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Practitioner narratives of supporting children from disadvantaged backgrounds with their early language development in a mainstream early years setting.

A Small Scale Investigation

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Abstract

Discourses surrounding a word gap between children from disadvantaged families and their more affluent peers informed the basis of this small scale investigation. A phenomenological approach was used to explore early years practitioner narratives of their pedagogical influences, with consideration given to Bourdieu's (1986) forms of capital in supporting the understanding of these. A thematic analysis concluded that Bourdieu's forms of capital are useful when exploring practitioner pedagogy, with a key recommendation for reflection of practitioners' capital within pedagogical approaches to be recognised.

Keywords: 'disadvantage', 'word gap', 'cultural capital', 'practitioner narrative'

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Speech and Language UK (2022) claim that 1.7 million children in the UK were delayed in their communication and language skills at the end of 2022. Ofsted (2022) aimed to hold the covid-19 pandemic partially accountable for these delays due to missed social opportunities. Though a developmental gap predated the pandemic, with O'Meara and Bradley (2022) stating that 28.2% of children were not reaching expected developmental levels in 2019, many of whom were experiencing disadvantage. Children from disadvantaged families are likely to experience different life chances, stated by UK Parliament (2019). Cultural capital is a key part of early years guidance (Ofsted, 2023a), with an emphasis on enhancing children's experiences within early education. Responding to the developmental gap experienced by those facing disadvantage, the government provide funded places within early years settings. This is supported by Nutbrown (2012) who recommended good quality early years provision is key in helping to reduce the developmental gap.

This insider research was carried out within a mainstream early years setting, rated as a 'good' setting by Ofsted. The setting is within a deprived locality and has seen an increase in the numbers of children accessing low income funding. An initial literature search discovered a vast quantity of research discourse depicting a language gap between children living in disadvantage, and those from more affluent families, which is consistent with the cohort of the research setting. Further searches of the literature delineated deficit views informing policy and practice with links to Bourdieu's (1986) concept of forms of capital. Following Jackson's (2022) discussions surrounding practitioner habitus and the quality of early education, I reflected on the quality of the early learning opportunities offered to the children within the setting. As discussed by Nutbrown's (2012), and recently by the UK Parliament (2019), there is a growing number of research and reports that promote academic development of early years practitioners through training and qualifications. Many of the practitioners hold the same level qualification but all practice differently. When considering cultural capital within early years, the focus has always been on the children's early experiences. Practitioners' previous educational experience is regularly considered, though their own experiences relating to economic, social and cultural capital appear to be overlooked. Research questions arose from the literature review relating to exploring the influences

on early years practitioners' pedagogical practice with regards to early language development (**chapter 2**). Therefore, this research is based on the influences on early years practitioners' pedagogical practice in supporting children's language learning, with a focus on those living within disadvantaged families.

Taking a critical theory approach, this small scale investigation sought to explore the pedagogical choices made by experienced early years practitioners with regards to disadvantaged children's early language development. A phenomenological approach to the research methodology was applied to limit the preconceptions of the insider researcher influencing the data gathered, which took the form of narrative interviews. Narrative interviews were chosen to elicit the voice of each participant within their own stories, providing an insight into the participants' views of how their pedagogical approaches are influenced. Following Wengraf's (2001) biographic narrative interview model, discussions were prompted using an initial question and were later followed up by a sub session whereby questions to induce further narrative were given, based on subjects described by the participant. Wengraf's third sub session was omitted from this study due to the small scale and therefore, limited time frame. The interview data was then coded using in vivo coding (Saldana, 2009, cited in Mooney and O'Connor Duffy, 2014. p. 12) to continue to ensure the participants own words were forming the themes, attempting to limit miscommunication of the results. Overarching themes were then used to analyse the data in response to the initial research questions.

Chapter 2 Review of the literature

This literature review has been conducted to gain an insight into the communication and language support offered by early years settings to children from economically deprived backgrounds. The review focuses particularly on the existing language gap between children from disadvantaged backgrounds and their more advantaged peers. Here, the term disadvantaged is used as a broad term to refer to families that are experiencing socio-economic disadvantage through low incomes, poor housing, ill health and lower education levels, as described by Hannon, Nutbrown and Morgan (2019).

Conducting a Boolean search, Google scholar and The Open University's library database were used to search for peer reviewed journals and books with parameters set to within the last 10 years, and extended in instances where minimal results were found. Initial key word searches included the terms 'language gap', 'early years' and 'disadvantage'. As my research progressed, 'language programmes' and 'practitioner narratives' were added. Databases searched were reduced to those focused on education and education and research.

Key themes developed throughout the review that informed further research lines and research questions to explore further within this small scale investigation. The review begins with the key theoretical concepts influencing children's early language development and moves on to explore the existing language gap between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers. From here, the review explores the initiatives used within early years settings to address the gap and support language development before addressing research using methods which elicit the voice of the practitioner.

2.1 No child is a blank canvas.

The Education Hub (Department for Education, 2022a) states that the first five years of a child's life are crucial to the child's future successes. Children's caregivers provide early language development opportunities that are vital for success in other areas of learning. When considering the child's language learning experience, Bronfenbrenner's (1974) ecological model demonstrates a clear link between their microsystem and other significant influences outside of the child's immediate family and educational setting, described by Bronfenbrenner as the macrosystem. Though Bronfenbrenner's model was introduced over 40 years ago, it appears to remain influential within recent research, with both Simpson et al (2017 p. 178) and Walker et al (2020, p. 70) citing the ecological model's links to language development. The child's caregivers, their microsystem, have the most influence on a child's development. The experiences here will form the child's use of language, and therefore, the communication opportunities afforded to the child are crucial to their early development. Children from disadvantaged families are often offered less adult-child interactions (Hart and Risley, 2003, Golinkoff et al, 2018), potentially from parents having less free time to spend with their children, or to spend on costly activities (Ellwood-Lowe, Foushee and

Srinivasen, 2021). Though this is a broad assumption, as Hirsh-Pasek et al (2015) demonstrate within their research, some children from disadvantaged backgrounds have good language skills and go on to achieve academic success, depending on early input by parents in the home. This further demonstrates the links between home experiences and children's development having a significant impact on children's language learning.

There is much discussion around the parents' role in shaping their child's language development, though Bronfenbrenner (1974), reveals an outer layer of influences as part of a macrosystem that will influence a child's development (Simpson et al, 2017). Cultural elements such as socioeconomic status and educational policy set by a neoliberal government are of key significance when considering the learning gap so often discussed alongside children from disadvantaged families. These elements can be explored further using Bourdieu's (1986) theories relating to forms of capital: economic, social and cultural, with symbolic capital being achieved once the former three are in place. Economic capital is significant when considering children from disadvantaged backgrounds, with government initiatives providing these children with funded places within settings to enhance learning. However, it is also hoped that this will support the child's social experiences and enhance their cultural capital through access to a wider range of opportunities. The Early Inspection Framework (Ofsted, 2023a) states that early years settings must be offering opportunities for children to extend their cultural capital in order for them to have social mobility throughout their later lives. This inspires further thought into how early years practitioners decide what opportunities children are offered to enhance their cultural capital and contributed towards the second research question formed following this review of the literature (**see chapter 2.6**). Whilst considering each early years practitioner has differing life experiences, *how does awareness of cultural capital influence early years professionals support of language development?* This will be addressed in **chapter 2.3**, following an initial focus on the development of the language gap.

2.2 The Language Gap

The topical context of this literature review began by exploring the language gap. Hart and Risley's research (2003) depicting a 30 million word gap gave rise to much

research. The report claims that children from low socio-economic homes hear less child directed speech giving rise to a vocabulary gap of 30 million words by the time the child reaches the age of four, creating future academic disadvantage. Though the study was carried in 2003, it became highly influential towards future research and government policy, with discourse shaped by the language gap evident still in recent publications. Within the field of research, Rowe, Raudenbush and Goldin-Meadow (2012) reported findings that replicated those of Hart and Risley's, demonstrating a link between socio-economic status, parent input and limited vocabulary growth. Gilkerson et al (2018) expanded on this to demonstrate the significance of adult-child conversational turns in the development of children's language and vocabulary development. However, children are hearing non directed language in their environment, as well as language through their interactions with peers, which Sperry, Sperry and Miller (2018) propose as a significant form of language learning. This was disputed by Golinkoff et al (2018) who reiterate the importance of the quality of adult-child interactions for children's understanding of the use of the language they are hearing.

The Bercow Report (Bercow, 2008) highlighted the need for early identification of speech, language and communication needs to reduce the number of children starting school requiring intensive support. With an aim to close the attainment gap, the Department for Education (2013) rolled out the legal requirement for all disadvantaged two year olds to have access to free childcare places in quality early years settings. This provided an onus on early years settings to provide high quality learning and development opportunities to these children to reduce the development gap between disadvantaged children and their peers. Similarly, further initiatives were added to the health sector aiming to support parents and provide early identification of language and communication needs. Public Health England (2020) developed an Early Language Identification Measure (ELIM) for use by health visitors, again, intending for it to be used to address the language gap between children from different social backgrounds. The ELIM looks at a specified list of vocabulary that claims children should be using by various ages. For children to learn this vocabulary, they need to be hearing these words in context to understand their meaning, thus allowing them to use the language themselves.

The literature thus far has addressed the inclusion of an otherwise marginalised group of children, supporting the need for current practice to address the language development opportunities offered to disadvantaged children. Within the literature there is evidence of deficit thinking, which is described by Kuchirko (2017) as an attempt to fix the family rather than the system that has continued their cycle of deprivation. Cushing (2022) critiques the initiatives to close the word gap as potentially adding to the oppression of these children through the deficit views of language learning of marginalised groups. Children's vocabulary is being measured against expectations set by the more powerful groups with Cushing (2022) also suggesting that there are structural inequalities within education that place blame on children's parents. Whilst gaps exist according to academic assessments, the label of 'language gap' demeans families living on a low income, adding to the inequalities they experience (Johnson, Avineri and Johnson, 2016). Discourse is focused on parents' apparent lack of quality of communication with their children, as opposed to addressing the inequalities experienced by families with low socio-economic status, such as access to community resources (Ellwood-Lowe, Foushee and Srinivasen, 2021). By focusing on the number of words children are using, we are creating a position that places a deficit on families living in poverty instead of addressing the finer links between poverty, language, and education (Kuchirko, 2017).

