't there, they would be so distracted, go off to the table, be a bit lost"; 5:109) to help "wake up their learning" (5:122) by asking questions. Carol's realisation about the importance of her role in supporting children's learning is further explored during a maths lesson. She uses a range of dialogical resources to tell this story; inviting different characters to help explain the point to the story. The adults' voices are used in the beginning of the story to demonstrate the scenario where they give a lot of instructions to children ("You've got to do this"; 8:188) and towards the end, to show that children actually need that input ("This is why we need it"; 8:205). Three different children's voices are used in the story. Child A acts as a hypothetical child, arguing with an adult about the instructions ("Why? Why are you asking me to do that?"; 8:192). Chid B, appears to be based on a real child, who repeatedly asks the 'why' questions. The behaviour is exaggerated, suggesting that the child is not seeing the whole picture. The dialogue during the maths lesson enforces the argument that adults need to explain things to children ("Why, why, why"; "Ok, you can't ask why for everything yeah, because it's now becoming irritating"; "Why is this [maths] important"; "Obviously money, you're going to deal with money when you grow up, you want to have a job"; 8:198). Finally, Child C, provides a reflection that a child is unlikely to have, without the help from an adult ("Oh yeah, why we need to do this calculation?"; 8:200). This further supports the argument that they need the explanation from the adult. Carol explains that "we need to tell them, they don't know it, kind of instinctively" (8:202). "So, I think we need to give them a full cast of the future" (8:205).

In terms of the group session with the other TAs, Carol felt that "they were ok. I wouldn't say they were like, so enlightening, Eureka moment and like, yes. I felt like they were

ok." (6:145). Concluding that she "didn't, to be honest, feel something changed" (6:165).

Carol explained that she benefited more from "whatever you gave me and one of the main INSET" (18:475) and the group sessions did not have such an impact "because we work in different phases, so nothing relates" (18:481). Finally, she explained that "we are just independent, we just wanna, we just get on with it" (18:482).

She understands that children have different levels of need and demonstrates her "conscious effort" to check the child's learning ("What did you learn? You tell me"; 11:273). Carol explains that "the input is from me, and to elaborate it for them, and then the output is the result" (11:269). Carol cares about the impact she has on children's learning and questions her own effort in teaching them ("What's gone missing?"; 11:282); "Is it the fact that I elaborated the vocab"; 11:294). So, she wants "them to ask questions and learn from each other" (12:309) and phase herself out of it (12:319). She describes a hypothetical scenario in which children become aware of the pattern of questions being asked ("Ok, yeah, ok, every day she is asking questions about this, she expects me to be alert"; 5:130). However, she acknowledges that "It's a slow process" (5:125).

Carol also describes an ideal scenario where children interact and discuss the content of the lesson. Another example of Carol's *coda* is in her narration of her good teaching skills, by leading the lesson and empowering the children, by asking questions and encouraging discussions, so that they learn from each other ("Ok, so what did you learn?"; "Ok I've discussed with my partner" (13:327). Although Carol understands that they [staff] are "facilitating enough to make them, slowly turning into independent learners" (14:354), she still beliefs that "sometimes they found quite difficult" (14:355) and may "need prompts to start" (14:358). She provides a hypothetical scenario where she removes herself from the class. Her voice warns children she won't be there, prompting

independence. This also emphasizes her position as a guide ("if I'm there… guiding through their learning, then we finish" (14:371), without whom the children might not be able to cope ("they give up at first instance"; 14:370). "They feel successful and I feel successful, rather than, you know, away from them" (15:389). "So, the next lesson I'll feel like I need to be there" (14:378).

In terms of change in her practice, Carol feels that she is "trying new things, that's changed" (15:387). She is willing to try new things and believes that "it's like a journey" (6:153) and "you have to be persevering through it" (6:157). Carol holds herself as a supportive professional who cares about children's progress, though distancing herself from the TA group in school; she worries about children's learning as she doesn't "want them to become that dependent" (10:241). She supports their independence by encouraging and empowering them ("You guys have become dependent, you need to try something by yourself, have a go"; "Believe in yourself"; "Ok, I have to believe in myself"; 10:248).

4.3   Overview of the stories

The following section will provide an overview of the six narratives, which is based on the in-depth analysis of the narratives across each participant, in relation to structural concepts (*orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution and coda*) and dialogical concepts (*polyphony, heteroglossia, identity and stakes*). Additionally, it will identify how participants experienced the initial training, the group sessions and what impact the event had in their practice. Please refer to Appendix 16 for a detailed overview of these analysis.

4.3.1   Structural concepts

Although each participant employed their own approach in telling their experiences of the event, it is possible to *identify* some patterns in which the stories were structured, in relation to these specific concepts. The *orientation* provided by four participants (Paula, Sarah, Jenny and Tracy) presented details about the settings, characters and context of most of the stories, whilst Emma and Carol adopted an approach that provide enough or inconsistent details about their stories, respectively.

For all the narratives, the *complicating action* consisted mainly of sequences of dialogues or actions linked to the story, with a beginning, middle and end. The majority of the participants (Paula, Sarah, Jenny, Tracy and Carol) also included their reflective thinking within this narrative concept, as this was linked to the main event that was happening in that moment in the story. Most participants (Paula, Jenny, Tracy, Emma and Carol) also described the challenges they encountered during the course of the event, not only for them but also to the children they work with. These included difficulties with lack of time to plan or put the training into practice (Emma, Tracy and Jenny), making sense of the training (Carol and Paula); children struggling with a task (Tracy and Carol), children's levels of understanding (Sarah, Jenny and Emma) or difficulties with independent learning skills (Jenny, Carol and Tracy). Jenny and Carol described hypothetical scenarios, based on unlikely circumstances they could have encountered during the event, which seemed to have the purpose of supporting the arguments they had produce. For example, Carol explained that children "don't argued back" (8:190) when adults give them instructions. The child's voice ("Why? Why are you asking me to do that?"; 8:192) provides a hypothetical scenario of what a child would not do in a classroom situation.

The concept of *evaluation* was used in all narratives to provide the participants' perceptions about the events of the story and reflect about their practice. This concept also served the purpose of providing further explanations about the point of the story, their thought process in making sense of the event and revealing how they felt at that time. For example, Jenny (6:229) expressed feelings of hopelessness about the support she was giving, which created conflicting views about her role; helping her come into terms with her change in approach. Overall, different styles were used in evaluating each story. While some participants would step out of the complicating action to tell the point of the story, others would do this just before the result.

Although most of the stories ended either with a clear *resolution* or *coda*, some participants finished their stories by simply summing up what had happened. The majority of the participants provided resolutions for their stories, which were directly linked to the complicating action presented earlier in the story. The common themes found in the resolution of the stories included the use the "questioning technique" during interaction with children (Jenny, Paula, Sarah and Tracy), team work and sharing information with colleagues (Tracy, Sarah and Paula), peer support amongst children (Emma, Paula and Tracy), stepping back (Jenny, Paula, Carol), switching roles with child (Paula, Sarah) and changes in beliefs about children's abilities (Paula and Jenny). Two participants (Carol and Emma) also used planning for future practice as a way to possibly resolve the story. The use of *coda* was inconsistent amongst all the participants. Paula and Sarah made use of this in most of their stories, providing a clear sign off at end of the story. Emma also used *coda* in some of her stories, however, this was not consistent, while Jenny, Tracy and Carol had a limited use of this concept.

4.3.2   Dialogical concepts

It was possible to identify a variety of resources used by all participants. Multiple voices (*polyphony*) were invited to the stories, which presented different characters (*heteroglossia*) from within the school community. The use of such resources served different purposes with their narratives, enabling the participants to provide examples of a range of scenarios they encountered, demonstrate how they attempted to apply the technique and offered insights about their inner thoughts. This benefited the stories by allowing the participants' *identities* to surface in light of the different challenges they had to overcome, according to what was *at stake* in each story.

The most common dialogical concepts found across all narratives were inner voice, classroom dialogue, child's voice and dialogue with staff, however, some participants made a broader use of these resources. For example, Paula and Jenny demonstrated the most varied use of these concepts. Jenny used inner dialogue with children to express how she was feeling about the situation and how much she cared about their learning. This enabled her to come into terms with the changes in her beliefs and practice by warning them about it. She also used previous inner voice and hypothetical inner voice to demonstrate how she used to think about children's abilities (14:612) and how she would probably not be thinking in a past situation (14:591). Paula invited other staff members into the dialogue to show how she works as part of a team in dealing with challenging situations (13:279). She also used her previous classroom voice, in comparison to her current voice, to demonstrate how she has changed the way she works (24:515). For both participants, multiple voices and dialogues were used to support the argument that they had changed, thus the way the children interacted with them during these dialogues was compactible with their new identity.

In terms of the different *identities* represented by the participants across the narratives it was possible to identify patterns in relation to individual aspects (e.g. reflective, caring, patient, adaptive, experienced), inter-relational (e.g. team worker, participative, communicative, leader, guide) and engagement with the training (e.g. committed to apply the method, promotes independent learning and willing to try new things). The most common themes regarding the *stakes* across the stories were related to participants' ability to support children's learning, recognise needs, promote independence, support classroom participation, children's wellbeing, being able to apply the method, being able to change and their own value within the classroom or the school.

4.3.3   Experience of the training session

Systematic comparisons (Appendix 16) revealed that each participant experienced the initial training session in different way, however some similarities were noticed between some of them, which seemed to be linked to year group they were working. For instance, Sarah and Emma, both early years practitioners, explained that they already knew about the technique discussed during the training, as they used questioning in their daily practice. This was explained as being part of the EYFS guidelines. However, both expressed that it was reassuring to become more aware of the "theory behind" what they do, so that they could have a better understanding that there was a reason behind their practice. Tracy, Year One HLTA, also mentioned the importance of making the link between theory and practice. For all three, this reassurance seemed to have helped her become more aware of the different techniques they were using and provide a range of practical examples of these.

All the narratives revealed engagement of the participants with the training and commitment to put into practice the recommended strategies. Another recurrent theme

for most cases was making sense of the training, while reflecting about their current practice in the classroom.

It is worth discussing these interesting findings revealed by Paula and Jenny, as both reported that the training helped them, not only to reflect about the links between theory and practice, but also the way that they viewed the children. This shift in their belief about children's capabilities (Paula – "No, they can do this"; 26:533) enabled them both to reflect about their own practice, in terms of their roles and responsibilities, realising that they were giving too much help, which changed their approach in supporting the children (Jenny – "the turning point was knowing they can do it"; 14:585).

From all the participants, only Paula and Carol mentioned the 'input, elaboration, output' framework. Paula expressed that the "whole explanation of what is input, elaboration and output, that is what stood out for me" (16:328). She also reported that the "sorting activity" from the training helped her realise that the questions could be organised in such way.

Interestingly, Carol seemed to have had a different experience of this part of the training. As she explained: "and then I thought of it like an input I put, kind of thing. What am I giving the child?" (1:5). This appeared to have been a turning point in Carol's experience, as this reflection about her input for the children helped her realise about the importance of her role in supporting children and consequently her approach in promoting independent learning.

4.3.4 Experience of the group sessions

The findings suggest that most participants had similar views and experiences of the group sessions, which generated themes around information sharing, sense of belonging,

shared practice, team work and peer support. There was one participant who presented a distinct view about these, which will be presented at the end of this section.

Overall, participants reported being positive about sharing information with other people when supporting children and hearing about the different techniques that were being used in different year groups. They also expressed being pleased to find out that people were also working in similar ways across the school, which created discussions about the importance of understanding what kind of support children were receiving, when planning for their transition from one year group to another. This is an important finding in the understanding of the participants' current practice in sharing information and the impact on this can have on children's experiences across year groups.

Another finding that was consistent amongst the majority of the narratives was that the group sessions were usually linked with 'phase meetings'. These consisted of weekly meetings between teachers and support staff, for each year group, where they have the opportunity to share practice, problem-solve and receive peer support. Tracy explained that "if there is [sic] any children that are quite concerning or anything like that they would be raised up" (6:128). Paula regarded this practice as "one the best things that we do" (10:206). Accounts about these meetings created a sense of being part of a supportive team, as Sarah explained "if we have a child that has problems with their behaviour, is not only our problem is everybody's problem. So, we share experiences together and we talk about it in this meeting" (10:226). This sense of belonging can also be found in the narratives from Jenny, Paula and Tracy, all of whom mention the fact that they are part of the same team of HLTAs and describe situations in which they supported each other during a difficult situation.

As previously mentioned, there was one participant (Carol) who expressed a different experience of the group sessions. Although Carol felt that these sessions "were ok", she explained that these did not have much impact on her practice, as most people worked in different phases, so "nothing relates" and "we just get on with it" (18:481). This finding is interesting because Carol was the only TA working with children in a higher year group in the school (Year 5), which could have impacted on her sense of belonging within the research group (discussed further in the following chapter). Differently from other group members (2 early years and 3 Year 1 practitioners), who would meet on a daily basis and have additional discussions, Carol would practice and reflect within her own phase.

4.3.5 Impact of the event on professional practice

One of the most significant findings to emerge from this study is that, overall, the event of the study had a different impact on the professional practice of each participant. Although it was possible to notice some recurrent themes, such as, change in views about children's abilities, taking a step back, reflection about practice and willingness to try new things, these seemed to have impacted in their practice differently.

For example, Sarah reported that the experience of the event helped her recognise that she works in a certain way for a reason, which has a theoretical basis, and that this helped her become a more reflective practitioner. Emma, who also works in the early years settings, explained that, although she appreciated the understanding of the links between theory and practice, she found it difficult to put the technique into practice. This appeared to be linked to her beliefs that children should be given the opportunity to learn from each other, or by themselves through play and that adults should avoid bombarding them with questions.

For Tracy, it seemed that the event of the study had an impact on her views about the children she works with and in her commitment to put the techniques into practice. Tracy also recognised herself as a valuable and resourceful member of the school community, who is able to adapt to different situation and "think on the spot" to overcome difficulties. Although Carol also realised the importance of her role, this was directly linked with children's learning rather than communication with staff. Carol reported changing her approach from giving answers to asking questions, in a conscious effort to apply the techniques and try new things, however she planned to "phase herself out", slowly turning them independent.

Both Jenny and Paula expressed that the event changed their approach which, as previously mentioned, seemed to be linked to the change in their views about what children can do with their support. With that in mind, both of them told stories about stepping back and putting the responsibility back on the children, so that they could take ownership of their learning. Jenny expressed taking "a more relaxed" approach, encouraging participation by asking questions to all children and preparing them for her change in approach. Paula used the input/output framework to think about her questions and incorporated these within other classroom strategies, such as switching roles, spot the mistake and role play to promote independent learning.

4.4   Summary of the chapter

This chapter began by revisiting the methods used in this study and introducing the individual stories of each participant. It went on to provide an in-depth analysis of the stories, comparing each of the narrative concepts previously specified. Finally, an analysis of the participants' experiences of the event was performed, identifying the

common themes found in their accounts of the training, groups sessions and impact on practice.

The previous section of this chapter has compared the use of the narrative concepts by each participant and has found that, although each narrative was told using individual styles, structural concepts were consistently employed by all participants, apart from *orientation* and *coda*, which had inconsistent or limited use, respectively. Comparison of the dialogical concepts also demonstrated varied application of *polyphony* and *heteroglossia*, with inner voice, classroom dialogue and child's voice more widely used. Participants' *identities* were presented according to their relationships with the children, the school community, their inner beliefs and engagement with the training. The findings suggested that the stakes of the stories were linked with participants' *identities*. High *stakes* involved children's learning, being part of a team, being able to promote independence and being able to make sense of the training.

