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AN INVESTIGATION OF TEACHERS' WRITTEN AND
ORAL COMMENTS ON PUPILS' LEARNING PERFORMANCES
IN ENGLISH TEACHING

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Submitted for the degree of Ph.D.
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University of Stirling
May, 1982.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the many people who in various ways have helped shape this thesis.

Particular thanks are due to the headteachers, staff and pupils of the schools participating in the data-gathering process. Not only did the teachers suffer such inconveniences as the presence of an observer in their classrooms over an extended period, but they did so with friendliness, trust and co-operation. A testimony to the value of their contributions may be recognised in the numerous insights into teaching which were offered by the teachers, and which subsequently inform the study.

Several members of the Education Department advised on possible literature sources of relevance to the research. In this respect, Steve Baron's direction towards the writing of Schutz was immensely helpful at a critical stage; as too the suggestions for reading from Colin Peacock and Stan Gilmore.

A large "thank-you" is offered to Irene Lindsay for typing and arranging the material so attractively and competently. I am very grateful for the tolerance, goodwill and unfailing helpfulness she showed before the unenviable tasks of deciphering rough drafts, and of ensuring consistency of punctuation and spelling.

But, without question, my largest debt is to my supervisor Donald McIntyre. His critical reactions to my work have been of

immeasurable value in identifying relevant issues and possible misconceptions, and I am grateful to him for the rigour, to say nothing of the many, many hours, he gave to this task. His patience, encouragement, open-mindedness and constant faith in the potential of the research have been a continual source of strength to me. I have counted it a privilege and a pleasure to have his supervision.

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Introduction

The research began with the study of teachers' written comments on pupils' written work in an English teaching context. There were several reasons for the selection of the written comment as the subject of an investigation: first, the comment communicates the teacher's response to the pupil's work, and as such it offers a potential source of information to the pupil of relevance to his learning. In addition, written comments, as a form of individualised teaching on an informal day-to-day basis, seem likely to represent a significant portion of the total feedback received by any one pupil in relation to his individual performance. Third, to date, teachers' comments have not figured to any real extent as an area of research. Where they have, they have tended to be part of a wider study which did not involve the conceptualisation of comments as providing instructive information of value to the learner.

For all of these reasons, an investigation of the character and possible contribution of the written comment to pupil learning seemed a potentially worthwhile area for research. Hence, the written comment is the focus of the first part of this study.

Though the work began with the written comment, in time the questions emerging from the initial investigation suggested the value of extending the field to include a detailed study of the relationship between the classroom context and the written comment; and, more significantly as it turned out, of the oral comment as instructive feedback to the learner. Oral comments, therefore, are the subject of the second part.

In the third section, the main questions arising from the oral comment data are examined. This meant in fact consideration of some teachers' images of the aspect of their teaching which most features the oral comment.

In summary, the three parts of the study are:

- 1) an investigation of written comments;
- 2) an investigation of oral comments;
- 3) a report of teachers' accounts of one major aspect
of their teaching.

The Comment Defined

Before moving on to describe the investigation, a precise definition of what is meant by teachers' comments is needed. Accordingly, the "comment" of the present study is the reply which the teacher makes to a pupil's performance when that performance, or the comment which refers to it, are identifiably concerned with an activity of pupil learning in English. The comment finishes when either the comment's referent changes, or when it is no longer clear that the reply continues to refer to the performance, or when there is a discontinuity in the provision of information; that is, one comment is identifiably separated from any other by the size of the physical spacing between them. Comments include non-verbal written responses such as "ticks" or underlining.

PART I

TEACHERS' WRITTEN COMMENTS

The rationale for research into teachers' comments on pupils' work is based on an assumption that comments offer some kind of feedback, or informal assessment on the pupils' performance; and that feedback may have an important contribution to make to effective teaching.

As a means of examining these assumptions, delineation of the concept, feedback, is a priority issue.

Learning theorists have long been concerned with how feedback is used by the learner to facilitate learning. Some insight into the process has followed the development of the computer (Annett, 1972) which led to the recognition of a relationship between physical and biological systems in their capacity for adaptive behaviour; the recognition, that is, that both man and machine have the potential to obtain information about the outcomes of their behaviour and to regulate these actions according to how effectively they appear to be realising the goals towards which they are directed. In other words, as computers may be programmed to check their progress towards a goal, and use the information gained to make any necessary adjustments to their programmed behaviour, so man seeks assessment of his behaviour that he may the better guide his progress towards attainment of his goal. The knowledge thus gained from cybernetics has given rise to a model of the learning process, named TOTE (Miller, Galanter and Pribram, 1965), which identifies the feedback action as central to learning.

The Concept of TOTE

The TOTE model gained significance in terms of human behaviour in the area of cognitive psychology (Miller, Galanter and Pribram, 1965). There it figures in relation to the problem of what determines how the organism interacts with his environment.

Briefly, cognitive theorists may be distinguished among the wider culture of psychologists by their rejection of the stimulus-response explanation of human behaviour, in which it is held that the organism is impelled by the strength of psychological needs to respond to those external stimuli of the environment which promise satisfaction of his needs. To the cognitive theorist, the organism is in greater control of his own behaviour than stimulus-response theory suggests.

Cognitive theorists hold that the individual's interaction with his environment is guided by the particular mental image he has of the world, and of how he himself relates to it. This image, or inner representation of the universe is not limited to the individual's immediate perceptions, or what is currently available to sense impression; rather his immediate perceptions are shaped by the experience of his history, and what sense he has made of that experience in the past. In other words, from the mass of detail which forms any aspect of reality external to the individual at any given moment, the individual will observe only some as salient. What he chooses to observe as significant, and what interpretation he makes of his observations, are the product of his past experiences manifest now in the beliefs, values, knowledge and understanding which are guiding

his interpretation of the present. Accordingly, since each person's history is unique, each individual's image of the world is also unique. It is this image, then, which determines what features of the world are significant for the individual, and what meaning he assigns to those features.

But critics of cognitive theory have contended that the theory fails to identify the mechanism with which the individual translates his interpretation of his environment into action. It is one thing to assign particular meaning to select aspects of reality, and something else again to act upon the meaning assigned.

Miller, Galanter and Pribram (1965) would answer this criticism with a development of the cognitive theorists' position. They propose that the individual's interaction with his surroundings is occasioned in the pursuit of goals, arising from the values inherent in his image, and which influence at any given moment what features of his environment he will choose for interaction. The goals of any individual range from those which may span a lifetime to the short-term variety, changing from moment to moment, which generate everyday activities. It may be recognised, then, that progress towards a goal may be intercalated with a number of shorter-term goals, which may, or may not be necessary sub-goals of the longer-term goal. In other words, goals are inter-related in various ways, including especially hierarchical systems.

Further, Miller et al suggest that the individual's behaviour which operationalises goal-pursuit is controlled by the formation of plans,

which both identify what steps are necessary for goal achievement, and arrange the sequence of their operation. In their terms, a plan is defined as:

Any complete description of behaviour should be adequate to serve as a set of instructions, that is, it should have the characteristics of a plan that could guide the action described. When we speak of a Plan in these pages ... the term will refer to a hierarchy (their italics) of instructions, and the capitalization will indicate that this special interpretation is intended. A Plan is any hierarchical process in the organism that can control the order in which a sequence of operations is to be performed.

(Miller, Galanter and Pribram, 1965,p.16)

Hence, the Plan is the mechanism which selects and organises all forms and levels of interaction between the individual and his environment: the Plan may be concerned with physical or symbolic expressions of behaviour, and, in the latter sense, implementation of the Plan may occur only in mental activity; it may be concerned at one level with such singular organic movements as lifting an arm in order to turn a door handle; at another level, the arm-movement is only implicit in devising a Plan to visit a neighbour; while, at yet another level, the Plan may be the construction of a series of Plans for managing the whole day's activities with a minimum of stress for the actor.

Even so, if the individual is to exercise effective control of his behaviour, as cognitive theory suggests, the simple generation of a Plan will not on its own be sufficient. What is needed, in addition, is a test of the extent to which the Plan in operation appears to be realising its goal. Hence, the Plan in operation

incorporates a test of the appropriateness of each unit of behaviour comprising the Plan; and, it is on the basis of the information yielded by the test, or, in other words, on the basis of the feedback, that the individual is in a position to know what his next action should be. If his Plan is working so far, he may proceed to the next unit of behaviour; if it is not, the feedback information will help him determine what kind of adjustment to behaviour may be necessary. In this way, each Plan in action, irrespective of its hierarchical status, may be identified as cast in the framework of the TOTE theory of behaviour.

The term TOTE is an acronym of the sequence of behaviour involved in its implementation, TEST-OPERATE-TEST-EXIT. In more detail, TOTE may be delineated as follows:

- (1) an initial test is made by the actor to determine to what extent his present state is congruent with the behaviour needed by the Plan;
- (2) information from the test is used to determine what adjustments are needed in order to operate in accordance with the Plan;
- (3) the Plan, with any necessary adjustments, is put into operation;
- (4) a further test follows to assess the adequacy of the Plan in operation;
- (5) if the Plan is not working successfully, adjustments will continue, followed by test of their adequacy until the Plan is deemed to be operating successfully;
- (6) when the Plan works successfully at any one point, the individual terminates this unit of behaviour to move on to the subsequent one.

However, the foregoing account of how behaviour is organised should not be taken to imply that construction of a Plan involves the actor's conscious identification of every unit of behaviour it is likely to contain in operation; or even that the act of construction is itself always consciously undertaken. In the example quoted earlier, turning of the door handle is unlikely to figure explicitly in Plan construction: as a form of behaviour it is too routinized to involve conscious thought processes; and "visiting a neighbour" may feature simply in thought as "visit Jones"; rather, it is the third instance, organisation of a series of Plans, where the consequences of the summation of all the behaviour involved is likely to be less easily predictable from experience, which will probably demand some detailed consideration. It should be stressed, however, that the amount of thought involved in a Plan is no indication of the value of that Plan to the goal-seeker. Individuals may be both unaware of what goals they are pursuing, and of the relative value to themselves of the different goals contained within their image. Though Miller et al's concepts of Plans and of TOTE are considered to apply to all behaviour, the interest of the present study is with the application of these concepts to learning. In other words, what is the significance of TOTE for learning?

TOTE and Learning

TOTE identifies the feedback process as providing the learner with information, which the learner uses to make any necessary adjustments to his performance. Annett (1972) explains the TOTE concept of the

function of information within the learning process in the following terms:

... information is equated with the reduction of uncertainty. Prior to a message being received the potential recipient is uncertain as to what the message will be, but when he has received it the uncertainty is reduced or eliminated and the information is said to have been transmitted.

(page 139)

This delineation of the learner's use of information differs from some classical views of the relationship between feedback information and learning (see Hilgard and Bower, 1975), where feedback is held to promote learning by virtue of the reward it offers the learner when he performs correctly. Two different effects of reward on learning have been suggested.

One effect is to act as reinforcement of the correct response. It is held that when the learner receives a reward in the form of information that he has performed correctly, the reward strengthens or reinforces the retention of the correct response in the learner's behaviour repertoire, over any wrong responses which he may have given earlier. More, reinforcement is generally believed to occur as a consequence of the reducing effect of the reward on the learner's drive; that is, the point at which the learner receives the reward - upon giving the correct response - reduces his drive to achieve his learning goal, the goal having been reached, and it is this reduction in drive which allows the correct response to acquire some degree of permanence in the learner's behaviour repertoire.

The other effect of feedback as reward is to act as incentive. In

evidence that any additional process is involved in 'reinforcement' beyond the knowledge of correctness, but also insofar as the informative value of feedback is sufficient on its own to explain learning, the concept of reinforcement is theoretically redundant.

Comparison of incentive, or drive-inducing effect with informative, or reduction-of-uncertainty effect suggests at least the possibility under some learning conditions that the two are distinguishable. This is a consequence of incentive effect being dependent on the promise of successful learning as opposed to the actual experience "successful learning". As instance, suppose the learner is not given the knowledge of the result of his performance hard upon the performance, but at some later time. Under these circumstances, he may be unable to recall his performance in its entirety, and as a result is not immediately able to apply the informative content of the feedback towards, in Annett's terms, reduction of uncertainty. On the other hand, he may still make use of the knowledge of the result of his performance in the incentive, or drive-inducing sense; for instance, by applying himself with energy to similar learning tasks. Consequently, there would seem no reason to reject the theory that the incentive function is separable from the informative function.

Assuming a TOTE perspective on behaviour, the implications of the foregoing are that the information of feedback may be used in more than one way by the potential learner, an argument which has particular relevance for school learning. Since pupil attendance at school is mandatory, it cannot be assumed that the incumbents of the pupil role have any commitment to learn what the teacher wants to teach. They

may be offered feedback on their learning performance, but there is no certainty that they will use it towards improved performance. This being so, the extent to which feedback may be motivational in the drive-inducing sense is a worthwhile consideration.

There is a further way in which the potential value of feedback may be tempered. Under the terms of the TOTE model all behaviour is in pursuit of a goal directed by a Plan. This means in effect that both teacher and pupil will be pursuing goals through the medium of their interaction with each other. It follows, hence, that the feedback which the teacher offers may relate to the teacher's goal for pupil learning, but it need not relate to the pupil's goal.

Though the pupil's goal may be to act in accordance with the teacher's, since he cannot know the teacher's Plan against which the teacher is assessing the pupil's performance and to which the feedback refers, the use the pupil makes of the teacher's feedback can only relate to an assumed Plan. But this is not to imply that the pupil will not be able to use the feedback in the reduction of uncertainty sense, simply that its informative value may be less than if the feedback related to his Plan for learning.

Such issues as the foregoing point up the need to consider the effect of the pupil's competence or otherwise as an interpreter of feedback, when the source of the feedback is another individual.

TOTE, Interaction and Learning

On this subject, Argyle's (1978) discussion of the place of TOTE in social interaction is apposite in its articulation of the influence of feedback in determining the success or otherwise of social relations;

or, in classroom terms, how the feedback process may promote, or depress, the pupil's identification with the learning situation as defined by the teacher.

Accordingly, the TOTE framework assumes that the participants of social interaction are pursuing certain goals through the medium of interaction. Thus, actors in interaction may have, for example, the goal of conveying information, or of giving a command, or of engaging in friendly discourse, to name only a few possibilities. But whatever the goal, in order to ensure their behaviour is appropriate to goal attainment, and to take the necessary corrective action if it is not, the actors need information on how their communication is being received: does it appear to be understood as the speaker intended? what attitudinal effect does it appear to be having on the listener? The source of such information is, of course, the feedback from the listener about the communication.

In social interaction, feedback may be non-verbal, such as is contained in facial expression or body posture; or it may be contained in a verbal response to the communication. Either way, the success of the social performer is in part dependent on how skilled he is at selecting and interpreting relevant feedback cues. Further, inability to respond with reasonable accuracy of interpretation to feedback can lead at the local level of interaction to communication breakdown, but more seriously to subsequent feelings of alienation between the actors involved.

Translated into the classroom situation, since in the nature of things the pupil's social experience is likely to be more limited than the

average adult's, the chances are that the pupil is among the lesser skilled of social performers. In consequence, there is the more need to consider the nature of the feedback offered in response to a pupil performance; to question if it could be misunderstood, or relatively meaningless to the pupil, given he is pursuing the learning goal; and, if so, to recognise that such feedback may, in effect be counter-productive to any pupil commitment to the teacher-defined learning situation.

Argyle's delineation of the role of feedback in the construction and maintenance of the individual's self-image contributes further to an understanding of the possible salience of feedback to the learning environment. He contends that among the goals which people commonly pursue is the goal of maintaining an image of themselves which is both internally consistent and consistent with aspects of reality which are attractive to them. In other words, there is a tendency for individuals to want to identify with aspects of the environment which they find rewarding, and to which, subsequently they are attracted. A main source of such reward is the feedback information which is relevant to the construction of a favourable self-image. With reference to the classroom, the implication is that the learner role may be more or less attractive to the pupil according to the kind of feedback he receives while in the learning situation. If the feedback is sufficiently rewarding, the pupil may come to adopt the teacher-defined learning goals as his own; if the feedback is unrewarding, he may come to reject them.

TOTE and Teaching : An Objectives Model of English Teaching

Argyle identifies the contribution of feedback to the social dimension of interaction. Given a model of teacher/pupil interaction as directed towards explicit goals, with the pupil accepting as his intermediate goals those which the teacher suggests for him, then Bloom's work (1971) on evaluation may be held to articulate the function of feedback in pedagogic terms.

Traditionally, most acts of teacher evaluation of pupils' work have been concerned with assessing the end result of teaching; with how well pupils have attained the desired learning objectives of a course. This kind of evaluation, labelled summative, normally occurs at the termination of a unit of teaching, and has been used mainly as a device for classifying pupils usually for the purpose of selecting which pupils may proceed to further courses.

Bloom stresses that evaluation has a function more intrinsic to the teaching process. Its purpose here is to provide information on where and in what way learning falls short of mastery in order that appropriate remedial action may be undertaken while it is underway. Evaluation in this sense is termed formative, and is intended to influence learning while it is in the process of taking shape; that is, it is not a terminal exercise, but is orientated towards improvement of future performance.

Among the uses of formative evaluation in teaching, the following are cited (Bloom, 1971, p.7-8):

- evaluation as a method of acquiring and processing the evidence needed to improve the student's learning and the teaching;
- evaluation as an aid in clarifying the significant goals and objectives of education, and as a process for determining the extent to which students are developing in these desired ways;
- evaluation as a system of quality control in which it may be determined at each step in the teaching-learning process whether the process is effective or not, and if not, what changes must be made.

Though Bloom emphasizes the use of tests in both formative and summative evaluation, it is recognised that other sources of evaluation may equally contribute, such as "Teachers' comments, subject specialists' criticisms, interest and attitudinal reactions of students" (page 135).

Bloom's conceptualisation of the role of feedback in teaching is based on an objectives model of teaching. This means that the operational strength of feedback is conceived as dependent upon specific knowledge of what the learning objective is in any particular unit of teaching. In the case of the learner, for instance, it is believed that he cannot make effective use of the feedback unless he knows towards which specific objective his learning is directed at any one point.

The position of the objectives model exponents invites consideration of how feedback figures in an English teaching context. Information relevant to this issue may be found in the Recommendations for English Teaching in Scottish schools, though it should be noted that the technique of feedback itself is not identified (for example, see C.C.E., 1967, p.10):

Various methods of attaining (English) aims are outlined ... There is no approach that can be applied to every class or every pupil. Language is an aspect of personal behaviour, and each individual develops his competence in deeply personal ways ...

What is clear is that the authors do not accept the validity of an objectives based approach to English teaching.

Insofar as English teaching specifies goals of intended pupil learning outcomes, these are the long-term goals of extending and developing the pupils' skills of language communication. To this end, prevailing opinion is that the acquisition of language skills does not admit the teaching of its components in the discrete units demanded of an objectives model; rather the specialist view favours a concept of language development as the product of the pupil interacting with language, either through the process of identifying what a particular language text is communicating, or through using language as written or oral expression. In this context, the teacher's goals for the pupil, and so his feedback will relate to how well the pupil gives evidence of understanding the text, or how well he undertakes the written, or oral work. Since the detailed specification of "how well" is the teacher's, feedback is based on an implicit, and to some extent subjective standard of competent performance, and therefore relates to an unspecified goal as far as the pupil is concerned.

From a TOTE perspective on behaviour, this means that the pupil's ability to identify the teacher's goal for the pupil's learning is solely dependent on what information may be taken from the feedback. Hence, to the objectives model theorist, the contribution of feedback

to learning is considerably reduced in this approach to English teaching.

TOTE and Teaching : A 'Process' Model of English Teaching

On the other hand, not everyone would accept that the optimum contribution of feedback need depend upon pre-specification of objectives. Among critics of an objectives approach, Stenhouse (1975) puts the case for an alternative feedback model.

Of relevance to the present discussion is his contention that some of the most important areas of cognitive development do not admit a pre-specification of objectives approach. As instance, induction of the learner into the thought-systems of our culture with the aim of enabling him to think creatively cannot by definition be assessed in relation to pre-specified objectives.

Accordingly, Stenhouse advocates adoption of a 'process' model of curriculum design. The theory of the process model is that the content material of a subject has value in its own right as a focus for study; for instance, the particular texts studied in an English curriculum. Such material is not simply an instrument whereby the pupil may be extended cognitively providing his interaction with it is appropriately directed. Rather, the claim is that each area of knowledge may be characterised by its "deep structures", these being the key procedures, concepts and criteria of the subject area. With reference to the study of English, presumably such a "deep structure" would be an aspect of the process by which language works to convey meaning as distinct from an understanding of its meaning in any particular

instance. In Stenhouse's view, the pupil's ability to assimilate the relevance of these deep structures for the subject under study constitute a valid aim of education. Moreover, he believes that pupils will assimilate the structures of knowledge as an inevitable product of making sense of the subject's material content; in English this would imply that the recurring exercise of understanding the meaning of texts would lead in time to the pupil recognising how the form of language helps shape the meaning.

However, it is the process of understanding in relation to content which is regarded as critical for pupil development. The point is that the learner should be allowed to interact with the material at his own level of understanding. The teacher's task would be to identify the terms of the pupil's understanding in order to offer feedback, in part on how the pupil's present understanding may be sharpened; and in part on how from the pupil's perspective on the cognitive field, he may be brought to a new awareness of the potential for understanding within the subject area. It is important that the teacher should neither identify teacher-defined learning goals for the pupil; nor should he expect all class members to seek the same goals. Instead, his role is to try to adopt the pupil's viewpoint on what the material has to offer as knowledge, or understanding; and, working from the pupil's cognitive framework, develop the pupil's understanding, both in terms of clearly defining what the pupil immediately understands, and in terms of how this baseline of understanding may offer prospects for extending the pupil's knowledge horizon.

The foregoing notwithstanding, Stenhouse's delineation of an alternative

feedback model should not be taken to imply that the feedback offered is not goal-directed. Though the feedback does not relate to a pre-specified objective in terms of intended learned behaviour on the part of the pupil, it does relate to the criteria, or standards of excellence immanent in the subject area. As Stenhouse says (1975, p.95):

... the task of appraisal is that of improving students' capacity to work to such criteria by critical reaction to work done. In this sense assessment is about the teaching of self-assessment. Such assessment is not purely subjective since it appeals to public criteria, but it is concerned with difficult judgements and hence performance will vary from teacher to teacher.

The critical point is that there are publicly-defined criteria of acceptable performance towards which a valid assessment of a performance must subscribe. Consequently, for the teacher to appraise the pupil's work, he must refer to these criteria of acceptability. But more, the teacher's feedback on the pupil's performance will also refer to the criteria of acceptable performance, and in doing so, by implication, the teacher is giving some degree of definition to the goal which the pupil should seek.

The process model differs from the objectives model in that it is not directed towards the attainment of specific objectives but towards the wider goal of understanding. In consequence, Stenhouse's claim (1975, p.94) with reference to the Humanities Curriculum Project that "Understanding is chosen as an aim because it cannot be achieved. Understanding can always be deepened", suggests that feedback within the process model will always imply that the goal has not been reached. However, this is not to deny the existence of a goal to which the feed-

back refers, nor of intermediate goals which are realisable in terms of achievement.

Consequently, the process model is compatible with the principle of TOTE: teachers will offer pupils feedback on their performance in relation to a goal, though that goal may not be specified. Though the teacher is attempting to work within the terms of the pupil's understanding, feedback is still guided by the teacher's definition of competent performance, and so is a product of teacher-defined goals.

Empirical Studies : Flanders and Related Research

A comprehensive review of the literature would in general include an extensive examination of the empirical research of relevance to the research question. With regard to feedback, however, it happens that there are very few studies of teaching which are premised on the concept of feedback. Though there are a number of studies which are, among other things, concerned with teachers' classroom comments, in most cases their theoretical bases are so limited and so diverse, their contexts designs and purposes so varied, that there seemed no serious prospect of synthesising anything from them. Consequently, it was decided to concentrate on the conceptual basis of the study with the addition of only a few empirical studies which are either relevant to the author's conceptualisation of the issues, or are particularly relevant for some other reason.

Among these of conceptual relevance, Flanders's study of the teaching process must figure. This study is based on a ten-category system, each category being intended to characterise in some degree the verbal

interaction between the teacher and the pupils. Since several of the categories are concerned with teacher reaction to pupils' talk, and some of these are defined in such a way as to be consistent with a feedback concept, it is these categories which are of present interest.

The ten categories each identify a type of statement made by either the teacher or the pupil as follows (Flanders, 1970, p.34):

Flanders' Interaction Analysis Categories* (FIAC)

	<p>1. <u>Accepts feeling</u>. Accepts and clarifies an attitude or the feeling tone of a pupil in a non-threatening manner. Feelings may be positive or negative. Predicting and recalling feelings are included.</p> <p>2. <u>Praises or encourages</u>. Praises or encourages pupil action or behavior. Jokes that release tension, but not at the expense of another individual; nodding head, or saying "Um hm?" or "go on" are included.</p> <p>3. <u>Accepts or uses ideas of pupils</u>. Clarifying, building or developing ideas suggested by a pupil. Teacher extensions of pupil ideas are included but as the teacher brings more of his own ideas into play, shift to category five.</p>
Teacher Talk	<p>4. <u>Asks questions</u>. Asking a question about content or procedure, based on teacher ideas, with the intent that a pupil will answer.</p>
	<p>5. <u>Lecturing</u>. Giving facts or opinions about content or procedures; expressing <u>his own</u> ideas, giving <u>his own</u> explanation, or citing an authority other than a pupil.</p> <p>6. <u>Giving directions</u>. Directions, commands or orders to which a pupil is expected to comply.</p> <p>7. <u>Criticizing or justifying authority</u>. Statements intended to change pupil behavior from non-acceptable to acceptable pattern; bawling someone out; stating why the teacher is doing what he is doing; extreme self-reference.</p>
Pupil Talk	<p>8. <u>Pupil-talk - response</u>. Talk by pupils in response to teacher. Teacher initiates the contact or solicits pupil statement or structures the situation. Freedom to express own ideas is limited.</p>
	<p>9. <u>Pupil-talk - initiation</u>. Talk by pupils which they initiate. Expressing own ideas; initiating a new topic; freedom to develop opinions and a line of thought, like asking thoughtful questions; going beyond the existing structure.</p>
Silence	<p>10. <u>Silence or confusion</u>. Pauses, short periods of silence and periods of confusion in which communication cannot be understood by the observer.</p>

*There is no scale implied by these numbers. Each number is classificatory; it designates a particular kind of communication event. To write these numbers down during observation is to enumerate, not to judge a position on a scale.

Insofar as the Flanders's system directs attention to teacher's response to the pupil's learning performance, the terms of its definitive categories as a group indicate that it is not conceptualised as providing the pupil with information which he may use to assess the adequacy of his performance as a learner.

Thus, the three categories of "Teacher Response" (categories 1, 2 and 3) are held to identify what Flanders refers to as "indirect influence" teaching; while those categories in "Teacher Initiation" (categories 5,6 and 7) are held to identify "direct influence" teaching. One component of his operational definition of "indirect influence" teaching (category 1) is "Accepts and clarifies an attitude or the feeling tone of a pupil in a non-threatening manner. Feelings may be positive or negative...". In other words, encodings appropriate to this category are not conceived as assessing the adequacy of a pupil's performance in terms of the intended learning outcome; rather, the response is regarded as a means of conveying to the pupil no more than that his performance is acceptable as a contribution to overt classroom events.

Nevertheless, though "Teacher Response" is not conceptualised as providing information of help in improving the learner's performance, the operational definition of category 3 does admit such a conceptualisation; hence, category 3 is "Accepts or uses ideas of pupils. Clarifying, building or developing ideas suggested by a pupil. Teacher extensions of pupil ideas are included but as the teacher brings more of his own ideas into play, shift to category 5".

Moreover, though the Flanders system has been authoritatively criticised

on a number of grounds (see Dunkin and Biddle, 1974), for example its conceptual confusion, a recurrent finding of research which uses the FIAC categorisation is of a significant relationship between "Teacher Response" (categories 1, 2, 3) in conjunction with "Pupil Initiation" (category 9) and a more positive pupil attitude to learning. Among these findings, category 3 encodings dominate the "Teacher Response" data by a fair margin. As one example, a New Zealand study (Flanders, 1965, p.57) reports an incidence of 6.26% of category 3 compared with a combined 2.69% incidence of categories 1 and 2. Elsewhere, (Flanders, 1970, p.40/1; Dunkin and Biddle, 1974, p.121) it is reported that categories 1 and 2 engross a relatively small proportion of total encodings. Hence, the implication is that it is category 3 which correlates significantly with better attitudes to learning; and, insofar as this is the category which encapsulates information on the qualities of the pupil's performance, as opposed to information in general terms on its acceptability or otherwise, the data on category 3 could be interpreted as supporting the significance of instructional feedback to the learner as an aid to improving his performance.

Again, a number of studies report a significant relationship between teacher response together with pupil initiation (categories 1, 2, 3 and 9) and higher pupil achievement; while other studies concerned to test the same two variables report an insignificance of relationship (see Dunkin and Biddle, 1974, p.115). In an attempt to resolve the ambiguity created by these findings, a study by Soar (1979) tests the proposal that indirect teaching (categories 1, 2, 3 and 9) has a non-linear relationship with three measures of pupil growth: vocabulary, reading

comprehension and creativity. In addition, the hypothesis is that creativity will respond most to indirect teaching, vocabulary less so, and reading comprehension least of all.

The results supported the hypothesis; that is, that in the areas of pupil growth tested, indirectness correlates positively with higher pupil achievement but only up to a certain point; beyond this point, the significance of the relationship steadily declines. The relationship may be graphically described by an inverted U-shape, with the mid-point of the \hat{n} identifying the optimum level of the relationship between the two variables.

Findings also supported the hypotheses that pupil creativity responds best to indirect teaching, vocabulary less so, and reading comprehension least.

The research on classroom activity, and especially on teacher reactions which uses FIAC and related schemes has produced promising if inconsistent results, the interpretations of which are complicated by the possibly confused nature of Flanders's conceptualisations. It seems likely, in consequence, that research conceptualised less ambiguously in terms of feedback might indicate more clearly the significance of teacher reactions for pupil learning.

The ideological commitment underlying Flanders's research invites comparison with Stenhouse's proposal for a model of teaching. Both educationists propagate their conviction that pupil learning will be improved if the pupil's perspective on the learning task is given greater weight in teaching; and both accord in the belief that the

experience of learning is more important for cognitive development than goal achievement.

Where they differ is partly in the terms in which they consider the pupil's relationship with the learning situation. In Stenhouse's opinion, the teacher should attempt to adopt the pupil's cognitive perspective on the learning task in order to offer feedback which is likely to be meaningful to the pupil as an aid to his learning. Simply to give feedback from the teacher's point of view of what the learning situation holds for a potential learner is to ignore that the pupil's grasp of the situation may differ from the teacher's; and hence the pupil may be unable to apply the feedback to his own understanding. Essentially, Stenhouse's concern is with the cognitive component of learning and with the importance of beginning at the point of the learner's current level of understanding if cognitive development is to be promoted; more, with maintaining a teacher/pupil relationship which allows always the pupil's image of the learning to shape what kind of help is offered.

Flanders's belief is not so much that the teacher should adopt the pupil's cognitive perspective, as that greater account should be taken of the pupil's contributions in teacher/pupil interaction in order to promote in the pupil a positive affective relationship with learning. This is regarded as a first step in helping pupils to develop cognitively:

Teachers can often recognise the subjective aspects of classroom teaching. Educators know that when the cognitive elements of learning are taught in a negative emotional context, the process is like a stone that enters the stomach, cannot be assimilated, and therefore is quickly excreted.

(Flanders, 1970, p.20)

Thus, according to Flanders, allowing pupils more initiative in interaction will help them to clarify what the teaching goals are and how they may be approached. Flanders is not saying, in contrast with Stenhouse, that teachers should play a handmaiden role to pupils; simply he is saying that giving greater acceptance, by implication, to what pupils have to say in the pedagogic context will increase their confidence in generating and putting forth their own ideas. In turn, this will help them to acquire a firmer image of what is involved in the learning task, in addition to allowing the teacher to identify and contribute to helping pupils with their individual learning difficulties. In other words, the teacher is to remain the initiator in selecting the aim of the learning exercise.

Hence, it may be recognised that Flanders assumes that learning is towards a known goal; indeed, that insofar as the goal is ambiguous, to that extent learning will be hindered. Stenhouse, on the other hand, contends that certain areas of learning are better approached without the constriction implied in a pre-determined learning goal.

In relation to TOTE, if the Flanders's theory is considered within the TOTE model of interaction, and from the point of view of the pupil as goal-seeker, Flanders is hypothesizing that the more encouraging the feedback which pupils receive on their contributions to classroom interaction, the more they will become involved in the learning situation, and so, the better their learning achievement. Conversely, for a teacher to deny accepting feedback to pupils' contributions is to promote non-committal learning behaviour on the part of the pupil. Flanders's hypothesis accords with TOTE in

recognising the value of feedback to effective performance; where it differs is in its emphasis of the affective component of feedback, and the assumption therein that pupils are mainly concerned with seeking information in relation to affective goals. The TOTE framework allows that individuals have a variety of goals, only some of which are likely to be characterised as affective.

By comparison, Stenhouse does not raise the issue of the pupil's affective response to learning, but at the very least his proposal would imply the kind of acceptance of pupils' ideas as defined by Flanders's. This being so, the finding of the Soar research of a significant positive relationship between greater teacher response (categories 1, 2, 3 and 9) and greater pupil creativity also supports the Stenhouse ideal of the teacher/pupil relationship most conducive to pupil learning.

Bellack et al

Research based on the FIAC system is testing the strength of the Flanders's theory on the teacher/pupil relationship. The theory predicts that certain patterns of teacher behaviour will affect learning in certain ways. In the empirical studies, evidence of a significant relationship between the behaviours identified by the theory is considered to offer support of the theory. In contrast to this approach, a number of studies attempt to contribute to a theoretical understanding of the teaching process by focussing their research on classroom behaviour as a way to a better recognition of the processes involved. One such study by Bellack et al (1973) is significant for the present study in

the extent to which the empirical data support a concept of comments as potential vehicles for informative feedback on pupils' performances.

Thus, the Bellack study involves classifying the language of teaching by applying a principle of word-meaning as equate with its use in a particular language context; for instance, to ask someone if they would close the door may be classified as issuing a request. In this, the Bellack research adopts the perspective on language of some modern philosophers, mainly Wittgenstein, who view language as the means of engaging in various activities, which are essentially linguistic in nature. These activities are referred to as "language games" and like games, the activities may be characterised as involving the participants in complementary roles in which they obey tacit rules of play. Among typical language games the following are instanced (Bellack et al, 1973, p.3):

Giving orders and obeying them

Play acting

Making a joke and telling it

The authors reason that in identifying the function of the speech contribution of both teachers and pupils, and subsequently the pattern of these functions within teaching, they will gain insight into the function of verbal actions in the classroom as components of the teaching process.

The research identifies four units of verbal action, referred to as "moves", which characterise the discourse of teaching. These are:

- 1) structuring moves, which set the context for subsequent behaviour;
- 2) soliciting moves, designed to elicit a verbal response;
- 3) responding moves, where the response is given to a previous solicitation;
- 4) reacting moves, which are occasioned by a structuring, or soliciting or responding action, but which are not elicited by them.

The reacting move is further defined "as serving to modify (by clarifying, synthesizing, or expanding) and/or rate (positively or negatively) what has been said previously" (p.4).

It may be recognised, therefore, that the reacting move category will contain teachers' feedback on a pupil's performance. However, in that the study is not confined to a concept of teaching discourse as an information resource of learning, but involves too language of a social and managerial nature, and in that report of the findings does not allow isolation of those comments specifically concerned with pedagogy, the inferences from the Bellack data for the present study should be regarded with reservation.

Thus, of all teacher moves, the reaction move accounts for 39.2% (page 175). 74.1% (p.183) of teacher reactions are occasioned by a pupil responding move; that is, the pupil responds to a previous solicitation either by the teacher or another pupil, whereupon the teacher reacts to the pupil's response. Of these teacher reactions to a pupil responding move, 51.8% (p.183) are rating reactions, 30.2% are modifying/rating reactions, and the remainder (18%) are modifying reactions. 80% (p.178) of all teacher reactions which contain a rating are positive.

The implication of the findings that the reacting move is a significant element of typical teacher behaviour would support the hypothesis of the current undertaking that teachers' comments could be particularly important in their influence on pupil learning; while the identification of the information contained within reacting moves as rating/modifying in nature would further support a concept of comments as supplying feedback to the learner.

On the other hand, to delineate the contribution of an utterance in terms of its function is not to imply that this is the only kind of communication it contains, or even that it is the dominant one from the point of view of either the speaker or the listener.

Accordingly, if the aim is to identify the possible contribution of comments to teaching, more detailed investigation into their particular properties of relevance to the learner would seem necessary.

Cameron-Jones and Morrison

A study similar to Bellack's is by Cameron-Jones and Morrison (1973). This research is of particular relevance to the present study insofar as it both focusses on English teaching in Scottish secondary schools and is premised on a feedback concept of teacher behaviour.

Thus, Cameron-Jones and Morrison conceptualise assessment within the TOTE model of behaviour from the point of view of the teacher as goal-seeker. Viewed in this way, the act of assessment includes both the teacher's solicitation of a pupil performance, and his reaction to that performance, and as such may be regarded as an extended TEST phase of TOTE. More explicitly, solicitation of the pupil is conceived as the selection component of the TEST; that is, the teacher

decides what it is he wants to test. Teacher reaction, on the other hand, is the interpretation of the feedback from the pupil.

This perspective on TOTE's relationship with teacher comments differs from the perspective adopted in the present investigation, where emphasis is on the potential of the teacher's reaction as offering feedback to the pupil. However, neither perspective would deny the existence of the other, and indeed Cameron-Jones and Morrison refer to the teacher's reactions as offering feedback, but without explicitly identifying the feedback as a possible information source on the pupil's goal-pursuing behaviour.

Teacher's reactions, which are held to be making a judgement on the pupil's performance, are categorised broadly in terms of what the teacher is doing in saying what he says. Hence, the principle of categorisation is the same as the Bellack study. For instance, the statement "... and you're quite right to think it's that" is categorised as "Elaborate confirmation" and "That's a nice concise statement of it you've made" is categorised as "Elaborate praise" (Cameron-Jones and Morrison, 1973, p.32).

The investigation includes social and managerial acts of assessment, but the report of the findings distinguishes between these and what are termed "topic-relevant" reactions; that is, reactions which refer to the manifest topic of the lesson.