2.3 Addressing the gap within early years settings.

As discussed in **chapter 2.1**, deficit views of language development amongst children from disadvantaged families have been formed, with the effects of this disadvantage becoming more distinct during education (Kuchirko, 2017). It would therefore be logical to further explore early years practitioners' actions to support the development of children's language learning, particularly relating to addressing the language gap. A strengths based approach to learning is promoted within early years, described by Fenton, Walsh, Wong and Cumming (2014) as appreciating a child's strengths and resources at hand and using these to the child's advantage. However, when considering the authority of government policy over early years practice, which Bourdieu labelled as the 'field' relating to formal norms that govern a particular activity (Edgerton and Roberts 2014), ideas surrounding the influences over how practitioners support

language development can be developed. Early years practitioners are required to carry out a formative assessment of children's development at age two (Department for Education, 2021), alongside health professionals who use the ELIM (**Chapter 2.2**). With the governments' introduction of stronger practice hubs (Department for Education, 2023a) to support settings following the pandemic, it is evident that there is a focus on the use of language programmes to address delays through offers of training and resources within the education recovery programme (Department for Education, 2022b). Though literature surrounding these programmes does not explicitly discuss cultural capital, it is implied through discourses surrounding economic and social disadvantage – access to these programmes can enhance children's capital supporting their future opportunities. Using this investigation to further explore how helpful Bourdieu's concept of capital is in explaining early years practitioner approaches to inclusive pedagogic practice would further inform discourses within the early years setting.

Numbers of funded places for two years olds and pupil premium funding being accessed in early years has steadily increased over the last 5 years, with minimal fluctuation (Department for Education, 2023b). From the literature, it is evident that a great number of these children will be found to be delayed in their language development, according to formal assessments. Ofsted (2022) also demonstrated within their report the negative effect of the covid-19 pandemic on children's early language development, adding to the increase of referrals to speech and language services. With the aim to reduce the development gap, formal interventions are implemented by early years practitioners. Reeves et al (2018) described the benefits of an Early Talk Boost programme in boosting the language skills of disadvantaged pre-school children, though their research acknowledges unknown lasting effects of the programme. The Early Talk Boost programme requires early years practitioners to receive specialist training, as does the Elklan Talking Matters programme, with Clegg and Rohde (2017) reporting that practitioners' confidence in supporting language increased with the use of the programme. Clegg et al (2020) found that Elklan had a positive impact on children's language development, though the research does not suggest how often the children are exposed to trained practitioners, nor does it acknowledge how much time in the setting the children were spending. Degotardi and Gill (2017) acknowledged the importance of practitioner interactions within settings, finding that practitioners

identified limitations of staffing and quality interactions hindering language development during interventions. Less research into language interventions with children under the age of three years have been carried out, however, Conner, Kelly-Vance, Ryalls and Friehe (2014) depict positive results from a play based language intervention with two year olds. Early language intervention programmes can have a positive impact on children's language development when introduced early and followed on into early school years (Fricke et al, 2017).

The above research is focused on more formal interventions that require access to specific training. The use of gesture, an unaided alternative communication method, by early years practitioners to support communication and language is both effective, according to Romano, Eugenio and Kiratzis (2021) as well as accessible in wider daily activities. Key word signing, using gestures alongside language, with all children within a setting, promotes social inclusion through the attempt to limit stigmatisation (Cologon and Mevawalla, 2017). The use of signing is often stigmatised as of use to those with a hearing impairment, however it can be beneficial to promote use of language for many others, including children with poor vocabulary, children learning English as an additional language (Blackburn and Aubrey, 2016) or those with more complex communication needs. Walker et al (2020) acknowledge the limited interventions for children who may be at an increased disadvantage due to having a complex communication need alongside a socio-economic disadvantage. Blackburn and Aubrey (2016) suggest that mainstream settings look further into the use of alternative communication methods to support language and communication as part of early interventions. Rensfeldt Flink, Asberg Johnels, Broberg and Thunberg (2020) examined the benefits of the use of alternative communication methods by children's caregivers, noting that there were significant differences in parental experiences and acceptance of these methods. When adding in the consideration of families from low socio-economic backgrounds, it is evident that the motivation and endurance needed to apply this form of intervention in the home environment, to aid continuity in support, may be adding further to stress on the family (Fäldt, Fabian, Thunberg and Lucas, 2020).

The literature reveals the benefits and limitations of the use of language interventions, but a gap is apparent regarding the explicit reasoning behind intervention choices. It is not clear why early years settings choose one method over another though the interventions appear to be broadly used and therefore may not relate specifically to each

child's existing experiences. Therefore, this raises the question '*what influences practitioners in the support they provide for the language development of children from disadvantaged backgrounds within a mainstream early years setting?*'

2.4 Eliciting practitioner voice.

To promote an inclusive pedagogy, it is important to learn from practitioners, the influences on their current actions. Early years practitioners' beliefs and experiences shape their pedagogy and therefore the learning experiences offered to children, as recognised within Degotardi and Gill's (2017) interviews. Although interviewing techniques offered an opportunity to elicit the voice of the participants, responses may be constrained by the questions. Through use of qualitative interviews, it is evident that the participants' own voice can be heard more implicitly, offering them a chance to tell their stories. This can be seen within the research conducted by Simpson et al (2017) whereby the practitioners focus on equality for the children growing up in poverty highlights a potential misfocus in practice from achieving equity within pedagogy. Offering participants, a chance to look in depth at their practice can highlight areas that had not been considered, as early years practitioners follow the structural inequalities, suggested earlier in this review by Cushing (2022), that are set as requirements by governing bodies including the statutory framework (Department for Education, 2021) and Ofsted (2023b). Gaining an understanding of early years practitioners' key motivators within their pedagogy using open ended, qualitative questions, as used by Brebner, Jovanovic, Lawless and Young (2016), can provide key themes from which further research and opportunities to support practice could arise. Both Bubikova-Moan (2017) and Gajek (2023) discussed the thematic nature of narrative interviews allowing participants to share their voice, and therefore offer the opportunity to provide further agency to them to shape their practice. Within a small scale study, this singular method is feasible within the given time frames to elicit voice and potentially prompt future research studies.

Further literature searches relating to eliciting practitioner voice discovered Williams-Brown's (2020) research on practitioner perceptions of funding. The method of open ended survey questions allowed participants the opportunity to be more open and honest with their responses due to the added anonymity afforded to them. However, as

Degotardi and Gill (2017) found, the questions may constrain responses and do not allow for an opportunity to gain a better insight to comments. The use of narrative methods of gathering practitioner voice may result in extensive story telling that could potentially be challenging to analyse and draw conclusions from. Thomas, Tiplady and Wall (2013) found that, although their narrative interviews drew lengthy responses, key themes emerged, and they were able to use these to create a condensed story of the participants lived experiences.

2.5 Conceptual Framework.

Critical theory would argue that realities are shaped by our experiences, though these realities are not truths, they are simply what we have come to know and accept (Govender, 2020). Throughout the above literature, though it is accepted that children's language skills are strongly influenced by their immediate caregivers, both larger social and cultural influences have a significant impact on how children receive support to develop their early language skills. Taking a critical approach to this, power structures can be questioned to learn more about how those who hold power over children's learning choose to support language development. Through problematising current ways of doing, we create reflection from which we can aim to develop social inclusion that is just for all (Bunniss and Kelly, 2010)

Early Years practitioners are in a position of power through their professional responsibilities to early education for very young children. Many of these children start settings at the very early stages of their language development, and it is the practitioners who have a strong influence over how language is supported. However, as discussed earlier when looking at Bronfenbrenner's concepts (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998, cited in Bulotsky-Shearer et al, 2012 p. 628), practitioners form part of a child's immediate microsystem, and there are other significant influences outside of this that directly impact how early years practitioners offer development opportunities to children. As discussed by Cushing (2022), structural influences within early education dictate learning outcomes that early years settings are to promote. This neoliberal view to education is formed for the majority group, creating marginalisation. This is acknowledged by Kuchirko (2017), with labels of 'poverty' and 'language gap' further marginalising groups of children, seemingly regarding their life knowledge as

less important. Opposing this, the Early Inspection Framework (Ofsted, 2023a) promotes the aspect of each child's cultural capital as important to build on within early years, though the statement's contain minimal information regarding how this is achieved. Taking a critical stance to this research, eliciting practitioner voice to learn about how they see their role in promoting children's language development will create an opportunity for practitioners to critically reflect on teaching methods and the critical role they play in children's early language development (Costley, Elliott and Gibbs, 2010).

2.6 Research questions.

Throughout this review discourses have surrounded the negative impact living with disadvantage has on children's language development, and the negative impact this has for the majority on their future life chances. I am keen to use this research as an opportunity for practitioners in the research setting to reflect on their practice of inclusivity and social justice for all, by reflecting on the decisions they take when using interventions to promote language development for children accessing two year and pupil premium funding entitlements. Therefore, the following questions have been formulated:

What influences practitioners in the support they provide for the language development of children from disadvantaged backgrounds within a mainstream early years setting?

How helpful is Bourdieu's concept of forms of capital in explaining early years practitioner approaches to inclusive pedagogic practices?

Chapter 3 Research Design

3.1 Research Approach

From an ontological perspective that knowledge is socially and culturally constructed (Bryman, 2001, cited in Grix, 2002), the epistemological view that initially informed this small scale investigation was of a constructivist stance that knowledge can be interpreted to determine the underlying views that shape practice. Inspired by Cushing's (2022) critiques of structural inequalities in education, alongside Simpson et al's (2017) notions of a misplaced focus on equality over equity, critical theory became more pertinent. Whereas constructivism is concerned with exploring the construct of knowledge, critical theory seeks to challenge cultural assumptions to provide an opportunity for emancipation. The gaining of high level qualifications within the educational field equating to the dominant expectations of quality practice, delineated by Jackson (2022), rests within Bourdieu's (1986) theories relating to cultural capital. Taking Bourdieu's (1977, cited in Jackson, 2022) critique that qualifications are to cultural capital what money is to economic capital, this study takes the stance to subjectify the cultural influences that underpin early years practices given the varied cultural influences that have shaped each practitioner's pedagogy. Govender (2020) suggests that our realities are what we have come to know, but this goes beyond the governing bodies' expectations of outcomes for children. Using Bronfenbrenner's (1974) ecological model relating to the systems that have significant capital influences over a child's life experiences, this can also be applied to the practitioners own lived experiences and the capital that has shaped their life perspectives. Forming a critical theory paradigm, based on the above ontological and epistemological views, this investigation will challenge the perceived autonomy afforded to early years settings by government reforms to provide empowerment over pedagogy (Department for Education, 2023c), through a reflective research approach.

