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Empowerment through literacy: Literacy shaping futures

Conference proceedings

The papers which follow are a selection of those presented at the 2011 UKLA international conference. They are designed to give a summary of the presenters’ key ideas, arguments and references. Please note that they are not peer-reviewed articles, but have been written to offer others a flavour of the conference and allow delegates to read about sessions they could not attend.

Not all sessions are represented here e.g. if papers are due to be published or have already been published elsewhere. For abstracts of all the parallel sessions, though, please refer to the conference brochure by clicking here.

For your information, Colin Harrison’s talk can be accessed here and Judy Parr’s paper has been published in Assessing Writing: PARR, J. M. ‘Repertoires to scaffold teacher learning and practice in assessment of writing’. Assessing Writing, 16, 32-48. 2011.
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A Metaphor Analysis Approach to Literacy Research: Providing Insights for Empowering Students through the College Literacy Transition

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Abstract

Most beginning college students experience some difficulty as they transition to the new expectations and rigours of college-level writing, especially in terms of how they understand academic literacy practices. This paper reports on a study designed to generate knowledge about first-year college students' conceptual starting points and whether and how their conceptualizations of academic writing changed during their initial college literacy experience in a developmental reading and writing class. With such insights, educators may better assist and empower students as they navigate the literacy transition into the formal written expectations of the academy.

A Metaphor Analysis Approach to Literacy Research: Providing Insights for Empowering Students through the College Literacy Transition

Transitioning to the rigours and demands of academic writing in college is difficult, in part because such a literacy transition entails a conceptual shift for most students. The study reported on in this paper was designed to generate knowledge about that conceptual shift, beginning with first-year college students' initial conceptualizations of academic writing, and including whether and how their conceptualizations changed during their first-year literacy instruction (for fuller discussions of this study see Armstrong, 2007; Armstrong, 2008; and Armstrong, Davis, & Paulson, 2011; Paulson & Armstrong, 2011). The study employed a multi-level, multi-method approach that included metaphor analysis as a way to explore students' conceptualizations by analyzing their metaphorical linguistic expressions.

Metaphor analysis is well-established as a research tool, though not nearly as widely used in literacy research as in other fields. As a research approach, it is intended to uncover participants' understandings by closely examining their metaphoric
language. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) have noted, ‘We are concerned primarily with how people understand their experiences. We view language as providing data that can lead to general principles of understanding’ (p. 116). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) have described this view as a cognitive linguistic approach, or conceptual theory, which posits that metaphor is more appropriately thought of as a cognitive issue than a linguistic one. In short, they argue, our conceptualizations, our actions, and consequently, our language, are ‘metaphorically structured’ (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 5), suggesting a link between what is said and what is thought. Since Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) seminal work, many scholars have described the use of metaphor analysis as a research tool (e.g., Cameron & Low 1999; de Guerrero & Villamil, 2002; Kovecses, 2002).

Metaphor analysis is an analytical approach that examines participants' linguistic metaphors (the actual metaphors articulated by the participants) to identify the target (the unfamiliar domain) and the source (the familiar domain through which the target is being explained or conveyed metaphorically). Next, these metaphors are framed in terms of conceptual metaphors (the cognitive analogical linking that underlies the linguistic metaphor) in order to provide some insight into participants' understandings of a given construct. According to Cameron and Low (1999), this involves ‘collecting examples of linguistic metaphors used to talk about the topic...generalising from them to the conceptual metaphors they exemplify and using the result to suggest understandings or thought patterns which construct or constrain people’s beliefs or actions’ (p. 88). In the case of the study described in this paper, the metaphorical linguistic expressions (MLEs) that were collected came in two forms: elicited and spontaneously generated.

**Brief Overview of the Study**

This study was set in the context of a developmental reading and writing course (see Bartholomae & Petrosky, 1986, for the theoretical background on this type of paired course) at a major U.S. research university. Using multiple data sources, including sequenced, semi-structured interviews, retrospective writing analyses, and classroom observations, this study followed eight first-year students throughout an entire
academic term. The primary data sources were the interviews, and one function of those interviews was to collect data on students' metaphorical linguistic expressions (MLEs) on two levels. First, elicited metaphors were gathered at several points across the study by prompting each participant to complete the stem 'academic writing is like __________.' In addition, spontaneously generated metaphors were identified through close analysis of interview transcripts. The next section will provide a short sample of the identification and analysis of spontaneously generated metaphors; for an explanation of the collection and analysis of elicited metaphors see Armstrong (2008).

**Spontaneously Generated Metaphors**

One of the study participants, Chris\(^1\), was a 19-year-old woman who was, at the time of the study, taking the developmental reading and writing course for the second time. We met four times over the course of the term for semi-structured interviews during which we discussed her academic writing assignments through retrospective analysis of her major essays. What follows are two small sections of one interview intended to provide some insight into the process of identifying and analyzing spontaneously generated metaphors. Here, Chris is talking about a writing strategy that she had adopted, something she calls 'bullcrapping':

CHRIS: Yeah. I just *threw that all together*. Just *made it up* and hoped it would *sound* good.

SONYA: OK, so that's what you mean by 'bullcrapping'? Kind of making it up and just hoping that it sounds good?

CHRIS: Yeah.

SONYA: Ok, what does it feel like when you’re at that place where you want to just 'bullcrap' or make something up, I mean, is there something specific that happens, or do you run out of ideas? What happens to get you to that point?

\(^1\) A pseudonym.
CHRIS: Usually when I run out of ideas, and it's either not long enough and I have to put more stuff into it and I don't know what to put into it, so just make it up.

SONYA: Any other specific places—you've pointed out that paragraph on page 2—where you read it and you say, 'this is me making stuff up'?

CHRIS: Well I know there's another paragraph but I don't know where. I don't know. It's this one here. It's these two paragraphs.

SONYA: Oh, both on page 2. The one that starts ‘Love is not blind, it sees more...’ What's 'bullcrappy' about that one?

CHRIS: Um, I just threw a whole bunch of different things together. Like, I don't even think I like really paid attention to what I was putting in. I was just like, ‘oh, ok, I'll put this in, and I'll put this one in...’

The italicized words and phrases in these excerpts were identified as Chris' spontaneously generated MLEs. These examples, as well as many other examples gathered during interviews with Chris, have in common an implied target of an IDEA (or some other bound entity that she ‘finds’ elsewhere) and a suggested source of an OBJECT. In terms of a conceptual metaphor, this would be framed as AN IDEA IS AN OBJECT. For Chris, in other words, an idea is something one puts into a piece of writing. Based on some of Chris' other identified MLEs, conceptual metaphors of LANGUAGE IS AN OBJECT, AN ESSAY IS A CONTAINER, and a personification of LITERACY IS AN ENEMY were also determined.

Following this initial analysis, these conceptual metaphors can then be grouped into larger categories to get to a deeper understanding of participants' predominant conceptualizations. A few of the categories identified in the study, including the various conceptual metaphors as well as an example MLE for each follow:

**Object/transmission metaphors:**

KNOWLEDGE IS TRANSFERABLE
‘...I wouldn’t be given ‘this is how to write a paper’

LITERACY-LEARNING IS RECEIVING AN OBJECT

‘We didn’t get much explanation’

A TEXT IS A CONTAINER

‘Add more quotes...add more quotes...’

Construction metaphors:

WRITING IS CONSTRUCTING A BUILDING

‘...to support a topic...’

A WRITER IS A BUILDER

‘...nail those topics together’

A TEXT IS A TOOL

‘...two texts that I was using’

The analysis of participants’ spontaneously generated metaphors, including this categorization of conceptual metaphors, was only one part of a larger study, of course. In addition, participants’ elicited metaphors were analyzed, as were several levels of analysis of their non-metaphorical language. These various phases of analysis were then used for triangulation using the constant-comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) as well as cross-case analysis (Merriam, 1998) to identify emerging themes and to discover patterns and differences.

Brief Overview of Findings
Data analysis confirmed conceptual diversity within the target population, as well as varying degrees of conceptual change during the course of participants’ initial reading and writing instruction. These participants demonstrated that they had personal conceptual models of academic writing, of literacy, and of literacy-learning near the beginning of their course (see also Simpson & Nist, 2002). Indeed, a range
of conceptual metaphors were identified at the outset, though most heavily emphasized object/transmission models similar to Chris' above.

In addition, there were equally varying degrees of conceptual change identified over the course of the study with some participants demonstrating movement from object/transmission models toward more generative models. These participants' understandings of academic writing and the degree to which these understandings evolved throughout the study, also seemed to affect their perceived and actual development as writers. This was confirmed in at least one instance because Chris, whose conceptualizations were strikingly object-transmission-based in the beginning, and which did not appear to shift much through the academic term. In fact, triangulation across the various phases of analysis provided evidence that Chris held potentially problematic conceptualizations of literacy and learning. Specifically, she did not seem to view literacy as anything more than a product completely disconnected from her own thinking. Chris, who had already taken the class twice, ended up not passing the course again and retaking it for a third time.

One of the study's major findings—as interpreted through a triangulated data analysis approach—was a link between students' writing-confidence levels and their conceptual models. In general, participants with lower self-confidence as writers, like Chris, tended toward a more local and basic conceptualization of academic writing; by contrast, those with more self-confidence seemed to view academic writing as a generative, lifelong learning process.

**Implications**
The study's findings, especially those linking self-confidence and conceptualizations, suggest the importance of acknowledging learners' understandings of academic literacy practices. College educators, especially those working with students transitioning to academic modes of literacy, need to acknowledge that not only are students' personal beliefs affecting their understandings but they also impact their overall writing development. For that reason, acknowledging widely varying understandings and progressions is one way to help empower first-year college students as they navigate the literacy transition.
In closing, future research in postsecondary-developmental contexts should consider not just what student-writers do, but also why they do what they do. Metaphor analysis is one approach that allows for such explorations. Indeed, as a tool for literacy research, metaphor analysis allows researchers to glean insights into learners' conceptual starting points, including their attitudes toward and understandings of literacy. With such insights, educators may better assist and empower students as they navigate the literacy transition into the formal written expectations of the academy. Further, based on related research (e.g., Nist & Holschuh, 2012; Simpson & Nist, 2002; Schraw & Bruning, 1996) there is potential to explore whether students' personal theories and conceptualizations of learning and knowledge, as determined via metaphor analysis, can be predictors of future academic success.

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References


Figured Worlds and Possible Selves – identity children’s television and transition to secondary school
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This paper reflects exploratory findings for preliminary data collected as part of a doctoral thesis. As such the discussions are tentative and incomplete and will contribute a more rigorous examination of the data within the thesis itself.

The key research questions are drawn from the concepts of ‘possible selves’ originally postulated by Markus and Nurius in 1987 and ‘figured worlds’ as described by Holland et al. in 1998. The research examines the identity narratives drawn on by children in their talk about their possible future selves in transition from primary to secondary school and how these narratives resonate with figured worlds and stereotypes of secondary schools in children’s television programmes set in secondary schools.

Markus and Nurius describe possible selves as:

...the ideal selves that we would very much like to become. They are also the selves we could become and the selves we are afraid of becoming.

(Markus and Nurius, 1986: 954)

For children in transition to high school (secondary school) there are well-worn stereotypical identity-types on offer as ‘possible selves’ and these are typically perpetuated through a range of narratives – but particularly television. Stereotypes offer a short-cut to understanding a range of social identities and contribute to the process of making sense of the social world, but in so doing they inevitably diminish complexity and individual difference and contribute to the normalisation of more powerful narratives:

Stereotyping imparts a sense of fixedness to the homogenised images it disseminates. It attempts to establish an attributed characteristic as natural
and given in ways inseparable from the relations of power and domination through which it operates. (Pickering, 2001: 5)

In the context of secondary schools and the stereotyping of children’s identity the ‘relations of power and domination’ referred to above are complex and intersect with narratives of transition to adolescence, media representation, popular culture and its consumption and schooling. (Danesi, 1994; Milner, 2006).

Stereotypes also have a significant role in the construction and maintenance of figured worlds - collectively understood cultural models which provide an imaginative template by which events, discourses, actions and players within particular cultural activities (such as ‘school’) can be predicted and understood (Holland et al., 1998). Figured worlds make use of stereotypes to provide a framework of interpretation between individual and social worlds so that:

...identity can be separated to some extent from cultural determinism and can account for improvisation and innovation within cultural contexts...

(Urrieta, 2007:107-8)

Thus when children draw on figured worlds of school they are not necessarily bound to reproduce the cultural models and associated stereotypes with which they engage but their identity work in school will nevertheless draw on and be influenced by them:

Figured worlds are therefore processes or traditions of apprehension that give people shape and form as their lives intersect with them.

(Holland et al., 1998:108)

This research seeks to explore to what extent the media representation of stereotypical groups determines the range of identities explored by children in secondary schools and to what extent children challenge or resist them. The research looks for resonances in the identity narratives children create in telling stories about their futures possible selves and the fictional narratives of children’s television and the associated stereotypes. The imaginative recreation of identity of through narrative as described by Bruner (1987) is used to frame the analysis – understanding narrative as an act of both representation of identity and its
construction. It is of particular interest to consider how future possible identities are articulated in the children’s narratives. Bruner suggests:

I believe that the ways of telling and the ways of conceptualising that go with them become so habitual that they finally become recipes for structuring experience itself, for laying down routes into memory, for not only guiding the life narrative up to the present but directing it into the future.

(Bruner, 1987: 708)

This could mean that the ways in which children talk about their futures selves in Year 7 whilst they are in Year 6 could play a part in directing the possible future identities or selves with which they engage.

**Methodology**

Twenty two Year 6 children (11 boys and 11 girls) were recruited from three different local schools through a voluntary process. In small group, semi-structured interviews they were asked to draw a picture of how they imagined they would be in Year 7. The pictures they drew were used as elicitation tools to further guide the group interview. The children were then asked to discuss pictures depicting the cast from children’s television programmes which portray children in secondary schools – again the pictures were used as elicitation tools so that the children’s spontaneous observations directed the course of the interview. Finally, the children were asked to complete a brief questionnaire about their viewing habits. This data collected so far forms the first part of the overall data for the project. All the children who took part in the interviews have agreed to be contacted for a follow up interview next year when they are in Year 7.

The children all attend schools in Kent where a selective system is in place for transition to secondary school. The children all knew which schools they would be attending and all had undertaken at least one visit. The schools they were enrolled in included grammar schools (selective); high schools (non-selective) and a special school. Some grammar schools were single sex, all high schools and the special school were mixed.
**Discussion of Data**

To illustrate the data, responses from two of the children are considered here in more detail along with a discussion of emerging themes.

Jordan’s secondary school was the local, non-selective high school – known as a ‘community college’. This is the school that the majority of his friends from his primary school would be attending. He was very keen to talk about what he thought school would be like and appeared confident and excited about the transition.

![Image of Jordan's picture](image)

Jordan’s picture shows himself in the middle with his arm round a girlfriend, a football at his feet and surrounded by friends both old and new.

The main focus for Jordan when talking about his new school were narratives of popularity such as:

‘I’ll probably be the same as I am now. Loads of friends...I’m really good at football.’

Sport was often linked either explicitly or implicitly to popularity – and this was more evident in the boys’ talk and pictures than the girls’ with many of the boys including pictures of sport-related activities or artefacts in their pictures of themselves in Year 7.

Jordan also linked popularity with academic ability – he said that he did not feel he would struggle with the school work but he was at pains to stress that he wasn’t ‘too’ clever – describing himself as the ‘bottom of the top group’ and saying:
‘I’m not really really smart. I’m...I’m like...in the middle...in literacy you have this table (pointing) where the children are really really smart...like...nerdy... a bit...and then like that table (pointing) and that one (pointing)...like...they’re all in top literacy but they’re like...the lowest in the top.’

Jordan was also focused on the girlfriend shown in his drawing - saying that his girlfriend in Year 7 would be ‘better’ than his current girlfriend. In his talk about his present and future girlfriends Jordan appeared to see them as accessories to the ‘cool’ and popular identity he wanted to project and not related to any kind of romantic attachment.

Jordan tended to use terms such as ‘nerd’, ‘geek’, ‘cool’ and ‘popular’ throughout the discussions – and in particular when describing the characters in the television shows. He reported watching significant amounts of television and, in particular, he watched and enjoyed ‘Waterloo Road’ a television programme, aimed primarily at an adult audience, which is set in a troubled secondary school. Jordan was knowledgeable about the storylines and able to describe the characters in some detail.

**Lisa**

Lisa had been offered a place at her second choice of school – she was to attend a nearby grammar school, but did not know any other children who would be going to this school. She was not happy about going to a grammar school and keen to distance herself from a ‘nerd’ identity.

The following exchange during the semi-structured interview caused Lisa some distress:

Lisa (pulling a face): I’m going to a grammar school

Bob (under his breath but clearly audible, imitating a drawn out sheep’s ‘baaa’): ne-e-e-e-rd

RA (interviewer) (to Lisa): Do you think that’s going to make a difference?

Lisa (pulling a face): yep

RA: How?
Bob (teasing in a silly voice): She’ll wear glasses

Lisa (putting her face in her hands): Oh my god!

Carly (joining in the teasing and silly voice): She’ll wear glasses!

Bob (still teasing): She’ll be ugly; she’ll be ugly

Lisa frequently made references to ways in which she was going to reject the ‘nerd’ behaviours. She made repeated references to her looks and compared herself to the characters in the television programmes by pointing to the female characters and saying: ‘She’s like me ‘cos she’s pretty.’ Lisa also enjoyed watching Waterloo Road and was very involved with the plot lines – again talking knowledgeably about the stories and characters.

She also described herself as ‘fashion’ and explained the importance of being ‘fashion’ if you wanted to be cool – demonstrating for me how she tied her school tie so that it was ‘fashion’ and not ‘nerdy’. Thus both attractiveness and clothing formed significant parts of Lisa’s understanding of both ‘nerd’ and ‘cool’ identities.

Lisa’s picture shows her and the ‘other kid’ – although she had met some children from her new school on her visit she could not remember any names. However, the narratives of strict teachers and the academic requirements of her new school dominate her picture – perhaps giving some insight into the figured world of grammar school which was the model for Lisa’s understanding. In discussion, Lisa repeatedly rejected narratives which aligned her with academic achievement – the ‘possible self’ with which she did not want to be associated. She asserted that she
wanted to get detention on her first day and listened, smiling when the other children in the group described her fights with other children at the primary school adding: ‘That’s because I’m not a nerd’.

**Conclusion**
The two children described above are typical of the responses from the children. Other narratives which were recurrent included fears about bullying; academic ability; increased independence and issues related to time and space – such as decreased time for hobbies, or size of the school. There appeared to be a correlation between the amount of television about secondary schools the children reported watching and their use of terminology relating to stereotypical school identities. In their discussion of the television programmes, however, the children were aware of the stereotypical nature of both the characters and the storylines – they recognised the television representations as a distortion of the ‘real’.

Media representation of high school provides cultural models or figured worlds which are made available to and shared with a wide range of children. The stereotypes of the pupils in them play key roles in how children understand how schools work and their part in them. Stereotypes of children in high school are usually presented in a hierarchical way related to the popularity or ‘coolness’ of the identity in question and ‘coolness’ in school is frequently associated with sports, popularity with peers and material possessions including clothes; at the opposite end of the spectrum are ‘nerds’ who are associated with conventional clothing; enjoying school work; achieving academically and having few, like-minded, friends (Milner, 2006). Whilst the playing out of these peer group cliques in school contexts may be less obvious than its portrayal through public narratives such as television, there is still a strong connection for children with the identities thus proscribed and this was evident in this research in the children’s talk about their present and future selves and the ways in which they ‘figured’ the world of secondary school would be.

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Abstract
I am challenging the label ‘multimodal texts’ because I believe it is unhelpful and distracting at a time when we need a comprehensive account of texts to underpin the wider definitions of literacy now gaining ground. I argue that reductive versions of the academic approach known as ‘multimodal analysis’ have been co-opted by literacy educators in ways that play into the hands of regressive policy-makers, and fail to recognise either the true complexity of non-print media or what preschoolers may be learning – from moving-image media in particular. I propose a different way of categorising texts, based on the multimodal meaning-making systems that they all employ, which divides texts into two broad categories: page-based (e.g., books, photographs, newspapers, web pages, SMS etc) and time-based (e.g., films, music, computer games, radio, etc). I explore some of the specificities and commonalities between these two categories, and indicate ways in which they might be productively explored in the classroom.

When I first started arguing for media education in the 1970s, the idea of using the word ‘text’ to denote anything that wasn’t written or printed seemed outlandish, even to me. It’s now become fairly widespread, but at the same time, conservative forces have continued to cling to the notion that an extended definition of ‘text’ is bound to threaten the predominance of traditional forms. Like most conservative ideas, this ignores the power of the people. People always have and always will use the forms of communication that come most readily to them and which they think enable them to communicate ideas, stories and information most effectively. Now that not only writing implements, paper and basic literacy education but also digital forms of transmission are so widespread, it is unlikely that the convenience and
expressiveness of the written form will face extinction any time soon, despite the steep learning curve this form presents to many learners.

At the same time, educators, academics and other thinkers have become increasingly fascinated by the rapid development and cultural impact of what, to avoid the limitations and ‘baggage’ of other terms, and for now, I will call ‘non-print texts’. This started more than a century ago when it began to become clear that ‘moving pictures’ were more than a novel form of photography: they were set to become a new mass entertainment medium and even perhaps a new art form. The development of other communications media throughout the 20th century is familiar to us all although, as often happens, most people tend to pay attention only to the forms that have developed significantly within the last 20 years, which for us now means digital technologies and all that they make possible. However, this fascination has been tempered by anxiety and uncertainty as we contemplate the relationships that may develop between ‘old’ and ‘new’ media, and the consequences that may follow.

One academic who has done much to establish the term ‘multimodality’ as a way of arguing that texts have now changed radically is Gunther Kress. Although Kress acknowledges the importance of a wide range of media forms including computer games, films and TV, his real focus tends to be the printed page, particularly in school textbooks: he demonstrates how these have become more ‘visual’ over the last 50 years and no longer need to be read conventionally from left to right and top to bottom (Kress, 2003). The same principles can be applied to web pages. Kress rightly draws attention to the fact that print and visual images need not be separately composed or separately read: they combine in a single, ‘multimodal’ communicative form. Similar arguments were made long ago by semioticians: for example in their use of the semiotic term ‘anchorage’ as a way of explaining how a print caption narrows down the ‘polysemic’ potential of, say, a newspaper image, and ensures that it is ‘read’ in a particular way (Barthes 1977: 38-41).
But my purpose here is not to review or critique the thriving academic field of multimodal analysis. I’m more interested in how the term ‘multimodal’ has been co-opted by educators. To make it usable by classroom teachers with neither the time nor the inclination to read academic tomes, the ideas behind it had to be simplified. This was also important if they were to catch the attention of policy-makers (whether in Government or the Civil Service). So while promotional material for Carey Jewitt’s *Handbook of Multimodal Analysis* (Jewitt, 2009) defined multimodality briefly but accurately as ‘an innovative approach to representation, communication and interaction which looks beyond language to investigate the multitude of ways we communicate: through images, sound and ‘music to gestures, body posture and the use of space,’ attempts to reach a wider audience with an ‘easier’ definition can get into fatal over-simplifications. For example, David Machin’s *Introduction to Multimodal Analysis* (2007) is widely promoted as providing ‘a groundbreaking approach to visual analysis’. A lot of what multimodal theorists deal with is visual but a lot of it isn’t, or combines the visual with other modes. And in the education sector, a completely new idea has emerged in the process of trying to make the idea of ‘multimodality’ more concrete and graspable. For example, Bearne and Wolstencroft (2007) not only chose the title *Visual Approaches to Teaching Writing* for their book on ‘multimodal literacy 5-11’ but also make the claim that ‘Many everyday texts are now multimodal, combining words with moving images, sound, colour and a range of photographic, drawn or digitally created visuals’ (page 1; my emphasis). A giant conceptual leap has been made here: from ‘multimodal analysis’ as a way of looking at texts, to ‘multimodal texts’ as a way of categorising what texts actually are.