Consequently, it is found that 88.44% (p.39) of teachers' reactions are topic-relevant, 85.44% (p.38) of ratings of these being positive and 14.62 being negative. Further, of the topic-relevant rating reactions,

67.67% (p.38) offer a simple rating, such as "Good", and 32.33% offer an elaborate rating, for example "It's absolutely as you say". Modifying reactions, which may be identified as offering instructive information in addition to the rating, for instance "Yes, at least he's going to become the road man", account for 19.12% (p.39) of the total reactions.

It would appear that the teachers of the sample assess pupils most often in relation to topic-relevant tasks; and that the assessment is most often of positive rating, but on occasions also offers modifying information.

As with the Bellack research, the evidence is encouraging both of a concept of teacher comments as feedback, and of a need for further investigation. For instance, the emphasis on positive feedback, which is also a finding of the Bellack study is intriguing in its implication that pupil academic performance is so often adequate in terms of the teacher's informal assessment acts. In formal assessment situations, which involve every class member, the evidence is that pupil achievement tends to vary widely within a class group, with a generally high incidence of aspects of pupil performance which are assessed as unsatisfactory.

Page

Studies investigating the effect of written comments on learning are rare. However, an early investigation of this subject was undertaken by Page (1958). His concern was whether written comments have a noticeable effect on a pupil's subsequent performance; and if so, are some kinds of comments more effective than others in this respect?

The report of the research is not explicit on how comments were conceptualized within teaching, but from references made to previous related research as concerned with the effects of "praise" and "blame" on pupils' work; and from information about the methodology of the Page research such that the test to assess the effect of the comments on pupils' subsequent performance is not concerned with the same kind of lesson content as the lesson which received the comments, the implication is that the research questions are conceived as testing the comment as a possible source of motivation to the pupil.

The pupil population participating in the research was divided into three groups: one group of pupils received a grade, but no verbal comment on a piece of their written work submitted to the teacher; one group received a grade together with a comment which was specified according to the grade. For example, all 'A' grade pupil work received the comment, "Excellent! Keep it up", all 'C' grade pupil work received the comment "Perhaps try to do still better", and all 'F' grade pupil work received the comment, "Let's raise this grade". The third group of participating pupils was given any comment which the teacher believed appropriate.

The results were that the pupils' work performances subsequent to receiving a comment tended to be better than the subsequent work performances of those pupils receiving no comment. However, the significant difference among all three groups of pupils was that between the "Free Comment" group and the other two groups.

Though the Page study offers evidence that teachers' written comments have an effect on pupils' work achievement, his research underlines

the need for more information on how comments may function to this end. Hence, since the effect of comments is not tested in relation to the same subject area, it cannot be hypothesized that pupils may have used the information of "Free Comments", in the reduction of cognitive uncertainty sense, in order to improve their subsequent performance. Rather, it must be supposed that the effect of the "Free Comments" relates to their promotion of the pupil's intention to perform better. Under the circumstances, it would be helpful to know more about the characteristics of "Free Comments", and assuming their motivational value, in what way these diverge from the potentially motivating property of either a grade on its own, or a grade with a specified comment.

Other Relevant Studies

Finally, several empirical studies of the effects of feedback on pupil learning outcomes are of particular relevance to the present study. Thus, Kulhavy (1977) in examining the implications of a number of feedback studies argues that the data suggest the corrective function of feedback is probably its most important component in improving pupils' learning performances; in other words, that giving learners information in relation to their wrong performances is of greater value to learning than simply confirming correct performances. If this is so, the implication is that feedback is performing an information-giving role and not, as has been assumed in a number of studies, that its most significant contribution to learning is to act as reinforcement of correct responses. Nevertheless, though Kulhavy's argument is convincing, and hence encouraging in the present interest, insofar as

he adopts a generic definition of feedback as describing "any of the numerous procedures that are used to tell a learner if an instructional response is right or wrong" (p.211) he leaves open the question of the possible difference in effectiveness between different kinds of feedback information.

In similar vein, the work of Brophy and Evertson (1976) and Stallings and Kaskowitz (1974) underline the value of teacher feedback to pupils in terms of pupil learning gains. Moreover, both studies also suggest that negatively evaluating feedback is associated with higher pupil learning gains, particularly where pupils are already motivated towards learning. A study by Soar (1973), on the other hand, suggests the importance of structured teaching, one aspect of which is the provision of information to the learner on the correctness of his responses. Again, however, none of these three studies is particularly detailed about the kinds of information provided as feedback.

Conclusion

From the foregoing review of the literature, the conceptualisation of teachers' comments as providing information to the learner of help in improving his learning would seem justifiable both from a theoretical stance and an empirical one. Thus, the role of feedback as an important component of competent human behaviour in its various manifestations is convincingly argued from a psychological, a sociological and a pedagogic perspective.

With regard to the empirical data, the implications of these are

promising for the proposed research into feedback, but convey too the potential value of a more detailed investigation of the properties of comments as feedback. Accordingly, it is to this consideration that the present study is now directed.

Having examined the theoretic and empiric support for a feedback conceptualisation of comments, it remained now to investigate the nature of the feedback provided by English teachers' comments. The focus of the initial investigation is teachers' written comments on pupils' work, on which subject the present chapter sets forth details of the procedure adopted, the subsequent findings and their implications. Since the choice of an appropriate research procedure depends on what questions are being investigated, then clearly specification of these questions was a necessary first step.

Research Questions

The intention to examine the nature of comments in English teaching was premised on a concept of comments as supplying feedback to the learner. The denotation of learner is important: on the one hand, it means that the area of investigation is confined to comments on the pupil's performance within the subject area; that is, comments of a social or managerial nature are excluded; and, on the other hand, it assumes the teacher's definition of appropriate learning activity, in the sense that whatever feedback the teacher offers on the pupil's performance in the form of comments is taken to have potential relevance in the teacher's eyes for the pupil's task.

Given a feedback perspective, the focus of the research must be concerned with the extent to which comments offer information which may be useful to a potential learner; hence, the basic research question:

"What information do comments offer of potential
relevance to learning?"

If information is to be relevant, it must be concerned with the learning of some aspect of the subject area. This means both that the comment must refer to an aspect of the teaching of English, and that it must have something to say about its referent. The question above, then, may be subdivided as follows:

1. "To what aspect of the teaching of English does the comment refer?"
2. "What is the comment saying about its referent?"

Within the framework of (2), further sub-divisions are identifiable. Thus several academic works invite consideration of the relative value to the learner of different kinds of information. Annett (1972), for instance, makes a distinction between information which is "drive-inducing" and information which is "uncertainty-reducing", referring to these respectively as incentive and informative feedback. Since what may seem drive-inducing in effect may also be uncertainty-reducing, and vice versa, Annett admits that the distinction is difficult to draw in practice. Nevertheless, both empirical studies and everyday experience suggest that information may affect ability to learn in more than one way, and that these different ways need not be complementary: what may be intended as helpful and informative feedback may be interpreted by the pupil in a way which is damaging to his self-esteem. Flanders's emphasis (1970) of the affective relationship between teacher response and learning is apposite here, as is Argyle's point (1978) that individuals are more likely to adopt goals which are attractive to them. In relation to feedback, these suggest that information could be either affective or cognitive in its orientation towards improved performance:

- 2.1 "What information is available of direct application

to the cognitive learning task?"

2.2 "What information is available of possible influence on the pupil's affective response?"

On the issue of the information available of direct application to the cognitive learning task, if comment on performance is to be useful to the learner, it must convey some measure of the worth of that performance against an ideal one. Without such information the qualities of competent performance from the perspective of the commentor are not apparent to the learner. In consequence, the learner cannot use the information to identify what of his performance needs improvement, or alternatively what of his performance should be fostered. In this regard, the studies of Bellack et al (1973) and Cameron-Jones and Morrison (1973), which underline the significance of the rating function within teachers' comments, are relevant. In Bellack's terms (p.29), ratings "include judgments about the truth or falsity, or appropriateness or inappropriateness of preceding statements". Accordingly, it seemed pertinent to the research interest to identify what rating of the pupil's performance is contained in the comment:

2.11 "What is the rating?"

That rating of a pupil's work need not be intended for learning purposes is identified by Bloom (1971) in his distinction between summative and formative evaluation. Thus, summative evaluation is concerned with the end results of teaching, with how well pupils have attained the desired learning objectives; while formative evaluation is concerned with helping pupils to improve their performance, and therefore with providing whatever information is

considered necessary to attain this purpose. As a consequence of the distinction, summative evaluation may be adequately operationalised by the offer of a rating of the pupil's performance. However, the simple offer of a rating would generally be considered inadequate in fulfilment of a formative evaluation purpose. It follows, then, that if the concern is with the extent to which comments are helpful to the learner, it is of relevance to identify what information they contain about the pupil's performance in addition to the rating:

2.12 "What descriptive information do comments contain about the pupil's performance in addition to the rating?"

If evaluation is concerned with future performance, the comment may manifest features other than description of the pupil's performance which are characteristic of teaching behaviour. For example, the comment could offer the correction of a weakness, or it could take the form of a direction to guide the pupil's performance. Since some teaching behaviours may be more informative than others, it seemed appropriate to investigate this question.

2.13 "Do comments contain elements characteristic of techniques of teaching?"

On the subject of information of possible influence on the pupil's affective response, Flanders (1970) and Stenhouse (1975) urge a need to take account of the pupil's perspective on the learning activity. In support of these views, some research by Soar (1979) suggests that teaching which gives greater emphasis to the pupil's contributions to classroom interaction may help promote creative thinking among pupils. In other words, the research implies that taking account of the

pupil's perspective may be of particular relevance to English teaching. With reference to comments, therefore, the issue is one of identifying properties of comments which could reflect some consideration of the pupil's view of the learning situation. From Stenhouse's position this would mean individualisation of feedback in the sense that perceived differences between pupils would shape the kind and form of feedback seen to be needed; and this would be manifest in the variation among pupils in the feedback they are offered:

2.21 "To what extent is feedback standardised?"

On the other hand, Flanders's emphasis on pupil affective needs suggests more that feedback should avoid impersonality. This could imply an alternative form of individualisation, such as recognition of the pupil's identity:

2.22 "To what extent is feedback personalised?"

The foregoing emphasis of the need to adopt the pupil's viewpoint highlights a further question of relevance to the investigation. If comments are to be helpful to the learner, how clearly the message of the comment is conveyed must be an important consideration:

3. "Are there features of the comment's form of presentation which may affect the comment's value as a piece of communication?"

A concern with the comment's form and how it may, or may not facilitate interpretation of the comment's message raised the issue of explicitness. For instance, teachers' comments may be based on an assumed shared knowledge between the teacher and the pupils; and, in consequence be written in a much abbreviated form. As example, a pupil who answers

a Comprehension exercise in half sentences may evoke the comment "Sentences!" by which the commentor means to remind the pupil that his answers should be written in complete sentences. How adequately the pupil interprets this kind of comment will be partly dependent on the validity of the assumption that the knowledge is shared - in the example quoted, that the pupil knows he should write in complete sentences; but more, as Argyle (1978) points up, how adequately the pupil interprets the comment will also be dependent on the pupil's skills of communication - in the example quoted, that the pupil recognises the word "Sentences!" as an abbreviated reference to the requirement of writing Comprehension answers in complete sentences. Hence the question:

3.1 "How explicit is the comment?"

One feature of the comment's presentation which may affect the clarity of its message is the extent to which the comment indicates the physical location of the aspect of performance being commented upon. Insofar as it does, it must make it that much easier to relate the comment's message to the instance of the strength or weakness of the pupil's work which evoked the comment. In consequence, the comment's valence as a medium of communication is enhanced.

3.2 "Does the comment identify the physical location of its referent?"

In addition to the foregoing questions, it seemed pertinent to the study of the potential of comments as feedback to investigate the teachers' intentions in writing comments, and their understandings about the information they were providing in making comments.

Consequently, it remained to identify more explicitly the research

questions of relevance to obtaining the teachers' images of their use of comments.

The basic research question is: what are the teachers' intentions and understandings regarding the information provided in comments. More succinctly, the question may be rephrased as:

"What are the teachers' images of their use of comments?"

In the breakdown of this question there are several distinct strands. Insofar as teachers use comments, they must be directed towards the attainment of some purpose. What this purpose is, and how the comment is thought to serve the purpose seemed relevant to the research interest. The issue of how the comment is thought to serve the purpose may be further sub-divided as two distinct questions: the first is concerned with the way in which the comment is believed to further the purpose; and the second is concerned with the teacher's expectations of the effects of the comment as a means to attaining the purpose. Hence, the questions as under:

- 4.1 What is the purpose of the comment?
- 4.2 In what way is the comment furthering the intended purpose?
- 4.3 What is the expected effect of the comment?

In summary, the research questions as articulated thus far are as follows:

in relation to the comments as manifest,

1. To what aspect of the teaching of English does the comment refer?
2. What is the comment saying about its referent?
 - 2.1 What information is available of direct application to the cognitive task?

- 2.11 What is the rating?
- 2.12 What descriptive information do comments contain about the pupil's performance in addition to the rating?
- 2.13 Do comments contain elements characteristic of techniques of teaching?
- 2.2 What information is available of possible influence on the pupil's affective response?
 - 2.21 To what extent is feedback standardised?
 - 2.22 To what extent is feedback personalised?
- 3. Are there features of the comment's form of presentation which may affect the comment's value as a piece of communication?
 - 3.1 How explicit is the comment?
 - 3.2 Does the comment identify the physical location of its referent?

in relation to the teachers' accounts of their comments,

- 4. What are the teachers' images of their use of comments?
 - 4.1 What is the purpose of the comment?
 - 4.2 In what way is the comment furthering the intended purpose?
 - 4.3 What is the expected effect of the comment?

The Comment as Manifest: Research Questions Operationalised

The research questions have been delineated at a conceptual level.

The issue now was how they might be most appropriately operationalised.

In selecting a method for investigation of the research questions where the comment itself is the source of the relevant data, the choice is

between a systematic procedure of content analysis and a more open-ended procedure.

Of the two, the systematic approach is the more disciplined, and so gives promise of a greater reliability. Hence, providing its use could be justified in relation to the present study, it seemed the obvious choice.

Accordingly, the recognised method of content analysis depends on the clear specification of a standardised unit for analysis, if it is to set the conditions for a systematic, and so disciplined investigation. On the other hand, in identification of the unit for analysis, care must be taken to ensure that it is not arbitrarily selected in relation to the meaning of the text as it is conveyed in the choice and arrangement of language. For instance, selection of a unit such as the use of a particular word in a text as a source of inference about the writer's attitude to his subject would have no analytic validity if, in fact, the particular word occurs in association with a variety of other words which render its attitudinal implications different on different occasions.

In relation to the present study, and the need for a clear specification of a standardised unit for analysis, the comment seemed likely to present an unambiguous unit in its definition as "the reply which the teacher makes to a pupil's performance when that performance, or the comment which refers to it, are identifiably concerned with an activity of pupil learning in English. The comment finishes when either the comment's referent changes, or when it is no longer clear that the reply continues to refer to the performance, or when there is a discontinuity in the provision of information; that is, one comment is identifiably separated from any other by the size of the physical spacing between them".

It may be noted at this point that the overwhelming majority of comments were distinguishable with reference to the criterion of physical spacing.

Moreover, it was believed that a definition of the comment which took account of the physical property of spacing sufficiently reflected a 'natural' unit of the writer's whole response to the pupil's performance as to justify the claim that the unit of analysis was not arbitrarily chosen in relation to the meaning of the teacher's response.

Again, content analysis depends on the categorisation of its units in terms of predetermined categories. Further to the interests of precision and reliability, this requirement ensures that the categories identified are adequate to the provision of answers to the research questions, and at the same time guards against the possibility that only characteristics which appear to support the hypothesis under study are considered in examination of the empirical data.

The possible disadvantage here is that in relation to the research questions being asked, predetermination of categories may lead to important characteristics of the text being ignored. On this issue, it was believed that the research questions as formulated appear sufficiently precise to provide clear guidance about relevant types of categorisation; and that the distinctions made are sufficiently important in themselves to make the investigation worthwhile, even allowing for the possibility that other distinctions of importance may have been missed.

In general, then, it was believed that a systematic content analysis procedure has considerable advantages as a method for investigation of

comments, and no serious disadvantages in relation to the present undertaking.

In order to explore the validity of these beliefs, a pilot study was undertaken in which three teachers from separate schools submitted pupil written work on which they had commented.

Subject to the examination of the comments made by these teachers, the research questions were operationalised in terms of the following ways of categorising comments:

Question: To what aspect of the teaching of English does the comment refer?

In the breakdown of this question, three broad categories are initially identified as distinguishing information logically necessary to an understanding of the relevance of the comment's message for the potential learner in English. Thus, if the comment is to further English competence, it must be of relevance to the learner whether he can, or cannot identify the characteristic of written English competence to which the comment refers: is the referent specified or not specified? Is it, or is it not subject-specific?

Referent dimension - Comments which are specific about the area of English competence to which they refer;
 e.g. "New sentences begin with a capital letter"

Comments which are specific about the area of competence to which they refer, but which are not subject-specific; e.g. "Careless handwriting"

Comments which are non-specific, or vague about the area of competence to which they refer;

e.g. "Well written"

Each of these three categories is further sub-divided.

Accordingly, insofar as subject specialists categorise English teaching into areas of competence, it must be salient to the research interest to identify the incidence of these categories in relation to written work. Consequently, comments for which the subject referent is specified may be further distinguished on the basis of distinctions which the author believes are shared by English subject specialists. This yields three main categories, each with a number of sub-categories:

Referent - Grammar	Where the comment refers to how accurately the pupil uses language to convey meaning at the literal level. It includes, therefore, the 'rules' by consensus of opinion, of language use, such as the accepted literal meaning of a word, correct spelling, and correct punctuation.
Sub-category A	- where the comment refers to a language 'rule', the application of which is dependent primarily on the understanding of a concept. For instance, to be able to write in paragraphs or to apply the rules of paragraph presentation is dependent first on an understanding of what constitutes a paragraph; e.g. "Always write in paragraphs"
Sub-category B	- where the comment refers to a language 'rule', the application of which is wholly dependent on knowledge of specific rules of written

language use, even though these rules may be assimilated through familiarity with the language;

e.g. "Numbers should be written out as words"

Sub-category

C

- where the comment refers to a language 'rule', knowledge of which is largely dependent on degree of familiarity with language; that is, one cannot overcome the weakness through understanding of a concept, or by remembering a rule of general application. For instance, though specific rules are sometimes offered to help overcome a weakness in spelling, ultimately if there is to be a general improvement in spelling it will be through increasing familiarity with the written word;

e.g. "~~impossable~~" "impossible"

Sub-category

D

- where the comment is non-specific, vague or ambiguous in its reference to pupil ability to apply the 'rules' of language use at the literal level of meaning;

e.g. "Take more care with grammar"

Referent -

Expressive

Where the comment refers to how effectively the pupil uses language beyond its ability to convey meaning at the purely literal level. It includes, then, the techniques of language use which may reinforce its literal meaning, such as appropriate imagery, style, fluency, and so on.

- Sub-category A - where the comment refers to the effectiveness of the language in bringing the scene to the reader's mind's eye. 'Scene' includes the participants, their characterisation, their actions, and the setting in which the actions take place; it also includes evocation of an emotional context as well as a physical one: e.g. "You successfully create the atmosphere of Ferry Castle"
- Sub-category B - where the focus of the comment is on the form of the language, as opposed to how it may alter or extend the meaning of what is being conveyed: e.g. "rather spoiled by a tendency to express yourself poorly"
- Sub-category C - where the focus of the comment is on the way language has been apportioned to different units of narrative; e.g. "You could have made far more of the fact that Peter was too nervous to speak"
- Sub-category D - where the comment is non-specific, vague or ambiguous about the features of the language which affect its ability to convey meaning beyond the literal level.
There were no examples in the pilot data.
- Referent - Imagination - Where the comment refers to the ability to produce and organise ideas at the conceptual

level around the proposed theme.

- Sub-category A - where the comment refers solely to the 'idea' content;
e.g. "Clever ideas"
- Sub-category B - where the comment refers to the plausibility of the ideas, either in a general sense, or with reference to the relationship between specific ideas;
e.g. "Your whole story is highly unlikely"
- Sub-category C - where the comment refers to the ability to offer adequate information to make the logic of the ideas apparent;
e.g. "A confused account"
- Sub-category D - where the comment refers to how accurately the ideas interpret the proposed theme;
e.g. "Your story is based on the man's hesitation rather than on his keeping silent"
- Sub-category E - where the comment refers to the factual details which support the ideas;
e.g. "Burma is not a town"
- Sub-category F - where the comment refers to the imaginative content in a vague, or ambiguous way;
There were no examples in the pilot study.

Since the study of the English language is concerned with the development of appropriate skills, the extent to which the comment's message is conducive to the fostering of these skills will be relevant

to the learner, even if the comment's referent is not subject-specific. Thus, within the dimension of skills which are not subject-specific, one category is identified in which reference is made to the instructions issued to the pupil prior to the learning task; and another is identified in which reference is made to the appearance of the written work. To allow for the possibility of comments emerging which make references to other areas of pupil competence in English which are not subject-specific, a category labelled "Skills-not-Subject-Specific-Other" is included:

Referent - Working Instructions	Where the comment refers to the instructions preceding the particular assignment, where these instructions are not subject-specific; e.g. "You were asked to discuss the topic, not write about a particular incident"
Referent - Appearance	Where the comment refers to any physical properties of the work in a non-subject-related sense; e.g. "handwriting!"
Referent - Skills-not- Subject-specific- Other	Where the comment refers to any other competence in English work which is not subject-specific and which is specified; There were no examples in the pilot study.

Comments which are non-specific or vague about the area of competence to which they refer are sub-divided on the grounds that the comment's informative value for the learner may be differentially influenced according to whether it is non-specific, or whether it is vague:

Referent -
 General Where the comment is non-specific about the aspect of the pupil's work being commented upon;
 e.g. "a fairly good essay"

Referent -
 Vague Where the comment is vague, or ambiguous about the aspect of the pupil's work being commented upon;
 e.g. "Too many details"

Question: What is the comment saying about its referent?

What is the rating?

On the issue of a rating, the evidence of the pilot study is that the majority of comments convey a rating, the comment referring to its subject in terms which in our language culture are associated with praise or adverse criticism. This may take the form of purely evaluative words such as "good", "poor", "well done"; or it may be reflected in the choice of words describing the subject, for instance "interesting" or "confused". Alternatively, the rating may figure as a sign indicating a weakness or strength, such as underlining, or "ticking"; or the rating may be conveyed through the offer of advice, for example, "Remember to paragraph". The point is that whether or not the rating is intentional, insofar as most comments indicate a weakness or strength of the pupil's work, a rating component is usually identifiable. Where the rating cannot be clearly identified, the comment is rated "neutral". Major categories of the rating dimension are:

Rating
 Comments rating positively, e.g. "clever idea"
 Comments rating neutrally, e.g. "You write
 without effort"
 Comments rating negatively, e.g. "Too short"

Within Positive and Negative definitions, some comments are found to be less positive, or less negative than others. Since such variations in the degree of rating may affect the learner's response to the rating, codification takes account of these. Consequently, a "Modified Positive" and Modified Negative" is introduced where the rating contains a modifying indicator such as "quite" or "a little":

Rating	Positive rating; e.g. "Interesting Plot"
	Modified Positive rating; e.g. "Quite well written"
	Negative rating; e.g. "Poor spelling"
	Modified Negative rating; e.g. "A bit mixed-up"

It may be apparent from the foregoing that ratings are not always explicit. Since learner response to feedback could also be influenced by the degree of explicitness of the rating, this characteristic of the rating is encoded:

Rating -	Comments rating explicitly; e.g. "Excellent"
Explicitness	Comments rating implicitly; e.g. "Remember punctuation"

Question: What information do comments contain about the pupil's performance in addition to the rating?

Consideration of this question in relation to the pilot data suggested that some comments contain descriptive information about the pupil's performance. Within the framework of this question too it was noted that some comments contain no verbal information about the referent, though the referent itself may or may not be indicated verbally.

Codification takes account of both characteristics:

No verbal information	Comments which offer no verbal information about the referent; e.g. The underlining of the referent; "Sentences!"
Description	Comments which offer some kind of descriptive information about the referent in addition to the rating; e.g. "Your work is untidy"

The descriptive information of comments may be further categorised from the evidence of the pilot data according to differences in the kind of description offered:

Description - Specific Description	The description is specific about the characteristic of the referent which leads to its evaluation; e.g. "Your ending is too abrupt"
Description - Normative	The description explains the evaluation by comparison with some norm; e.g. "You introduce characters without explaining who they are"
Description - Causal	The description explains the evaluation by assertion of consequence; e.g. "Too much detail about axles tends to bore the reader"

Question: Do comments contain elements characteristic of techniques of teaching?

The question of the comment's relationship with recognised teaching behaviours leads to consideration of what kind of teaching help there may be in the form or content of the comment. Two further dimensions of what the comment is saying about its referent are thus identified from the pilot data:

Correction The descriptive information is in the form of the correction of a weakness; that is, it tells the pupil exactly what he should have written; e.g. by offering the correct spelling of a word wrongly spelt.

Direction The descriptive information suggests a course of action in the form of a generalisable rule to be followed in future;
e.g. "Answer in sentences"

Within Direction, two further distinctions are identified: one is whether the generalisable rule is in the form of a prescription or a proscription; the other is whether adoption of the generalisable rule demands that the pupil should understand the nature of the weakness which evokes the comment. In relation to the former, the justification for making the distinction is based on the belief that, in general, proscription only tells the pupil what he should not do, while prescription in addition offers information about what the pupil should do - a difference which may differentially affect the pupil's response to the comment's message. With regard to the latter distinction within Direction, the distinction is justified on the grounds that the kind of assumptions which comments reflect about learners may also affect the learner's response to the comment:

Direction - The comment prescribes in a generalisable way
 Prescription for future work;
 e.g. "Remember to paragraph"

Direction - The comment proscribes in a generalisable way
 Proscription for future work;
 e.g. "Do not use brackets for omissions"

and

Direction - The generalisable rule assumes that the pupil
Weakness understands the nature of the weakness which
Comprehension evokes the comment;
Assumed e.g. "Remember to write in sentences" could only
 be adopted if the pupil understands the concept
 of a sentence.

Direction - The generalisable rule does not assume that
Weakness the pupil understands the nature of the weakness
Comprehension which evokes the comment;
Not Assumed e.g. "Do not begin sentences with 'because'".
 Adopting this rule does not demand that the pupil
 should understand why 'because' is not an
 appropriate way to begin a sentence; he need only
 comply with the direction.

Question: What information is available of possible influence on the
pupil's affective response?

To what extent is feedback standardised?

It was apparent from the pilot data that feedback to pupils is not standardised in the sense of different pupils receiving comments on similar strengths or weaknesses, which comments would be categorised in exactly the same way; for instance, that every pupil in a particular class who makes a spelling error receives the same comment, such as the correct spelling. On the other hand, though it was clear that teachers respond to perceived weaknesses and strengths of individual performances, to what extent this feedback is not standardised in the sense of reflecting sensitivity to the pupils' unique perform-

ances is a much more difficult question. Indeed, since it seemed likely to call for investigation at the level of the teachers' word choices, it implies a coding system so complex as to be virtually unmanageable. Consequently it was decided to abandon this research question.

Question: To what extent is feedback personalised?

The extent to which comments are identifiable as personalised is manifest in two ways in the pilot data. The first is where the teacher indicates that he is aware of exactly which pupil's work he is commenting upon:

Personalisation - The comment shows that the teacher is aware of
 Recognition of which pupil's work is being commented upon;
 the Particular e.g. by using the pupil's name, or by referring
 Pupil to earlier work, "Your spelling is improving"

The other form of personalisation is where the comment identifies the source of the weakness or strength of the work as an individual characteristic of the pupil:

Personalisation - The comment identifies the source of the weak-
 Attribution ness or strength of the work as an individual
 of Source characteristic of the pupil;
 Weakness/ e.g. "Careless work"
 Strength

Question: Are there features of the comment's form of presentation which may affect the comment's value as a piece of communication?

How explicit is the comment?

The question of explicitness is partly operationalised in the

categories already identified as coding an explicit characteristic. Accordingly, one measure is the degree of explicitness of the rating. However, in addition, explicitness may be operationalised in identification of the degree of inexplicitness. Thus, the categorisation of comments which offer no verbal information provides relevant information here; as also, the category encoding comments which are vague or ambiguous in their referent.

Question: Does the comment identify the physical location of its referent?

Several different ways in which comments indicate location are noted. Since some ways may be more effective than others in supporting the comment's value as a piece of communication, the differences are each identified as sub-categories.

Location - Where the comment refers to a particular part of the whole work and is specific about the physical location of this part.

Sub-category A - where the comment uses the physical properties of the work as a map of reference
e.g. "Gripping ending"

Sub-category B - where the comment uses the unit of thematic construction
e.g. "Your story does not really show that James kept silent at a crucial point"

Sub-category C - where the comment uses quotation
e.g. "Do not use 'this Italian car' unless you have previously mentioned it"

Sub-category - where the comment is written beside the part to
 D which it refers
 e.g. The circling of a spelling error

Data Collection

In consideration of the requisite data on written comments, it was decided to concentrate on the work of third year pupils; in part because informal observation and discussion with teachers in several schools suggested that written work commenting was not prominent in the mixed ability teaching of the first two years, and, in part because from fourth year on, the proportion of school-leavers would tend to channel the investigation towards the work of the more academically orientated pupil. In consequence, the relevance of the findings might be unnecessarily restricted.

As a preliminary to obtaining the data, teachers of the English department of a local comprehensive school were invited to co-operate in the research. It was explained that the purpose of the investigation was to provide a description of the properties and use of written comments in English teaching; and that, in order to do so, it would be necessary to study samples of such comments in considerable detail. In addition, since the teachers' images of the comment, of its use and value in teaching, should be an important aspect of any such description, it was suggested that it would be helpful if the teachers who wrote the comments would agree subsequently to being interviewed on the subject.

With reference to the work submitted for examination, the proposal was that in the interests of representativeness examples of

comments already made and of recent date would be preferable; in other words, since the teachers' consciousness of the impending investigation might have had an unintentional influence on their commenting, it seemed advisable to take precautions against such a happening, and sample comments made prior to the research onset. Recency was stressed on the grounds that the interviews could involve the participants in a certain degree of recapitulation of the work commented upon. Further, the teachers were asked if they could, where practicable, supply different kinds of pupil written work, in order to allow comparison of comments in relation to these differences.

Accordingly, the data on written comments was contributed by six teachers, and was drawn from the work of 200 pupils over the whole ability range in the third year of a Comprehensive school. All teachers reported that the work submitted was recent, though none of it was undertaken in anticipation of the investigation.

Reliability Study

To test the reliability of the delineation of the unit of analysis, and of the categories identified as describing the content of comments of relevance to English teaching, a sample of ten pupil assignments containing 100 comments in total was categorised independently by a second coder.

Comparison of codings revealed the following:

With reference to the unit of analysis, coder agreement was found in all instances.

In consideration of the comment categories, the referent dimension was found to have an 88% incidence of coder agreement, the difference being mainly a consequence of the systematic use of the Expressive category by the second coder in instances in which the first coder used Grammar. In all instances, the difference could be ascribed to the difficulty of deciding whether a language construction weakness constituted the breaking of a 'rule' of written English construction, or whether it was simply clumsily constructed. This particular distinction was intended to be reflected in the difference between the following two samples:

"I told him it wasn't allowed for him to do that"

"Peter ran as quickly he could"

In the first sentence, the language construction is not incorrect according to the 'rules' of formal English. Nevertheless, it could have been more rhythmically constructed, for instance, "I told him he wasn't

allowed to do that".

In the second sentence, on the other hand, the omission of a second 'as' breaks a 'rule' of formal English construction.

Within individual referent dimensions, the coding of Grammar sub-categories reflected a 94% agreement between coders. Where disagreement occurred, it was unsystematic. The total numbers of both Expressive and Imagination encodings were too slight to allow a valid assessment of the reliability of their respective sub-categories. Nevertheless, in almost all instances agreement was found between coders.

The categories encoding evaluation of the pupils' work, Positive, Neutral and Negative categories, reflected a 98% agreement of coding; while the test of the degree of explicitness encapsulated in the Implicit and Explicit categories revealed 100% correspondence.

The largest difference between the coders was found in comparing the encodings of Specific Description, agreement being only 79%. In almost all instances of disagreement, the differences were systematic in the sense that the second coder had not understood the author's intention that Normative, Causal, Correction and Direction encodings should be interpreted as automatically also including a Specific Description encoding. Though the difference here does not affect the analysis of the data, it is necessary to emphasise that this rule was in fact adopted throughout the study, and that it should be borne in mind in relation to the results presented.

Within the Correction category itself, there was a 98% agreement between coders. In addition, though total numbers for Normative, Causal,

Direction, Attribution of Source Weakness/Strength, and Personalisation

- Use of the Pupil's Name were slight, in all instances agreement was 100%.

Finally, the category Location revealed 99% overlap between encodings.

Characteristics of the Comments' Data

A summary of the encoding of comments is presented in Tables 1-4.

TABLE 1

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	J	Totals	
Teacher	1	1	2	3	3	4	4	5	6		
No.of pupils	19	17	27	26	20	29	22	27	13	200	
No.of pieces of work	19	17	53	51	40	58	44	35	13	330	
Total Comments	107	102	275	373	273	389	237	482	50	2288	
Referent - Grammar	A	62	50	54	98	84	160	44	226	3	781
	B	3	2	5	21	23		1	13		68
	C	36	37	69	199	108	192	98	117	16	872
	D			1	1		1		5	2	10
Express.	A			11	1				3		15
	B	2		74	4	15	7	13	29		144
	C			10			1		3	6	20
	D				1				1		2
Imag.	A	3		11	8	5	4	9	26		66
	B		1				1	1	4		7
	C			4	8	4	9	14	2	2	43
	D			1			1	9		1	12
	E			9	3	2	5	7	4		30
General			1	17	26	18	3	34	33	12	144
Referent - Appear.				4	3	8	2		5	1	23
Working Inst.			10	1			2	2		3	18
Vague	1	1	4	0	6	1	5	11	4	33	

TABLE 2

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	J	Totals
Teacher	1	1	2	3	3	4	4	5	6	
No.of pupils	19	17	27	26	20	29	22	27	13	200
No.of pieces of work	19	17	53	51	40	58	44	35	13	330
Total Comments	107	102	275	373	273	389	237	482	50	2288
Evaluation - Pos.		1	28	12	7	1	35	53	13	150
Pos. Mod.			2	1		1		2		6
Neg.	106	101	244	353	262	386	201	417	35	2105
Neg. Mod.	1			5	3	1	1	7	2	20
Neutral			1	2	1			3		7
Explicit	6	2	59	52	28	26	53	77	23	326
Implicit	101	100	215	319	244	363	184	402	27	1955
Spec.Descr.	69	76	194	268	214	274	145	331	23	1594
Normative			3	2			1	16		22
Causal								5		5

TABLE 3

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	J	Totals
Teacher	1	1	2	3	3	4	4	5	6	
No.of pupils	19	17	27	26	20	29	22	27	13	200
No.of pieces of work	19	17	53	51	40	58	44	35	13	330
Total Comments	107	102	275	373	273	389	237	482	50	2288
Correction	44	50	118	164	144	207	106	241	11	1085
Direction Pres.	1	12	28	17	12	6	7	29	2	114
Pros.		2	2	3		1	1	5	1	15
Weakness Comprehension Assum.		12	26	15	8	4	7	12	2	86
Weakness Comp. not Assum.	1	2	4	5	4	3	1	22	1	43

TABLE 4

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	J	Totals
Teacher	1	1	2	3	3	4	4	5	6	
No.of pupils	19	17	27	26	20	29	22	27	13	200
No.of pieces of work	19	17	53	51	40	58	44	35	13	330
Total Comments	107	102	275	373	273	389	237	482	50	2288
Location - Cat. A			4	1				6		11
B			4			2	2	2		10
C				1				1		2
D	101	96	219	324	242	363	223	391	26	1985
Personalisation - Recognition of particular pupil			4				1	8	9	22
Personalisation - A.S.W.			8	23	15	3	1	10	5	65
No Verbal Information	20	15	35	56	40	31	47	109	6	359

Each vertical column represents a different class group; with the numbers 1 to 6 at the top of the columns referring to the teacher of each group. Thus teacher 1 comments on the work of the two classes at the extreme left of the Tables, teacher 2 the next class, teacher 3 the subsequent two classes, and so on. Where the teacher submitted two samples of the work of one class on the same kind of pupil written work, the encodings have been combined. This happened in relation to columns C, D, E, F, G and H. Hence, all else being equal, the total comments for these columns should approximate to two times the totals for the remaining columns. The exception is column H, where the total sample is only 1.1/3 times the class size. In this instance, the teacher included only some of the pupils' work in relation to one of the exercises. It should be noted too that teachers 1 and 6 had smaller classes than average, all three classes being at the lower end of the ability range.

It will be recognised that the investigation includes 15 different written work episodes. Reading across the Tables from left to right, these are respectively:

Teacher 1 - column A - a creative essay
 column B - an interpretation exercise

Teacher 2 - column C - two creative essays

Teacher 3 - column D - two creative essays
 column E - two creative essays

Teacher 4 - column F - two creative essays
 column G - two literature exercises

Teacher 5 - column H - two creative essays

Teacher 6 - column J - an interpretation exercise

What the preponderance of creative essays suggests is open to speculation: it may be that most written work is of the creative essay type; or it may be that most commenting refers to creative written work; or it may simply be coincidental. The present research is in no position to offer an answer to this question.

Quantitative differences of encodings between columns are more attributable to differences of class size than indicative of different styles of teacher commenting, or of different responses to different kinds of written work. Of possible differences noted, one is that interpretation exercises have fewer comments per individual piece of work than other written work. However, this may be because Interpretations involve much less pupil written work on average. The other is that Interpretations refer more in commenting to the working instructions. Here again this may be because Interpretations tend towards a more rule-governed format of presentation.

The Frequency of Different Characteristics

The six teachers between them make a total of 2288 comments. Spread over 330 pieces of work, this means that each piece of work receives on average 7 comments.

Referents of Comments: Codification within the categories identifying the comments' referents reveals that most comments refer to a Grammar aspect of the subject area. This is followed by Expressive, Imagination and General, each of which accounts for a much smaller incidence of comments. The three remaining sub-categories of the Referent group, Appearance, Working Instructions and Vague encapsulate a relatively small proportion of the total comment population. Below is each teachers' comment distribution to the various categories (Table 5).