Using this holistic view of knowledge, this research used a qualitative investigation following a predominantly phenomenological approach to allow an opportunity for preconceptions to be put to one side to gain a deeper insight into the participants' own perceptions of their pedagogy (Costley, Elliott and Gibbs, 2010). To answer the research questions, learning about the influences behind practice, a phenomenological approach can be used to attend to the interpretations and motivations behind

practitioners' expectations of their responsibilities in meeting the statutory framework that governs their practice. It is the aim of this investigation to create an opportunity for the participants to reflect on their influence to promote social justice through their pedagogy, reflecting on the experiences that have led them to their current pedagogical positions. Simpson et al (2017) took a phenomenological approach to their research using interviews to elicit further depth in discussions. However, Simpson et al's (2017) study, alongside others (Williams-Brown, 2020, Reeves et al, 2018), also used forms of quantitative data within their research, developing quantifiable data to inform their debate. Blackburn and Aubrey's (2016) approach was more qualitative, with consideration given to the objective of the research aiming to empower the practitioners within the project by presenting their stories. Though this approach aims to provide an opportunity to listen to participants' own voice, it is crucial to consider the researcher's own perceptions, as Fairbrother (2014) critiques, suggesting that this should be addressed through research methods, discussed further in **chapter 3.3**.

3.2 Participants

As this was a small scale investigation of a qualitative nature, it was not practical to include all practitioners from the research setting. Reflecting on the research questions, the qualitative data required to answer these questions required a method that would elicit potentially lengthy discussions that would be time consuming to transcribe and analyse. This type of data was of significance to this study and therefore, to ensure the research would be practical, ethical decisions had to be made regarding who to recruit to the investigation. It was initially decided that senior practitioners would be invited due to their influence over pedagogical decisions made within the setting. However, this stipulation could infringe the anonymity of the participants', potentially making it easier for them to be identified due to the small size of the setting. It was therefore decided that the participants must have been working within early years settings for at least two years to ensure they had the chance to have established their pedagogical positions within the children's learning environments. It is significant to note here that all participants were from British backgrounds, having only worked in UK settings, and had all completed the same early years qualification at level 3. Six invitations to join the investigation were sent out, along with key information relating to how this would take place (Appendix B). Four participants were recruited for the study, with two

participants having significant events that saw them unable to take part. Discussions had been held with the setting gatekeeper, and permission granted, with reassurance that confidentiality will be maintained throughout the process (Appendix F) and there would be no financial implications to the setting (Costley, Elliott and Gibbs, 2010).

As an insider researcher, my role throughout the process required careful consideration as I was in an authoritative position, and I wanted to equalise the power dynamics as much as possible for the participants to truly reflect on their own voice. This was addressed within the information the participants were provided, and through follow up discussions to ensure each participant fully understood the research that they were taking part in to ensure that I had gained informed consent. Adams (The Open University, 2022) reflects on the locality of where research is carried out. Many of the participants asked to complete the interviews within my office, the place where meetings would usually occur, but I was keen to ensure we met on either neutral ground, or within their own rooms at the setting to attempt to alleviate the formal employee to manager style conversation. As was found during the discussions, the power dynamics from insider research can never fully be equal, with participants checking in to ask if their responses were 'ok', to be met with reassurance that there were no wrong answers, this was the time for their own words to be told. Roseneil (1993, cited in Taylor, 2011 p. 6) critiques the positive aspects of insider research that are relevant to this situation, delineating the benefits of a pre-existing rapport with participants. This pre-existing rapport was apparent within the interviews through the participants' choices regarding the interview space, explored further in **chapter 3.5**.

3.3 Research Method

Inspired by a previous research study I had carried out as part of my undergraduate degree within this research setting, using Wengraf's (2001) biographic narrative model, an unstructured narrative interview was chosen to complete this small scale investigation. Fairbrother (2014) presents unstructured interviews as in depth methods of providing research participants with an arena to share their own views and for the researcher to surrender their power. Bryman (1988, cited in Fairbrother, 2014 p. 75) also notes the unstructured method of qualitative interviews allowing for avoidance of biased ideas from the researcher. With the research questions encouraging practitioner

discussions relating to experiences and influences over their pedagogy, an unstructured interview was the deductive method of choice. Horsdal (2012 p. 76) reiterates the importance of asking one initial question to the participant and then allowing them the freedom to share the parts of their story that are significant to them, and from an ethical point of view, the parts they wish to share. Differing from Horsdal's approach, Wengraf's model allows for a sub session following the initial interview to gain further insight into aspects of the participants' initial story.

The research method used within this investigation followed Wengraf's model, commencing with an initial question that Wengraf (2001, p. 5) labelled SQUIN – a single question induced narrative (Appendix D). Rosenthal (2005, cited in Burke, 2014 p. 6) discussed giving the participant some background information regarding the research but ensuring to highlight the purpose of the interview is for the participant to tell their story. Giving some background information to the research allowed the narratives some relevant focus, however, it was important to ensure that my own predetermined thoughts on the subject were not formed within the information given.

The question was carefully selected to elicit a narrative from the participant without providing any bias ideas from myself as the researcher to allow the participant to lead their own account. To answer the second research question regarding Bourdieu's concepts of capital, it was important that the participants were offered the chance to tell their stories, from the beginning, to learn about the potential impacts of economic, social and cultural capital within their lives that may have an influence on their pedagogical approaches now. As the researcher, it was important that only reassuring nods and gestures were used during the interview to prevent possibilities of the story to be influenced in any way by my own preconceived ideas (Rogan and de Kock, 2005). The lengths of these initial interviews varied as the participant was in control of when their story ended. To support my ability to spend more time actively listening to the participant, I sought permission to voice record the interviews. From a phenomenological approach, this investigation aimed to elicit the voice of the practitioner, and this was at the forefront of all aspects of the research. Voice recording the interviews was a decision based on integrity of the transcriptions. Narrative interviews can be lengthy to transcribe, and the recordings allowed for the participants' own words to be used throughout the transcription process.

Following the initial interview, a secondary interview took place, providing an opportunity for myself as the researcher to ask the participant to elaborate on elements of their initial narrative. Wengraf (2001) suggested a short break between the interviews to review notes and prepare questions. The break was kept short to ensure continuity in the established rapport between interviewee and researcher, however, careful consideration was given to the follow up questions. These were required to be story inducing, using the participants' own words, in the order given by the participant, to prevent any steering of the research in a particular direction. Burke (2014) also followed Wengraf's (2001) model, using a third subsection to follow up on the initial interview process later. This section was not used within this study given the limited time frame though it is evident from Burke's (2014) research that this is a useful addition to narrative interviewing, particularly for larger research studies than the one conducted here and could be used within future studies.

3.4 Research Analysis

To continue to ensure the validity of the research, the use of thematic analysis with elements of in vivo coding formed the analysis of this research. Once the interviews were conducted, the transcription process began. Key themes were found using thematic analysis to identify key phrases or topics discussed by the participants. Coding was used to decipher the transcripts into themes and sub themes. As Fugard and Potts (2019) detail, key words or phrases may be used to create themes, however, themes may present using varied phrasing that are connected by a common phenomenon. To continue with the prioritisation of the participants' voice, in vivo coding, described as coding used to honour the participant voice by Saldana (2009, cited in Mooney and O'Connor Duffy, 2014. p. 12), was used within the thematic analysis process. The in vivo codes were used during phases 2 to 5 (**Table 1**) and then as part of the final report to keep the participants' voice at the forefront of the results, thus attempting to continue to reduce unconscious bias (Byrne, 2023). Following an inductive approach, the research analysis began by analysing the specific responses to the interviews to create an analysis of the potential theories behind them. The thematic analysis process consisted of six phases described below:

<i>Phase 1</i>	Used an exploratory approach to familiarise with the data . This phase began as soon as the interviews were being conducted and continued after, with the data being read and re-read.
<i>Phase 2</i>	Initial codes were generated through broad subjects that were significant to the research topic within the data, or significant to the participant.
<i>Phase 3</i>	Searching for themes began by exploring the coding for common themes and ideas, collating these together. Coding that contested a theme was also included within that subgroup.
<i>Phase 4</i>	A review of the themes was explored in two stages. The coded segments of the interviews were collated together to identify a pattern under one key theme. If a coded extract was not relevant or there was not enough to support a theme, a thematic map was created.
<i>Phase 5</i>	Using the thematic map from phase 4, the final themes were named and defined using an analysis of each.
<i>Phase 6</i>	Once the themes and subthemes had been concluded, the final report could be produced.

Table 1 Phases of Thematic Analysis (adapted for this research study from Braun and Clarke, 2006 p. 87)

3.5 Further ethical considerations

3.5.1 Consent

As discussed above, there are key ethical considerations to take account of when critically evaluating the power aspects between the researcher and the participants. One

key regard is that of informed consent, which the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2019) states must be addressed from the beginning of any research study. The Open University's consent form, containing the key information that Bos (2020) deems relevant to gain informed consent, was used to seek participants' permission (Appendix C). Given my authority within the setting as the manager, it was crucial that this was addressed, and reiterated throughout the whole process. I was keen to affirm with the participants that I was carrying out the research as part of my master's degree studies, and not as their manager. The concern was that they may agree to take part by agreeing as a form of managerial request, this was not the case. One participant was concerned that if she did not take part, I may fail my course. I reassured her that she was by no means obligated to take part and that contrary to this, refusal to join would be something that I would reflect on as part of the research process. She did decide to participate, stating she was nervous about what she might talk about but was happy to join. A key benefit to being an insider researcher, and researching within the established early years team, is that I had developed a good rapport with them, and they were able to have many informal discussions with me about the process, in turn, reassuring them. On the other hand, I had to ensure that I did not influence their ideas about the research with my own whilst I was in the role of their colleague, and not in the zone of being a researcher.