Finally, participants' perceptions about the event suggested changes in approach, as well as reassurance about current practice. The link between theory and practice seemed to have encouraged participants to engage with the training and commit to put it into practice. Perceptions of the group sessions related to the importance of information sharing and generated discussions about this practice within the school community. Changes in practice appeared to be linked to belief systems and interpretation of the content of the training, which were displayed by changes in patterns of behaviour or by conscious reflection about practice.

The next chapter presents the Discussion, which critically interrogates the findings of this research and provides an account of how these findings address the research questions outlined in Chapter 2.

Chapter Five: Discussion

5.1   Overview of the chapter

This chapter will draw together the findings from the current study in relation to each of the research questions. These findings are discussed considering the literature outlined in Chapter 2 and possible links with psychological theory. Potential limitations of the research will then be considered, informing a discussion about areas for future research. The chapter also outlines implications of the study, particularly for educational psychology practice. The chapter concludes with reflections upon the research process, engagement with the data and the personal learning experiences of the researcher.

5.2   General review of findings linked to research questions

5.2.1   How did Teaching Assistants experienced the training session?

Making sense of the training session was found to be challenging for the participants, who reported that some the content was particularly technical and required them to look back at the additional materials provided in order to understand the content of the training. Some aspects of the session, such as the sorting activity in groups, were considered crucial in supporting it's understanding, by giving them the opportunity to put the concepts into practice and generating further discussions. One aspect that stood out for some participants related to the phases of learning (input, elaboration, output), proposed by Feuerstein et al. (1979) in the development of dynamic assessment. The understanding of this framework, which involved organising questions according to each phase, was considered of significant importance to at least two of the participants, who reported not realising that questions could be organised this way and attempting to adopt these in their practice afterwards. As previously outlined in the Findings Chapter, the interpretation of the meaning of this framework differed amongst participants. For example, Carol

understood it as the importance of her input and how she elaborated the content of the lessons for the children, who would, in turn, demonstrate their understanding through their answers (output). Other participants also expressed confusion regarding the elaboration phase, which was described as "the middle bit" by Paula.

Paula also made an insightful contribution by providing an alternative title for the training session, adopting a language that was more familiar to her. The encouragement for participants to think about a different way of making sense of the training, was driven by the researcher's social constructionist position; assuming that the reality of the training should be socially constructed by the participants, by the use of language. With that in mind, and through further discussions with group members, Paula proposed the change of the title of the training from 'mediational language' to 'questions for learning' approach. This insightful moment was further explored during her interview, which has been already presented in the previous chapter as a high-level *resolution* for her story.

Another important point that was discussed by most participants referred to the links between theory and practice, which helped to reassure participants about their practice. Although some participants, especially both early years practitioners, reported that they were already using this method in their daily practice and had attended similar trainings in the past, they felt it was reassuring to find out that this practice had a theoretical basis, which meant they were doing the right thing.

Burgess and Mayes (2009) found, in a study exploring the views of HLTAs about their training programme, that the participants appreciated the theoretical underpinnings of the training, which helped them to develop a more reflective practice. Similarly, the findings from the current research suggested that participants became more reflective about their practice after making links with the theories presented during the training. Schon (1983)

suggested that practitioners reflect on their knowing-in-practice, by thinking back on situations they have lived or the work they have done, by exploring their understanding in handling such situations. He argued that this reflection can serve to correct overlearning, as the practitioner may start to criticize the implicit understandings that they have developed through repetitive experiences of their practice.

The personal attributes categorized by Dewey (1933) as integral to reflective practice are open-mindedness, wholeheartedness and responsibility. Arguably, these attributes could be linked to the findings of the dialogical analysis of the current study, regarding experiences of the training session, which identified the following identities: adaptive, flexible, experienced, reflective, committed, persistent and determined (see Appendix 16).

Participants demonstrated engagement with the training materials, by reading back on the content and making links between the theories and their current practice. This could relate to the concept of reflection-on-action (Schon, 1983), which refers to the reflection about an event that has occurred, deliberately thinking more deeply about this event. It could be argued that the reflection about their practice stimulated the engagement with the training materials, reinforced by the reassurance that their practice was underpinned by learning theories (Feuerstein et al., 1979 and Vygotsky, 1978), which in turn motivated the participants to be more open to the concepts proposed by the training and determined to put those into practice.

Self-determination theory (SDT) is described by Ryan and Deci (2000) as an approach to human motivation and personality, which highlights the importance of inner resources for the development of personality and self-regulation. They investigated the essential growth tendencies and innate psychological needs that are the basis for self-motivation

and personality integration. The theory identifies autonomy, competence and relatedness as psychological needs which may enhance persistence, performance and creativity. Social context can support or prevent engagement and psychological growth. Deci and Ryan (1985) presented the cognitive evaluation theory as subcategory of the SDT. This theory argues that social-contextual events, which promote feelings of competence may enhance intrinsic motivation. However, this may not be possible unless the feeling of competence is accompanied by the sense of autonomy, thus, people must experience that their behaviour was self-determined. It is possible that the participants' self-determination, or autonomy, to engage with the training and incorporate the method into their everyday practice could be linked with the sense of competence provided by the links with theory and the sense of relatedness experienced by being part of the same research group.

5.2.1.1 Summary of TAs experiences of the training session

This research found that TAs differed in their experiences of the training provided as part of the study. While some expressed difficulties in making sense of the technical concepts and theories described, others reported being already aware of the techniques. More practical aspects of the training, such as the phases of learning framework, for categorising the questions, was considered an important aspect, however, differences in individual interpretations of this aspects were also apparent. Participants felt reassured that their practice had a theoretical basis, which seemed to lead to reflective practice and further engagement with the training materials and commitment to apply it. This interpretation extends the findings of Burgess and Mayes (2009) and provides further insights about possible links between reflection-on-action (Schon, 1983) and self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000) for the training of TAs in this study.

5.2.2   How did Teaching Assistants experienced the group sessions?

Participants from the current research reported positive views about sharing information and strategies with other TAs. They revealed attending regular meetings, where they received support from other members of staff and maintaining appropriate levels of communication with teachers and other colleagues. The sharing of information about children's learning, behaviour or home situation appeared to be a recurrent theme across all narratives. These findings appear to be inconsistent with the study by French (2001), which reported that teachers did not plan for TAs in lessons, suggesting that TAs were working without any direction or lacking communication. French's study did, however, indicate that appropriate training, higher educational levels of the teachers and preparation for supervision were correlated with perceptions of adequacy in support. Arguably, this could be the case for the current school.

Participants declared receiving weekly peer support and training, as part of their continuous professional development. Neither of these findings are consistent with the ones from Breton (2010), who reported that TAs felt unprepared to perform their role, receiving minimal training and supervision. Actually, the opposite was found; Paula, for instance, described a dialogue with her line manager, discussing her strengths, interests and areas of development. Paula's account is in accordance with the findings of the studies by Chopra et al. (2011) and Groom (2006), which made connections between supervision, professional development and TAs' performance management and appraisals.

There seemed to be a trend in the literature, describing TA's perceptions about their roles and responsibilities, and the autonomy assigned to them, in relation to pedagogical decision-making without the appropriate supervision and support from teachers (Dowling

et al., 2000; Giangreco et al., 2010 and Dew-Hughes et al, 1998). Participants from the current study presented a range of roles and responsibilities, which was related to the positions (TAs and HLTAs) each one had within the school and within their year group teams. Differently from the findings of the study by Dowling et al. (2000), where TAs expressed concerns about their levels of responsibility and teachers' competencies in supervising them, participants expressed a clear understanding about their functions and appeared to receive the appropriate support from teachers and other members of staff; engaging in conversations about children's assessment levels, learning skills and well-being.

Although it was found in the current study that HLTAs presented a broader range of roles and responsibilities, such as small intervention groups for core subjects (English and Maths) and language groups, one to one support, and were expected to assume teachers' responsibilities, such as covering lessons, this was regarded by the participants as a positive part of their role, rather than cause for frustration (Giangreco et al., 2010). It is possible that early years practitioners and TAs would express similar feelings, if given levels of responsibilities that were not in accordance with their job description, as suggested by Giangreco et al (2010), however, this was not reported by any of the participant from this study.

As it has been previously outlined, most participants valued the sharing of information with other TAs and teachers, providing examples of previous and current practice. Sharing strategies and promoting joint problem-solving, which also created further discussions about planning for children's transition across year groups. This finding is consistent with the study by Groom (2006), who indicated that opportunities for reflective practice and peer support may foster a culture focused on improving children's learning.

It is possible that the realization about similarities in approaches across year groups, experienced during the event of the study, could have encouraged further communication amongst colleagues towards supporting this transition.

The role of collaborative work amongst TAs, HLTAs and other members of staff was a common theme that emerged from both the literature and the narratives discussed in this research. TAs created opportunities for problem-solving to improve teaching and learning; by sharing good practice and different techniques (Groom, 2006), as well as working together in implementing effective strategies to achieve common goals (Devecchi et al., 2010). With this view in mind, it could be argued that these findings could be linked to the social interdependence theory (Johnson and Johnson, 1989). The basic premise of this theory suggests that the goals of different people in a situation determine how they interact, and these patterns of interactions determine the outcomes (Johnson and Johnson, 2005). Hence, the outcomes of individuals are affected by actions of others and their own (Johnson and Johnson, 2009). It is possible then, that the joint work of TAs and teachers, based on respect and trust about each other's competence and knowledge (Groom, 2006), promoted work towards better learning outcomes for the children they worked with.

One of the most noticeable findings from the previous chapter is related to the literature around supervision and professional development of TAs, as almost all the participants reported attendance to weekly phase meetings with teachers and senior members of staff to receive peer support, discussing cases and reflecting about ways forward. This supports the findings of Carnahan et al. (2009), who proposed a systematic approach of supervising TAs; emphasizing opportunities for in-service problem-solving strategies and regular staff meetings. Both, the participants in the current research and those in the Morgan and

Ashbaker (2011) study, described the practice of reflective teamwork to improve planning and communication between TAs and other members of staff. Arguably, this could be a result of participants' perceptions about their contributions and support to the practice of other colleagues, which reinforced their experience of being part of a supportive team.

As previously mentioned in Chapter 4, identities that emerged from participants' stories about the group sessions involved being a team-worker, participative, communicative and caring. These characteristics appeared to be in accordance with the stakes of each of the stories, such as being part of the team, children's engagement in lessons and being able to support their learning. These were common themes found in the narratives of most participants, which involved being part of phase teams, the team of HLTAs or being accepted by the children as part of their group.

Such findings appear to be linked to the need to belong theory by Baumeister and Leary (1995), who proposed that humans have a drive to establish and sustain interpersonal relationships that have a minimum amount of interactions, which are positive and significant. The two criteria for satisfying this drive involve: a) frequent and pleasant interactions with other people; b) the setting must be stable, with a framework of concern for each other's well-being.

In the context of the phase meetings, TAs felt supported by their colleagues, who they met regularly, cared about their welfare and helped them overcome challenges found in their every practice. In the context of the event of the study, TAs were part of the same research project, over a number of weeks, sharing ideas and good practice, in the attempt of making sense of the approach and putting it into practice. This sense of relatedness (Baumeister and Leary, 1995) provided further conditions for the participants' self-determination (Ryan and Deci, 2000) discussed earlier in this chapter.

Perhaps the need to belong theory could also be helpful in explaining the stories presented by Carol, who was the only participant expressing a different experience from the group sessions. Baumeister and Leary (1995) argued that, without frequent contact, relatedness will not be satisfactory for the sense of belonginess. Even though all six participants belonged to the same research group, it appeared that, apart from the group sessions, there was no regular contact between some of the participants, due to their positions within the different phases of the school. Two participants worked together within the early years phase and the three HLTAs worked together within phases one and two.

Carol was the only participant who worked in a separate phase by herself. It is possible that, although she met with the rest of the group for the training and two group sessions, she did not experience the everyday interactions and discussions as the other group members. Thus, Carol's experiences of the group discussion were less motivating in terms of group membership, which encouraged her to take a more reflective approach about her role within the school, focusing on the impact that her input had on children's learning, rather than the importance of sharing information and strategies with other group members. Interestingly, even though Carol seemed to have a reduced sense of relatedness (Baumeister and Leary, 1995), in comparison to other participants, she still presented similar levels of self-determination (Ryan and Deci, 2000). It is possible that her view about the importance of her role in supporting children's learning, supported her sense of competence and autonomy, which may have motivated her to be opened to try new things and take responsibility for adopting the approach.

5.2.2.1   Summary of TAs' experience of group sessions

Against the findings of previous research (French, 2001 and Breton, 2010), participants of the current research reported appropriate levels of communication with teachers and

other members of staff, expressing positive views about the importance of sharing information. The experience of the group sessions generated discussions about phase meetings, which was a practice valued by the participants for promoting reflective teamwork and fostering a culture focused on supporting children's learning, extending the findings of (Morgan and Ashkbaker, 2011) and offering new perspective for Groom's (2006) conclusions. Further discussions about the links between the need to belong (Baumeister and Leary, 1995) and self-determination (Ryan and Deci, 2000) theories was provided, possibly strengthened by social interdependence theory (Johnson and Johnson, 1989). One participant presented views different from the remaining members and possible explanations for such difference were discussed in relation to the proposed theories.

5.2.3 How was the experience of training and group discussions perceived to have impacted on Teaching Assistants' professional practice?

Two main themes were found to provide a more informed understating of how the event of the study impacted on the TAs' practice. The first theme involved participants' change in point of view in relation to children's abilities to learn independently, which had a direct effect on the overall classroom approaches adopted by these participants. The second theme was related to participants' reflections and views about their own practice, which lead to further realization about their status and value within the school community and their role in supporting children's learning.

The first point seemed to be a result of the participants' experience of the training and the group sessions, in which concepts around independent learning skills, sharing of information with other colleagues and peer support seemed to have led to the understanding that "they [children] could do it", with the appropriate support. This change

in paradigm appeared to have influenced their position and actions in the classroom, moving from giving answers to asking questions, which also had an effect on the approaches they adopted in their interactions.

Given the intersubjective nature of the event, it would be possible that positioning theory could provide an explanation for the change in approach by the participants in their practice. This theory suggests that cognitive processes explain the actions people undertake, by setting for each moment and situation the meaning of those actions (Harré, Moghaddam, Cairnie, Rothbart, & Sabat, 2009). According to Van Langenhove and Harré (1999) conversations are composed of storylines, and the way people position themselves in those conversations is linked to these storylines. This change in position towards the promotion of independent learning, motivated by the view that children were able to do the work themselves, appeared to have resulted in a turning point in the participants' narratives.

Positioning can be understood as a discursive practice where the construction of stories makes the person's moral and personal attitudes understandable and defined as social acts (Van Langenhove and Harré, 1999). People may position themselves and others within a moral space, making use of a range of categories and storylines. During a conversation a person might position others while at the same time positioning him or herself. The stories that people tell about themselves may vary depending on how they want to present themselves. Van Langenhove and Harré (1999) proposed the concept of 'deliberate self-positioning', in which people might want to express their personal identity, by communicating their agency, expressing their point of view or describing events in their lives.