TABLE 5 Totals for each Teacher within Referent Sub-categories

		Teachers						<u>Totals</u>
		<u>T1</u>	<u>T2</u>	<u>T3</u>	<u>T4</u>	<u>T5</u>	<u>T6</u>	
Referent Sub- categories	Grammar	190	129	534	496	361	21	1731
	Expressive	2	95	21	21	36	6	181
	Imagination	4	25	30	60	36	3	158
	General	1	17	44	37	33	12	144
	Appearance	-	4	11	2	5	1	23
	Working Instr.	10	1	-	4	-	3	18
	Vague	2	4	6	6	11	4	33
	Totals	209	275	646	626	482	50	2288

Most striking is the similarity of the pattern of encodings among teachers; but within this common pattern there are also important variations. Thus for every teacher, the Grammar category is dominant, but the extent of this dominance varies markedly: teacher 1 makes hardly any non-Grammar comments, while at the other extreme teacher 2 and teacher 6 have 47% and 42% respectively of their comments in the Grammar category. Similarly, with only minor exceptions, all teachers have more comments in the Expressive, Imagination and General categories than in any of the remaining categories; but there are wide variations among the teachers in the relative incidence of their comments in these three categories. For example, 35% of teacher 2's comments are in the Expressive category, but only 3% of those of teacher 3 and teacher 4, and less than 1% of teacher 1's.

Table 6 identifies the percentage of each Referent category within the teachers' individual total comments:

TABLE 6 Referent Distribution as a Percentage to the Nearest Whole Number of Each Teacher's Total Encodings

		Teachers						Categories as % of the total comments
		T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	
Referent Sub-categories	Grammar	91	47	83	79	75	42	76
	Expressive	1	35	3	3	7	12	8
	Imagination	2	9	5	10	7	6	7
	General	0	6	7	6	7	24	6
	Appearance	0	1	2	0	1	2	1
	Working Instr.	5	0	0	1	0	6	1
	Vague	1	1	1	1	2	8	1

Ratings in Comments: Consideration of the Rating dimension suggests that teachers most often rate pupils' written work negatively, the proportion of total Negative to total Positive being 93%:7%. Very few of these ratings figure in a modified version (cf. Table 2). The ratio of Negative to Positive of each teacher's ratings is shown below (Table 7):

TABLE 7 Individual Ratios of Negative to Positive

		Teachers					
		T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6
Negative		99	89	97	94	89	74
Positive		1	11	3	6	11	26

It will be recognised from the fact that only 7 Neutral comments are recorded in Table 2 that almost all comments contain an identifiable rating. However that the majority of ratings are implicit is also clear, the ratio of total Implicit to Explicit being 86%:14%.

Individual Implicit/Explicit relationships are presented in Table 8:

TABLE 8 Individual Ratios of Implicit to Explicit

	Teachers					
	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6
Implicit	96	78	87	87	84	54
Explicit	4	22	13	13	16	46

Descriptive Content of Comments: Rating apart, the Descriptive Dimension encodes 70% of all comments in the Specific Description category, 2% of which are also encoded Normative or Causal. Most Normative/Causal encodings are attributable to the one teacher, namely teacher 5. Individual Specific Description distributions are as below (Table 9):

TABLE 9 Individual Ratios of Specific Description

	Teachers					
	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6
Spec. Descr. as % of individual totals	70	70	75	67	70	46

Corrections and Directions: Approximately half of the total comments are coded Correction (47%); while of those offering Specific Description, Correction figures at 68%. Individual percentages of Correction within individual totals are shown (Table 10):

TABLE 10 Individual Ratios of Correction

	Teachers					
	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6
Correction as % of individual totals	45	43	48	50	50	22

Comments coded as Direction account for only 6% of the total population, with Prescription and Weakness Comprehension Assumed predominant within their respective sub-dimensions. The exception here is teacher 5 (cf. Table 3) who has a higher ratio of Direction with Weakness Comprehension not Assumed than with Weakness Comprehension Assumed. In other words, fulfilling this teacher's directions is not generally dependent on the pupil having understood his weakness and how to correct it. Individual Direction percentages are as below (Table 11)

TABLE 11

Individual Ratios of Direction

Direction as a % of individual totals	Teachers					
	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6
	7	11	5	2	7	6

Personalisation : Recognition of the Particular Pupil: Personalisation of comments where the teacher indicates recognition of the particular pupil figures very slightly at less than 1% of the total comments, but of note is the finding that teacher 6 with only 50 comments in all has the highest total of such personalised comments. The indication is, therefore, that this sub-category of Personalisation is a marked feature of teacher 6's commenting.

Personalisation : Attribution of Source Weakness: The incidence of attributing the source weakness to a characteristic of the pupil is slight at under 3% of the total. Notably T3 engrosses almost two-thirds of the encodings.

Explicitness: Delineation of the comment includes consideration of its explicitness. In this respect, Table 2 records that the incidences of explicitness of the rating figure at only 14% of the total comments. On the other hand, the small percentage of Vague Referent comments (1%) as recorded in Table 1 gives little support to any supposition of inexplicitness, as also the percentage of comments with no verbal information about the referent (Table 4) at 16%. The various measures of explicitness, therefore, do not in general undermine the comment as a medium of communication.

Location of Comments: Almost all comments indicate the place of the weakness or strength to which they refer, the percentage of Location among total comments being 88%. Of these, 99% are written beside their particular referent. Of comments where the location is not indicated, over half are General comments which are, by definition, non-located. In the characteristic of Location, therefore, comments appear strong as media of communication.

Relationships between Dimensions

The data of Tables 1-4 identify the relevant frequencies of the coded characteristics of comments, but give no indication of how these characteristics are inter-related in their incidence.

As a means of exploring these inter-relationships, the following Tables are instrumental (Tables 12-44):

* TABLE 12

	Pos.	Neut.	Neg.	Total
Grammar	1	-	1730	1731
Expressive	23	-	158	181
Imagination	22	6	130	158
General	107	1	36	144
Appearance	-	-	23	23
Working Inst.	-	-	18	18
Vague	3	-	30	33

* TABLE 13

	Spec. Desc.	Norm.	Caus.	Total
Grammar	1273	6	2	1731
Expressive	139	5	-	181
Imagination	116	11	3	158
General	15	-	-	144
Appearance	12	-	-	23
Working Inst.	12	-	-	18
Vague	3	-	-	33

TABLE 14

	Imp.	Expl.	Total
Grammar	1697	34	1731
Expressive	130	51	181
Imagination	62	90	158
General	8	135	144
Appearance	13	10	23
Working Inst.	16	2	18
Vague	29	4	33

*All Normative and Causal comments are also coded Specific Descriptive. Figures here for Specific Descriptive have Normative/Causal incidence subtracted. 3 Normative codings are also coded Causal.

TABLE 15

	Corr.	Total
Grammar	973	1731
Expressive	98	181
Imagination	10	158
General	-	144
Appearance	3	23
Working Inst.	1	18
Vague	-	33

TABLE 16

	Person	Total
Grammar	3	1731
Expressive	2	181
Imagination	3	158
General	10	144
Appearance	2	23
Working Inst.	1	18
Vague	1	33

TABLE 17

	A.S. W/S	Total
Grammar	11	1731
Expressive	4	181
Imagination	11	158
General	36	144
Appearance	2	23
Working Inst.	1	18
Vague	-	33

TABLE 18

	Pres.	Pros	W.C. Ass.	W.C. not Ass.	Total
Grammar	56	9	42	23	1731
Expressive	10	2	10	2	181
Imagination	17	-	9	8	158
General	15	1	15	1	144
Appearance	11	2	6	7	23
Working Inst.	5	1	4	2	18
Vague	-	-	-	-	23

TABLE 19

	No Verbal Info.	Total
Grammar	294	1731
Expressive	15	181
Imagination	16	158
General	-	144
Appearance	5	23
Working Inst.	6	18
Vague	23	33

TABLE 20

Location

	A	B	C	D	E	Total
Grammar	1	-	2	1671	57	1731
Expressive	6	3	-	137	35	181
Imagination	3	7	-	66	82	158
General	-	-	-	61	83	144
Appearance	-	-	-	9	14	23
Working Inst.	-	-	-	13	5	18
Vague	1	-	-	28	4	33

TABLE 21

	Pos.	Neut.	Neg.	Total
Location A	3	-	8	11
B	2	-	8	10
C	-	-	2	2
D	63	3	1919	1985
E	88	4	188	280

TABLE 22

	Impl.	Expl.	Total
Location A	4	7	11
B	2	8	10
C	1	1	2
D	1879	103	1985
E	69	207	280

* TABLE 23

	Spec. Desc.	Norm.	Caus.	Total
Location A	8	1	-	11
B	9	1	1	10
C	1	1	-	2
D	1418	7	1	1985
E	134	12	3	280

TABLE 24

	Corr.	Total
Location A	-	11
B	1	10
C	1	2
D	1079	1985
E	4	280

*3 norm also coded causal. Spec. D. with norm and caus. subtracted.

TABLE 25

Location	Pres.	Direction		Total
		Pros.	A B	
A	-	1	-	11
B	3	-	2	10
C	-	1	1	2
D	27	9	16	1985
E	84	4	24	280

TABLE 26

Location	A.S.W.	Total
A	-	11
B	-	10
C	-	2
D	6	1985
E	59	280

TABLE 27

Location	Person.	Total
A	-	11
B	-	10
C	-	2
D	1	1985
E	21	280

TABLE 28

Location	No Verbal Info.	Total
A	-	11
B	-	10
C	-	2
D	359	1985
E	-	280

* TABLE 29

	Spec. Desc.	Norm.	Caus.	Total
Pos.	39	2	-	156
Neut.	5	-	-	7
Neg.	1526	20	5	2125

TABLE 30

	Impl.	Expl.	Total
Pos.	7	149	156
Neut.	-	-	7
Neg.	1948	177	2125

TABLE 31

	Corr.	Dir.	Total
Pos.	-	-	156
Neut.	-	-	7
Neg.	1085	129	2125

TABLE 32

	Person	Total
Pos.	9	156
Neut.	-	7
Neg.	13	2125

*3 caus. are also coded norm. Figures for spec. descr. have norm./caus. incidence subtracted.

TABLE 33

	A.S.W.	Total
Pos.	18	156
Neut.	1	7
Neg.	46	2125

TABLE 34

	No Verbal Info.	Total
Pos.	-	156
Neut.	-	7
Neg.	359	2125

*TABLE 35

	Spec. Desc.	Norm.	Caus.	Total
Impl.	1421	7	1	1955
Expl.	144	15	4	326

TABLE 36

	Corr.	Total
Impl.	1081	1955
Expl.	4	326

*Figures for spec. descr. have norm.and caus. incidence subtracted.

3 normative codings are also coded caus.

5 neutral are also spec. descr. but neither Impl. nor Expl.

TABLE 37

	Direction	Total
Impl.	78	1955
Expl.	50	326

One Implicit both prescribes and proscribes with reference to the same content.

TABLE 38

	Personal.	Total
Impl.	2	1955
Expl.	20	326

TABLE 39

	A.S.W.	Total
Impl.	12	1955
Expl.	52	326

One Affect. is neutral evaln.

TABLE 40

	No Verbal Info.	Total
Impl.	359	1955
Expl.	-	326

TABLE 41

	Corr.	Total
Spec. Desc.	1080	1594
Norm.	5	22
Caus.	1	5

All corr. are coded spec. descr.
 Spec. descr. is with norm/causal incidence subtracted
 1 normative is also coded causal
 Within total figures, norm. & caus. have not been subtracted

TABLE 43

	Personal	Total
Spec. Desc.	11	1594
Norm.	-	22
Caus.	-	5

TABLE 42

	Direction	Total
Spec. Desc.	120	1594
Norm.	8	22
Caus.	2	5

Spec. descr. is with norm. and caus. incidence subtracted
 1 norm. is also coded caus.

TABLE 44

	A.S.W.	Total
Spec. Desc.	20	1594
Norm.	1	22
Caus.	-	5

In order to determine whether the degree of the relationship might have arisen by chance, a chi-squared test of significance was applied to those Tables where frequencies are high enough to allow such a test.

It was originally intended that this statistical analysis would inform how the results should be discussed in the sense that the dimension most widely inter-related with other dimensions would provide the optimum organising framework for discussion. In the event, however, all pairs of dimensions allowing significance tests proved to be significantly inter-related. This meant that the choice of an organising dimension for discussion was less important, since whichever dimension was chosen would lead into discussion of the other dimensions; but further, it meant that the findings provided no help in deciding how best to organise discussion of comment characteristics.

Ultimately, it was considered that that dimension containing most categories should be selected as the dominant perspective from which to examine the issues raised by the inter-relationship of categories, since selection of this dimension would facilitate the most detailed investigation. In other words, insofar as the Referent dimension contains more categories than any other, it would appear the appropriate choice.

Moreover, there are further grounds for its selection. The comment's referent is the subject of the comment, and it is a norm of English language usage that the subject of a piece of communication is identified before relaying the information about the subject. Hence, selection of the Referent dimension as the point of entry from which to consider comment groupings would simply reflect the form of language

organisation common to English language users. In other words, in an English language context, the Referent dimension would seem the obvious starting point from which to consider the representative message of the comment.

Discussion of Comment Characteristics in their Inter-relatedness

All teachers have the highest percentage of their individual comment population in the Grammar referent category, the total percentage of Grammar being 76% of the whole comment population (2288 comments).

Grammar: Within the Grammar category, sentence/paragraph definition and spelling sub-categories are the largest at 46% and 50% of the total Grammar encodings. Four teachers contribute more of their comments to spelling than to sentence/paragraph definition, teachers 2,3,4 and 6 - and two teachers contribute more to sentence/paragraph definition than to spelling, teachers 1 and 5.

Of the total Grammar encodings 100% are Negative evaluation (Table 12), 97% are Implicit evaluation (Table 14), 74% are Specific Description (Table 13), 56% are Correction (Table 15), 4% are Direction (Table 18), 17% are No Verbal Information (Table 19), and 97% are written beside the comment to which they refer (Table 20). Virtually no comments involve Personalisation, Recognition of Particular Pupil (Table 16), or Attribution of the Source Weakness/Strength (Table 17). Thus the overwhelming majority of these comments are categorized as:

Grammar/Negative/Implicit/Located beside Referent/No Personalisation/
No Attribution of Source Weakness; and of these, there are three
main sub-types:

(1) Specific Description involving Correction;

e.g. "theye their", "A"

(2) Specific Description not involving Correction

e.g. "not a sentence", "Why use the Possessive?"

(3) No Verbal Information

e.g. "^" (missed-out word), "went of"

The data on Grammar suggest that most comments in this area of English study are indicators of weaknesses. From the percentages of Correction and Specific Description supplying information relevant to the elimination of a weakness, there is evidence that comments could function in relation to future performance; that is that their salient characteristics equip them to help the pupil perform better in future. Moreover, in that the comments do not in themselves provide any positive incentive for pupils to learn, but instead are concerned with what is to be learned, they may be said to offer the pupil a form of direct instruction.

The high incidence of Correction and No Verbal Information conveys the relative ease of commenting in the Grammar area as a consequence of its rule-governed property; in other words, explanations involving both longer comments and a greater likelihood of being misunderstood are apparently not seen to be necessary; the pupil need only be referred to the rule, or alternatively presented with its exemplification.

There is little to suggest why Grammar should be emphasized in comment-writing. As already indicated, Grammar emphasis may reflect a practicality of comment-writing; for instance, long comments may be

too time-consuming, and it happens that Grammar allows short comments. Or, the emphasis may be related to the qualities of the pupils; for example, their age may equip them to cope best with Grammar as opposed to any other area of English study. Or it may be because Grammar is particularly eligible for a written form of assessment; for instance, that a written comment does not allow the taking of feedback from the pupil about its comprehensibility would seem an important consideration both in relation to whether a comment should be made, and in relation to what form it should take. Thus, Grammar may be more eligible as the subject of a comment by virtue of its rule-directed character.

If one speculates on teachers' intentions in writing such Grammar comments, the concentration on weaknesses would suggest that to offer the pupil information with which to understand the worth of his own performance - for example in explanation of the teacher's grade - is not the main purpose behind the writing of Grammar comments; otherwise there would surely be some positive evaluations in the sample. The point is given support by the large incidence of evaluations which are implicit; that is, if understanding of the performance's worth is part of the comment's intended message, the structure of the comments suggests its role is a subsidiary feature of whatever communication is intended.

Expressive: The second largest Referent category at 8% of the total comments is Expressive. This category identifies comments which refer to the use of language beyond its ability to convey meaning at the purely literal level.

The dominant Expressive sub-category at 80% of the total Expressive

incidence encodes comments which concentrate on the form of the language as opposed to how the form may add to or alter literal meaning; for example, the comment, "rather spoiled by a tendency to express yourself poorly" is not so much saying that the meaning is not understood by the reader, as that the form of the language used is not facilitating the extraction of meaning.

Within the Expressive category 87% of comments are Negative (Table 12), 72% are Implicit (Table 14), 77% are Specific Description (Table 13), 54% are Correction (Table 15), 7% are Direction (Table 18), 8% are No Verbal Information (Table 19), and 76% are located beside the weakness to which they refer (Table 20). Again, Personalisation - Recognition of Particular Pupil and Attribution of Source Weakness/Strength figure slightly. Thus, these comments are in the majority of cases coded as:

Expressive/Negative/Implicit/Located beside the Referent/No
Personalisation and No Attribution of Source Weakness

and as either

(1) Specific Description involving Correction;

e.g. changing a word for one which is more euphonious within the particular context, but which has the same meaning as the word being changed.

or (2) Specific Description not involving Correction;

e.g. referring to the pupil's over-usage of certain words as "Monotonous"

In that these major types of Expressive comments correspond to two of the three main types of Grammar comments, and more generally in the extent to which Expressive comments reflect the characteristics of

Grammar comments, especially in the proportions of them which are Negative Implicit, Specific Description and Correction, there is support too for identification of most Expressive comments as containing a form of direct instruction.

However, substantially larger proportions of Expressive than of Grammar comments are coded as Positive and as Explicit: while 72% are Negative Implicit, 13.5% are Positive Explicit and 14.5% are Negative Explicit.

The incidence of Explicit evaluation especially in association with Positive evaluations may be understood as offering incentives to pupils, instead of, or as well as offering direct instruction. On the other hand, the differences between Expressive and Grammar may be a consequence of the difference in character between these two areas of English teaching. As noted earlier, Grammar weaknesses are easily identified and corrected because Grammar is not only rule-governed in its application, the 'rules' are generally taught to the pupils to facilitate learning. Comments, then, need only involve an indication of the 'rule'. 'Expressive', however, does not lend itself to rules of application. Indeed, the competent use of the expressive component of language may be influenced by a number of language techniques, any or all of which may contribute to the total effect at any one time. Further, assessment of the expressive component of language is context bound to an extent which Grammar assessment is not. It is possible to note and correct a wrong spelling when a word is alone on a page, but to assess if a word contributes to the expressive meaning of a piece of writing entails considering its effect in association with what the sentence and often the whole text is trying to communicate.

Since the literal content is normally the most obvious route to an understanding of the text, and hence likely to have more hold over the reader's attention, the chances are that the deficiencies of literal presentation are not only more easily detected but may even override notice of the strengths and weaknesses of expressive content. Consequently, it is not difficult to believe that Expressive aspects of language would tend to be more identifiable towards the extremes of performance, a suggestion which may partly explain the tendency towards explicitness of evaluation - the teacher has a stronger awareness of evaluation when commenting. Moreover, such a tendency to give prior attention to literal presentation, combined perhaps with the limited possibilities for generalisable direct instruction in relation to the expressive use of language, may explain the relatively low incidence of comments in the Expressive category

Imagination: The third highest of the Referent categories at 6.8% of the total comments is Imagination. This category encodes comments which refer to the ability to produce and organise ideas at the conceptual level around the proposed theme.

The dominant subcategories in Imagination are reference to the production of ideas at 42%, for example "You take the easy way out in turning towards the ghost idea"; and reference to the sufficiency of the information offered to make the logic of the ideas apparent at 26%, for example "This has no direct connection with the previous events".

Within Imagination, 82% are Negative evaluation (Table 12), 39% are Implicit evaluation (Table 14), 73% are Specific Description (Table 13), 6% are Correction (Table 15), 11% are Direction (Table 18), 10% are

No Verbal Information (Table 19), and 42% are located beside their Referent, most of the remainder (52%) being at the end of the piece of work (Table 20). Personalisation - Recognition of Particular Pupil and Attribution of Source Weakness/Strength are negligible (Tables 16 and 17).

Though Normative and Causal categories comprise an insignificant percentage of the total comments, 14 out of the 27 encodings of these categories, or slightly more than 50%, relate to Imagination comments.

The most frequent groupings are not so evident within Imagination, but insofar as patterns are distinguishable they comprise the following categories:

- (1) 46% are Imagination/Negative/Implicit, 60% of which offer descriptive information;
e.g. "Ice-cream?" (The teacher is questioning the pupil's choice of ice-cream as a plot detail).
"Try to get some depth into your ideas".
- (2) 36% are Imagination/Negative/Explicit, 93% of which offer descriptive information;
e.g. "Poor ideas"
"Your essay is muddled. There was no reason for the lorry driver to speak. There was no one to speak to".
- (3) 11% are Imagination/Positive/Explicit, 68% of which offer descriptive information;
e.g. "Some good impressions"
"Interesting contrast between character's attitudes".

The pattern for Imagination comments is similar to those for Grammar and Expressive in its incidence of Negative together with Specific Description, and to this extent supports the instrumentality of comments as instruction. Imagination differs from Expressive and Grammar in its balance of Explicit over Implicit; in its very small percentage of Correction; and in its significant share of Normative and Causal comments.

The low incidence of Correction needs explanation, since its incidence with Grammar and Expressive contributes to the instructional potential of these comments. In view of the definition of Imagination that the comment refers to the ability to produce and organise ideas at the conceptual level around the proposed theme, the lower percentage of Correction within this Referent group is not really surprising. If the pupil is weak at producing ideas, producing an idea for him is not likely to improve his performance at idea-producing. To put it another way, the type of teaching strategy implied by the use of Correction is that the provision of a correct model will allow the pupil to identify the correct form, remember it and apply it on future occasions; that is, there is a correct form or in the case of Expressive comments a more appropriate form which may be safely used by the pupil whenever this area of English figures in written work. The production of an idea, however, does not in general have one correct form, or even approximate to one correct form. Indeed skill in imaginative thinking is normally dependent on an ability to generate a number of ideas and bring them together to form a coherent piece of communication; and the more unusual the ideas, or the combination of ideas, the better. This being so, if the emphasis is on the production of ideas, it would be inappropriate to try to improve imaginative

ability through the provision of a correct model.

In relation to the organisation of ideas, a correct model may help, but since the time spent on writing the model might be more profitably spent on an explanation to ease the pupil's task of making the comment meaningful, then it seems unlikely that teachers would tend to offer a Correction.

The foregoing notwithstanding, there is one subcategory which does have potential for ease of Correction, and which in fact engrosses most of the Correction encodings within Imagination; and that is where the comment refers to the factual details which support the ideas.

Further support for Imagination as generally unsuited to Correction comes in the percentage of Normative and Causal comments it attracts. Both categories encode possible explanations of a weakness. Normative means that the justification for an evaluation is made explicit in terms of the criterion which has been applied in making the evaluation; and Causal means the statement qualifying an evaluation is followed by an indication of its consequence. In that the percentage of both categories is very slight in the total comments, it is significant that more than 50% should relate to Imagination comments; especially given the small total percentage of Imagination in the total population. In other words, there is evidence that the Normative and Causal categories are to the same extent replacing the Correction information of Grammar and Expressive comments.

Why Imagination should contain more Explicit evaluation than Grammar or Expressive may also be identifiable from the nature of its relationship with Correction. As already outlined, the use of Correction is

associated with, but not dependent upon, the extent to which the area of the subject is "rule-governed"; and insofar as it is rule-governed it also lends itself to the use of abbreviated forms of commenting such as underlining and scoring-out. Hence, the more rule-governed the area, the higher the likely incidence of Correction, but more particularly of abbreviated commenting. It is a characteristic of these forms, however, that their evaluation is Implicit. In other words, the more rule-governed the area, the more its evaluations will be Implicit. Consequently, that Imagination is not characterised in terms of "rules" of application means, all else being equal, it will not tend to the same weight of Implicit evaluation among its population.

If the hypothesis has validity, it should gain some support in a test of Expressive comments, these being much less dominated by "rules" than Grammar comments. Hence, though Expressive allows Correction it does not readily admit abbreviated comments. If, then, all Correction are extracted from Expressive, the hypothesis will be supported if the remaining comments show a ratio of Implicit/Explicit which is close to the ratio in Imagination. Subsequently, findings with Correction removed from Expressive show the balance of Explicit: Implicit as 56%:44%, or more nearly a reflection of their balance in Imagination, which with the removal of Implicit Correction is now 63%:37%.

General: The one remaining Referent category of any significance is General at 6.4% of the total comments. This category indicates that the comment is non-specific about the aspect of the pupil's work being commented upon.

Encodings are 74% Positive evaluation (Table 12), 95% Explicit (Table

14), 10% Specific Description (Table 13), 10% Direction (Table 18), 7% Personalised - Recognition of Particular Pupil (Table 16), 25% Attribute Source Weakness/Strength (Table 17), 58% located at the end of the work, and 42% located in the body of the work (Table 20).

The categories Correction and General are mutually exclusive, since a comment cannot be non-specific about the aspect of the work to which it refers, and at the same time offer an item of information which identifiably contains the correction of the weakness. Most frequent groupings are:

(1) General/Positive/Explicit, comprising over 70% of the total;
e.g. "Reasonable"

or (2) General/Negative/Explicit/Attribution of Source Weakness,
comprising approximately 25% of the total;
e.g. "Could be better with a little less carelessness".

86% of comments in group (2) are the product of one teacher's commenting (teacher 3). One teacher (teacher 1) made only one General comment. Of the five teachers who contribute enough General comments to allow inferences on an individual basis, four appear to show a bias in favour of Positive evaluation (teachers 2, 4, 5 and 6), and one a bias in favour of Negative evaluation (teacher 3).

The non-specific nature of General comments, together with the location of the majority among the summary end comments allows their application as a form of general assessment on the whole piece of work. That they are non-specific and have so few Specific Description codings would seem to deny any conceptualisation of the General comment as direct instruction.

The most significant features of these comments are their emphasis on evaluation, and their ratio of Positive to Negative. Hence, there is indication that the main information conveyed to the pupil in General comments is an evaluation of his performance. Further, the teachers concerned show a bias as to which kind of evaluation they pass on: if the work overall does not call for their preferred evaluation, the chances are a comment in general terms is not offered. Thus of the four teachers who favour Positive evaluation, three (teachers 2, 4 and 5) give a General comment on approximately 25% of their pupils' work, and one (teacher 6) gives a General comment on 50% of his pupils' work; while the teacher favouring Negative evaluation comments generally on 50% of his total pupil work (teacher 3).

For these limited proportions of pupils, the General comments offered might provide them with a justification of their grades. However, the systematic biases of individual teachers leads one to speculate that the intended value of the comments is related to the teachers' different images of the effects of Positive and Negative evaluative comments; and this in turn suggests that such General evaluative comments are made where they are seen to have an incentive value, with four of the teachers apparently believing in the value of praise (where it is "due"), one believing in the value of criticism, and one not seeming to value either in this context.

But incentive in relation to what purpose? Since the evaluation of General comments is not associated with any particular strength or weakness, and since there is likely to be a variety of kinds of strengths or weaknesses on any one piece of work, then it would be

unrealistic to suppose that the incentive is meant as a way of helping to imprint any or all of the instruction included in the assessment in the mind of the pupil. There remains, then, the value of evaluative comments as general encouragement to the pupil to apply himself more determinedly to the improvement of his performance.

Interestingly, though on this interpretation four of the five teachers favour Positive feedback as incentive, all employ markedly more Negative feedback in association with the potential direct instruction contained in the comments of the Specific Referent categories.

Working Instructions/Appearance: Of the remaining Referent categories two have not yet been mentioned. These are concerned with working instructions to the pupil, and the appearance qualities of the work; for example, handwriting. Since both contribute insignificantly to the total comments, it is reasonable to conclude that the vast majority of comments are directly concerned with the teaching subject.

Other Categories: Several categories which might have contributed to the definition of comments have not been included in the discussion because they do not figure significantly either overall or in relation to any one Referent group.

Direction, where the comment suggests a course of action to the pupil in relation to a weakness, encodes approximately 6% of the total comments. However, these are so widely dispersed among the Referent categories as to render their incidence insignificant within each of these categories. Where Direction is used it more takes the form of Prescription of activity than Proscription of activity; but also it is

more likely to demand of the pupil an understanding of the weakness if the Direction is to be acted upon. Since this subcategory of Direction implies that teachers believe pupils know how to correct a weakness, its use seems more to emphasize the weakness than to provide help to the pupil in solving a failure of understanding.

Normative and Causal explanations feature in the analysis of Imagination, but their incidence is nevertheless insignificant in relation to the total comments.

There is a similar small percentage for the remaining category to offer some kind of explanation of a weakness or strength, Attribution of the Source Weakness/Strength. This category referred to 3% of the encodings, its incidence also being concentrated within one of the Referent categories, in this case the General category.

The final category Personalisation attracted less than 1% of encodings. Personalisation encoded any reference in the comment to knowledge of this particular pupil. Since it figures so slightly in comment-writing, it seems that comment-writing is, on the whole, a fairly impersonal business.

Conclusion

At this stage, what inferences may be taken from the foregoing analysis? From the minimal personalisation of the information relayed by comments, the data suggest that comments are written in reaction to the characteristics of the work being assessed, with the perceived characteristics of individual pupils having relatively little influence on the nature of these comments.

General comments, being largely concerned with explicit evaluation, would appear to have primarily a motivational function; whereas more

specific comments tend to by-pass motivational considerations and to have an information-giving instructional function. No explicit links are normally provided between these two types of comments, and their respective functions appear to be conceived as independent of each other.

The information of Specific Referent comments may be held to place emphasis on the most simple forms of learning. Thus, on the one hand, the majority of comments refer to the most basic aspects of written English competence, such as punctuation, spelling and use of the appropriate tense; and on the other, the kinds of information conveyed make least demands upon the learner. For instance, Correction implies rote or imitation learning; while No Verbal Information implies that the learning material is so familiar to the learner that no greater elaboration of the comment's message is necessary. By comparison, very little use is made of Direction, where weakness comprehension is not assumed, nor of the different kinds of explanation.

Finally, several different kinds of instruction are identifiable in comments. One which figures prominently is the indication of a simple 'rule' which pupils are assumed to know, such as is manifest in No Verbal Information, or in Direction-Weakness Comprehension Assumed. Another, also relating to simple 'rules', provides a model of correct performance, as in Correction. A third, concerned with more complex kinds of instruction, offers some information to the learner towards improved performance, but asks of the learner that he should resolve for himself how to apply it to his own work; most Specific Description comments are of this kind, as too Direction, where weakness comprehen-

sion is not assumed.

Thus far, the image of written comments emerging from the data implies a relatively narrow conception of their usefulness on the part of the teachers. It remained to consider to what extent the interviews would support this implication.

Research Questions Operationalised

Given the intention to seek the teachers' images of their use of comments, it was decided that the interview offered the most appropriate means of obtaining the necessary data. The problem now was: how to plan the interviews to obtain answers to the research questions?

Fundamentally, the purpose of the interviews was to help identify the teachers' images of the comment. It would have been adverse to this purpose to structure the interviews so tightly as to inhibit the free expression of their views on the subject; for example, by advance identification of assumed relevant issues, which would restrict the range of reply. What was wanted was more that the teachers should be in a position to select and speak upon what they considered relevant. On the other hand a too-loosely structured interview situation might not supply the teacher with the framework needed if an answer to the research question was to be elicited.

In response to these considerations, it was decided to focus the interviews on a selection of the comments made by the teaching being interviewed, and in relation to each comment ask the same three core questions. It was believed this would help channel the teacher's thinking around the appropriate question, but would not do so to the extent of inhibiting their selection of what was relevant in reply. Additionally, it was intended to encourage the teachers to talk freely by probing for elaboration and clarification of their responses.

Within the terms of the interview procedure, the research questions are operationally defined as follows:

- (1) Why did you choose to make a comment here?

(2) Why was this an appropriate comment to make?

(3) How do you imagine the pupil will respond to the comment?

Data Collection

The written comments were coded and statistically compiled before the interviews were arranged. This meant that the interviews took place a number of weeks after the data on comments had been received. One of the teachers who submitted written comments was not available for interview. Hence, the interviews feature only five of the original six teachers; that is, teachers 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6.

The selection of comments to figure in the interviews is dictated by the ways in which comments most obviously differ from each other. The data from some teachers do not contain an example of every type selected. Thus, the selection for each teacher includes as far as possible: an example of a non-verbal comment, a Specific Description comment, a General comment, and so on.

The five teachers between them give their views on 34 comments, their replies being in response to the same three questions, as identified earlier, asked of every comment. It was not always possible to elicit a reply to each question, though this happened on very few occasions.

Characteristics of Interview Data

Since the interview data is slight it does not allow the same statistical analysis as the written comments. Nevertheless, each aspect of the teachers' replies which is concerned in any sense with comment-writing has been categorized as it relates to each pupil's work and each teacher in the interview situation. In that the

statistical information is drawn from small totals within each category, and in order to avoid implying more inferential weight to the data than actual numbers allow, numbers rather than percentages are used in the following analysis.

Why did you choose to make a comment here?

In reply to this question, on 34 occasions teacher explains the decision to make a comment by reference to a weakness or strength in the pupil's work. Though all teachers, at some point, identify also a feature of the particular pupil which influenced the comment, only one teacher, teacher 2, does so in relation to most of the comments in his interview. In all, comment-shaping pupil characteristics are noted in association with 15 comments: 5 refer to the good effort of the pupil, and 1 to the poor effort; 5 relate to the teacher's perception of the pupil's academic ability (1 positively, 4 negatively); 1 refers to the pupil's cognitive immaturity; 3 relate to the teacher's perception of the pupil's future prospects, either academic (2) or career (1); and 1 relates to a perceived personality characteristic - timidity.

The data appear to support the inference drawn from written comments that the main purpose of comments is to indicate the weaknesses and strengths of a pupil's performance; but also, the initial preoccupation of the teachers with these weaknesses and strengths suggests that their indication is the teachers' main concern. To put the point another way, it would seem from the evidence that the decision to make a comment is dictated by the qualities of the work, rather than the characteristics of the pupils whose work is being assessed.

Of the 22 structurally adequate comments, 8 encode also the teacher's assertion that the pupil had a source of information, other than that contained in the comment, to enable him to interpret its message accurately; that is 5 teachers refer to a previous class lesson about the weakness or strength of the comment, and 3 teachers refer to oral explanations of the comment itself. From the remaining 14 of the 22, 5 correspond in incidence with the teacher's belief that the pupil is academically able. It should be noted that information about the pupil's academic ability was not particularly sought, though on several occasions the interviewer did ask the question as a natural follow-up of the teachers' replies. Nevertheless, most of the teachers' references to academic ability are volunteered.

Of the 8 comments, the structural adequacy of which is in doubt, 2 correspond in incidence with the teacher's assertion of the pupil's low academic ability.

Although teachers doubt the structural adequacy of 8 comments to convey the intended message, insofar as the believed adequacy of a further 8 is dependent on an additional source of information, altogether there are 16 intimations that the comment on its own is an inadequate purveyor of information.

In addition, all of the teachers at some point of the interview, and with reference to the comments generally, volunteer their opinions that they are an unsatisfactory instrument of teaching. In total, 10 different reasons are offered, an average of 2 per teacher. The ten reasons are as under:

- (1) pupil laziness/lack of interest;

- (2) the comment is too protracted as a form of communication;
- (3) too time-consuming to write;
- (4) too limited in the information provided;
- (5) pupil failure to respond to the teaching;
- (6) inadequate teaching strategy;
- (7) space for writing comments limited;
- (8) depressing effect of too many;
- (9) not enough impact;
- (10) too many comments overloads the pupil.

Though one teacher refers to pupil laziness as explanation of the comment's limitations, he is nevertheless making the point that inability to compete against pupil characteristics is a deficiency of the teaching strategy.

With reference to the implications of written comments, the interviews suggest a possible explanation of why they are mainly used in relation to the most basic kinds of learning. Since the basic kinds of learning make the simplest demands on the learner, the information offered to the learner may be of the simplest kind. Hence, in that Grammar commenting allows the relay of information in its simplest form, and in that comments are regarded as of limited use, then the chances are that Grammar, or its equivalent in relation to simplicity of demand upon the learner, will figure highly in comment-writing. It would appear that the emphasis on Grammar is not so much related to a concern with Grammar, as to the fact that Grammar best meets the conditions of comment-writing in accordance with the teachers' beliefs about what is viable.

Within responses to the question on the appropriateness of a comment, teachers express opinions on the functions of the comments. Thus, there are 26 intimations that the comment is a means of teaching the pupil how to perform correctly in the future, 1 of which is also intended to provide incentive; there are 3 intimations that the comment is indicating a weakness, and 5 intimations that the comment is providing incentive. Additional functions suggested are: it provides the pupil with the teacher's standard (1); it gives the pupil proof of the teacher's scrutiny of his work (2); and it provides feedback for the teacher (1). Two teachers also intimate that comment-writing becomes automatic after a time; that, irrespective of a pupil's assumed response, the work is still assessed in accordance with the teacher's usual practice.

The 6 comments indicated as providing incentive are General in referent with Positive evaluation. In relation to these comments, 4 of the pupil recipients are perceived as possessing a favourable affective characteristic, usually the good effort of the pupil; and 1 pupil recipient is perceived as academically able.

The data here corroborate the inference drawn from the written comments that the intention behind their use is to offer the pupils help in their future work; further, most comments concentrate on help in the form of direct instruction.

The total sample of General/Positive comments in the interviews is too slight to allow valid implications. Nevertheless, they do offer support for the inference that General written comments provide incentive. No mention is made in the interviews of the possible

incentive of Negative comments, though this may be implicit in one teacher's reference to a comment as indication to the pupil of the teacher's scrutiny of his work.

The relationship between the teacher's good opinion of a pupil's response to the teaching situation, and the offer of incentive, would seem to suggest that incentive is being offered to pupils who are already academically motivated. Nothing that was said in the interviews suggests that teachers see a need to provide through their comments an incentive for those pupils who are less academically motivated or successful. Nor indeed was there any indication of perceptions by teachers that the Negative evaluations generally implicit in their instructional comments might have a disheartening effect on pupils. Thus, these features of teachers' commenting practices, anomalous to the researcher, are not illuminated by the interview study.

How do you imagine the pupil will respond to the comment?