The participant must be clear about what they are taking part in through transparency within the study and be aware of their right to refuse, or to withdraw consent at any time. Following the transcription of a narrative, there was a matter of wording that was addressed by the participant. The participant was not comfortable with how they had addressed a subject and felt that they had used words that were not professional, potentially causing repercussions for them in their role. Respecting the participant, and offering them dignity within the research, following the Code of Human Research Ethics (British Psychological Society, 2014), it was mutually agreed that the small excerpt would not be quoted within the data presentation, however, it could be addressed sensitively within the analysis. On reflection, ethical considerations addressed before the research took place had been centred around my position of authority as an insider researcher. I had anticipated the participants' acknowledging myself as their manager and potentially not feeling as though they had to meet my expectations. However, it appeared that the rapport we had built within our work as

colleagues, as discussed in **chapter 3.2** by Roseneil (1993, cited in Taylor, 2011 p. 6), had formed an element of trust, allowing the participant to relax, momentarily disregarding the manager and employee relationship.

3.5.2 Anonymity

Anonymity within the research was important to allow the participants the freedom to tell their stories without fear of being identified. Given the nature of the small setting, and this being an insider research investigation, full anonymity was not possible (Poulton, 2021). This may have been granted to some degree using a different research method such as an online survey, however, the phenomenological approach to this investigation would not have been achieved. The small team meant that by process of elimination, other team members may be able to deduce responses by colleagues, but the participants were aware of this as part of their informed consent. The participants position within the setting was not recorded and any identifying information, for the participant, the setting or families, was redacted to ensure anonymity for all in question. The research setting was not named at any point throughout the research, and no identifying factors included.

3.5.3 Data storage and protection

Confidentiality was vital to the success of the research, as well as to ensure ethical requirements were met. The storage of data was of key significance (BERA, 2019). All paper consent forms were scanned and stored on my own password protected device, and the paper copies returned to the participants for their reference. Each interview was voice recorded (**Chapter 3.3**) on a password protected device and the written transcriptions were then stored on a password protected laptop with only my sole use.

Chapter 4 Data presentation and analysis

4.1 Introduction

The narratives were collected using the method described above in **Chapter 3** and were then analysed using a thematic approach. The thematic analysis highlighted key topics discussed by the participants which have been analysed against the sub questions identified within the literature review (**chapter 2**). As Poulton (2021) delineates, data distortion is possible when conducted by an insider researcher, due to historical knowledge of the participants and context of the setting. I have aimed to reduce this within this analysis by using the participants own words within each topic. However, it is acknowledged that as an insider researcher, I have a substantial awareness of practice and therefore have insider knowledge relating to some aspects of the participants narratives. For example, when naming practitioners, I am aware of their qualifications and experience and can link this sensitively to the analysis. Some words have been redacted to protect the anonymity of the setting, the participants, and the children. I have also chosen to omit participant labels, such as ‘participant one’, following speech quotations to respect the anonymity of the participants, through concern that connections may be made through several quotations linking to one participant, as this research will be disseminated within the research setting. On reviewing the transcript of their narrative, one participant requested that a small section was omitted as they felt that, although it was their own words, it was not a true representation of how they actually felt. Prioritising the wellbeing of the participant over the study was of utmost importance, and we agreed to retract this small section from the analysis.

Research Question 1

‘What influences practitioners in the support they provide for the language development of children from disadvantaged backgrounds within a mainstream early years setting?’

4.2 Deficit thinking

“..we obviously do planning in the moment, which is normally based on the children’s experiences that the disadvantaged children have not had, it’s normally the other children that have had the experiences...”

This quotation, taken directly from one participants’ narrative, demonstrates deficit thinking, described by Kuchirko (2017) as placing a culture of blame on a child’s failure to do well in school due to familial inequalities. The quote appears to be placing importance on the experiences of the children from more affluent backgrounds, over the experiences of the disadvantaged child. Planning in the moment, discussed by this participant, is a teaching strategy whereby the educator plans learning spontaneously around the interests of the child in a given moment (Ephgrave, 2018). Ephgrave’s (2018) approach is strengths based, with practitioner’s being encouraged to promote the individual experiences of each child and enhance their learning from within that teachable moment created by the child. This participant, discussed above, went on to describe an activity planned spontaneously for a child, inviting disadvantaged children to join in so that they can *“experience the excitement”*, appearing to assume that the disadvantaged children would not have received this experience before and therefore marginalising this group of children. This participant was not alone in voicing prioritisation of some experiences over others. A second participant labelled activities they ensure the disadvantaged children take part in to support their vocabulary growth, demonstrating deficit thinking again through their discourse:

“....disadvantaged children not accessing the community, and having those opportunities to get involved in things such as the library, going to the supermarket, going to playgroups...”

Early years guidance provides practitioners with the freedom to explore activities that will promote the children’s cultural capital, dependent on the cohort of each setting (Ofsted, 2023a). Several participants discussed communicating with families about their child’s experiences at home, learning about the child’s current life experiences to inform future learning. Yet, two participants stated that assumptions were still made regarding the children’s experiences. *“We assume certain children don’t always have these opportunities”*, and therefore continue to plan language learning experiences based on deficit notions, described by Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (2007, cited in Simpson et al, 2017, p. 179) as preconceived ideas of what is correct.

However, this deficit view was not unanimous across all participants. One participant's discourse differed greatly from the others, with the focus being on individual learning. Though disadvantage was mentioned once within the whole narrative, it was acknowledged that all children, regardless of their experiences, have their own needs, with differing methods of support needed for all.

“They are individual’s, we all are, we all have our own experiences, and we all have our challenges, that is what we need to learn and then we can build on those. It is the same for everybody”.

This description of individual learning begins to create an argument for equity over equality, which was a key topic throughout the narrative interviews, and will be further explored in **chapter 4.4**. However, it holds a key place within this theme relating to deficit thinking. All participants have worked within the setting for a considerable length of time, yet there is an apparent difference in thinking between them regarding what influences how they feel about supporting language learning of children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

4.3 Strengths-Based Approach

“I mean, you’ve got to know your child to help them the best you can”.

In contrast to the deficit thinking delineated throughout the narratives, it appears that elements of a strengths-based approach can be seen. A strengths-based approach to educating children focuses on the strengths of each child, appreciating their strengths and resources at hand and using these to the child's advantage (Fenton, Walsh, Wong and Cumming, 2014). The settings' central approach to teaching using the planning in the moment method supports a strengths-based approach, making each child central to their own curriculum, prioritising their unique experiences, and scaffolding these. This was evident through a reflective account by a participant of a teachable moment she encountered:

“....and well... he came in one morning and was excited because he had seen a tractor at the park on his way to school. He said tractor....tractor, so that was it, we put our coats on and went to the park so that he could show us the tractor. We sat together

and talked about what the tractor was doing, lots of lovely language opportunities right there in that moment, it was special to him, had meaning... you know.... he did that, we walked to the tractor because it was important to him, and we showed him he is important to us....”

Following the interests of the child to promote their learning can be seen as a form of agency being offered to the child, empowering them in their learning. This opportunity was formed as a result of knowing the child well enough to scaffold their interest, therefore supporting their individual development. Early years practitioners have the opportunity to form professional relationships with the children and their families, as part of what Bronfenbrenner described as their microsystem (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998, cited in Bulotsky-Shearer et al, 2012 p. 628). It can be seen within these narratives that these relationships have an impact on how and what the child learns. The above quote demonstrates a positive aspect of this, with other participants also acknowledging that they offer *“different opportunities to each and every child, depending on where they are, what they need, they all learn differently”*, with another participant reiterating this when relating to supporting a specific child’s speech, *“they all do different things, they need different help, his mum said he doesn’t like it that way, so we find another way”*. However, there appears to be some overlap between the strengths based thinking apparent here, and the deficit thinking evident within the previous theme, with discussion surrounding individual learning followed by assumptions being made about what constitutes experiences the child must have.

“there is a massive difference I think between how they’re taught or how they’re.....the choices and stuff they are given at home, to what the expectation is like in the setting”

4.4 Equality vs Equity

“It’s about making sure they are all equal....have equal opportunities so that all children have the chance to have the same experiences”

The term ‘equal opportunities’ is delineated throughout early education guidance and within individual settings policies, so it is not unexpected to see equality featuring

throughout the practitioner narratives when discussing disadvantaged families. All four participants commented regarding equality, “*we treat them as equals*”, discussing the pedagogy offered by the practitioners in the setting.

“I feel like you know your children that come from disadvantaged backgrounds, so I feel like....., you treat them equally to the children that come from more advantaged backgrounds.....just the same, we don’t talk to them any different.”

Ridge (2011, cited in Simpson et al, 2017, p. 182) stated that children experiencing disadvantage are likely to have differing needs, and therefore equal opportunities being offered to children, presents a risk of their diversity not being addressed. The narratives generally discoursed equality as treating the children all the same, “*we are all the same really*”, though none of the participants expanded on this subject relating specifically to the children’s learning. However, equality discourse was apparent in some narratives relating to the children’s families, which could be described using Cushing’s (2022) premise of an ideology created by language gap discourses, observed within current literature and early years guidance supporting early years practitioners. The almost dismissive use of the terms ‘language gap’, or ‘development gap’, appear to create a label that separates disadvantaged children from their more affluent peers, without addressing the specific development of a child as an individual, or the situation that has got that family to that position.

“the funded children, they are funded to come in to [the setting] so that we can help to close the development gap, help them catch up to their peers before they go to school...because they are from families that are disadvantaged.....they have less money and time to do the things that the other children might be doing”.

However, though not explicitly described by the participants, there are many elements of equity dispersed within the narratives, demonstrating an awareness of diverse pedagogical approaches needed to support children to provide equality. One participant spoke fondly of a child they had cared for where she had adapted her teaching to meet his specific development stage, “*it just didn’t work for him, he needed to be doing and outdoors just me and him, so we would go for a walk and do our learning that way, it was so much better, and it was what he needed at that time*”. Another participant spoke about sharing a story with a small group of children, “*well we looked at the book*

together, but you can't talk to all the children in the same way, they have different levels of understanding, or communicating, so I am always changing the way I talk to each child so that they can all join in at their own level of understanding". Though Simpson et al (2017) indicated that many children living in poverty were seen but not heard, it appears through these narratives, that practitioners are using methods to attempt to listen to the children through direct observation to meet their diverse needs. *"We are aiming for the best of their ability, not to all be the same, but to be their best selves".*

Research Question 2

How helpful is Bourdieu's concept of social and cultural capital in explaining early years practitioner approaches to inclusive pedagogic practices?