In the context of the current study, positioning theory may help to understand how TAs' change in their points of view, in relation to children's abilities, may have influenced the way in which they positioned the children within the classroom context, as being able to complete the work independently, and simultaneously positioned themselves as professionals that ask questions, rather than giving answers. This change in position seemed to have modified their attitudes and beliefs, which in turn may have changed the stories they tell to present themselves and their identities. So, the discourse used by the TAs when describing their classroom practice, can be understood in relation to how they position themselves and the children within their stories.

Participants reported the use of more open-ended, rather than closed questions, which meant they were stepping away, letting the children take the lead and take ownership for their learning. Such findings have some relation with those of Radford et al. (2011), who examined the differences in the interactions between teachers and TAs, finding that while teachers opened conversations with children, TAs tended to use closed questions.

In the current research, however, TAs reported to have conversation with class teachers about their questioning techniques, motivated by the event of the study, which resulted in a change in the way they interacted with children. Additionally, one participant (Jenny) provided in-depth reflections about her responsibilities regarding children's learning and her overall role within the school context. This insightful reflection was a result of an interaction with a child, who was unable to explain what he had learnt on a previous maths lesson, which seemed to be linked to the findings from Blatchford and Webster (2009) about the focus on task completion over process learning by TAs. Findings suggest that a change in position about children's abilities resulted in an in-depth reflection about the

participants' actions, which seemed to have had a knock-on effect on their practice as whole.

It was also found in the current research that, those participants who believed children could learn independently adopted classroom approaches that involved activities such as taking a step back, switching roles with the children and making mistakes on purpose, so that they could find the answer by themselves or learn from each other. Similar approaches were described by Radford et al. (2014), who emphasize the importance of students leading interactions, taking responsibility for their own learning and developing heuristic scaffolding (Radford et al., 2015), such as 'think aloud' and self-support, encouraging children to regulate their own learning.

The cooperative learning theory (Johnson and Johnson, 2009), which originates from the social interdependence theory, as previously discussed, consists of students working together to achieve a joint goal. This can happen formally, where groups of students engage in quick dialogues or activities, in which they respond to questions about what they are learning and engage in brief dialogues, focusing their attention to the material; or informally, where students engage in turn-to-your-partner discussions before and after the lesson. This practice was in accordance with the identities and stakes identified during participants' stories about their practice after the event of the study, which included being a guide, promoting of independent learning skills and encouraging class participation. It was reported by Tracy that a child overheard other children's comments about the same question and returned to her seat before asking for further support, which suggests children were learning from each other through dialogue.

While for some participants the experience of the event impacted on their views about the children, for others it impacted on their views about themselves within the school

community, in relation to children and their reflective practice. Discussions about the event generated stories about participants' status within the school, as valuable source of information and knowledge about children's strengths and needs. Recognition of their importance and reassurance about their place seemed to have helped them to become more reflective about their practice, describing situations in which they had to deal with a range of situations, making use of their skills, experience and knowledge.

Expressions such as 'thinking on the spot' suggest a process of reflection-in-action, in which reflection occurs in the midst of the moment without interrupting it (Schon, 1987). It is suggested that this process is central to the 'art' of practitioners who can deal with situations of instability, uniqueness or uncertainty (Schon, 1983).

This notion can be linked with participants' descriptions of dialogues with children in which they would be thinking about the questions they were asking, in relation to the ones discussed during the training and group sessions. Schon (1987) distinguishes reflection-in-action from other kinds of reflections by its immediate significance for action. In that sense, rethinking about their actions lead to 'on-the-spot-experiment' which requires further thinking about what needs to be done. He further explained that reflections about these past reflection-in-action may indirectly influence future action. As described by some participants in the current study, the use of particular types of questions would generate different responses from the children, which would in turn require further questioning. Although the training materials were initially used, to remind them about what questions to ask, participants reported that they were later just going along and questioning their answers without realizing.

5.2.3.1 Summary of the impact of the event on TAs' professional practice

This current research found that two main themes that were discussed in addressing the third research question. The first theme involved the examination of how participants' change in views about what children can do independently, also change their position about their role in the classroom and consequently their approaches and actions. Positioning theory offered possible explanations of how this change influenced different patterns of interactions and classroom approaches, which resulted in engaging in cooperative learning and the promotion of independent learning skills. The second theme discussed referred to the participants' views about their own status with the school, reassuring their value through the realization of the importance of their contribution to children's learning. Participants described how they use their experience and knowledge to deal with different situations daily, and concepts from reflection-in-action were offered to provide possible explanations to how the event impacted on their practice.

5.3   Limitations of the research

When discussing the limitations of current research, it is important that these are considered in relation to the study's purpose and adopted paradigm. With the aim of exploring the experiences of TAs from a social constructionist perspective, the researcher recognized that multiple realities about the event were constructed during the study, according to each specific context. Ways in which the researcher attempted to avoid possible limiting factors will be considered throughout this section.

5.3.1   Sample size and data collection method

The first limitation of the study refers to the sample of participants that was used. Due to the qualitative nature of the research, six participants were interviewed, thus the findings are limited in terms of their generalisability. In addition, while the recruited participants

were part of a range of year groups, these were all within the same school. Moreover, because the number of participants was unevenly distributed across the school phases, it is possible that the participant who was part of a separate year group had a different experience. Therefore, the findings of this study should be interpreted according to the individual experiences of each participant, within the context of this specific school. That being said, it is important to point out that the purpose of this research was not to generalise the findings, but to explore the individual narratives of each participant, in order to have a better understanding of their experiences of the event of the study. The researcher argues that this was achieved, as the rich data obtained from the stories of each participant provided a genuine account of their experiences. Although the research findings suggested that some aspects of the event had a different impact for each participant, the researcher accepts that these should only cautiously be applied to TAs in other contexts.

Future research should then build on these findings by including a larger sample of participants, from multiple schools, with a similar number of TAs per year group. It would also be important to explore some of the themes that emerged from this research (such as promotion of independent learning, peer support and reflection-in-action) within other educational contexts, such as secondary schools, as it might be possible to investigate whether these might be applied to TAs more widely.

Semi-structured interviews were used as the data gathering method adopted by this research; such rich data would have been difficult to collect by alternative means. For instance, using questionnaires to collect participants' accounts of the event would be inappropriate as it is unlikely that it would yield data that represented the detailed experiences of each participant. It could be argued that another method of data gathering

could have been to carry out focus groups with participants. This approach could have been advantageous, especially during the first group session, as it would allow the researcher to collect group narratives, which could be used in subsequent stages of the study (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas and Robson, 2002). As such, focus groups are often used this way with the intention of becoming a precursor to the development of a resource (Robson, 2002), which was not the intention of the current research. Additionally, when seeking to obtain individual experiences, focus groups are less likely to provide in-depth insight in comparison to individual interviews (Wilkinson, 2003). Keeping in mind that only one of the research questions related to experiences of the group, while the remaining two questions concerned individual experiences, it was considered the conducting individual semi-structured interview would provide data that could answer these questions more effectively. As noted above, further research around the use of mediated learning approaches by TAs should continue to be explored. The use of focus groups within an action research (McNiff, 2013) context could provide valuable information in the development of the mediational language approach, proposed during the event. However, it was not within the remit of the current study to develop the approach, but to explore participants' experiences of it.

5.3.2 The focus of the research

Another design issue, which could be understood as a limitation of this study, involved the focus and method of collecting participants' views about an event which in which the researcher was involved, the training session. Given that it was the researcher who delivered the session, with openness about his own journey and engagement with the material, and later conducted the interviews about the session; it could be argued that participants may have been subject to biases, providing socially desirable views, meaning that they could have been influenced to speak about the training in a positive way. In

order to diminish the effect of these biases, the researcher made a number of attempts to ensure that the focus of the research was to explore their individual narratives, rather than evaluating the training.

5.3.3 Changes in the procedure

During the initial development of the design of the present research, the researcher set out to deliver a brief introduction of the aims and purpose of the research during a staff meeting at the school, prior to the beginning of the study. This had the intention of, not only recruit more participants, but also making the teachers aware of the content of the study. Unfortunately, due to changes in the school schedule, the SENCo informed that it would not be possible.

The researcher had also planned to deliver a longer training session, where the MLE principles, such as intentionality, meaning and transcendence could be explored and discussed in more depth. However, this was not possible to achieve, due to issues related to staff availability. Although these concepts were presented during the delivery of the training, it was notable that participants did not fully engage with the discussions about these principles.

For this reason, the researcher then decided to use part of the first group session to clarify any doubts participants might have had about the training and provide further explanations, rather than focusing primarily on sharing their experiences in applying the approach during the first week. Although it was not a requirement, participants were also encouraged to meet on the third week without the researcher, giving them the opportunity to have more opened discussions. However, as some participants were part of different year groups, that meant that they work at different times and therefore were not able to meet every week. Differences in year groups and timetables also had an impact on the

group dynamics, as previously discussed, meaning that, during the week, some participants would work separately.

5.4   Addressing bias

Although the researcher adopted a reflexive approach in the current study, to ensure that his own expectations and beliefs were not influencing or misrepresenting the participants' responses, it can be argued that further considerations could have been taken regarding concepts of rigor and trustworthiness. Bias can be understood as any influence, which may result in a distortion in the findings of a study (Galdas, 2017).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed that the concept of trustworthiness should contain four features: transferability, dependability, credibility and confirmability. It was recommended that strategies such as negative cases, peer debriefing, prolonged engagement and persistent observation and member checking should be used to attain trustworthiness. The method of member checking may involve a number of strategies, such as returning the interview transcript to participants, member check focus groups or returning the analysed data to participants. Such strategies may potentially improve rigor in qualitative research, ensuring that participants' perspectives and views are represented, rather than influenced by the researcher's own agenda.

Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, and Spiers (2002) argued that concepts related to reliability and validity are still appropriate for achieving rigor in qualitative research. They argued that strategies such as investigator responsiveness, methodological coherence and an active analytical stance should be built within the qualitative research process in order to ensure rigor. Such strategies enable the researcher to correct the direction of the analysis, as well as the development of the study. It is important that the researcher remains opened to the verification process, which involves checking,

confirming, making sure and being certain. Thus, the researcher's responsiveness to data may remind him to be proactive and take responsibility for rigor.

As previously mentioned in Chapter 3, in the current study the researcher sought the participants' validation by sending their individual narrative analysis. This involved sending the narratives via email (see Appendix 18) and requesting participants to contact the researcher if there was any aspect of the narrative that they did not agreed with. From the six participants who were sent the narratives, one responded that email confirming that she agreed with the analysis. Another two participants were met informally at the school and confirmed that they agreed with the analysis. It could be argued that adopting further member checking strategies, such as returning the transcripts to the participants, having an additional individual or group meeting with the participants, in which they would have the opportunity to share their perspectives about their narratives in more detail, could have enhanced the rigor and trustworthiness of the data analysis and reduce the possibility of bias. Further considerations should be taken in this respect in future research.

5.5   Reflections

5.5.1   Researcher's experience of the study as a whole

The current research was an exciting and challenging experience at the same time. As previously discussed, my personal interests and beliefs were a driving force in the development of the training materials and the choice of working with TAs. The engagement with the research around MLE and DA, together with the practical experience of these approaches in my role as a TEP, meant that the development of the training materials was of significant importance for me as a professional. My previous experience as a TA, who sympathized with the issues found in the literature, meant that

the expectation of the success of the approach was exciting and encouraging, in the development of the study. Additionally, my recent experience of supervision and peer supervision as a TEP provided another layer of interest in planning the study.

It was insightful to realise that, as the research developed and I became more engaged with the literature, the design and methodology of the research, there was a shift in how I approached the focus of the research. This became more apparent at the beginning of the data collection, as I reflected about the first two interviews and prepared for the following ones. As I spoke to the participants and gathered their views, I realized that, although the content and motivations for the training were important, as they emerged from my professional experience as a TA and as TEP, my role as a researcher required me to focus my attention and considerations in ensuring that their experiences were gathered accordingly. I came to realise that, this shift in my position and focus was crucial in order to achieve the aims of the research and answer the research question I had set to answer.

Although it was not the aim of the current research to evaluate the training session during the interviews, but to explore participants' lived experiences of the study, it could be argued that the narrative interviewing approach could provide EPs with an alternative to evaluate participants' lived experiences of certain activities undertaken by EPs within schools. These could include staff training with teachers or TAs, or group activities, such as peer supervision. It is the researcher's opinion that the practicality of using a full narrative analysis may not be appropriate for EP practice, however, eliciting individual's stories about what happened during these activities could prove a useful approach for exploring their perspectives about possible impact.

5.5.2   TEP role vs researcher role

During the completion of this doctoral-level research it was possible to learn a considerable amount, both professionally and academically. Given the context of this professional programme, I was able to firstly develop my knowledge about research practice, becoming aware of the importance of having a clear understanding about conceptual frameworks of reality and knowledge, before considering the selection of the appropriate research design and method of analysis.

This process has helped me to adopt a critical position when considering how to answer the research questions from this study, as well as in the review of literature. It has also helped me to consider my position as social constructionist, and how this affected my role as a TEP. Most importantly perhaps, was how this process has influenced my views about the importance of qualitative research in exploring real-world problems. Educational Psychology practice requires careful consideration and reflection in the negotiation of meaning about a range of issues at hand in everyday practice. However, as a researcher the focus of the interaction is the participant's account. I believe that the engagement with this research has provided the opportunity to critically analyse the principles and values underpinning my belief systems and adopt a position that allows this process to happen.

I felt that my skills in carrying out this qualitative research, particularly in relation to the method of narrative analysis, developed better than I expected. I believe that the analytical and reflective skills developed as a TEP, together with other practical skills such as consultation and group work have supported this development. Interestingly, my initial beliefs about research, which placed more value in empirically tested hypothesis and quantifiable measures, changed with the experience of this research. I was able to

recognise the importance of qualitative research, especially in the in-depth analysis of complex data about people's experiences.

5.5.3 Engagement with the data

I regard the method of data analysis as point of strength in my involvement with this research experience. However, it is important to acknowledge that the analysis of such complex and rich set of data, paired with the multiple stages of analysis adopted by this research, required me to extensively engage with the data and at times, this process felt highly strenuous. That being said, it was pleasing and exciting to realise how much in-depth knowledge and understanding I developed about the narrative of each participant toward the end of the analysis and when discussing the findings.

Although there is no prescribed or predetermined method of narrative analysis, by the end of the study, I felt that the adopted method proved crucial in eliciting participants' stories and providing further understanding about who they were and who they came to be.

5.5.4 Reflexivity

A reflexive approach was maintained throughout the study, in order to encourage as many true responses as possible and manage biased responses from the participants. I believe I acknowledged how these influences could have shaped the research process, both as a person and as a theorist/thinker (Burr. 2015). While personal reflexivity involves reflecting on how the researcher's own values, beliefs and interests can shape the research; epistemological reflexivity requires the engagement with questions related to how the choices made about the research questions, design and methods of analysis may have influenced the constructions of the findings. This may influence the way in which the research questions could define or limit what can be found and ways in which the design and methods of analysis may 'construct' the data and findings.