From the replies, teachers perceived 18 pupils as responding in some way positively to the comment, and 10 as responding in some way negatively. On 4 occasions, the reply referred in a generalised way to pupil responses, and on 2 occasions there was no reply.

Of relevance to these data is the information on the pupils' academic ability. Among references to academic ability, 9 pupils are regarded as academically able, 4 academically average, and 12 academically poor.

8 of the 9 perceived academically able pupils correspond in incidence with the teacher's belief that the pupil will respond in some way positively to the comment. In relation to the remaining pupil, the teacher is explicit about the inadequacy of the comment to convey its intended message.

10 of the 12 perceived academically poor pupils correspond in incidence with the teacher's belief that the pupil will respond negatively, or with the teacher's uncertainty about the pupil's response. Of the two remaining, one has correspondence with a perceived positive pupil response, and with one the response is not intimated.

All 4 perceived academically average pupils correspond in incidence with a positive response.

Thus, there is a very high correlation between pupils' perceived academic abilities and the responsiveness which teachers expected them to show to comments. Of course, a correspondence in incidence between a teacher's perception of a pupil's academic ability and his perception of a pupil's ability to respond positively to a teaching strategy should be no surprise; rather it is to be expected that to the teacher evidence of academic ability implies ability to respond to his teaching.

On the other hand if the correlation between what pupils gain from a teaching strategy and the ability attributed to them is so high, does this not raise questions about the efficacy of the teaching strategy?

Does it not, in fact, suggest that the chances are it is having little or no effect on the performances of the pupils? Perhaps it would be more accurate to suggest that the differential efficacy of the teaching strategy should raise doubts in the minds of the teachers, since it is their perceptions which supply the data. And that teachers entertain such doubts has already been concluded from the data examined earlier.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it remains to summarise the contributions of the interviews to what has been inferred from the data on written comments.

The inference that specific referent comments are indicators of weaknesses or strengths of the pupils' work is supported from the teachers' accounts of their images of comment-writing; as also the inference that such indications are a means of helping the pupil to perform better in future. With reference to General comments there is support too for a conceptualisation of these comments as providing pupils with incentive.

When teachers refer to their decisions to make comments, the data suggest that indication of the strengths or weaknesses of the pupils' work is the commentor's main pre-occupation; that is, he is not particularly concerned with which pupil's work is being commented on, and of the appropriateness of the comment as feedback to this particular pupil. To put the point another way, it would appear that, generally speaking, irrespective of which pupil is receiving the comment, it is the qualities of the work which dictate the choice

of comment.

In the various references to the limitations of comments, the interview data suggest an explanation of why comments are used primarily in relation to the most basic kinds of learning: given the perceived limitations of comment-writing, if comments are to be used with confidence, it would seem reasonable to restrict their use to those learning situations which make least demands upon the learner; for instance, as reminders of the assumed familiar "rules" of written English.

But perhaps the teachers' accounts are of most interest where they offer new perspectives on the use of comments. For instance, there is the intimation that teachers have little confidence in comments as a teaching strategy, conveyed in part in the references to the structural inadequacy of a number of the comments; in part in the indications that the pupil had a source of information other than the comment to enable him to interpret its message; and in part in their identification of the various ways in which comments are of limited usefulness.

In addition, there is the implication in relation to General comments of some association between the provision of Positive incentive and the perceived high ability level of the pupil, there being no complementary intimation of the possible incentive of Negative General comments, or of the possible disheartening effect of the dominance of Negative evaluations in relation to specific referent comments.

Though the empirical investigation is instructive in its identification of comment characteristics of relevance to a feedback conceptualisation of the comment, the contribution of the study lies as much in the questions it raised on the role of feedback generally in English teaching.

PART II

COMMENTS IN THE CLASSROOM CONTEXT

The foregoing analysis of written comments suggested the appropriateness of further data collection. Thus, from the interviews it appeared that written comments were a part only of the total feedback to pupils on their written work; and that, moreover, oral comments might play a more extensive part in English teaching than had been anticipated.

In consequence, in order to gain a more comprehensive image of the value of the comment in teaching, it was decided to investigate the comment within its classroom context.

In particular, three foci for classroom observation were identified:

(1) One emerged from the suggestion that discussions about work performance in a whole class context were a regular feature of the teaching unit concerned with written work, and the subsequent practice of commenting; and that, in consequence, written comments were to be understood in conjunction with these more explicit discussions illuminating the characteristics of competent written work.

This suggested the need to examine the classroom context as a means of identifying in what way classroom oral activities might contribute to the meaning of the comment; and hence to investigate the precise nature of the relationship.

(2) A further suggestion was that written comments were frequently enlarged upon and elucidated by the teacher as he returned the work to each pupil.

In this respect, it seemed important to consider the nature and extent of the practice of elucidation.

(3) The third suggestion, emerging from the teachers' reservations about the usefulness of written comments as a teaching technique, was that written comments did not figure largely in teaching.

If this was so - and it required first to be investigated - it invited speculation on the nature of the feedback which pupils did receive on their work on an individual basis, and how it compared with written comments.

In the light of these considerations, the research was extended in part to continue the investigation relating to the written comment, but more particularly to widen the research interest by examining the role of the oral comment in English teaching. Hence, the investigation was concerned with all teacher commenting on all pupil set tasks, where both set tasks and comments might be in either oral or written form.

Research Questions

(1) If the oral activities of classroom teaching were to be investigated concerning the extent to which they might contribute to the interpretation of written comments, a first task was to identify similarities between the subject matter of oral teaching and the subject matter of written comments. In other words:

What aspects of the subject area, English, are being taught?

Since it is a regular practice of English teaching in Scottish schools to focus lessons on the meaning of a particular text, and hence to refer to a number of teaching concepts within any one lesson, the ability to interpret a dependent written comment might be influenced by what degree of emphasis was given to whatever concepts emerged. Emphasis might be a consequence of the lesson's structure, or of the

explicitness with which it was relayed:

Does the lesson centre on the teaching of a concept, or concepts, or are they allowed to emerge through analysis of a text?

Are lesson concepts made explicit?

Having identified similarities of subject matter, subsequent investigation would involve comparison between what was being said about each subject, and how it was being said. In turn, this would allow assessment of the extent of the connection between oral teaching and written comments:

How do oral teaching and written comments compare with regard to semantic content?

How do they compare with regard to the form in which they are presented?

A common feature of English teaching is the setting of a certain amount of written work, which does not have specific reference to the subject matter of a preceding oral lesson. In these general practice sessions in particular, but also in relation to any piece of written work, interpretation of the comment might be dependent upon the instructions which preceded the written work; in other words, what kind of definition was offered of the qualities expected in performance of the set task. This again would involve consideration of the form, explicitness and content of the communication: for example,

Is the set task exemplified through the offer of a model of the desired behaviour?

Is the pupil given specific directions on how to proceed?

Are the criteria of attainment made explicit?

(2) To examine the relationship between written comments and their elucidation on return of the pupil's work would also mean identification and comparison of language characteristics; that is, form, explicitness and semantic content. But in addition, the extent to which elucidation might assist comment interpretation would depend on how widespread it was both in relation to its content, and its intended audience:

How does the range of comment interpretation compare with the range of written comments?

Does elucidation involve a whole class audience, or is it directed to pupils on an individual basis?

Further, the contribution of elucidation might depend on how systematized the practice is, for instance, does the teacher have a system to cue the need for oral explanation, such as referring briefly to each pupil's written work before returning it, or does oral explanation appear to rely on the teacher's powers of recall?

What evidence is there of systematization of oral interpretation?

Finally, elucidation of the written comment might be assisted by explicitly relating the oral comment to its written form:

Is the relationship between the oral and the written comment made explicit?

(3) The intention to widen the research to include all forms of teacher comments was a product of the implication that written comments did not figure largely in teaching. Before moving on to the potentially larger investigation of oral comments, it was necessary to consider the extent of written commenting. Hence, the question:

What is the frequency of teacher written commenting on pupils' written work?

It remained now to investigate oral comments. As with written comments, this meant identification of their salient properties. Accordingly, since the appropriate process of investigation had already been undertaken with written comments, it was proposed, at least initially, to examine the oral comment from the same perspective. Thus, the relevant questions at this stage of the research were:

1. To what aspect of the teaching of English does the comment refer?
2. What is the comment saying about its referent?
 - 2.1 What information is available of direct application to the cognitive task?
 - 2.11 What is the rating?
 - 2.12 What descriptive information do comments contain about the pupil's performance in addition to the rating?
 - 2.13 Do comments contain elements characteristic of techniques of teaching?
 - 2.2 What information is available of possible influence on the pupil's affective response?
 - 2.21 To what extent is feedback standardised?
 - 2.22 To what extent is feedback personalised?
3. Are there features of the comment's form of presentation which may affect the comment's value as a piece of communication?
 - 3.1 How explicit is the comment?

It was considered that the descriptive information afforded by investigation of oral comments might support or further inform the inferences from the data on written comments in relation to their perceived limitations. For instance, it would be enlightening to know:

Are some areas of English teaching reserved for face-to-face commenting?

Are some mainly in written form?

Are some kinds of explanation more evident in one form of commenting than another?

Data Collection

There being no way of anticipating precisely what classroom activities might be of relevance to the investigation of either the relationship between the classroom and written comments, or oral commenting, it seemed advisable to record all teacher/pupil interaction over a wide enough group of lessons with the same pupils to be able to identify the pattern and status of different kinds of comments within English teaching. Ideally, this meant tape-recording of English lessons with the same class group for a period of three to four weeks.

However, since interpretation of teaching activities might involve non-verbal features of interaction, or of the context, the presence of an observer to note and record such details was a further requisite.

Thus, verbal interaction might refer to a book, worksheet, picture, or the pupil's work without making the reference explicit. In these instances a copy of the particular material might be necessary for

subsequent interpretation. Where clarification of a written comment was involved, since the need was to compare oral interpretation with its written counterpart, it would be necessary to note which pupil was being addressed in order to identify later which pupil's work was the referent of the talk.

Assessment of the contribution of lesson activities might call for recognition of the teacher's audience: was it one pupil, a group of pupils, or the whole class? In the same interest, insofar as the investigation might entail comparison of what pupils were present with what lessons were taught, record must be made too of both pupil absentees, and the date of each lesson's occurrence.

With regard to the organisation of the return of written work in particular, but also of likely relevance to the overall consideration of the comment's function and value in teaching, identification of the initiator of the teacher/pupil interaction was necessary.

In summary, data collection involved:

tape-recording of verbal content of a group of lessons

note of any materials used

copy of pupils' written work

who initiated the interaction

who was being addressed

which pupil was speaking

which pupils were absent

lesson date

any other aspects of content of possible relevance, such as

the actions of the teacher, or the pupil groupings,

whether the pupils volunteered to reply, or were selected by the teacher.

Invitation to Participants

As a preliminary to collection of the research data, six English teachers were invited to cooperate in the research.

It was explained that the focus of the investigation was teachers' written and oral comments on pupils' work in an English teaching context, and that in this interest it was believed necessary to record and observe every English lesson with the same class group over a set period. A third-year class group was suggested, it being stressed that related earlier research on the written comment had studied the teaching of this year-group.

Subsequently, it was agreed that the collection of data would involve recording and observation of each teacher's third-year class over a period of two weeks. The teachers concerned were asked to make no amendment to their normal teaching programme or practice during the research visit, since one part of the investigation was to consider the frequency of different types of commenting in relation to pupils' work performances; for instance, it would distort findings if teachers commented more than was their normal practice.

The participating teachers formed three groups of two, each group teaching in a different large Comprehensive school. Their teaching experience ranged from two years to 15 years.

The class groups, who participated, represented the whole ability range in the third year with the exception of remedial pupils.

Report of Written Comment Investigation

The decision to extend the research was based partly on the belief that the study of the characteristics of classroom teaching could contribute to a more insightful analysis of the value of the written comment in teaching.

As it happened, during the time spent in schools, written work on which the teacher had commented was in evidence on only two occasions. With regard to one of these occasions, the work had been set before the onset of the data-collecting process. Accordingly, it was not possible to identify any relationship between the written work and classroom teaching. Moreover, return of the work involved the simple distribution of the work to its owners without oral comment from the teacher; nor did the pupils seek exchange with the teacher in relation to the work returned.

On the other occasion, the teacher both set the work and returned it in the presence of the observer. Setting the work involved asking the pupils to write ten sentences, each to contain a word relating to the theme of that day's lesson, and considered in the lesson as to its precise meaning.

On returning the work, the pupils were asked to read the teacher's comments carefully. This was followed by the teacher speaking to each pupil individually about their particular strengths or weaknesses.

These individual sessions were found to be characterised in the following ways: the teacher referred to each pupil's work before commenting on it individually; he selected only the pupil's major weaknesses and strengths and spoke on these in some detail; weaknesses occasioned an

explicit description of what was needed if it was to be improved, and how such a weakness affected the reader's response to the work, often with exemplification; strengths were praised, the contribution of the strength to the work being elucidated; punctuation and spelling weaknesses received the same kind of elaborated comment as weaknesses of the work's 'idea' content; strengths were commented upon as often as weaknesses, though weaknesses tended to attract more teacher talk on an individual basis.

Though it would be inappropriate to make any kind of generalisation from this one example of oral elucidation of written comments, it is worthy of note that the findings differed in several respects from the findings on written comments. Differences were: that comments concentrated on the pupil's major strengths or weaknesses; that strengths as well as weaknesses received elaboration of their characteristics and how these contributed to the work; that weaknesses were much less dominant in their share of the total comments than in written commenting; and that 'rule-governed' aspects of written English received as elaborated an explanation of the weaknesses as did any other weakness receiving comment.

To return to the subject of the extent of written commenting in general, it should be noted that the teachers volunteered explanations about why written homework was not being set; for instance, in one case it was because the examinations of another year group were currently being assessed, and so were annexing the teacher's time outside of school hours. In another instance, it was because the pupils had just finished their term examination, and were having a deserved rest from homework.

Conclusion

In summary, and within the framework of the research questions, consideration of the relationship between classroom discussion on competent written work and the written comments themselves was not possible, there being no instance of the former teaching activity within the period of observation. The issue of the practice of elucidation of comments foundered too from inadequate research data, though this teaching activity was observed on one occasion. Finally, in reply to the question on the extent of written commenting, the evidence suggests, the teachers' explanations of its absence notwithstanding, that written commenting is a minor part only of English teaching, at least for these teachers.

Research Questions Reappraised

If the data on written comments might be held to have defied expectations, the data on oral comments emerged as even more complexing. It is to the issue of oral comments, therefore, that the rest of this section of the thesis is devoted.

Thus, in investigation of the characteristics of oral comments, the period of classroom observation led to a fundamental re-appraisal of the research questions to be investigated, and indeed of the assumptions underlying the project as a whole.

It happened like this: to date, the study had taken its direction from a feedback concept of the comment. From this perspective certain general characteristics of the comment were predicted; for instance, it was predicted that the comment would contain information which could be helpful to the pupil in his learning task. It would follow, then, that an absence of the predicted characteristics would be likely to call in question the validity of the underlying conceptual framework.

Accordingly, during the stage of classroom observation, doubts began to emerge about the adequacy of a Feedback Model in relation to oral commenting. This was particularly so within the predominant form of teacher/pupil interaction, where one teacher interacts with a whole class group. Thus, in this context, and even without the application of a systematic coding of teacher behaviour, several features of the observed behaviour were particularly striking as potentially un-

characteristic of the comment as feedback. For example, one was the brevity of the teacher's comment upon the pupil's performance, such as a simple indication that the performance was considered inadequate. If this was feedback, then it was feedback of a very limited nature, and being so, it stood little chance of being useful to the pupil as a learner.

Again, there was the dominance of the pupil share of the interaction by a relatively small number of pupils, the implications here being that only a small number of pupils were receiving feedback on their performance. Hence, to entertain interpretation of these comments as feedback would have meant also entertaining a highly implausible view of the teachers' concerns and standards.

Search for an Alternative Model

Gradually such considerations led to a serious questioning of the Feedback model, and ultimately to the search for an alternative approach towards investigation of oral comments. In effect, if the appropriateness of the Feedback model could not be assumed, how to conceptualise comments was now the central question.

There being no clear alternative explanation suggested by either theories of teaching or of social behaviour in general, the task implied an attempt at constructing an explanation of the comment on the basis of the apparent logic of the teachers' behaviour.

However, adoption of this approach involved a number of preliminary considerations. First, since comments figured as part of a pattern of teaching, any conceptualisation of the comment had to take account of the teaching pattern in which it was embedded. Thus conceptualisation

of the comment meant in fact conceptualisation of the teaching pattern containing the comment.

Again, in order to construct a conceptual model, it would not be enough simply to apply logic to the behaviour under study, since human behaviour cannot be assumed to be governed in its entirety by logic; rather, individuals have frequent recourse to cultural norms in selecting the behaviour appropriate to particular circumstances. Hence, in addition to the use of logic, there was needed too some intuitive understanding of the salient features of the phenomenon to be explained. In the present instance, this meant some shared cultural understanding of what each act of the teaching pattern would be likely to mean from the perspective of a teacher.

Further, the nature and status of the model to be developed had to be made clear. In relation to the former this entailed describing how the model was to be constructed, and the justification of such a construction in terms of its conceptual adequacy as an explanation of human behaviour; in relation to the latter, it meant explaining the contribution of the model to the research.

Finally, subsequent to formulation of the model, some disciplined means had to be identified whereby the explanatory strength of the model might be tested. In this respect, it was considered desirable if the tests could include assessment of the model's comparative explanatory power over other models.

These concerns, then, provide the logic for the remainder of this chapter.

The Allocation of Teaching Time to Different Teaching Approaches

The need for an alternative explanation of the comment became apparent during the period of classroom observation, where the preponderance of one kind of teaching activity raised doubts about the plausibility of a Feedback concept. Since it was pertinent to the investigation to consider not only the conceptualisation of comments but also how extensively they figured in English teaching, it would seem appropriate at this point both to justify the claim that one kind of teaching activity was dominant, and in the process identify the proportion of teaching time given over to the different activities in which the comment figured.

Two forms of teaching were identified in which the teachers offered oral comments to the pupils. These were whole-class instruction where the teacher addresses all class members simultaneously; and individualised instruction where teacher and pupils interact on a one-to-one basis. With very few exceptions, the one-to-one sessions referred to pupil written work currently underway.

The following Table sets forth the ratios of each teacher's whole class teaching to individualised teaching to all other teaching activities, where whole-class and individualised teaching are as defined above.

To quantify the time spent on different activities, it was decided to base the unit of measurement on the lesson period since this represented a natural division of the teachers' time. However, insofar as one lesson period was often used for two or more activities, the lesson period itself would be too gross a measure. Hence, the unit chosen

was one quarter of a lesson period, there being no instance of more than four activities featuring in any one lesson period. It will be recognised that such a unit represents an approximation only in terms of the actual time spent on activities.

All of the teachers taught for six lesson periods per week with each class. Over two weeks, this meant that the total teaching units for each teacher were forty-eight. These were distributed as under:

TABLE 45 Allocation of Teaching Time

Teachers	No. of units to Whole class Teaching	No. of units to Individualised Teaching	No. of units to All other Teaching
1	15	21	12
2	36	6	6
3	39	5	4
4	37	9	2
5	12	4	32
6	10	28	10

The Whole-Class Teaching Pattern

In developing a conception of what was happening in whole-class teaching, it was necessary to start not from detailed systematic observation of identified aspects of teaching activities, but rather by seeking to identify those features of the teaching activity which could be hypothesized to be endemic to it, and which together defined the distinctive observable pattern thought to be characteristic of the teaching. Such characteristics of whole-class teaching were gleaned not only from the

author's experience of observation during the collection of research data, but also from the author's professional training and experience; for example, from observation as a student teacher; from videotaped lessons of English practitioners; from admission to other classrooms as a professional colleague; and from staffroom discussion of lessons with fellow teachers. Since the general characteristics thus identified were only hypothesized as endemic to whole-class teaching, it would be necessary subsequently to collect systematic evidence to test the hypothesis. The characteristics were as follows:

- (1) Teaching behaviour is characterised by the asking of a question, and the making of a comment upon a pupil's reply;
- (2) Pupils volunteer to reply;
- (3) The pupil responding is usually selected by the teacher from the volunteers;
- (4) Pupils who do not volunteer are very seldom selected;
- (5) Some pupils answer a lot of questions, and some pupils answer very seldom, or not at all;
- (6) Most teacher questions refer to an 'unseen' text.

Constructing an explanation of the foregoing behaviours meant considering the possible reasons for the selection of each action individually as behaviour appropriate to the attainment of a teaching goal; then assessing which of these reasons was most rational when considered in conjunction with the remaining actions. However, before doing so, the exact conditions under which the process of construction operated must be specified and justified.

The Nature and Status of the Model

The basic principle of the model was adapted from an idea of

Alfred Schutz (Schutz 1963). As a sociologist concerned with the methodological problems of his science, Schutz proposed the concept of a homunculus as a device appropriate to the study of human behaviour. In Schutz's definition, the homunculus is a mythical being characterised only by the typical behaviour of a typical actor in the particular role of social behaviour which is the focus of the scientist's immediate academic interest. To this mythical being is assigned a typical motive for acting as it does, the typical motive being limited to what is necessary to explain the observed behaviour and only the observed behaviour.

From the perspective of Schutz, the function of the homunculus within the social sciences is to provide an "ideal" account of behaviour, which is validated against the real actors' accounts of what they are doing. In this way, the model offers a means of studying human behaviour which incorporates the meaning such behaviour has for the actors involved; while by confining his homunculus to the behaviour identified as typical, and by assuming the typical behaviour is directed only towards the attributed purpose, the scientist sets the conditions which allow the application of a verifiable rationality.

The Schutz model allows the study of human behaviour in a way which incorporates the meaning such behaviour has for the actors involved. In elucidating the contribution of the Schutz model to the current research, it should be noted that since the "ideal" account of the teachers' behaviour was fully articulated some months after observation of the actions to which it relates, there was no possibility of validating the account against the teachers' accounts of their own actions. Hence, it must be emphasized that the purpose of the model

developed here differs from that proposed by Schutz. In particular no claim is being made of a connection between the explanation of the model and the actual purposes of the teachers whose behaviour furnishes the material for the model's construction; in other words, the model was neither based on, nor tested against the teachers' conceptualisations of their own behaviour; instead it was based on and tested against the behaviour of the teachers, and moreover behaviour as described in the author's preconceived terms. Thus, the model should be regarded as assigning intention to the observed behaviour such that it is understandable as rational action within the social role of teaching, the function of the model being no more nor less than to exhibit a mythical person whose intentions and rational plans would lead to patterns of behaviour of the kind manifested by the teachers observed.

Nevertheless, while not working within the same logic as the Schutz homunculus, the feasibility of abstracting his concept of a mythical being in order to construct an "ideal" account of the teachers' behaviour offered a means of achieving one kind of understanding of the observed behaviour. Differences notwithstanding, therefore, the models have in common both that the behaviour of the homunculus corresponds to that of observed actors in certain specified aspects; and, more important, that the homunculus's behaviour is rationally directed towards achievement of certain specified purposes.

Since the concept of rationality of behaviour is crucial to both models, and since it is therefore necessary to specify clearly what this concept means, it seemed appropriate to follow Schutz's explanation.

Schutz begins by delineating in what way his definition of 'acting rationally' differs from the more familiar concepts of 'acting sensibly' and 'acting reasonably' (Schutz 1963, p.326-327).

Ordinary language does not sharply distinguish among a sensible, a reasonable, and a rational way of conduct ... We may say that a man acted sensibly if the motive and the course of his action is understandable to us, his partners or observers. This will be the case if his action is in accordance with a socially approved set of rules and recipes for coming to terms with typical problems by applying typical means for achieving typical ends. If I, if We, if 'Anybody who is one of us' found himself in typically similar circumstances he would act in a similar way. Sensible behaviour, however, does not presuppose that the actor is guided by insight into his motives and the means-end context. A strong emotional reaction against an offender might be sensible and refraining from it foolish. If an action seems to be sensible to the observer, and is, in addition, supposed to spring from a judicious choice among different courses of action, we may call it reasonable even if such action follows traditional or habitual patterns just taken for granted. Rational action, however, presupposes that the actor has clear and distinct insight into the ends, the means, and the secondary results which 'involves rational consideration of alternative means to the end, of the relations of the end to other prospective results of employment of any given means and, finally, of the relative importance of different possible ends'.

From the above definition, it may be recognised that rationality of action demands both that the actor shall have clear insight into the means-end relationship of his proposed action, and clear insight into the consequences of his actions in all their manifestations; that is, how the actions may affect other, possibly future plans of the actor.

Thus, if the actions of the homunculus are to be strictly rational they must take place under conditions which allow such clarity of insight. In effect, this means that all features of the context and all conditions of the homunculus's actions which have any

influence whatsoever on its behaviour must be clearly identified, including identification of the determined end of the context affected by the action. Only in this way is the homunculus in a position to act as if with precise knowledge of the exact relationship between its actions and the desired end, and with precise knowledge of the consequences of its actions.

The strict control of conditions necessary for construction of a rationally directed homunculus may be better elucidated in considering in what way rationality of action as defined by Schutz applies to real-life behaviour. Accordingly, though rationality of action presupposes the conditions outlined above, the sheer unpredictability of the real-life world does not admit the application of such strict rationality. More expansively, the position is this:

The condition that the actor shall have clear insight into the means-end relationship of his proposed action is unattainable in real life because the actor cannot know with certainty if the means chosen will achieve the desired end. This is so because the situation of the proposed action will not be exactly the same as the situation(s) of his experience which have allowed him the knowledge that the means chosen will be the most likely to achieve the desired end. The fact is that no two situations are ever exactly alike in every detail, even if the difference is only that the actor himself must be older on one occasion than on another, and hence must respond to the latter situation from a more experienced viewpoint. Consequently, since the difference in situation may affect the outcome of the proposed actions, the success of the means-end relationship cannot be predicted with certainty; and without such a guarantee of success rational decision-making is not

possible.

The second condition - that the actor shall have clear insight into the secondary consequences of his action - is equally unsupportable in real-life by virtue of the fact that human behaviour does not occur in a vacuum. Not only is it interlinked with the past and future purposes of the actor, it is also interlinked with the purposes of other actors. This means that future plans may be affected by present actions.

Hence, in order to plan rationally, present action must take account of its effect on future plans. But since the actor can neither know how the actions of others might affect his future, nor how unforeseen events of his own biography might do so, he cannot know with any certainty what his future plans will be. Consequently, he cannot devise present plans with clear insight into their influence on future plans.

There remains, then, to identify in what sense the concept of rationality may be applied to human behaviour. Accordingly, it is held that when devising a plan for future action, the actor proceeds on the basis of his knowledge at hand at that particular time. This knowledge is drawn from experience and includes the actor's identification of what aspects of reality are relevant to the purpose of his actions, and which must, therefore, be taken into account when constructing a plan. However, since only the actor is in a position to know the ultimate purpose of his plan, then only the actor is in a position to recognise what is relevant to his purpose. Moreover, insofar as the actor's perspective of what is relevant is restricted by the human condition, one facet of which is the difference among individuals of degree of knowledge, understanding or insight, then what is relevant to the actor is not just determined by the uniqueness of his view of the relationship

between reality and his intended purpose, but also by his capacity to identify relevance within his image of reality. Hence, rationality of action is constructed within the framework of relevance as defined by each actor, and for this reason can at best be rational only to the degree attainable within the set framework, and as far as the unpredictability of real-life conditions will allow.

The homunculus, however, is not bound by the limitations of the real world, since its actions take place under precisely controlled conditions not possible in real life, there being not only a determined setting for these behaviours, but also a determined end. Because of this, as an explanation of human behaviour, the homunculus is able to 'act rationally' freed from the unpredictability of events which hampers the human condition.

Construction of the Homunculus

The construction of a rational model of the teachers' observed behaviour required first the identification of a purpose towards which the behaviour was assumed to be directed, together with any contextual conditions which were assumed to prevail, and which must be considered in determining the rationality of the action.

On the issue of the former, it seemed appropriate to begin by investigating the plausibility of homunculi constructed within the framework of traditional conceptualizations of the possible task requirements of teaching while interacting with the learner.

Thus, earlier doubts notwithstanding, one such concept was the Feedback model which had yet to be rejected as a possible rational explanation of the observed behaviour. This being so, it was proposed

to attempt the construction of a homunculus whose purpose was to supply pupils with information about their performances of direct relevance to improvement of these performances.

From the literature on English teaching, two further possible concepts of accepted pedagogic strategies emerged. One of these was the need of the teacher to consider the effect of his teaching on the pupils' motivation. As instance, from the recommendations for English teaching (C.C.E. 1967, p.14), the basic principles for the early stages are detailed thus:

1. The primary aim of the work should be to promote the skills involved in communication.
2. An important secondary aim, related to the first, should be development of the pupils' sensibilities through the reading of literature.
3. It is essential to these aims that pupils should talk, read and write as much as possible.
4. Since pupils must want to read and write, teachers should seek means to induce them to do so.
5. Consequently, all the work should be conducive to both pleasure and the sense of satisfaction that arises from achievement.

Hence, the recognised teacher purpose of catering for the need for pupil incentive suggested a further conceptual framework for building a homunculus.

In the literature too was reference to the potential teacher purpose of involving the learners in a discussion approach to literary study.

What the authors considered this to involve was delineated as follows (C.C.E. 1971, p.12):

... the close reading lesson in which teacher and pupils study a piece of writing together is the only method at our disposal ... The lesson must

proceed to genuine discussion - questioning by pupils, the free expression of opinion, the active involvement of everyone in the process of subjecting the material to close scrutiny - and close reading skills can be developed only if such lessons are arranged with some frequency.

From the description, there was sufficient similarity between what was recommended above and the behaviour observed as typical to warrant the attempt to construct a homunculus whose purpose was engagement of the pupils in a discussion-type lesson.

With regard to any contextual conditions assumed to prevail, in relation to all attempts at constructing a rational model of whole-class teaching, the assumption was that the teacher was concerned with teaching all pupils in the class.

It should be noted too that all the homunculus models were developed on the premise that the salient characteristics of whole-class teaching identified earlier were indeed typical of whole-class teaching. This premise would be tested later against the collected classroom data.

A Feedback Homunculus

From this perspective the teacher's purpose in interacting with the pupils is to offer them feedback on their learning performance. The definition of feedback in this context is that it will offer the pupil information about his performance of help in improving his performance. A rational construction of the observed behaviour as directed towards this purpose involved considering to what extent each teacher/pupil act identified as typical might be regarded as a rational means of attaining such a purpose. The process is as follows:

The asking of a question in relation to a text is consistent with a feedback purpose insofar as it identifies for the pupil the particular area of English study which the teacher wishes to assess. From this assessment, the teacher determines the kind of feedback which will be of most help to the learner in improving his performance.

The making of a comment upon a pupil's reply. The comment is the teacher's offer of feedback.

Most responders are volunteers. That most responders are volunteers means that feedback is largely given to those pupils who volunteer; which implies some association between those whose learning the teacher wishes to assess and volunteer pupils. However, the assumption that those who volunteer are those most in need of feedback would depend not only on the belief that pupils are primarily motivated by the desire to learn from the teacher but also on the belief that the majority of pupils are capable of self-assessment, that the teacher recognises this competence, and that subsequently the activity of volunteering to respond is in order to receive feedback. Consequently, the proportion of volunteer respondents among pupils casts doubt on the plausibility of the feedback model.

Some pupils answer very seldom, or not at all. The implication here is that all pupils do not receive feedback on their learning performance. Given that the teacher is concerned with the learning of all class members, this would imply an assumption on the part of the teacher that all pupils who do not answer do not require feedback, which is again an implausible assumption.

Consequently, since it was apparent that the observed teacher behaviour

could not be plausibly interpreted in terms of a feedback purpose as concerned with all class members, the attempt to construct the model was abandoned at this point.

A Provision-of-Incentive Homunculus

Here the teacher's purpose is to promote and maintain a sufficient level of pupil motivation to facilitate the learning task. As with the feedback model, the construction process is as follows:

The asking of a question in relation to a text is consistent with a provision of incentive goal insofar as the attempt to engage pupils in the learning task may be perceived as a means of helping to promote their sense of commitment to what the learning involves. Thus, it may be held that a need for achievement, or a need for mastery of the environment can be sufficient incentive in inducing individuals to apply themselves with engagement to whatever task confronts them. From this perspective, the teacher's question may be conceptualised as identifying a possible task for the pupils.

The making of a comment upon a pupil's reply. In order to enhance the pupil's involvement with the learning task, and in this way improve the likelihood that successful learning will occur, it would be appropriate to offer the pupil the kind of information upon his performance which might help to make the learning situation attractive to him. This could be either encouragement in the form of ego enhancement, such as praise; or it could be information necessary to the learner to improve his learning.

Most responders are volunteers If the intention behind the asking of questions is to promote the pupil's engagement with the learning task,

it would be counter-productive to attainment of this purpose to be too often by-passing those pupils who appear to be responding to the motive-inducing strategy and select non-volunteering pupils instead. Moreover, since on balance the chances are that the pupils who volunteer are more engaged with the learning task than non-volunteers and are therefore more likely to have an appropriate response to the teacher's question, there is the greater likelihood, in selecting volunteer respondents, of being able to offer positive feedback to the pupil, and in this way strengthen the pupil's motivation. To put the point another way, the pupil's motivation to learn may be adversely affected by feedback which suggests his response is less than adequate. Hence, where the provision of incentive is the purpose, the tendency may be to seek out a majority of respondents whose behaviour gives promise of an appropriate reply to the teacher's question.

Some pupils answer very seldom, or not at all. Insofar as the teacher allows such a situation to prevail, it must be assumed to accord with the purpose of providing incentive for all pupils. If this is so, the implication is that the incentive offered to the responding pupil is considered to have an overspill effect on the rest of the class.

However, to entertain this explanation means also assuming that teachers do not feel the need to test if the supposed overspill effect is operative with all pupils by selecting a reasonable proportion of non-volunteering pupils. In other words, it would be inconsistent with the purpose of providing incentive for all class members for a teacher to appear indifferent to whether or not his strategy is

succeeding with pupils whose behaviour would seem more likely to indicate that they are less motivated than the pupils who volunteer. Unless the teacher selects pupils who are not volunteering he has no way of knowing if these pupils are motivated. Consequently, the attempt to construct a rational Provision-of-Incentive Model was herewith abandoned.

A Promotion-of-Discussion Homunculus

The assumption behind the Discussion model is that the teacher's purpose in interacting with the pupils is to promote a general discussion. As defined earlier, this would mean that the pupils play a part in directing the progress of the interaction; that is, they will play an initiating role both in relation to deciding who shall speak, and what kind of contribution the speaker shall make. The process is as follows:

The asking of a question in relation to a text is consistent with the promotion of discussion, since it may be interpreted as a means of encouraging the pupils to formulate their ideas on the text. However, the definition of a discussion stresses that pupils pose questions as often as teachers, and the premise is that only teachers do so. In this respect, at least, then, pupils are not playing an initiating role.

The making of a comment upon a pupil's reply. This too is in accordance with the teacher behaviour expected of a Discussion homunculus, since if pupils are to be encouraged to contribute, they should receive some form of acknowledgement of their contribution.

On the other hand, the fact that pupils do not comment on either other pupils' performances or on the ideas of the teacher is also at odds with the definition of their role requirements.

Most responders are volunteers. Again, this pupil behaviour meets the requirements of Discussion in some degree. Where the behaviour does not conform to role requirements is in the pupil waiting to be selected as respondent. In other words, whether the pupil contributes, or not, is still very much under the control of the teacher.

Indeed, insofar as the only part played by the pupil is that of responder, and even then only if he should be selected by the teacher, the inference is that such pupil behaviour is contrary to the basic principle of a discussion-type lesson. Though the pupil definition of the situation need not accord with the teacher's, a rational homunculus teacher intent on Discussion would take steps to vary the pattern of interaction.

Hence, construction of a promotion-of-discussion model was also abandoned.

A "Teaching" Homunculus

At this point it was clear that no plausible homunculi could be constructed in relation to some traditional conceptualisations of the possible purposes of teaching behaviour. In view of this, it was proposed to return to first principles by attempting to make sense of the configuration of characteristics of whole-class teaching as already identified, assuming only that this pattern of behaviour was consistently directed towards a teaching purpose, the teaching purpose as yet unidentified in a more specific sense.

The teacher's purpose is "to teach". Within this framework, the following construction of whole-class oral instruction emerges:

The asking of a question in relation to a text suggests that a questioning activity is considered an appropriate technique in the realisation of the aim of the lesson.

Teachers seek an answer to their questions. This implies that obtaining an answer is an integral part of the teaching activity.

Most responders are volunteers and Some pupils answer very seldom or not at all. From these behaviours, it would appear that teachers do not mind who answers, which suggests there is no relationship between the asking of the questions and the particular pupil who answers; in other words, that it is the receiving of an answer which is important, not who supplies it. Moreover, there is a further implication here that answer-seeking is not intended as a means of testing the individual pupil's ability, otherwise it would be reasonable to expect a wider selection of answerers.

That the teacher seeks an answer, and that the identity of the answerer is unimportant suggests that a pupil answer to the teacher's question has a function in relation to the aim of the lesson. Further, that the identity of the answerer is unimportant suggests too that the question-and-answer activity is directed at the whole class through the medium of individual pupils; that is, the pupil is instrumental to the teaching as well as being a pupil who is being taught.

If questions are being directed at the whole class, presumably all pupils are expected to be thinking about the question. However, since they are not all required to answer, or even to give evidence at some point that they have been attempting to formulate an answer, it cannot be assumed that the value of the exercise relates to the

pupil finding an answer unaided. This leaves thinking about the question as the pertinent pupil activity; and so it is concluded that this thinking about the question is in some sense instrumental to attainment of the teaching aim.

Most teacher questions refer to an 'unseen' text. This rules out the possibility that questions are intended as text recapitulation. It remains, then, that the questions are directing the pupils' attention to aspects of the text which raise questions. If this is so, what is the educational value of the exercise? noting questions about this particular text, and by such process, coming to an awareness of what the text offers as a piece of communication? or, assimilating the process of abstraction of the text's communication? In this respect, the 'unseen' characteristic of the texts has more to offer analysis: insofar as it implies that recapitulation of the content of a text is not a regular feature of English teaching, it seems unlikely that educational merit is solely contained in what any particular text has to offer as communication. The inference is, then, that the value of the question-and-answer activity relates more to the process by which the text is examined.

The Model Constructed

The foregoing interpretation of the observed behaviour allows the construction of an explanatory model of whole-class oral teaching:

Teacher intends to demonstrate to pupils the kind of activity they should imitate in order to study a written text. Though the pupils are asked to reply to the teacher's questions, their reply is instrumental to the demonstration; that is, the pupil act of answering

is as much a means of helping the teacher teach as it is a means of helping the responder learn.