Despite the problematic nature of this conceptual leap, a thriving industry has started to grow around the notion of ‘multimodal texts’. The National Strategies website offered this:

> Multimodal texts are now common on the Internet and pupils are used to texts that use more than one method of communication. All over the web there are short films, animations and combinations of words, sounds and images that convey ideas. (www.nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/191938 website now closed: 9th September 2011)
thus reducing ‘multimodality’ to a mere aggregation of ‘methods’ with the term ‘more than one method of communication’, when the point of multimodality is – or should be – to investigate the interaction between modes to produce meanings that are more than the sum of the parts. A further reductive approach can be seen in this local authority advice on multimodal texts which equates them with computer-based activity as well as allocating them a lower status: they’re just a way of getting children to do better at reading and writing; by implication, they have little intrinsic value:

ICT texts incorporating sound and images as well as text can be a highly effective way of engaging children in purposeful interactions with reading and writing. (www.eriding.net/english/multimodal_writing.shtml accessed 9th September, 2011)

Most depressingly of all, this publisher’s promotion simply spatters modish terms around as though they were equivalent in meaning:

Multimodal texts: podcast - give your literacy lesson some multimedia magic with our free digital text and activities.

(www.education.scholastic.co.uk/content/4902 accessed 9th September, 2011)

What all these examples demonstrate is a confusion of aims: there’s a desire to bring non-print texts into the classroom but an anxiety about how to justify this and above all a fear that someone – parents, press, head teachers, Ofsted – may object to the apparent devaluing of print texts. ‘Multimodal texts’ sounds scientific and businesslike, and is unlikely to appeal to Daily Mail headline writers. In the current climate of testing and league tables these anxieties are understandable, but I’d argue that the contortions thus generated cause as many problems as they solve. The counter-argument to here is that it’s better to try and broaden children’s experiences in some way even if it involves compromises. But the effect of compromise here is to make an unnatural and strained division between the ‘proper texts’ that are written or printed on paper and in books, and ‘everything else’, whether it is labelled ‘multimodal’, ‘digital’ or ‘visual’. This disregards that fact that much of what falls into
the ‘everything else’ category is actually print-based: websites, e-mail, e-books and SMS all use ‘printed’ words. There are some interesting differences between words on paper and on screen, mainly relating to their cost and ease of distribution, but the actual skills required to make sense of them are the same.

I object to the practice of lumping all non-print texts together under the ‘multimodal’ heading, because it:

- ignores the specificity of different types of non-print texts
- ignores the fact that print texts are also multimodal
- loses sight of the ways in which print and non-print texts have important commonalities
- imposes a false, technologically-derived uniformity on non-print texts, and
- disregards people’s actual textual practices and preferences.

Addressing the last of these points first, we need to remind ourselves of what people, and particularly young children, are actually doing with non-print texts. Ofcom’s annual series of ‘media literacy audits’ is a useful source here. This year their data show that, when asked what media technology they would miss most if it was taken away, 52% of the 5-7 age group identified television as their favourite, with computer/console games coming a long way behind at 25% and other media practically nowhere. (Ofcom UK Children’s Media Literacy p 29, at http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/media-literacy/media-lit11/childrens.pdf accessed 9th September, 2011)

Public excitement and moral panics about digital technologies tend to overlook the continued and specific importance of the moving image (ie TV and films) in children’s formative years. It’s a safe bet that if Ofcom’s study looked at preschoolers, we’d see an even bigger preference for TV – and for DVDs, which Ofcom doesn’t ask about, since it doesn’t regulate them! For indicators on early encounters with moving-image and other media we have to turn to Digital Beginnings, the important Sheffield University study which tells us that 59% of children have started
watching TV by the age of six months and that by age 2, 70% of children can (and probably do) turn on the TV by themselves (Marsh et al., 2005: 25).

Moving-image media are enormously important to young children and have been ever since the invention of the VCR made it possible for little children to view and review favourite bits of TV and film whenever they wanted or were allowed to – that is, since the late 1970s. For that entire 33-year period, most educators have continued to be distracted by public concerns relating to the possible effects of moving-image media content, while ignoring a much more salient issue. The ‘elephant in the room’ is this: given that children start to engage with and enjoy moving-image media in their second year of life – often in contexts with little or no adult mediation – then well before they start school they must have acquired some understanding of the complex multimodal characteristics of these media, because if they hadn’t, they wouldn’t be able to enjoy them so much.

This could have immense implications for the early stages of conventional literacy learning. Let’s consider what this early learning involves. Following the broader set of cultural attitudes that exclude popular entertainment forms such as film from the mainstream artistic canon, teachers tend to assume that, because children learn to understand films and TV at an early age, these media must be simple, as in ‘the visual nature of film makes its devices more accessible to a wider range of children’ (Simpson, 2011 forthcoming). But we don’t assume that verbal language is simple just because children learn it early on! Where multimodal analysis ought to help us, is in understanding the enormous complexity and distinctiveness of moving-image media, and thus to recognise that understanding them must involve learning, even if that learning is achieved by very young children.

The modes at work in moving-image media are usually described as ‘sound and image’, although sometimes performance is also acknowledged. But if we move the ‘magnifying glass’ of multimodal analysis a little nearer, the finer grain of multimodal meaning-making can be revealed. The image mode can include sub-modes such as
framing, movement, mise-en-scène, lighting, colour, graphics and animation style. The sound track can be composed of voice, music, sound effects and silence, each of which can be broken down again into a multiplicity of modes, as can the sub-modes of ‘performance’ such as expression, movement, speech, song, appearance and costume. All these sub-modes are in themselves immensely complex and important. But a vitally important mode is almost always overlooked: time, which includes duration, rhythm, sequence and transitions. Time in films and TV is different from the time required to read a book or scan through a website, which is under our control. Time in moving-image media is an essential part of the repertoire of creative choices available to the filmmaker, in the same way that it is essential to composers of music: changing the duration of a shot or a transition, or altering the sequence of shots, affects meaning just as much as changing the tempo of a piece of music or changing a crochet to a minim. It is this complexity that is lost when all non-print texts are unthinkingly lumped together, whether for facile reasons like ‘they’re all digital’ or for more ideologically-charged reasons such as defending the pre-eminence of print.

Might it not make better sense, then, to find a different way of characterising texts that takes account of the way in which they are ‘read’ rather than the technologies that carry them, or their historical dominance? There are obviously several ways of doing this, but one that I have been exploring starts by taking account of what’s well-established in the education system and what is – so far – not.

The education system is at ease with texts that contain a high proportion of printed words. It’s also at ease with static texts that can be viewed at leisure, and that can be copied easily. The default technology here is books and other paper-based formats,
and with a little thought it should be clear that we are all pretty used to the inclusion of images in these (pace Kress, at least since the illustrated manuscripts of more than a thousand years ago) as well as to reading similar kinds of text on screens.

What the education system finds it a lot harder to deal with are texts such as films, TV and computer games. This is not just because they’re new – two of these media are older than most of us. One major fact that makes educators tend to regard these kinds of text as difficult if not actually threatening, is that children like them, know them, and, crucially, have learned about them outside school. And, although this is not so readily apparent, I think it is also because time is a key mode in all of them and renders them less obviously susceptible to shared analysis. But whether or not these are the main reasons for educators’ resistance to teaching about these texts in the classroom, the obvious and major difficulty is that most educators simply don’t know enough about these texts to be able to teach about them. And by posing as a simplification, the ‘multimodal texts’ idea does everyone a disservice.

My main interest in offering this categorisation is simply to demonstrate a different way of presenting the two major forms that I am interested in, namely books and films, in a way that frees us from some of the baggage that the print vs multimodal division entails. By putting these two forms together with others in page-based/time-based groups, I suggest that if we must categorise texts at all, this might be a more logical division, based as it is on a significant modal split.

How useful is the page/time distinction for considering major narrative forms like books and films? After all, many of the skills required for interpreting or making narratives in books overlap with, or are parallel to, those required for interpreting or making narratives in films. In other words, many of the supposedly print-based key skills of ‘traditional’ literacy are not medium-specific. Examples include:

- Making inferences from clues in the text
• Making narrative predictions
• Considering authorial intent
• Identifying character type
• Recognising a genre
• Recognising a specific point of view
• Understanding compressed or extended time-frames

Unfortunately the real implications of this are rarely explored. Teachers can be easily persuaded that interpreting films is ‘just like’ interpreting print and thus children’s enthusiasm for film can be exploited in order to help them to read. But this misses the point. When we deploy skills such as those listed above, we do it by ‘reading’ medium-specific codes, conventions, and modal interactions. At this level, books and films are very different, and reading a film is not at all like reading a book. The fact that children can (with encouragement) identify at least some of the medium-specific textual features of a film in order to justify statements like ‘I think something scary is going to happen’ or ‘she’s surprised because she can see what he’s doing’ means that they can also be encouraged (perhaps through creative activity) to reflect upon the fact that textual features produce meanings and can generate audience response. This is enormously important as a basis for entering the world of literacy – especially if we define ‘literacy’ in a wider sense that recognises children’s entitlement to go on developing their capabilities with ‘time-based texts’ as well as learning to read and write in the conventional sense.

Recent research evidence (Bazalgette and Bearne, 2010:5; Bazalgette et al., 2011) suggests that, where children are offered recursive opportunities for using and developing skills specific to film, this can enhance the skills they need for engaging with any kind of text, and challenges many prior assumptions about ‘ages and stages’ and what children may be ‘ready for’ at certain ages. For example, in many schools children in Years 1 and 2 can be found

• considering how a sound track relates to visuals
• positioning a camera and framing an object or scene/analysing how this has been done
• deciding to use a close-up/considering why a close-up has been used
• choosing music to convey a specific mood/trying out different kinds of music with the same images
• adding sound effects to convey a sense of place and time
• deciding exactly where to cut a visual or audio track
• composing, or analysing, an audio and/or visual montage to tell a story or express a state of mind.

If they are doing these kinds of things in the first years of primary school, it ought to be possible to imagine a rich and ongoing literacy education in which both page-based and time-based texts are analysed and made, together and separately. In the following ‘snapshots’ from an integrated P/T curriculum, it’s possible to see how each task or problem involves the development of important skills and knowledge that can be both medium-specific but also have resonances across the P/T divide.

- Shall I use first- or third-person narration?
- Learning to enjoy a 19th century novel.
- Making a précis of a text to reduce it from 1000 words to 200.
- Exploring the rhythmic patterns of a poem.
- Experimenting with symbols and metaphors.
- Imitating a specific generic style.
- Analysing a piece of persuasive writing and identifying bias and the use of stereotypes

- Shall I position the camera (or mic) to favour one particular point of view?
- Understanding historical film/tv/radio in context.
- Cutting an interview from 10 minutes to 2 minutes and retaining key points.
- Editing still or moving images to accompany a piece of music.
- Finding a way of representing an abstract concept visually/aurally.
- Imitating a specific generic style.
- Considering the meaning and validity of violence in a computer game.

So how useful might the P/T schema be? Usha Goswami’s presentation at the UKLA conference made me wonder whether it might be more far-reaching than I had so far imagined. Her account of research that demonstrates the importance of the auditory features of language in early learning, and the long-term effects for children who have problems in identifying things like rhyme and stress patterns, has made me reflect on the nature of speech as the primary time-based text. The Cambridge
Primary Review (Alexander, 2010) reiterated many earlier studies in criticising the lack of attention given to speaking and listening in primary schools: it would seem that the same problems of manageability and confidence apply here as they do for film and other time-based texts. So maybe the P/T idea is worth pursuing? I look forward to debating this with UKLA colleagues.

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References
Empowerment through Literacy: Literacy shaping futures

Reading and Mental Health

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Abstract
This paper is based on a symposium which considered the relation of reading to community and individual health and well-being from the perspectives of a health scientist, a linguist and a literature specialist. Specifically it considers the mental health benefits of the national community programme of shared group reading, ‘Get into Reading’, pioneered by The Reader Organisation, a national charity with a mission to make the reading of serious literature available to everyone as a creative, life-enhancing activity. The paper is based on multi-disciplinary research carried out at the University of Liverpool in collaboration with The Reader Organisation and in partnership with Liverpool Primary Care Trust, Mersey Care Mental Health NHS Trust and the Department of Health.

Introduction
This paper considers research-based evidence for reading groups as a therapeutic intervention in mental health. It focuses specifically on the intervention developed by the UK charity, The Reader Organisation - ‘Get into Reading’ - a nationally lauded community programme of shared group reading, singled out as an example of good practice in the Department of Health Consultation Document, ‘New Horizons: Towards a Shared Vision of Mental Health’ (2009). The paper reports on the findings of a cluster of multi-disciplinary research projects carried out at the University of Liverpool, in partnership with Merseyside NHS Trusts, based on the common hypothesis that the experience of reading literature together in a group can facilitate
the capacity in individuals to shift internal paradigms and ‘tell a new story’ about the
self. The paper discusses the relation of shared reading to community and individual
health and well-being from health, linguistic and literary perspectives.

The Intervention
‘Get into Reading’ (GIR) is a distinctive model of shared reading of serious literature
where participants read whole books, stories, plays and poems aloud together, with
regular and spontaneous pauses for discussion. A group will take months to read
long works such as Tolstoy’s Anna Karenina or Dickens’s Great Expectations (often
the only thing the group members read). The virtue of the shared-reading-aloud
model is its inclusiveness: even people who cannot read – whether through literacy
difficulties or neurological disorders, or impaired vision – can participate
meaningfully. The programme is distinguished from other reading or literacy
interventions in two ways: firstly, in focusing not on the promotion of literacy per se
but on making reading a creative and social activity in which the shared experience
of literature is an important element; secondly, in emphasising the importance of
serious literature in offering a model of human thinking and feeling. GIR is
predicated on the belief that the English literary tradition alone – one thousand years
of poetry, the works of Shakespeare, the great nineteenth-century realist novels –
represents a vast, largely untapped resource with the potential to mediate human
experience and find and alleviate personal trouble. Now well-established nationally,
GIR is running in over 200 groups in settings as diverse as homeless hostels, asylum-
seekers refuges, GP surgeries, neurological centres, dementia care homes, drugs and
alcohol rehabilitation and mental health centres.

The Research
The most recent multi-disciplinary research project completed at University of
Liverpool – ‘An Investigation into the Therapeutic Benefits of Reading in relation to
Depression’ (Billington et al 2011) - sought to establish: (i) whether GIR works in
alleviating depressive symptoms, through analysis of clinical data and participant
testimony and (ii) how it works by examining the role of the literature and the role of
the group in producing health benefits. What follows is a summary of the project’s
findings from each key analytical perspective – clinical/health-scientific, literary and
Clinical perspective: What is the evidence that GIR works?

The reading and depression study drew data from GIR groups for adult participants with a GP diagnosis of depression over a 12 month period. Observed and reported outcomes for participants previously referred by GPs to GIR groups had included: being ‘taken out of themselves’ via the stimulation of the book or poem; feeling ‘good’, ‘better’, ‘more positive about things’ after taking part in the group; valuing an opportunity and space to reflect on life experience, via memories or emotions evoked by the story or poem, in a convivial and supportive environment; improved powers of concentration; a sense of common purpose and of a shared ‘journey’; increased confidence and self-esteem; sense of pride and achievement; valued regular social contact; improved communication skills (Robinson, 2008). These findings resonated with an expanding evidence base in support of a range of treatment options for depression including psychosocial interventions which emphasise meaningful social engagement, a sense of value, purpose or comprehensibility in respect of one’s self and life (Dowrick, 2009).

In the reading and depression study, depression severity questionnaires were administered at start and close of the 12 month period, and results showed a statistically significant improvement in mental health. Given that there was no control group, we cannot infer that participation in GIR caused reduction in depression: we may only note the temporal association between these two variables. Yet these findings were abundantly corroborated by the qualitative data gleaned from participant testimony in interview and focus group discussion and from observation of the reading group experience. The self-reports elicited in focus group discussion and/or informally in the reading group sessions attest to the benefits of the reading group intervention in respect of the participants’ mental well-being. Participants reported feeling more confident, more willing to talk, to listen and to interact with the other group participants. They valued the reading groups as a stimulating, meaningful, challenging activity which at once helped them to relax, putting personal thoughts aside, while also encouraging increased concentration and attention in
relation to the text being read and others’ responses to it. Hearing other people’s opinions and interpretations and sharing details of their own experiences in discussion was valued. Becoming involved and feeling part of something were key attributes. This was true for those who habitually read outside of the group and for those who rarely read at all. One participant said: ‘It gets it out in the open. Whatever is hidden up and out – if you’ve got feelings put down they’ve got to come up and out otherwise your head would explode. It gets me thinking and afterwards I go out of the room still thinking.’

These preliminary findings resonated with other innovative research into reading and health, which suggested that the act of reading together a literary text not only harnesses the power of reading as a cognitive process: it acts as a powerful socially coalescing presence, allowing readers a sense of subjective and shared experience at the same time (Hodge et al, 2007). Related research suggested that the inner neural processing of language when a mind reads a complex line of poetry has the potential to galvanise existing brain pathways and to influence emotion networks and memory function (Thierry et al, 2008). The possibility that shared reading can help make those micro-happenings last longer and bite deeper - both at the point of delivery and in its effects over time – remains a key area requiring dedicated research.

**Literary perspective: What kind of literature works and why?**

The weekly groups in the reading and depression study followed the standard GIR format: each one-hour-and-a-half session involves the shared reading aloud of a novel or short story, with spontaneous pauses for discussion, and concludes with a reading of a poem.

One key finding was the importance of a rich, varied, non-prescriptive diet of serious literature (which ranged from Shakespeare to Carol Ann Duffy). Several group members expected an alternative or complementary ‘treatment’ and literary works which addressed their depression directly. Instead they experienced a mix of poems and stories which were chosen for their intrinsic quality and seriousness and for their suitability to the agreed tastes and interests of the group, rather than for their status as literature which ‘uplifts’ or speaks to or of unhappiness. After only a few weeks, participants began to gain an appreciation of the literature for its own sake rather
than as a ‘remedy’, and thus contributed and interacted as interested members of a reading group rather than as patients. The notion of ‘recovery’ in such a context relates as much to the rediscovery of old or forgotten, suppressed or inaccessible, modes of thought, feeling and experience as well as to the discovery of new ones.

The mix of fiction and poems significantly added to the benefits of the intervention. Prose and poetry were observed to have distinctive functions and benefits, which were emphasised by their combination in each session and which were mutually complementary. Broadly speaking, the continuous narrative led to observed and reported outcomes of ‘relaxation’, or calming of mental anxiety, while poetry, on the other hand, was demonstrably more exacting at levels of concentration and mental effort and elicited much more verbal expression of thinking as well as intensity of focus.

The role of the group facilitator was key in providing an expert choice of possible literatures (from which the group would collectively select a work), and in making the literature ‘live’ in the room and become accessible to participants, through skilful reading aloud and sensitive eliciting and guiding of discussion. The sense of each group as a literal ‘interpretive community’ (Fish, 1980) – benignly shared by the world of the book as well as sharing in it - was particularly fostered by the shared reading model which included everyone together in the reading experience.

At the same time the readers’ creative ‘participation’ and ‘production’ of the text (Iser, 1978) and its meaning was always an individual as well as a collaborative process. Separated narratives of meaning, often surfaced in and converged with the group discussion. But they were demonstrably continuing intently beneath the surface of the latter and were indicative of subterranean concentration over a long time span on particularised matters. Our tentative conclusion is that these personally meaningful inward events in relation to the literature were made possible by the protective presence of the group. Shared reading, it seems, was always potentially personal reading and one enabled the other. The ongoing-ness of the shared reading/discussion allowed each participant, trusting to that continuity and support, safely to risk the adventure of separate thought journey. Shared reading thus encouraged mindfulness while overcoming isolation.
**Linguistic Perspective: What part is played by group dynamics?**

The discussion elicited in response to the texts, where personal ideas, feelings, opinions and experiences were mutually shared, was critical in creating a sense of community identity within the group. Linguistic analysis of the groups' conversational habits over the 12 months demonstrated how the reading group discussions increasingly adhered to the Gricean ‘cooperative principle’ of conversation – specifically the four precepts (‘Gricean maxims’) Grice identified (truth, relevance, appropriate quantity, and clarity) as necessary to fulfil the cooperative principle (Grice, 1975). The promptitude and relevance of participant responses showed full engagement in the interaction, and concentrated, interested alertness to conversational signals. Moreover, group ‘knitting’ was evident in multiple ways in linguistic phenomena and behaviours. Verbal repetition and syntactic mirroring of one another’s words showed that participants’ attention was closely focused on the conversation, and that they wished to support the views others expressed. Awareness of others’ unspoken thoughts indicated participants’ ability to empathise with one another and the group increasingly showed confidence in assuming leadership, taking the initiative in guiding the direction for discussion and in offering to read aloud from the text themselves, so that the conversation slipped the facilitator’s guidance altogether at times. It was striking how the discussion was often bursting with the imaginative life of the group’s responses to the book or poem.

The linguistic evidence also demonstrated the critical role played by the facilitator. The latter’s social awareness and communicative skills were essential to the creation of an atmosphere of serious attention and emotional involvement and in the promotion of individual confidence and group trust, through skilfully posed questions and gently nudging encouragement of the subtlest efforts or contributions - often non-verbal or tentatively verbalised. The facilitator’s directive guidance was also important in holding open key ideas or central concerns, often by returning the discussion to tiny details of the poem or story, or by capturing details of participant contributions which helped whole group understanding and included everyone in the process of meaning-making. The facilitator’s role was also key in putting the group’s needs above those of the individual where necessary. When, for example, group members flouted Gricean conversational maxims, especially those of quantity of
information and relevance, the facilitator’s control of topic and topic shift enabled a more openly democratic sharing of the text and discussion. The facilitator’s alert presence in relation to literature, the individual and the dynamics of the group is a complex and crucial element of the intervention.

Concluding Remarks
Our research concludes that there are three ‘mechanisms of action’ operative in Get into Reading – the literature, the group and the facilitator – and that these mechanisms are reciprocally dependent in producing benefits in relation to mental health. These findings resonate supportively with UKLA’s mission statement that ‘language development begins in the home and the community’; that ‘critical literacy is an essential part of literacy development at all levels’; and that ‘the nature and successful practice of language, literacy communication are complex in form, changing and intricately related’. It is our contention that GIR - humane, inexpensive and eminently replicable - also has significant implications for reconsidering the place of reading in our culture and its contribution to individual and community well-being.

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Images of teachers in children's literature: are there messages for initial teacher education?

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Abstract
This paper discusses the research ideas behind a seminar session from the recent UKLA conference (2011). The seminar identified a potentially rich data source, i.e. children's literature, in order to investigate the way teachers are represented and the possible link with initial teacher education (ITE) students' conceptions of professional identity on entry to teacher education courses. This illuminative inquiry is based on the writer's current PhD study into the range of representations children are actually given access to within the school context, particularly in key stages 1 & 2, through a review of the teaching of narrative within the last decade, which would draw upon the findings of the UKLA research on Teachers as Readers (2006-8). An examination of the characters found in familiar classroom texts such as Roald Dahl's *Matilda* are used in conjunction with a focus upon recent literature regarding the cultural construction of the primary teacher within the UK to investigate and explore the potential interplay between imagined teachers and the recruitment of teachers in training. While other aspects of media no doubt have an impact upon the changing construction of ITE students' professional identity, I propose that the preceding literary influences within the classroom experience of ITE students have largely been ignored, and as a result valuable insights into their perceived professional identity upon entry to the programme, and a potential inhibiting factor for widening recruitment, has lain dormant and been thus far misunderstood.