4.5 Practitioner lives

"That's the way I was brought up anyway".

Jackson (2022) argued, using Bourdieu's theories relating to capital, that we should look beyond the qualifications of early years practitioners, investing further research into the cultural experiences that shape their practice. As discussed in **chapter 3.2**, each participant has the same level of qualification, yet importantly, their narratives all tell stories of past events that have been significant to them. Remembering a conversation with a family member, one participant reminisced *"she said do you remember the time when mum was always singing, during our childhood....mum never stopped singing, and there were always nursery rhymes".* The participant did not directly link this to their practice, however had earlier stated that *"with the babies, I can help them with their talking from the word go because I can sit there reading a book, doing nursery rhymes, talking and singing to them all the time".* Though not explicitly expressed by the participant, it appears that the cultural influences of their family have influenced her teaching practices, linking with Bourdieu's (1986) theory of cultural capital. This participants habitus has been formed by her cultural capital, that is, her early life experiences have shaped her norms.

"We've all got a slightly different approach to supporting communication."

This trend in the results continued within other participants narratives, *“I also think that the way I’ve been brought up.... it’s my mum and dad, they would let me look at what was going on, take time to communicate with me and... I always knew what was happening next”*. This narrative also linked to a later discussion surrounding the importance of the use of pictures to support children’s awareness of their routine, *“.....so rather than him miss out on what is happening next, just putting something in to placeto help with his early communication”*. This participant reiterated the importance of children knowing what is happening next twice more within their narrative.

Degotardi and Gill (2017) discoursed the impact early years educator’s childhood and educational experiences had on their pedagogical methods, which relates to the findings of this investigation, seen again within another narrative. This participant alluded to the impact of their familial experiences shaping their priorities in the present. The participant discussed elements of economic capital that appear to have impacted her social and cultural capital throughout her childhood, and this appears to have emphasised her priorities for the children within the setting as she had stressed the importance of the children experiencing visits within the local community and being *“part of the real world”*.

The use of narrative interviews, as Horsdal (2012) had proposed, provided the participants a platform to tell their own stories, with each depicting memories from their childhoods, or early careers, that appear to have shaped their pedagogical priorities today.

4.6 External Expectations - Policy

“We look at the children’s progress from their starting points....celebrate that...rather than just meeting the milestones in the EYFS.....but there is massive pressure to make sure they are hitting their milestones...and for their age...and to have them school ready. The outside professionals never ask how much progress they have made from their starting points, in their own learning, they are focused on knowing if the children will meet the Early Learning Goals, or other assessments that they have to follow.”

Cushing (2022) critiqued the structural inequalities within education and the influences of these structural inequalities can be seen within the participants narratives. In **chapter 4.5**, evidence had begun to form that demonstrates the practitioner's individual cultural capital impacting on their pedagogical priorities when considering disadvantaged children's language learning. The participants had not explicitly linked their approaches to their childhood experiences, however, the participants have made clear links between their practice and the influence of governing policies and guidance. One participant critiqued the influence the Early Years Foundation Stage guidance (Department for Education, 2021) has on their practice, saying "*there's a strong expectation now, there's a lot of pressure on children going to school, school readiness, and the goals and expectations, especially in literacy and English*". Bourdieu's concept of field relates to the cultural impact this educational field has on practice (Edgerton and Roberts, 2014). Dominant societal discourses shaped by the word gap (Johnson, Avineri and Johnson, 2016), seen within government policy and, more recently in catch up programmes following the covid-19 pandemic, appear to have influenced narratives:

"There needs to be a lot of input now from early intervention, as early as possible and I think that is where there is becoming a bit more of a divide....between the children at home... that can get the support and attention, to the disadvantaged.....and then the disadvantaged children are falling behind from a very early age from the EYFS goals"

As with Bronfenbrenner and Morris' (1998, cited in Bulotsky-Shearer et al, 2012 p. 628) discussions surrounding Bronfenbrenner's (1974) theories relating to the macrosystem, links to Bourdieu's capital theories are evident within the policies that govern the participants' practice. Discussed in **chapter 4.2**, deficit views have created a culture of blame, with discourses relating to the developmental gap creating a divide between the disadvantaged and more affluent families. Within this investigation, narratives were focused on the negative impacts of parental engagement from the disadvantaged families, rather than on the social or economic capital that affects the families' cultural disposition. Elements of the participants discussions surrounded the negative impact of limited parent interactions, or limited access to resources as opposed to seeking to address the inequalities imposed by the educational structures. Discussing disadvantaged families, one participant stated that "*I see them, the families, out and about, in a rush to school or work, on their phones, there are less interactions between*

the children and parents". Here, the focus is on the lack of adult to child interactions taking place, instead of addressing the inequalities in access to quality time with their children to engage in meaningful interactions. Golinkoff et al (2018) addressed the need to learn from the disadvantaged families about their child directed interactions, highlighting the importance of this type of language learning above language learning from overheard speech, or televised language.

The pressures from statutory guidance and outside professionals to have children within the setting meeting the dominant educational expectations appears to be causing misplaced tension between practitioners and the workload being set:

"We have a lot of extra activities to carry out with the children in the vulnerable families, the parents don't necessarily take it as seriously as the parents from other families. From comments they have made, I feel that they come to [setting] for that support and that means they don't have to do those activities and things at home as much.....it is our role but we only have them for such a short time, the parents need to engage as well for it to have the best impact"

This extract has a feel of negativity towards the disadvantaged families, however, as part of the whole narrative, there is an overall feeling of injustice for the participant from the pressures of supporting the families and meeting the expectations set within early years education. Another participant also delineated their feelings towards their role in supporting children with their language development through referrals to outside agencies:

"I think they (vulnerable families) agree to keep the peace sometimes, they just agree because they don't want you looking into other things sometimes. I think some families feel that we are above them, have more authority, even though we try to treat them as equals, everyone needs support, we should work together. Sometimes other parents make me feel that they know better....well they are their children at the end of the day....but we have to do so much training and are just trying to give their child the best start"

This is another example of the injustice felt by the participant, but injustice in agency is also acknowledged. The hierarchy created between different classes and cultures, has

an effect on how interactions take place between parents and early years professionals, thus potentially affecting practice.

4.7 External Expectations – External Training

“We do lots of training, I think I have done lots over the years.....and it is always changing....what I learnt about when I first started my job is different now, best practice changes a lot”

Three of the participants discussed the impact their training has had, saying that *“it has a massive influence on your practice”*. As Jackson (2022) acknowledged, a practitioner’s own social, economic and cultural capital provides them with the habitus to educate children following the dominant educational expectations. A practitioner’s habitus may affect the way they approach educational training, and the way they understand each component of the course, relating to their own experiences. The participants presented discussions surrounding training resulting on the formation of their practices when it comes to teaching language and communication with children:

“Across the years I’ve done a lot of communication and language training and I think all training really emphasises how...puts a big approach on how you teach and how you look at things and how your practice works.”

The participants named training they had attended which was all focused on language and communication programmes such as Early Talk Boost (Reeves et al, 2018) and the use of Wellcomm (Education Endowment Fund, 2023), programmes that are used by the setting. One participant demonstrated the influence more dominant professional bodies have on the decisions made to use such programmes, stating that *“we were given it (the Wellcomm package) by our early years team. Ages ago we did Early Talk boost because we were told that was what was best for the children, then we were told to do Wellcomm, but there isn’t anything proper...like talk boost... for the younger children, just pre-school really”*. These programmes are now offered as part of the government’s education recovery programme (Department for Education, 2022b) and are promoted as good practice to support children’s early communication development. One participant acknowledged the impact initial early years training has on practice, but

also recognised that practice also reflects the expectations and ethos of the setting they are based in. Early years practitioners receive the same training, yet all practice slightly differently.

“I assess the situation a little bit differently because I’ve got a lot of experience, although we all have the same qualifications, I’ve got ample amount of experience compared to them.....working with lots of different families. I can use my training differently, because I can relate it to different families and different situation. Some of the others, they worked in different settings, and they did things differently there....not wrong, just different, and the expectation here is different. We do try to take each child as an individual and really look at how they communicate.”

This participant appeared more confident throughout their narrative in developing their own practices, making links between their training, qualifications and experience both within early years settings and their personal life, whereby they felt they had been offered many positive experiences. In contrast to this, another participant who had stated they felt they had missed out on opportunities as a child, and appeared less confident in their own pedagogical approach, discussed being particularly influenced by a senior early years practitioner’s approach.

“Well, I learn a lot from [name], I watch and she will explain why she does things a certain way, why we are teaching that, and that’s how I learn. Like, before I was looking at just lack of speech...sometimes social skills or behaviour.....but now I notice that it’s not all about just speech, there are other forms of communication that can be missed, I didn’t see that.....but now I do”

From within my role as this senior practitioner, I have a significant awareness of Bourdieu’s forms of capital and the confidence to question current training and practice, adapting this to the setting. However, this participant’s narrative emphasises the influence other practitioner’s practice has over their own and goes some way to demonstrate Jackson’s (2022) concepts surrounding the quality and experience of Early Year’s practitioners in promoting early language development.

By using a phenomenological approach to this study, I have been able to gain a better understanding into the influences faced by early year’s practitioners within my setting. As Jackson (2022) suggested, it is important to look beyond training and dominant

discourses that influence pedagogy, but to look at individual experiences, such as those shaped by Bourdieu's concepts relating to capital, to gain a bigger picture of how to further support disadvantaged children's early language development. The use of narrative interviews allowed the participants agency over their individual stories, providing a holistic overview of their influences and priorities within their practice.

Chapter 5 Conclusions and Implications

The above analysis of the data has supported me to conclude this small scale investigation, responding to the research questions identified following the initial review of the literature. Limitations to the research are considered followed by implications for future practice and research.

What influences practitioners in support they provide for the language development of children from disadvantaged backgrounds within a mainstream early years setting?