From the beginning of this research I acknowledged and actively reflected upon my role within this study. My personal interests, experiences and views, as a researcher and as a psychologist, were the driving force behind the choice of conducting this research. With this in mind it was necessary to address such interests throughout the research process. For example, during the training session I explicitly shared with the participants my personal journey towards the development of the study. I also emphasized that I was interested in understanding their experiences of using the approach, rather than evaluating its effectiveness. Even though I felt passionate about this approach, as a researcher, I was interested in finding out their personal and professional experiences. However, I understand that this was harder to accomplish than previously anticipated. During individual interviews, especially the first ones, I saw myself asking questions that were in a way evaluating the approach I had proposed. Although unintentional, my personal interests and expectations about this approach influenced my conduct during the interview process. After ongoing reflection, careful considerations about these issues with my Director of Studies and further engagement with the literature related to my research design, I was able to change my approach to the interviews and carefully developed questioning techniques which intended to bring about the participants' stories, rather than leading them towards specific answers.

Another point to made refers to the language used during the course of the study, which also changed my own way of understanding the research. The term 'mediational language' was a choice made based on my own experience and understanding of what the approach entailed. However, such term could be seen as quite technical, which could also make it meaningless to someone unfamiliar with it. Such issue was addressed at the beginning of the initial training. I openly explained to the participants that this was the language I had chosen to describe the approach; however, I was also interested in how

we could further discuss the use of another term that could be more meaningful to them. Towards the end of the training, after the concepts and principles had been discussed and the participants had the opportunity to put those in practice, we returned to the discussion of alternative term to describe the focus of the session. The participants decided as group that it would be more appropriate to call it 'questions for learning', which in their view better described approach.

5.6 Implications for future research

Findings suggest that this study provided valuable insight about TAs' professional practice and the experience of taking part in the research, which may suggest that the mediational language approach and peer support or supervision for TAs could provide promising approaches for future research. This said, there are some learning point from the present study, which would also need to be considered when discussing implications.

As pointed out above, it would be beneficial to consider a larger sample size, providing better representation of the TA population. Future research should also consider a population from a variety of settings, which could also provide a wider understanding about the experience of TAs working with children from different key stages. With that in mind, it might be useful to ensure that there are opportunities for TAs to meet on a regular basis, so that the collaborative practice can further develop.

In terms of group discussion, it was not possible, within time limits of this research, to provide a specific model of peer supervision for the participants. Nonetheless, it might be worth considering the introduction of a structured and practical model of peer supervision, such as reflective teams (Andersen, 1987) or solution circles (Forrest and Pearpoint, 1996), which could help making the sessions focus in problem-solving. Brown and Henderson (2012) have trialled the solution-circles with support staff in mainstream

school and found the approach to be a flexible tool in creating a positive approach for problem-solving. Additionally, if group discussions were to be used in conjunction with the training sessions, it would be worth to consider having more sessions, with the sessions spread apart, so that the participants could have more time to make sense and establish their own understanding of the approach.

As previously noted, the mediational language approach contains specific concepts and principles that are crucial for its complete implementation, thus it would be advisable to provide training of appropriate length, so that these elements can be explored in depth.

5.7   Distinct contribution

The current research incorporated a range of themes that linked psychological research and theory into educational practice, providing insights about TAs' experience of an alternative approach for practice, promoting peer support within the school community and encouraging the development of reflective practice. Additionally, the research seemed to have impacted on the participant's views about themselves, recognizing their value and importance within the school context. It also seemed to have provided alternative perspectives about children's abilities, addressing issues related to learnt helplessness and focus on task completion over process learning.

Findings suggested that there might be important implications for EP practice, being able to work with others in providing alternative approaches for staff training (HCPC, 2015), and supervision, based on psychological research. TAs have a range of roles and responsibilities in supporting children's learning and emotional wellbeing, however, the literature suggests that they may lack the necessary supervision and specialized training to manage everyday challenges, which can have an impact on their sense of agency within the profession. TAs' accounts about the group discussions provided important

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information for the development of a model of peer support in schools, promoting their professional development as reflective practitioners. As an example in practice, in the LA where the researcher works as a TEP, a number of schools make use of EP time to provide supervision for teaching staff.

Finally, the findings of this research have been requested by the EPS in the LA where the research is currently working as a TEP. This could be a valuable opportunity to share the findings and implications of this research and create further discussions about alternative ways of supporting TAs and promoting independent learning skills for children and young people.

5.8   Conclusion

This research had the purpose of exploring the narratives that TAs told in relation to their experience of the event of the study. This event consisted of one training session, introducing the concepts of the mediational language approach, and two group discussion sessions. The intention of this event was to provide TAs with an alternative approach for interacting with children, to promote independent learning and problem-solving skills, and to encourage them to engage in peer support and sharing best practice.

The key conclusions that emerged from this study are around the TAs' change in perceptions about what children are able to do independently and their perceptions about themselves within the school community and within the group. One participant expressed a different view about the group discussions, which appeared to have resulted in a more individual approach in her practice.

Positioning theory offered possible explanations for the change in approach by the participants, which could have resulted in different patterns of interactions and classroom, due to different stance, taken in relation how they should act. These changes signified the

engagement in activities related to cooperative learning and the promotion of independent learning skills for the children.

Participants' views about their status and value within the school context could be linked to the realization of the importance of their contribution to children's learning. Such realization may be explained by the concepts of reflection-in-action, as participants reported to find solutions when dealing with different situation 'on the spot', and changing their thinking and actions at the specific moment.

TAs' perceptions about the training were positive, valuing the links between research and practice, which seemed to have reassured their value and importance within the school context, which led to engagement with the training materials and commitment to the approach. Self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000) and reflection-on-practice (Schon, 1983, 1987) appeared to explain participants' commitment to apply the approach into their everyday practice and think back about their previous and current practice and understanding about learning theories. The input-elaboration-output was considered a useful framework by some participants.

Sharing of information generated discussions about peer support within participants' year groups, which was regarded as a valuable aspect of their practice. Changes in practice appeared to be linked to belief systems and interpretation of the content of the training, which were displayed by changes in patterns of behaviour or by conscious reflection about practice.

Implications of the current research suggest the need for further exploration of the impact of positioning theory in the training of approaches that support the development of TAs' pedagogical role within schools, which could be further supported by element of self-determination theory in the application of these approaches. Social interdependence

theory and need to belong also seemed to promote collaborative work, which is linked to peer support. Structured peer supervision models could be beneficial in reinforcing positive interactions.

Finally, it could be argued that the mediational language approach could provide a useful framework of practice for TAs in improving their interactions with children. It would advisable for some elements of the training to be revisited, in order to ensure that the understanding of main concepts and principles are consolidated during the training, so that TAs can make use of its full potentials.

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Appendix 1 – Table outlining details of the selected articles from Search 1

Teaching Assistants, Support for Learning and Professional Development

Author, year and country	Main focus	Methodology	Number of participants	Findings
Dew-Hughes, D.; Brayton, H. and Blandford, S. (1998) UK	Qualification and training of Teaching Assistants In-post professional development	Quantitative Questionnaires	274 TAs	Confusion over roles, responsibilities and approaches; 78% had no time allocated for planning with teachers; Half of the respondents never met TAs from other schools, although 89% would welcome the opportunity for this to happen.
Burgess, H. and Mayes, S. (2009) UK	Higher Level Teaching Assistants' perceptions of the Level 2 training programme and their changing role in classroom support	Mixed methods Evaluative research: questionnaires and in-depth interviews	17 HLTAs	TAs viewed the program positively, 88.2% feeling that it supported their professional development and improved their knowledge Nearly half (47%) reported increased confidence and greater understanding Working in groups – talking with other TAs was very beneficial. The support provided by the tutor/trainers and their peer group were rated most highly by the teaching assistants
Devecchi, C. and Rouse, Martyn (2010) UK	The aim of this article was to explore what is 'special' about teachers and TAs	Mixed Methods Ethnographic approach, structured and ethnographic observations	2 schools 4 Teams (approx. 2 people)	The analysis of the data from the two schools suggests that the successful inclusion of students is dependent on how schools as organisations and communities are also able to support the inclusion of adults.

	collaborating to support each other	semi-structured and unstructured ethnographic interviews Questionnaires analysis of school policy documents		It puts forward the case that TAs' impact on children's learning has to be assessed not only by academic achievement, but also by taking into account the nature of the support TAs receive from teachers and the school, and seeks simultaneously to explore the dynamics of their collaboration with teachers.
Groom, B. (2006) UK	The developing role of TAs from 'helpers' to one that is more directed to support the teaching and learning process	Descriptive?	N/A	It identifies the need for greater clarity in training and the need for further opportunities for career progression. It recognises the contribution made by teaching assistants, particularly in supporting the process of inclusion It provides possible frameworks to support the development of the role of teaching assistants
Webster, R., Blatchford, P., Basset, P., Brown, P., Martin, C. and Russel, A. (2011) UK	This article conceptualises the most likely explanations for the negative effects of TA support in the form of the Wider Pedagogical Role (WPR) model, the components of which enable us to understand the effects of TA support in terms	Qualitative Descriptive	N/A	WPR model was used as a framework to conceptualise these findings under the headings of practice, deployment, conditions of employment, preparedness and characteristics.

	of the decisions made about TAs, rather than by them.			
Cockroft, C. and Atkinson, C. (2015) UK	Small-scale research exploring the views of LSAs about facilitators and barriers to effective practice using the WPR model to conceptualise their views.	Qualitative Focus groups Thematic Analysis	8 learning support assistants	Findings reveal that LSA could identify current facilitators barriers under each of the five components (practice, deployment, conditions of employment, preparedness and characteristics), highlighting the usefulness of the model.
Radford, J., Blatchford, P. and Webster, R. (2011) UK	Using conversation analysis, this study compares teacher and TA talk in terms of turn allocation, topic generation and repair. Aiming to explicate more fully ways in which teachers and TAs use language in inclusive classrooms.	Qualitative Conversation analysis	130 audio recordings 15 schools	It was found that teachers open up conversation with students, whilst TAs close down the talk. Teachers, with whole classes, adopt inclusive teaching strategies to ensure oral participation whereas TAs, working with individuals, emphasise task completion. Teachers use open strategies for topic generation whilst TAs ask closed questions. Teachers withhold correction with prompts and hints whilst TAs supply answers.
Radford, J., Bosanquet, P., Webster, R., Blatchford,	This paper proposes heuristic scaffolding as the key element for inclusion in a	Qualitative Descriptive study of natural occurring classroom interactions	16 teacher/TA audio recording	The study presented examples of TA talk to illustrate the key dimensions of the theoretical model of heuristics.

P. and Rubie-Davies, C. (2014) UK	candidate theory of TA pedagogy. Aiming to develop theory and illustrate potential practice for TAs rather than exactly represent current practice in schools.	A grounded approach to the analysis was taken, informed by the procedures of conversation analysis.	pairs were selected	It is argued that it would be helpful for TAs to understand their different implications for the learner over a short sequence of discourse. It is therefore important that students are encouraged to 'think aloud' in terms of articulating their self-support strategies while working, fostering independence by allowing students to lead the interaction,
Radford, J., Bosanquet, P., Webster, R. and Blatchford, P. (2015) UK	This paper aimed to develop a theoretical model of scaffolding for TAs, by examining detailed examples of dialogue between TAs and children, to demonstrate possible scaffolding strategies	Qualitative Conversation analysis	42 audio recordings made in 15 schools	The study offers a framework for how learners can be supported, through interaction. Three distinct roles are suggested, which help to clarify the pedagogical and non-pedagogical responsibilities of the TA.

Appendix 2 – Table outlining details of the of selected articles from Search 2

Teaching Assistants, Supervision and Professional Development

Author, year and country	Main focus	Methodology	Number of participants	Findings
Carnahan, C. R., Williamson, P., Clarke, L. and Sorensen, R. (2009) United States	This article, describes a systematic approach for teachers supporting TAs, which includes processes for (a) supervising staff training, (b) in-service strategies, and [c] problem-solving strategies.	Descriptive	N/A	The article argues that developing a shared philosophy regarding teaching and learning in the classroom supports a consistent, coherent classroom environment. Regularly scheduled meetings allow for the discussion of expectations and student performance, increase opportunities to provide positive feedback, and allow TAs to understand the reasons behind the work asked of them.
Giangreco, M. F., Sutter, J. C. Doyle, M. B. (2010) United States	This article reviewed recent research on special education paraprofessional issues and practices in U.S. schools between 2000 and 2007.	Descriptive	N/A	Major findings of 32 identified studies were summarized in 9 topical categories: (a) hiring and retention of paraprofessionals, (b) training, (c) roles and responsibilities, (d) respect and acknowledgment, (e) interactions of paraprofessionals with students and staff, (f) supervision, (g) students' perspectives on paraprofessional supports, (h) school change, and (i) alternatives to the use paraprofessionals.
Chopra, R. V., Sandoval-Lucero, E. and	This article reports key findings from two studies that established the connection between effective supervision of TAs by teachers and	Descriptive	N/A	Study A: The findings highlighted the importance of the supervising teacher being "in the loop" in the

French, N. K. (2011)

United States | TAs´performance in the classroom as well as their continuing professional and career development. | | | communications and interactions between parents and paraeducators.
Study B:
Major findings of this study were that TAs who became teachers described work environments that provided them the opportunity to learn and practice some aspects of the teacher role. They had supervisor who worked collaboratively with them.
The integral role that an effective supervising teacher plays in TA´ success across the career development was a major finding of both studies. |
| French, N. (2001)

United States | Examined special education teacher practice who have responsibility for supervising TAs. | Quantitative Questionnaires | 321 teachers | Findings suggested that teachers' method of supervision was varied and supervisory training was recommended. She reported that most teachers did not plan for the TAs, expressing concerns that they might be working without any direction or with directions that are usually quickly created and easily misunderstood. |
| Downing, J. E., Ryndak, D . L. and Clark, D. (2000) United States | The purpose of this study was to identify TAs perceptions of their roles and responsibilities in inclusive classrooms. | Qualitative Interviews Content analysis | 16 TAs | TAs reported high levels of responsibility for education programs and independent decision making. TAs expressed concerns regarding their qualifications to make such decisions.
On-going training and supervision is recommended for TAs, as well as for teachers in developing competencies in managing and supervising TAs. |
| Breton (2010) United States | Investigated how adequately prepared are TAs working in special education | Quantitative Survey | 258 TAs | Indicating that most respondents felt unprepared for their roles, also receiving minimal training and supervision. The findings suggested that teachers |

				should be adequately trained to provided supervision.
Causton-Theoharis, J. N., Giangreco, M. F., Doyle, M. B. and Vadasy, P. F. (2007) United States	This article outlines commonalities from the body of literature discussing circumstances in which paraprofessionals were used successfully to improve the reading skills of students.	Qualitative Descriptive	N/A	The article offers suggestions of how classroom teachers and special educators can effectively support the work of paraprofessionals, outlining ways in which teachers can effectively involve TAs in literacy instruction.
Morgan, J. and Ashbaker, B. Y. (2011) UK	Discusses the development of TAs´ roles and responsibilities after the implementation of the National Agreement (2003), which influenced the way teachers worked TAs within the classroom. Raising questions regarding teacher´s responsibilities to guide, monitor and support the work of the TAs.	Descriptive	N/A	Describe the use of reflective teamwork, in which teacher and TAs meet for 15 minutes daily to review previous lessons, in order to enhance planning, communication and review. During these meetings both teacher and TA identify two things that went well and two things they would like to improve, using these reflections to plan future lessons.