Introduction
In this paper it is my intention to consider the way teachers are represented in children’s literature by popular authors and illustrators in order to illuminate common themes and stereotypes within these representations. The eventual purpose of the discussion and debate is to explore the impact of such representations on ITE
students’ (and teachers’) perceptions of the professional role of teacher in response to recent studies which highlight the role of cultural artefacts in identity formation and expression.

**Background**

My interest in cultural artefacts and their impact on identity was prompted by my previous experience in schools as a qualified primary teacher. I had generated the hypothesis that many of the narratives shared within primary classrooms contain constructions of teachers that are in opposition to current ‘accepted’ educational practices and that while this is seemingly ignored or overlooked in the criteria for selection of stories to utilise as resources it could be having an impact on professional identity construction, not only for those currently working as primary teachers but also on those wishing to join the profession. For example, whilst reading Jacqueline Wilson’s *The Suitcase Kid* (1992) to my class as part of a Y6/7 transition unit, I felt overwhelmingly that the absence of teachers with a perceived duty of care in this story did not reflect how I felt about my professional role, and presented an ‘uncaring’ model of teaching, where external influences (in particular issues affecting home life) were rejected as having an impact on a child’s capacity to learn; equally, the role models provided in Dahl’s *Matilda* (1988), another popular text in school, were unrepresentative of what I felt teaching to be. Miss Honey is as untouchable a role model as any ‘perfect’ heroine from ancient tales, while the role of Miss Trunchbull, deliberately less appealing, was identified by the writer as being the more believable of the two within the text itself, a terrifying indictment of Dahl’s own view of the teachers who taught him, but also a caricature that is seemingly repeated in children’s literature. I do not doubt the power of books to influence ideas, and the lack of balance in the representations of teachers and schools found in texts commonly introduced in these same environments prompted an exploration into literature as a cultural artefact capable not only of being a symbol of identity, but also in direct conflict with it.

The issue of what constitutes being a teacher was raised again for me while interviewing prospective ITE students. Candidates were asked to discuss the traits of a ‘good’ teacher, and over several rounds of interviewing distinct patterns emerged to the answers, with key themes appearing in almost every discussion: teachers should
be organised, have a sense of humour, focus on learning, have a good understanding of curriculum subjects, be interesting. I began to wonder if those who decided to become teachers were those able to develop these ideas and themes despite the skewed, school-based texts used as resources, due to other cultural influences which encouraged different views of teaching and teachers, while those from under-represented groups (males in primary; ethnic groups other than white British) found this more difficult due to the lack of other positive images being presented to them.

**Children’s literature and identity construction**

Tonkin (1990) proposes that books are amongst the cultural artefacts that help us form our social models, and in research regarding literacy, artefacts and identity, the interplay between literacy and identity in a school context is highlighted (McVee, 2004; Scanlan, 2010). Although much work has been done on teachers’ professional identity construction (Goodson, 1992, 2008; Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt, 2000; Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop 2004) this tended to focus on how teachers perceived their professional role with limited research into the cultural and social factors that have influenced their perceptions; there is also an apparent emphasis on secondary teachers, with very few studies focused on the perceptions of those in primary roles, although this is a growing area of interest (Vogt, 2002).

To add to this there are few prominent existing UK studies of the potential interplay between literary and socio-cultural constructions of the class teacher and teachers’ professional identity, despite a wide acknowledgement of the influence of children’s fiction and narrative in shaping or “transmitting cultural values” (Hunt, 1994 p. 3). This means that there is little understanding around the potential impact narrative may have on perceptions of professional identity construction during its early formation; thus there is limited research that explains why I reacted to the texts as if they were ‘attacks’ on my professionalism, while simultaneously being willing to continue sharing them as examples of ‘good’ fictional narratives with learners in primary school.

In order to explain the potential impact of texts on early identity formation I drew on Wolf and Heath (1992) who present a case study account of how young readers link their experiences of literature to the world around them, and tellingly the study
highlights the young age at which this process starts; Wolf (2003) also highlights the need to allow children opportunities to question biases and assumptions in order for them to explore the full range of roles available to them. I would argue that greater understanding of the impact of literature presented to children in classrooms is needed, moving beyond gender and racial issues, in order to widen opportunities through expanding knowledge and understanding. This develops Hunt’s (1994) previous research that found that literature reflects power, not demography and while he also questions whether books (particularly those introduced by adults) are as influential, as those interested in discussing their influence suggest in light of the increased use of computers/tv/internet, my view is that the children who have access to these wider cultural influences and are effectively utilising them can access a broader, more balanced view of society than those from more disadvantaged or protected social situations, in which case the literature in school can be even more influential and must reflect that balance in as many areas as possible.

My initial question for research is therefore multi-faceted: to what extent do current narratives chosen as classroom resources for detailed study contain representations of teachers; are these representations generally diverse and inclusive of positive and negative constructions, or do they tend to create villains, either through placing the adult teacher in a group alien to the central child character (and thus reader) or making them morally or emotionally weak (Gamble and Yates, 2008); and are teachers and those wishing to become teachers aware of negotiating such representations in their dual roles of professional teacher and member of the socio-cultural group that is conceptualising these characters? Anecdotally, I have witnessed children from a young age, particularly girls, play ‘school’ where they are the teacher: this is often role-played as quite didactic and traditional. A colleague from another institution cites candidates in interview situations saying they knew they wanted to be a teacher since this same stage in early childhood (but stressed these were mainly female candidates). Could the ‘narratives’ they are rehearsing be influenced merely by what they are seeing modelled by the class teacher, or are other influences being negotiated at this time?

**Teachers as Readers**
My presentation, given at the 2011 UKLA conference as a seminar session, picked up on a key theme that emerged from the Phase 1 audit of teachers’ reading habits undertaken as part of the UKLA’s 2006-8 research project involving 1200 primary teachers (Cremin et al, 2008). Responses to questionnaires identified that the majority of primary teachers drew upon a limited range of writers’ work when asked to identify ‘good’ children’s authors, defined as “writers whose work they, as teachers, had found both valuable and successful with primary age children” (p. 14). Authors most frequently identified as appropriate for the classroom were Roald Dahl, Michael Morpurgo, Jacqueline Wilson, J.K. Rowling, Anne Fine. As I have already stated, during the course of my own career I not only drew upon the work of some of these writers, but I had already found their portrayals of teachers to be at odds with my understanding of professional behaviour and values. When I went back to the work by these authors I perceived as most commonly used in key stage 2 classrooms (based on my own and a small number of colleagues’ teaching practices) I noticed again common themes emerging: teachers were largely caricatured as female (and in illustrations often more mature white women with hair in a grey bun, generally portrayed standing looking down upon children); they often talked over children or misheard and left the child feeling generally unappreciated or frustrated; they had low expectations of the children’s potential. This was also reflected in the picture books that featured teachers, by illustrators also identified by the UKLA research as being popular for use in school (Quentin Blake, Anthony Browne, Shirley Hughes, Mick Inkpen). The notable exception was Starting School by Janet and Alan Ahlberg, in which there are male as well as female teachers in the illustrations, and different ethnicities reflected in the drawings of the staff as well as the children.

**Conclusion**

The issues highlighted in both the children’s texts and my wider reading indicate to me that this is an area in need of rigorous study. Vygotsky (cited in McVee, 2004) argues that all learning is socially mediated, which leads me to question what social, cultural and historical contexts we present as classroom norms; and if we repeatedly present an unchallenged caricature of teachers and their attributes, are we preventing those from under-represented groups the opportunity to develop their aspirations? That is, are we leaving children with the message that teaching is not for them if they don’t conform to the culturally accepted norm of white, female, didactic
teacher, presented by their own class teacher as an acceptable reading of the profession?

At this point I feel obliged to inject a note of caution into my own rhetoric and acknowledge that there may be no such definitive link between the characters in children’s novels and professional identity construction. The notion of articulation, defined by Hall (cited in Dimitriadis and Kamberelis, 2006 p. 138) as, “a linkage which is not necessarily determined, absolute and essential for all time” will be a central theme for my future research; it will be about identifying how perceptions held by the agents and actors entering the classroom in the role of teacher can be influenced by seemingly disparate elements of popular culture long before they make decisions about professional identity, but will not initially aim to make any claims regarding the widespread application of such a view. However, I cannot help but feel there is a link to be found as, in the words of Bruner (1991) “The central concern is not how narrative as text is constructed, but rather how it operates as an instrument of mind in the construction of reality” (pp. 5-6). In her work on narrative, culture and teachers’ identity, McVee (2004) identified that many white US teachers consider themselves as being without culture; “For these teachers, culture is transparent and uncontested” (p. 882). I am left wondering if we in the UK are also blind to the socio-cultural discourse and accepted practices that our students have grown up in and with and are preventing those who could, teach.

References


Empowering students and children through literature
Virginia Bower and Tracy Parvin, Canterbury Christ Church University

Abstract
This paper describes the use of a university based book club to empower student
teachers and thereby children through literature. Although the project is still in its
eyear early days, themes are already emerging which indicate the potential power of
providing a ‘space’ where trainee students have the freedom and opportunity to
discuss children’s literature. These themes include empowerment through improved
confidence, enhanced subject knowledge and pedagogy and the strength that comes
with involvement in a shared experience as part of a community.

Introduction
The English team at Canterbury Christ Church University is committed to promoting
the importance of the use of high quality children’s literature in the classroom. All
lectures and seminars begin with a text (shared either by the tutor or a student);
students complete analyses of a range of children’s literature (some of which are
formally assessed); reading conferences are organised, where students have the
opportunity to hear authors discuss their writing; and students are encouraged to
build up their own collection of books which they can take into school.

Our beliefs are in line with Meek’s philosophies when she states that:

My disquiet about reading experts is that they de-contextualise reading in
order to describe it. They are casual about texts. Those whom I want to call
‘expert readers’ – critics, subject specialists, writers, English professors,
publisher’s editors and text consultants – make the same kind of mistake.
They believe that there exists a group of the well-read who have a common
background of texts which they all know and to which reference can be made
at all times with common understanding by those ‘in the know’. But they have
very little curiosity about how readers in their specialism *come to know* how to read the texts of their subject. (Meek, 1988: 6)

Like Meek, we are anxious that our students are not ‘casual’ about texts and that they have every opportunity to continuously develop both the breadth and depth of their textual subject knowledge – to become familiar and confident with texts which will support their teaching in school and most importantly texts which will empower both them and their pupils. To this end we strive to ensure that children’s literature is prominent, central, integral and most importantly *enjoyable*.

**How the project evolved**

To further highlight the importance of children’s literature and it has to be said, to indulge our own interest in this area (!), we decided to set up a book club for our undergraduate students; a place to enjoy and discuss children’s books. The club was voluntary (for us and the students) and was held on Wednesday afternoons as, within the crowded timetable, this was the only time when students from all three year groups could attend. The club was advertised in initial lectures and was open on a first come first served basis. We hoped for twenty students, thirty-eight applied and we split them into two groups – one hour apiece – starting our sessions in October 2009.

From the outset we handed over the organisation of the sessions to the students and they decided that they would like to devote half the time to picture books and half to an ongoing novel. With the picture books, they opted for a theme each week i.e. wordless picture books, Christmas, outer space, picture books for older children. The novels selected included ‘Alone on a wide wide sea’ by Michael Morpurgo and ‘Pig Heart Boy’ by Malorie Blackman. Each week, everybody would bring in a picture book relating to the theme, to share with the group and with the novel, we would read to a certain page and then discuss our thoughts and ideas. After each session, a bulletin was produced and emailed to all members of the group, summarising the content of the session and listing the books discussed. This served two purposes – if some students were unable to attend, they could stay updated and knew what was required for the following week. It also provided the students with an ongoing database of texts they could use in the classroom.
Unplanned activities and events arose from the book club including cinema trips to see children’s films, author visits and general socialising!

Initially the embryonic vision of the book club was purely to provide students with a ‘space’ to enjoy children’s literature and to share their experiences. However as the first year progressed we realised the potential for research and began to collect relevant data in the following forms:

- Emails – sent and received
- Informal conversations
- Discussion boards on our VLE
- Formal questionnaires
- Semi-structured face to face interviews with newly qualified teachers who were ex-book club members.

From the data collected we wanted to explore the question: ‘How has attendance at the book club empowered students as teachers of literacy?’ In order to explore this question, we looked at the work of Samantha Twiselton (2000) and the research from Cremin et al.’s Teachers as Readers project (2009).

**The changing status of student teachers**

Tiselton’s (2000) research was focused on the hierarchical development of students’ understanding and conceptualisation of pedagogy and teaching approaches. Through her study she developed a conceptual framework which identified students as falling into one of three categories: Task Managers, Curriculum Deliverers or Concept Builders. Twiselton (2000) suggests that Task Managers are most concerned with completing an activity, rather than developing the learning the task is supposed to promote. Curriculum Deliverers make more explicit reference to learning; however this is within the restriction of an externally given curriculum. Concept Builders have a firm understanding of the subject and of how they might further develop children’s knowledge and understanding, being committed to bringing their own creativity and innovation to the classroom – prepared to take risks. These categories provided a useful framework for our own analysis of the semi structured interviews held with Sarah, Becky and Adam, NQTs who had been members of the first book group.
The responses from the NQTs during the semi structured interview yielded a wide range of views which we were able to categorise under relevant headings:

- the importance of the thematic approach;
- developing knowledge of children’s authors;
- taking risks and advising colleagues;
- books and the wider curriculum.

The interviewees were unanimous in their belief that the book club had considerably enhanced their knowledge of children’s literature and this they felt, gave them the confidence to choose appropriate texts to support their planning across the curriculum. Rather than simply accepting the previous teacher’s planning, they felt fully equipped to develop their own units of work linked to the PNS:

> When I have had a rigid scheme to work with, with the objectives set, it was hard for me to say ‘I want to use this book,’ because they would say, ‘Last year we used this book’. Or ‘the teacher before you used this book’. Then I would think, ‘Should I do it?’ Then I would think, ‘I am going to do it anyway.’

(Adam)

This sense of autonomy further enhanced their confidence and encouraged them to offer advice (when asked) to their more experienced colleagues with regards to suitable literature to support a wide range of curriculum areas, including literacy. Having a picture book theme each week provided them with a wide range of texts to draw upon during literacy and also for other areas of the curriculum. Familiarising themselves with particular novels and authors allowed them to choose the most appropriate text for their class and gave them the subject knowledge to be able to recommend texts to their pupils.

What did become evident through the course of the interview, however, was that all of the work that Sarah, Becky and Adam undertook in school was curriculum driven. Whilst they were using texts, not only in literacy but to support or introduce a range of subjects throughout the curriculum, the prevailing sense was that these books were simply being used; the texts were being treated as curriculum tools. There was a distinct lack of reading for enjoyment; the books that were used always had to have a purpose.
Whilst we acknowledge that the subject knowledge that has been developed through the book club is enabling these teachers to make these useful literacy links, perhaps, in future book club sessions, we need to explicitly reinforce the enjoyment of reading. It is necessary here to emphasise that the approaches being used by the NQTs are not being viewed as a deficit, but rather as a work in progress. Perhaps these teachers are experiencing the curriculum drivers and have to negotiate their own approaches within an increasingly prescriptive curriculum. It is possible that as they become more experienced, Sarah, Becky and Adam will begin to renegotiate and reconceptualise their pedagogical ideologies and in so doing begin to save curriculum spaces for the enjoyment of reading.

**Beyond Twiselton**

Having looked at Twiselton’s work and begun to think about the process students go through as they progress through their teacher education and beyond, we began to look at some of the other data we had collected. We were looking for any evidence that attendance at the book club empowered student teachers, moving them towards being concept builders. At the same time we were keeping in mind the findings from the TARS project (2009) and as we highlighted these, we noticed similar themes emerging. Cremin et al (2009) highlighted the following key issues from their research:

- The need to promote an enjoyment of literature;
- The importance of an excellent subject knowledge relating to children’s literature;
- Going beyond using texts as tools;
- Developing communities of readers.

When we analysed the students’ responses on our own questionnaires, it appeared that the book club had unwittingly begun to address some of these issues. Enjoyment emerged as a key theme, one student writing:

*I thought that discussing the books may take the enjoyment out of them, but it has been the opposite. I have enjoyed every minute of the discussions and sharing our views about a range of books.*
The data revealed that the students felt empowered through enhanced knowledge and understanding of a wide range of literature, particularly picture books. We felt that this was a real achievement, particularly as Cremin et al’s research indicated that teachers’ knowledge of picture fiction was quite limited. The TARs project also identified that teachers have a tendency to return to their own childhood reading and we intentionally ensured a move away from that inclination and found that students, although keen to share their memories from their reading histories, were happy to explore unknown territory. The data also indicated that the book group gave them a chance to be part of a reading community and provided a ‘space’ in which to share and enjoy literature.

All of this was very positive, but at this point we want to return to an issue raised earlier in this paper – what we consider to be an issue both for us and for our students. Interestingly, despite our own implicit emphasis on enjoyment and love of literature in every session, what emerged over and over was the students’ desire to see texts as ‘useful’. In their research, Cremin et al ask the question:

‘Has literature become a mere tool for teachers to employ in the context of reading instruction? (Cremin et al, 2009: 11)

As we prepare to enter the third year of the project, this is an issue we intend to confront. We hope that attendance at the book club will continue to enhance the students’ confidence and subject knowledge and that they can indeed see the usefulness of high quality texts across the curriculum. However, we intend to promote an enjoyment of literature as a first priority, before looking at what the texts can ‘do’ for us. Similar to a ripple effect in a pond, if you regard reading for pleasure and enjoyment as the stone being dropped into water, the resulting ripples are empowerment through enhanced subject knowledge, enhanced confidence and enhanced pedagogy.

What we need to ensure is that we explicitly demonstrate that the ripples cannot exist without the stone.

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References


Empowerment through Literacy: Literacy shaping futures

Learning to the Power of 2: Teacher and learners together using digital storytelling
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Abstract
This paper presents research into the use of digital storytelling by a classroom teacher and her 24 grade 5-6 (10-12 year-old) learners in a small rural school in Northern Ontario, Canada. The research is based on phase one of a two-year study commissioned by the Near North school board. The purpose of the research was to investigate whether introducing sophisticated technological tools might have an effect on writing engagement and achievement. This study found that three key teaching decisions empowered young writers to engage and succeed.

The classroom situation most provocative of thoughtfulness and critical consciousness is the one in which teachers and learners find themselves conducting a kind of collaborative search, each from his or her lived situation. Maxine Greene (2000)

The classroom teacher in a grade 5-6 classroom where I was a participant-researcher was able to create the kind of classroom Greene describes above. How did she do it? This paper presents my findings as well as my conjectures about why things worked so well. All students became highly engaged in digital storytelling, and every student produced at least one good quality digital story. First I will provide some context and research background.

The classroom teacher and I – a teacher educator – designed the research question using action research (1) as a model:
How can digital storytelling in a Grade 5-6 classroom enhance engagement in writing and the motivation and ability to create higher quality writing?

The context included the introduction of a mobile Mac lab. The assumption that engagement would increase as a result was not made without examination. We wanted to know how we might go beyond initial superficial amusement to produce deeper, longer-lasting effects. In order to answer this, we began a focused investigation of how young writers engaged in writing using technology. Growth was measured through specific indicators, including writer self-perception, time spent on task, and task completion. Data collection included observations, interviews, a writer self-perception scale, and print and digital writing samples. The students were also tracked throughout a second academic year, with an emphasis on progress and achievement in digital and print forms of writing.

This paper focuses on the initial year. I found that three unpredicted factors contributed to full engagement. The classroom teacher made three conscious decisions that made the teaching and learning experiences more powerful. First, she decided to learn new technology along with her students, rather than attempt to become a full expert before introducing it. Secondly, the learners worked in cooperative groupings to create multimedia artwork, scripts, and small group dramatic presentations, which were photographed and recorded, and then integrated into the final digital stories. Thirdly, she stipulated that no Internet images would be used in the digital stories: the learners would have to create their own images through hand-made artwork and/or photography. This interactive learning approach combining the hands-on with the technological in a highly social setting ensured that every learner succeeded in producing at least one digital story.

Rationale
The connections between poor student engagement in literacy tasks and low achievement on classroom and standardized tests are well documented (Brozo et al., 2007). However, we can engage adolescent students when they feel involved, are stimulated intellectually, and are supported academically to develop the skills and
knowledge that they need (Ryan, 2008). A ‘new literacies’ approach offers promising opportunities to achieve such goals (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006). The use of current technologies allows greater interactivity and control over the nature of student writing and the ways in which it can be presented. There is evidence that these factors produce high levels of engagement (Leu, 2000).

Digital storytelling in particular has been found to be engaging for both teachers and students (Dockter et al., 2010). Teachers have found that multimedia-rich digital stories can be powerful learning tools.

A digital story combines student-produced images such as photos and drawings, voice narration, and music to tell a personal, fictional or informational narrative. Unlike a story written in the traditional way with pencil and paper or a print document, a digital story is similar to a short film with a continuous narrative line.

The use of multimedia for the creation of digital stories has a positive effect on motivation for ‘struggling writers’. One study suggests that struggling writers may be motivated by digital technologies ‘because they are more literate in new literacies and employ these to scaffold traditional literacy’ (Sylvester & Greenidge, 2009-10 : 294).

We wanted to explore how digital storytelling might engage the students more deeply. How would we measure engagement?

One of the indicators of being an ‘engaged reader’ is that such readers identify themselves as being interested in reading. Similarly, there is a strong connection between engaging in writing activities and how those writers perceive themselves as writers (Bottomley et al., 1997). We used the publicly available Writing Self-Perception Scale (WSPS) as one indicator of engagement.

Another indicator of engagement is an increase in the length of time spent deeply involved in a task (VanDeWeghe, 2009). This was measured through observation of time ‘on task’.

Completion of digital stories was counted as a third indicator. The stories were then assessed for quality using an assessment rubric. The teacher shared the rubric with the students, and they co-created ‘success criteria’ (OME, 2010) which were posted in
the classroom. The final stories were compared with the initial stories written prior to the introduction of digital tools.

By the end of year 1, we observed a significant increase in levels of engagement as indicated by time spent on task and project completion. The third indicator, writer self-perception, was re-surveyed at the end of the second year, and showed modest improvement.

In the Classroom
In the spring of 2010, I arrived as a guest, and used traditional storytelling to review story structure and create the context for the students’ stories. During this first session, the emphasis was on oral rehearsal of stories as a way to get the ideas flowing (Campbell & Hlusek, 2009).

The classroom teacher followed up with mini-lessons on story structure. The structure of the story from session 1 became a template. The students were instructed on how to create hand-drawn storyboards for their stories, using a graphic organizer consisting of ‘cartoon-style’ boxes.