Early years practitioners have a wide range of internal and external influences, competing to shape the support they offer for the language development of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The participants have demonstrated that they are influenced in their thinking during early childhood, before their careers in early years were even formed (**Chapter 4.5**). Evidence from both literature (Jackson, 2022) and narrative interviews (**Chapter 4**) demonstrate that economic, social and cultural capital experienced within early childhood begins to shape the priorities and beliefs of the practitioner. It is acknowledged that this is demonstrated on a small scale within the research setting, however, the results demonstrate key influences for these practitioners. Some of these influences have resulted in the formation of deficit views (**Chapter 4.2**), placing the experiences of disadvantaged children as less significant in supporting early language development, without specifically addressing the systems that have continued to place these families within this disadvantaged group (Cushing, 2022). This has been influenced by dominant discourses relating to the terms ‘word gap’, or ‘disadvantage gap’ and the pressure to reduce this gap from the governing authorities. Though it is apparent from the narratives that these deficit views are formed subconsciously over time, influencing how the participants approach the strength’s based teaching they go on to describe. The participants were focused on a strengths based approach (**Chapter 4.3**), influenced by both formal training opportunities (**Chapter 4.7**) and the desire to promote equality for children (**Chapter 4.4**), meeting their individual needs to ensure social justice is achieved. Throughout the narratives, it was clear that the participants viewed external factors such as qualifications, policy and training, as the key influences relating to the formation of their pedagogy, (Jackson, 2022).

How helpful is Bourdieu's concept of social and cultural capital in explaining early years practitioner approaches to inclusive pedagogic practices?

It is important to highlight that the participants had differing views when discussing what their priorities were within supporting children's early language development (**Chapter 4.5**), and these areas require critical reflection in order to acknowledge the influential aspects of the practitioner's own capital. Applying Bourdieu's (1986) concept of capital to the practitioners' approaches to inclusive pedagogic practices, key links are evident. Their differing approaches can be explained through recognition of each participant's individual economic, social and cultural capital, which forms their habitus (Edgerton and Roberts, 2014). Each participant had differing views regarding their priorities for supporting early language development for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. These differing views each appeared to link back to individual discourses relating to childhood experiences of language learning or disadvantage. These experiences help to shape the disposition of the participants (Jackson, 2022), and therefore how they view disadvantaged children's language learning experiences. Additionally, the participant's recognised the influences authoritative bodies had over their practice (**Chapter 4.6**). With knowledge of Bourdieu's concepts, dominant cultural expectations of language learning are seen as good practice, unintentionally enhancing the cultural divide even further.

5.1 Limitations

The reliability of this data is limited by the very nature of a small scale investigation. Due to time constraints, and the use of lengthy narrative interviews, it was only practical to interview four participants. However, the use of narrative interviews allowed qualitative data to be gathered, within minimal input from myself as the researcher, allowing the participants the freedom to explore their own stories (Horsdal, 2012 p. 76). To extend the validity of this study, further research could include a wider set of participants which I believe would further inform the impact practitioner capital has on inclusive practice in the early years.

5.2 Implications for future practice within the setting

As an insider researcher, I have the benefit of disseminating the findings within my own team at the setting and overseeing the implementation of adaptations to practice. I suggest practice could be further improved to include more opportunities for practitioners to reflect on their own capital and the influence this has on their priorities for inclusion when supporting children from disadvantaged backgrounds. A further recommendation would be to reflect on communication with families attending the setting, learning more about their priorities for their own child's learning and experiences, to include any barriers they themselves feel they face. Placing the practitioners in a position armed with more extensive knowledge of individual family's capital will allow them to learn how to further enhance this in a meaningful way to each family, in turn, supporting the capital of each child.

The initial dissemination of this research will take the form of an in house training event for the practitioners within the setting. Whilst reflecting on the findings, it is my hope to continue the practitioner agency that has been provided throughout the interview process, to support practitioner inclusion throughout the process of change. These changes will include discussing together how we reflect on our own capital when engaging with children and their families, as well as how we will accomplish gaining a better understanding of individual family's capitals. Continuing to engage the practitioners through this process will provide them with an opportunity to continue their reflective practice, as well as share the process with other practitioners who were not part of this research. Following this process, this research and the implications for the setting's practice will be shared within the local authority networking event to continue to share best practice.

5.3 Implications for future research

To enhance this investigation, future research could extend the sample group to include a wider range of practitioners within early years settings. This would allow an opportunity for further validation to the information gathered here. In addition to this, a larger research project gathering the quantitative information from disadvantaged families about their experiences with supporting their young child's early language development would be beneficial to enhancing early years practitioners' practice. Particularly focusing on their economic, social and cultural capital would allow early

years practitioners the opportunity to reflect on each family's experiences and use these to inform a holistic approach to supporting early language development.

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Postscript - Narrative critical reflection

Beginning my journey through this module, I knew I would undertake a small scale investigation as I feel strongly about continually questioning practice and adapting what we do for the benefit of the child. As I began to focus on the subject of the investigation, I realised the complexity of refining my research topic. I had initially decided to focus my research on the inclusion of disadvantaged children with a special educational need or disability (SEND). However, on further reflection, following my studies within EE814 and EE815, and through feedback from my tutor for TMA1 and TMA2 within this module, I felt that I was not following a path that truly reflected my research intent, and this was reflected in my feedback as I was not putting forward a strong argument for my research (Appendix E). I decided that as a setting, the inclusion of children with SEND was a significant strength and therefore, my research should focus on an area of social justice that is not predominantly discoursed within the setting at present. However, refining my research question was still challenging. On further discussions with my tutor, I reflected on the deficit views I was subconsciously portraying within my own research subject, making presumptions about the research before it had been carried out. I followed this line of thinking and developed my reflections on current practice within the setting, careful to partake in conversations within my tutor group about my ideas, rather than with my colleagues so as not to influence their thinking before interviews were carried out with them. Conducting the initial literature review supported my concept and I began to build a strong basis for my research.

Another significant learning curve was my experience as an insider researcher. Reading the literature about conducting insider research, I felt I was in a strong position to address the ethical considerations required to ensure my research was both conducted ethically, addressing the power dynamics that existed between myself as the setting manager, and the participants. As an authoritative figure, I reflected on how to offer back the participants agency within the research. I had initially planned to conduct the research within the participants' own spaces (**Chapter 3.2**), either within the setting, or out of the setting so that we could avoid using the office space that formal meetings would usually take place in. I had been concerned that the participants would feel that

they should give answers that they felt I was expecting, if they felt that we were still within the manager/employee boundaries (Appendix F). However, 3 of the participants insisted on completing their narrative interviews within my office space. On reflection, this could demonstrate the respectful relationship in place with my colleagues, which was further experienced within their narrative accounts. The participants were much more relaxed than I had anticipated and shared information less formally than perhaps they would have done with an outsider researcher conducting the interviews (Appendix D). This led to some views being shared that were not appropriate to share within the data presentation, although they did demonstrate the deficit thinking analysed within other parts of the data. Ethical considerations for the participant were addressed immediately and, following a discussion with my tutor, I decided to include discussions around the deficit view without using the terminology expressed by the participant. Conducting interviews as an outsider researcher, within other settings in the future, would allow me to reflect further on my role within this study as an insider researcher, reflecting on the responses of practitioner's with whom I do not have a pre-working relationship.

Appendix A

E822 Ethical Appraisal Form

Masters: Education, Childhood and Youth



NB: it should be noted that The Open University is unable to offer liability insurance to cover any negative consequences students might encounter when undertaking 'in-person' data collection. It is therefore very important that you follow appropriate research protocols which should include seeking Gatekeeper permissions to undertake any data collection within your setting and adhering to ethical principles for the safety of yourself and your

Because ethical appraisal should precede data collection, a completed version of this form should be included with TMA02 for those developing a Small-Scale Investigation (SSI) and as part of the EMA submission for those completing an Extended Literature Review and Research Proposal (EP) form of the Dissertation.

participants.

Fill in section 1 of this document with your personal details and brief information about your research.

For section 2, please assess your research using the following questions and click yes or no as appropriate. If there is any possibility of significant risk please tick yes. Even if your list contains all "no" you should still return your completed checklist so your tutor/supervisor can assess the proposed research.

Section 1: Project details

a.	Student name	Lisa Finnemore	
b.	PI	[Removed]	
c.	Project title	Practitioner narratives of supporting children from disadvantaged backgrounds with their early language development in a mainstream early years setting	
d.	Supervisor/tutor	Anita Pilgrim	
e.	Qualification	Masters in Education	X
		Masters in Childhood and Youth	

f.	MA pathway (where applicable)	Inclusive Practice
g.	Intended start date for fieldwork	April 2023
h.	Intended end date for fieldwork	June 2023
i.	Country fieldwork will be conducted in <i>If you are resident in the UK and will be conducting your research abroad please check www.fco.gov.uk for advice on travel.</i>	England

Section 2: Ethics Assessment		Yes	No
1	Does your proposed research need initial clearance from a 'gatekeeper' (e.g. Local Authority, head teacher, college head, nursery/playgroup manager)?	x	
2	Have you checked whether the organisation requires you to undertake a 'police check' or appropriate level of 'disclosure' before carrying out your research? ¹	x	
3	Have you indicated how informed consent will be obtained from your participants (including children less than 16 years old, school pupils and immediate family members)? Your consent letters/forms must inform participants that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. ²	x	
4	Will your proposed research design mean that it will be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge/consent at the time (e.g. covert observation of people in nonpublic places)? If so have you specified appropriate debriefing procedures? ³		x

¹ You must agree to comply with any ethical codes of practice or legal requirements that maybe in place within the organisation or country (e.g. educational institution, social care setting or other workplace) in which your research will take place. If required an appropriate level of disclosure ('police check') can be obtained from the Disclosure and Barring Service (England and Wales), Disclosure Scotland, AccessNI (Northern Ireland), Criminal Records Office (Republic of Ireland), etc.

² This should normally involve the use of an information sheet about the research and what participation will involve, and a signed consent form. You must allow sufficient time for potential participants to consider their decision between the giving of the information sheet and the gaining of consent. No research should be conducted without the opt-in informed consent of participants or their caregivers. In the case of children (individuals under 16 years of age) no research should be conducted without a specified means of gaining their informed consent (or, in the case of young children, their assent) and the consent of their parents, caregivers, or guardians. This is particularly important if your project involves participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent (e.g. children under 16 years, people with learning disabilities, or emotional problems, people with difficulty in understanding or communication, people with identified health problems). There is additional guidance on informed consent on the Masters: Education and Childhood and Youth website under Project Resources.