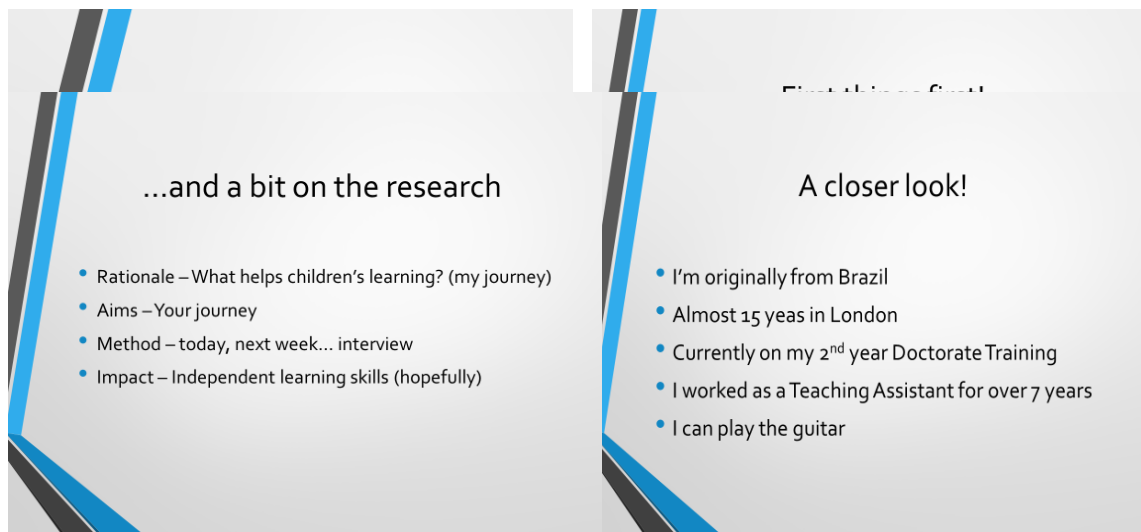**Appendix 3 – Table outlining details of the selected articles from Search 3**

Mediated Learning Experience and schools

Author, year and country	Main focus	Methodology	Number of participants	Findings
Pokorna et al. (2015) Czech Republic	This article, reports the results of educational methods based on Feuerstein's Instrument (IF) Enrichment Programme in schools and consultation centres in Czech Republic	Qualitative Case studies	6 teachers 99 pupils	Teachers who were trained in the IF programme applied this method to reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils were asked to talk about previous knowledge about the lesson, make detailed observations of what they were learning, voice their conclusions and explain their answers. Teachers also reported changes in their own approaches and thinking about the children's potential to learn and progress.
Schur et al. (2002) Israel	This article presents the theoretical background for a constructivist and MLE based approach to teaching science. The article documents an experiment which tested the effectiveness of the approach with low achieving students.	Quantitative Experimental and Control Groups	32 students (14 - 15 years of age)	Results showed that the experimental group demonstrated significant improvement in comparison to control group in all measurements. Suggesting that the combination of the constructivist approach and MLE theory was effective with low achieving students.
Yeomans, J. (2008)	This article examines the use of Dynamic Assessment (DA) by school staff in the	Qualitative Review	N/A	Thea paper suggested that Assessment for Learning (AFL), which recommends interactional approaches, such as questioning techniques, shares some common ground with

UK	development of process skills in the delivery of curriculum content.			Mediated Learning Experience (MLE). The paper discusses ways in which teaching and mediation could be incorporated in the classroom.
Lidz and Haywood (2014) Israel	The article discusses the link between assessment and the implementation of recommendations using DA.	Qualitative Review	N/A	The authors discussed how teacher as a mediator can engage students in complex interactions involving specific skills, to address issues on self-regulated learning, which included, modelling and encouraging self-talk in relation to the task and to role play with teacher.
Kozulin and Presseisen (1995) United States	The article suggests a learning theory and cognitive education based on a combination of Vygotsky's 'psychological tools' paradigm and Feuerstein's Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) approach.	Qualitative Review	N/A	The article argued that the cognitive functions required by the educational system might be hindered by insufficient MLE and lack of experience with higher order psychological tools. It emphasizes the centrality of a mediator in learning, suggesting appropriate teacher preparation to support students to acquire strategies of independent learning and problem-solving skills, to prepare them for the constant changes in curriculum content.
Tzuriel (2000) Israel	This paper reviews the research on standardized static testing and the DA approach, describing intervention perspectives and suggests future research.	Qualitative Literature Review	N/A	The paper concludes the DA presents a more valid approach for measuring cognitive ability and recommending intervention strategies. Further research is suggested in terms of reliability and validity of DA.
Haywood (2003) United States	This paper described the Bright Start programme, explaining its theoretical background, and reported evidence for the program's effectiveness.	Qualitative Literature Review	N/A	The paper provides findings about the effectiveness of the program using a range of studies conducted in a variety of countries, including US, Canada, Israel, Belgium, France and Italy. In the majority of studies children who received the program demonstrated significant improvement in comparison with control groups.

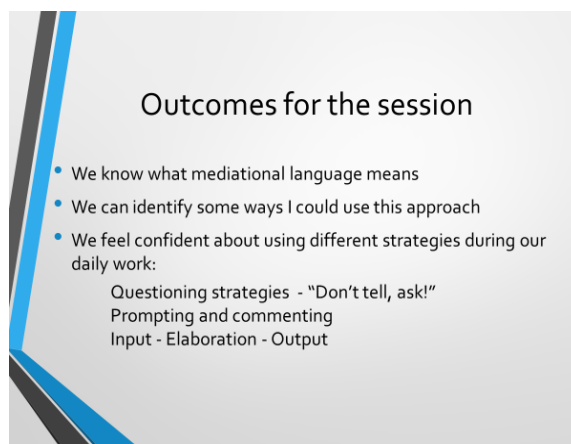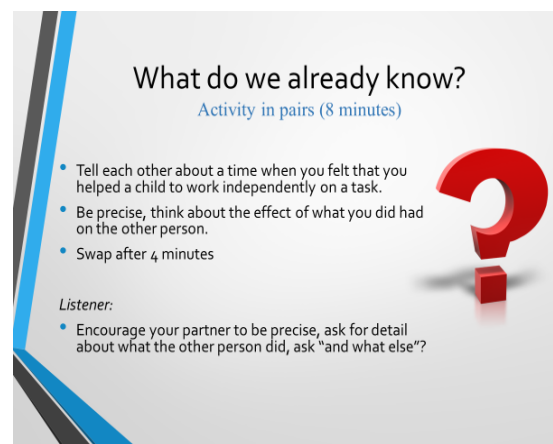**Appendix 4 – Mediational Language Training presentation**

...and a bit on the research

- Rationale – What helps children's learning? (my journey)
- Aims – Your journey
- Method – today, next week… interview
- Impact – Independent learning skills (hopefully)

1

First things first!

A closer look!

- I'm originally from Brazil
- Almost 15 yeas in London
- Currently on my 2nd year Doctorate Training
- I worked as a Teaching Assistant for over 7 years
- I can play the guitar

2

3

4

Outcomes for the session

- We know what mediational language means
- We can identify some ways I could use this approach
- We feel confident about using different strategies during our daily work:
    Questioning strategies - "Don't tell, ask!"
    Prompting and commenting
    Input - Elaboration - Output

5

What do we already know?
Activity in pairs (8 minutes)

- Tell each other about a time when you felt that you helped a child to work independently on a task.
- Be precise, think about the effect of what you did had on the other person.
- Swap after 4 minutes

Listener:
- Encourage your partner to be precise, ask for detail about what the other person did, ask "and what else"?

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

Why do we mediate?

- Child learns about the world by exploring, looking, listening, copying. So *modelling* what to do and how to do it is very important.
- A child learns by **repeating** experiences.
- A child learns by gradually being encouraged to **do things for themselves** – but with guidance from the adult.
- A child learns by connecting new experiences with experiences and learning from the past. This helps them to **problem solve** *now* and predict and plan in new situations.

13

How do we mediate?

- **Some Do's:**
  - Ask – don't tell
  - Explain *why* something is going to be done or why it is important (intention)
  - Use correct language and explain your words in different ways to aid comprehension (meaning)
  - Connect the event or activity to other times and other places (transcendence/bridging)
- **Some Don'ts**
  - Don't guess what the child is trying to say or answer for them.
  - Don't rush the child. Give them time to think.
  - Don't just show the child and expect them to copy.

14

Gathering information (input)

- Recognise there is a problem!
- Show knowledge and understanding of basic concepts
- Focus and maintain attention
- Being able to use more than one idea at a time (several sources of information)
- Methodical scanning
- Being careful when it matters (precision and accuracy)
- Relate new information to what is observed and previous information
- Time and sequencing

15

Using information (elaboration)

- Understand the task
- Use only relevant information
- Compare to existing knowledge
- Mentally visualise object/action to think about
- Think and plan approach
- Remember
- Look for differences and similarities
- Clarify
- Keep all the facts in mind (Simultaneous processing)
- Generalise between situations

16

Showing What We Know (output)

- Good motor control
- Think before answering (control impulsivity; reduce trial and error responses)
- Overcome blocks; be willing to have another go
- Express self clearly; explain/justify view
- Be precise and accurate
- Check and self-correct outcome
- Show pride/pleasure in accomplishment

17

Reflection time!(Output)

- What did we learn today?
- How do we know that?
- Any volunteers?

18

154

19

20

21

22

23

Appendix 5 – Group activity during training session

Input	Elaboration	Output

Appendix 6 – List of questions supporting each learning phase

Supporting the input phase

- What do you think you have to do? What do you think you need to find out?

- When have you done something like this before?

- When you did this before, what did you do first to work it out?

- What information do you have that will help you work it out?

- Would it help if I show you what to do then you have a go? [modelling]

- If you do this part, I'll help with that one [alternating]/ Let's do it together.

Supporting the elaboration phase

- Let's make a plan so we don't miss anything.

- Stop and look carefully at what you're doing.

- Can you find a better way?

- What do you need to do next?

- What do you think would happen if…?

Supporting the Output phase

- How? Why? What else?

- That's a good answer. How did you work it out?

- When else do you think you might use this [named skill]?

- What do you notice is the same/different about these two problems?

- Can you think of an explanation for that?

- That's a good explanation, can you think of another one?

- And another one? Which do you think is the most useful explanation?

NORW**OO**D
Hope

What is Mediated Learning Experience (MLE)?

Mediation is where an adult (e.g. parent, teacher, teaching assistant. therapist) intervenes in purposeful ways to help the child make links and develop thinking skills which can then be used in different situations. We can not take progress for granted and so we have to actively intervene to help children make sense of their experience and so learn from it.

Why do we mediate?

- Child learns about the world by exploring, looking, listening, copying. So *modelling* what to do and how to do it is very important.
- A child learns by repeating experiences.
- A child learns by gradually being encouraged to do things for themselves – but with guidance from the adult.
- A child learns by connecting new experiences with experiences and learning from the past. This helps them to problem solve *now* and predict and plan in new situations.
- Some children have great difficulty making those connections. They do not learn easily from their experiences. They may have difficulties with language, memory and holding complex ideas in their minds. They will need more support in making connections.

- Such a child may learn how to do something well in one situation but if part of the task changes they can no longer do it. This means learning was limited to the specific context. The child could not adapt, transfer the skills and generalize the learning to different situations.

What do we mediate?

As a Teacher, Parent, LSA or Teaching Assistant, you may need to mediate in order to teach:

- Language, labels and concepts (vocabulary)
- Content (ideas and information)
- Logical thinking (making sense/ understanding and explaining reasons)
- Behaviours (turn-taking, sharing, social rules,)
- Understanding of order and sequence.
- Skills for independent learning (comparing, grouping, deciding what's relevant, prioritizing, making choices and judgements, being careful and precise when needed).
- Reflection (thinking about your own thinking and how you worked out your answer)

How do we mediate?
Some Do's:

- Ask – don't tell - Where will we find….? What do we need to do next? Have we finished, or is there something else we need to do? Let's check together. Yes, that's right, how do you know that's right? Can you remember when we did this before?

- Explain *why* something is going to be done or why it is important; help the child to find meaning in the event e.g. We need to write this down so we don't forget. We need to plan so we don't miss anything out. We need to plan our time so we can finish everything we have to do. We need to think ahead and plan our writing so it fits on the line.

- ## Use correct language and explain your words in different ways to aid comprehension. Check that the child understands by asking them to repeat the idea back in their own words. Use higher order, concept word to raise the level of the child's thinking- but explain e.g. Can you give me one the same colour/size/ shape? Which is larger/ largest? Which has more/ most? Tables, chairs, beds, etc are all kinds of ….?

- ## Connect the event or activity to other times and other places (bridging) e.g. - The colour is red. Where else is it important to think about colour (e.g. red sometimes means "stop" or "danger". Can we go outside to play? Let's look at the sky. The clouds are very dark, I think it might rain.

Some Don't's:
- Don't guess what the child is trying to say or answer for them.
- Don't rush the child. Give them time to think.
- Don't just show the child and expect them to copy. Developing the child's learning is like building a house; first put up the "scaffolding" to support the structure, then remove this support one piece at a time until the structure can stand on its own.
- Don't be afraid to set clear and consistent rules.

As parents and professionals we need to do MORE connecting, MORE modelling and MORE explaining for children with special needs.

© Ruth Deutsch

MEDIATIONAL PHRASES

- ! When have you done something like this before?
- ! Connecting to prior experience (time)
- ! Where have you done that before to help you solve a problem?
- ! Connecting to prior experience (place)

- ! When is another time you need to ___?
- ! Prediction based on prior learning

- ! Can you think of another way we could do this?
- ! Generating alternate strategies for problem solving
- !
- ! What do you think the problem is?
- ! Defining the problem

- ! Let's make a plan so we don't miss anything.
- ! Developing planning behaviour

- ! Stop and look carefully at what you're doing
- ! Reflecting on the process

- ! What do you need to do next?
- ! Planning and prediction
- ! © rmdeutsch2002

Appendix 8 – Levels of support discussed during group session

The Path of Least Resistance

least

to

most support

- Encourage child to identify problem
- Help child determine their own approach to the task
- Suggest an approach
- Lead the child to a response
- Provide part of the response
- Model the response and provide another opportunity
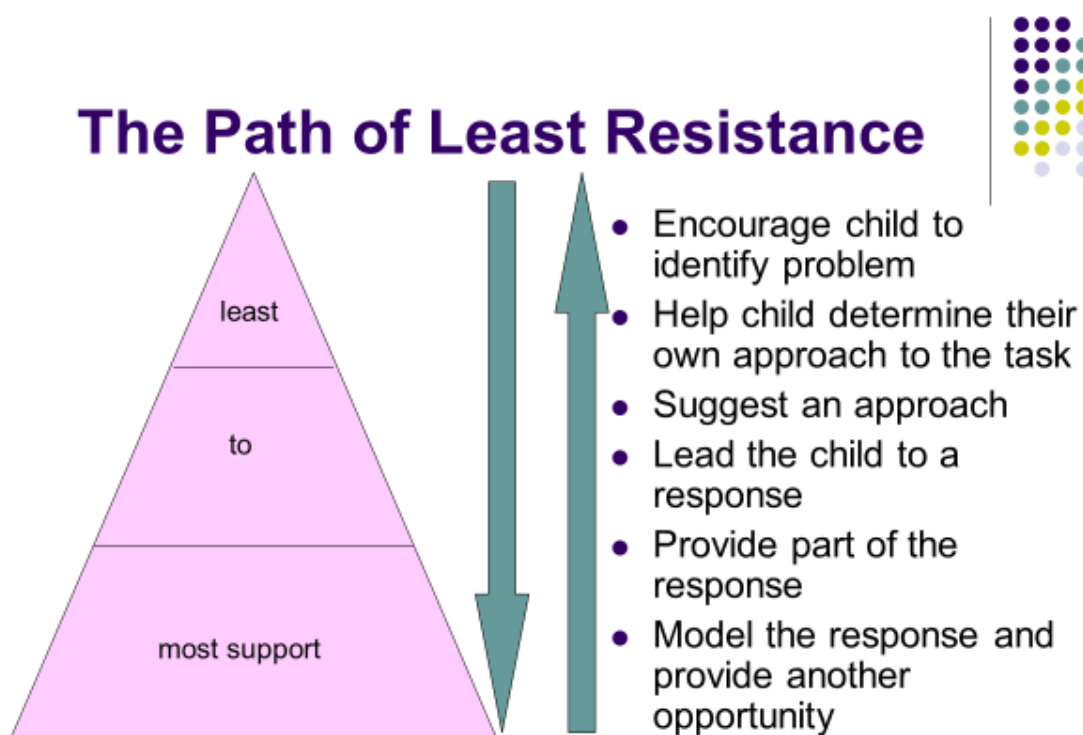
Appendix 9 – Information sheet for participants

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

School of Psychology
Stratford Campus
Water Lane
London E15 4LZ

Researcher
Eduardo Cardoso de Freitas
U1529170@uel.ac.uk
07477953255

Consent to Participate in a Research Study
The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate a research study. The study is being conducted as part of my Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology degree at the University of East London.