The classroom teacher then introduced the mobile Mac lab to her students. Together, she and the students became familiar with how to use software to create multi-media digital stories. The teacher reported that the students chose to create fictional narratives rather than non-fiction. The following is an outline of the process:

1. Once they were familiar with MacBook programs, students were introduced to a new storyboard template designed for digital stories. Students completed storyboards during two designated literacy blocks.
2. During a third two-hour literacy block, with a research assistant, the classroom teacher, and the researcher there to assist, the students began taking photos and creating original artwork for their iMovie version of their stories. The students worked in small, cooperative groups creating props, costumes, backgrounds, and short dramatic plays. These were photographed using digital cameras.
3. During a fourth literacy block, students began adding music and narration. They wrote and practised the narration as a script before recording the voice-over.

4. The following weeks involved revising, editing, and polishing their digital stories.

5. A ‘Share Fair’ was held in the school gymnasium in June, allowing students to show and talk about their digital stories with families and visiting classrooms. Every student participated.

How did the classroom teacher manage to have such a high degree of engagement? At first glance, the technology itself seems to present the most significant contribution. By returning to three indicators of engagement, we can look beyond the obvious.

**Indicators of Engagement**

**Writer Self-perception**
According to the WSPS surveys, 70% of the students viewed their own writing skills in the low to average range. Post-surveys in June 2011 indicated slight improvement. These results were puzzling. Was there a self-confidence issue? Do self-perceptions depend on beliefs about what counts as writing? Two of students interviewed identified themselves as ‘not good writers’ because of problems with spelling and ‘messiness’ – problems they saw as solved when using computer programs. This implies that they saw ‘real writing’ as a pencil and paper task. Further analysis will be included in Phase 2.

**Time on Task**
We used before-and-after anecdotal notes, comparing the initial storyboard creation with the final digital story. During the former, 17 of the 24 students stayed on task throughout the literacy block, drawing and writing their storyboards. The other 7 students required frequent re-direction and assistance. During the digital story
production, observational notes indicate full engagement in terms of staying on task, with the exception of one student who needed extra time and teacher support.

**Project Completion**
Initially, 19 of 24 completed the storyboards; 24 of 24 completed at least one digital story. Qualitative factors that indicate engagement levels are not easy to measure but were palpable to anyone present. The students were animated, cheerful, focused, and creative in their approaches to solving problems. (For example: *How will the viewer know this character is a mouse? Easy! We’ll make ears from construction paper and draw whiskers on her face!* ) Further, there were few, if any management problems. They managed the resources without mishap and solved social dilemmas with minimal teacher intervention. They used the hallway, the library, and the outdoors to rehearse and photograph their stories, and they all returned at the appointed time. How did the classroom teacher create the conditions for productive engagement?

**Conditions for Engagement**
As indicated earlier, we can engage adolescents when they feel involved, are stimulated intellectually, and are supported academically (Ryan, 2008). How did the teacher’s decisions contribute to creating these conditions?

**Feeling involved**
The teacher had decided to learn with her students:

I think I always feel that if you learn with your students that you’re a better teacher anyway because you can break the tasks down…. We were constantly learning together and problem-solving together. That helped them engage more in the whole project. It would not have been the same project if I tried to become an expert first.
She also maintained student involvement by providing choice of topic and presentation style, and by co-creating success criteria that emphasized ‘personal best’.

**Stimulated intellectually**
The teacher provided exciting models, including oral stories, sample digital stories, mentor texts, and storyboards. They were stimulated by the fact that they were working towards performances and presentations. Additionally, the technology itself was a stimulus.

**Supported academically**
The teacher supported the students primarily through modelled, interactive, and guided instruction. She encouraged cooperative grouping. The guidelines and structures for successful group work were already established. The teacher highlighted the technology itself as a support for their writing during mini-lessons.

In addition, all participants in the study, including the researcher and research assistant, worked with the students in the classroom, assisted with technological questions, and helped to manage resources.

The final words should be from the classroom teacher:

> The whole project was amazing to me as a teacher. I remember a couple of times just standing there thinking, ‘Everyone should be able to do this.’ It was just so amazing because they cooperated so well: they needed other people to be in their pictures and they were even drawing artwork for each other because they needed a certain picture: if they knew somebody could draw animals they would ask them to draw for them…. So it was a real cooperation thing, and I felt that was really pretty neat.

It was indeed a ‘real cooperation thing’. The teaching and learning for this teacher and her students were enhanced on multiple levels because of her powerful teaching decisions. She empowered herself, and she empowered the learners.

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**Notes**
1. For information about how ‘action research’ is used here, please see Ontario Action Researcher, http://www.nipissingu.ca/oar/index.htm.

References


Empowerment through pupil voice: the changing picture of reading attitudes in Europe.
Jane Carter (senior lecturer in primary education): University of the West of England

Abstract

The choice and use of children’s literature within and beyond the classroom plays a vital role in developing children as readers (Cremin et al, 2008). It is in this context that a Comenius Project, investigating the learning and teaching of children’s literature across four countries, has been working. Researchers from Universities in England (University of the West of England), Turkey (University of Gazi), Spain (University of Murcia) and Iceland (University of Akureyri) have been part of a Comenius Project (2009 to 2011) aiming to gather, analyse and disseminate information about the current role of children’s literature in schools and in children’s lives in Europe, with a particular focus on the 8 to 11 age group.

In 2010 six thousand children and their teachers, across the four countries, took part in a survey about their reading habits, preferences and school practices. Following the survey, focus groups of children and their teachers were interviewed to further illuminate the survey data. The analysis has shown some interesting similarities and differences in teaching approaches, reading attitudes and preferences, choice and selection of texts, children’s views of the bedtime story and in the perceptions of classroom practice by children and their teachers.

It was important to the research team to ensure that children had a voice, not just in expressing their opinions as part of the survey and focus groups but also in the analysis of the resulting data. To this end, a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) pack was produced to present to children some key data from the survey alongside a series of discussion prompts and activities to illicit from children their ideas, explanations and analysis of the data.
The workshop at the UKLA conference was a presentation of the CPD pack and this paper will summarise some of the workshop activities and discussion.

**Reading Ambassadors**

**Introduction**

This CPD pack (available on the Comenius Project’s website [http://www.um.es/childrensliterature/site/](http://www.um.es/childrensliterature/site/)) was designed to engage children with the debate surrounding the need to promote and develop young people as readers, for both pleasure and purpose. It provides children with an insight into the responses of other children that participated in the survey and focus groups. The pack begins by introducing children to the different countries and to the research project itself. Children are asked to be ‘Reading Ambassadors’ with the important role of informing the four governments about their views on promoting reading. The pack contains a menu of activities and teachers can select the data, information and activities they wish to use with their class and children. Following the activities children are invited to collate their recommendations and produce a short podcast or written ‘manifesto’ that can be posted on the Comenius Project website.

Participants at the workshop were asked to engage with the activities as if they were children and so in the description of the activities undertaken in the workshop the participants are referred to as children/participants.

**Activity 1**

**Rationale**

The activity required children/participants to predict in which country they thought children most enjoy reading and to justify their responses. Children/participants then compared their predictions with the actual data and reflected on possible differences.

**Outline of activity**

Children in each country were asked in the survey to say what sort of reader they thought they were. They had to select one of the answers that they felt described
them as a reader. They could say: I love to read or it's okay to read or I don't like reading.

What sort of reader would you say you are?

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<th>Country</th>
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<th>I don't like reading</th>
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Participants were given the blank chart (above) and a set of percentages (below) and were asked to match countries with percentages giving reasons for their predictions.

I love to read     It’s okay to read     I don’t like reading
78.2%               17.0%               4.8%
I love to read     It’s okay to read     I don’t like reading
44.5%               47.4%               8.1%
I love to read     It’s okay to read     I don’t like reading
54.5%               40.0%               5.5%
I love to read     It’s okay to read     I don’t like reading
33.5%               58.5%               8.0%

Participants were invited to discuss their predictions reflecting on their prior knowledge of the different countries and cultures before being presented with the research findings.

What sort of reader would you say you are?

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<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>44.5%</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
<td>58.5%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>78.2%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Findings relating to this activity from the research project**

The findings show that Turkish children seem to ‘love reading’ more than the other participating countries. Methodological issues were highlighted by the research team; the choice of words ‘I love to...’ may have been interpreted differently by the children. In Iceland, for example, this phrase is not associated with activities such as reading and so was translated in a slightly different way. Some of the Turkish researchers felt that children had a strong desire to please their teachers and so may have answered more positively. However, taking these factors into consideration, the Turkish data still presents an interesting difference in attitudes.

Children using the CPD pack are invited to reflect on their own countries data, offering explanations for the similarities and differences between countries. Teachers are invited to share the research with children, that shows that if you love reading, you read more and if you read more, you get better at reading. Children are then encouraged to consider ways to increase the number of children in their own country who love reading.

**Activity 2**

**Rationale**

This activity asked children/participants to consider the role and value of hearing a story read aloud either in school or at home (the bedtime story).

**Outline of the activity**

Children/participants were presented with a list of statements about the value of reading aloud (based on current research but phrased in child friendly language, to including the impact on children as future readers, language development etc) and
children/participants were asked to decide if these were true or false. The following statements were shared:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading aloud to children helps them to be able to listen more carefully for longer periods of time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The more children hear stories the more likely it is that children will become readers themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking about books that have been read aloud develops children’s confidence in talking about their own reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children who have been read aloud to regularly generally read more and read more challenging books that those who have not been read aloud to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading aloud to children helps them extend their vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children who have heard lots of different books read aloud to them are able to use these to help them with their own writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children can be introduced to really challenging stories that they would not be able to read for themselves through being read to.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the statements are supported by research evidence.

The CPD pack goes on to encourage children to reflect on stories they have been read at home and at school and to compile a list of ‘recommended read alouds’ that can be shared with the other research project countries but also parents, teachers and children within their own school.

Wells (1985), Snow and Ninio (1986) and more recently Clark and Hawkins (2010) demonstrate ‘the correlations between home story reading and early proficiency in school reading’ (Gregory and Williams, 2000:158). With this in mind the research survey asked about both home practices in reading aloud and school practices.

Children/participants were presented with the survey data from this part of the research project.

**Does your teacher read aloud to you?**

Answer: often

Iceland – 58%

Spain – 50%

Turkey – 63%
England – 44%

How often does someone in your family read for you in the evening before you go to sleep?

Answer: Never

Iceland – 47.4%

Spain – 55.4%

Turkey – 41.9%

UK – 48.8%

Findings relating to this activity from the research project

Again, there were cultural considerations around these questions, although each country’s researchers thought a ‘bedtime story’ was part of their cultural tradition in some form. The data showed that the incidence of the ‘bedtime story’ reduced with age, as might be expected, with children reporting that they wanted to read themselves as they grew older and that younger siblings took priority for parents. As part of the English data analysis this question was studied further, comparing two schools in different socio economic contexts. Brick Lane was the name given to a school in an area of socio economic disadvantage and Leafy Lane to a school in an area of high socio economic advantage. Both survey and focus group data was analysed.

Table 1: Survey data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often does someone in your family read for you in the evening,</th>
<th>Brick Lane School</th>
<th>Leafy Lane School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There is a clear difference in the incidence of children’s experiences of the ‘bed time’ story in Brick Lane and Leafy Lane schools. Children at Leafy Lane being more likely to have a bed time story than children at Brick Lane. This data is further illuminated when gender is used as a factor.

### Table 2: Bedtime reading and boys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often does someone in your family read for you in the evening, before you go to sleep?</th>
<th>Brick Lane School boys</th>
<th>Leafy Lane School boys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The boys in Leafy Lane School are twice as likely to have a bedtime story (always and often) as boys in Brick Lane. Bearne and Marsh (2007: 28) cite a significant number of studies that focus on the concern in education of the literacy gender gap that seems apparent in, not only Britain, but in many other countries. They highlight the growing moral panic around achievement and point to studies that offer reasons for the gap in attainment. They caution however against a simplistic response and analysis and reiterate the position of Younger et al (2005) in ‘the importance of taking note of the specific nature of every learning situation since community, school and classroom cultures are shifting constructs’. With this in mind it is useful to put the survey data alongside that of the focus group and alongside the data for girls.

### Table 3: Bedtime reading and girls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often does someone in your family read for you in the evening, before you go to sleep?</th>
<th>Brick Lane School girls</th>
<th>Leafy Lane School girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>46.4%</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting that there is little difference in bedtime story reading habits of girls and boys at Brick Lane School but at Leafy Lane the boys are more likely to have a bedtime story ‘always or often’ than the girls. There was little difference between boys and girls in terms of those children that ‘seldom or never’ had a story. It is possible that parents at Leafy Lane, consciously or not, are aware of the gender differences in achievement in reading and so ‘compensate’ by enriching the home experience. Alternatively, it may be that parents are aware that their male children
read less, or are less independent in their reading than their female children (Clark and Foster, 2005) and so again, the home environment steps in to ensure children access the pleasures of reading though hearing stories read aloud. It is also possible that parents see boys reading a wider range of non-fiction text (Clark and Foster, 2005) and so balance this with story reading at bedtime. Whatever the explanation, boys at Leafy Lane School are having access to the those activities that have, according to Clark, citing Gest et al. (2007:2),

significant positive influences not only on reading achievement, language comprehension and expressive language skills (Gest et al., 2004) but also on pupil’s interest in reading, attitudes towards reading and attentiveness in the classroom (Rowe, 1991)

The bedtime story – focus group data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leafy Lane School - Boys’ responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Being read a story at bedtime sort of tucks you into bed with a good feeling.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My mum reads to me and I find it relaxing before I go to sleep.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Stories stopped at about 7 but it’s a relaxing end to the day.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Dad reads Enid Blyton to me, we only have ten minutes. You can relax when someone reads to you.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Girls’ responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“My dad read to me. I would claim that I got nightmares and couldn’t go to sleep so he read to me. The stories stopped when I was six because I was reading by myself”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My dad read to me. I really enjoy both my parents reading to me and they still do sometimes.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It stopped when I was seven or eight, dad used to tell me stories. My mum still reads to me, we go into the garden.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Children at Leafy Lane offered some detailed reasons for enjoying the bedtime experience, often linking it to relaxing and enjoyment. Many suggested that Children at Leafy Lane offered some detailed reasons for enjoying the bedtime experience, often linking it to relaxing and enjoyment. Many suggested that the bedtime story had stopped because they were now able to read on their own, but a number reported the continuation of the experience beyond the age when they could read independently for pleasure.
Children cited both parents as the teller of the bedtime story, although ‘dads’ were mentioned frequently. The presence of a reading male role model that is mentioned frequently is significant in terms of its impact on boys as readers. The findings of Clark and Akerman (2006) stated that boys were more likely to improve their attainment in reading if ‘their father showed an interest in their education.’

**The bedtime story – focus group data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brick Lane Primary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boys’ responses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I know I didn’t have any.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“What do you mean by bedtime stories?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Never – they are too busy. My dad is on the X Box and my mum is on the computer. It would be nice”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Sometimes I am in the mood, even though I am nine – it calms me down and get the angriness out of my system.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Girls’ responses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I did ‘till I had a TV in my room. I just watch it until my eyes get tired. I would prefer both.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I have my MP3 player and I go to sleep and listen to music. I just drift off.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I used to have a story to get to sleep but not now.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I have bedtime stories at my Nan’s. She has done it since I was little. She reads it with expression and I don’t. She picks out funny books.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By contrast the children at Brick Lane did not report either that the bedtime story was a feature of the cultural practices of their home or that is was a pleasurable experience. Some comments suggest the bedtime story was a purely functional aspect of getting to sleep that could now be accomplished more effectively with a TV or MP3 player. Some children seemed to suggest that they would quite like to engage with a parent in a bedtime story but many others saw it as an activity confined to younger children.
Activity 3

Rationale

The activity required children/participants to reflect on the role and influence of the internet on their reading habits.

Outline of the activity

The children in the survey were asked if they had the internet in their home. The responses were:

- Iceland – 97.5%
- England – 92.1%
- Spain – 72.5%
- Turkey – 64.2%

The children/participants were presented with 9 statements about the influence of the internet on reading habits – with a mixture of positive, negative and neutral messages. They were asked to consider each statement and to decide if they strongly agreed or disagreed with the statements. The statements were placed on ‘diamond of 9 boards’. These were then discussed and shared in relation to the survey data and in relation to previous questions about attitudes to reading.

Findings relating to this activity from the research project

The question relating to internet access was asked as one way of looking at the socio economic experiences of the children across the research countries. It was noted that Turkey, with least access to the internet, had more children that said they ‘loved to read’ and Iceland, with the highest internet access, had the least number of children who said they ‘loved to read’. The research group noted that simple correlations between internet use and reading were not evidenced although further study in this area, across the countries would be interesting.

Conclusion
A number of other CPD pack materials based on the project findings were shared with the workshop group and these can be found at the project’s website along with the interim report of findings.

**References**


Empowerment through Literacy: Literacy shaping futures

Reading in colour: to what extent does a colour-coded grapheme system aid English primary children to read French?
Howard Cotton, Plymouth University

The paper I presented at the UKLA conference in Chester in 2011 on using a colour-coded grapheme system forms part of some wider work on the introduction of Modern Foreign Languages at Primary level in English schools from 2011. The work examines the government’s case for re-introducing Primary Languages in 2011, which is based on economic and social as much as academic imperatives (Low, 1999) and aims to examine the challenges it poses teachers to achieve a competence in their pupils at reading in French, the language chosen by over 90% of primary English schools (NFER, 2009). It critically examines the processes by which an English child between the ages of five and seven acquires a mastery of the reading process in his first language and contrasts the time and effort involved in this with the same child learning how to read in French between the ages of seven to eleven. A comparison of a French child learning to read French in France provides a useful foil to highlight the government’s incorrect assumption that acquiring a second language is an extension of the process of acquiring a first language (Grenfell, 2007). A study of the literature allows for a discussion of the ‘younger is better’ argument and shows that, even though a secondary school pupil is more cognitively advantaged than a primary child to acquire a foreign language, overall exposure time to learning a foreign language is a major factor supporting the introduction of Primary Languages (Martin, 2000). Despite making this case, competence in reading and writing in secondary aged pupils in a foreign language is unacceptably low due to a historical move away from a literacy-supported approach to communicative language teaching (Erler, 2007). The paper presented at Chester looks at the progress made by a group of Y6 English children using Facilecture©, a colour-coded grapheme system, to read French, compared with a group of Y6 English children using ordinary black and white text. The children’s views of the process of learning to read using Facilecture© are discussed as well as those of the teachers using Facilecture© to teach children to read. The children using Facilecture© over 14 sessions made slightly more progress
in reading in French than their peers. This is a competency in decoding and accuracy of pronunciation but does not measure comprehension of the text, which, although the ultimate purpose of reading, can only be achieved through far longer exposure to French that the primary model offers.

**Facilecture©**

Facilecture© is a colour-coded grapheme system devised by M. Francis Ribano. Facilecture© employs 11 colours to indicate the pronunciation of the vowel sounds by colouring the different graphemes that represent the same phoneme. Thus the nasalized [ɔ̃] sound can be represented orthographically as ‘an’ as in (orange) ‘en’ as in (dent) ‘am’ as in (jambe) and ‘em’ as in (décembre) but by a single colour, orange. Unlike all the 11 other colours in Facilecture© which are used to indicate only vowel pronunciation, the use of the colour grey neither refers to vowels nor to sound but rather to the lack of it, for example ‘ils parlent’. Additional guidance is given for the pronunciation of certain consonant sounds using italics. Although Facilecture© was originally designed to help native French speakers learn to read French, it has been trialed in two primary schools in England with Y6 native English speakers to see how effective it is in helping them decode French. Reading in French, rather than, say, German or Spanish, presents pupils with decoding a language whose pronunciation rules are as illogical as those of English and only mastered after many years of study and living in a French-speaking country. Probably the most challenging aspect of reading in French for both native and non-native speakers is that there is no systematic correspondence between orthography and pronunciation. Because of this, I use phonetic transcriptions that follow the system devised by the International Phonetic Association (Appendix 1). This lack of GPC is most noticeable in vowels and vowel clusters, where the sound [j] can be represented, for example, by ‘i’ ‘y’ ‘ill’ and ‘il’ (as in avion, yaourt, paille and soleil). For further examples, see Code Facilecture on Ribano’s website, [http://www.facilecture.fr/](http://www.facilecture.fr/), which is a very useful source of information and examples, all in French.

Bernard Tranel devotes 232 pages of his book ‘The Sounds of French’ (1998) to explaining how to pronounce French correctly. Correct pronunciation allows a learner to produce French that is intelligible to another French speaker and to
understand them when they speak French. It allows the learner to write correctly, drawing on auditory memory to recall how to say the words and the correct visual memory match to write them. *Ils se ressemblent comme deux gouttes d’eau* (literally they look like two drops of water or like two peas in a pod) is not written or pronounced like and does not mean the same as *ils se ressemblent comme deux couteaux* (*they look like two knives*). Reading and writing are what Vygotsky (1978) called two *halves of the same process*: the skills needed to write, blending sounds to form a word, mirror those used to segment the sounds to be able to read a word. Although Y6 English pupils have well developed reading and writing skills, these are transferable only up to a point when reading a foreign language like French. The learner knows about how print, books and stories work and has a GPC system in place that can interpret many of the GPCs that are common to French and English – most of the consonants and some of the vowels. By Y6 a child has in place a metalinguistic awareness and learning strategies that can be applied to the new language. A comparison of a native French child learning to read French in France with a native English child learning to read French in England highlights the challenges this poses. The French Y6 child has been surrounded for ten years by the spoken sounds of French and has a clear idea of what the French word ‘chat’ sounds like [ʃɑ] and means. The child will have seen it written often and has a clear GPC for the word. The English beginner learner must initially shake off the English GPC interference that leads him to want to say [tʃeɪt] with all the semantic associations that go with the word. He must learn new pronunciation rules (‘ch’ says [ʃ] ‘a’ says [ɑ] a pure and long sound and the final [t] is not pronounced. He must learn the meaning of the word and develop both a visual and auditory recognition as well as a visual/auditory association that allows him to be able to recall how to read, pronounce and spell ‘chat’ correctly.

The French child is at a distinct advantage for he will not only hear the word ‘chat’ hundreds of times but will read it too. His world of phonemes and graphemes and GPC reinforcement comes from his family, school, TV, books and printed matter and the wider environment. The English child could count himself lucky to hear or read any French outside the one hour at school. So whereas a Y6 French child can pick up a French book and reading for meaning and pleasure, the English Y6 child, who also
reads for pleasure and meaning in his own language, can only see a French book initially as a decoding exercise.

There are both major differences and major similarities in reading in French and English. We share the same 26 letters of the Latin alphabet (contrast this with Arabic or Russian script). In addition French uses 5 diacritic marks (supplementary signs that combine with letters) to form 12 new graphic symbols - the cedilla, acute, grave and circumflex accent and the diaeresis. Most of the consonants make similar or identical sounds. In fact English has 22 consonant sounds compared to 17 in French (see Tranel, 1998, Chapter 8 for a comparison of the consonantal systems). We share some vowel sounds but French always uses pure vowels, monophthongs, whose quality is constant throughout their production, and English a mixture of monophthongs and diphthongs, whose quality is not constant and changes from one vowel to the other during production. In addition French uses 4 nasal vowels [œ, ë, ë, œ] (un bon vin blanc [œbœvœblœ] that do not exist in English. Finally the French always place a grammatical stress on the final syllable (cultûre, culturêl, culturellemênt), whereas English stresses vary and may fall on for instance the last, second to last or third to last syllables (Japân, Scôtland, América).

Facilecture© is best understood by looking at a copy of a script that has been encoded (see the attached example of ‘Petit Cochon est Coincé’ and examples from Ribano’s website.) There is evidence (see Ribano’s website) that Facilecture is an effective system for scaffolding the decoding process in French. He has begun exploratory work on a similar system for the English language, which is more complicated because of its use of monophthongs and diphthongs. The question needs to be asked, given the opacity of the English grapheme system, whether a colour-coded system could be developed and taught alongside traditional print, as a useful form of scaffolding for those children who always have and always will find decoding English print a major challenge.