³ Where an essential element of the research design would be compromised by full disclosure to participants, the withholding of information should be specified in the project proposal and explicit procedures stated to obviate any potential harm arising from such withholding. Deception or covert collection of data should only take place where it has been agreed with a named responsible person in the organisation and it is essential to achieve the research results required, where the research objective has strong scientific merit and where there is an appropriate risk management and harm alleviation strategy.

5	Does your proposed design involve repetitive observation of participants, (i.e. more than twice over a period of more than 2-3 weeks)? Is this necessary? If it is, have you made appropriate provision for participants to renew consent or withdraw from the study half-way through? ⁴		x
6	Are you proposing to collect video and/or audio data? If so have you indicated how you will protect participants' anonymity and confidentiality and how you will store the data?	x	
7	Does your proposal indicate how you will give your participants the opportunity to access the outcomes of your research (including audio/visual materials) after they have provided data?	x	
8	Have you built in time for a pilot study to make sure that any task materials you propose to use are age appropriate and that they are unlikely to cause offence to any of your participants?		x
9	Is your research likely to involve discussion of sensitive topics (e.g. adult/child relationships, peer relationships, discussions about personal teaching styles, ability levels of individual children and/or adults)? What safeguards have you put in place to protect participants' confidentiality?	x	
10	Does your proposed research raise any issues of personal safety for yourself or other persons involved in the project? Do you need to carry out a 'risk analysis' and/or discuss this with teachers, parents and other adults involved in the research?		x
11	Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?		x
12	Will the study involve recruitment of patients or staff through the NHS or the use of NHS data?		x

If you answered 'yes' to questions **12**, you will also have to submit an application to an appropriate National Research Ethics Service ethics committee (<http://www.nres.npsa.nhs.uk/>).

⁴ Where participants are involved in longer-term data collection, the use of procedures for the renewal of consent at appropriate times should be considered.

Appendix B

Narrative Interview Participant Information Sheet

Practitioner narratives of supporting children from disadvantaged backgrounds with their early language development in a mainstream early years setting

Dear [Name]

I would like to invite you to take part in a small scale research study that I am carrying out. Before you agree to take part, I would like to take this opportunity to tell you about the study and what it will involve for you. Please take your time to read over the following information and ask any questions if you would like more information, or to clarify any points.

What is this research study about?

I am currently undertaking the final year of a Masters in Education degree, following an inclusive practice pathway. This research study will form the basis of my dissertation and will complete my work for the degree. I have been interested in supporting the development of young children, particularly those experiencing disadvantage. From working within our setting, I am aware that our team are caring for many children who are from low socio-economic backgrounds, those who are in receipt of either 2 year funding, or receive the pupil premium top up. We have also experienced an increase in the number of children we are significantly supporting with their early communication and language needs. Therefore, I would like to learn about your experience, as a practitioner, of supporting young children are from a disadvantaged background with their early language development.

What will it involve for you?

You will be invited to attend an interview with myself where you will be asked to talk about your pedagogical approach to supporting young children with their language

development within the setting, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. There are no right or wrong responses, I would like to hear your own words and what is important to your personal experience. Prior to the interview, you are asked to consider the children that you directly care for that are from disadvantaged families, and how you support these children, thinking about important experiences or events that have shaped your teaching methods.

The interview will be carried out at the setting within your own rooms. I will take short notes as we go along, and then we will have a break. Following a short break, we will return to the interview where I may ask some questions regarding the subjects you had brought up during the initial interview. This is likely to be asking you to expand on a subject so that I can clarify your views or experiences, avoiding misinterpretation when I write up the interview later.

I will be audio recording for the sole purpose of transcribing the interview. This is to ensure I can transcribe your conversation word for word to avoid misinterpretations. Once I have transcribed the interview, you will be given the opportunity to read this, to ensure it is a true reflection of your words. The audio recording will then be deleted.

Why have you been invited to take part?

You are being invited to take part in this study as you are experienced with supporting children in an early years setting and have worked at the setting for a minimum of two years.

Do you have to take part?

Absolutely not. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary and you can refuse to answer questions or withdraw at any point without any consequences.

What are possible risks or benefits to taking part?

The aim of the research is to inform future practice by learning from practitioners lived experiences and therefore supporting the setting, practitioners and children. Potential

risks are to the setting, whereby conversations have the potential to reveal negative experiences or practices. However, these will be negated through analysis of the experiences to inform future practice, with the aim to enhance positive future experiences. All responses will be anonymised, however, the setting is small and there is the possibility that colleagues reading the research may be able to identify you from your responses. During the transcription process, some responses by yourself, such as names used, or very specific examples, may be adapted to anonymise the response, whilst maintaining the intended message. These changes will be in agreement with yourself.

Will taking part be confidential?

Your name or position within the setting will not be used within the research. As above, any information deemed to make yourself, children, colleagues or the setting identifiable, will be adapted, or blanked out. Again, you will have the chance to read your transcriptions to ensure you are happy with the adaptations. Audio recordings will then be fully deleted.

Confidentiality will only be broken should any information be given during the interview process that is deemed to be a safeguarding matter for either colleagues or children. In which case, the settings safeguarding policies and procedures will take priority.

Your name and signed consent will not be anonymised as this is needed to prove that consent to participate has been given. The signed consent forms will not be included in the final write up of the dissertation, however they will be provided to The Open University as evidence that I have sought permission and consent.

All consent forms, transcriptions and the study will be uploaded to my personal laptop, which is password protected and for my sole use. Paper copies will be shredded once I have received my degree. The dissertation and consent forms will be sent to The Open University electronically via their secure online system.

How will the information and recordings be recorded and stored?

A voice recording app will be used to record the interviews and recordings will be stored on an encrypted file on my personal laptop and backed up on an encrypted email. The laptop and email are also password protected and for my sole use. The voice recordings will not be sent with the dissertation, nor will they be used for anything other than the transcription process by myself. They will be listened to in confidence, whilst being transcribed. Once transcribed, the recordings will be removed from the laptop and from the 'trash' file.

The transcriptions, consent forms, and study will be written on a word app on my personal laptop and backed up via the email, again, these are password protected, encrypted and for my sole use. Signed consent forms will be uploaded to a secure file to be stored and then sent to The Open University as proof that I sought consent. Paper copies will be kept in a locked cabinet in my staff file until I receive my degree. Only I have access to these files. Chapters of my dissertation will be shared with my tutor, via a secure online platform through The Open University.

The final dissertation will be sent electronically through The Open University's secure online system. Under the freedom of information legislation, you are entitled to see any information you have provided at any time.

How will the results of the study be shared?

The research is being used to form a dissertation that will enable me to complete the Masters in Education degree. Actions that will inform future practice, as learned through the study, will be shared with the setting through a dissemination meeting and potential future training. All participants to the study will be invited to an initial meeting to share the results of the study before these are shared between other colleagues.

Who can you contact for further information?

You can contact myself, Lisa Finnemore, at [email address] if you have any questions regarding the study. [Name and email] or [Name and email] can be contacted as those

overseeing my research practice within the setting, should you have any concerns about how the research is being conducted.

Thank You

Lisa

Appendix C



E822 INTERVIEWS CONSENT AND ASSENT FORM

(to be completed by all participants and, if the participant is a child/young person under age 18, with and by their parent/carer/guardian)

If this request relates to a child/young person under the age of 18 and a child or young person would benefit from this, please would a parent, carer or guardian read these questions to them and, if necessary, complete the replies for them. **N/A**

Please indicate YES or NO for each of the questions below and return the completed form by 31st March 2023 to Lisa Finnemore at [email address].

Have you read (or had read to you) the information about this interview?	YES	NO
Has someone explained this interview to you?	YES	NO
Do you understand what this interview is about?	YES	NO
Have you asked all the questions you want?	YES	NO
Have you had your questions answered in a way you understand?	YES	NO
Do you understand it is OK to stop taking part at any time?	YES	NO
Will you have an adult present with you?	YES	NO
Are you happy for the interview to be audio recorded?	YES	NO
Are you happy with how your data will be stored?	YES	NO
Do you understand that your and any other real names as well as any identifiable information will be removed from what will be shared after the interview?	YES	NO
Are you happy to take part?	YES	NO

If any answers are 'no' you can ask more questions. But if you **don't** want to take part, please let me know and **don't** sign your name.

If you **do** want to take part, please write your name and today's date

Your name _____

Date _____

Signature

Return form to Lisa Finnemore at [email address]

Thank you for your help.

Appendix D

Research Instrument

Narrative Interview Initial Question

“Language development in the early years is an area that is seen as crucial to children’s holistic development. Since the covid-19 pandemic, we have seen further prioritisation of children’s early language skills, particularly those of children living within disadvantaged families. In order to gain further understanding of how early years practitioners support children’s language development, it is important to learn about your story and what has influenced your pedagogical choices. I am interested in hearing your own story, everything you say is relevant, I am just going to listen and make some notes as you talk. The interview is being voice recorded, with your permission, to enable me to transcribe your story using your own words to reduce the opportunity for misinterpretations. If you are still happy to proceed, may you tell me your story, starting wherever you like?”