Project Title
Teaching assistant's experience of mediational language and peer supervision in their professional practice: an exploratory study.

Project Description
The aim of this study is to provide teaching assistants with alternative approaches in supporting children's learning in classroom, together with peer-supervision.
Participants will receive a training session (approx. one hour) on the approaches, followed by two peer-supervision sessions with the researcher and other participants (one hour each), to discuss good practice and problem-solve possible issues encountered during the study period (6 weeks). At the end of the last week, participants will be asked to take part in individual interviews (approx. one hour) to talk about their experiences and views about using these approaches in their everyday practice.

Confidentiality of the Data
Participants contact details will be kept in a safe place, only accessible to the researcher, who will ensure this is not shared with anyone else. During interviews participants will be ensured that their names and identifying references will be changed in the transcription of the interviews. Additionally, participants will be given the option of using a different name during those sessions, so that anonymity and confidentiality can be ensured.

Audio recordings from the interviews will be erased once the study is completed, however anonymized transcripts might be kept for further analysis. Participants have the right to withdraw their data from the study, without being obliged to give any reason.

Location
The study will be carried out at the participant's place of work.

Disclaimer
You are not obliged to take part in this study and should not feel coerced. You are free to withdraw at any time. Should you choose to withdraw from the study you may do so without disadvantage to yourself and without any obligation to give a reason.

Please feel free to ask me any questions. If you are happy to continue you will be asked to sign a consent form prior to your participation. Please retain this invitation letter for reference.

If you have any questions or concerns about how the study has been conducted, please contact the study's supervisor Helena Bunn, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ. Email address: Helena.Bunn@uel.c.uk.
or
Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr. Mary Spiller, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
(Tel: 020 8223 4004. Email: m.j.spiller@uel.ac.uk)

Thank you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely,

Eduardo Cardoso de Freitas

Appendix 10 – Participant consent form

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

Consent to participate in a research study

Teaching assistants' experience of mediational language and peer supervision in their professional practice: an exploratory study.

I have the read the information sheet provided relating to the above study and have been given a copy to keep for myself. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researcher(s) involved in the study will have access to identifying data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the research study has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me. Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

………………………………………………………………………………………….

Participant's Signature

………………………………………………………………………………………..

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

………………………………………………………………………………………..

Researcher's Signature

…………………………………………………………………………………………

Date: ………………...…….

Appendix 11 – Interview schedule

1) Can you tell me how was it like for you to experience using this new approach, from the first training day, during the group sessions, until today?

2) How did that feel like to you?

3) Tell me what happened when you started work after the training session…

4) Tell me what happened…

5) And then what happened?

6) What happened next?

7) In the beginning, you said .... could you tell me a bit more?

8) Could you tell me a bit more about how was it like…?

9) What aspects of group sessions did you find important?

10) How did it influence your professional practice?

11) Can you remember a particular time when /you felt you helped a child/felt effective in your practice/happy about a day at work?

12) Was there anything I haven't asked you that you would like to add?

Appendix 12 – Example of transcript

166

1. **Eduardo –** This interview is about your experience of the whole thing,
2. training and then the group sessions? How was it for you? So, tell me,
3. tell me all about it, basically.

4. **Carol –** Ok, you know when you said about about the input and the
5. output? I wasn't thinking on my work like that, the input and then the
6. output. So after you said that, and then I thought of it like an input I put
7. kind of thing. What am I giving the child? And then from that, how much
8. of it is the child taking to reach an outcome.

9. Eduardo – Ok

10. **Carol –** So, because my bulk of my day is with like, really low ability
11. children. They find it very difficult to understand even the instructions.
12. So, the instruction has to be like completely decoded, to get them to
13. like, even questioning them to see if they've understood what I've said;
14. and then I get them to even show me, on their white boards. So, so
15. let's say, if I say: - 'Three tens', maths. How do you show that in terms
16. of pictures? So, and then, if I say: - 'Ok, now I'm going to give you, I'm
17. going to do of the opposite of that'. To show that they've learnt that. So,
18. if we are showing three tens like, the tens we show with like, deens, or
19. like, lines and then dot, for the units, yeah? And then I'll give them a
20. number, so they have to to show that like that, and then other
21. way around, so I'll give them the picture and they have to give me the
22. number. So, it's like, some children cold do one of the bits, some
23. children are just lost... They are all like on different, kind of,
24. learning... they've got different learning needs.

25. **Eduardo –** Yeah, sure

26. **Carol –** So, I think I feel like, they are....some of them, they get it, some

27. of them don't, so they're all in like, different levels.

28. **Eduardo –** Yeah of course.

29. **Carol –** Yeah, and it's challenging because, you know, I want like, to
30. just go in and teach, and I want them to just get it. Yeah, I have that
31. kind of expectation, and if I, if they don't, then I feel like I'm getting
32. frustrated, because I'm like: - 'Why aren't they getting it? Ok I have to
33. try something else then.' Then have to get something solid out, maybe
34. that's what they need or they need to get up and actively to something.
35. That hasn't quite happened like, coming out in the playground and
36. doing, maybe jumping, some sitting, you know, maybe they have,
37. physically have to do something. You know like, I thought about the
38. kinaesthetic, visual, all the kind of, you know, these children, are they
39. that kind of learner? Or kinaesthetic learner, do they need to feel
40. things? And so, we can't always get to apply all that into our, the
41. teaching.

42. **Eduardo –** Yeah, of course

43. **Carol –** Yeah, but the questioning part, I think he happens quite
44. innately.

45. **Eduardo –** Sure, of course

46. **Carol –** So, yeah. So, the input, output, yeah. I'm going to think of that
47. more so now.

48. **Eduardo –** So, what changed then? From, you said from the beginning
49. when we....

50. **Carol –** I wasn't doing that, I wasn't thinking of it. even after like, the
51. initial bits, of where you said: - 'The input it is like this and the output is

52. like that'. Sill not quite getting it, and then I had to like, go away and
53. look at it myself; and then see. Ok, and have some like, questions
54. written out, for that session, so I'll be looking at the planning and I'd
55. see: - "Ok then, what can be the input part of my, on my part?".

56. Eduardo – Sure

57. **Carol –** And then, sometimes, you know, you want the children to... I've
58. found out that, is always like, we take over like, sometimes we ask too
59. many questions. So, I want to children to ask a question about that
60. specific like, activity. Sometimes, obviously, like, they've got the lack of
61. words, or the confidence, or they don't know how to. So, I'll
62. demonstrate. - 'Ok, I'm going to ask a question to this person, now you
63. asked me.' And even then, those times when weren't actually still
64. getting it, they'd just sit there like.... So, we have to look at question. At
65. least is sometime else. You know, but throughout this thing, we've
66. been filling in gaps, gaps in their learning.

67. **Eduardo –** Ok, what do you mean by filling gaps?

68. **Carol –** So, some of the can't even count from like, one back, one
69. forward. So, they've had this assessment thing like, - 'I can do this. I
70. can do that'. We have to go through the books to see, what they can
71. do, what they can do, are there emerging, are the developing, are
72. secured in that. So, we are constantly going back and forth with that.
73. Yeah, because assessments show otherwise you know?

74. **Eduardo –** Ok, so can you tell me maybe, what happened then after
75. the first session, after the group, in terms of, can you give me an
76. example of what happened? What changed? Was there any change in
77. you, in terms of your practice?

78. **Carol –** You know, before you came, we were going to this other
79. training, where we had to become kind of, like, conscious kind of
80. practitioners. it's called outstanding TA programmes thing, so two of us
81. went, from work. And, again, it was to do with like, the mediated kind
82. of learning like, asking loads of questions. So, you were saying about
83. this, I kind of had a taste of it already.

84. **Eduardo –** Ok, brilliant

85. **Carol –** So, we will be applying that, and then, because two of us
86. went, we need to kind of give an inset to the rest of the teaching
87. assistants and maybe the teachers. Yes, it's been very very
88. enlightening process (laughs) I would say.

89. Eduardo – Ok

90. **Carol –** And I have been making like, a few notes to go, to see like,
91. what has worked, what hasn't worked. I don't want to overload the
92. children with too many questions. There has to be like, somehow
93. balance or a limit, because you don't wannna.... that becomes too
94. overbearing, I find. You can see them, physically like, they're trying to
95. digest that bit of information and then, you're giving then something
96. else, another question to think about. You just one of them to tackle
97. this first. You know?

98. **Eduardo –** So what happened after the training then?

99. **Carol –** After the training...sometimes it's hard to put into words...

100. **Eduardo –** Try to give an example, maybe in the
101. classroom, some child do you work with, someone that you
102. have been working with.

103. **Carol –** Ok, with like, in the afternoon, there is the speech

104. therapy groups, and these children they've got like issues like
105. stummering, stuttering, lack of confidence. So, I will have them
106. in a little circle, at the back, so that, they've got my
107. support, while they are accessing the main teaching part.
108. So, it's getting them to tell me what the LO means. Yeah, and,
109. what they have to do. If I wasn't there, they would be so
110. distracted, go off to the table, be a bit lost, and the class teacher
111. would probably have to go round to hear them again. So, I think,

112.   yeah, I play a very important role in their learning. It's more, you
113.   know these, training and this, has made that more so, kind of,
114.   I've become aware pf that. How much my input is necessary
115.   and important to these children.

116.   **Eduardo –** How is that? Can you tell me a bit more?

117.   **Carol –** Sometimes imagine myself not there, and that, they will
118.   struggle I know it. So, need that. They need those kind of like....
119.   even to like, awaking the thinking like, wake them up even.
120.   Sometimes you have like, passive learners that just sit there
121.   and then not... you know. they won't even look at the LO, they
122.   won't think for themselves, so by me, or us, asking
123.   questions, we wake up their learning. That's what I find.

124.   **Eduardo –** How did that impacted on you as a professional?

125.   **Carol –** It's a slow process I think. Slow, but I think the
126.   consistency will, in the end, turn in some kind of, benefit like,
127.   fruit. It;s overtime. I don't think anything will happen
128.   immediately. I think we've we carry on with this, then the
129.   children, they'll kind of, go into that pattern of like, thinking: -
130.   'Ok, yeah, ok, everyday she's asking questions about this,
131.   she expects me to be alert'. And then I want them to start doing
132.   that like, automatically almost. It might come slowly, it's not
133.   happened yet but, let's see, let's give it more time.

134.   **Eduardo –** So do you think, yourself as a
135.   professional, something changed?

136.   **Carol –** Yeah, we are doing individual stories of the child as a
137.   learner. That's starting, so we kind of suggested that to my line
138.   manager and I think, we need to see what's working for this
139.   child, or what the strength are, what kind of questions
140.   triggers my input from them, like you know, that kind of
141.   initiative to learn. So, yeah, it's this story, individual story
142.   things, and we are going to take it to the leadership.

143.   **Eduardo –** And, can you tell a bit of how was it like for you
144.   having the group sessions afterwards?

145.   **Carol –** They were ok. I wouldn't say they were like, so
146.   enlightening like, Eureka moment and like, yes! I felt like they
147.   were ok like, give me enough to go and try it.

148.   **Eduardo –** Ok, tell me a bit more.

149.   **Carol –** Yeah, with me and I kind of person that I want to go and
150.   try something, so this was something new, obviously being part
151.   of this research, I was thinking like: "Yeah, I want to try this. I
152.   know if I go with the children and see where we go with this". As
153.   you said, its like a journey.

Appendix 13 – Example of analysis

Left page (handwritten) — Structural Concepts:

Structural Concepts

OR – children, maths lesson

CA – thinking about the content of the session
Her input

EV – because she works with "really low ability children"

CA – children's difficulties

EV – So, info needs to be 'decode'
OR – maths.
CA – description of a maths lesson, interaction with children

RS –

Middle page (typed transcript):

Carol

1. Eduardo – This interview is about your experience of the whole thing,
2. training and then the group sessions? How was it for you? So tell me,
3. tell me all about it, basically.

4. Carol – Ok, you know when you said about about the input and the
5. output? I wasn't thinking on my work like that, the input and then the
6. output. So after you said that, and then I thought of it like an input I put
7. kind of thing. What am I giving the child? And then from that, how much
8. of it is the child taking to reach an outcome.

9. Eduardo – Ok

10. Carol – So, because my bulk of my day is with like, really low ability
11. children. They find it very difficult to understand even the instructions.
12. So, the instruction has to be like completely decoded, to get them to
13. like, even questioning them to see if they've understood what I've said;
14. and then I get them to even show me, on their white boards. So, so
15. let's say, if I say: - 'Three tens', maths. How do you show that in terms
16. of pictures? So, and then, if I say: - 'Ok, now I'm going to give you, I'm
17. going to do of the opposite of that'. To show that they've learnt that. So,
18. if we are showing three tens like, the tens we show with like, deens, or
19. like, lines and then dot, for the units, yeah? And then I'll give them a
20. number, so they have to to show that like that, and then other
21. way around, so I'll give them the picture and they have to give me the
22. number. So, its like, some children could do one of the bits, some
23. children are just lost... They are all like on different, kind of,
24. learning... they've got different learning needs.   RS
                                                          Coda

25. Eduardo – Yeah, sure

26. Carol – So, I think I feel like, they are....some of them, they get it, some

Right page (handwritten) — Dialogical concept:

Dialogical concept

Carol uses her 'classroom voice' to demons-trate how she interacts with children in the lesson. The children provide a silent presence

ID – support, teaching

ST – How much support she gives to enable children's understanding

Structural Concepts

RS - children learn differently

CA -

EV - expectations and frustration

CA - things not happening as expected.

EV - types of learners.

RS - time or opportunity & limits.

EV - questions happen innately

EV/RS - planning to think about the technique.

CA - before she wasn't thinking like that.

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27. of them don't, so they're all in like, different levels.

28. **Eduardo** – Yeah of course.