**Petit Cochon est Coincé**

CODAGE © Procédé facilecture™® [http://www.facilecture.fr](http://www.facilecture.fr)

**Petit cochon est coincé.**
Voici la ferme des pommiers. Madame Dupré est fermière. Elle a deux enfants, Julie et Marc et un chien, Caramel.

À la ferme il y a six cochons. Les cochons vivent dans un enclos, où ils ont une petite cabane. Le plus petit cochon s'appelle Tire-Bouchon.

C'est l'heure de manger. Madame Dupré donne à manger aux cochons. Mais Tire-Bouchon est si petit qu'il n'a jamais rien.

Tire-Bouchon a faim. Il fait le tour de l'enclos à la recherche de quelque chose à manger. Il découvre une petite ouverture sous le grillage.

Tire-Bouchon est dehors. Il s'est glissé sous le grillage. Le voilà dans la cour de la ferme.

Il se promène dans la cour et observe tous les animaux. Quel repas va-t-il choisir ?

Contact the author: hcotton@plymouth.ac.uk

References


Empowerment through Literacy: Literacy shaping futures

Read to Work: A collaborative literacy intervention by an academic liaison librarian and an academic tutor
Sarah Cousins, London Metropolitan University
Denise Adams, London Metropolitan University

Theme
This paper tells the story of an ongoing collaborative project between a module leader and an academic liaison librarian. The two professionals developed a friendship in the first instance. They were also engaged on an accredited Learning and Teaching programme at the university. These two conditions led them to identify a purposeful opportunity to collaborate on a project. They focused on a first-year, undergraduate module, which they re-configured to embed support for academic literacies on a professional, Early Years teaching degree.

Context
The sample for the study was a first year cohort of 25 students on a BEd Early Years Teaching undergraduate degree at London Metropolitan University, a large, urban institution with a linguistically and culturally diverse body of students. The two professionals developed an intervention programme together. In line with Gilman and Kunkel’s (2010) study about changing roles of university librarians, they believed that ‘an essential first step ... was to establish common goals, understanding and vocabulary.’ (p.24) With a focus on one module, Aspects of Early Years Play and Learning, they sought to reshape their positions and develop their capacity for innovation and change. (Ibid. p.31)

A Blended Learning approach
They used a shared VLE to support students’ learning. This was to facilitate opportunities for students to receive individual feedback on weekly formative tasks, engage in asynchronous discussions and revisit session materials. Leese (2009)
found that ‘students are more likely to engage with technology if it will enhance their performance.’ (p.73) MacDonald and Evans (2008) noted that undergraduate learners responded favourably to being linked, through blended learning approaches, to workplace learners stressing that such approaches offered students an ‘increased opportunity to relate theoretical content to the real world.’ (MacDonald & Evans, 2008, p.88) Lopez-Estrada (2008) also found that such approaches made it possible for student teachers on placements to gain support from their university tutors and peers. In this project too, technology was the main vehicle for communication with students while at university, on placement and at home. The VLE was used to support students to develop independent working styles, participate in discussions and receive individual, descriptive feedback.

Rationale
It was noted that a significant number of written assignments submitted by first year students on the BEd Early Years Teaching programme revealed a difficulty with reading. Students were able to refer to some key texts, but their outcomes revealed a greater challenge in, firstly, making coherent links between their reading and their practice on placements, secondly, accessing a wider range of appropriate reading material and, thirdly, in developing their own critical stance in relation to their reading.

The project was conceived at a time when London Metropolitan University was beginning to seek new ways to embed support for academic literacies within the core academic offer, rather than sending students out for satellite, off-course, catch-up interventions. This was in line with recommendations that embedding academic support within a course is more effective than signposting students to adjoining, disembedded support (Warren, 2002; Bloxham & Boyd, 2007). The project also matched Goen-Salter’s (2008) support model as ‘an explicit scaffold for learning’ (p.87). Goen-Salter emphasised ‘the important bridge between academic learning and students’ lived experiences in the world beyond...’ (Ibid.) For Goen-Salter, the experience of reading involves not only such skills as de-coding, comprehension and interpretation, but also an ability to make appropriate reference to one’s own ‘social and cultural location’ (Ibid.) Students involved in this project were supported to
make links with their own experiences of learning, including their learning on professional placements in Children’s Centres.

**Project Objectives**
The aim of this project was to explore effective ways for academic liaison librarians to work with academic tutors to offer scaffolded support to first year undergraduate students. This was in order to help them acquire the new academic discourses needed as they make the significant transition to university. This collaborative project sought to give the academic liaison librarian ‘increased visibility’ (Gilman & Kunkel, 2010, p.31) both in the university learning spaces and online. York et al (2010) also note that involving librarians in academic encounters with students enabled them ‘to become active participants, not just suppliers of text and technologies.’ (p.196) To this end, the librarian and tutor collaborated to develop information literate students with such attributes as lifelong skills and employability. (Webber, 2000 cited by Big Blue Project final report, 2002, p. 6; SCONUL, 1999, 2007) They supported the students to make links between their reading of policy documents and theoretical works, and their emerging professional practice in London-wide centres. These are particularly challenging requirements for first year undergraduate students in a large, urban university, the majority of whom are the first in their families to progress to Higher Education.

The librarian and tutor offered students opportunities to experience success in frequent, ‘bite-sized chunks’ (Marriott, 2009, p.251), with short, formative assessments, in the hope that students would have more chance of succeeding in the module summative assessments. The project also supported the transition towards more independent studying patterns, helping students to build self-confidence and autonomy as new academics and aspiring teachers. Throughout the intervention, students were supported by the academic liaison librarian to select and access wide online and hard-copy reading, evaluate its quality and make links between their wide reading and experience at Children’s Centres.

**Methodology**
The researchers adopted a qualitative, action research approach, positioning themselves within an interpretivist paradigm. They also sought students’ narrative
accounts of their learning. This was considered to be an effective way for students to reveal their emerging learning positions. Furthermore, all students on the module contributed brief, evaluative accounts at the end of each session on how their reading had impacted, or might impact, on their practical experience on professional placements and their understanding and syntheses of academic theory. The project leaders sought students’ immediate accounts at the end of each face-to-face session, in relation to how they applied their reading to their professional and academic roles. Some of the students also volunteered to share their learning more discursively by offering their own accounts of their learning journeys since beginning the module in question. The project leaders also articulated their own learning stories to each other, as they evaluated each session and planned the next. At each stage of the project they met in a physical space to evaluate and reflect on the sessions, analyse student responses and plan the next steps. During this project the librarian gained student feedback using the ‘One minute paper’ classroom assessment technique developed by Angelo and Cross (1998). This enabled a response at the very point of students’ learning. The project leaders not only analysed and acted on these responses, but also shared their joy and satisfaction at students’ positive responses, articulation of their learning and actual take-up of the support offered.

**Discussion of the theme/innovation**

The librarian was present for a proportion of each session over six weeks, offering incremental steps in learning and relating the learning content to the module formative and summative assessment tasks. The module tutor planned the face to face and virtual learning activities as opportunities for students to represent or realise their reading in a range of modes, including drawing, acting, making, discussing, writing, blogging and posting online comments. Students were supported to ‘become actively engaged in their learning and the learning and teaching process, rather than be passive recipients of knowledge and information.’ (Groves & O'Donoghue, 2009, p.147) This was in order to include all learning styles and acknowledge that learning can be realised multi-modally. As one student clearly articulated during a structured interview, “Ideas come to me when I do things”, and another student said: “I’ve always learned better from being practical.” The librarian and tutor consciously adopted this approach of offering students a range of modes through which to realise their reading comprehension. Just as on placements
students are required to translate their university reading about learning and teaching into actual learning and teaching, so in each session students were required to translate their reading for each session into concrete experiences or outputs.

The project leaders adopted a social constructivist approach, striving to support new students to read widely, negotiate meanings with their peers, assimilate new learning and begin to make links between their reading and practical experience on placements. To this end, students were invited to post their reflections on children’s play experiences on their own learning blogs. This online activity was linked to the final presentation assessment at which students were asked to refer to their blogs. Although this approach was targeted primarily at students who needed to be ‘extrinsically motivated’ (Ibid.) in order to engage in their learning, it ensured full participation in this online reflective writing activity. As emphasised by Groves and O’Donoghue, ‘the technology does not have to be complex or leading edge. It does, however, need to be constructively aligned with the curriculum objectives and learning outcomes.’ (Ibid. p.148)

Project Impact
The impact of the project was gauged through an analysis of the end-of-semester assessment outcomes, student participation in the VLE and students’ ongoing and end-of-semester evaluations. The first cohort of students who participated in the project, achieved high levels of success both in the module and their Professional Placement. Some students commented that they were able to see particular theories of play and learning in action at their placement settings. Other students were able to make links between their observations of children at play and their reading.

Students were invited to carry out very quick reflections at the end of each face-to-face session at university under the following prompts: ‘What did you learn through your reading and by participating in the session activities?’, ‘How will this affect your approach on professional placement experience?’ and ‘What do you want to read more about?’ Some responses referred to emotions, with one student making reference to what she experienced as ‘the joy of learning’, and another student expressing that she was ‘moved’ by a certain aspect of history she had read about, associated with an educational approach. Many of the responses revealed a deep level of learning and contained evidence that, as in a study by Lopez-Estrada (2008)
with a similarly diverse group of students at the similarly large, urban Texas Pan American University, these first year students at London Metropolitan University were ‘bridging theory to practice, and deepening their critical thinking skills.’ (p.89) In the first year, 97% of students who submitted their module assessments passed at the first attempt.

Student evaluations of their learning were gathered by means of module-specific online questionnaire embedded on the VLE. Students commented on the level of support they received by the tutor and librarian, the increased confidence they felt about approaching the summative assignments and their newly-acquired skills, especially in relation to referencing their work.

**Conclusions**

A positive outcome of the project was that students who found using the library resources threatening or envisaged impenetrable barriers to library services acquired the skills to locate, evaluate and critique a range of appropriate reading. Furthermore, they re-positioned the library services as accessible. Some students reported increased confidence in being able to “get a good grade” and “to do well in their assignments”. In these ways, they progressed from having relatively little understanding about the library to a realisation that it is part of their learning landscape, the “real world” service (with helpful people, comfortable spaces and a wealth of resources) in and with which to develop academically.

Students had access to their librarian at their point of need and were supported to acquire increased independence as researchers. They were motivated to seek and evaluate appropriate reading material for themselves and apply these skills to other modules in the programme.
References


Storytelling across the Primary Curriculum
Alastair Daniel, London Metropolitan University

Abstract
In this paper, I outline an approach to classroom storytelling that is grounded in a structuralist approach to narrative. I suggest that through understanding the relationships between the various elements of narrative, teachers can not only construct tales from a range of source materials across the curriculum, but maintain a flexibility in their telling which enables story-making to become a social construction, rather than an individual’s performance.

***

For the last year, my life has been dominated by the preparation of the book of the same title as this paper (Daniel, forthcoming). My aim here is to present a distillation of the approach taken to storytelling in the book and present some ideas which will be of practical use in the classroom context.

There is a distinction to be drawn between story reading and storytelling: when the story is told the book is closed and the teller relies on their own linguistic and imaginative resources. In a sense, of course, all teachers tell stories because humans are storytelling animals: it is the means by which we represent who we are (and our values) to each other and to ourselves (Bruner 1986). In Vivian Gussin Paley’s words, it is ‘a shared process, a primary cultural institution, the social art of language’ (1990: 23).

Although there has been a series of initiatives in the last few years that have raised the profile of storytelling in the classroom, there has been little discussion about the pedagogy of storytelling as teaching. Sometimes classroom storytelling has been reduced to tales which are learned from written texts, and told as a means of encouraging children in their writing. As such it becomes a means of transmission of one person’s ideas to a group: ‘this is my story, and this is how I will tell it to you’.
Whilst there is, undoubtedly, a place for a transmission model, it represents a particular approach to storytelling and, I would suggest, not the one with potential to inform our teaching across the curriculum. Rather than this fundamentally monologic style, it is possible to take a more dialogic approach to storytelling: ‘this is our story, and this is how we will tell it’.

A dialogic approach moves us beyond a relationship in which an active telling is contrasted with a passive hearing, to one in which story-making is a collaborative act. Whilst I may be the principal storyteller, my role is to provide the narrative structure around which we, as the community of storytellers, can weave our own telling: the storytelling is flexible and the story is negotiated. This is primarily achieved through the use of authentic questions, i.e., ‘those for which the teacher has not prespecified or implied a particular answer’ (Nystrand, Gamoran and Kachy cited in Alexander 2008: 15), through which description can be built, events analysed and narrative developments suggested.

It is possible, however, to tell stories without verbalising such questions. The teller can maintain an authentic and questioning response to their hearers, staying aware of the non-verbal signals that indicate if the tale has emotional resonance, is too long or complicated, or the language is inappropriate (too easy or too complex). When the teller understands these signals, they can respond in the way that they weave the story around the narrative structure for this particular group at this particular time. Although only one person may be speaking, the telling remains a social act.

**Narrative Structure**

In order to achieve the kind of flexibility in storytelling advocated above, the teller needs to have an understanding of the narrative structure of any story that they are to tell – then they can fold their words over and around the story scaffold. Although getting to grips with narrative structure can seem an abstract approach, it must be remembered that story is the natural way in which we organize information so that we, as natural storytellers, we have an inherent understanding of story structure (Livo and Reitz 1986: 5). What follows, then, is simply a codifying of that inherent understanding.
Research by William Labov (1972) into the natural (everyday) storytelling of adolescents in New York provides a useful insight into narrative structure. In addition to the familiar structural elements of Introduction (setting), Problem, Events, Crisis or Climax, Resolution and Ending, Labov proposed that narratives are bracketed by an Abstract (at the beginning), and a Coda (at the end). The narrative Abstract sets up a story, providing an indication of what is to follow. In natural storytelling, the Abstract could be along the lines of ‘you will not believe the day that I have had: that photocopier has got to go...’; the anecdote in which the photocopier’s shortcomings are revealed, then follows. The Coda closes the story and provides a summarizing statement, such as ‘...and so from now on, I will do all my copying at home’. The function of these opening and closing sections is not in presenting new information but, rather, marking the beginning and end of a time of story: the Abstract tells the hearer that they are moving from the ‘here and now’ of contextualized language to the ‘there and then’ of decontextualized language; similarly, the Coda returns the hearer to the ‘here and now’. Whilst these narrative elements appear in crafted storytelling, with phrases such as ‘Once upon a time...’, and ‘...and they lived happily ever after,’ by bracketing classroom story with an abstract and coda, the teacher works within the conventions of conversational story-making and reinforces its social nature.

In addition to the Abstract and Coda, Labov also introduced the concept of narrative Evaluation, through which the stand of the teller towards the events of the story is revealed. Whilst evaluation can be shown through descriptive language, vocal tone and gesture (and can occur at any point during the narrative), the very act of selecting which events are worthy of narration and which may be discarded is evaluative. Further, the ways in which narrative elements (including characters, events and motivating forces) relate to one another, also position the teller in relation to the story. Whilst we tell stories to give shape to the world around us, the ways in which we structure and tell those stories reveal our own longings, loves and prejudices. Awareness of the ways in which evaluation is expressed is vital for the class teacher, particularly when telling tales from history, or stories of religious and cultural significance.

Meta-narrative
In addition to the sequence of events around which story language can be woven, the teller also needs an awareness of the internal structure of the narrative. By
understanding the way in which narrative elements relate to each other, the storyteller can maintain narrative coherence while being flexible in the retelling of a known story; the meta-narrative also helps with story memorization and, most importantly, commanding of the evaluative nature of the narrative.

The analytical tool suggested here is based on the work of A.J. Greimas (Greimas and Courtes 1979) who suggests that the internal structure of a narrative can be broken down to six *actantial functions*; in the table below these are provided with explanatory notes and a simple analysis of *Little Red Riding Hood*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actantial Function</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Associated question</th>
<th>Functions in <em>Little Red Riding Hood</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>the character around whom the narrative turns</td>
<td>Who is the story about?</td>
<td>Little Red Riding Hood;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td>that which the subject wants to achieve or acquire (this could be a person, an object or an attribute);</td>
<td>What do they want to do?</td>
<td>To take a basket of food to her Grandmother;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sender</td>
<td>the person(s) or force(s) that moves the Subject to seek the Object;</td>
<td>What makes them want to do this?</td>
<td>Little Red Riding Hood’s mother sends her to her sick grandmother;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiver</td>
<td>the person(s) that benefits from the Subject’s successful quest for the Object;</td>
<td>Who will benefit if they succeed?</td>
<td>Grandmother;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opponent</td>
<td>the person(s) or force(s) that opposes the Subject’s completion of their quest for the Object;</td>
<td>Who, or what, is trying to stop them doing this?</td>
<td>The Wolf;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helper</td>
<td>the person(s) or force(s) that aid the Subject in their</td>
<td>Who, or what, is trying to help them</td>
<td>The woodcutter.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The identification of these actantial functions not only enables us to retell established tales, but also to construct coherent narratives from material across the primary curriculum. In this way, narratives can be constructed around a range of facts and ideas, from historical events to scientific processes, in which learning is enabled through utilizing story as the natural way in which we communicate information of value.

**Examples of Storytelling across the Curriculum: Science and Geography**

There is a creative tension in classroom storytelling between Jerome Bruner’s aim of making ‘the strange familiar’ (interviewed in the Guardian newspaper 2007), and Kieran Egan’s preference for making ‘the familiar seem strange’ (1986: 47).

The myth of *Orion*, for instance, can help contextualise the rotation of the Earth and stellar life-cycles within recognisable mythic themes of love, folly and vengeance and, at the same time, provide a mnemonic for abstract scientific concepts related to the night sky. In this story the actantial schema enables us to create a narrative in which we can take an evaluative stance on Orion’s folly at wanting to slay every living creature; the Earth’s rotation against the night sky can be incorporated into the story’s coda as the constellation of Orion is ‘chased’ by that of the vengeful scorpion as the globe turns. However, whilst the strange is being made familiar, at the same time, the familiar becomes strange: stars which can be seen even in a town’s night sky are linked to a world in which gods and monsters walk the Earth, enabling reality to be viewed in wonder. It also needs to be emphasised that it is the flexibility and immediacy of the story told, rather than read or recited, that enables the community of storytellers to explore such themes within the narrative itself rather than in separate activities.

This making-strange of the world around us through story, then, enables us to see our environment with new eyes, and have our attention drawn to things which, although familiar, would otherwise dwell in the backgrounds of our lives. Stories travel from place to place, morphing as they are transmitted from culture to culture and, as they journey, they carry the imprint of the places they have been – the mutable nature of traditional narratives provides a natural context in which children can explore not only the wider world, but also their own local environment. Although most children will be familiar
with the German tale, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, variations on this story can be found all over Europe. The English version is based in the fishing community of Newtown on the Isle of Wight, and the details of the narrative reflect the local environment. Hence, in Newtown, the rats drown in the harbour (rather than the river of the German story) and the children disappear into the forest (not the mountains of Saxony). Using the six question form of the actantial schema (‗Who is the story about?’ etc.) children can identify the important elements of the narrative and (through substitution and adaptation) they can construct and tell their own stories of, say, *The Pied Piper of All Saints’ Primary School*. The familiar is made strange, and connections created between local geographical features that may otherwise have never been seen.

**Summary**

When we tell stories in the classroom, meaning is not only conveyed by the organization of events and ideas in narrative form – a way that is ‘a natural order of mind’ (Livo and Rietz 1986: 5) – but also by the way in which the tales are told. In this paper I have explored a dialogic form of storytelling that depends on building story language around a narrative scaffold which holds together the elements of story, both sequentially and relationally. At the same time as heightening awareness of the evaluative stance that we take to the tales that we tell, working with narrative structure enables us to create coherent narratives from material across the curriculum. Taking such an approach, tales remain flexible in the telling, and storytelling itself becomes a communal act; to reiterate Gussin Paley’s words: ‘the social art of language’.

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See also:  www.storytent.co.uk

**References**


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Empowerment through Literacy: Literacy shaping futures

Literacy Coaching and Student Literacy Achievement
Laurie Elish-Piper, Ph.D. Northern Illinois University

Purposes
The primary purpose of this study was to use a mix-methods research design to examine the relationship between literacy coaching and student reading and writing achievement in grades 1-7 in a suburban school district in the midwestern United States of America. In addition, the study also sought to identify commonalities and differences across grade level bands (primary, intermediate, and middle school).

Perspectives
Literacy coaching has been identified as a promising practice for improving teacher expertise in reading instruction (International Reading Association, 2004; Toll, 2006). The assumption that underlies literacy coaching is that through the job-embedded, ongoing professional development provided by literacy coaches (Deussen et al., 2007), classroom teachers will improve their instructional practices which will lead to improved student reading and writing achievement outcomes (Joyce & Showers, 2002).

Research on literacy coaching indicates that teachers who work with literacy coaches are more likely than teachers who do not receive coaching to enhance their classroom literacy environments (De Alba-Johnson et al., 2004), use best practices in their literacy instruction (Blachowicz et al., 2005; Salzman et al., 2008), implement new instructional strategies into their classrooms effectively (Neufeld & Roper, 2003), and accept change in a positive manner (Symonds, 2003). These research studies indicate that literacy coaching contributes to teacher professional development and practice; however, they did not specifically examine the impact of literacy coaching on student achievement in reading and writing.
To date, a relatively small number of research studies have examined the link between literacy coaching and student reading and writing achievement. Walpole and Blamey (2008) conducted a multi-year study that concluded that schools with literacy coaching were more likely to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) than comparable schools where coaching was not provided. A study of the Literacy Collaborative (LC), a comprehensive school reform model that includes school-based literacy coaching for professional development, concluded that the LC ‘professional development is associated with a 16 to 29 percent improvement in student literacy learning rates’ (Biancarosa et al., 2008, p. 38). In addition, an evaluation study by Swartz (2005) concluded that literacy coaching contributed to student reading gains in grades K-4 more than a traditional professional development program or a highly prescriptive reading curriculum. The presenters of this paper have also conducted two studies (Elish-Piper & L’Allier, 2010, Elish-Piper & L’Allier, Accepted for publication) examining the relationship between literacy coaching and student reading achievement in grades K-3 in districts with Reading First grants. Findings from these studies indicated that specific literacy coaching variables predicted student reading achievement gains within the Reading First framework. Namely, literacy coach certification, total time spent with teachers, and time spent on four literacy coaching actions (i.e., conferencing, administering assessments, modeling, and observing) predicted student reading achievement gains at specific grade levels.

This study examined the relationship between literacy coaching and student reading and writing achievement in grades 1-7 in a school district that implements a balanced literacy framework rather than a highly prescriptive model such as Reading First. The research questions that framed this study were:

1. What is the relationship between literacy coaching (i.e., time, activities, and content) and student reading and writing gains?
2. How do literacy coaches and the teachers they coach perceive the purposes, essential components, and most effective aspects of literacy coaching?

**Methods**
**Participants**

This year-long, mixed methods study included 6 literacy coaches, 95 teachers, and 2,383 students from a suburban school district in the midwestern United States of America. One quarter of the students were from minority backgrounds, 10.4% were identified as low-income, and 9.7% were English language learners. The district did not make adequate yearly progress in the 2008-9 school year in Reading in the subcategories of students from low income backgrounds and African-American students.