Appendix E

Reflection Grid

Category	Feedback received / Targets achieved / Areas of development	How did this shape my dissertation?
Knowledge and Understanding	<p>TMA1 feedback: There is a promising set of material and some good ideas emerging here. I think we just need to make sure they are clearly expressed on the page so you get the full credit for them</p> <p>TMA2 feedback Look at BERA guidance for ethics</p>	<p>I used information from my journal and past TMA's to create mind maps in order to organise my ideas. I have then used these to plan a layout for my dissertation with subheadings to organise my notes and readings to refer to.</p> <p>I have referred specifically to the BERA guidance and the ethical appraisal grid to ensure I had a good understanding of ethical considerations before planning the research study.</p>
Critical analysis and evaluation	<p>TMA1 Feedback I feel as if there is an argument in your mind, which you have not quite put down on the page here</p> <p>TMA2 feedback You need to develop a confidence in your method.</p> <p>I would like to see you take a critical approach on the possibility of 'deficit' thinking, when talking about a word gap for</p>	<p>At this point in the module, I had lots of ideas but was finding it difficult to pinpoint one specific area that was not too broad. As I moved forward, I began to refine my research and, again, at the start of this final module, I refined this down further following conversations with both my tutor and with my tutor group within the forum and tutor group sessions.</p> <p>I reflected on the method I had used within my undergraduate degree and adapted this for my dissertation as I felt I had a good knowledge of the method having used it previously.</p>

	<p>children from lower socio-economic backgrounds.</p> <p>Draft chapter feedback Use Kuchirko to explore deficit thinking further</p>	<p>I re-read the articles from my literature review to form a more critical understanding of deficit thinking and have used these to discuss the topic within the dissertation, as well as to analyse a theme within the data presentation.</p>
Links to professional practice	<p>Discussion with tutor: Ethical Consideration – participant used terms within narrative that they are not happy with but that demonstrate the subject well.</p>	<p>I had a discussion with my tutor, and with my tutor group within a tutorial session, about the terms used within a narrative interview (I did not share the terms used within the group, just described the situation). I did not want to use the terms out of respect for the participant (ethics), however, it did form good evidence towards my argument. Following the discussion, I spoke with the participant, and it was agreed that the term would not be used within the quotes that formed the data presentation, however, the subject could be used sensitively within the discussion.</p>
Structure, communication and presentation	<p>Draft chapter feedback: We need to unpack the research questions a bit, then you will be able to show how your method was chosen to elicit data that answers them.</p> <p>Use of a reference potentially identifying setting?</p>	<p>On reflection of my initial research questions, I realised there was elements of subconscious deficit thinking within the questions, and assumptions being made. I have learned throughout this degree, and particularly within this final year, to be more critical of my thinking, questioning myself more. Having done this, I have been able to refine my research questions to make them more open and have used</p>

		<p>these to explore my choice of method and methodology.</p> <p>The use of the reference did not identify my setting, however, my tutor suggested using a footnote to make this more explicit. However, after rereading my draft copy, I amended this part and no longer required the reference.</p>
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Appendix F

Ethical Grid

E822 Ethical grid

Rationale	No	Question to consider	Your thoughts
External/ecological			
Cultural sensitivity	1	What are the values, norms and roles in the environment in which I am working and are they likely to be challenged by this research?	From my position as an insider researcher, I have a working knowledge of the values, norms and roles within the setting and can approach these with sensitivity.
Awareness of all parts of the institution	2	What is the relationship between the group/individual I am working with and the institution as a whole? How does it affect the participant(s)?	I hold an authoritative position within the setting and therefore my role as an insider researcher has to be considered carefully to attempt to limit the power dynamics.
Responsive communication – awareness of the wishes of others	3	How might my work be viewed/interpreted by others in the institution? How will the language I use be interpreted?	It is important that the research is constructive and can be used as a reflection tool to support future practice.
Responsibilities to sponsors	4	What are my responsibilities to the people paying for or supporting this research (local authority, my school, external bodies)?	There are no cost implications to the setting as the research is being conducted outside of working hours. I have a responsibility to the sponsor, which is the organisation, to ensure the setting remains anonymous within the research.
Codes of practice	5	Have I worked within the British Educational Research Association guidelines? Are there other relevant codes which might also be applicable? Am I aware of my rights and responsibilities through to publication?	I have worked through both the BERA guidelines and the Code of Human Research Ethics. Extra attention will be given to the integrity of the results, to ensure a fair portrayal of the participants views. The guidelines have been adhered to with respect to the participants and stakeholders right the way through to dissemination.

Efficiency/use of resources	6	Have I made efficient use of the resources available to me, including people's time?	Narrative interviews are lengthy in nature. I ensured best use of the participants' time by minimising the gap between the initial interview and the sub session follow up. I offered the participants the choice of a suitable time for them to partake in the interview, though this had to be within a set time frame to meet the time scale of the investigation.
Quality of evidence on which conclusions are based	7	Have I got enough evidence to back up my conclusions and recommendations?	I gathered four in depth narrative interviews and was able to follow each initial interview with a sub session to follow up any topics of interest that were raised by the participants. I feel that this was enough data to make the conclusions that I arrived at, however, a larger quantity of participants would add further validity to my arguments.
The law	8	What legal requirements relating to working with children do I need to comply with? Am I aware of my data protection responsibilities? Am I aware of the need for disclosure of criminal activity? Do I need written permissions?	Ethical requirements are at the forefront of all research. The data protection act must be adhered to and was considered through storage of data and participant information. Consent was sought from the setting gatekeeper, as well as from each participant, ensuring the participants were fully informed along the way, and were aware of their right to withdraw at any time. As an employee at the setting, a DBS was already in place for myself and the setting has access to my update number to check at any time.
Risk	9	Are there any risks to anyone as a result of this research?	The main risk is that the participants or setting are identified. Every effort has been taken to ensure this does not happen. All identifiable information has been redacted and any discussions that may identify a specific participant, practitioner or child, have been

			<p>discussed within the findings sensitively so that the topic can be discussed but the individual not identifiable.</p> <p>There is a small risk of conflict of interest. As the setting manager, if I hear any information that may bring the setting into disrepute through discriminatory discussions, or discussions of very poor practice, this would need to be identified and acted on accordingly.</p>
Consequential/utilitarian			
Benefits for individuals	10	<p>What are the benefits of my doing this research to the participants? Would an alternative methodology bring greater individual benefits?</p>	<p>Through dissemination of the findings, and continued agency afforded to the participants through working together to plan next steps, it is hoped that the research will act as a reflective tool for participants to take a step back, acknowledging the subconscious practice that occurs, providing a better understanding of their own, individual practice, including what has influenced this.</p>
Benefits for particular groups/organisations	11	<p>What are the benefits of my doing this research to the school/department? Could these be increased in any way? How will I ensure that they know about my findings? Is my work relevant to the school development plan? Can I justify my choice of methods to my sponsors?</p>	<p>As above, practice will be informed and the setting can learn how to improve teaching strategies moving forward. Practitioners will be more aware of how their experiences shape their pedagogical approaches and can address these accordingly. It is hoped that this will then have a positive effect on the teaching of early language to the children within the setting.</p> <p>The findings will be disseminated within an in house training event, and the practitioners will be asked to support in the development of an action plan from these findings.</p>

Most benefits for society	12	Is this a worthwhile area to research? Am I contributing to the 'greater good'? Is it high quality and open to scrutiny?	Disseminating the findings to with local network meetings could support the practice within other settings. This research could also be used to inform future research studies.
Avoidance of harm	13	Are there any sensitive issues likely to be discussed or aspects of the study likely to cause discomfort or stress?	There is the potential for sensitive issues to be discussed surrounding disadvantaged families, or for the participants sharing their personal stories. Transcriptions will be shared with the participants and any sensitive issues can be addressed within the findings in a sensitive manner.
Benefits for the researcher	14	Am I going to be able to get enough data to write a good thesis or paper? Am I aware of my publication rights? What might I learn from this project? Will it help in my long-term life goals?	This investigation is limited by time scales and therefore the data will be limited. However, I feel that I have enough information to inform my research topic for the individual setting. This will provide myself with detailed information about how we can move forward as a setting in our practice. Long term, this study will form a good basis to carry out future research projects.
Deontological			
Avoidance of wrong – honesty and candour	15	Have I been open and honest in advance with everyone who might be affected by this research? Are they aware that they can withdraw, in full or in part, if they wish?	All participants and stakeholders have been provided with detailed information regarding the research and are aware they can withdraw at any time.
Fairness	16	Have I treated all participants fairly? Am I using incentives fairly? Will I acknowledge everyone involved fairly? Can I treat all participants equally?	I believe I have treated all participants fairly. No incentives were offered and all participants joined in the study freely.
Reciprocity	17	Have I explained all the implications and expectations to the participants? Have I negotiated mutually beneficial arrangements? Have I made myself available when those	All participants have been made aware of the implications and expectation. Where possible, the participants were offered a time that suited them to

		involved might wish me to be? Are the participants clear about roles, including my own, as they relate to expectations?	conduct the interviews, though this had to be within a specific timescale. The participants decided where they felt comfortable with the interview taking place.
Tell the truth	18	If there is any need for covert research, how will I deal with this? What will I do if I find out something that the participants/school/department do not like? How will I report unpopular findings	There has not been any need for covert research. The interviews have been conducted openly. Any findings that may be met negatively have been addressed sensitively, in a constructive way.
Keep promises	19	Have I clarified access to the raw data and how I will share findings including at publication? How will I ensure confidentiality?	Confidentiality will be ensured through anonymity throughout the research paper. Raw data will be for my sole use and will be destroyed when it is no longer needed for this research study. It will not be used elsewhere within any other study or for any other purpose.
Do the most positive good	20	Is there any other way I could carry out this research that would bring more benefits to those involved?	The use of narrative interviews and thematic analysis were chosen to ensure the participants had the opportunity to tell their own stories with minimal influence from myself as the researcher, and that the data was kept, as much as possible, within their own words.
Relational/individual			
Genuine collaboration/trust established	21	Who are the key people involved? How can I build a constructive relationship with them?	As an insider researcher, I am already an established member of the team and have formed constructive relationships with the participants prior to this research.
Avoid imposition/respect autonomy	22	Am I making unreasonable or sensitive demands on any individuals? Do they appreciate that participation is voluntary?	Voluntary participation has been reiterated through participant information sheets and through informal conversations with the participants.

			The nature of the narrative interview allows the participants to choose the information they wish to share.
Confirmation of findings	23	What steps will I take in my methodology to ensure the validity and reliability of my findings? Can I involve participants in validation? Will I report in an accessible way to those involved?	The use of a phenomenological approach, and narrative interviews will ensure validity to the results as the results will be formed by the participants own words and ideas. Miscommunication and misinterpretations of results will be minimised through use of the participants own words, and through sharing of transcripts to ensure they have been transcribed fairly.
Respect persons equally	24	How will I demonstrate my respect for all participants? Have I treated pupils in the same way as teachers?	I have offered each participant the same opportunities within the research, demonstrating respect through reiterating the importance of their own voice within their individual stories.