Hence, the pupil's reply is not intended as the means whereby the teacher assesses the extent of the pupil's learning. Indeed, correct answering of the question does not mean the pupil has learnt the lesson, for finding an answer to the particular question is not the lesson to be learnt; it is that the asking of such questions is the pertinent activity for the better elucidation of meaning in a written language context. Insofar as the pupil answers the question correctly, he is solely demonstrating that the answering of this particular question elucidates meaning - which is not to say that he himself has learnt this fact.

Moreover, it is essential to the demonstration that a pupil replies: since the cognitive activity engaged in in seeking an answer to the question is not observable, and therefore not demonstrable, the teacher himself cannot supply the answer; to do so would be to ask the pupils to take on trust that the teacher's answer is a consequence of asking the appropriate question.

So it is an important part of the demonstration that a pupil should answer - and correctly; that a pupil should bear witness to the value of asking this question in this context. A pupil not answering correctly means the activity has not been effectively demonstrated. It may also signal something about the pupil as a learner, but in that assessment of the pupil is not the teacher's intention at this particular time, and that the intended outcome of his question has not been realised, then consideration of the pupil as a learner will take second place to keeping the demonstration operational by seeking a correct answer

elsewhere. This is the more likely since too many failures from pupils will imply that the demonstration is invalid; that is, that the asking of such questions does not lead to the elucidation of meaning. Pressure, therefore, is on making the demonstration work rather than on helping individual pupils learn. Thus, why this pupil does not supply the correct answer is a consideration peripheral to the main activity.

Characteristics of Comments within the Demonstration Model

In practice, the model implies that the teacher comment on a pupil answer would indicate the extent to which it was correct or wrong.

There would be no tendency to dwell with wrong answers, since identifying and subsequently teaching towards individual learner characteristics is not the intention behind the activity.

Correct answers would tend to invite more comment or teaching space than wrong answers since this would enable the importance of their role in the lesson to be driven home. Correct answers are the moment of the teacher's point being made.

A possible corollary of this last point might be that teachers would use their expertise on the relationship between the level of question and the likely pupil response to frame a majority of those questions which have a high probability of being answered correctly - which is not to suggest that this is the only condition to be met in determining the difficulty level of questions; simply that with a Demonstration model of teaching an overall pupil ability to answer the questions readily may be a prime requirement for effective teaching.

Research Questions : Demonstration Model

The "Demonstration" homunculus provides interpretation of the observed behaviour from which it is possible to hypothesise the purpose of the comment. The adequacy of this homunculus as a model for explaining the observed behaviour must depend on both confirmation of the validity of the observed characteristics used in its construction, and confirmation of the properties which should prevail, observed or otherwise, given its validity. The research questions to be asked are therefore as follows:

A. Does the observed teaching have the properties salient in shaping the model?

- (1) Teacher behaviour is characterised by the asking of a question, and the making of a comment upon a pupil's reply.
- (2) Most replies are elicited from pupils who volunteer.
- (3) Some pupils answer frequently, and some very little or not at all.
- (4) Most lessons refer to a text.
- (5) The text, or the part being referred to is generally "unseen".

B. Do the comments made in the observed teaching have the properties which were identified as test of the model?

- (1) The teacher will signal whether the answer is or is not acceptable.

If the teacher's comment is to convey acceptability or otherwise, it must imply some form of evaluation, or rating of the pupil's performance as an appropriate answer to the teacher's question. The evaluation may be explicit or implicit; hence, subsequent questions are:

Is it clear that a rating is being made?

Is the rating implicit or explicit?

- (2) Most replies will be acceptable.
- (3) There may be a tendency for correct replies to attract more teaching space on an individual basis than wrong replies.

Investigation of this property poses the subsequent question:

What is the comment saying about its referent in addition to any rating offered?

- (4) Teachers will not tend to dwell with wrong answerers.

In addition to investigation of the information of the comment which could be of help to the learner, it would offer further test of the above property to consider if the pupils who answer wrongly are offered another question, as this could imply an alternative attempt to promote their understanding:

To what extent does the same pupil have to reply to two consecutive questions, where the first reply has been negatively evaluated?

Research Questions : Other Models

So far, the questions selected as relevant to the investigation have been the product of conceptualising the teachers' behaviour in terms of a Demonstration model. However, there might be an additional consideration here in relation to the earlier attempts to construct other homunculi. It may be recalled that plausible explanations could not be maintained with the frameworks of these homunculi, as interpretation of the observed behaviour. Nevertheless, their implausibility notwithstanding, it was proposed where practicable to identify what features of comments would support or deny the inappropriateness of the discounted models.

With regard to the Feedback model, the properties consistent with the provision of feedback were identified in detail in investigation of written comments. In the current investigation, however, the question

was not so much: assuming a feedback conceptualisation of the comment, what are the characteristics of the feedback provision? Rather, the question was: what characteristics of oral comments would lend credence to their conceptualisation as feedback? To answer this question, then, meant abstracting from the feedback properties of written comments those properties which particularly define the feedback concept. Thus, insofar as feedback is defined as the provision of information to the pupil about his performance of help in improving his performance, it was considered that the essential identifying properties are those which individually encapsulate the provision of such information; more specifically these are Specific Description, Normative Description, Causal Description, Correction, Direction and Personalisation where it encodes attribution of the source of the weakness or strength to a characteristic of the pupil. In other words, categories such as those encoding the comments' referents were not included since these do not on their own support a feedback conceptualisation.

A Provision-of-Incentive model would imply that the comment contained some form of encouragement of the pupil. This could mean either such accepted motivating strategies as, for example, the offer of praise; or it could mean the same kind of information identified as salient for a Feedback model.

Hence, the categories considered supportive of a Feedback model could apply also in test of an Incentive model with the addition of categories encoding the use of praise or disapproval. Where the two models might be expected to differ would be in the potential of the Incentive model to emphasize Pure Evaluation; with a Feedback model, an emphasis

on Pure Evaluation at the expense of more constructive information towards improvement of weaknesses would be counter-supportive.

The Incentive model raised a further problem: it was difficult to distinguish the test of the model from the test of the Demonstration model with regard to the identifying comment properties, the sole differentiating characteristic being the use of praise, or disapproval. Nevertheless, though a significant incidence of both categories would not be inconsistent with a Demonstration explanation, a slight incidence of praise, and to a lesser extent disapproval, would be difficult to reconcile with a main teaching purpose of providing incentive.

Both the Feedback and Incentive homunculi allowed identification of the characteristics to be expected of the comments by virtue of the fact that the acting out of these purposes is typically contained in the response to another individual's act, though not necessarily so. With the Promotion-of-Discussion homunculus the characteristic mode of behaviour is not so readily identifiable from convention, and is as likely to be contained in the teacher behaviour which precedes the pupils' performances as in the comments which follow them.

Since the teacher behaviour preceding the performance is the teacher's question, it offered a test of this homunculus to investigate whether the question was so constructed as to imply the teacher had a particular answer in mind. In other words, if the teacher intention was to help pupils take an initiating part in the discussion, it would be adverse to such a purpose for the question to imply that the teacher already had an intellectual position about what the material being discussed had to offer.

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With regard to what characteristics might be expected of the comments, it would be inconsistent with promoting Discussion for teacher comments to be typified by evaluation of the pupil's contribution, since this would suggest that some contributions were more acceptable than others. As a result, pupils might rather be deterred from contributing to the discussion.

Further, if the teacher is intent on promoting Discussion, it would be inimical to the purpose to be commenting on all pupil responses, it being part of the definition of Discussion that pupils should be encouraged to provide comment. Thus, a teacher dominating the act of commenting would imply that promoting Discussion was not the intention.

Hence, test of the Discussion homunculus involved the following questions:

Does the teacher's question imply a pre-determined answer?

Are pupils' performances evaluated?

Does the teacher comment on all pupils' performances?

Research Questions Operationalised : Demonstration Model

The research questions identified, it remained to consider their operational feasibility. Consequently, as a means of clearly delineating the relevant comment characteristics in operation, a section of the data on whole-class teaching was studied.

Model Shaping Properties

With one exception, the characteristics which shape the model presented no problems in quantification of the relevant data for the purpose of statistical verification. Thus whether or not most lessons refer to a text was easily retrievable, and quantifiable from the records on

each lesson; and similarly with four of the five identified model-shaping properties. The exception, however, refers to the claim that teacher behaviour is characterised by the asking of a question, and the making of a comment upon a pupil's reply.

To justify the dominance of this behaviour in whole-class teaching meant illustrating the ratio of teaching time given over to teacher question/pupil answer/teacher comment to the time spent on other pedagogic behaviour in the lesson. Hence, to this end it was proposed to time two lessons from each teacher on the proportion of time within each lesson given over to different oral activities on the part of the teacher.

The basis for the selection of the two lessons was, in the one case, the lesson appearing from the records to contain the fewest number of question/answer/comment units per time spent on the whole lesson; and, in the other, the lesson appearing to contain the highest number of question/answer/comment units per time spent on the whole lesson. It will be recognised that to some extent the selection was arbitrary. Nevertheless, it was believed that this would offer an adequate image of the allocation of time within these lessons to justify the claim that the specified behaviour is dominant.

In the sample of data studied, the following teacher oral activities were identified:

Teacher

Monologue - where the teacher relays information about the material under study or about the lesson content without seeking oral response from the pupils

e.g. "He's trying to walk straight. He doesn't realise

it but his neck muscles are being strained rigid."

"This is something very important to your future life, to be able to read something and understand it properly."

Teacher Question/ - where the teacher frames a question which the
Pupil Answer/ class are expected to answer; a pupil answers;
Teacher Comment and the teacher makes a reply which is
recognisably commenting on the pupil's answer.

e.g. Teacher's question: "The people in
The Orkneys depend on what for livelihood?"

Pupil answer: Fishing

Teacher Comment: Fishing (And a boat is one
of the most precious things you could have up
there).

The part in brackets would not be coded in
this category, but in Monologue, since it is
not referring to the pupil's answer.

Managerial - where the teacher refers to class management
concerns such as which book to open, or some
aspect of pupil behaviour.

e.g. "Now hands up if you've got an answer.

Don't call out"

"Put your books down for a minute"

Reading the Text - where the text being referred to is read out
either by the teacher, or by a pupil.

Summarising the - where the teacher summarises parts of a text
Text as opposed to reading it.

- Social - where the teacher refers to concerns irrelevant to the lesson
e.g. asking about a playground incident.
- Other - where the teacher refers to anything other than the foregoing categories
e.g. telling a joke prompted by an incident of the text under study.

Each of these activities was timed as beginning at the point when the teacher speaks, all pauses between activities being timed as part of the preceding speech activity.

The timing of the lesson began where teaching of the whole-class lesson began, and ended where teaching of the whole-class lesson ended. Hence, the processes of settling a class prior to teaching, or of changing over to a teaching activity other than whole-class teaching, or of dismissing a class at the end of the class period were not included. Frequently, lessons ended only when the period bell rang.

Model Testing Properties

On the properties which test the model, operationalisation of the research questions led to the definition of categories in the following ways:

Question: Is it clear that a rating is being made?

In the breakdown of this question, most teacher comments contained a

rating, either Positive or Negative. Where a rating was not clearly identifiable, either from the characteristics of the teacher's comment, or the characteristics of the teacher's subsequent question, the comment was coded "Neutral rating":

Rating dimension - Comments rating positively; e.g. "Right"
 Comments rating negatively; "I don't think so"
 Comments rating neutrally; "I see, what do
 you think John?"(turning to another pupil).

Within Positive and Negative ratings differences of degree of rating were observed. Since these differences might be significant as indices of the teacher's purpose, categorisation took account of them. Thus, some comments offered a simple, conventional form of acceptance or non-acceptance while others again were less accepting, or less non-accepting than average, thereby implying some modification of the rating element:

Rating -

Acceptance	Comments which indicate simply that the teacher accepts the pupil's reply; e.g. "Right"; "That's it"; "O.K"
Modified Acceptance	Comments which imply some modification of the teacher's acceptance of the pupil's reply; e.g. "That's one way of putting it"
Non- Acceptance	Comments which indicate simply that the teacher does not accept the pupil's reply; e.g. "No"

Modified
Non-Acceptance Comments which imply some modification of the
teacher's non-acceptance of the pupil's reply;
e.g. "Not exactly"

Question: Is the rating implicit or explicit?

Since the degree of explicitness of the rating might also have implications in relation to the teacher's purpose, whether the rating was implicit or explicit was categorised. It was found that implicit Positive ratings almost always took the form of repetition of the pupil's response, or some slight rephrasing; though, occasionally acceptance was implicit in the teacher act of asking another question of the class, which followed logically from the preceding question or from the pupil's answer. Implicit non-acceptance either took the form of repetition, but on a rising note signifying the teacher was questioning the adequacy of the pupil's response; or it took the form of a question, implying non-acceptance. Where an implicit acceptance/non-acceptance could not be coded in any of the above categories it was coded as Implicit Acceptance Other, or Implicit Non-acceptance Other:

Implicit
Rating Comments which imply acceptance by exact
repetition, or by slight rephrasing of the
pupil's response;
e.g. Pupil: There was no-one at the door
Teacher: There was no-one at the door
and
Pupil: Somebody you put your troubles on
Teacher: Somebody you blame for everything
Comments which imply acceptance by the question

which follows the pupil's response:

e.g. Teacher: What sickly details was he giving?

Pupil: To stick it (a knife) in, and
turn it round.

Teacher: And what else was he saying would
give difficulty?

Comments which imply acceptance in any other way.

No example was found.

Comments which imply non-acceptance by repetition on
a rising inflection, signifying questioning;

e.g. Pupil: Sir, he doesn't like it at all.

Teacher: He doesn't like it at all?

Comments which imply non-acceptance by the question
asked of the pupil's response;

e.g. Pupil: a laird

Teacher: Would you call him a laird?

Comments which imply non-acceptance in any other
way.

No example was found.

All explicit comments whether Positive or Negative rating were found
to be simple in form:

Explicit

Comments which are simply explicit about their
acceptance;

e.g. O.K.

Comments which are simply explicit about their
non-acceptance;

e.g. No.

Comments which are explicit in any other way in
their acceptance.

No example was found.

Comments which are explicit in any other way in their non-acceptance.

No example was found.

Question: What is the comment saying about its referent in addition to any rating offered?

Here the evidence was that comments sometimes contained elaborations of their initial ratings. Though the relevance of elaboration to the research question is in terms of its frequency in association with the different ratings, in an attempt to give a profile of elaborations to be discussed post-hoc in relation to its consistency with each of the models, the different kinds of elaboration identified were sub-categorised. Thus, with comments rating positively, the comment may simply repeat the pupil's reply in a more explicit form; or it may offer an example of the pupil's point. Elaborations which could not be coded in either of these categories were coded "Elaboration-of-Positive-Rating - Other".

Although there was no evidence in this preliminary sample of any information being offered other than ratings or elaborations on these ratings, in principle operationalisation of 'additional information' includes anything said about the pupil response; it therefore also includes the categories offering information in addition to the rating which are defined later in relation to the Feedback model.

Elaboration of Positive Rating - Greater Explicitness	Comments which elaborate on a Positive rating by giving greater explicitness to the pupil's reply; e.g., Teacher: "And what else was he saying would give difficulty? Pupil: They might hit the bone. Teacher: Right. For, if you've seen
--	--

your Perry Mason, you'll realise it's very difficult to actually stab someone to death, because you might hit bone and you wouldn't get the knife in.

Elaboration of Positive Rating - Exemplification Comments which elaborate on a Positive rating by giving an example of the pupil's point;
 e.g. Teacher: Who else was involved?
 Pupil: Some of the villagers.
 Teacher: Yes, the Mayor was involved, wasn't he?
 And so was Mr McKay.

Elaboration of Positive Rating - Other Comments which elaborate on a Positive rating by offering any other information relevant to the pupil's performance;
 No example found.

Elaboration of comments rating negatively were rare, and those which did figure could be encoded within the Feedback categories. To allow for the possibility of any other kinds of elaboration being found, a category "Elaboration of Negative Rating - Other" was added.

Elaboration of Negative Rating - Other Comments which elaborate on a Negative rating by offering information other than that already categorised;
 No example found.

Question: To what extent does the same pupil have to reply to two consecutive questions, where the first reply has been negatively evaluated?

From this question, the category was defined as follows:

Stays-with- Same-Pupil	The same pupil is asked a second question, where the first reply has been negatively evaluated.
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Research Questions Operationalised : Other Models

In relation to the investigation of oral comments in terms of the Feedback model, the relevant categories were identified as Specific Description, Normative Description, Causal Description, Correction, Direction and Personalisation, where the weakness or strength is attributed to an individual characteristic of the pupil. These categories were defined as follows:

Specific Description - Comments which are specific about the characteristic of the weakness or strength which leads to the evaluation;

e.g. "Wilson is not a villager"

Normative Description	Comments which additionally explain the - evaluation by comparison with some norm. No example found.
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Causal Description	- Comments which additionally explain the evaluation by assertion of the consequence. No example found.
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Correction	- Comments where the descriptive information is
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in the form of the correction of the weakness in the sense that it tells the pupil exactly what he should have said;

e.g. "No. In fact, John would have to admit where he'd been"

- Direction - Comments where the descriptive information suggests a course of action in the form of a generalisable rule to be followed in future.
e.g. "Look for the answer in the book"
- Personalisation - Comments which identify the source of the weakness or strength as an individual characteristic of the pupil
Attribution of Source Weakness/
Strength e.g. "Think carefully before you answer"

Further to investigation of the Feedback potential of oral comments, it may be noted that the categories identified earlier as elaborating on a Positive rating could be re-defined as offering information of help to the learner's task of improving, or capitalising on his performance. There would, therefore, be a need to consider the incidence of these encodings in investigation of the Feedback homunculus.

Consideration of the potential of the Incentive model was held to involve the categories appropriate for a Feedback model, with the addition of Praise or Disapproval codifications. Thus, to allow for the encoding of Praise, or Disapproval, the rating dimension included two further sub-categories as under:

Rating - Comments which indicate in addition to the rating
 Acceptance that the teacher is approving of the pupil's
 with Praise reply;
 e.g. "Good"; "Well done"

Rating - Comments which indicate in addition to the rating
 Non-Acceptance that the teacher is disapproving of the pupil's
 with Disapproval reply;
 e.g. "Nonsense"

In operationalising the research questions relevant to test of the Promotion-of-Discussion Model, the following question called for additional categories:

Question: Does the teacher's question imply a predetermined answer?

Investigation of this issue meant identifying if the question preceding the pupil's performance did, or did not, allow a diversity of reply:

Closed Question. The question preceding the pupil's performance is so constructed as to deny a diversity of reply;
 e.g. "How does the fisherman die?"

Open Question The question preceding the pupil's performance is so constructed as to allow a diversity of reply;
 e.g. "How would you react to the old man's explanation?"

Chapter 7 Oral Comments in Whole-Class Teaching : Empirical Data

Demonstration Model : Empirical Findings

The empirical data on whole-class oral teaching was found to have the following incidences of identified salient characteristics.

On model-shaping properties.

- 1) "Teacher behaviour is characterised by the asking of a question, and the making of a comment upon a pupil's reply"

The proportion of teacher time allocated within a lesson to different teaching activities is presented below:

TABLE 46

Teacher	Mono- logue	Question/ Answer/ Comment	Mana- gerial	Read- ing Text	Summar- ising Text	Social	Other	Duration of Lesson
1-lesson 1	21%	32%	9%	43%	Nil	Nil	Nil	15mins. 4secs.
2	27%	29%	Nil	41%	3%	Nil	Nil	31mins.
2-lesson 1	10%	72%	2%	10%	Nil	3%	3%	21mins.45secs.
2	23%	57%	5%	8%	3%	3%	1%	31mins.30secs.
3-lesson 1	25%	40%	3%	31%	Nil	1%	Nil	11mins.21secs.
2	12%	42%	6%	39%	Nil	1%	Nil	29mins.50secs.
4-lesson 1	15%	79%	5%	1%	Nil	Nil	Nil	24mins.24secs.
2	4%	33%	4%	58%	Nil	1%	Nil	25mins.55secs.
5-lesson 1	15%	74%	1%	1%	Nil	1%	8%	14mins.31secs.
2	17%	59%	3%	19%	Nil	Nil	2%	18mins.
6-lesson 1	4%	28%	9%	58%	Nil	1%	Nil	13mins.34secs.
2	8%	13%	8%	70%	Nil	1%	Nil	16mins.44secs.

It may be noted that "Reading Text" bulks much larger overall than had been anticipated. However, since the text has to be familiar to an audience if reference to its content is to be at all comprehensible

to them, the findings on the time allocated to text reading do not deny the implications of the claim that the dominant mode of whole-class teaching is through the asking of questions and the making of comments on pupils' answers. In other words, the reading of the text is a necessary preliminary to the activity of asking questions. But this is not to suggest that this may be the only teaching purpose which text-reading serves; simply that in relation to the questioning which follows, it is a pre-requisite that the pupils should be familiar with the text content.

Reading of the text apart, the Question/Answer/Comment behaviour engrosses the highest proportion of teaching time by a fair margin overall. Teacher 1 (lesson 2) is the only exception, where Monologue accounts for an almost equal proportion of time.

2) "Most replies are elicited from pupils who volunteer"

Table 47 presents the number of pupil respondents selected from volunteers against the number of non-volunteers.

TABLE 47

Teacher	No. of Volunteer Respondent Pupils	No. of Non-volunteer Respondent Pupils
1	148	18
2	267	39
3	380	11
4	786	12
5	123	3
6	46	3
Total	1750	86

Volunteers as a percentage of total response = 95%

Non-volunteers as a percentage of total response = 5%

3) "Some pupils answer frequently, and some very seldom or not at all"

The differential contribution of pupils to the activity of answering teachers' questions is shown in Table 48 and Table 49. Table 48 gives both the mean percentage of answers which are given by the two pupils answering most in each lesson, averaged over the total number of lessons of each teacher (left-hand column), and the percentage for the two pupils who answered most over the sum of each teacher's lessons (right-hand column). Thus, while the percentage of replies in the left-hand column includes the percentage responses of the most frequent answerers within each of a number of lessons, and therefore involves a number of pupils, the figures in the right-hand column represent the total percentage response of the two most frequent responders over all the lessons, and therefore involve only two pupils.

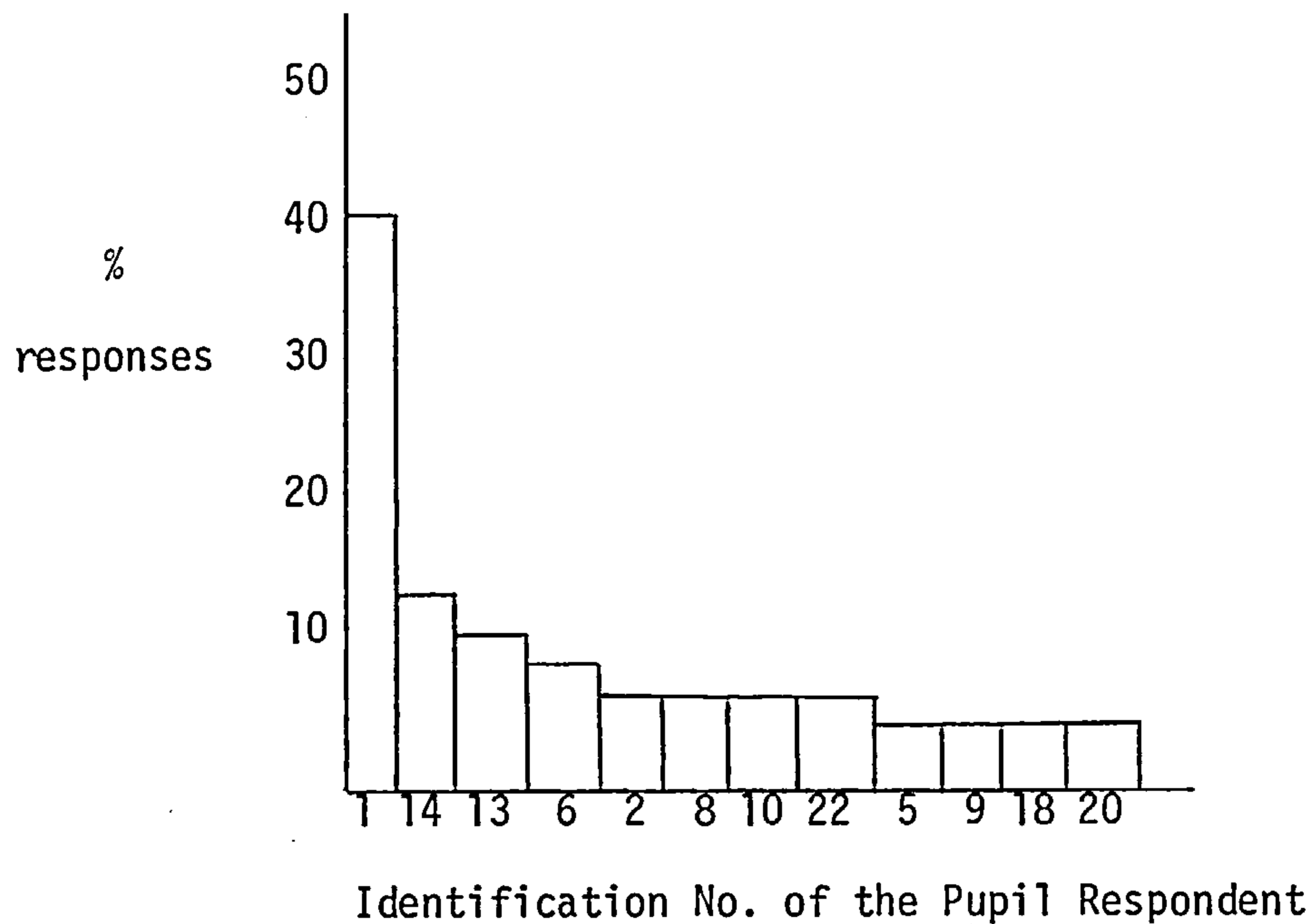
TABLE 48

Teacher	Total No. of Pupils in class	No. of Lessons	Average No. of Responses per lesson	Ave. propn. over n lessons of responses in lesson given by the two pupils who responded most in that lesson	Propn. of responses in n lessons given by the two pupils who responded most over lessons
1	27	7	23	47%	36%
2	28	9	34	31%	22%
3	22	8	49	35%	31%
4	27	9	88	33%	24%
5	31	3	17	59%	49%
6	29	3	16	59%	39%

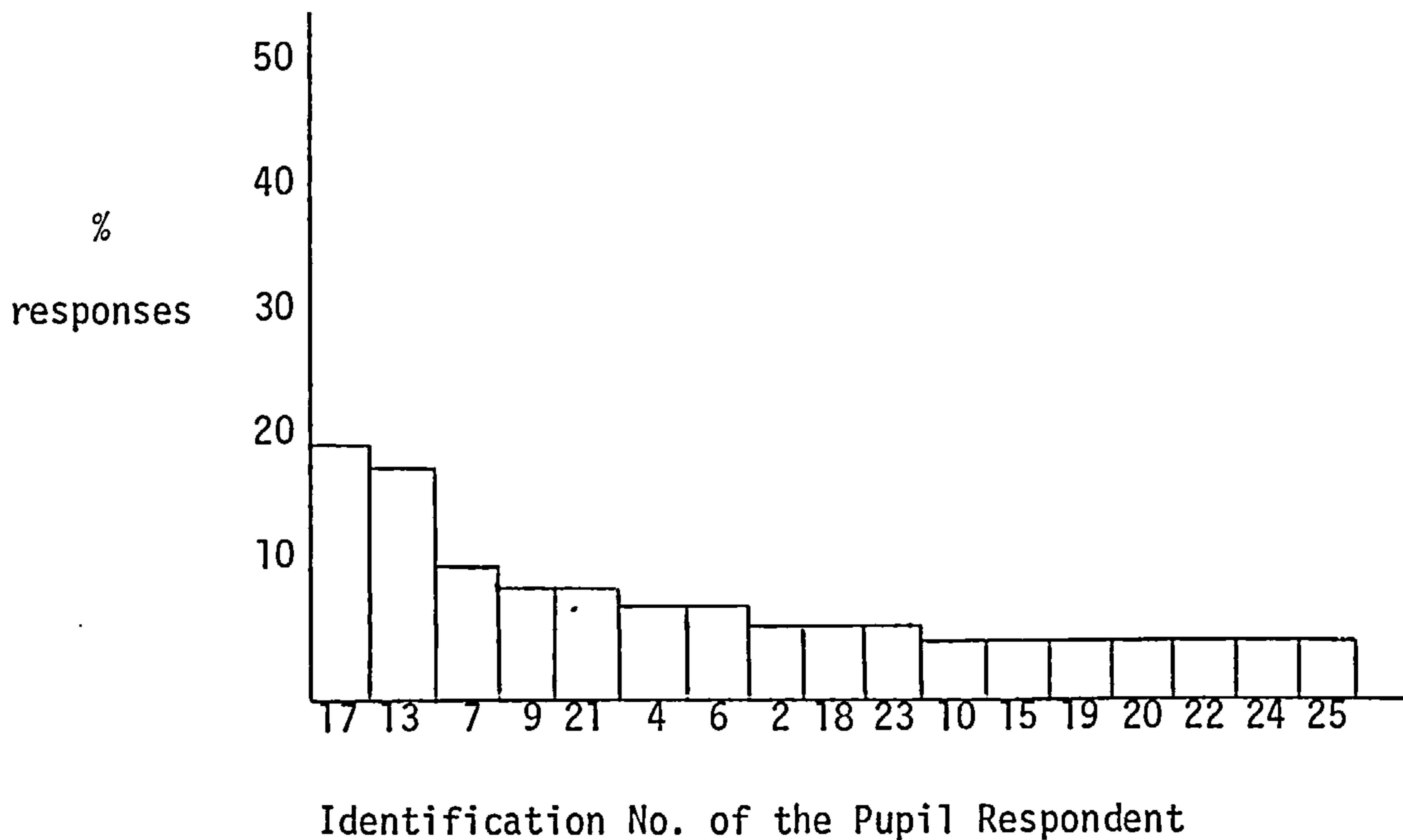
The selection of two pupils as representative of the claim that "some pupils answer frequently..." may seem arbitrary, but was the result of inability to identify any specific number of pupils as the most

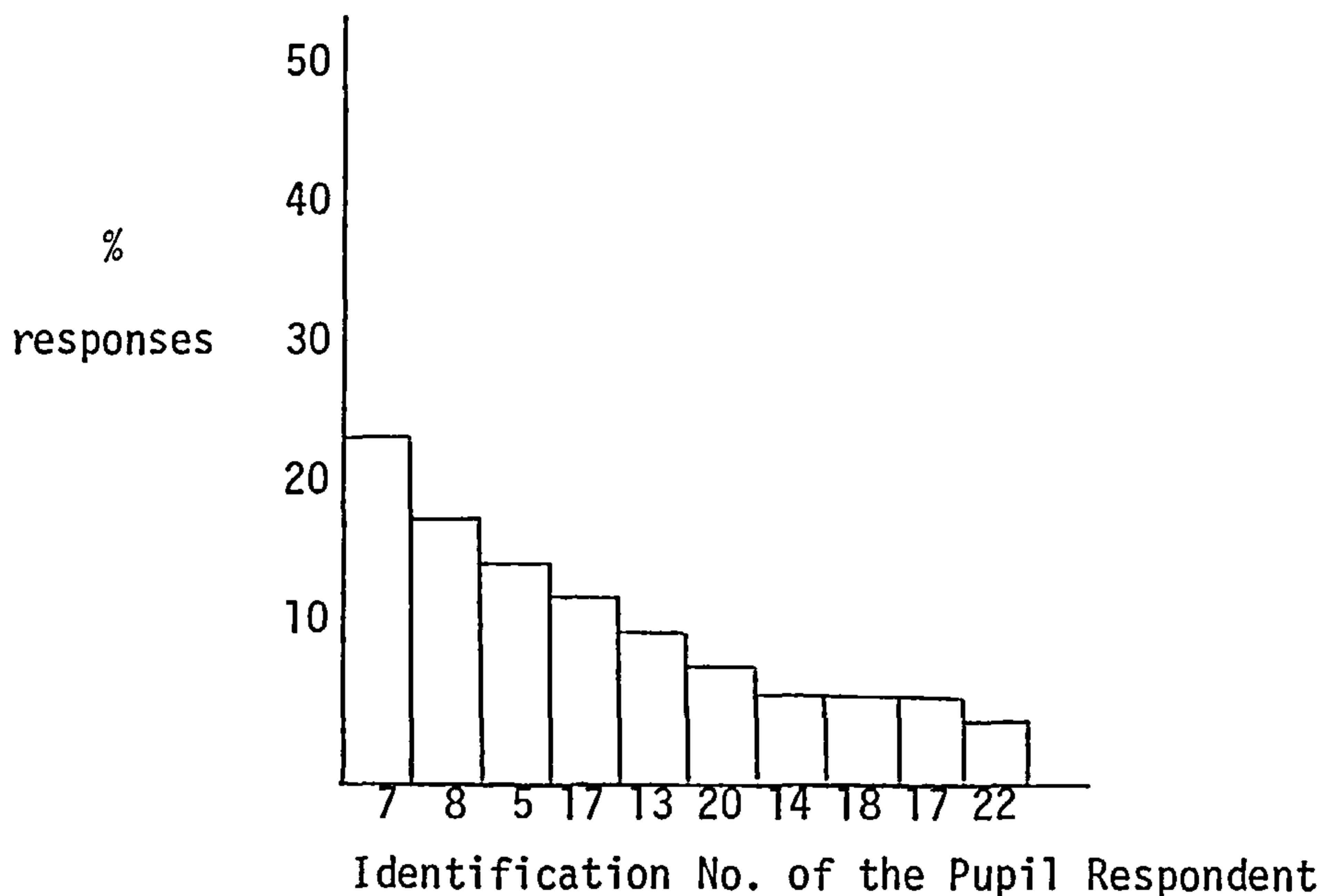
frequent delineator of "some pupils". The following three diagrams of the percentage of individual pupils' responses within specific lessons illustrate the diversity:

Teacher 3



Teacher 2



Teacher 4

Nevertheless, all three diagrams support the claim that the contribution to lessons of individual pupils varied widely.

Table 49 presents the data on infrequent answerers. In a few lessons overall, the number of pupil responses sought is less than the total number of pupils present. Under these circumstances, it might be reasonable to argue that every pupil could not be expected to respond. However, since the case being presented is that teachers give no evidence in whole-class sessions of an intention to interact with a wide range of pupils, it was assumed that if the contrary had been true then, generally speaking, teachers would either extend the number of questions, or the number of pupils called upon to respond to each question. Therefore, in calculation of the findings, no adjustment was made for the fact that sometimes the number of pupils exceeds the number of responses sought from pupils.

A further point in relation to Table 49 is that the data is incomplete for at least one lesson with each teacher, the reason being that the recorded identification of which pupil was answering was not always audible. Nevertheless, these instances notwithstanding, most respondent pupils have been identified for each lesson. The figures as presented show both what the percentage of non-selected pupils would be if all the unintelligible pupil identifications could be identified each with a different non-selected pupil (minimum percentage of non-selected pupils); and what the percentage of non-selected pupils would be if none of the unintelligible identifications could be identified with any of these pupils (maximum percentage of non-selected pupils).

TABLE 49

Teacher	No. of lessons	No. of unintelligible pupil identifications over total lessons	Average percentage of pupils not called upon to reply	
			Minimum %	Maximum %
1	7	9	50	55
2	9	10	30	35
3	8	24	29	42
4	9	50	19	40
5	3	-	76	76
6	3	8	65	74

4) "Most lessons refer to a text"

Within whole-class oral sessions, those lessons which are text-based are shown against those non-text-based in Table 50.

TABLE 50

Teacher	No. of text-based lessons	No. of Non-text-based lessons
1	7	-
2	7	2
3	6	2
4	8	1
5	3	2
6	3	-
Total	34	7

Text-based lessons = 83% of the total

Non-text-based lessons = 17% of the total

- 5) The text or the part being referred to is generally 'unseen'.
The frequency of 'unseen' and 'seen' texts is presented in Table 51.

TABLE 51

Teacher	'Unseen'	'Seen'
1	7	-
2	6	1
3	5	1
4	7	1
5	3	-
6	3	-
Total	31	3

'Unseen' texts = 91% of the total

'Seen' texts = 9% of the total

The findings of Tables 46 to 51 support the assumptions about the observed teacher behaviours which together gave rise to the

construction of the Demonstration model. The data which follow are intended to investigate the extent to which the observed patterns of comments are similar to the pattern of comments which would be observed for a Demonstration homunculus.

On Model-Testing Properties

"Teacher will signal whether the answer is, or is not, acceptable"

Table 52 shows the ratio of comments containing an evaluation of the pupil's reply against those in which there was no clear evidence of an evaluation:

TABLE 52

Teacher	Proportion of Positive and Negative evaluations over total lessons	Proportion of non-evaluative comments over total lessons
1	98	2
2	97	3
3	98	2
4	96	4
5	75	25
6	91	9
Total	555	45
mean %	93%	7%

"Most replies will be acceptable"

TABLE 53

Teacher	Proportion of Positive comments over total lessons	Proportion of Negative comments over total lessons
1	82	16
2	75	22
3	96	2
4	89	7
5	69	6
6	87	5
Total	498	58
mean %	83	10

It will be recognised that acceptable, as opposed to non-acceptable, pupil replies are in the large majority in every case.

"There may be a tendency for correct replies to attract more teaching space on an individual basis than wrong replies"

The percentage of Positive comments containing elaborations of the evaluation was held against the percentage within Negative comments (Table 54). Given that the total percentage of Negative comments is low (see Table 53), there is a tendency for the derived percentages to be based on very small actual numbers. In Table 54 actual total numbers of Negative comments for each teacher are shown, from which it will be recognised that teachers 3, 5 and 6 are affected in this way and that therefore the findings for these teachers do not allow valid inferences to be drawn:

TABLE 54

Teacher	% within Positive comments of those containing elaboration of evaluation over total lessons	% within Negative comments of those containing elaboration of evaluation over total lessons	Total number of Negative comments over total lessons
1	20	27	22
2	21	20	65
3	27	40	5
4	21	22	68
5	43	80	5
6	40	100	2

The evidence of the findings in relation to teachers 1, 2 and 4 is that the predicted trend is not apparent. There was, however, a significant feature within the delineation of simple evaluation which offers further test of the research question under consideration. This was the tendency of teachers to repeat correct replies. Simple Negative evaluation has only three instances over all lessons of the use of repetition. Shown below is the incidence of repetition among simple Positive evaluations; that is, where there was no elaboration of the evaluation (Table 55):

TABLE 55

Teacher	% over total lessons of repetition among those Positive comments which have no elaboration of the evaluation
1	72
2	59
3	65
4	68
5	23
6	49

If these figures are added to the percentage of Positive comments offering elaboration of the evaluation a percentage of which also feature repetition, and the results compared with the Negative comments containing an elaboration of the evaluation, a more valid comparison of the teaching space afforded to each type of comment on an individual basis is presented (Table 56).