Teachers had an average of 12 years of experience, and 75% of the teachers had earned a master’s degree. Each of the four elementary buildings had a full-time literacy coach while the middle school had two literacy coaches. Three of the coaches held Reading Specialist Certification, one was completing that Certification during the course of the study, and two of the coaches held Reading Teacher Endorsements.

**Literacy Curriculum**

The District was in the second year of implementation of its Balanced Literacy Framework when this study was conducted. The Framework included the following components: Reading Workshop (read aloud, shared reading, guided reading, reading conferences, and independent daily reading), Writing Workshop (shared writing, interactive writing, guided writing, writing conferences, and independent daily writing), and Word Study (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, roots and affixes, and word origins).

**Data Collection and Analysis**

The researchers collected both quantitative and qualitative data to address the research questions. Quantitative data about literacy coaching came from the Structured Literacy Coaching Logs. The Structured Literacy Coaching Log documented all coach/teacher activities (e.g., demonstration teaching, co-planning) and the literacy content on which the activity focused (e.g., comprehension, writer’s workshop) as well as activities that did not involve interactions with a specific teacher (e.g., ordering materials, planning professional development). Literacy
coaches entered data into their logs at the end of each day and submitted their logs to the researchers on a weekly basis for eight months (October – May).

Quantitative data about student achievement came from the fall and spring reading scores on the *Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)* and the fall and spring writing scores on student writing samples that were analyzed using a Six Traits rubric. The *MAP* assesses word recognition/vocabulary, literal comprehension, inferential/interpretive comprehension, evaluative comprehension, and literary response and analysis. The composite MAP score, or RIT (Rausch Unit) score, was used as the measure of reading achievement. *RIT* scores allow comparison across grade levels as they are reported in terms of the RIT Scale, which is an equal interval scale that has the same meaning regardless of grade level of the student. Writing Assessments were scored by district personnel using a Six Traits rubric that measured ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. The scores for each trait were combined to obtain a total writing score, which was used as the writing achievement variable.

Frequency distributions were calculated to develop an initial summary of the coaching and assessment data. Hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002) was used to analyze the relationship between literacy coaching and students’ reading and writing achievement. In the HLM analysis, literacy coaching variables included total time of coaching received, time teachers were involved in specific literacy coaching activities, and time teachers received coaching about specific areas of literacy content.

Qualitative data were collected through interviews of all six literacy coaches and a random sample of 19 classroom teachers. The semi-structured interview protocol used with all participants addressed perceptions of the purposes, essential elements, and most effective aspects of the literacy coaching program. Stratified random selection of the teachers ensured that 2 or 3 teachers from each school and grade level were chosen and that there was a balance of interviewees in terms of gender and
novice/experienced teachers. The interview data were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Results
Analysis of the Structured Literacy Coaching Logs indicated that the literacy coaches in the study spent an average of 65% of their time working directly with teachers. The average number of hours of coaching received by each teacher at the first through fourth grade levels ranged from 2½ to 3½ hours per month. Average coaching hours for teachers at the fifth through seventh grades ranged from 4 to 6 hours per month. Furthermore, three of five most frequently implemented literacy coaching activities were consistent across all seven grades; they were providing professional development, conferencing/consulting, and co-teaching. In addition, co-planning was one of the top five coaching activities in all but two grades (i.e., 3rd and 5th grades). Similarities regarding the content of the coaching were also noted across grade levels. Writing instruction was one of the top five areas of focus for all grade levels, while guided reading, reading workshop, and remediation ranked in the top five areas of focus for six of the seven grade levels.

On average, the total gains on the MAP assessment by students at each grade level (1-7) were statistically significant (at the < .001 level). The percentage of variance of student reading gain due to teacher differences was calculated for each grade level and was found to be statistically significant at three grades: first (15.74%), third (3.29%), and fourth (5.56%). On average, the total gains on the writing assessment by students at each grade level (1-7) were statistically significant (at the < .001 level for grades one through five, at the .029 level for grade six, and at the .026 level for grade seven). The percentage of variance of student writing gain due to teacher differences was found to be statistically significant at all seven grades, with the percentage of variance ranging from 14.42% at the seventh grade to 47.39% at the first grade.

When the relationship between literacy coaching and student reading performance was analyzed using HLM, the following coaching activities and literacy content areas
were found to be either statistically significant (≤ .05), or approaching statistical significance\(^\dagger\), which indicates that these activities predict gains in student reading.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Coaching Activities</th>
<th>Content of Coaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Coaching Hours</td>
<td>Co-planning Hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the relationship between literacy coaching and student writing performance was analyzed using HLM, the number of hours spent discussing the Literacy Framework was a statistically significant predictor of the growth in student writing at the 5\(^{th}\) grade level. No other literacy coaching variables predicted gains in student writing at any grade level.

Data from the literacy coach and teacher interviews revealed both similar and conflicting views of the goals of literacy coaching, the essential elements of literacy coaching, and most helpful literacy coaching activities. A summary of these findings is provided in the table below.

### Summary of Interviews Analyzed Across Literacy Coaches and Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic / Issue</th>
<th>Literacy coaches</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose(s) of Support</td>
<td>Support for Support</td>
<td>Teachers do not view</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>literacy coaching</td>
<td>teachers</td>
<td>teachers</td>
<td>literacy coaching as a way to support students’ reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Support for students</td>
<td>• Specific coaching activities (modeling, co-teaching, co-planning, resources, new strategies, using data to plan instruction)</td>
<td>• Teachers identify specific coaching activities as essential. Literacy coaches do not.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essential elements of literacy coaching</td>
<td>• Experience as a teacher</td>
<td>• Knowledge base</td>
<td>• Both teachers and literacy coaches identify knowledge base as essential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Knowledge base</td>
<td>• Affective / dispositional attributes</td>
<td>• Literacy coaches identify dispositional, affective, and interpersonal issues, but teachers only mention availability and accessibility of literacy coaches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Relationships with teachers</td>
<td>• No mention of specific coaching activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• No mention of specific coaching activities</td>
<td>• Knowledge base</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Availability / accessibility of literacy coach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most helpful aspect of literacy coaching</td>
<td>• Presenting / providing PD</td>
<td>• Literacy coach as resource</td>
<td>• Both groups mentioned co-teaching, but this activity was not found to be a predictor of student gains for either reading or writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Modeling</td>
<td>• Resources (materials)</td>
<td>• No other overlap was identified between groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Co-planning</td>
<td>• Availability</td>
<td>• Two of the literacy coaching activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
identified by the
literacy coaches were
predictor variables at
the first grade level
(co-planning and
modeling).

**Discussion and Conclusions**

Students at all grade levels made statistically significant gains in reading and writing, indicating that overall instruction is promoting literacy growth. While there were statistically significant gains, few literacy coaching variables contributed to those gains, even though teachers received a relatively large amount of literacy coaching time. The data indicated that literacy coaches worked with a wide variety and large number of educators in their buildings, rather than prioritizing their time to work with teachers whose students were not making sufficient gains in reading and writing. Elementary literacy coaches not only worked with classroom teachers, but with special educators, librarians, paraprofessionals, and parents; middle school coaches worked with language arts teachers, content area teachers, librarians, and paraprofessionals. Thus, the lack of targeted coaching may partially explain why so few literacy coaching variables contributed to student gains.

Targeted coaching might be achieved by examining average student gains at the teacher/classroom level. When the average student gains are not consistent across teachers/classrooms in a grade level, differences at the teacher/classroom level likely contribute to student gains. These differences may include, but not be limited to, teachers’ educational level, years of teaching experience, and instructional competence. In writing, average student gains accounted for by teacher differences were documented at each grade level. In reading, variance at the teacher level account for differences in student gains at three grades (i.e., grades 1, 3, and 5). Using this data, literacy coaches could provide targeted coaching for classrooms with lower average student gains.
To contextualize the findings from the quantitative data, three conclusions were drawn from the interview data. First, while literacy coaches viewed coaching as supporting both teachers and their students, teachers reported that coaching supported them but not their students. Because the teachers did not see the link from coaching to instruction to student learning, they may have been less willing to engage with their literacy coach or to modify their instructional practices. This finding also suggests that further clarification may be warranted to ensure that literacy coaches and teachers have a shared understanding of the purposes of literacy coaching.

Second, the literacy coaches identified classroom teaching experience, an open personality, and accessibility as essential elements of literacy coaching; classroom teachers reported that the coach serving as a resource and providing access to teaching resources were the most essential elements of literacy coaching. These differences suggest that the literacy coaches are viewing coaching from the inside-out by focusing on the qualities and characteristics they believe allow them to do their jobs effectively. Teachers, on the other hand, seem to be viewing literacy coaching from the outside-in by focusing on the activities in which they personally have engaged with their literacy coaches. Both groups identified the literacy coach’s knowledge base as an essential element – indicating that they understand the need for the literacy coach to have specialized knowledge.

Third, when discussing the most helpful aspect of literacy coaching, coaches tended to focus on the activities on which they spent the most time, and teachers also selected the specific activities in which they personally had engaged with their literacy coaches. The only coaching activity that was identified by both groups was co-teaching. That activity, however, was not one of the literacy coaching activities that predicted student reading or writing gains.

While it may seem surprising that only a small number of literacy coaching variables predicted student reading and writing gains in this study, further consideration of
district variables offer important insights. Teachers in the district were highly educated – with over 75% holding Master’s Degrees. In addition, the student demographics reflect relatively low numbers of students with ‘risk factors’. Additionally, the district had a clearly defined balanced literacy framework as well as a strong professional development climate. These contextual factors may have resulted in situating literacy coaching as a resource to help teachers ‘tweak’ their instruction rather than to transform it, resulting in less substantial changes to instruction. This notion of the importance of the context for literacy coaching is supported by previous research in a district that received a Reading First grant (Elish-Piper & L’Allier, 2007; Elish-Piper, L’Allier, Accepted for publication). In this district, teachers were less highly educated (i.e., 37.1 % held Master’s Degrees), a relatively high number of students were considered to be ‘at-risk,’ and the literacy curriculum was not clearly defined. In this Reading First context, literacy coaching may have fostered more substantive changes to teachers’ instruction, contributing to improved student achievement. These contextual factors could at least partially explain why a larger number of literacy coaching variables predicted student reading gains in the Reading First district. Based on these findings, future research needs to examine the context of literacy coaching to help determine the most effective use of literacy coaches to support student reading and writing gains.

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Elish-Piper, L., & L’Allier, S.K. (2007, November) Does literacy coaching make a difference? The effects of literacy coaching on reading achievement in grades K-3 in a Reading First district. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Reading Conference, Austin, TX.


Empowerment through Literacy: Literacy shaping futures

Teacher Interaction in the Teaching of Writing
Ros Fisher and Debra Myhill

Abstract
This paper draws on evidence from ten writing lessons in year three and four classrooms observed as part of the DfE funded evaluation of the Every Child a Writer Project. Data drawn on include video and audio data from the ten lessons, medium term and lesson plans, interviews with teachers, children and parents as well as analysis of writing samples. We discuss three related issues in the paper. The first of these arises from the way the objectives given in lesson plans did not always match the content of teacher-pupil interaction. We then consider how scaffolding was used as a teaching strategy and argue that this does not always seem designed to lead to independence. Finally, we emphasise the importance of meaning and communicative effect in writing.

In this paper we reflect on issues that arose from evidence from ten writing lessons in year three and four classrooms observed as part of the DfE funded evaluation of the Every Child a Writer Project. Data drawn on include video and audio data from the ten lessons, medium term and lesson plans, interviews with teachers, children and parents as well as analysis of writing samples. As such it provides no more that a snapshot of lessons. However, it offers some interesting illustrations of the variety of practice and indicates how teaching may impact on the quality of the writing produced by children.

Three related issues are discussed in this paper:
1. The relationship between the lesson objectives and teacher pupil interaction.
2. The use of scaffolding as a teaching strategy.
3. The importance of meaning and communicative effect in writing.

Use of objectives
Although lessons had objectives that related to a broad range of aspects of writing development, these were not always the aspects of writing emphasised by teachers in their interaction with pupils. A significant aspect of the teaching observed was the way in which some teachers appeared to foreground the secretarial (spelling and punctuation) aspects of writing at the expense of meaning. This was even the case when the lesson plans appeared to focus on something quite different.

In one lesson the teacher’s objectives were to get pupils to personalise a class story using interesting story openings and exciting word choices. However, the interaction between teacher and pupils and the feedback given by the teacher could have given pupils the impression that other features were more important:

Teacher: Who can carry on that story with me, whilst I write?

Pupil: [inaudible]

Teacher: Out of the - ? Good girl. Okay, so, ‘Out of the corner of his eye’ [children murmuring along], and remember when we have a good sentence opener, what follows?

Pupil: Comma.

Teacher: Good girl. Comma. ‘Out of the corner of his eye –‘

Pupil: He saw -

Teacher: Who saw?

Pupils: Tom.

Teacher: What are we going to use for ‘Tom’?

Pupil: Capital letter.

Teacher: Good girl. Tom. ‘Out of the corner of his eye, Tom
saw –’

Pupil: An arrow.

Teacher: Good girl. Come on folks, you need to be thinking. ‘An arrow pointing –’

Pupils: To the treasure -

Teacher: Oh, hang on a minute, somebody said something lovely I’ll pick up on in a moment. ‘Tom saw an arrow pointing to the –’

Pupils: [inaudible]

Teacher: Oh right, okay. ‘The golden, comma, shiny treasure.’ Right. Stop there for me. What am I going to put at the end?

Pupil: Full stop.

Teacher: Full stop.

In the plenary of this lesson, pupils were asked to circle all the punctuation they had used with blue pens. When this had been completed they could read to each other their ‘fanciest sentences.’ Here the intended learning focus on interesting openings and exciting word choices seems subordinate to the use of punctuation.

In contrast, in the extract below the teacher in a year four class has pupils writing a leaflet to advertise their stone age attraction. The objective was to use persuasive language to convince a tourist to visit:

Teacher: And you’re going to use your imaginations to come up with a really good persuasive leaflet, to convince tourists that might be coming to your area to come and visit your Stone Age museum. Okay? Think about what sort of language you might use.

Pupil: Well, if you give them information like where it is, um, what’s inside of it

Teacher: Yeah, where it is, what’s inside of it. And you really
want to – do what?

Pupil: You could say, like, you’ll feel like you’re in the Stone Age time?

Teacher: Fantastic. You’ve got to use really good language to convince people, haven’t you? That it’s somewhere they want to go.

Pupil: Well, um, make it sound really interesting. And so also, you could also put, like, other events on it which you could go to as well. And, like, really exciting events as well.

Teacher: Brilliant. So exciting language.

It is further clear from talking to the pupils afterwards that they have understood what they were doing:

‘Well this morning we were doing advertisement writing, we were supposed to sort of have sort of persuasive writing, we had to sort of persuade people to come to a museum that we were sort of making, a stone age sort of, ... I think I was sort of pleased, I think I, ‘cause I think I might have used my words quite well and made good sentences I think....... I think I used quite good vocabulary cause I said ‘Dine in style at the Cave Kids Café.’

The use of scaffolding

There was frequent use of scaffolding pupils’ writing as a teaching strategy such the use of the acronyms; the use of pre-written text which needed to be altered; the use of a modelled text; the use of partially written texts which needed completion and so on. Scaffolding is a valuable strategy in explicitly supporting learning about writing, but scaffolding which is too strong or ‘supportive’ may be limiting student learning and creating over-dependence. In particular, the scaffolding can seem to be more focused on getting pupils to use a particular feature (time connectives; adjectives) rather than understanding the use of that feature. Two priorities for the use of any
scaffold are firstly, that the scaffolding should focus on what the teacher wants the pupils to learn about the writing and secondly, a consideration of how the teaching can move from the scaffolded support to independence.

Several of the observed lessons had the use of connectives as a learning focus which brought to light some issues worth commenting upon. In one of the retelling of a story lessons, the focus was both on writing the build-up element of a story and on using conjunctions to create compound sentences, and the class were given the acronym FANBOYS (for; and; nor; but; or; yet; so) as a strategy for remembering the possible connectives that can create compound sentences. Using a worksheet which scaffolded fairly heavily the story content, one group’s task was to create a story build-up with compound sentences. The consequence was a group of texts that did not successfully manage the connectivity and the connections made are not always meaningful in the context of the narrative.

Soon Jack reached his best part of the terrific town park in the whole world which was the Spectacular Spider Web for he was just about to start climbing when he spotted a sporty Subaru racing car on the other side of the spider web, so before Jack could speak the Subaru spoke.

It seems likely that these writers focused on the task of joining clauses with the list of conjunctions recommended through the FANBOYS acronym, but not on the process of meaning-creation. The discussion with the pupils following this lesson is in sharp contrast to the children above describing their writing of the museum pamphlet. When asked what they were doing in trying to do with their writing they explained:

P1: About, we were like, we had like two sentences and we had to put like FANBOYS in.

P2: The FANBOY are for, and...

P1: So, nor, yet, and I think...

P3: So, or, but....

P2: No, the, it, for...

P4: For, am, which...
Writing to convey meaning
This focus on grammatical features leads to a danger that young writers may learn that usage is good, that is, that using adjectives or connectives is intrinsically a good thing to do, without any corresponding understanding of how use of these features can shape meaning or effect in a text. All teachers gave very affirmative and encouraging feedback, but this was not always insightful. One teacher wrote ‘Great subordination’ when a pupil used ‘when’ and ‘Great connectives’ for the use of ‘so’: in both cases, these are connectives which are a) common in the oral repertoire and easily transferred to writing and b) in evidence in pupils’ writing from the Early Years. Such comments also suggest that the grammatical feature itself has merit, rather than considering communicative effect. There were examples where the teacher feedback was constructively focused on development. One teacher made helpful suggestions to one writer who over-used ‘suddenly’, offering the alternatives of ‘within a second’; ‘A moment later’; ‘In a flash’. Another teacher highlighted the choice of ‘roam’ as an effective verb, and invited the writer to go back and look at two lines which repeated a word and consider an alternative. In general, however, the teacher feedback tended not to engage with the overall communicative message and effect of the writing, just the presence of certain features. More challenging comments, which link textual features with communicative purpose, might enable these writers to develop their writing more.

In whole class interaction, there was a tendency for teachers to ask pupils to provide ‘good adjectives’ or ‘interesting verbs’ rather than considering how the use of these
words may or may not be ‘good’ or ‘interesting’ in the writing that they are doing. It was noticeable that oral and written feedback praised usage but rarely discussed effect or appropriacy. ‘What’ questions were asked (e.g. What sentence starters have you used? Have you used any powerful verbs? etc) but not ‘Why’ questions, such as why did you choose that starter for that sentence at that point in the story? or why do you think that adjective works for this piece of writing? More discussion of the effectiveness of choices made might support the move from heavy scaffolding to independence.

In one lesson in a year 3 class the teacher had written a poem which the class were tasked to improve. The mid-term plans focused on using a range of vocabulary to engage the reader. This is translated in teacher-pupil interaction into ‘powerful words’. Thus words to engage become words that are powerful in their own right. The teacher asked for ‘children who can write in their poems as many powerful words as possible’. In this lesson, the teacher held a sustained discussion about better words for grass than ‘green’, and offered ‘emerald’ as an improved substitute: there was no discussion of why ‘emerald’ might be more appropriate or what the connotations of ‘emerald’ were that supported the ideas in the text. In the writing samples from this lesson, there were some writers who seemed to be focusing on word choice at the expense of meaning-making, thus creating writing which did not make sense. The extract below explains the destruction and sadness in the rainforest and then concludes that the rainforest is a happy place:

Bulldozers destroying and animals sprinting;

Kids crying all alown

That’s why the rainforest is a happy place!

In contrast, below, the teacher has pupils working on a play script linked to their history project about life in Tudor times. The learning outcome of the lesson was that pupils would be able to ‘convey a character’s feelings in a play script’. The focus was only a small part of the script in which John Dudley has to persuade Lady Jane Grey
to return to London. Following role play of this scene, pupils are improving a script written previously by their teacher. Note below in this extract the way the teacher focuses pupils’ attention on the effectiveness of the language to convey the character’s feelings:

Teacher: .... the way I’ve written it – don’t you think that he could be a bit more persuasive?

Pupils: Yeah.

Pupil: Um, he could say something like... ‘Jane, Jane. Come with me. You could be crowned Queen of England if you just – If you just come to London.’

Teacher: I like it. ....

Teacher: ‘Come with me to London’ -

Pupil: ‘So you can be’... ‘And you can’ -

Teacher: So, I like the ‘so’ – That connective ‘so’. So, ‘come with me to London so – ‘

Pupil: ‘You can be crowned Queen of United Kingdom or England.’

Teacher: .... And [name], what – add something to this. Make it a bit more persuasive, oh, she’s really needed.

Pupil: Um, we need you desperately.

Teacher: Lovely. We need you – We need you, or England needs you?


Teacher: England needs you -

Pupil: Desperately.

Teacher: Okay, lovely. That’s really nice. ‘Jane, Jane. Come with me to London so that you can be crowned Queen. England needs you desperately.’
Following this pupils wrote their own versions in which the task and teacher input results in effective use of co-ordination. Simple co-ordination is used effectively to indicate Lady Jane’s reluctance to become Queen. One writer expressed Jane’s horror at her father’s wish that she should become Queen thus - ‘H-he can’t h-have and I-I don’t want t-to.’ Another used ‘but’ very effectively to make a counter argument. At the end of the lesson the teacher asks pupils to read their work and they identify which language features produced the effect that they were looking for.

**Conclusion**

First of all, it is important to reiterate the caveat that the sample is small and diverse, making generalisable comparisons and assertions invalid. However, the richness of the data which combines the writing samples with the lesson plan, the lesson observation notes, and the video of the lesson does mean this analysis is able to make good connections between the text produced and the teacher’s input.

The examples given here show overwhelming evidence of teachers working hard to support children in their development as writers. The evidence from these lesson observations showed most pupils to be hard working and enthusiastic in their engagement with their writing lessons. However, these data also point to the need for teachers and pupils, in their pursuit of particular features of writing, not to lose sight of the purpose of writing being to communicate meaning.

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To read the full report of the teaching of writing in the case study schools (RR-108B), go to DfE website

https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/RSG/AllRsgPublications/Page2/DFE-RR108B

**Notes**

1. In 2008, The University of Exeter and the National Foundation for Educational Research were commissioned by the then Department for Children, Schools and
Families (DCSF), now Department for Education to conduct an evaluation of the national pilot of Every Child a Writer initiative. The study employed quantitative and qualitative methods to evaluate impact and explore process and practice over the second year of the initiative. The full report is published by DfE and available on their website.

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Empowerment through Literacy: Literacy shaping futures

The Assessment of Writing: Revisiting D’Arcy’s Contrasting Paradigms for the Teaching and the Assessment of Writing
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Abstract

Drawing on research funded by the Bedford Charity (Harpur Trust), the narrative writing of reluctant writers in 10 Lower Schools was levelled using, firstly, the Assessing Pupil Progress (APP) criteria and, secondly, criteria devised by the researcher. Findings resonate with the contrasting paradigms critiqued in D’Arcy’s paper on the teaching and assessment of writing (D’Arcy 1999). Levels assigned to individual texts can vary between one assessment criteria and another. In many cases, pupils achieved higher levels against criteria designed to evaluate creativity and the ability to tell a story. Appropriate assessment criteria are critical not only to summative evaluations, but also the planning of future teaching. These findings have implications for both the way writing is assessed, but also impact on the pedagogy of writing; self perceptions of pupils as writers and call into question the validity of Standard Assessment Test(SATs) data that suggests standards in writing lag behind reading at the end of KS2 (11 year olds).