CA

29. **Carol** – Yeah, and it's challenging because, you know , I want like, to
30. just go in and teach, and I want them to just get it. Yeah, I have that
31. kind of expectation. And if I, if they don't, then I feel like I'm getting
32. frustrated, because I'm like, "Why aren't they getting it? Ok I have to,
33. try something else then" Then have to get something solid out, maybe
34. that's what they need or they need to get up and actively to something.
35. That hasn't quite happened like, coming out in the playground and
36. doing, maybe jumping, some sitting, you know, maybe they have,
37. physically have to do something. You know like, I thought about the
38. kinaesthetic, visual, all the kind of, you know, these children, are they
39. that kind of learner? Or kinaesthetic learner, do they need to feel
40. things? And so, we can't always get to apply all that into our, the
41. teaching.   RS

42. **Eduardo** – Yeah, of course

43. **Carol** – Yeah, but the questioning part, I think it happens quite
44. innately.

45. **Eduardo** – Sure, of course

46. **Carol** – So, yeah. So, the input, output, yeah. I'm going to think of that
47. more so now.

48. **Eduardo** – So, what changed then? From, you said from the beginning
49. when we....

50. **Carol** – I wasn't doing that, I wasn't thinking of it. even after like, the
51. initial bits, of where you said: - 'The input it is like this and the output is

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Dialogical concepts

→ Her inner voice reflecting on her own practice also reflects her frustration, which is a result of previous expectations about her roles and the childrens responses.

The voice also shows her persistence in adapting her practice according to the childrens needs.

ID - Tries new things, willing to improve

ST - Her teaching ability

174

Structural Concepts

CA - finding hard to make sense of the content of training, trying to understand it-

GV - thinking about what she has learnt.

CA - adults ask too many questions.

EV - children should ask questions

CA - children may may lack the confidence
↳ so she demonstrates. by modelling questions ↳ but they still don't get it.

RS - adults have been filling the gaps in their learning.

CA - assessment

EV - back and forth

RS - "assessments show otherwise"

---

52. like that'. Still not quite getting it, and then I had to like, go away and
53. look at it myself; and then see. Ok, and have some like, questions
54. written out, for that session, so I'll be looking at the planning and I'd
55. see: - "Ok then, what can be the input part of my, on my part?".

56. **Eduardo** – Sure

57. **Carol** – And then, sometimes, you know, you want the children to. I've
58. found out that, is always like, we take over like, sometimes we ask too
59. many questions. So, I want to children to ask a question about that
60. specific like, activity. Sometimes, obviously, like, they've got the lack of
61. words, or the confidence, or they don't know how to. So, I'll
62. demonstrate. - 'Ok, I'm going to ask a question to this person, now you
63. asked me.' And even then, those times when they weren't actually still
64. getting it, they'd just sit there like..... So, we have to look at questions At
65. least is something else. You know, but throughout this thing, we've
66. been filling in gaps, gaps in their learning.

67. **Eduardo** – Ok, what do you mean by filling gaps?

68. **Carol** – So, some of the can't even count from like, one back, one
69. forward. So, they've had this assessment thing like, - 'I can do this. I
70. can do that'. We have to go through the books to see, what they can
71. do, what they can do, are there emerging, are they developing, are
72. secured in that. So, we are constantly going back and forth with that,
73. Yeah, because assessments show otherwise you know?

74. **Eduardo** – Ok, so can you tell me maybe, what happened then after
75. the first session, after the group, in terms of, can you give me an
76. example of what happened? What changed? Was there any change in
77. you, in terms of your practice?

78. **Carol** – You know, before you came, we were going to this other
79. training, where we had to become kind of, like, conscious kind of

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Dialogical concepts

→ The inner voice demonstrates her thought process in making sense of the content

ID - tries hard, does not give up
ST - Her contribution, her part.

→ Classroom voice demonstrating how she supports children by modelling and "filling in gaps... in their learning.

ID - she is necessary, useful, important for their learning.
ST - Her role

Structural concepts

OR- TA training - reflective practice
2 TAs

EV- So, "I kind of had a taste of it already."

CA- Feeding back the training to the rest of the staff.

RS- es

CA- studying, reflecting on practice

EV- prefers not to overload children with too many questions.

CA- children's difficulty to process too much information

EV/RS - help them one thing at the time.

---

80. practitioners. its called outstanding TA programmes thing, so two of us
81. went, from work. And, again, it was to do with like, the mediated kind
82. of learning like, asking loads of questions. So, you were saying about
83. this, I kind of had a taste of it already.

84. **Eduardo** – Ok, brilliant

85. **Carol** – So, we will applying that, and then, because two of us
86. went, we need to kind of give an inset to the rest of the teaching
87. assistants and maybe the teachers. Yes, it's been very very
88. enlightening process (laughs) I would say.
RS

89. **Eduardo** – Ok

90. **Carol** – And I have been making like, a few notes to go, to see like,
91. what has worked, what hasn't worked. I don't want to overload the
92. children with too many questions. There has to be like, somehow
93. balance or a limit, because you don't wannna... that becomes too
94. overbearing, I find. You can see them, physically like, they're trying to
95. digest that bit of information and then, you're giving them something
96. else, another question to think about. You just one of them to tackle
want them
97. this first. You know?

98. **Eduardo** – So what happened after the training then?

99. **Carol** – After the training...sometimes it's hard to put into words...

100.   **Eduardo** – Try to give an example, maybe in the
101.   classroom, some child do you work with, someone that you
102.   have been working with.

103.   **Carol** – Ok, with like, in the afternoon, there is the speech

---

Dialogical Concepts

Structural concepts

OR - group of children, language diff,

TA, in a circle at the back, class teacher

EV - TA support in the classroom

CA - without her support they wouldn't be able to cope

EV - she plays a "very important role in their learning"
↳ the training made her more aware of that

OR - Classroom without her
CA - children would struggle

EV - "So, they need that"

CA - "awaking their thinking, wake them up even"
↳ "they won't think for themselves"

EV/RS - by "asking questions, we wake-up their learning"

EV - "I don't think anything will happen immediately"

CA - sequence of actions towards children's independent automatic questioning?

---

104. therapy groups, and these children they've got like issues like
105. stummering, stuttering, lack of confidence. So, I will have them
106. in a little circle, at the back, so that, they've got my
107. support, while they are accessing the main teaching part.
108. So, it's getting them to tell me what the LO means. Yeah, and,
109. what they have to do. If I wasn't there, they would be so
110. distracted; go off to the table, be a bit lost, and the class teacher
111. would probably have to go round to hear them again. So, I think,
112. yeah, I play a very importatnt role in their learning. It's more, you
113. know these, training and this, has made that more so, kind of,
114. I've become aware pf that. HOw much my input is necessary
115. and important to this children.

116. **Eduardo** – How is that? Can you tell me a bit more?

117. **Carol** – Sometimes imagine myself not there, and that, they will
118. struggle I know it. So, need that They need those kind of like...
119. even to like, awaking the thinking like, wake them up even.
120. Sometimes you have like, passive learners that just sit there
121. and then not... you know. they won't even look at the LO, they
122. won't think for themselves, so by me, or us, asking
123. questions, we wake up their learning. That's what I find.

124. **Eduardo** – How did that impacted on you as a professional?

125. **Carol** – It's a slow process I think. Slow, but I think the
126. consistency will, in the end, turn in some kind of, benefit like,
127. fruit. It's overtime. I don't think anything will happen.
128. immediately. I think we've we carry on with this, then the
129. children, they'll kind of, go into that pattern of like, thinking: -
130. 'Ok, yeah, ok, everyday she's asking questions about this,
131. she expects me to be alert'. And then I want them to start doing
132. that like, automatically almost. It might come slowly, it's not
133. happened yet but, let's see, let's give it more time.

Dialogical concepts

The child's voice provide a hypothetical scenario in which the child/children realize or becomes aware of the pattern of questions. This supports the idea of giving time by antecipating an ideal scenario

ID - she is aware about how things work in children's learning

ST - "carry on with this", independence?

structural concepts

OR - Line manager, leadership

CA - Suggesting new approaches for school SLT.

Dialogical concepts

134. **Eduardo** – So do you think, yourself as a
135. professional, something changed?

136. **Carol** – Yeah, we are doing individual stories of the child as a
137. learner. That's starting, so we kind of suggested that to my line
138. manager and I think, we need to see what's working for this
139. child, or what the strength are, what kind of questions
140. triggers any input from them, like you know, that kind of
141. initiative to learn. So, yeah, it's this story, individual story
142. things, and we are going to take it to the leadership.

EV

RS

143. **Eduardo** – And, can you tell a bit of how was it like for you
144. having the group sessions afterwards?

Ev

145. **Carol** – They were ok. I wouldn't say they were like, so
146. enlightening like, Eureka moment and like, yes! I felt like they
147. were ok like, give me enough to go and try it.

RS - she is happy to try things.

148. **Eduardo** – Ok, tell me a bit more.

149. **Carol** – Yeah, with me and I kind of person that I want to go and
150. try something, so this was something new, obviously being part
151. of this research, I was thinking like: "Yeah, I want to try this. I
152. know if I go with the children and see where we go with this". As
153. you said, its like a journey.

Coda

Inner voice
→ Trying new things, for the children.
ID   *ST*

154. **Eduardo** – So, how was the journey for you then? Then me
155. more about your journey.

156. **Carol** – Up and down. Its a struggle. And I think with any
157. struggle, you have to be persevering through it. Yeah.

158. **Eduardo** – Do you have an example?

Appendix 14 – Example of the table of analysis

Structural Analysis (overall structure of the narratives)		Quotes (dialogical concepts represented in underlined words)	Lines	Dialogical Narrative Analysis (dialogical concepts represented in underlined words)	
Orientation Provides the setting in which the events of the story are told. *(Who, what, when, where?)*	Maths lesson with "really low ability children"		10-11	**Polyphony/Heteroglossia** (Who are the people that share the story? What is their role in the story?)	Carols uses her classroom voice to demonstrate how she interacts with children in the classroom in the lesson. The children provide a silent presence, which may indicate that they are listening to the instructions and responding accordingly
Complicating Action Relates the events of the story, represented in linear time, with a chronological order. *(Then what happened?)*	Beginning: Thinking about the content of the session, her input. Middle: Description of a maths lesson, instructions given to the children. End: Reflecting on challenges	"… then I thought of it like an input I put kind of thing. What am I giving the child? And then from that, how much of it the child is taking to reach an outcome" Classroom voice: "Three tens… How do you show that in terms of pictures?... Ok, now I'm going to give you, I'm going to do the opposite of that" Inner voice: "Why aren't they getting it? Ok, I have to try something else then"	6-8 15-17 32	**Resources** (What are the voices contribution to the story? Benefits for the narrator of their involvement?) **Identity** (What does the story teach about the narrator? Their becoming in regard to who they are and in regard to whom they might be?) **What's at stake** (How does the narrator hold their identity through the story given the event?)	Her inner voice reflects on her own practice, also reflecting on her own frustration, which seems to be linked to previous expectations about children's responses. Her voice also demonstrates her persistence in adapting her practice according to the children's needs Identity: supportive, willing to try new things and improve
Evaluation Presents the narrators perspective. The 'point' of the story. Reveals emotions as part of the story. *(So what?)*	Beginning: So, the information needs to be broken down. Middle: different feelings; expectation and frustration	"So, the instruction has to be completely decoded…" "…I have that kind of expectation, but then I feel like I'm getting frustrated" "So, it's like, some children could do one of the bits, some are just lost"	12-13 37-39 22-23		

	End: There are different kinds of learners				What's at stake: Her teaching, how much support she gives to enable children's understanding
Result Tells how the story ends. *(What finally happened?)*	Beginning: children are different Middle: time constrains End: Planning next	"They are all like on different kind of learning... they've got different learning needs" "we can't always get to apply all that into our, the teaching" "... I'm going to think of that more now"	23-24 40-41 46-47		
Complicating Action Relates the events of the story, represented in linear time, with a chronological order. *(Then what happened?)*	Beginning: Finding hard to make sense of the content of the training, trying to understand it. Middle: Thinking about what she has learnt End: example of classroom situation, modelling and questioning	"Still not quite getting it, and then I had to go away and look at it myself..." Inner voice: "Ok, then, what can be the input part of my, on my part?" Classroom voice: "Ok, I'm going to ask a question this person, now you ask me"	52-53 55 62-63	**Polyphony/Heteroglossia** (Who are the people that share the story? What is their role in the story?) **Resources** (What are the voices contribution to the story? Benefits for the narrator of their involvement?) **Identity** (What does the story teach about the narrator? Their becoming in regard to who they are and in regard to whom they might be?)	The inner voice demonstrates her thought process in making sense of the content of the training. The classroom voice demonstrates how she supports the children by modelling and "filling the gaps... in their learning" Identity: she tries hard and doesn't give up; she is important to children's learning
Evaluation Presents the narrators perspective. The 'point' of the story. Reveals emotions as	Children should ask questions	"So, I want children to ask a question about that specific activity" "we are constantly back and forth with that"	59-60 72	**What's at stake** (How does the narrator hold their identity through the story given the event?)	What's at stake: her contribution, her role in the classroom

part of the story. *(So what?)*					
Result Tells how the story ends. *(What finally happened?)*		"we have been filing in the gaps, gaps in their learning" "because assessments show otherwise"	65-66 73		
Orientation Provides the setting in which the events of the story are told. *(Who, what, when, where?)*	Another TA training about reflective practice with two other TAs	"it's called outstanding TA programme thing, so two of us went, from work"	80-81		
Complicating Action Relates the events of the story, represented in linear time, with a chronological order. *(Then what happened?*	Feeding back the training to the rest of the staff Studying, reflecting on practice Children's difficulty to process too much information	"we need to kind of give an INSET to the rest of the teaching assistants" "and I have been making like, a few notes…" "you can see them, physically like, they're trying to digest that bit of information…"	86-87 90-91 94-95		
Evaluation Presents the narrators perspective. The 'point' of the story. Reveals emotions as part of the story. *(So what?)*	Help them one thing at the time	"I kind of had a taste of it already" "I don't want to overload the children with too many questions"	83 91-92		
Result Tells how the story ends.		"you just want them to tackle this first"	96-97		

(What finally happened?)					
Orientation Provides the setting in which the events of the story are told. *(Who, what, when, where?)*	Speech therapy groups, children and TA in a circle at the back of the classroom	"and these children, they've got issues like stammering, stuttering, lack of confidence"	104-105	**Polyphony/Heteroglossia** (Who are the people that share the story? What is their role in the story?	The children's voice provides a hypothetical scenario in which they realise or become aware of the pattern f questions. This supports the idea of giving time by anticipating an ideal scenario.
Complicating Action Relates the events of the story, represented in linear time, with a chronological order. *(Then what happened?)*	Beginning: Without her support they would have difficulty with the lesson Middle: Imagining herself not in the lesson End: sequence of interactions	"if I wasn't there, they would be so distracted, go off to the table, be a bit lost…" "Sometimes I imagine myself not there" Children's voices: "Ok, yeah, ok, every day she is asking questions about this, she expects me to be alert"	109-110 117 130	**Resources** (What are the voices contribution to the story? Benefits for the narrator of their involvement?) **Identity** (What does the story teach about the narrator? Their becoming in regard to who they are and in regard to whom they might be?) **What's at stake** (How does the narrator hold their identity through the story given the event?)	Identity: she is aware about how children learn What's at stake: how much children need her support
Evaluation Presents the narrators perspective. The 'point' of the story. Reveals emotions as part of the story. *(So what?)*	The training helped her realise about her role Views about the process	"I play very important role I their learning… this training and this… I've become more aware of that. How much my input is necessary and important to these children" "It's a slow process" "I don't think anything will happen immediately"	112-115 125 127-128		
Result Tells how the story ends. *(What finally happened?)*		"so, by me, or us, asking questions, we wake up their learning" "let's give it more time"	122-123 133		

Orientation Provides the setting in which the events of the story are told. *(Who, what, when, where?)*	Group session with other TAs				
Evaluation Presents the narrators perspective. The 'point' of the story. Reveals emotions as part of the story. *(So what?)*		"They were ok. I wouldn't say they were like, so enlightening, Eureka moment and like, yes. I felt like they were ok." "I didn't, to be honest, feel something changed"	145-147 165		
Complicating Action Relates the events of the story, represented in linear time, with a chronological order. *(Then what happened?)*	Thinking about trying new things	Inner voice: "Yeah, I want to try this, I know if I go with the children and see where we go with this"	151-152	**Polyphony/Heteroglossia** (Who are the people that share the story? What is their role in the story? **Resources** (What are the voices contribution to the story? Benefits for the narrator of their involvement?) **Identity** (What does the story teach about the narrator? Their becoming in regard to who they are and in regard to whom they might be?	Trying new things for the children.
Result Tells how the story ends. *(What finally happened?)*		"you have to be persevering through it"	157		
Coda Links past world to present world. Function 'to sign off'		"it's like a journey"	153		

Appendix 15 – Example of the summary of small stories

Carol summary of small stories

Maths lesson with "really low ability children" (1:10)

Carols uses her classroom voice to demonstrate how she interacts with children in the classroom in a maths lesson. The children provide a silent presence, which may indicate that they are listening to the instructions and responding accordingly ("Three tens… How do you show that in terms of pictures?... Ok, now I'm going to give you, I'm going to do the opposite of that"; 1:15).