TABLE 56

Teacher	Total No. of Positive comments over total lessons	% over total lessons of elaboration of evaluation in Positive comments plus repetition of simple Positive evaluations	Total No. of Negative comments over total lessons	% over total lessons of elaboration of evaluation in Negative comments plus repetition of simple Negative evaluations
1	138	92	22	32
2	231	80	65	23
3	380	92	5	40
4	699	89	68	22
5	38	66	5	80
6	42	89	2	100

The hypothesis that there is a tendency for each correct reply to attract more teaching space than each wrong reply would appear to be supported by the data, if only in the sense that positively evaluated pupil responses were frequently repeated.

"Teachers will not tend to dwell with wrong answerers"

Table 54 shows the percentages of Negative comments which contain an elaboration of the evaluation. Though these percentages are higher

than had been anticipated, they are yet not high enough to allow inference that the model is refuted on this one test of its explanatory strength. However, the data admit a further test here in relation to the category "Stays-with-the-same-pupil", since evidence of a willingness to stay with wrong respondents could imply that the teacher has some intention to pursue the pupil's difficulty (Table 57).

TABLE 57	Total number of Negative comments over total lessons	Total number of Negative comments over total lessons where teacher stays with the same pupil
Teacher		
1	22	2
2	65	5
3	5	Nil
4	68	1
5	5	1
6	2	Nil

The implications are that teachers seldom remain with wrong responders to ask another question, even allowing for the slight number of wrong responses over all lessons. Hence the data of Table 57 support the hypothesis that teachers do not tend to dwell with wrong responses.

In summary, the empirical findings reveal a dominant incidence of the properties identified as consistent with a Demonstration homunculus: thus, the large majority of teacher comments upon pupil replies contain an evaluation and that evaluation is positive; there is a dearth of information other than evaluation in both Positive and Negative Comments; and the replies of wrong responders do not attract the same teacher

talk as the replies of correct responders, nor do they attract follow-up questions.

When these findings are considered in association with the findings on hypothesis-shaping characteristics (Tables 46 to 51), the potential of an explanation of whole-class oral teaching as consistent with the Demonstration model is strengthened.

Other Models: Empirical Findings

Report of the empirical findings is incomplete without consideration of the data relating to the remaining homunculi under investigation.

Those properties identified as consistent with a Feedback explanation, which do not overlap with the salient properties of the Demonstration or Incentive models, are found to be insignificant in their incidence. The relevant categories are those concerned with descriptions of the weakness/strength, correction of the weaknesses, direction of pupil behaviour to improve performance, and attributing the weaknesses/strengths to a characteristic of the pupil. Table 58 identifies the percentage of each teacher's total comments which have any one of these characteristics.

TABLE 58

Average Percentage of Each Category over
All Whole-Class Negative Comments

Teacher	Total No. of Neg. Comments	% of Spec. Descr.	% of Norm/ Causal	% of Corr.	% of Direc.	% of Attribution Source Weakness/ Strength	No. of Neg. Comments with only an eval.
1	22	Nil	Nil	9	14	Nil	19
2	65	Nil	Nil	11	Nil	Nil	58
3	5	Nil	Nil	20	Nil	Nil	4
4	68	Nil	Nil	7	4	1	60
5	5	Nil	Nil	20	20	20	4
6	2	50	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1

The Feedback properties which overlap with other models are the rating dimension and elaboration of the ratings. With reference to these characteristics, consistency with a Feedback explanation would mean that the rating would reflect a substantial proportion of Negative evaluations, and in addition would tend to be associated with information other than Pure Evaluation. From the earlier analysis of oral comment properties, it was clear both that Positive evaluations were in a considerable majority, and that neither Positive nor Negative comments were predominantly offering information beyond the rating of potential help to the learner (Table 54). Consequently, the data on oral whole-class comments did not support a Feedback explanation.

With regard to investigation of the Incentive model, it was considered that it might be supported as an explanation if comments contained a

large incidence of Pure Evaluation, with the possible addition of Praise or Disapproval. In relation to both criteria, some support was found.

Thus, oral comments reflected a dominance of Pure Evaluations in Positive encodings (Table 54); while instances of Praise and Disapproval were found to figure in whole-class oral commenting as follows:

TABLE 59

		% of Praise within Positive Evaluations	% of Disapproval within Negative Evaluations
Teacher	1	Nil	Nil
	2	6	Nil
	3	2	Nil
	4	23	Nil
	5	12	Nil
	6	Nil	Nil

Accordingly, these findings gave some support to an Incentive explanation. Nevertheless, such as they are, the data did nothing to allay the severe scepticism expressed earlier about a pattern of teaching aimed at motivating pupils but involving an apparent readiness to take on trust the motivation of the large proportion of pupils who gave least evidence of being motivated.

Investigation of the Promotion-of-Discussion model was concerned with the incidences of teacher behaviour likely to encourage pupils to take an initiating part in the interaction. The properties held to

be salient here related to the kind of questions preceding the pupils' performances; and, in the comments, to the extent of evaluation of pupil performances by the teacher, in addition to the incidences of teacher commenting overall.

Encoding of question types revealed an overwhelming majority of questions which implied a pre-determined answer on the part of the teacher. Only two teachers, teachers 2 and 3, had any incidence of open questions in their total whole-class encodings, the respective percentages being 1% and 0.5%.

The evidence on comments was that the vast majority of teacher comments on pupils' performances contained a rating. Moreover, there were no recorded instances of any person other than the teacher commenting on a pupil's performance. Consequently, it was concluded that the findings did not support a Promotion-of-Discussion homunculus.

Conclusion

In summary, analysis of the empirical data offered no support for the Feedback Model, nor the Promotion-of-Discussion Model. Though there was some support for the Provision-of-Incentive Model, the findings did not undermine the considered implausibility of a Provision-of-Incentive explanation, when the teachers' characteristic behaviour other than that contained in the comments was taken into account. The Demonstration Model, on the other hand, was substantially supported in terms of all the measures conceived as testing its explanatory strength.

Whole-class oral instruction characterises one form of teacher/pupil interaction. The other frequent form was identified as individualised instruction, of which the observable characteristics, assumed salient as teaching behaviour, are:

- 1) the pupils are engaged individually on written work;
- 2) the teacher interacts with the pupils on a one-to-one basis during the process of the written work;
- 3) in general, the teacher initiates the interaction, but occasionally the pupil does so.

The earlier decision to adopt a homunculus approach towards investigation of the data was a consequence of the apparent inappropriateness of the observed teacher behaviour as the product of a feedback purpose. It may be apparent from the above that the observed characteristics of individualised instruction are consistent with a feedback purpose. Accordingly, the need for an alternative explanation was less of an issue with individualised instruction. Moreover, the absence of any intimation in the literature on English teaching of any possible alternative purposes for individualised interaction adds weight to this view.

In consequence, it was proposed to investigate the empirical data from two perspectives: the first considered the validity of a feedback purpose by constructing an appropriate homunculus; the second assumed the validity of the feedback purpose, the concern of this perspective being to investigate the nature of the feedback provided.

Construction of a Feedback Homunculus

The purpose of the teacher's comment is to offer information to the pupil of potential help in directing the pupil to what he should do now in improving his performance. From this perspective, the following explanation of the comment in individualised teaching emerges:

Teacher intends to improve performance in English work by offering the pupil information on what he should do now in order to correct his weaknesses, or capitalize on his strengths. Teacher uses the pupil's performance to assess where the pupil is weak/strong and offers information in relation to the specific performance.

In practice, this would mean evidence in the teacher's comments of evaluation of the pupil's performance, since the offer of constructive information must imply some evaluation of the work. Further, it would mean evidence in the teacher's comments of a significant incidence of negative evaluations, since improvement of performance is most obviously possible where that performance is less than adequate.

Where the pupil initiates the interaction, the pupil is identifying his own learning problem, in relation to which he is seeking feedback from the teacher. In these instances, teacher feedback is likely to precede any pupil attempt to cope with his problem in writing. In other words, the feedback will not refer strictly to the written performance. This being so,

in such circumstances, it may be that the feedback does not include an evaluation of anything the pupil has done, but only an evaluation of a suggested course of action.

Thus, with reference to both teacher-initiated and pupil-initiated comments, a feedback purpose would mean too evidence of information beyond simple evaluation, since evaluation alone especially where that evaluation is negative can rarely be of help to the pupil in improving his performance.

Finally, since feedback is on performance, and individual performances are likely to exhibit different strengths and weaknesses, there would be significant differentiation in the kind of feedback offered.

Characteristics to be Tested : Feedback Homunculus

Investigation of the model of individualised teacher/pupil interaction involves confirmation of the properties which should prevail, given its validity.

In summary, these are as under:

Properties which test the hypothesis

- 1) Most comments will contain an evaluation;
- 2) There will be a significant incidence of Negative evaluation comments;
- 3) Within Negative evaluation comments the information beyond simple evaluation will be of help in directing the pupil to what he should do now towards correction of his weakness;
- 4) There will be significant differentiation in the kind of help offered.

Research Questions : Feedback Homunculus/The Nature of the Feedback
Provided

In relation to the Model-testing process, since the model involved in this instance was the Feedback Model, test of the hypothesised properties essentially meant application of most of the research questions pertinent to investigation of written comments. For instance, in order to test the strength of the hypothesised property, "Most comments will contain an evaluation", it was first necessary to identify if comments contained an evaluation; while the property, "There will be a significant incidence of Negative evaluation comments" meant identifying what the evaluation was.

However, since the second part of the current investigation was concerned with the nature of the feedback provided and so involved almost all identified research questions pertinent to investigation of a feedback conceptualisation of written comments, it was unnecessary in relation to test of the Model to specify the research questions independently. Both investigations therefore involved the following questions:

1. To what aspect of the teaching of English does the comment refer?
2. What is the comment saying about its referent?
 - 2.1 What information is available of direct application to the cognitive task?
 - 2.11 What is the rating?
 - 2.12 What descriptive information do comments contain about the pupil's performance in addition to the rating?
 - 2.13 Do comments contain elements characteristic of techniques of teaching?

2.2 What information is available of possible influence on the pupil's affective response?

2.21 To what extent is feedback personalised?

Research Questions Operationalised

The operational feasibility of the research questions was tested against a small sample of the empirical data, from which process three distinct forms of teacher/pupil interaction were identified:

- 1) where the teacher comments on the pupil's work without any oral contribution from the pupil;
- 2) where the teacher initiates verbal interaction with the pupil about the pupil's work;
- 3) where the pupil initiates verbal interaction with the teacher about the pupil's work.

In order to take account of characteristics of each form which might be relevant to their conceptualisation as providing feedback, the three forms were considered separately on the issue of operational feasibility.

1) No Pupil Oral Contribution

In those instances where the pupil does not contribute orally to the interaction, it was found that the feedback categories as defined in

relation to the relevant research questions of written comments could be applied virtually unchanged to the comments made in this context. Consequently, the appropriate feedback categories as defined in relation to written comments were reinstated, with the exception of the category identifying 'No Verbal Information' comments (see pages 49-62).

2) Teacher Initiated Teacher/Pupil Interaction : Pupil contributes
Orally

Where the pupil contributes orally, and the teacher initiates the interaction, teacher behaviour was found to be characterised by questioning until either the pupil arrived at the correction of his weakness, whereupon the teacher's final comment was acknowledgement of the pupil's success; or, the teacher terminates the interchange by offering information of help towards correcting the weakness - in other words, information consistent with a Feedback model.

It should be noted that, in the sample studied, all teacher/pupil interaction where the teacher invites the pupil to reply is prompted by a weakness of the pupil's work. In order to make the distinction between this initial Negative evaluation, and on occasions acceptance by the teacher that the pupil has found the answer, a category identifying the instances of the teacher's acknowledgement of the pupil's subsequent success was added:

Acknowledgement of
the pupil's success,
following teacher
questioning

The comment is an acknowledgement
of the pupil's success in correcting
his weakness, following teacher
questioning;
e.g. "That's it".

3) Pupil Initiated Teacher/Pupil Interaction

Where the pupil initiates the interaction, two forms of initiating question were identified of relevance to categorisation of the teachers' comments: one simply asks a question about an aspect of the pupil's work; the other includes in the question a possible answer. For example, in the former instance, the pupil may ask how a certain word is spelt; while, in the latter instance, he would ask if a certain word is spelt in a certain way. Since this difference has a bearing on how much information is needed from the teacher, it was taken into account in categorisation of the teachers' replies.

Accordingly, the teacher's reply was either acceptance of the possible answer contained in the pupil's question, that is a Positive evaluation of the pupil's performance; or it was feedback information; or it initiated the questioning approach found in teacher-initiated interaction, and so implied an initial Negative evaluation. From these, the categories were: the feedback categories, the category acknowledging the pupil's ultimate success, where a questioning approach was employed, and a category for the teacher's acknowledgement that the possible answer in the pupil's initiating question was correct.

Hence the additional category:

Teacher Confirmation
of the Pupil's
suggested answer

The comment acknowledges that the
pupil's suggested answer to his own
question is correct;

e.g. Pupil: Is belief spelt

b-e-l-i-e-f?

Teacher: Yes.

Discovery of the diverse patterns whereby interaction, relevant to a pupil's difficulty or weakness, may be both initiated in different ways, and ended in different ways, raised a problem which went beyond that of operationalising the research questions. Rather, it pointed back to questions of conceptual definition, raising issues not so far considered about how broadly the concept of 'feedback' was to be defined. Were the patterns of pupil initiation, of teacher questioning in response to a perceived weakness or difficulty, and of interaction terminated by acknowledgement of a pupil's successful resolution of the problem to be considered as consistent with the activity of an idealised Feedback homunculus?

In the event, since the three forms of interaction have in common both a teacher intention to help overcome a weakness - whether by questioning or other means - and an intention of monitoring the pupil's performance to offer an evaluation, then they may all be identified as consistent with the activity of a Feedback homunculus. However, insofar as the use of questioning to attain these goals - whether it is pursued until successful, or terminated with the provision of the more indirect form of feedback - may imply an additional intention of teaching pupils how to think through their difficulties, or to identify their weaknesses for themselves, these interactions, characterised in part by questioning, should be regarded as important distinct sub-types of the Feedback homunculus.

Feedback Model : Empirical Findings

With regard to the dual purpose of the investigation of comments in individualised teaching, it was decided first to test the validity

of the Feedback homunculus before going on to consider in greater detail the nature of the feedback provided.

Table 60 records some general information about these individualised teaching lessons of relevance to the subsequent report of the characteristics of comments as feedback. It should be noted that the final column identifies how many comments each pupil would have received on average only if the total comments had been distributed equally among them:

TABLE 60

Teachers	Total No.of lessons over the two week period containing individualised comments	Approx. Time on Average spent on each lesson	Total No.of Pupils in Class	Total No.of Individualised comments over 'n' lessons	Average No.of Comments per pupil over the two week period
1	5	40 mins.	27	225	8
2	5	10 mins.	28	54	2
3	2	20 mins.	22	16	1
4	2	40 mins.	27	85	3
5	2	20 mins.	31	14	1
6	5	55 mins.	29	63	2

In reporting the findings, the data relating to the different forms of teacher/pupil interaction are presented individually, where their individualising characteristics may be significant for the analysis.

On Model-Testing properties

1) "Most Comments will contain an Evaluation"

Table 61 presents the number of teacher comments which contain an evaluation against those in which an evaluation was not apparent

TABLE 61

Teacher	Teacher-Initiated						Pupil-Initiated		
	No Pupil Reply			Pupil Reply			Pos. Eval.	Neg. Eval.	Neut. Eval.
Pos. Eval.	Neg. Eval.	Neut. Eval.	Pos. Eval.	Neg. Eval.	Neut. Eval.				
1	50	111	Nil	Nil	54	Nil	3	37	Nil
2	20	10	Nil	Nil	1	Nil	5	18	Nil
3	3	3	Nil	Nil	4	Nil	3	3	Nil
4	33	28	Nil	Nil	8	Nil	7	9	Nil
5	Nil	2	Nil	Nil	2	Nil	3	7	Nil
6	2	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	5	56	Nil

From the Table, it is clear that all comments contain an evaluation, whether the interaction is teacher or pupil-initiated.

2) "There will be a significant incidence of Negative evaluation comments"

If the three forms of teacher-pupil interaction are considered as a whole, comments which evaluate negatively are dominant by a fair margin (Table 61). However, when each form is considered individually, it may be noted that, with the exception of Teacher 1, "No Pupil Reply" comments are distributed more or less equally between Positive and

TABLE 64

Pupil Initiated

Teachers	Spec. Desc.	Norm.	Caus.	Corr.	Dir.	A.S.W.	No.of Neg. Comments with only simple eval.	No.of inter- actions in which pupil finds the answer after questioning	Total No.of Questioning Interactions	Total No.of Neg. Comments
1	32	1	Nil	17	5	Nil	Nil	5	8	37
2	18	4	Nil	12	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	18
3	3	Nil	Nil	3	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	3
4	9	Nil	Nil	7	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	2	9
5	7	Nil	Nil	3	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	2	7
6	50	Nil	Nil	36	6	1	Nil	5	17	56

Within the total Negative comment population, only 7 comments are restricted to the provision of simple evaluation.

Table 63 (final column) and Table 64 (penultimate column) may be interpreted as recording the instances of teacher questioning of pupils as against the more direct form of feedback provision. If the instances of teacher questioning are compared with the total number of comments in Table 62, together with those remaining in Table 64 when the figures for questioning are abstracted, it is apparent that questioning features much less often than the offer of direct feedback, the respective numbers being 100 against 253. Hence the data are held to support a main feedback purpose in individualised commenting, though this is not to deny a possible additional purpose in relation to questioning.

Accordingly, the findings of Tables 62-64 are consistent with the hypothesis that Negative comments will offer information beyond simple evaluation, and of help in directing the pupil to what he should do now towards correction of his weakness.

4) "There will be significant differentiation in the kind of help offered"

Tables 62-64 (above) provide support for the characteristic of differentiation of feedback information, where five distinct types of informational feedback, or multiples of types are identified.

In summary, the empirical data reveal a significant incidence of the properties identified as consistent with a Feedback homunculus:

thus, all comments contain an evaluation, the majority of which are Negative; within Negative comments there is a preponderance of comments containing constructive help for the learner, and in addition, there is evidence of substantial differentiation in the kind of help offered. It may be concluded, therefore, that the properties of individualised comments allow their interpretation in terms of a Feedback explanation.

It remains, then, to consider in some detail the characteristics of the feedback provided.

The Feedback Characteristics of Oral Comments in Individualised Teaching

Tables 65-67 tabulate the distribution of the Feedback characteristics of teachers' oral comments. Though the three forms of teacher/pupil interaction are presented separately, the Tables each refer to the same group of lessons. Where a lesson or group of lessons contain no comments of any one form of interaction, these lessons do not figure in the appropriate Table(s). For example, teacher 6 has no teacher-initiated comments in lesson-group K; hence, lesson-group K is not included in either Table 65 or Table 66.

Within each teacher's total number of individualised lessons, the findings of lessons which are concerned with the same kind of lesson theme have been combined. Thus, teacher 1's lessons focussed on two different themes, but involved in total five individual teaching sessions; whereas teacher 4's focussed on only one, which comprised two individual teaching sessions.

The number of comments in any one lesson-group should not be taken as indicative in any way of the time spent on these lessons.

Reading from left to right across the Tables, lesson themes are:

- lesson-group A - Class reader, totalling four teaching sessions;
- lesson-group B - Grammar exercise, totalling one teaching session;
- lesson-group C - Poetry, totalling three teaching sessions;
- lesson-group D - Interpretation, totalling two teaching sessions;
- lesson-group E - Descriptive writing, totalling one teaching session;
- lesson-group F - Class reader, totalling one teaching session;
- lesson-group G - Poetry, totalling two teaching sessions;
- lesson-group H - Class reader, totalling two teaching sessions;
- lesson-group J - Creative writing, totalling two teaching sessions;
- lesson-group K - Interpretation, totalling three teaching sessions.

TABLE 66

		Teacher Initiated Teacher/Pupil Oral Interaction					Total	
		Teacher 1		Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4		Teacher 5
		lesson group A	lesson group B	lesson group C	lesson group F	lesson group G		lesson group H
Referent - Grammar		4	22	Nil	1	1	Nil	28
Expressive		Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	3	Nil	3
Imagination		28	Nil	1	3	4	2	38
General		Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Appearance		Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Working Inst		Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Rating	Positive	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	Negative	32	22	1	4	8	2	69
	Explicit	24	19	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	43
	Implicit	8	3	1	4	8	2	26
Descr.	Spec.Desc.	6	3	Nil	3	3	Nil	15
	Normative	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	Causal	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	Correction	Nil	3	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	3
	Direction - Pres.	5	Nil	Nil	3	1	Nil	9
	Pros.	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	Weakness - Comp. Assumed	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1
	Weakness - Comp. Not Assumed	4	Nil	Nil	3	1	Nil	8
	Recog.of Partic. Pupil	2	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	2
	Attribution of Source Weakness	Nil	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1
	Accepts - following questioning	26	19	1	1	5	2	54

Report of the Findings

The Tables identify Grammar comments as dominant overall within the referent dimension. However, if the one lesson-group devoted to Grammar aspects of written English is excluded, lesson-group B, then Imagination encodings predominate, followed in descending order by Grammar, General, Working Instructions, Expressive and Appearance. Teacher 4 is the exception here with an almost equal distribution between Grammar and Imagination categories. Moreover, T4 is the only teacher to refer to Expressive aspects of the pupils' work.

It may be noted at this point that General comments figure only when pupils are not engaged verbally in the interaction, their percentage of these comments being 17%; and further that some 60% of teacher 2's comments, and all of teacher 6's (2 comments only) are General referent.

All comments contain identifiable evaluations of which the majority are Negative (77%) and Implicit (52%). If the General comments are considered separately, however, 87% are found to be Positive and Explicit in evaluation.

Some 48% of comments are Specific Description, of which 6% are Normative, 21% are Correction, and 11% are Direction. Where Direction is used, it tends more towards Prescription in terms which do not assume that the pupil understands the nature of his weakness. Further, 7% of the comments refer to the pupil by name, and 1% attribute the weakness to an individual characteristic of the pupil.

If 'No Pupil Oral Interaction' comments are considered independently, since this form is more strictly comparable in findings with the written comment data, then Specific Description engrosses 56% of encodings, Normative 11%, Correction 21%, Direction 17%, Recognition of the Particular Pupil 14%, and Attribution of the Source Weakness 1%.

Comparison of the three different forms of teacher/pupil interaction suggests that comments are most often characterised as not requiring oral response from the pupils. However, when the different forms are compared on an individual basis, teachers 3 and 5 have very few comments altogether, but more of these are pupil rather than teacher-initiated. Teacher 6, on the other hand, with only two teacher-initiated comments has the highest number overall of pupil-initiated ones.

In teacher-initiated teacher/pupil oral interaction, though some 78% of the interaction is terminated by the pupil finding the correct answer as a consequence of the teachers' questions, this form of interaction is extensively used by only one teacher, teacher 1. By comparison, where pupils initiate, the interaction is most often terminated by the teacher offering the correct answer; that is, 60% of teacher replies to pupils' questions end with the provision of Correction. It may be of interest with reference to the foregoing that Imagination referents are the single largest category of pupil-initiated comments.

If teachers are compared in relation to the kind of help offered to pupils in a similar teaching context, the data on lesson-groups B

and G are noteworthy. Thus, teacher 1 in a lesson exclusively concerned with Grammar aspects of English makes relatively low use of Correction (19% of Negative comments), high use of Normative (21% of Negative comments), and some use of Questioning (16%); while teacher 4, in a lesson-group containing a majority of Grammar referents, makes high use of Correction (60% of Negative comments), a lesser use of Normative (16% of Negative comments), and again some use of Questioning (11%).

Discussion

Perhaps the most striking feature of oral comments to emerge from the empirical data is the apparent infrequency of their use. This is implied both in the number of lessons which figure individualised oral commenting, and in the number of comments contained in each lesson. Of the six teachers, only teachers 1 and 6 allocate a considerable proportion of teaching time to lessons involving oral commenting. Though teacher 6 has the highest allocation of time to such lessons, teacher 1's lessons contain most comments overall, and by a fair margin. However, it should be remembered with reference to teacher 6 that almost all of her comments are pupil-initiated.

When oral comment data are compared with their written counterpart, the small number of the former is even more apparent. Thus over a total of 15 lessons 2288 written comments were identified, whereas 21 lessons yielded only 487 oral comments.

In one respect, the low incidence of oral comments is not difficult to understand when it is remembered that oral comments occur when

pupils are engaged with the work receiving comments. Hence, the activity is restricted to a fixed time. But, in addition, where comments include verbal responses from the pupils, each instance of a comment is likely to be more time-consuming than comments without verbal interaction. This must be particularly so with written comments, which, from the evidence, appear to favour abbreviated forms. Considerations of time too, may also account for the finding that most oral comments are in the form of 'No Pupil Oral Interaction'.

More difficult to explain is the finding that some teachers offer very little oral commenting. It may or may not be relevant to this issue that the teachers most concerned, teachers 3 and 5, both had 'high-ability' classes. More explicitly, it could be that the educational development of these pupils is believed to be better promoted if they are left to get on with their work relatively undisturbed. But, whatever the explanation, the pupils would appear to acquiesce in the situation insofar as these lessons also contain fewest pupil initiations.

On the other hand, the findings relating to the teacher who has most pupil-initiated comments but least of all teacher-initiated ones suggest more that this teacher believes pupils should be left to identify their inadequacies of performance for themselves, rather as if only those weaknesses which pupils identify unsolicited are likely to benefit from teacher feedback.

The dominance of the Grammar referent in one lesson, when held against the total numbers in any other lesson, would seem to support the

inference of written commenting that the characteristics of Grammar allow an ease of commenting denied to the other referent categories. In other words, given a comparable availability of time, when the focus of the lesson is Grammar, more comments may be included.

Moreover, that Grammar is only the second highest referent, if 'lesson' B is excluded, but overwhelmingly highest in all written commenting, would seem to support a further reason for the predominance of Grammar in written comments, and that is, that the characteristics of the other referent groups may make them more suited to the oral comment. Hence, with reference to Imagination comments in particular it was suggested that their message would tend to call for both explanation and feedback from the pupil about the extent of his understanding. Consequently, the concerns of Imagination commenting would seem better considered in oral form when the pupils are present, and this suggestion is supported by the oral comment data.

Oral comments have more Negative than Positive evaluations, and most evaluations are Implicit. Nevertheless, if teacher-initiated oral interaction comments are abstracted, since most of these employ teacher-questioning followed by acknowledgement that the pupil has found the correct answer, then the balances of Negative against Positive, and of Implicit against Explicit are more nearly equal.

In part, this finding is associated with the high percentage of General comments, most of which are Positive and Explicit. If the proportion of General comments is compared with the proportion of General written comments on the other hand, why oral comments should seem to cater more for pupil incentive than written comments is not so readily discernible.

The lower percentage of Specific Description in 'No Pupil Oral Interaction' comments, when compared with written comments, is consistent too with the higher percentage of Positive evaluations in this form of interaction; however, in teacher-initiated interaction as a group (Tables 64 and 65), the lower percentage of Specific Description may also be associated with the incidences of teacher-questioning as a means of helping the pupil towards improving his performance.

When 'No Pupil Oral Interaction' comments are compared independently with the written comment data, the divergence of findings in relation to each form is not only maintained but strengthened, the exception being a more equal balance of Specific Description. Hence Correction retains its lower use in oral form, while Normative, Direction and Recognition of the Particular Pupil are more frequently used than in written comments.

The finding of a lower percentage of Correction encodings, and a higher percentage of Normative encodings overall than with written comments would seem likely to be associated with the much higher percentage of Imagination comments among oral data. It may be recalled that Imagination written comments were also notable in having less Correction and more Normative encodings than other referent categories, it being concluded that it was of the nature of Imagination aspects of English to be unsuited to the provision of Correction, but by the same token more likely to attract Normative feedback.

However, the foregoing conclusion has been tempered somewhat by the finding of a high percentage of Normative and a low percentage of

Correction in the lesson exclusively concerned with Grammar aspects. In other words, the findings here are as much a pointer to the greater potential of the oral medium in the provision of feedback, as to the demands of the more complex aspects of English.

In summary, what implications may be drawn from the investigation of oral comments as feedback? First, they may be held to support an implication of written comments that the preponderance of Grammar referent comments is a product of the properties of written communication insofar as it is both more time-consuming than the oral form, and calls for a clarity of message not essential in oral communication. In other words, Grammar aspects of English would seem most adaptable to feedback in writing.

Oral comments too support the implications of the written comment study, in particular the data of the interviews, that written comments are of limited usefulness as an approach to teaching. This is suggested mainly by the large incidence of Imagination comments in the oral form as compared with the written.

But, perhaps overall, the examination of oral comments conveys most the richness of their feedback provision, which is reflected both in the wide range of kinds of help offered, and in the distinctions among teachers in using different patterns of comments in different contexts. Consequently, generalisations about oral comments are not only difficult to make, this very difficulty is a pointer to the adaptability of oral comments, and subsequently to their greater potential as a medium for feedback.

Conclusion

Comments in individualised teaching, unlike those for whole-class teaching, were found to be consistent with a feedback conceptualisation, and to offer additional insight into the implications of the written comment study. In particular, the oral comment investigation stressed that the provision of feedback on individualised learning would appear to be constrained in a number of ways. In consequence, feedback on an individual basis appeared to play a decidedly minor role in pupil learning in English teaching.

These issues will be considered in greater detail in the final chapter.

PART III

TEACHERS' IMAGES OF WHOLE-CLASS ORAL TEACHING

Chapter 9 Interviews with Teachers on Whole-Class Oral Teaching

The attempt to rationalise the function of teachers' oral comments in whole-class oral teaching led to the construction of a model explanation of the pattern of teaching behaviour in which the comment figures. From the model, the characteristics which comments should have, given its validity, were identified; the empirical data on comments were subsequently examined for these characteristics; and the said characteristics were found to be present.

The correspondence of comments with the model gave support to the validity of the Demonstration homunculus as a rationalisation which explains the pattern of teaching behaviour in terms of acts positively directed towards the facilitation of learning. On the other hand, in the author's experience, such an explanation has no currency among English specialists; for instance, it does not figure in the literature on English teaching. Accordingly, insofar as teachers' morale, and their capacity to evaluate and refine their teaching is likely to be dependent on having just such a coherent rationale, the support of the empirical data for the Demonstration explanation raised the question of the extent to which teachers themselves understand their teaching in these terms. For instance, if teachers conceive of themselves as trying to do something more ambitious and failing; or, alternatively, if they believe they are achieving something more ambitious, then they do not have a starting point for a realistic monitoring of their own teaching.

Thus, in order to investigate this issue, it was necessary to invite teachers to articulate their perspectives on this one aspect of English teaching. It would have been valuable here to have explored the

perspectives of the teachers who supplied the original data relevant to testing the model. However, by the time the model had been clearly articulated, and tested, it was too late to do so. Moreover, there was some advantage in inviting different teachers to participate in the study since this allowed consideration of the extent to which the observed behaviours of whole-class teaching, basic to construction of the model, were generalisable to other teachers; in other words, as a precursor to exploring the accounts of these other teachers on their whole-class teaching, it was necessary to verify that they did teach in this way by first observing their teaching.

With reference to the subsequent intention to explore the teachers' accounts of their teaching, the initial concern was to identify exactly what information should be sought from teachers, and how it should be sought.

Research Questions

Insofar as it was the Demonstration homunculus which pointed the way to the present research undertaking, clearly an important consideration was the extent to which teachers rationalise their teaching in accordance with a Demonstration explanation. It may be that the teacher's explanation wholly accords with the model; or it may agree only in parts; or it may not correspond conceptually at all.

A second question, arising mainly from the recommendations to English teachers (C.C.E. 1971, p.12), and therefore presumed influential advice from the point of view of the practising teacher, was the extent to which the teachers may be attempting to operationalise the recommendations relevant to whole-class oral teaching. In other words: to

what extent do they perceive their teaching in terms of a Discussion model, where the Discussion method is articulated as "questioning by pupils, the free expression of opinion, the active involvement of everyone in the process of subjecting the material to close scrutiny"?

Finally, since teachers may not perceive their teaching as related to either of the foregoing two models, the third consideration was the identification of the terms in which teachers do rationalise their teaching.

In summary, the research questions are:

- (1) To what extent do teachers rationalise their teaching in accordance with the Demonstration model?
- (2) To what extent do teachers rationalise their teaching in accordance with the Discussion method?
- (3) In what terms do they rationalise their teaching?

Research Procedure

As a means of seeking answers to the research questions, it was decided that the interview would be the most appropriate technique, since it allowed the expression of views in as detailed and as expansive a manner as the respondent might wish, and it was important to the research purpose to encourage such free expression. As a preliminary to the interview, it would be necessary to verify that the teacher respondents did teach in accordance with the behaviour identified as typical of whole-class oral teaching. Thus, the interview must be preceded by a short period of observation of each teacher's teaching. With regard to the interviews themselves, it was necessary to specify what questions would be most likely to

elicit the desired information from respondents.

Given the aim to identify the teachers' images of their teaching, in the interests of valid research findings it was important that the questions should not prompt the respondent towards the selection of any one kind of response rather than another. In other words, the questions should neither contain assumptions about the teachers' viewpoints, nor should they imply the terms in which a reply might be expected. Ideally, then, the questions should be so framed as to encourage the interviewee to select for himself the terms of his response.

To this end, the proposal was to seek first an answer to the third question: in what terms do teachers rationalise their teaching?

The terms of the response to this question should offer information too of relevance to the first and second questions. However, since it was thought unlikely that, in the event, the respondent's replies would also offer clear information on the other two, it was intended at a later stage of the interview, and taking account of earlier replies, to point the questions more specifically towards obtaining information relating to the model, and to the Discussion approach.

Thus, to obtain an answer to the question "In what terms do teachers rationalise their teaching?", the following procedure was adopted:

The pattern of typical whole-class oral teaching was described before asking the respondent if he agreed that his teaching accorded with this pattern, the pattern being:

- (1) the teacher is referring to a text which is new to the pupils in the sense that the teacher has not previously considered this text, or the part under scrutiny, with this class;

- (2) the teaching process is that the teacher asks a question, which a pupil is expected to answer; when the teacher receives an appropriate answer, he comments on it, before asking another question. If no-one replies, or an appropriate answer is not forthcoming, generally speaking the teacher does not supply the answer himself, but rather rephrases the question, or asks another question related to the same issue;
- (3) the teacher has an answer in mind when asking the question, and will usually move the lesson forward to a different question when this answer is offered by a pupil;
- (4) in general, it does not really matter which pupil answers the question.

Assuming the teacher's concurrence, he would then be asked if he would make explicit what he was doing, and why he was doing it in this way.

The question "To what extent do teachers rationalise their teaching in accordance with the Demonstration model?" was more particularly operationalised by asking, where necessary, what the teacher perceived as the role of the question; what he perceived as the role of the pupil's answer; and was it important which pupil answered.

The question "To what extent do teachers rationalise their teaching in accordance with the Discussion model?" was more particularly operationalised by introducing, where necessary, the concept of Discussion teaching, defined as (C.C.E. 1971, p.12) "... questioning by pupils, the free expression of opinion, the active involvement of everyone in the process of subjecting the material to close scrutiny"; then asking the respondent for his views on this approach to teaching.

Data Collection

Six teachers were invited to co-operate in this stage of the research, three from each of two Comprehensive schools.

It was explained to the teachers that the findings of an earlier investigation had led to the consideration of an aspect of teaching in greater detail than had been anticipated at the stage of data gathering. As a result, data relevant to this aspect had not been collected, and by the time the need for such data became apparent, some considerable time had elapsed. Consequently, it was believed that the interests of the research would be better served by inviting a different group of teachers to participate. Assuming the agreement of the teachers, their participation would involve them in an interview, the purpose of which was to obtain the teachers' perspectives on one feature of their teaching. First, however, it would be necessary to verify that any teacher interviewed did, in fact, teach according to the behaviour identified as characteristic of this one area of English teaching. Hence, this would entail the observation of a few lessons with each teacher. Further, it was explained that the investigation was concerned with the teaching of third-year classes.

The six teachers who agreed to participate were subsequently observed in their teaching of a third year group over several lessons. Five of the six teachers ranged from four to six years experience of teaching, and the sixth had more than thirty years experience of teaching.

Report of the Interviews

The reports of the interviews were organised according to each

teacher's response to the three research questions, with any information offered by the respondent which was additional to these included at the point of the report in relation to which the information appeared most relevant.

It was decided to report the interviews individually, and with extensive quotation, for several reasons. The first was that the replies were sufficiently different, and the differences of sufficient interest and relevance to warrant the relay of the differences in the presentation of the results. The second was that extensive quotation allowed a more public verifiability of the data analysis, and so should minimise doubts about possible misrepresentation of the teachers' opinions. The third was that the interviews were few enough and each of short enough duration to render this method of presentation manageable for the reader.

Below, the format of the report of the interviews is set forth. It should be noted here that this format does not correspond to the format of the interview but is rather a consequence of the author's organisation of, and abstraction from, what was said in the interviews.

Accordingly, each interview report identifies in the following sequence:

- (1) the extent of the teacher's agreement that her teaching parallels the behaviour identified as characteristic of whole-class teaching;
- (2) the teacher's explanation of her teaching in comparison with the Demonstration explanation;
- (3) the terms in which the teacher regards her teaching, together with possible aspirations;
- (4) the extent to which the teacher's perspective of her teaching corresponds with the Discussion method;

- (5) the teacher's identification of constraints in teaching;
- (6) any additional information relevant to the teacher's image of whole-class oral teaching.