Introduction

D’arcy was critical of the ‘narrowly mechanistic’ approach to writing (D’Arcy, 1999), initiated by the National Curriculum (DES, 1989). This largely skills based discourse (Ivanic, 2004) locates teaching in the development of technical accuracy at word, sentence and text level with scant attention to the articulation of meaning by means
of creative uses of language. Whilst not dismissive of the importance of technical accuracy, D’Arcy was critical of the demise of creative and process based discourses (Ivanic, 2004) characteristic of writing pedagogy in the 1980s. In this paradigm the writer’s thoughts and feelings, values and concerns are central to composition (D’Arcy, 1999). Though not mutually exclusive, D’Arcy perceived that the two paradigms had become dichotomised. She asserts that the dominance of one paradigm over the other in writing pedagogy influences pupils’ self-perceptions as writers (D’Arcy, 1999). In a skills based writing paradigm, the writer is a scribe concerned only with what Smith (1982) identified as ‘surface’ or secretarial features of writing. In a creative and process based paradigm the writer’s attention is given to compositional aspects of writing (Smith, 1982) and the construction of meanings. It may be argued that the dominance of the skills based paradigm was reinforced in England by Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) and the National Literacy Strategy (DEE, 1998). Both required the evaluation of textual structure, grammar and punctuation rather than a consideration of content, or the writer’s ability to express thought or feeling (D’Arcy, 1999). In addition, by applying contrasting evaluations of pupils’ writing D’Arcy demonstrates how, in a skills based paradigm teachers are positioned as technical assessors, rather than as real readers, free to evaluate the, affective, creative or literary quality of the writing (D’Arcy, 1999).

D’Arcy refers to influences that shaped her thinking, culminating in a ‘multiple helix’, which combines ability to ‘generate language’ with the mental processes of ‘thinking, feeling, visualising and doing’ (D’Arcy, 1999). Amongst her mentors were James Britton (1970) who advocated language as both a symbolic representation of and means of understanding the world. Writing is a means of shaping thinking; of making thought visible which creates opportunities for reflection. A second influence was James Moffett (1980) who, like Britton, posited that writing begins with ‘inner speech,’ which is shaped and crafted in the compositional process. From this perspective, writing pedagogy involves helping the writer make appropriate word and syntactic choices and devise textual structures that elucidate pre-textual thinking (Moffet, 1980). Berthoff (1982), a third influence, acknowledged that inner thought relied on implicit knowledge of language which emerges in the writing process. D’Arcy deduced that children possess the linguistic means to express thought which
negates the need to be taught linguistic features divorced from their thoughts as writers (D’Arcy, 1999). This paradigm posits writing as both a product of thought and a process of making meanings and feelings concrete. It is a means of learning about the self; the world and one’s position in the world. Finally, D’Arcy refers to Murray (1982) who suggests the primary audience for the writer is the writer her or himself; wider audiences are secondary (D’Arcy, 1999).

If the assessment of writing is reduced to the scrutiny of word classes; punctuation and syntactic structures, the purpose of writing, as a means of meaning making and reflection, is lost and writing becomes the task driven pursuit of technical accuracy. The corollary is that young writers, even those achieving academic success, are in danger of adopting negative or indifferent attitudes to writing as a meaningful, pleasurable activity (Gardner, unpublished).

Comparison of Assessing Pupil Progress and Assessment of Narrative Writing

This paper draws on data from a three year research project funded by the Bedford Charity (Harpur Trust) that investigated the impact of mind mapping on the writing of reluctant writers in ten Lower Schools in Bedfordshire (Gardner, 2011). Four samples of narrative writing were collected from 66 pupils and assessed, using two sets of assessment criteria. The first, Assessing Pupil Progress (APP) in writing resonates with (SATs) criteria; the subject of D’Arcy’s critique. The APP criteria are designed to give a ‘...detailed, analytic view of pupils’ attainment across all...types of writing’ (National Strategies online). These criteria are, therefore, understandably generic. The AAP criteria are spread across eight assessment foci (AFs) as follows;

- AF1 Write imaginative, interesting and thoughtful texts
- AF2 Produce texts that are appropriate to task, reader and purpose
- AF3 Organise and present whole texts effectively, sequencing and structuring information, ideas and events
- AF4 Construct paragraphs and use cohesion within and between paragraphs
The first two foci appear to allow an evaluation of the writer’s creativity, depth of thought and affect on the reader. However, the remaining foci locate the assessment firmly in a linguistic paradigm, concerned with structures at word, sentence and text level. In addition, guidance notes suggest the criteria are unevenly weighted. Progression ‘...is shown by differences in the criteria.’. Assessment Foci ‘..are presented in a particular order for assessment purposes...’ with AFs 5 and 6 first, followed by AFs 3 and 4, then AFs 1 and 2 and finally AFs 7 and 8. The position of AFs 7 and 8 would suggest these are least important. However, the guidance recommends:

‘..the criteria for AF7 and AF8 are considered as a way of confirming or modifying the assessments made on evidence for the majority of the other Afs’.

Overall, the fulcrum of assessment rests on word level competence rather than the writer’s ability to demonstrate flair, imagination and affect on the reader. D'Arcy (1999) also noted that the cultural positioning of the assessor may contaminate judgments in relation to social class register. These criteria, therefore, belong to a linguistic, skills based paradigm.

A second set of criteria, the Assessment of Narrative Writing (ANW) criteria, were devised specifically for the research project to enable a comparative analysis of assessment to be made.
The ANW foci are evenly weighted. Although there is word, sentence and text level analysis, attention is drawn to the affect and effect of word choices in relation both to narration and the reader. The criteria are specific to elements of narrative and reflect the work of Genette (1972); Barthes (1975) and Rosenblatt (1969). Genette (1972) makes the distinction between narrative and narration; what is in the story and the manner of its telling. Barthes (1975), amongst other things, draws attention to elements of the text that push the story forward (nuclei) and others that embellish it (catalysers). Rosenblatt’s ‘Reader Response Theory’ reminds us of the dyadic relationship of the writer and reader. In addition to these influences, the criteria are located in a socio-cognitive theory of writing, which posits that the construction of texts involves the interaction of the writer’s cognitive processes; social conventions and cultural influences. (Nystrand et al., 1993).

The ANW foci for Level Two are cited below:

**Plot** - There are clear causal links between events, which are told in chronological order. The narrative has a plausible opening, development and conclusion. Characters are the agents of events.

**Narration** - The beginnings of a narrational voice are evident in the way the writer addresses the reader. The writer narrates the story with some minor embellishment of events. The narration and plot remain similar.

**Characterisation** - Several characters are introduced and brief physical descriptions are given. Basic emotional and or psychological depth is suggested.

**Setting** - A sense of place and/or time is denoted by means of brief description.
Words and The writer uses descriptive language to depict time and Grammar place. Language is used to create cohesion and coherence.

Textual Ideas are well organised showing evidence of demarcation by

Organisation means of clear sentence boundaries.

Experience The writer uses their own heuristic experiences with slight

And Meaning adaptation and embellishment as the basis for the story. This may include some allusions to other texts the writer has read or seen.

Affective The writing begins to engage the reader with some

Reader Response emotional response at particular stages of the story.

The final AF allows the reader to evaluate the extent to which the writing engages them affectively and the penultimate criterion allows credit for the writer’s use of personal experience and intertextuality. The symbiotic relationship of assessment criteria; curriculum; and pedagogy are implied here.

**Comparison of outcomes APP versus ANW**

A comparison of findings shows that in most cases pupils’ scores are either the same or higher on the ANW criteria than with the APP criteria. A comparison of 69 scripts in the baseline sample show that 62% (N = 43) of pupils scored the same level on both criteria, whilst 26.4% (N = 18) of pupils achieved a higher level on the ANW criteria, whereas 11.6% (N = 8) of pupils attained a higher level on the APP criteria than they did on the ANW criteria.
The second and third samples show pupils made even greater improvement on the ANW criteria. In a sample of 42 scripts the second assessment shows that those pupils achieving the same level on both criteria had fallen to 36% (N = 15). There was little difference in those pupils scoring a higher level on the APP criteria than on the ANW criteria between the first and second assessments. In the second assessment this amounted to 11.7%, which was just 0.1% higher than on the first assessment. However, 52.3% (N = 22) of pupils achieved higher levels on the ANW criteria than the levels they achieved on the APP criteria. Fifteen pupils, or 36%, were a third of a level higher; 14% (N = 6) were two thirds of a level higher and 2.3% (N = 1) achieved a grade a whole level higher.

In the final assessment 37 scripts were marked. In 45.9% (N = 17) of cases there was no difference in the level assigned to scripts using either criteria. Six pupils (16.3%) achieved a third of a level higher on the APP criteria than the ANW criteria. Although this is higher for this category than on the two earlier assessments, the actual number of pupils represented is not significantly different in terms of the overall number scoring more highly on the APP criteria. In the first sample it was 8 pupils and in the second it was 5 pupils. So, irrespective of the size of the sample a similar number of pupils are ‘favoured’ by the APP criteria. However, the third assessment confirmed the trend of the first two by showing that once again more pupils achieved a higher grade on the ANW criteria than they did on the APP criteria: 16.3% (N = 6) were a third of a level better and 21.6% (N = 8) were two thirds of a level better. Overall then 37.9% (N = 14) achieved a higher level on this criteria than they did on the APP criteria.

A second comparative indicator is the rate of progress pupils made against each set of criteria across the three samples. Although the majority of pupils (55%) made the same rate of progress when assessed against both sets of criteria, more pupils (28%) made greater progress when their writing was marked using the ANW criteria compared to 17% whose progress was greater when marked against the APP criteria.
In summary, these findings suggest a significant number of pupils demonstrate higher standards of writing when assessed against the ANW criteria than against the APP criteria.

**Conclusion**

The findings of this study suggest that a process based writing paradigm and allied assessment criteria reward authorial voice and affective qualities of writing. D'Arcy advocated assessment criteria that synthesised technical accuracy and compositional features. Given that assessment criteria reflect the paradigmatic perspectives of the curriculum, these results are in tune with D'Arcy’s assertion that a paradigmatic change is required in writing pedagogy, as well as the assessment of writing. These findings suggest that such a change could lead to significantly different SATs data, leading to a greater number of pupils demonstrating higher standards of literacy.

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Strong Foundations?

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Abstract:
The Foundation Phase (FP) curriculum in Wales is based on play and experiential learning. This paper examines the professional testimony of twenty practitioners who were interviewed about their perceptions of the quality of writing in the new curriculum. Results echo those of the evaluation team in 2006 with positive aspects but also concerns about standards and the use of support staff in teaching. Practitioners thought that creativity needed to be balanced with teaching the skills of writing.

Introduction
In 2001 the Welsh Assembly Government published its vision for Wales demonstrating its aspiration to become ‘internationally renowned as a Learning Country’ (WAG, 2001, p. 1). As part of the changes a radical re-thinking of the education of the youngest children was proposed to ‘plant ambition and high expectation early on’ (2001, p. 15). The Foundation Phase (FP) in Wales is concerned with the education of children from 3 -7 years, encompassing nursery, reception and Key Stage 1 and sets out the aims and outcomes for this stage of children’s education. It is a child-centred curriculum involving ‘first-hand experiential activities’ (WAG, 2008, p.4) drawing on successful methods of education in other countries such as Reggio Emilia and Swedish forest schools. The seven areas of learning (AOLs) it contains are similar to those in the English curriculum such as Language Literacy and Communication, Mathematical Development, Physical Development, Creative Development and Knowledge and Understanding of the World. At the core of the new curriculum is Personal Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity. Welsh Language Development adds to the distinctiveness of the curriculum as a
further central feature designed to deliver the Welsh Assembly Government’s aspiration of bilingualism for Wales.

The role of the practitioner in the new curriculum is placed within the philosophy of facilitating learning with the child at the centre. Planning should be holistic with connections made between the different areas of development. Practitioners are expected to have knowledge of child development to aid them with their observations and help them to develop each child as an individual. In addition to the FP curriculum there is a Skills Framework (WAG, 2008) for 3-19 year olds which requires progression in thinking, communication, ICT and number skills.

The expected outcomes for the FP in writing are very similar to those in the previous Early Years and Key Stage One National Curriculum in Wales and children at the top end of the FP are expected to be able to talk to an audience, respond to texts, read independently and write in a range of genres. Expectations have not been lowered but the manner in which these outcomes are to be achieved has changed with children being given ‘opportunities to make marks and write in meaningful activities.’(WAG, 2008 p.18). It is expected that ‘through participating in purposeful writing tasks children will develop and improve their written skills as they move along the learning continuum.’(WAG, 2008, p.18).

Early evaluation of the FP in 2006 by Siraj-Blatchford et al indicated that there was much to celebrate with positive improvements in independence, confidence and attitudes to learning (Siraj-Blatchford et al, 2006, p. 8). However, they also cautioned about some areas of concern. They particularly noted a lowering of standards in areas of literacy and in the use of support staff in teaching and assessment. The report’s recommendations stressed need for ‘balance between academic and social emotional aims’ (p16). It commented on much good practice but also ‘a decline in children’s opportunities for learning in the areas of literacy and interaction with adults’ and also that ‘training on pedagogy of FP needs to be recognised’ (p16).

Present Research
Our research aimed to investigate the perceptions of teachers and other practitioners about the impact of the FP on writing in particular. This area was chosen following a comment from a head teacher who said, ‘The children are writing less, but the content is better.’ This stimulated interest to find out more about practitioners’ perceptions of writing in the new curriculum. Subsequently a methodology was designed where interviews with 20 teachers from two neighbouring LEAs were conducted. These interviews were mainly of a non-structured nature where we wished to identify themes using grounded theory principles (Glaser, 2002). The largest group interviewed was advisory teachers, which made up 8 of the 20 professionals interviewed. This was helpful as they had an overview of what was happening in schools and insight into how the FP was being implemented. Six classroom teachers, two SENcos, three headteachers and one deputy headteacher were also interviewed.

Results

Professional testimony from these practitioners indicated many positive aspects to the new curriculum and its impact on writing.

‘It gives them reasons for writing’ (SENCo 2)
‘The vocabulary is better’ (Advisory teacher 2)
‘There’s a willingness to learn – a buzz about learning’ (Advisory teacher 3)

A strong conviction was shown in many of the interviews that the chance to talk, and develop ideas through play was a valuable enhanced aspect of the FP. Role play, providing real contexts for learning, talk through oral storytelling and sharing of ideas were cited as important positive aspects. Creating exciting themes, where the children engaged in imaginative play and developed vocabulary and ideas, was central to much of the work in the new FP. One class had a pirates’ theme with a table top playmobil set and the role play area developed as a pirate ship. In another school a Superheroes theme was created which the children loved so much they did not want it to end. Enthusiasm for the FP was expressed by the group of class teachers especially, who emphasised that children produced more authentic writing as they were able to ‘lose themselves in the play’ (Class teacher 3). One advisory teacher commented that staff were trained and committed to developing skills through themes and providing real contexts for learning. This is the Foundation
Phase at its best and evidences the intention to help all children ‘grow to become confident learners (WAG, 2008, p. 5).

Not all comments by interviewees were positive though. Concern about the skills of writing was expressed by headteachers as well as advisory staff.

‘We are very concerned children are going into year 2 without the literacy skills. They don’t have the skills to write a story. Children can’t pick up story by osmosis’ (Headteacher 1).

‘Handwriting formation can go. The bread and butter have to go back in with the foundation’ Class teacher 1).

The most worrying aspect expressed was about the deployment of support staff.

‘In some schools LSAs (Learning Support Assistants) are being used to teach the most vulnerable children’ (Headteacher 1).

The headteacher who made this judgement was adamant that trained teachers should be the ones dealing with children with special needs and that training for support staff needed to be more in depth. The view was that some LSAs did not have high quality literacy skills themselves and to allow them to teach and assess children with difficulties was quite inappropriate. The issue of training was a constant theme throughout interviews. Practitioners expressed the need for further, more consistent, training on how to teach literacy through. As one advisory teacher explained, ‘If teachers think the FP is easy it rings alarm bells. Foundation does not mean free.’ In other words the new curriculum is more structured than it is perceived to be by some teachers and planning for progression essential. An example given was of a child who liked writing stories but with no planning to provide him with a different genre to write in. This was seen as taking child-centered education to the extreme and potentially to have a restricting effect on a child’s potential.

These comments highlight a well-documented tension in the teaching of writing between encouraging children to develop the creative aspects of engagement, imagination and risk-taking in writing, while paying due attention to the acquisition of the skills of handwriting, spelling, punctuation and correct in use of language forms or grammar. A key question is how do we assess writing? D’Arcy (2000) raised this issue in her book ‘Two Contrasting Paradigms’ and it is a question we need to be thinking about when discussing children’s writing and it seems that the teaching of writing in the FP raises these issues of balance and focus in the teaching
of writing reformulating them against a backdrop of a child-centred and ‘holistic’ curriculum. The span of development from 3–7 years in the FP also marks a considerable range of development which children might be expected to make in writing and brings out the need for more differentiated and nuanced approaches to progression.

Another challenge within the Foundation Phase is the need for standards to be maintained or improved. The ‘top down’ approach is still in the minds of some headteachers who have to justify results to all stakeholders. This pressure to achieve has resulted in more formal ways of teaching handwriting and spelling than is conceived in the philosophy of the FP in general. One teacher told me, ‘We aren’t really doing the FP. We tried it but the results went down so there was a panic and now we do formal writing exercises, just like before’ (Classteacher 2). It seems that standards in the formal skills of writing are perceived to be slipping in the new curriculum. However, as one advisory teacher commented, ‘We need to give it time. We may not see the real results until those children are in Year Six.’

A call for a sense of equilibrium was intimated. The phrase ‘Don’t throw the baby out with the bathwater’ was repeated several times by different members of staff.

‘In best practice it is the balance between the old and the new. There has to be a balance between the creativity and mechanics of writing to avoid children who can’t write because they haven’t got the skills to do so’ (Deputy Headteacher 1).

Emphasis on talk as the basis for writing was a clear thread in all the interviews. The need to extend ideas and vocabulary through role play talk and adult/pupil talk was seen as essential. As one advisory teacher asserted, ‘If they can’t speak it they can’t write it’ (Advisory teacher 6).

One unexpected aspect emerged during the investigation. In one school, due to building work, the classes were restricted in their use of the outdoor areas and had to return to more structured, almost formal, whole-class teaching methods. The result had been an increase in the number of Level Three writers at age seven in the formal end of Key Stage Teacher Assessments. The headteacher was cautious about this as many factors have to be considered when interpreting results, including differences in cohorts.
This was a school where the staff, including the headteacher, were totally committed to the FP philosophy so her response to the change was balanced.

‘I’m not going to jump to conclusions but there is, the evidence is there, that this year they’ve achieved really above our hopes or expectations then. So I think it’s, in the girls’ minds it’s become very clear that although the Foundation Phase and everything that we’re doing with that is very important and they’ve got to do it because there’s big pluses for it anyway, they, I think they’re going to really make sure that, that rigour isn’t lost at all.’

By rigour she was referring to the skills needed for writing at the end of the FP at age seven. FP Outcome Six refers to writing that is ‘often organized, imaginative and clear’ and also requires punctuation, spelling and grammatical structure that is ‘usually correct’ (WAG, 2008, p. 47). Legible writing is also required. This is an example of the tension between the desire for creativity but the demand imposed by curriculum outcomes and expectations requiring a balance between flexibility and ‘rigour’.

Figure 1 is an example of the writing of a six year old after reading and discussing Jill Murphy’s ‘Whatever Next?’ The work is evidently that of a high-achieving child who has clearly been able to form sentences, is aware of punctuation and the structure of a letter. This was from the school where building work had disrupted the normal functions of the FP resulting in more formal lessons than the teacher usually undertook with her class. Her interpretation of the work was interesting. In her eyes the child had not lost himself in the story as he was at pains to point out twice that he was aware it was a fantasy. ‘I amajind it’ (sic) he says showing that he was one step removed from the story. In the teacher’s eyes this was evidence that the restrictions on role-play and other contextual outlets had left him more disassociated from the story than he would have been if allowed to follow the principles of the FP more closely.
Conclusions

The investigation raises many questions about the teaching of writing in general in the context of the new curriculum. The FP is not fully embedded and outcomes of this innovative method will not be evident for several years. However, it is the attitude of the teachers that is important. The over-riding impression from their personal testimonials was that if they want this curriculum to work then they will make it work. However, training still seems to be an issue. How do you train children to read and write through play? How do you know when to intervene and guide their learning in other ways? For experienced practitioners this may not be an issue but, for teachers trained to teach in strict formats like the Literacy and Numeracy hours to have to think about teaching writing in thematic ways may be challenging.
The role of the LSAs was highlighted in many of the interviews. Siraj-Blatchford (2009) attested that the qualifications and training of staff had an impact on the achievements of young children. The Foundation Phase is expensive in terms of staffing and many schools have seen their staff double in the last three years. Extra training for LSAs, to provide them with the skills necessary to support children in reading and writing, may prove to be too large a burden. Grants for continuous professional development for teachers have disappeared in the last few years and schools are increasingly looking to cut costs, so keeping staff rather than training may have priority if the high staff/child ratio required by the FP is to be maintained. This also creates a tension as headteachers may have to decide between quality of provision and quantity of staff available to supervise children.

The emerging themes from this small-scale research echo those of Siraj-Blatchford et al in 2006. Where the FP is implemented properly and children are given real contexts for learning supported by properly trained staff there is much to celebrate. However, training in FP pedagogy is still an issue and the deployment of staff in the classroom is important. If children are to develop a love of learning they need to be not only enthused but supported in that learning. The children need the skills for writing as well as the willingness to write and this should be provided by properly trained staff.

**References**


Representations of meaning
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Abstract
Three to eight year old children demonstrate their identity and their meanings through their symbolic representations at home, in nursery and at school. Using freely available resources, children's spontaneous and creative actions provide them with opportunities to draw on their own life experiences. Role play, drawings, cut-outs and selected artefacts and found objects are some of the methods and contexts in which children are able to express their meanings. Their representations give an insight into the way they construct their world and make it visible: using what they know, calling on their own cultural experiences, and interpreting it in their own way. This study draws principally on the work of Freire (1970), Pahl (1999) and Kress (1997) in an analysis of the children’s literacy practices in the form of their symbolic representations. Artefacts made by three to eight year old children in the setting and at home provided an insight into the meanings which they attached to their everyday activities. At times they combined their drawings, writing and collage with role play, toys and other physical resources to represent their meanings symbolically.

Introduction
With an ever increasing emphasis placed on developing literacy skills in early years practice, this paper recognises in children's diverse practices the complexities and meanings of their communications, using whatever resources they have access to. It reports on a study which explores the ways in which children use their symbolic representations to make visible their thinking and ideas, and the ways in which adults construct meaning from the children’s activities. The principal data consist of images of children’s artefacts that were produced at home and at school and nursery. These are supported by field notes and conversations with the children and their parents. The children were inventive in their choices of resources and frequently wrote or created messages and stories for family members and friends using
multimodal approaches to their representations. They used opportunities in their play to make their own stories, and frequently demonstrated their creativity and inventiveness in these self-chosen activities.

The study explores how practices at home, at school and in the pre-school setting can facilitate children’s exploration of their identity and their own narratives, and encourage them to represent their own meanings: to say or show what they mean.