Her inner voice reflects on her own practice, also reflecting on her own frustration, which seems to be linked to previous expectations about children's responses. Her voice also demonstrates her persistence in adapting her practice according to the children's needs ("Why aren't they getting it? Ok, I have to try something else then"; 2:32).

Identity: supportive, willing to try new things and improve

What's at stake: Her teaching, how much support she gives to enable children's understanding ("we can't always get to apply all that into our, the teaching"; 2:40).

"… I'm going to think of that more now" (2:46)

Summary:

Carol presents as supportive and willing to try new things to improve. She reflects about her own practice and her frustrations about how much support she gives to enable children's understanding ("Why aren't they getting it? Ok, I have to try something else then"; 2:32). This reflection also helps her to think about other ways of working ("I'm going to think of that more now"; 2:46)

Finding hard to make sense of the content of the training, trying to understand it

The inner voice demonstrates her thought process in making sense of the content of the training ("Ok, then, what can be the input part of my, on my part?"; 3:52).

The classroom voice demonstrates how she supports the children by modelling and "filling the gaps… in their learning" (3:66).

Identity: she tries hard and doesn't give up; she is important to children's learning

What's at stake: her role in the classroom ("So, I want children to ask a question about that specific activity"; 3:59)

Summary:

Although Carol found it hard to make sense of the training at first, she held herself as someone who tries hard and does not give up easy ("Ok, then, what can be the input part of my, on my part?"; 3:52). She values children's contribution in lessons and worries about her role in supporting this ("So, I want children to ask a question about that specific activity"; 3:59). Using her classroom voice, she demonstrates how she supports the children by modelling and "filling the gaps… in their learning" (3:66).

Another TA training about reflective practice with two other TAs

Feeding back the training to the rest of the staff, studying, reflecting on practice

Children's difficulty to process too much information ("you can see them, physically like, they're trying to digest that bit of information"; 4:94)

Help them one thing at the time ("I don't want to overload the children with too many questions"; 4:91).

Summary:

Carol is aware about the importance of reflective practice, as she has attended other trainings with two of her colleagues. She also understands children's difficulty to process too much information ("you can see them, physically like, they're trying to digest that bit of information"; 4:94) and thus, prefers to help them one thing at the time ("I don't want to overload the children with too many questions"; 4:91).

Speech therapy groups, children and TA in a circle at the back of the classroom

("if I wasn't there, they would be so distracted, go off to the table, be a bit lost"; 5:109)

"Sometimes I imagine myself not there" (5:117)

Children's voices: "Ok, yeah, ok, everyday she is asking questions about this, she expects me to be alert" (5:130).

The training helped her realise about her role ("I play very important role I their learning… this training and this… I've become more aware of that. How much my input is necessary and important to these children"; 5:112)

"It's a slow process" (5:125)

The children's voice provides a hypothetical scenario in which they realise or become aware of the pattern f questions. This supports the idea of giving time by anticipating an ideal scenario.

Identity: she is aware about how children learn

What's at stake: how much children need her support

"so, by me, or us, asking questions, we wake up their learning" (5:122).

Summary:

The training helped her realise about her role ("I play very important role I their learning… this training and this… I've become more aware of that. How much my input is necessary and important to these children"; 5:112). She worries about how much children need her support ("if I wasn't there, they would be so distracted, go off to the table, be a bit lost"; 5:109) to help "wake up their learning" (5:122) by asking questions. Carol describes a hypothetical scenario in which children become aware of the pattern of questions being asked ("Ok, yeah, ok, every day she is asking questions about this, she expects me to be alert"; 5:130). However, she acknowledges that "It's a slow process" (5:125).

Group session with other TAs

"They were ok. I wouldn't say they were like, so enlightening, Eureka moment and like, yes. I felt like they were ok." (6:145)

"I didn't, to be honest, feel something changed" (6:165)

Summary:

In terms of the group session with the other TAs, Carol felt that "they were ok. I wouldn't say they were like, so enlightening, Eureka moment and like, yes. I felt like they were ok." (6:145). Concluding that she "didn't, to be honest, feel something changed" (6:165).

Thinking about trying new things

Inner voice: "Yeah, I want to try this, I know if I go with the children and see where we go with this" (6:151).

"you have to be persevering through it" (6:157).

"it's like a journey" (6:153)

Summary:

Carol is willing to try new things and believes that "it's like a journey" (6:153) and "you have to be persevering through it" (6:157).

Appendix 16 – Overview of stories

	Paula	Sarah	Jenny	Tracy	Emma	Carol
Structural Analysis						
Orientation	Detailed in most stories	Detailed in most stories	Detailed in most stories	Detailed in most stories	Enough information	Inconsistent amount of details
Complicating Action	Sequences of Actions and Dialogues Reflective thinking Challenges	Sequences of Actions and Dialogues Reflective thinking	Sequences of Actions and Dialogues Reflective thinking Hypothetical scenarios	Sequences of Actions and Dialogues Challenges	Sequences of Actions and Dialogues Challenges	Sequences of Actions and Dialogues Reflective thinking Challenges Hypothetical scenarios
Evaluation	Reflection Perspectives Explanations Point of the story	Explanations Perspectives Reflection Point of the story	Explanations Perspectives Reflection Point of the story	Perspectives Thought process Reflective thinking	Reflection Perspectives Overview	Explanations Perspectives Reflection Point of the story Future practice
Result	Summing up Resolution for most stories	Resolutions for most stories	Resolution for most stories	Resolution for most stories	Future practice Possible resolutions for some stories	Future practice Resolution for most stories Recognises challenges Position
Coda	Most stories	Most stories	Limited use	Limited use	Some stories	Limited use
Dialogical Analysis						

Polyphony/ Heteroglossia	Inner voice Previous inner voice Classroom voice Classroom dialogue Dialogue with child Dialogue with group Dialogue with staff Child's voice Child's inner voice Previous classroom dialogue	Inner voice Classroom voice Classroom dialogue Child's voice Dialogue with staff	Inner voice Previous inner voice Inner dialogue with child Hypothetical inner voice Classroom voice Previous classroom voice Multiple classroom voices Dialogue with child Dialogue with group Dialogue with HLTAs Child's voice SENCo's voice	Inner voice Classroom voice Classroom dialogue Child's voice HLTA's voice	Classroom voice Dialogue with children Child's voice	Inner voice Classroom voice Children's voices Multiple children's voices Adult's voice
Identity	Adaptive Reflective Supportive Caring Opened minded Flexible Emphatic Sensitive Team worker Promotes independence Member of the class	Experienced Promotes independence Children enjoy interacting with her Reflective Conscious Participative Role model Part of a supportive team	Challenging Understanding Wants children to enjoy their learning Committed Leading the class Patient Takes a step back New way of working and viewing the children Teaching	Communicates effectively Source of information Team worker Guide Resourceful Thinks on the spot Useful Valuable Promotes independence	Wants to help the children Experienced Attentive Thinks about school as a whole Encourages peer support Committed to apply the method	Supportive Reflective Persistent Adaptive Willing to try Tries hard Important Useful Caring Empowering Guide Makes a difference

			Member of the class Not a teacher Inclusive Reflective Confident Adaptive	Leading the classroom		Celebrates progress
What's at stake	Children's learning Children's independence Recognising need Children's engagement Her beliefs about children's capabilities Being able to take a stance Being able to work as part of a team	Ability to support the children Being able to promote independence Being able to support problem solving Children' well-being Being able to reflect on own practice Being able to see the bigger picture Being able to make sense of the training	Children might switch off too much pressure Children's understanding Children's participation Children feeling comfortable Children's learning Children becoming lazy and dependent Child being singled out Stuck in her old ways Being able to adjust	Status Value Her approach works Children's understanding Children's independence Being able to respond to children's needs	Professional knowledge Bombarding with questions Being able to apply the method Children's independence Children's understanding	Teaching skills Children's understanding Her role Change in child's behaviour Her contribution Children's progress Children's independence Children being able to cope Child gone through the net Child's well-being
Research questions						
Experience of training	Triggered it all Already asking questions	Already using the questions Reassuring	Realised was helping too much	Theory behind Difficulties putting into practice	Already knew about More awareness of the theory behind	Hard to make sense of the training

	Theory behind Making sense of training Reflection about own practice	Theory behind Tried to use the questions Modelling Spotting the mistake	Reflection about roles and responsibilities Making sense of the training Reflection about own practice	Importance of communication Making sense of the training Questions to support independence	understanding theoretical base of practice difficult to apply	Aware of the importance of reflective practice Has attended other trainings Realises about the importance of her role Realises children need input from the adult
Experience of group sessions	Nice to share Different perspectives Reflections about where you stand Linked to phase meetings Support from colleagues	Nice to hear about other people's techniques Reflection Phase meetings Problem-solving Supportive team	Some good things to pick on People using similar techniques Different age groups Working together Sharing information Defensive about taking people' suggestions at first	Good to share Important to work together Importance of sharing enough information Different roles and responsibilities	Helped to becomes familiar with the training Share practice Learn how others support children People work in different year groups	Not enlightening They were ok Not much impact Work in different phases We just get on with it
Impact on practice	Change in views about children abilities Change from giving answers to asking questions	Reflecting about practice Learning from one another Making sense of the event	Change in views about children's abilities Stepping back	Adapting to the situations Thinking on the spot Committed to put into practice	Difficult to apply Would benefit older children Hopes they will learn independently	Change from giving answers to asking questions Conscious effort to apply

	Promoting independent learning Input/output framework Relationship with children Stepping back Switching roles Spot the mistake	Being aware of the theory behind Links between theory and practice Having in mind we do it for a reason	Putting responsibility back on the child Relaxed approach Relationship with children More willing to try new things Would benefit more able children	Change in views about the children's abilities	Attempted to put into practice Encouraging peer support Noticing skills in different year groups Giving opportunity to learn by themselves	Reflects on her impact on children's learning Plans to phase herself out Slowly turning them independent Willing to try new things

Appendix 17 – Ethical Approval

School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee

NOTICE OF ETHICS REVIEW DECISION For research involving human participants BSc/MSc/MA/Professional Doctorates

REVIEWER: Dr Helen Murphy

SUPERVISOR: Dr Helena Bunn

COURSE: Professional Doctorate in Education and Child Psychology

STUDENT: Eduardo Cardoso de Freitas

TITLE OF PROPOSED STUDY: Teaching assistants' experiences of mediational language and peer supervision in their professional practice: an exploratory study

DECISION OPTIONS:

1. **APPROVED:** Ethics approval for the above named research study has been granted from the date of approval (see end of this notice) to the date it is submitted for assessment/examination.

2. **APPROVED, BUT MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED <u>BEFORE</u> THE RESEARCH COMMENCES** (see Minor Amendments box below)**:** In this circumstance, re-submission of an ethics application is <u>not</u> required but the student must confirm with their supervisor that all minor amendments have been made <u>before</u> the research commences. Students are to do this by filling in the confirmation box below when all amendments have been attended to and emailing a copy of this decision notice to her/his supervisor for their records. The supervisor will then forward the student's confirmation to the School for its records.

3. **NOT APPROVED, MAJOR AMENDMENTS AND RE-SUBMISSION REQUIRED** (see Major Amendments box below)**:** In this circumstance, a revised ethics application must be submitted and approved before any research takes place. The revised application will be reviewed by the same reviewer. If in doubt, students should ask their supervisor for support in revising their ethics application.

DECISION ON THE ABOVE-NAMED PROPOSED RESEARCH STUDY
(Please indicate the decision according to one of the 3 options above)

APPROVED

TEACHING ASSISTANTS' EXPERIENCES

Minor amendments required *(for reviewer)*:

Major amendments required *(for reviewer):*

ASSESSMENT OF RISK TO RESEARCHER *(for reviewer)*

If the proposed research could expose the <u>researcher</u> to any of kind of emotional, physical or health and safety hazard? Please rate the degree of risk:

	HIGH
	MEDIUM
x	LOW

Reviewer comments in relation to researcher risk (if any):

Reviewer *(Typed name to act as signature)*:   Dr Helen Murphy

Date: 27/02/17

This reviewer has assessed the ethics application for the named research study on behalf of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee

Confirmation of making the above minor amendments *(for students)*:

I have noted and made all the required minor amendments, as stated above, before starting my research and collecting data.

Student's name: *Eduardo Cardoso de Freitas*
Student number: u1529170

Date: 01/03/17

(Please submit a copy of this decision letter to your supervisor with this box completed, if minor amendments to your ethics application are required)

PLEASE NOTE:

*For the researcher and participants involved in the above named study to be covered by UEL's insurance and indemnity policy, prior ethics approval from the School of Psychology (acting on behalf of the UEL Research Ethics Committee), and confirmation from students where minor amendments were required, must be obtained before any research takes place.

*For the researcher and participants involved in the above named study to be covered by UEL's insurance and indemnity policy, travel approval from UEL (not the School of Psychology) must be gained if a researcher intends to travel overseas to collect data, even if this involves the researcher travelling to his/her home country to conduct the research. Application details can be found here: http://www.uel.ac.uk/gradschool/ethics/fieldwork/

Appendix 18 - Email sent to participants

Hi XXXX,

Hope you are well.

Please find attached the narrative I've written following the analysis of your interview.
The name used in the submitted version will be different from yours, to ensure anonymity.

There are some technical terms such as *dialogical* or *structural* concepts used in the narrative.
Dialogical are mainly linked to the different 'voices' (child's voices, inner voice) or dialogues (classroom or group) you used during the interview.
Structural refers to how you've organised the stories in terms of context or orientation, sequence of actions, evaluations and result or resolution.

These are based on my interpretation of what we've discussed, so it would be helpful to have your views as well, to ensure trustworthiness.

Please let me know if there is anything that you feel should be changed or said in a way that reflects your experience.

Thank you so much for taking part on this research.

Best,

Eduardo