Miss D

Miss D recognises herself as using the pattern identified as typical, with the exception that she usually selects which pupil shall speak. Her reasons for doing so are that otherwise either no-one answers, or they all want to speak at the same time. In other words, she is partly selecting pupils as a means of maintaining order, and partly selecting them to give the teaching strategy impetus. To put the point another way, if pupils could be relied upon both to volunteer and to respond in an orderly fashion, there would be no reason for the teacher to be the selector of the pupil respondent. Miss D's explanation here, therefore, does not conflict with the Demonstration explanation, where it is assumed that in general it does not matter which pupil answers:

I tend to ask certain people because they're a class who find it difficult to discuss. They either all want to say something at the one time, or they don't want to say anything at all. I'm trying really hard with them to get them to discuss properly ... I'm sort of half-way between getting a proper discussion rather than ask them in particular. I find if I leave a question open, you'll notice that they talk to one another about an answer. I haven't overcome that yet.

Miss D regards questions as a means of helping pupils to form their own opinions, but the question has to give some guidance to the pupil to help towards appropriate thinking, otherwise he will be unable to form an acceptable opinion:

If you leave it to them to give their own ideas nothing will come ... But I'm really trying to

build up their opinions. Of course you're going to lead them because some of them will be barking up the wrong tree.

By this process, the teacher hopes to bring pupils to a better awareness of what the text, and the literature in general has to offer - presumably by the answers they find to the questions, and, more, to bring pupils to ask themselves questions about a text they are reading.

I want to make them aware that what they are reading, there's some value in it ... I think they could learn a lot from what they are reading, and build upon it ... I don't want to indoctrinate them but I want them to make themselves think about what they're reading ... if they can get to the stage where they ask themselves questions, it (questioning) comes automatically to them - or a lot easier and therefore they're able to cope with the work of the exams. Most children read a book because of the plot, and I want them to see more in (a book) than the plot.

Teacher's image of the role of the question would seem to imply that it's use will hopefully become habitual to the pupil in his reading. He (the pupil) will come to adopt a questioning approach to his reading. If this is so, the teacher's approach to consideration of a text may be held to be offering a model of how texts should be read. So here again the question would appear to be playing a part consistent with the explanation of the model.

The pupil's answer to the question is expected to be used by the other pupils as a means of checking their own answer. If the pupils disagree in any way they are expected to say so, in part because their reply may be an equally valid answer, and in part because their answer gives the teacher feedback on how they arrive at their viewpoint. Hence presumably answers also allow the teacher to understand how pupils may be responding to her teaching. This image of the pupil's answer therefore does not correspond with the explanation of the model, where it is held

that the pupil's answer supports the effectiveness of the demonstration as an approach to text-reading by testifying that the asking of such questions does lead to a better understanding of a text:

I want (the pupils) to hear what this person has to say, and if that's what they've been looking for, and there's nothing else forthcoming that they accepted that, and I've told them if they disagree to say so. It's up to them to put forward the various viewpoints ... that I might not see something that another person would see ... That's where English is different from say Maths. or Science - there's not the one answer, and it's getting them to realise it. I'll say to them 'Well, what do you think?' I always think it's important to see how they're getting their viewpoints as well, and whether or not you can work out how they're going along these lines, like the boy who said the scalding waterfall wasn't true because you can't get a scalding waterfall. Well, again, he was trying to be scientific, he's a technical kind of person, he couldn't see the literary part of it ... I'm glad he opened his mouth and said that.

Further, Miss D's explanation of her teaching does not coincide with the model in the sense that there is no suggestion that she has either the intention of seeking out potential correct answers or potential incorrect answers. She would appear to be suggesting that she simply selects pupils randomly and the observation of her teaching would support this interpretation. When an adequate answer is forthcoming, presumably she sees this as the point to move the lesson forward, relying on differences in understanding being introduced by the pupils concerned - though she recognises the situation is not ideal:

That's a problem as well. Some of them say 'Well, that's the answer, so whatever I say must be wrong', but partly laziness as well.

Miss D regards her teaching as a compromise version of a Discussion Approach - her aim being to teach by the Discussion method, but with this aim not so far realised in her teaching. She believes that if pupils could discuss issues in an orderly manner, that is allowing each other to speak and listening with the purpose of learning from

each other, that such discussion would help them to think independently. This would both give them confidence in their own opinions, and be beneficial to them in examination situations where there is no longer a teacher available to guide their thinking.

I'm trying really hard to get them to discuss properly ... They either all want to say something at the one time or they don't want to say anything at all ... I'm sort of half-way between getting a proper discussion, rather than ask them in particular... I can get some response from them but they're not all listening to that person. They'll listen to me ... but they'll not listen to each other, and I can't get through to them yet that they can learn from one another... I would like to get to the stage where they're asking me questions...

I think (discussion approach) opens their mind to question what they're doing ... When they're in exams, there's no-one to lead them, no-one to guide them at all, no-one to ask them questions. They've got to ask themselves questions. If they get to the stage where they ask themselves questions, it comes automatically to them, or a lot easier, and therefore they're able to cope with the work of the exams ... I think it gives them confidence as well. This harks back to my own education, where I was always afraid of opening my mouth in case I was made a fool of.

The conditions perceived by Miss D as working against the successful use of a Discussion strategy fall into several broad categories: there is first that the behaviour of the pupils is considered inappropriate for fruitful discussion. They either all want to speak at once, and are not prepared to listen to each other; or they are afraid to speak in case they invite criticism. When they do contribute to the discussion in an orderly fashion, some are over-critical, and some are reluctant to offer any criticism:

The girls won't criticise each other, and get embarrassed. The boys tear pieces off each other which makes them more reserved, so they won't volunteer though if you ask them usually they have something to say.

The teacher suggests that unresponsive pupil behaviour may also be a consequence of peer group norms where it is important to avoid being identified with the teacher:

They (the pupils) want to be one of the gang. They don't want to be too much associated with the teacher - apart from the two in the front. They want to talk to me all the time ... I think it's basically the way we're brought up as well.

Then there is the problem of pupils genuinely having no response at all when they are invited to contribute their ideas. Teacher believes this is partly caused by their lack of experience in thinking about a wide range of subjects; and partly caused by their lack of interest in subjects which the teacher introduces with the intention of widening their horizons, but which the pupils tend to see, initially at least, as boring. Such a situation adds to the difficulties of obtaining some kind of voluntary expression of the pupils' opinions. Moreover, the situation may be further aggravated by what texts are available for the teacher's use, since these may not always cater both for the need to interest the pupils, and the need to educate them:

If you leave it to them to give their own ideas, nothing will come. They'll give their own opinions on certain topics that they're interested in, but that's not ... they're very narrow-minded in that sense. It's got to be what they're interested in, and they don't view something like old age - that's boring. In a lot of ways they want something you've done with the first year to get them interested, like prehistoric animals, but I want to steer them away from what they want because I tend to think it more widens their horizons ... I find that a text that's demanding enough and one that they'd be interested in is very hard to choose for that particular class ... Then, of course, it depends on what books are in the cupboard. That narrows it (the choice) a lot.

Miss D recognises problems in her version of a Discussion approach which is that the responsibility for what is learned must rest to a large extent with the pupils in the sense that they are expected to question an accepted pupil answer if they disagree. She suggests that pupils may be reluctant to do so, because they fail to recognise either that more than one answer may be acceptable, and hence believe that their disagreement with the accepted answer must mean they are wrong: or that, even if their answer is wrong, by expressing it they may be helped to better understand their weakness, and so profit from the situation.

A lot of people frown upon discussion but I think it gives them confidence. This harks back to my own education where I was always afraid of opening my mouth in case I made a fool of myself - so I won't force anybody to answer - I'll go to someone else ... I would sit in tutorials and never open my mouth ... but I had something to say and it wasn't as silly as I had thought ... and it got a conversation going, then you began to learn things from it ... and I've got that at the back of my mind.

She is also of the opinion that some pupils may not disagree through laziness on their part.

Miss D identifies problems general to teaching without relating these to any particular teaching method. One is that pupils have considerable difficulty in communicating their ideas, particularly orally; another is that considerations of time limit how much of any one text is examined; and another is that finding a correct balance between what is considered educationally helpful to the child, and the need to prepare him for examinations is difficult.

Then, there's the problem of communication. I find that's quite a problem even with them because despite the fact that they're a second

top section, they do find it difficult to communicate verbally as well as in written work. They find it difficult to construct ... Both boys and girls find it difficult to express themselves ...

I choose sections out of books rather than the whole text, because you're never going to give them as much as you could - simply because of the time factor. If you take good parts, it might lead them on to read that book...

Next year they'll be geared so much towards sitting their exam which is what they personally want ... but I feel this year you can spend a lot of time developing them in other ways ... We were doing a thing on newspapers the other day. You know it was amazing what you could get from it ... But looking at their exam papers, I haven't concentrated enough on the exam. You've got to try to find a balance.

It could be that these pressures too are influential in pushing the teacher towards the use of a method which gives greater control to the teacher over classroom interaction.

Miss E

Miss E agrees she uses the pattern identified as typical. She says she does not mind who answers her questions, though she likes to spread her answerers as widely as possible among the pupils so that some pupils don't dominate the lesson while others never contribute at all. Her concern is that a pupil should answer the question, and if no answer is forthcoming, she would rather rephrase the question than supply the answer herself. This is entirely consistent with the Demonstration model.

I like to make sure they (the pupils) all get a shot, and someone's not hogging the lesson; nor someone sits quiet and never contributes anything at all ... When I'm asking questions I want the answer always to come from them, rather than

me explain it to them... I would rather rephrase my question, than supply the answer.

The teacher's contention that she likes to ensure "all get a shot" was not obvious in observation of her teaching; though neither was there firm evidence to the contrary on this point. Moreover, it seems likely that her words relate to her intentions in general about her teaching, and are not to be interpreted as assertions that she always achieves such a purpose.

Miss E perceives the function of the question as a means of engaging the pupils mentally in the issue of the question. In this way they reflect on the idea, and in arriving at an answer are in a much stronger position to retain the learning which has occurred. She stresses also that the activity of thinking, of seeking an answer, is intended as a way of developing their ability to think things out for themselves in other situations. Simply to tell the pupils the answers would be, in her opinion, a much less effective way of helping them to learn, because it would not engage their minds to the same extent, and hence would have less impact developmentally:

It's the same as when they make spelling mistakes, I prefer them to go and look up the dictionary. I feel it's better than me telling them. I feel if they can do it on their own, they retain it better than if I actually just give it to them, because if you give it to them on a plate, it doesn't go in their brains, I don't think. They just take it at face value, and that's it: they've used it on this occasion. But they don't have it in their brains then to use on another occasion. And also if they're thinking things out for themselves, it should lead them on to think out for themselves in other situations.

The use of the question here would appear to bear some resemblance to its function for the Demonstration homunculus. The possible difference

is that with the homunculus the teacher's intention is identified as demonstrating to the pupils that they should imitate the teacher's process of text examination, though it should perhaps be stressed that this is not to imply an intention that pupils should come to recognise this purpose at a conscious level. Miss E gives no clear indication of a demonstration purpose in her method; rather it would appear to be regarded as a means of directly involving the pupils in the activity which, hopefully, will become automatic to them in their response to similar situations - reading being one such situation. In other words, the teacher could be implying that pupils will come to imitate the behaviour of the classroom by selecting such behaviour as appropriate when reading independently; or she could be implying that practising the behaviour will lead to it becoming the automatic response to the situation. But if the latter, then this explanation would seem to ignore that in the examination of a text involving the whole class, it is the teacher who asks the questions. Therefore, it is not clear how it will become part of the pupil's automatic response to ask himself questions.

The pupil's answer to the question is expected to be used by the other pupils as informative in the sense that they should assess to what extent they regard the reply as correct. If they disagree in any way teacher intends that they will say so. She adds that disagreement with a pupil respondent's answer is by no means uncommon; though again such pupil disagreement was not apparent from observation.

I would be hoping when I got an answer from a pupil that the rest would be thinking, 'Yes, that's right'. They would give it. And if they didn't agree, I would hope they'd put up their hand and say it - and usually they do. They don't let someone say something they don't agree with without voicing their opinion.

Here, the pupil's answer is intended to play a role other than that suggested by the Demonstration explanation.

Further, Miss E does not support the explanation of the model in the sense of favouring as respondents those pupils who are assumed to have the correct answer. Rather she would appear to be suggesting that she has a relatively random approach to answer seeking: though she is concerned to involve as many pupils as possible, her emphasis is on obtaining an answer, as opposed to identifying possible wrong answers, or correct ones.

Miss E's method of teaching is not perceived as a compromise attempt to achieve a Discussion approach in the sense that she is striving towards it. She holds that present circumstances make the Discussion method unattainable. However, she regards the Discussion method as ideal if the practicalities of the situation would permit its implementation, and her explanation of her teaching could be interpreted as an adaptation of the ideology of Discussion to the realities of teaching. Thus, Discussion too is intended to involve the pupils in the practice of thinking ideas out for themselves so that they may be better equipped to think independently. Where the methods differ is in how much responsibility for the content of the thinking is left to the pupil:

The ideal situation is to discuss something obviously, but I feel throughout the school this would be very difficult with the size of the groups ... The only other (method) would be Discussion in an ideal situation, if you had a smaller group of children and more time with them.

The conditions perceived by the teacher as rendering discussion unrealisable are several. First, class sizes are too large to

allow effective management of Discussion. As an example, a pupil at one side of the room may disagree with a pupil speaking at the other, but instead of voicing his/her disagreement to the class in general will turn to a neighbour and hold a separate interchange. This means that all too frequently there are a number of discussions going on concurrently:

If you were teaching two or three pupils at a time you could discuss things with them, but the classes are so big. If a child answers here, and you have your attention with that child, then on the other side of the room someone thinks of it, they'll turn to a neighbour and say 'Oh, that's not right', and discuss it there. You can end up with two or three groups all having discussions. It's terribly hard to structure a discussion for a whole group.

A further problem related to the size of the group is that a few pupils reply to all the questions, while quieter pupils have nothing to say. Teacher believes that the unresponsive are inhibited by too large an audience, and by the fear of being criticised or laughed at:

You'll get certain ones who'll reply to every question, but if you could get the other ones on their own I think you could get a discussion going then, and bring them out a lot more. But I feel a lot of them feel inhibited with the size of the group ... It's the same with reading. Some children read very badly in front of the class, but if you have them out to your desk they read fine. They don't want criticism or to be laughed at.

Perhaps an issue related to this last point is the teacher's contention that pupils are unused to the interaction of Discussion, which she expands upon by referring to the reticence of Scottish children in general, and of how English children, for example, are much better at voicing their opinions. She is at a loss to account for this situation, but regards it as a real barrier to effective Discussion.

They're not used to the interaction of a Discussion ... I think Scottish people are a bit backward in conversation, and I think it comes through a lot when you go to places like University ... If you ever see children interviewed on T.V. English children always come across an awful lot better than Scottish children.

Finally, in relation to Discussion teaching, the teacher believes that children do not really have the language at their command necessary to taking part in Discussion, and this too is inhibiting:

A lot of the children don't have the language at their command.

Miss E regards the method of teaching she uses as the most satisfactory under present conditions, and, in this respect she elaborates on certain conditions which appear to her especially problematic and constraining. One overriding problem stressed several times in the interview is the shortage of time which both affects the range of areas of the subject which are covered, and in how much depth individual areas may be considered. Teacher is concerned both at how an important aspect of the subject may be completely overlooked for a time, and about her impression that the wide coverage of the subject means it tends to be taught at a too superficial level:

I often feel that I just don't have enough time with them ... half an hour a day to discuss lots and lots of things, to teach them how to use their language, to teach them to communicate better. It's just not enough time ... I feel there's not enough time to get through all you want to. I feel that with all my classes, there's so much to do, and I sometimes feel we're just managing to scratch the surface ...

You can suddenly realise halfway through the term you haven't done summary work, and they have to do summary for the exams. So you have three weeks solid doing summary, and everything else goes out the window.

The other considerable problem is the conflict experienced by the teacher between educating the child in the sense of improving his language skills and broadening his outlook, and preparing the child for examinations. She is of the opinion that there is too much emphasis outside the classroom on judging the teacher's competence by examination results, and so presumably she does not consider that preparing pupils for examinations is always the same exercise as developing their communication skills:

In all the classes you have the exams you have to prepare them for at the end, and people judge by the end results, not by what you've done with the child all the year through, which I don't think is a very good thing. ... That seems to be the all important thing instead of broadening the child's outlook.

Both the pressure of time and the pressure of the need to prepare pupils, particularly in areas of the subjects which figure in examinations, would seem also to be likely to discourage the practice of allowing the pupils too much responsibility for controlling the lessons.

Miss L

Miss L agrees that she uses the pattern identified as typical, but with some qualification. Thus, though in general it does not matter which pupil answers, she tries to note if any pupils appear to be having learning difficulties, in order to select these pupils as respondents, and help resolve their difficulty:

There are pupils who are poorer than others and just don't understand, and I would choose some of them to answer. ... I don't always ask the poorer ones but I try to on occasions ... I

really want to make sure they (the pupils) understand what they've read and ask (some) questions for that reason ... You also watch to see their faces - and look for those who don't understand.

There is some suggestion here, therefore, that one part of the teacher's purpose in selecting pupils is as a means of identifying learning weaknesses and helping the pupils overcome these. Such a purpose is not in accordance with the Demonstration homunculus; nor was there indication from observation of the teacher's behaviour that resolving pupil learning weaknesses might be one of her teaching purposes.

Miss L's questions are intended to engage the pupils in thinking along the lines directed by the teacher. Without the guidance offered by the teacher's questions, the pupils' thinking is too limited.

Sometimes the teacher does not mind what answers are forthcoming as long as the pupils are involved in thinking, though in general she is attempting to ensure their answer conveys a good understanding of the text.

The questions are supposed to make them think ... I really want to make sure they've understood what they read, and ask (some) questions for that reason ... The children have to be led ... But at an early stage what they say is all very limited ... Sometimes I don't mind what answers I get as long as they're thinking.

By the process of asking questions about a text, the teacher aims to extend the pupils in their experience of literature, in their experience of social situations and other cultures; the teacher aims too to develop the pupils' vocabularies; and to give them more practice in thinking.

We're looking at various forms of literature... The reading of the book will stretch them vocabulary-wise, and experience-wise. There's the knowledge of new cultures which is stretching them ... just thinking about

things they don't normally think about will hopefully also stretch them.

Teacher believes that reading texts in this way will promote the pupils' abilities to understand texts when reading independently though she is not specific about the nature of the relationship and has reservations about the value of the transfer exercise; with regard to the nature of the relationship, she does not say if the pupil is intended to ask himself the kind of questions which the teacher has been asking, or if the experience of finding answers to the questions is thought to develop the pupil's ability to assign meaning to his reading without the preliminary of asking questions. In this case, the competence being transferred to other texts would be the wider experience gained from knowledge of the answers to the teacher's questions; rather than that the asking of such questions is the means whereby meaning is extracted.

Miss L claims further that she sometimes seeks more than one answer to her questions, because there may be more than one valid answer:

I don't think I just ask for one answer ... I ask for several answers because there might be more than one answer.

Again, it was not apparent from the short period of observation of these lessons that the teacher sometimes sought several answers to the same question.

If other pupils disagree with the pupil's answer which is accepted by the teacher, or if they do not understand either the question or the answer, they are expected to say so. Teacher recognises that with a number of pupils this is unlikely to happen because of particular personality traits of the pupils, such as shyness or laziness.

If you ask a child a question and he gives you the right answer and you move on, it doesn't necessarily mean that everybody in the class understood, and you really rely then on pupils speaking up and saying so ... That class will not talk. You have pupils who don't speak up, and still don't understand. I know a lot of the girls are shy, and a lot of the boys are extremely silly, and then there are the lazy ones as well.

Miss L's explanation of her teaching does not coincide with the model insofar as she is not seeking correct answerers. Indeed, in some instances she would contend she is actively seeking incorrect answerers, or those with no answer as a means of remedying these weaknesses. But where this purpose is not in operation, pupils are selected to answer on a random basis, and on occasions according to the teacher's testimony more than one answer is sought.

Miss L was unable to identify the distinction between the method she uses and a Discussion method until the characteristics of Discussion which distinguish them from the method used were stressed:

I find it difficult to define the difference between Question and Answer method and Discussion.

Before and after this point, however, she speaks as if her teaching aspires towards pupils participating and initiating as freely as conditions and her interpretation of what is required of her role will allow:

You ask for several answers and hopefully they'll maybe talk. That class don't talk. I've got to sort of pull them (the answers) out, which is fairly difficult ... Only good classes can have discussions ... Even with good classes, its normally the same people all the time (who contribute) ... It's all very well to say we'll have a discussion, but even when I have a discussion I have to do that method of bringing in all those other people ... It's even difficult with

a good class - by 'good' I'm meaning academic ability - but at least with a good class there are more of them willing to offer ...

The only time I found that (discussion as defined in Bulletin) has happened I had a top section ... I would do my normal question and answer approach, and they would take over, and because I liked what was happening, I allowed it to happen. I like the teaching method I use. If the children can take over and wish to, and it's going to be done properly, I don't mind.

The constraints perceived by the teacher as adverse to the operation of Discussion teaching are several: there is, first, inappropriate pupil behaviour where too many pupils remain silent. The situation is better with the more academically-able pupils, but even so the teacher has to play an initiatory role by directing questions at unresponsive class members. Teacher believes that the unresponsiveness is in part a product of shyness, particularly in the presence of class members of the opposite sex; and, in part, it is a product of the general immaturity of the pupils.

I like having discussions but it depends on the class. Only good classes can have discussions... Children are very inhibited, especially at their age, and the boys and girls are very conscious of one another ... with a good class there are more of them willing to offer ... I wonder if it's just something to do with maturity?

With classes of poor academic ability, there is the additional problem that the discussion tends to go off at irrelevant tangents, because their concentration span is weak:

You can't discuss with a very poor class ... they go off at a tangent. I think it's their concentration span. It's so limited that every so often they'll jump off into 'Did you see so-and-so on the telly last night?' and you're off onto something different altogether.

Further, where a class is willing to talk, teacher is of the opinion that, in general, their thinking is too limited to make much of a contribution to their educational development; while, with younger pupils, there is a tendency to be insensitive to the feelings of others, which situation must be supposed to be detrimental to constructive discussion:

At an early stage what they say is all very limited, and what they say is what they hear their parents say ... They (younger pupils) don't know where to stop. They get carried away and they say things which you know someone else in the class is going to find insulting.

In the few instances where the ideal form of discussion has occurred, the teacher does not hold these as the intended consequence of her behaviour, but rather regards them as the product of the greater maturity, or higher academic ability of the class:

The only time I found that (discussion in its ideal form) has happened I had a top section. You also find with the seniors that that can happen. They feel very adult, and don't take what teachers say as gospel, and they are willing to argue even with the teacher.

Finally, and possibly as a consequence of the tendency of pupils to engage in inappropriate behaviour, teacher suggests that discussion could be a threat to her management of the class.

Discipline's the big thing (limitation). I feel that. In the debate sometimes ... I try to get the person first of all that's got the wee hammer to get control, and if that fails I would take over.

Miss L recognises the problem of her present teaching method is that she is reliant on pupils telling her if they do not understand or if they disagree with what is being said; and that there are a number of

pupils who do not accept this responsibility for their own learning.

Problems identified as adverse to the attainment of the teacher's purposes in whole-class oral lessons are that some classes are very reluctant to contribute to lessons; and that with pupils of poor academic ability, it is unwise to attempt to resolve their weaknesses too much in front of other class members. This is so because they see themselves as being unfairly singled out, become embarrassed, and the result is a generally uncomfortable classroom atmosphere, which is detrimental to the success of the lesson.

I don't always ask the poorer ones ... because they would feel you were picking on them. Plus, if they don't have the answer, they feel embarrassed. I don't like to have an uncomfortable atmosphere, and they don't see it as anything other than you are picking on them.

Both considerations imply the need for a fair degree of teacher initiative if the lesson is to make progress.

Miss O

Miss O accepts that she uses the pattern identified as typical, though sometimes she will select a particular pupil to reply. Her reason may be that she suspects the pupil is not paying attention and so by directing a question at the pupil she will regain his attention; or it may be that the pupil never offers to reply, and that the teacher is of the opinion he/she does not like to commit himself publicly:

There are times when I suspect someone is not paying attention, and I would pull them up that way. Also, there are (some pupils) who do not like to voice their opinion, and I nearly always try to ensure that they answer,

but I don't ask them too often because I know they're so good ... it's just maybe a question of they don't like to commit themselves in front of others.

The teacher's explanation of her occasional selection of pupils does not conflict with the Demonstration homunculus in the respect that it is not generally important to her which pupil answers.

Miss O uses her questions as a way of getting pupils to think about various aspects of a text which she considers of particular importance to the study of English. Without the focus to their thinking offered by the teacher's questions, the pupils would not gain the same understanding of the text. The question also allows the teacher to gain feedback as to whether pupils are understanding what she wants them to: this may be a firm understanding of the plot; or of the techniques of different language genre such as shortstories, or poems; or it may be to improve their vocabularies; or their understanding of different language characteristics:

I would be expecting by the question to get (the pupils) to think about specific things... That class ... will tell me 'You read the parts' (referring to reading a play prior to asking questions about it). I mean I like them to read but they don't make a good job of it. They don't get the feeling coming out; they don't even get the meaning coming out in the words, and I feel it's the same with reading a bit, asking a bit, talking a bit about it (the question-and-answer technique) - more goes through. The only way I feel they know a text well is to do it that way ... The point that I'm wanting feedback on - if it's not got through to them, I'd say 'Well, let's look two pages further back or something...' so I suppose it's a kind of milestone in the lesson (the feedback sought by the question). If I can get over that milestone, then I know I can go on ... You're never sure, but that class would tell me ... that they didn't understand.

Asking questions may be to cement home the plot, to make them think about the characters, whether they are real characters or flat characters, to make them think about the twist which is usually in the short story, vocabulary, figures of speech, the tone of a poem. With each different mechanism I would have slightly different questions.

The teacher is not specific about how the questioning approach may be beneficial to pupils when reading independently, but there is implication that she does not consider the examination of one text as contributing to any extent to the better understanding of texts in general when she refers to pupils not working satisfactorily if asked to consider a text independently:

I had a 5th year section and we did a text in class, and we did it very thoroughly. Then I gave them another text and said 'This is how you do it. You go and do it'. Not one of them did it properly. And I talked to them afterwards and they said they didn't feel confident in their own ability.

In other words, Miss O does not appear to place much educational strength on the process of text examination as a way of extending pupils' learning in a general sense, as opposed to its help in coming to an understanding of the particular text under study. If this is so, Miss O's conceptualisation of whole-class oral teaching is fundamentally divergent from the Demonstration model.

The pupil's answer to the question is a source of feedback to the teacher that her intended learning outcome for the pupils has been achieved. Pupils who do not agree, or understand, are expected to say so, and, generally, the teacher believes that the pupils will do so,

though she concedes that she has pupils who will not volunteer their disagreement or misunderstanding.

I would say until I get a satisfactory answer I wouldn't proceed further. It's going to make me back-track a bit if I see ... the point I'm wanting feedback on - if it's not got through to them, I'd say 'Well, let's look two pages further back'... If I can get over that milestone then I know I can go on, and that hopefully the whole of them - I mean you're never sure - but generally speaking that class would tell me ... that they didn't understand

Miss O's explanation differs from the model too in the sense that she does not have the intention of seeking out correct answerers, though from the slight evidence of observation, the number of correct answers elicited from pupils appeared much greater than the number of incorrect answers. But, this notwithstanding, the teacher intends simply to seek an answer, not minding normally who supplies the answer. When the correct answer is forthcoming, teacher moves the lesson forward, while recognising that there may be some pupils who are not following the lesson and not saying so.

Miss O's teaching does not appear intended towards encouraging a discussion type of lesson in which pupils take a more initiatory role. Thus, her questions are more designed to elicit a particular answer, and so presumably guide pupils' thinking in the direction favoured by the teacher, rather than as a means of encouraging the pupils to think for themselves.

Further, that pupils should take the initiative of calling out their answers appears to be regarded to some extent as more of a threat to class management:

As for the preconceived answer, yes I suppose I

do have that at the back of my mind, and that's the answer I want, though there are times when the children do come up with the things you don't think about, so then you have to say to yourself 'Wait a minute, do we accept this, or do we not?' ... with that class (if somebody calls out the answer) No, I don't mind that because the relationship is such that I don't mind - and I feel that they wouldn't ever go overboard.

Miss O regards her present teaching approach as satisfactory:

I feel happy with this way - I don't know if it's better but I always feel if I am talking to them, and getting verbal answers that it's better ... It gives me more job satisfaction ... I feel it does make it more understandable for them.

In consideration of discussion-type lessons, the teacher regards these as unsatisfactory for several reasons: one is that the pupils do not behave in a manner conducive to the educational development of them all. Some pupils dominate the talking; some pupils have a less than serious attitude conveyed in their response; and some pupils have nothing to say. Teacher is of the opinion that unresponsive pupils benefit more from a more teacher-directed lesson; otherwise they are afraid to commit themselves in public in case their replies are wrong.

In a discussion type lesson you get the chatty kid doing all the talking - be it good or bad - and it can be good ... you get the silly ones saying 'Diarrhoea' or whatever ... The quiet kids are left out of it ... they don't like to commit themselves either way - whether they're frightened that what they say is wrong, I don't know. These kind of kids get more from the old-fashioned method.

Again there tends to be too much digression in a discussion lesson, and the teacher prefers a more rigorously-structured approach:

I'm putting up a word on the board and somebody says something about an earlier point - you know,

it tends to digress more, and isn't as structured as I prefer ... I personally feel that that kind of lesson doesn't go through the same as (the question-and-answer kind of lesson).

On the whole, however, teacher believes that children are not forthcoming, and that this may be accounted for by their immaturity.

Children are not terribly forthcoming, even bright ones ... I think it's a skill that we expect them to have because we can do it (discuss things), but they're not good at it.

Finally, teacher believes that small numbers are necessary to promote a discussion type lesson, otherwise it is difficult to keep the talk on the subject of the discussion.

Numbers would influence ... with a big class, I find that it does run away with itself, and you very easily go off at tangents, with the vociferous ones dominating.

The teacher does not express feelings of constraint in the method she uses; rather she is explicit about her satisfaction with it.

Miss N

Miss N acknowledges her use of the pattern identified as typical with the qualification that where the class cannot supply the answer to her question, as may happen with a less-able section, she explains the answer to them:

It's very gratifying if they see (the answer) right away. And if they don't I usually stop and explain it ... if I've got a poorer class, the questions have got to be couched in a more easily understood way. I tend to do more explaining with (the poorer classes).

The implication would appear to be that Miss N does not favour the rephrasing of her question to the same extent as the other teachers

interviewed, when an appropriate answer to the question is not forthcoming, and this was supported from the evidence of observation.

The teacher regards the questions as a means of helping to train the pupils in a disciplined approach to their reading. In pursuit of this purpose the importance of the process of text examination is identified; and, to this extent the explanation coincides with the explanation of the Demonstration model. However, the teacher is not explicit about how the teacher questions are believed to contribute to the development of the pupils' abilities to read texts independently:

... what seems to me to be a basic principle of teaching is that you are actually there to enable these children to discipline their thoughts not necessarily along your channelled lines but to get into the habit of orderly thinking, orderly attack on say, a work of literature ... There's control in this method ... I'm not talking about classroom control, or classroom management - I'm talking about mental control with the child... The sooner you channel these young minds ... into corridors of discipline the better, even if it's only for the short time that they're in school, some of it will be taken away with them, some of them will say 'Oh, I mind doing that. That's the way you do that' ... I suppose if you want to define education you're supposed to draw it out, so that before you can draw it out, you've got to sort of put it in ... You are actually leading out the knowledge from them, but to do that you've got to put a whole lot of yourself into it.

The aim of these lessons varies with the ability level of the class. With the more academically-able pupils, the teacher's task is to instil an appreciation of the qualities of language in good writing, there being some indication here that pupils may be able to use their understanding of these qualities to improve their own writings. In these classes, the questions are intended to focus the pupils' attention on

the particular characteristics of the language of the text. With less academically-able pupils, who have difficulty extracting any meaning from written material, the teacher is trying to ensure that the text meaning is understood at the most basic level. In these instances, the questions are underlining the main features of the plot, or theme, by focussing the pupils' attention on the relevant details:

When I do a piece of literature ... I want to try and engage the child in a love of language, and a love of the construction say of a Shakespeare play, if it's a good class ... The chances of them not understanding the book given are very slight because the book is obviously geared to their intelligence ... What they need to be pointed to is the quality of the writing ... I tend to stress ... the characterisation, and the actual literary expertise of the author. 'This is a good piece of writing, and this is the kind of thing you must strive for'.

I don't try this love of language bit with the less-able pupils. ... They require a certain amount of mental discipline because of their inability to collect facts on paper. So there's a lot of training in that direction goes on with them ... The chances of these classes not understanding the book are much greater ... and you only ask questions like 'Why did Billy Caspar do this?' or 'What caused him to do such-and-such?' and 'Why did he love Kes?', but you never ask them - say - 'Why is that a good piece of writing?' - never ever.

Miss N is less clear about how the pupil's answer to the question figures in relation to other class members, saying simply that the pupils would accept the correct answer. She sees a value too in the potential of the pupils' answers to offer fresh insight, or to offer a means of comparison with the accepted answer.

They will benefit because they will accept it ... Very often a pupil will give an answer which even you haven't thought about. I mean even a lower class - 'out of the mouths of babes and sucklings' - you will get an answer which you haven't thought about because they are looking at it from a different standpoint, and sometimes that answer is so fresh and so much better, it actually benefits the whole class ... You can

also ask them to give you their answer, and you can compare the two (the teacher's looked-for answer and an alternative answer), and you can ask the class which of the two answers do you think is the better.

In the latter instance, presumably the exercise of comparison is regarded as a means to a clearer understanding of the appropriateness of the favoured answer.

There is no implication in the teacher's report of her teaching that she is actively seeking out pupils who are likely to have an appropriate answer, and in this respect, the teacher's explanation does not coincide with the Demonstration model.

Miss N is satisfied with the teaching method she uses. She has tried other methods, including a form of Discussion, and she finds these do not hold the same potential for controlled thinking on the part of the pupils. She concedes, however, that other methods may be more successful under the direction of other teachers:

I've been teaching for a long time and I've tried all the other methods ... and I still come back to this one. (With another method)... the pupils have got to understand that the fact that they've been taken away from the more disciplined approach to their literature is not to say that they're in any way to make a fool of it. It's still got to be tightly controlled ... I have tried the other methods, and they haven't been as successful as this one ... Other methods may be very acceptable to some people and they may even be very successful, but to me ...

The teacher identifies three reasons why she does not favour discussion type teaching. One is that it has too much potential for lawless behaviour on the part of the pupils; and is therefore too much dependent for success on the personality mix of the pupils. Another is the associated problem of the effect of Discussion teaching on the pupils'

mental discipline. The third is also an implied consequence of placing too much initiative for the course of the lesson in the hands of the pupils, and that is that it allows certain children to propel the discussion in a direction of little educational value:

I don't like the sort of mayhem that it could lead to, and very often does. (There are teachers who are very good at doing the Discussion method. These are the more extrovert teachers who don't mind the odd ha-ha and guffaw from the back of the room). It's a loose method of teaching ... there's a looseness about it and I think we're actually in the business of mental discipline, that's what it seems to me to be a basic principle of teaching is that you are actually there to enable these children to discipline their thoughts... I think an awful lot depends on the composition of the group that you've got ... that group you saw ... I could throw open a discussion with them, and very little mayhem would ensue. They would still be reasonably disciplined within their own heads, but put these children with another group, where you've maybe got a catalyst child who sets the whole thing off ... you'd get an entirely different discussion. You'd get what I would call the tripey discussion.

Miss N does not identify problems in the method she uses.

Miss S

Miss S accepts that her teaching behaviour conforms generally to the pattern identified as typical, but with two qualifications. One is that she frequently selects the pupil respondent from non-volunteers as a means of keeping the pupils' attentions on the lesson. The other is that she does not regard herself as having a particular answer in mind, and when she receives that answer she will move on to another question; rather she is willing to seek out a number of answers, though because of the need to retain the pupils' interest, she acknowledges the need not to dwell with any one point too long. From the short period of observation, it was not apparent that the teacher

sought out several respondents to one teacher question:

I sometimes select (a pupil) because I know who's likely to fall asleep. Quite seriously - I think I like to have a good spread (of respondents) even physically from people in different parts of the classroom, I like to keep drawing in - but again that's possibly because I want the focus of attention to keep shifting so that people are as alert as possible.

... another thing, about me having an answer in mind when I ask a question ... I don't, I really don't, and I'm open to so many suggestions because I'm not a very black and white person. I really don't believe English can be taught that way, and I like to shepherd in as many shades of meaning as possible.

(the turn-over of one-question-and-one-answer)... is just so's you can cover more material. It's an expedient, because if you're going to stay - I often find myself bogged down with maybe a phrase that I could talk about till the cows come home, but really it's hardly fair. You really must hold interest.

There is the implication here then that the pressure to retain the interest of the pupils in the lesson conflicts with a desire to obtain a wider selection of pupil replies. Thus, in relation to this point the teacher's explanation of her teaching does not coincide with the Demonstration model.

Teacher asks questions in order to lead the pupils into a better understanding of the text, where the role of the question would appear to be that it offers direction to the pupils' thinking. The question is also instrumental to better understanding in that it allows the teacher to assess the general level of understanding, and to use this information to help resolve the pupils' learning problems:

Faced with material that's new to them I think basically that I try to ensure as many as possible understand the basics of the context and the gist of the meaning of the passage ...

with a poor class especially I feel that you can't go into the second paragraph until you've understood the first paragraph, and really the same holds true for a sentence, and you can almost take it back to the basics of the word. (the question) ... is to try and lead them into understanding - I think that is the most important thing ... I prefer asking questions because then you can gauge how many of them have understood, and at the different levels of their understanding maybe you can pitch the context into something more familiar to them.

Teacher is not specific about how the method used may help pupils develop the general ability to read texts with better understanding; nor indeed that her teaching aspires to this purpose.

The pupil's answer to the question is seen partly as offering feedback to the teacher on pupil learning problems, and partly as a means of conveying the discussion in terms which are more familiar to the other pupils, and in this way extending the potential of the classroom interaction as material which is meaningful to its audience. The teacher's image of the interaction here appears to be allowing for the possibility that the teacher's form of expression or the level of the teacher's experience, may pose a barrier to the pupils' understanding. Hence, the pupil respondent is helping to overcome this problem where it exists by expressing his share of the discussion in terms or in experiences which are more familiar and so possibly more comprehensible to the pupils:

I often ask a very poor pupil, and when you see just how wrong, or how away off beam they can be - sometimes that's off-putting for the class generally, but sometimes it opens an ambiguity that maybe you weren't aware of yourself, and you can lead through it, through points of contact to the real (meaning) ...

I would hope that any answer would trigger off ... experiences that they're more familiar with and perhaps expand just the sphere of the context of the question ... because I think that if they feel safe with it then perhaps you can work up to the level of the passage itself.

Here again the part played by the pupils' answers does not correspond with the explanation offered by the Demonstration model.

Further, Miss S's explanation does not coincide with the model in the sense that she is not seeking correct answers; rather, it would be more accurate to say from her testimony that on occasions she is seeking incorrect answers as a means of resolving learning problems. The observation period was too slight to offer evidence to support or refute this claim. On the other hand, it was not apparent that this teacher appeared to elicit more incorrect responses than any of the other teachers. The teacher is aware, however, that such a purpose cannot be pursued too vigorously because it may have the unintended consequence of weakening the interest of the class in general.

Miss S has never thought of the method she uses as distinct from a Discussion method. Nevertheless, she acknowledges that there is a difference, and supposes that this must be because conditions do not always permit the operation of a more ideal interpretation of Discussion teaching. She has witnessed one lesson which conformed to the ideal description of Discussion teaching, and was admiring both of the response achieved from the pupils, and of the implications of better understanding of the lesson on the part of the pupils. However, she herself has found a strict version of Discussion

unmanageable:

Really, I've never thought of them (the method used and Discussion) as being as separate as this (the interview) is pointing out.

... I use the present approach, if it is different to Discussion just because I feel there is a need in the unideal situations in which we work to give some sort of direction.

I've tried Discussion at times, because interestingly an inspector used a method similar to that as far as I could identify it ... and I really was impressed because it was amazing how much responsibility pupils took when they were given it to direct the discussion, and how much they did find out ... I found that his approach probably did more to open up their understanding of what he was doing than I had been doing previously. (The disadvantage is) the manageability of the class.

Miss S identifies three reasons why she finds Discussion in its ideal form unsatisfactory. One is the threat to classroom management; another is that some pupils tend to take more of a share in the discussion than the value of what they have to say deserves; and the third is that the opinions of quiet pupils remain unheard:

There's the manageability of classes, if there are disruptive elements in a class and there usually are with poorer classes.

Again, it's difficult because the attention-seeker will want more attention than his or her due by virtue of their argument.

Again, the quiet, mousey character doesn't get a chance to really say probably what is going round in his, or her head. At least as a teacher you can direct attention away from, you know, the born show-off.

Miss S has reservations about the method she uses, but believes it allows her to involve as many pupils as possible in the lesson, and to take account of the learning problems of as many pupils as she can.

I find that being the teacher by drawing in the

strands at the front helps me, makes me feel like a teacher, but you just often wonder how much use that role is playing in teaching the others.

I think that (the method used) is the simplest way of involving as many of the class as possible, and ensuring that the teacher knows that as many of the class as possible are on the right track.

Discussion of the Teachers' Interviews

In conclusion, what general indications are to be taken from the interview data?

There is first the question of the validity of the general descriptive account of the teachers' observed behaviour. On this aspect of the interviews, the teachers' views may be summarised as follows: all teachers were in agreement that the text of the lesson was new to the pupils in the sense that the teacher had not considered this text, or the part under scrutiny, with this class on an earlier occasion.

It was accepted too that the teaching process used was the asking of questions which pupils were expected to answer, and that if no answer was forthcoming the teachers preferred to ask another question.

However, one teacher, teacher O, qualified this last point by saying she was happy to explain the answer if pupils were having difficulty.

That, in general, the teachers had an answer in mind when asking the question was confirmed by all but one teacher, teacher S; while that the lesson moved forward upon receipt of this answer was further accepted by four teachers, the exceptions being teachers L and S, each of whom claimed to search from time to time for more than one answer to a question.

Finally, the teachers agreed that, generally speaking, it was unimportant which pupil answered, though five of the six qualified their agreement by saying that they also sometimes selected pupils for a number of reasons. These were: that otherwise no-one answered, or they all spoke at once (Miss D); that otherwise some pupils dominated the lesson (Miss E); that occasional selection allowed feedback on poor learners in order to resolve the learning problem (Miss L); that occasional selection was a means of calling a pupil to attention (Miss O and Miss S); or that it was a means of eliciting some response from quiet pupils (Miss O).

That the teachers qualify aspects of the descriptive account emphasises, on the one hand, the importance of viewing the account as an abstracted idealisation only of the teachers' behaviour. In other words, it is not being suggested either that the pattern identified as typical prevails for all whole class oral lessons concerned with the study of a text, or that it holds firm throughout any one lesson. Rather, the image of this kind of teaching as refined by the teacher respondents would seem consistent with the multiplicity of concerns facing the teacher in the normal classroom situation; for instance, the need to ensure pupils are attending, the need to motivate pupils, and the need to check up on their understanding of the lesson.

On the other hand, where the teachers qualify or refute the descriptive account, such deviations were seldom apparent from observation of these teachers' lessons. The one teacher whose qualification was apparent from observation was Teacher N, who claimed to supply the answer to her questions where pupils had none. It may be assumed, therefore, that receiving an answer from a pupil was not so important

to this teacher as to the others. However, in that this behaviour appeared to figure minimally in the lessons, its occurrence does not invalidate the generalised description of the teacher's behaviour.

With regard to the remaining refutations of the author's descriptive account, the lack of supportive evidence from observation needs some consideration.

The claim by two teachers of a tendency to seek more than one answer from pupils might have been expected to be obvious in observation, even given the slightness of the observation period. That it was not suggests that the instances of such teacher behaviour are possibly rarer than these teachers' accounts would suggest. But this is not to imply the teachers were falsifying their reports; simply that their intentions in this respect may be difficult to realise against the pressure of other teaching demands, and so there may be a slighter incidence of the intended behaviour than either the teachers would choose, or are aware of.

A more difficult issue is the contention by one teacher that she does not have an answer in mind when asking the questions. Insofar as the teacher's behaviour did not appear inconsistent with the descriptive account, a response of this nature points up an inadequacy in the way the account was formulated and offered to the teachers. Thus, the concern here was with whether the teachers behaved in such a way as to suggest to pupils that the questions each had a single correct answer. To operationalise this in terms of the teacher "having an answer in mind" is to attempt to reconstruct what is in the teacher's mind at the time when the real task should have been to seek reconstruction of how she behaves.

The report by one teacher of selecting some pupils in order to identify and help resolve possible learning problems would not seem likely to be obvious from a slight period of observation, since there is first the problem of identifying what, from the teacher's perspective, constitutes feedback of possible help towards improved performance. On the other hand, it was clear from observation that this was not the teacher's main purpose, there being evidence that the teacher's replies were similar in character to those of the teaching which gave rise to the Demonstration homunculus. Hence, this teacher's identification of an additional purpose of providing learner feedback does not invalidate the author's general descriptive account.

Similarly, those teacher qualifications relating to the occasional selection of particular pupil respondents were neither easily identifiable from slight observation; nor, providing that such instances are not dominant in the pattern of the teacher's behaviour, are they inconsistent with the general descriptive account.

Consequently, it may be held that the descriptive account of the teachers' behaviour has in general been validated by the report from the interviews.

From the interview data, too, four broad types of teaching 'models' may be abstracted from the teachers' explanations of their oral whole-class teaching. Often, these occur in combination.

Four teachers, teachers D, E, L and N explain their teaching in terms which correspond with a limited version of the Demonstration model; that is, they ask questions and seek answers in order to help pupils

to develop the ability to examine texts in general. They differ, however, in the extent to which their explanations approximate to the model.

Miss D's explanation lies closest to the Demonstration explanation as she is the only teacher to make it explicit that pupils are intended to acquire the habit of asking themselves questions in relation to text-examination. Miss D differs from the Demonstration explanation, however, as do all the teachers, in that she does not appear to be concerned with selecting pupil respondents who are likely to be in possession of the correct answer.

Miss E stresses the value of pupils developing the habit of thinking things out for themselves, without specifying in what way the question-and-answer process will contribute to the development of the habit. Consequently, it is not clear if the teacher intends that the pupils should come to imitate the teacher's behaviour by asking themselves questions; or if she is of the opinion that thinking things out for themselves will come automatically by virtue of the pupil being involved in the process of text-examination. If the desired behaviour is regarded as acquired automatically, as opposed to imitatively, this would seem to ignore that the pupil's behaviour gives evidence only that the pupil responds to the teacher's question. In other words, if asking himself questions is not part of the pupil's behaviour in interaction with the teacher, there is no reason to suppose that the activity of asking questions will be acquired automatically, or subsequently that the pupil will be able to think things out for himself without the help of appropriate questions.

By comparison, Miss L believes she is helping to promote the pupils' abilities to read texts independently by involving the pupils in thinking about things they don't normally think about. In this, Miss L, as Miss D and Miss E, could be referring to the pupils' acquisition of the process of text-reading; or she could be referring to the value of obtaining answers to the questions, in which case the competence to be acquired would be the wider experience gained from knowledge of the answers to the teacher's questions; that is, the pupil would be better equipped to study texts by virtue of his wider experience of assigning meaning to his reading, rather than by having at his command a process of text examination which helps him to extract meaning.

Thus, while the explanations of teachers D, E and L are not inconsistent with the Demonstration model, only Miss D is explicit about how the pattern of teaching activity is believed to develop the desired kind of generalised pupil competence; from her viewpoint, this is the automatic acquisition of the habit of asking questions when examining a text.

Miss N's teaching, on the other hand, is attempting to help discipline pupils' thinking by offering pupils an orderly framework for interpretation of the texts they are reading. Again, this teacher is not explicit that pupils should come to ask themselves questions when reading a text on their own, but from her image of what she hopes pupils will gain from her lessons, "I mind doing that. That's the way (my italics) you do that", there is implication that the pupils should come to imitate the approach used in the classroom.

A second 'model' of teaching emerging from the interviews is that whole-class oral teaching may be explained as directed towards the pupils coming to understand specifics about the particular text being examined. Teachers E, L, O and S emphasize this as part of their teaching purpose in these lessons.

It may be remembered that an explanation in these terms was rejected earlier in the study on the grounds that a detailed knowledge of any particular text could have only limited usefulness in the educational development of the child, it being considered that such an exercise could have little transfer value. In other words, that the knowledge of the specifics of one text must be assumed to contribute only minimally to the understanding of texts in general. Yet, here are four of the six teachers stressing this purpose in their teaching.

It may be that these teachers do regard the knowledge of the specifics of a text as a worthwhile goal in itself, though no-one offered any indication of why they might believe it to be so. Alternatively, they may have rather regarded it as an intermediate goal in some way helpful in attaining a more ambitious long-term goal, though here again an indication of what the long-term goal might be was not volunteered.

A third 'model' suggested by four teachers, teachers D, L, O and S is expressed in terms of a feedback purpose; the feedback sought being either in order to assess if the lesson is generally comprehensible to the class, or in order to take remedial action in relation to particular learning problems.

With reference to the last point, it was an early assumption of the research that this was the purpose of the teacher's questioning

behaviour in oral whole-class lessons. That the assumption finds some support from the teachers' accounts suggests the need for a re-assessment of the later position of the study that feedback is not a plausible rationale for the pattern of teacher activity in these lessons.

On this issue, it has already been noted that there was no observational evidence to point up the possibility of a feedback purpose; nor was there observational evidence to suggest that the teacher behaviour was dissimilar in its salient characteristics from that of the teachers in the earlier study which led to the questioning of a feedback purpose. Moreover, where the teachers explained their purposes in terms of feedback, the implication was always that this was a subsidiary purpose.

It seems apparent, therefore, that although at least one teacher aspires to providing occasional feedback to learners, by far the dominant pattern of activity in these typical whole-class oral lessons is directed towards a different teaching objective.

The fourth 'model' may be expressed as aspiration towards Discussion type teaching. Only one teacher, teacher D, aspires towards Discussion teaching, though this, it may be recalled, is the 'approved' method. Nevertheless, three teachers, teachers E, L and S, regard the method as ideal if the conditions necessary for its implementation prevailed. However, insofar as the conditions do not prevail, the teachers regard the method as unrealisable as an approach to teaching.

All of the teachers are fluent on the subject of the constraints militating against successful Discussion, where the constraints are

expressed overwhelmingly in terms of pupil characteristics.

Thus, all teachers refer to the imbalance in the pupil contributions to the lessons, such that a few pupils have too much to say, while others say nothing at all. Teacher S adds that as a result the course of the lesson is directed by too few pupils. Several teachers, teachers E, L, O, N and S refer to the greater potential of Discussion type lessons in creating problems of classroom management, and, in a similar vein, teachers L, O and N speak of the tendency of pupils to go off at a tangent.

Two teachers refer to the pupils' general lack of skill in communicating as a further constraint. Hence teacher D believes children have insufficient experience to allow them opinions on a range of subjects, besides a difficulty in expressing the opinion they do have; while teacher E regards their unresponsiveness as in part culturally determined, and in part a product of not having the language of discussion at their command.

Two teachers, teachers E and O, suggest class size is an important factor in Discussion teaching, and that at present classes are too large for successful discussion; and one teacher, teacher D, suggests that the textual material available to the teacher may be a further constraint.

Only one teacher, teacher N, suggests the Discussion method may have educational limitations in the sense that it does not have the same potential for disciplining the pupils' intellects as a more teacher-directed approach. Teacher N is alone too in suggesting that the success or failure of Discussion may be attributable to a particular

trait of the teacher; in her own case, that she is insufficiently extrovert for an effective realisation of the method.

Two points emerge from the foregoing: the emphasis of the teachers on the constraints posed by pupil behaviour suggests on the one hand that Discussion teaching calls for considerable skills of classroom management, not simply in holding potentially disruptive behaviour in check, but also in promoting a more fruitful discussion for all class members; and second, the references to the inappropriateness of pupil behaviour suggest that conflicts between the concerns of the teacher and the concerns of the pupils may be more intrusive with the Discussion method than with a more teacher-controlled approach.

But perhaps the strongest impression conveyed by the interviews is an image of whole-class oral teaching as a compromise activity generated by the conflict between the aspirations of English specialists, and the realities of the classroom situation. In part, this is suggested by the variation in explanation among the teachers for patterns of teaching which are nevertheless remarkably similar; and in part it is made explicit in the teachers' identification of the constraints of teaching. Thus, on the one hand there are such pressures as the tendency to assess teachers' competence according to how successfully their pupils compete in external examinations, and against this the teachers' desires to teach the pupils in a way they believe will be most conducive to the pupils' acquisition of English competence, and which the teachers suggest may mean a lengthier approach to certain aspects of the subject than examination concerns will allow.

Conclusions and Implications

This investigation was based on an initial assumption that all teacher comments on pupils' performances in English supplied feedback to the learner. Hence, the purpose of the research was to identify the characteristics of the feedback. However, at a deeper level, there was a further assumption that feedback was desirable, if not essential to learning in English. In the light of the empirical findings, it would seem pertinent at this point to re-examine the earlier stance.

On the question of the feedback characteristics of comments, feedback was identified in written and oral form. In each form, the feedback was offered to the pupils in a one-to-one relationship, and with reference to the pupils' written work. Written feedback was found to be characterised in the following ways: there was a preponderance of reference to pupil weaknesses, the specific instance of the weakness being identified; most weaknesses referred to the basic "rules" of written English, such as punctuation and spelling; and, of probable relationship with the emphasis on the "rules" of written English, the instructional information of written comments was of the simplest kind; for instance, the indication of a weakness by underlining was common, as too was the correction of a weakness or the offer of some descriptive information of help towards its correction.

Though a considerable majority of written comments referred to specific weaknesses of the pupils' work, comments which referred to the piece of work in a generalised way were also fairly frequent. These comments were notable for their emphasis on pure evaluation, most evaluations

being positive; for their restricted use in the sense that not all pupils in the class received such a comment; and for their lack of any explicit relationship with the specific referent comments. From the non-specific nature of the referents, and from the dominance of pure evaluation, it was inferred that these General comments were designed as a motivational, rather than an instructional aid to learning.

Oral comments also emphasised weaknesses of the written work, the majority of such weaknesses referring to the elemental "rules" of written language. On the other hand, the dominance of these characteristics was not overwhelming, as in written comments, there being too an almost equal proportion of oral comments which referred to the ideas of the work. Moreover, though simple forms of instruction such as Correction, were again in frequent use, there was a greater tendency to make use of explanation and questioning as means of helping the pupil to come to a better understanding of his weakness, or of how to correct it.

Generalised referent comments, the characteristics of which implied a motivational purpose, also figured in oral commenting. Again, these were primarily offering Positive evaluations of the pupils' work.

There were indications too that the proportion of feedback on written work is not extensive. Thus, though written comments on written work were numerous on an individual basis, it is questionable if this teacher exercise plays more than a minor role in English teaching, the empirical study suggesting that written feedback may be provided on an average of once a month. By comparison, oral comments on written work appear to feature much more regularly. However, since the

provision of these is normally held within the time when pupils are engaged on written work, and the teacher has to respond to the work of all the pupils during this time-span, the implication is that pupils receive very little oral feedback on their work on an individual basis, and this implication is supported by the empirical data.

From the foregoing description of feedback, it may be apparent that the provision of feedback in English teaching is restricted in a number of important respects. For instance, the emphasis on the basic skills of written competence in written commenting, together with the small number of oral comments to each pupil highlight the fact that pupils are not receiving feedback to any significant degree in relation to more complex areas of English learning, such as text analysis, the organisation of the ideas of a piece of writing, or the relationship between the form of the written material and its meaning. Moreover, though oral comments give some weight to more complex forms of instruction, in the overall emphasis on simple forms of instruction, a relationship between English competence in written work and cognitive skills other than the most basic is not being fostered, and so would seem implicitly denied. Again, that feedback is largely confined to written work points up that it is not a significant characteristic of teaching in relation to pupils' oral performances.

Further, the emphasis of Generalised referent comments on Positive evaluations when compared with the emphasis of Specific referent comments on instructional information with implicit Negative evaluation suggests that the provision of these two kinds of information, instructional and motivational, may be conceived independently in their relationship with learning; for instance, teachers' observed

strategies do not appear to take into account that the overwhelming number of the Negative evaluations in comments offering instruction may be counter-productive to the value of their individual instructive content for learning; nor, that the evaluations of Generalised referent comments might better promote the pupil's performance if the incentive could be explicitly related to specific aspects of the performance.

Finally, there is the question of how pupils might be expected to profit from the feedback. Ideally, if the pupil is to utilise the instructional information, he must not only be able to understand what it would imply for the improvement of his work, but also have the opportunity to test his understanding in practice. In the case of oral feedback on written work, since it is offered while pupils are engaged with the written work, it does allow pupils to operationalise the instruction of the comments.

With regard to written feedback, on the other hand, from the period of classroom observation it was inferred that the allocation of teaching time for the purpose of allowing pupils to capitalise on the feedback offered was not always a feature of the teaching. Moreover, where such allocation was in evidence, the exercise focussed on making the feedback more explicit to the pupil, as opposed to providing an opportunity for the pupil to practise using the information of the comment. For example, suppose the comments on one piece of work referred frequently to the indication of new sentences, the pupil weakness here being a tendency to run sentences together, it is suggested that the pupil might better assimilate the information of these comments into his practice if he was set a new task in which he was particularly

required to try to correct his tendency to run sentences together.

It is clear from the empirical data, therefore, that there are considerable areas of English learning in relation to which feedback is not being provided in other than a minimal degree. In the circumstances, it might be concluded either that pupils are thought to acquire feedback on performance from a source other than the teacher, or that externally provided feedback is not considered particularly desirable in English teaching.

On the former suggestion, the only possibility in the classroom for an alternative source would be other pupils. The empirical study gave no indication that other pupils might be in a position to respond to individual learning problems. However, the part intended for the pupil in Discussion teaching could be conceived in this light. Thus, if the principle of Discussion teaching is to be operationalised pupils must take an initiating role in the lesson, both by asking questions and by responding to the ideas of others; and these activities may be alternatively conceptualised as offering information of help to other pupils in clarifying, altering or extending their ideas, and so of improving their performance.

The fact remains however that under present circumstances Discussion teaching does not appear to be a viable proposition for the majority of teachers. Consequently, it cannot be supposed to be fulfilling a feedback role.

The alternative possibility - that feedback may be provided by pupils, and by some process of self-monitoring related by the non-responding pupils to their individual performances - receives some support from

the teachers' accounts of their teaching, where the pupil respondent's answer was conceived in part as a means of allowing pupils to check on their own answer. As such, the pupil's answer may be compared with the provision of the correct answer as a form of feedback identified in relation to written work. On the other hand, feedback of this nature does not take account of the recipient pupils' perspectives on the learning, and so of the probable subsequent need to make provision in the feedback for differences of learning problems among the pupils.

Before considering the question of the desirability of feedback provision, the issue of its feasibility is apposite to the discussion. Accordingly the empirical investigation highlighted a number of practical constraints upon the provision of feedback: the analysis of written comments suggested that feedback referring to non-rule-governed areas of the subject would be a complex and time-consuming business, and that in relation to these areas feedback might be more effectively and economically provided in oral form; in particular since oral form allowed the teacher to judge whether or not the feedback was comprehensible to the pupil.

The problem of oral feedback was that the allocation to each pupil must be contained within a limited time-span divided among all class members, and so it would be unlikely to be comprehensively provided on an individual basis.

From the teacher interviews on written comments a number of other constraints were identified: comments were thought to be ineffective in competing against pupil laziness, or lack of interest in learning;

they were considered too protracted as a form of communication, or the space available for writing them was too slight for the offer of more than a limited amount of information in relation to each comment referent; or there was not enough time available to write more extensive comments. In addition, too many comments were thought both to have a depressing effect on the learner, and to overload him with instructional information.

All things considered, therefore, there would appear to be some case for concluding that externally provided feedback on performance is not considered effectively realisable given the practicalities of the teaching situation.

The question of its desirability is more difficult. The fact that teachers offer feedback on the pupils' work despite their sharp awareness of the practical difficulties of implementation suggests that feedback is considered desirable, at least in relation to those areas of learning where it is provided. With reference to more complex areas of learning, however, teachers' beliefs about the value of feedback were not indicated.

It may be that these areas present so many difficulties as to deter all thought of attempting its provision on an individual basis. Hence, what feedback pupils do receive may be limited to whatever they are able to glean from whole-class instruction. But here again such feedback does not take account of the learner's view of the learning, and so of the need to offer feedback which caters for his particular learning problems. Moreover, this kind of feedback requires of the learner that he monitor his own performance against the information

provided by the teacher in order to assess in what way it differs from what is desirable.

The belief that feedback may not be so much undesirable as unnecessary in English learning may be implicit in the views of one body of English specialist opinion, where emphasis is placed on the value of practice to the learner. It is held that the more the learner interacts with the competent use of language, as in reading well-written books, the more his competence in the skills of communication will grow; with or without the teacher's intervention.

This ideological position on language development receives some support from everyday experience where it would seem undeniable that oral language is acquired and developed as a product of the learner interacting with other language users. However, oral language acquisition may differ crucially from either reading or writing language competence in the sense that individuals provide each other not only with models of language in use but also with extensive feedback on their skills of oral communication and interpretation. Indeed, it may be an acknowledgement of the wealth of modelling and of feedback provision outside of the school context, which leads teachers to place little emphasis on this aspect of language competence in their teaching.

By comparison, neither reading nor writing receives much in the way of feedback from out-of-school language experience. Moreover, with reference to the more complex areas of English study, such as the relationship between form and meaning, it seems likely that virtually no feedback is offered to pupils outside of the English classroom.

Accordingly, given the implications of everyday experience on the role of feedback in oral language acquisition, together with the research of cognitive psychologists such as Bandura (1977), which suggest that the availability of both models and feedback which complement each other may be valuable, if not necessary for learning, it would seem difficult to refute that the provision of feedback from a language specialist can only enhance the learner's chances of effective learning. It is concluded, therefore, that feedback is desirable to learning in English, though this is not to deny that alternative teaching techniques may be more cost-effective in relation to the acquisition of basic language competence; nor that, in certain areas of the subject, the provision of feedback may be impracticable.

What, then, are the implications for educationists if English teaching is considered in terms of a feedback model? Since the empirical data do not provide a basis for comment on this issue in relation to pupils' oral language, the discussion here must be limited to feedback on written work.

Thus, even if it is held that the development of pupil competence in English proceeds more or less satisfactorily without the instructional help of feedback on performance, and that, besides, its provision is not cost-effective, it remains a fact that teachers do provide feedback on some aspects of pupils' work. In the circumstances, it would seem profitable to explore in what ways feedback might be made more cost effective in these areas.

As already identified, the limitations of feedback on written work

are: the emphasis on the most basic aspects of written language competence; the dominance of Negative evaluations in specific referent comments as opposed to the dominance of Positive evaluations in General comments, with no explicit links between the two; the absence of any follow-up exercise to allow pupils to make specific use of the information of the comments; and the infrequency of the feedback provision.

From the findings, the major overall problem would appear to be the disjointedness of the feedback provision: on the one hand, pupils are offered instructional information, largely Negative in evaluation, and simultaneously motivational information, which is largely Positive in evaluation, without any attempt to reconcile the possibly conflicting implications of the motivational "message"; on the other hand, no specific provision is made to allow pupils to make use of the feedback of comments.

What would seem to be needed, therefore, is a more systematised approach to commenting. For instance, rather than comment on all weaknesses of a pupil's work, it might be more instructive to the pupil, if only his most obvious weaknesses were identified, and in addition a follow-up exercise set in which he was required to pay particular attention to improvement of those weaknesses. This would mean, of course, that identified weaknesses would have to be limited to only two, or at the most three kinds. However, since fewer apparent weaknesses might improve the pupil's motivation to apply himself to the information of comments, this could be an advantage.

Further, in view of the belief that too many comments are likely to overload the pupil with instructional information, it would be helpful to keep a record of pupils' learning problems to allow for the planning of an agenda for the individualised teaching of each pupil.

It might also be encouraging to the pupil, besides possibly strengthening his assimilation of the instructional information, if purely evaluative feedback could be identified explicitly with specific aspects of the pupil's performance.

Finally, since oral feedback has the greater adaptability in relation to the provision of more complex instructional information, oral commenting could concentrate on feedback of this nature, and not as at present give equal emphasis to the provision of simple instructional feedback, such as correction of spelling errors. In this way, oral feedback sessions would have more time to devote to the more complex aspects of English teaching.

The questions raised by the investigation of feedback in English teaching, in particular those relating to its insignificant use in whole-class oral teaching, led to the search for an alternative conceptualisation of the teachers' comments in the dominant pattern of teaching observed in oral lessons; and so to the need for an explanation of the teaching behaviour itself. From the literature on English teaching issued by the Central Committee on the Teaching of English, the recommended method for the text examination observed in these lessons was "Discussion" teaching. This meant that pupils should take an initiatory part in the lesson both in asking questions, and in

responding to the questions and ideas of others. The ideology behind the method appears to be that pupils will gain practice in forming ideas and communicating them, and that the skills thus practised will develop their ability and their confidence in thinking independently, and in expressing their thoughts lucidly. Further, that in testing out their ideas in interaction with others, they will come to refine and extend them.

However, it was clear from observation of teaching that the Discussion method was not in operation as a general teaching technique. At a later stage in the investigation, teachers were firm in their identification of the constraints against its implementation. These were that some pupils dominate the lesson, others do not contribute at all; lawless behaviour is more of a threat; pupils do not keep to the point of the discussion; pupils do not have a wide enough range of opinions on different subjects to enable them to contribute; pupils have difficulty expressing what opinions they do have; class sizes present organisational problems; and the method does not allow the same disciplining of the pupils' intellects.

Given the questions raised by teachers' observed practices, and in addition the absence of any possible alternative explanation of the observed teaching in the literature, it was decided to construct an "ideal" explanation of the teaching behaviour as a basis for further exploration. The principle of the "ideal" explanation is that it offers a coherent rationalisation of the observed behaviour as directed towards one purpose. In other words, it is assumed as a temporary expedient that the teachers have neither conflict of interest, nor

conflict of motive in engaging in the action under scrutiny. As such, the "ideal" explanation provides, among other things, a conceptual framework for investigating the accounts of their behaviour given by teachers whose teaching corresponds to the observed behaviour.

The "ideal" model presented an image of text-based whole-class oral teaching as concerned with demonstrating to the pupils how texts should be examined. Under the terms of the model, questions are asked in order to elicit correct replies to the teacher's questions. In this way, pupils' replies demonstrate that the asking of such questions leads to a better understanding of the text, and of texts in general. It is, therefore, important that a pupil should answer and answer correctly, otherwise the demonstration has not been made. In operation, therefore, the tendency will be to select those pupils as respondents who are likely to have an acceptable answer to the teacher's question.

Accordingly, by teacher interview, it was found that though there was some overlap between the model and the teachers' accounts, there was also a fair amount of idiosyncrasy of explanation. More specifically, teachers were unanimous in identifying the question-and-answer activity as a means of helping pupils to read with greater appreciation of what the text was communicating. However, within this conceptualisation several different ways in which the teaching activity was thought to promote pupil learning were suggested: for example, pupils would be exercising their thinking ability, or would be learning how to discipline their thinking, or would be considering ideas which were new to them. Only one teacher suggested that pupils should be

acquiring the process of asking questions as an approach to text reading. There were differences of opinion too about whether the investigation of one text was of help in allowing the pupil to read other texts independently.

Again, the role of the pupil respondent was generally regarded as helpful to the learning of the other pupils, but here too teachers varied in their images of the use made of the pupil respondent's answer; from one point of view it was regarded as a means of relaying the acceptable answer to the other pupils, from another as a form of communication likely to be more comprehensible to the pupils than the teachers, and from another a way of identifying for other pupils possible misconceptions in their own response, which would provide them with an opportunity to seek teacher help.

Moreover, in their accounts of their teaching, teachers identified a number of constraints against the realisation of their perceived teaching purposes. One of these was that the responsibility for whether or not the lesson was meaningful to the pupil was very much the pupil's. If he did not understand why an acceptable pupil reply was acceptable, he must question it; otherwise the teacher was in no position to know of his learning difficulty, or to help resolve it. In addition, the shortage of time was stressed by one teacher, but implicit in other accounts, in particular in relation to the need to cover all areas of the curriculum adequately against the need to prepare pupils for examinations; and finally, the conflict between a need to maintain pupils' interests and a need to ensure their understanding of any one point was identified.

If there is one lesson to be taken from the teachers' accounts, it must surely be the extent to which the current aspirations of English teaching are found to be unrealisable. This is particularly evident on the issue of Discussion teaching where only one teacher would appear to attempt its implementation, though even here the teacher has a keen awareness of working against constraints. As a result, on the one hand, teaching occurs within a conceptual framework which would seem considerably undermining for its practitioners in its implications that they are less than adequate to their task; and, on the other hand, the idealisation of Discussion teaching allows them no clear alternative model as a basis for their teaching.

In the circumstances, therefore, the Demonstration model might be usefully employed as a way of helping to resolve the problem. Since it provides a coherent rationalisation of the teachers' behaviour without conflict of interest, it offers a conceptual framework where aspirations fully accord with what is practicable. Its obvious merit is, as has been argued, that it closely reflects a pattern of teaching behaviour which is dominant in the teaching of many teachers. Its acceptability, however, would be equally dependent on the extent to which it is compatible with English teachers' present understandings of what they are doing in whole class teaching, and in particular with the aspirations with which they engage in such teaching.

The available evidence shows that teachers' aspirations do not correspond at all closely to those implicit within the Demonstration model, and that their aspirations are very varied. But how compatible are they with this model?

From the small sample of the study, it would appear that there are probably a majority of teachers who aspire to ask questions "to get pupils thinking", and while this is not identical with the Demonstration model it is quite compatible with it. In effect, if the Demonstration principle was adopted it would mean an extension of the teachers' present ways of thinking about their teaching. In addition, however, it would mean that the teachers were in a stronger position to work towards developing their teaching more in accordance with their ideals. For instance, suppose a teacher wanted his Demonstration lessons to involve a more widespread pupil response. In considering how to achieve this, he would have to take into account that selecting pupils who might not have a reply would in principle work against the Demonstration purpose. Of course, this might be perfectly acceptable to the teacher, if he regards a more widespread pupil response as a better teaching goal than Demonstration. The point is that by virtue of having a coherent rationalisation, the teacher is equipped to consider the issue in all its implications. Thus, he might instead be able to devise a behavioural plan which would both involve more pupils, and retain the Demonstration goal.

Additionally, the Demonstration principle might be used as a help in streamlining the present method. For instance, it would assist the teacher in working towards maximising its strengths and minimising its weaknesses in a way which kept the main purpose of the activity in mind. As illustration, suppose the quick turnover of question-and-answer is considered a strength, because it both promotes the teaching purpose and caters for a need to maintain the pupils' interests in the lesson. In order to capitalise on the strength, the teacher might decide

against the use of occasional questions as a source of feedback on weaker pupils; perhaps instead trying to meet this problem in part by attempting to frame the questions in a way which might cater for a wider pupil response. Or, again, the method might be considered weak in not allowing feedback on what pupils are learning. In consequence, the teacher might attempt to solve this problem by arranging a follow-up pupil activity designed to assess the extent of individual learning.

The pattern of teaching which has been described as typical of whole-class teaching, and which has been rationalised as the Demonstration method, does however have limitations in comparison with the Discussion approach which is 'officially approved' and which some teachers would ideally like to implement. In particular, the observed pattern of teaching does not manifestly foster either independent-thinking or critical judgement.

Though teachers' questions could be framed to allow for divergent thinking on the part of the pupils, the empirical study suggested that the majority of teacher questions were not so framed; that is, the teachers' questions tended to allow for only one acceptable answer. Again, the classroom context would appear to pressure teachers towards eliciting only one answer, whether or not the question might allow for several, which suggests that the pattern of events does not support a norm of divergent thinking; for instance, the need to maintain pupils' interest in the lesson, and therefore the pressure to maintain the development of the lesson. Moreover, even if pupils are thinking divergently, their overt behaviour conveys

that they do not feel encouraged either to voice their ideas, or raise questions, or respond to the ideas of others. Overall, therefore, there is no evidence to support a view that the Demonstration method promotes the kinds of thinking or interaction which are ideally fostered by the Discussion approach.

In the event, two courses appear open to educationists: either they accept that Discussion teaching is unrealisable under present circumstances for the majority of teachers and that therefore it is more realistic to plan consciously for the more limited but nonetheless worthwhile goals implicit in the Demonstration method; or they must attempt to resolve the problems working against successful Discussion in ways which take account of the realities of the classroom situation.

The proposal that educationists attempt to solve the problems of implementing Discussion as it is presently conceived is a large issue. For instance, it seems likely that the kind of pupil initiative necessary for productive Discussion may be contrary to both the teachers' and the pupils' images of appropriate pupil behaviour; and that, consequently, coming to terms with a teaching situation where the norms of everyday teacher/pupil interaction do not prevail will take time to be assimilated by the participants such as to give direction to their behaviour. More explicitly, the teachers' reports of their teaching suggest that the control which is believed necessary if the teacher is to fulfil her responsibilities, and which allows her to manage a large group of pupils successfully in the course of her normal teaching duties runs counter to the kind of teacher/pupil relationship which is likely to promote Discussion. Hence, the teacher's regular

relationship with her pupils implies that her definition of the situation shall prevail, her definition being that she is the authority figure in the sense of deciding what shall be done, how it shall be done, and when it shall be done. Further, the kind of pupil behaviour appropriate within these situations is also broadly defined and managed by the teacher. Discussion, however, requires that pupils take over much more responsibility for the management of their own behaviour. Consequently, helping pupils to assimilate this new definition of their role requirements but only within certain lessons is likely to call for considerable skill on the part of the teacher, in addition to the demand in terms of time.

Shortage of time is a prominent feature in another crucial problem of Discussion, where one part of the teaching aim is to prepare pupils for examinations. Thus, even if Discussion is successfully implemented it is likely to call for a more leisurely pace towards achieving the level of understanding deemed necessary for examination performance. Accordingly, if Discussion is to be acceptable to teachers its realisation must take account of the pressure of other commitments.

Conclusion

It remains to consider to what extent the investigation into teachers' comments may be held to have answered the original research questions, and to identify the implications of any additional findings which have emerged.

The initial questions sought to elucidate in detail the nature of the

feedback provided through teachers' comments, and of potential help towards the improvement of the pupils' performances. Thus, questions were concerned with such issues as the relative emphases of different kinds of feedback, with the overall frequency of feedback provision, and with the detail and explicitness of its instructional information.

These questions have been answered for one sample of six teachers in relation to written comments, and a further sample of six teachers in relation to oral comments. Broadly, the conclusions are that feedback is provided to pupils in relation to only limited aspects of the subject English, and refers primarily to written work.

Though in considering teachers' comments, the investigation has illuminated teachers' actual practices in commenting, the study does not claim to provide any kind of explanation other than those provided by the teachers themselves, of why the patterns of commenting are as they are. Consequently, no firm recommendations can be made about conditions necessary for the development of procedures for providing more extensive, balanced or systematic feedback. Indeed, any attempt to introduce such innovations would have to be based on some tentative theoretical explanation of current practice, in terms of the nature of the knowledge with which English teaching is concerned, in terms of the material, organizational and ideological constraints influencing teachers, and in terms of the extent to which teachers have been able to acquire relevant skills.

An appropriate way forward, therefore, would seem to lie in the direction of an action-research study, which would be directed towards

both implementation of improved feedback, and testing of the theoretical understandings on which the plans for this improved feedback were based.

Though the original research questions proved helpful in the investigation of individualised teaching, when the research came to focus on whole-class oral lessons, the early assumption of the comment as feedback in this context was called in question, and subsequently rejected. In its place, a 'model' explanation of the pattern of whole-class oral teaching was constructed, initially in order to help identify the role of the comment in these lessons, but growingly as a means of achieving some kind of understanding of the pattern of teaching in which the comment figured.

From the exercise of 'model' construction, and its eventual exploration against the accounts of six teachers whose teaching corresponded to the behaviours on which the 'model' was based, there emerged an image of whole-class oral teaching as representing some kind of compromise between the aspirations of English specialists and the realities of the classroom.

As with individualised commenting, it is stressed that the 'model' and the teachers' reports are not being offered as explanations of what is being done; they are rather accounts of what is being done. However, in addition, the 'model' provides a rational basis from which the pattern of whole-class teaching might be usefully explored.

From the data, then, several possibilities for further enquiry are suggested. In the interests of more insightful teaching, for example, it would be helpful to understand the relationship between the

ideology which informs the practice of whole-class teaching, and the actual practice; or alternatively, to understand the constraints which have helped determine the current teaching pattern in order to promote the implementation of more approved teaching methods, such as Discussion. Again, since both proposals would call for the formulation of tentative explanations of the teachers' practices, an action research study would seem a prerequisite to allow the test and modification of these explanations through a carefully theorised and monitored attempt to introduce changes.

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