**Representations of meaning**
The significance of children being able to 'name their word and their world' (Freire, 1970) is demonstrated in the way they use their own resourceful methods and contexts within which to make meaning. Reflecting on his work with communities becoming literate, Freire (Freire and Macedo, 1987: 159) advocates a 'critical' approach in developing a pedagogy of literacy where learning takes place in the 'language of the people' so that they are empowered by the possibility of engaging in 'reflection, critical thinking and social interaction'. Within the context of this study, this suggests that there is a need to value children’s representations of their thinking so that they can recreate their own language of meaning. Vasquez (2004: 139) found that while working with the children in her kindergarten class, they 'imagined that the social world could be otherwise' and that they could 'change the way things were'. Children were able to engage with issues of social justice, and had a clear sense of right and wrong.

In the Reception class at school, five year old Louise made a picture of her house (figure 1) for her friend who was anxious about coming home with her after school - the first time that she would not be fetched by her own mother. Louise used pencils, pens and scraps of card to show her friend what her house looked like so that she would know what to expect, and after drawing her own family she asked her friend to draw her family too, seen on the left hand side of Louise's house.
Children can find ways to make their own meanings visible if they are able to use their imaginations, and understand that their own means of representation are valued by those around them. Freire suggests that a move away from traditional approaches to literacy which are characterised by a skills-based acquisition of knowledge is needed, towards an 'emancipatory literacy' (Freire and Macedo, 1987: 156) where children can use their own ways to make meaning. When children understand that their meaning-making endeavours are valued, this provides a driving force for their literacy development as they devise ways to represent their thinking.

Freire (1970) contends that power relationships are particularly evident in education, where children may be reluctant to pursue their own interpretations of meaning if they are at odds with those expected by adults in the setting. By means of their drawings and artefacts, children are able to make their own voices heard so that they can build a theory of action through reflection and representation of their thoughts, experiences and feelings. Kress (1997) suggests that long before children are able to read and write in the adult sense they are able to express their views, their thoughts and their identities in a variety of ways in order to demonstrate what they mean.

**Methods and contexts**
In this study, the children made choices from resources that surrounded them, and used these to represent their thinking in sometimes surprising and inventive ways. These resources included paper and pencils used in drawings, scribbles and early attempts at writing; however, just as frequently, the modes of representation that the children used included the use of found objects and scraps of card, boxes or collage materials. Role play was found to be an effective context for meaning making, and was frequently combined with play that involved their toys or rearranging objects or furniture, sometimes in combination with spontaneous mark making. Children were found to engage in complex narratives in drawings and artefacts that may appear messy or trivial at first sight, but their meanings took on a complex and serious character when time was taken to listen to their accompanying descriptions or stories, or to observe their subsequent play and activities.

Dyson and Genishi (2009: 77) suggest that teachers might learn about and gain an understanding of the experiences of children as they tell their own ‘personal narratives’. Children begin to learn how to develop narratives around their own lives and experiences and, while telling and retelling their own stories, they share their own worlds and concerns with those around them. While these personal narratives may be told verbally, this study explores the innovative and sometimes unexpected means by which children ‘tell’ their stories visually and symbolically. In a reception class ducklings had hatched in an incubator, and were then housed in a light box on a table. At five, Joseph became concerned about the well-being of his friends as they tried to stand on stools to have a clearer view of the ducklings. The children negotiated some ground rules for their safety and for the care of the ducklings: Joseph used scraps of paper (figure 2) to stick messages onto the ducks’ box for all to see in the class room: ‘no people on the stools, no fingers poked through’.
Figure 2: Joseph's message

Resources
Children’s multimodal texts may include their toys and other favourite objects (Pahl and Rowsell, 2010), which provide a real and meaningful context for storytelling and analysis of their thoughts on the social and cultural aspects of life. After a holiday in Spain, seven year old Ellen and her younger brothers re-enacted a bull fighting scene at home using their toys, accompanied by a poster (figure 3). They used this opportunity to reflect on cultural traditions related to bull fighting and to consider
their own feelings about this.

Figures 3: Matadors preparing for the bull fight

Sometimes the children’s drawings and artefacts were accompanied by mark making in some form; however the use of writing (or invented or play writing) was not necessary in order to define the activity as ‘literacy’ (Kendrick and McKay, 2004). It is the child’s narrative about their meaning making that makes it into a literacy activity. The methods used by the children in this study were clearly influenced by the resources available at the time in the home and in school, and in many ways children’s choices were opportunistic in the sense that they used the resources that were close to hand at the time of their intention to represent their thinking.

**Constructing meaning**
Pahl (1999) calls for a recognition of children’s own forms of literacy practices by acknowledging their own identities in their texting, writing, emailing, telling stories, role play and model making. Children’s innovative ways of representing their thoughts reflect their creativity in the ways in which they are able to make links between experiences in the past and in different domains (Pahl, 2007). Young children are constantly endeavouring to make sense of their world: Laura attached deep meaning to her father’s decision to stop smoking. She wrote and drew at home (figure 4) about her understanding of the issue, using her drawing to convey part of her message: 'smoking will make you sick. It is bad for you.'
Figure 4: Smoking is bad for you....

It may seem problematic and uncomfortable to be receptive to the multiple interpretations and expressions of the children’s representations which reflect the changing and constantly varying nature of the child’s voice, creativity and meanings in different contexts. However disorganised and chaotic the children’s activities may appear to have been on the surface at home and in the classroom, there was a clear order and focus about the intentions and meanings within which the children were engaged as they worked and played. Jewitt (2007) argues that one needs to move ‘beyond language’ in the classroom by acknowledging multimodal texts and context. This can be equally relevant to the Early Years setting and home, and was a key consideration in the approach to this study.

Children have their say
When offered a range of resources from which to choose in order to find a representational means for their meaning making, the children demonstrated inventiveness and ingenuity. Vasquez (2004) recognises young children's ability to conceptualise and analyse the situation and take responsibility for their actions. At times, some children appeared to adjust their writing and artefacts to fit in with more conventional and accepted ‘school’ behaviours and this became evident in both the quantity and depth of their presentations. Data gathered from conversations with the children showed that time constraints and expectations of producing neat work were limiting factors which made it difficult for them to express their own voices in their work. At home, they would practise their school writing sometimes seriously,
sometimes in a playful way. In this way their ‘cultural capital’ enabled them to fit in with the expectations of school (Freire, 1970: 69) as they demonstrated an understanding of the expectations in different domains.

Images which make up the data for this study may appear either pleasing to the eye, or apparently random at first sight: however, it is the meaning behind the artefact that is of interest rather than the aesthetic or visual quality of the artefact. Children's artefacts may be viewed as ‘cute’ and precious by the adult in a way that can devalue what the child is endeavouring to communicate: this tendency to generalise and ‘reduce teaching to a feel-good process……[and] coddling’ is considered by Freire (1998: 4) who calls for a professionalism which results in adults taking seriously children's contributions as expressions of their thinking.

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References


Empowerment through Literacy: Literacy shaping futures

The Ontology of an Enigma: the Dyslexia Syndrome
Jeff Hynds

Introduction

During the last few years I have undertaken research into aspects of dyslexia, culminating in the submission last year (Autumn 2010) of a doctoral thesis at the School of Education of the University of Sheffield. In the following short paper I attempt to outline something of my research journey and what I endeavoured to accomplish. This is of necessity a relatively brief account, for it will be appreciated that it is quite difficult to condense five or more years of work into a few pages. However, for those interested, a booklet is available (in hard copy, on CD or delivered electronically), which includes a fuller account of the circumstances of my research, and incorporates a condensed version of my thesis, reducing it to about a quarter or less of its original length. I believe this provides a reasonable reflection of the original, and my guess is that it will suffice for most purposes, but if any serious researcher would like an actual copy of my complete doctoral thesis, I can provide this, also on CD. Further details about this, including contact details, appear at the end of this introductory account.

Original abstract of doctoral thesis (to set the scene)

Dyslexia has been a controversial condition for over a century. Nevertheless there has, particularly in the last decade, been a renewed interest in it, as evidenced by the launch of several government initiatives, by the considerable growth of support organisations and advocacy groups, by proliferating university research and by burgeoning media interest. Yet dyslexia experts still appear unable to define the concept, or resolve the many contradictions, while
others note how dyslexia continues to be a major drain on the educational system and particularly on the families involved. From the standpoint of critical ethnography, this thesis seeks to investigate the origin and significance of dyslexia’s mysterious ontology, and the importance this might have for the way dyslexia is currently regarded. After reviewing published literature of likely relevance, and discussing certain sociolinguistic and sociocultural theories germane to the enquiry, the thesis poses several questions about the nature of dyslexia’s existence, about its disputed aetiology, about its much-vaunted pedagogy, and about its apparently increasing presence in our society. Evidence to reveal possible answers to the questions posed has been sought in fieldwork, which has involved close observation of activities in a top-level school specialising in teaching dyslexics, together with a consideration of the procedures and preoccupations of certain local dyslexia associations, interspersed with observation of, and interviews with, a number of dyslexic participants. While an analysis of the collected data has in some ways produced unsurprising findings, it is suggested that the thesis has also made a number of significant and even quite unexpected discoveries. As a consequence, it is argued that there are persuasive reasons to call in question some of the long-held beliefs of the dyslexia community, and the practices it employs (Hynds 2010).

**My research journey**

I have worked in the literacy field, one way or another, for over 50 years, mainly as a teacher (primary and secondary) and teacher trainer. At first this was in what is usually called ‘mainstream’ literacy, although as time went on I did develop an increasing interest in young people who had difficulties with learning to read and write. However, for a long time I avoided what was called ‘dyslexia’ because I assumed for many years that this was a special category of problem caused by a medical condition beyond my competence to understand. As you may know, dyslexia had originally been ‘discovered’ by doctors in the late nineteenth century, and was thought to be a disease of the visual system (Gayán 2001: 7).
As a teacher I was quite influenced in my early days by the National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE) which I joined in 1961. (I didn’t join UKLA/UKRA until about 25 years later.) As a member of NATE, and as a higher degree student in the early 1970s at the Institute of Education, I came under the influence of Jimmy Britton (Professor James Britton) and the Institute team of those days (people like Harold Rosen & Nancy Martin). Then in 1975 the Bullock Report was published, which was for me a very important report about language and literacy learning. This was largely written by Jimmy Britton and HMI Ron Arnold, another person from those days whose work I also admired. The fact of the matter was, however, that nowhere during these years did I encounter anyone who gave dyslexia any serious attention, or even mention it! Ironically the Bullock Report did briefly mention it (in one sentence), but had the effect of steering me away from it, because it reinforced its medical connections. All it said was:

There is a small group of children ‘often referred to as dyslexic,’ who ‘should have access to a comprehensive diagnostic service, calling as necessary on the skills of doctor and psychologist’ (DES 1975: 275).

Apparently the dyslexia lobby was disgusted with this cursory reference (‘a small group’ indeed!) and called it ‘pedantic and untenable’ (Critchley & Critchley 1978: 4), but I knew nothing of this at the time.

So, in the 1970s, as a mere English teacher, it seemed to me that dyslexia was not an area in which I was professionally capable of becoming involved and, as I had much else to think about at the time, I did not in those days feel a pressing need to investigate it further. I did retain a sort of latent curiosity, because from time to time dyslexia was mentioned in the media, and I occasionally heard about ‘poor unfortunate children suffering from dyslexia’ (on this occasion from one of my distant relatives who was providing temporary accommodation for a summer school). I remember I vaguely wondered about them. In fact, although I was unaware of it, interest in dyslexia had been increasing in Britain, particularly from the early 1960s onwards.
It was in the spring of 1982 that I had my damascene experience. I was attending a course on literacy learning at the Centre for the Teaching of Reading at Reading in Berkshire. One of the lectures was delivered by a Dr Margaret Newton of the University of Aston. She had, she informed us, been devising a new battery of tests designed to diagnose dyslexia, called *The Aston Index* (Newton & Thomson 1976), and also a set of teaching materials aimed at remediating the condition, called *The Aston Portfolio*. Both packages were aimed at children aged from 5 to 14. This lecture was particularly fortunate for me because I found myself suddenly introduced, at a stroke as it were, to the whole world of dyslexic thinking, and to what I later discovered were virtually all of its recurrent preoccupations.

What struck me immediately, very much to my surprise, was that neither the tests nor the remedial materials seemed to have any obvious medical basis at all. In fact several of the activities appeared to have very little direct connection with literacy – activities like naming pictures of simple objects, drawing a man or a woman, or copying shapes such as circles and triangles. One test consisted of the (even then) outdated *Schonell Graded Word Reading Test* (1955), which could hardly be claimed as a startling new discovery. It seemed to me that if these really were the procedures involved in the diagnosis and remediation of dyslexia, then understanding it required no special medical expertise. Most of the ‘tests’ in *The Aston Index* were based on the kinds of activities that were commonplace in ordinary mainstream schools and, in the case of some (‘the child is instructed to write his/her name’, ‘letters of the alphabet must be named and sounded’), not only commonplace but dully traditional, especially considering that in the 1980s considerable efforts were being made to approach literacy teaching in more generic and less mechanistic ways.

From that time onwards (the early 1980s), as part of my own professional development in the field of literacy learning, I decided that I must study the dyslexia situation as much as I could, and if possible achieve a greater understanding of what was, for me, turning out to be a very mysterious area. So in subsequent years, when I had time, I read a range of books and papers on various aspects of dyslexia. In 1988 I joined the British Dyslexia Association (BDA), and at the same time became a
member of the Dyslexia Association of London (DAL), attending several of their meetings. I also enrolled on a number of related courses and conferences, one of which was an International Dyslexia Conference in York in 1997. In this way I gradually became conversant with much of the prevailing dyslexic orthodoxy and the typical beliefs of the dyslexic fraternity, most of which had in fact been mentioned by Newton during my initiation at Reading in 1982. I was also becoming increasingly aware of the persistent controversies that have dogged dyslexia during the last 100 or more years. It seemed a strange and contradictory condition and I found I was growing more and more sceptical about it. However, I did not really have time then to concentrate very fully on it. In particular, I never got as far as encountering anyone dyslexic and, as I was not dyslexic myself, and as no-one in my family was dyslexic (unlike the situation of almost all dyslexia researchers), I had no actual practical experience of it. My knowledge of the condition was all second-hand. I had encountered other people’s views and opinions certainly, and quite extensively, but I had not investigated the situation for myself.

The opportunity to do this presented itself in 2005, when I joined Sheffield University’s doctoral programme. Like all doctoral programmes, this requires participants to undertake planned research in a specific area of their own choosing. At first, however, I did not concern myself with any particular area of investigation, because I immediately realised that I needed to bring myself up to date on recent developments in research methodologies, since there have been many advances in recent years. This led to my becoming interested in the research methodology known as ‘ethnography’. This is a form of enquiry that has its roots in the classic researches of anthropologists of the early twentieth century, like Bronislaw Malinowski and Margaret Mead, who famously investigated the lives of South Sea islanders by living amongst them. Using various techniques of observation and communication, and by devising systems for recording and analysing what they found, they endeavoured to make sense of the alien cultures they were investigating. They did not usually have much knowledge of the situations they were in, but they did have the skills to investigate those situations. Ethnography is still associated with ‘fieldwork’ of this kind, that is, with observing, noting, collecting, and recording actions or artefacts that might contribute to a greater understanding of the unfamiliar situation being
investigated, but in the last 100 years the notion of ethnography has broadened and it is used in many modern and everyday settings, not just exotic ones. Nowadays virtually any section of a society or community can be studied ethnographically, like Judith Okely’s study of gypsies in southern England (Okely 1983), or Shirley Brice Heath’s investigation of language use in two US communities (Heath 1983).

To cut a long story short, I eventually decided that I would like to write an ethnography, but was undecided for some time on what area to explore. (Dyslexia was not, in fact, my first choice!) But in the end I decided that I would attempt an ethnographic investigation of certain aspects of dyslexia. Ethnographic enquiry, like all research methodologies, has certain ‘rules’ and procedures. Various aspects of the area under investigation have to be considered, and the whole eventually has to be written up in ‘thesis’ format, as follows:

**Ethnographic enquiry: the constituents of a thesis**

This involves several elements, though not necessarily in this order:

1) A declaration of one’s ‘positionality’ in respect of the area to be investigated.
2) A justification of the choice of this area: why is it necessary, relevant or important?
3) A ‘review of the literature’, that is, a consideration of any previous investigations undertaken by others. This would include anything significant that has happened so far, or anything that has been written about the area of investigation in books, papers, in the media, on the internet, in government pronouncements, etc.
4) The historical background of the area under investigation. (If this is not extensive, it could be incorporated into 2 above.)
5) An explanation of the theoretical framework that will underpin the enquiry.
6) Justification of the choice of ethnography as an appropriate research methodology and the framing of specific research questions.
7) A consideration of, and decisions about, how the situation might be investigated empirically, which will involve choices about: (a) settings, i.e.
where the investigation will take place and with whom; (b) data sources and methods of data collection.

8) A system for recording and analysing the collected data.

9) Outcomes, conclusions, results, or ‘findings’.

Over several years I explored, analysed and discussed critically all the above constituents, eventually writing up everything that I considered significant in a thesis that contained 244 pages, about 110,000 words, and included nine main chapters and nineteen appendices. Major aspects that I pursued or examined were:

- A justification of dyslexia as an appropriate area for investigation in the early twenty-first century
- An analysis of the many controversies that have dogged dyslexia for over 100 years, including the historical background or evolution of dyslexia
- My *modus operandi* for empirical investigation, including my selection of suitable research participants and research settings
- The constituents of my fieldwork, including the writing of fieldnotes and my system for analysis, which resulted in critical investigation of:
  - Dyslexia as a medical condition
  - Dyslexia and self-concept
  - Dyslexia certainty and confident expertise
  - Dyslexia *Weltanschauung*
  - Dyslexia and pedagogy
- Main Outcomes, Conclusions, Results and Findings. This part of my research, too extensive to discuss here, produced a number of surprising findings, never I believe hitherto mentioned or discussed critically.

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**References**

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for Life (The Bullock Report) London: HMSO.


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This short paper refers to:


An illustrated booklet entitled Dyslexia: Fish, Fowl or Beast, originally delivered as a paper at the UKLA Conference (Chester 2011), is available in hard copy, on CD, or can be sent electronically. For the two former I will need a conventional postal address to which to send. For the latter I will need an email address. The booklet explains more fully the circumstances that brought about the above thesis, and incorporates a condensed version of the thesis itself, reducing it to about a quarter or less of its original length. I believe it provides a reasonable reflection of the original but, if any serious researcher would like a copy of the full thesis, I can provide this too, also on CD. However, I cannot send this electronically, because it is too large, so I will need to have a conventional postal address for this.
Empowerment through Literacy: Literacy shaping futures

Powerful Knowledge in the Curriculum for Excellence
Rick Instrell

**Context**

It is possible to view the past half century in Scottish education as a dialogue between competing discourses. In the 1960s, secondary schooling was dominated by a *conservative* discourse in which teachers delivered apparently static and uncontested subject discipline content. The *progressive* discourse of constructivism rejected this model, placing the child at the centre and focused on how learners individually and socially construct their understandings. Progressivism in turn generated a reactionary ‘*back to basics*’ 3Rs discourse. The *educational technology* discourse, which has now transformed into the *digital generation* discourse, promised to solve the problems of progressivists and reactionaries alike, and became the dominant discourse within Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) resulting in the establishment of *Glow*, Scotland’s educational intranet. Another key force was the *vocational* discourse which impacted schools in the 1980s with the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) and the setting up of the Scottish Vocational Education Council (SCOTVEC). During the qualification design process, SCOTVEC officers often used the distinction between ‘need to know’ and ‘nice to know’ and this sometimes had the unfortunate consequence of diluting high-level educational aims down to measurable but impoverished learning outcomes and performance criteria.

**Curriculum for Excellence**

The ideas explored in this paper have been developed within the context of the Scottish Government’s curriculum development for 3-18 year-olds, grandly titled the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). It is claimed that CfE focuses on learners’ needs by
providing a coherent, more flexible and enriched curriculum which will lead to better quality learning and teaching and therefore increased attainment. CfE was designed to give freedom and responsibility to establishments as well as autonomy to teachers.

Mark Priestley and Walter Humes (2010) identify CfE as being typical of recent international trends in national curriculum development in that it involves both top-down prescription and bottom-up curriculum development. Such developments seek to maintain standards whilst giving teachers a degree of flexibility and autonomy.

The CfE initiative started in 2004 and its first year of implementation was 2010. It was a Scottish Labour project which was picked up by the Scottish National Party (SNP) when they came into power in 2007. Although conceived in time of plenty it has had a prolonged and painful labour in a time of scarcity. CfE demands substantial teacher input but many teachers have become demotivated through the deterioration of conditions of service, limited promotion prospects and attacks on pension rights. Despite this, CfE has been enthusiastically taken up in the primary sector. The response has been much more variable in the secondary sector with some schools and departments very keen, whilst others repeat the practices applied to other ‘innovations’: simply ticking the boxes in audit checklists and maintaining the status quo. CfE has a commitment to literacy and numeracy across learning but much of this is hampered in the secondary sector by ‘departmental silo’ thinking and separate departmental bases in schools. There is also a lack of interdisciplinary thinking within many of the subject-based committees of the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA).²

Media educationists, however, have welcomed the CfE document Literacy Across Learning (Scottish Government 2009) as it recognises the centrality of both monomodal and multimodal texts in the learning experience.

*Literacy Across Learning* includes a table of 35 text types which teachers might use in CfE implementation (Table 1).

² My ‘evidence’ for the claims in this paragraph is anecdotal rather than empirical and is based on numerous discussions with teachers in primary and secondary sectors as well as teachers/lecturers serving on SQA qualification design teams.
Table 1: Example of texts in ‘Literacy Across Learning’

And there the document ends! There is no advice on how such a policy might be implemented. There is no sense that there could be a set of disciplinary principles to guide such a process. There is no recognition of the complexity of creating and interpreting many of these text types, nor of the fact that teachers need training in this area.

This example demonstrates why many educationists, whilst agreeing with the CfE’s progressive aims, criticise its documents as vague, anti-intellectual and ignorant of subject disciplines.

Finding a Solution

In February 2011, AMES (Association for Media Education in Scotland) published a position paper *Breaking Barriers* (AMES, 2011) which tries to address some of the arising issues in the light of developments in the media (multimodality: Jewitt 2009; online participatory culture: Jenkins et al. 2006) and in thinking on literacy (New London Group 1996).
Multimodality should be a common concern for every curriculum area which involves communication in multiple modes. Increasingly pupils are being asked to use and produce complex multimodal products as part of the learning experience. Consequently all teachers need to have an idea of how to interpret and create such texts. As a corollary, assessment needs to shift from purely monomodal written responses to allowing learners, outside the examination hall at least, to be able to respond multimodally in a medium of their own choosing e.g. illustrated hyperlinked essay, multimedia presentation, video/audio podcast.

I believe that multimodal principles derived from linguistics allows a principled approach to multimodal teaching and assessment. Drawing inspiration from multimodal social semiotics (Jewitt 2009), critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995) and systemic functional linguistics (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004, Eggins 2007), the multimodal approach views all communication as involving the orchestration of modes in rhetorical structures to construct meaning in cohesive and engaging texts. I have already given a (hopefully) teacher-friendly account of these ideas (Instrell 2008, 2010) and it convinces me that it should be possible to develop common criteria for multimodal communicative performance in every curriculum area. An advantage of such a common approach is that it would help both teachers and learners bridge subject barriers.

SNP education minister Michael Russell is an advocate of media education, having worked in television and the media prior to establishing his own media company. Following discussions with the minister AMES has had very productive discussions with Learning and Teaching Scotland (now incorporated into Education Scotland) and SQA. Also, with the assistance of Scottish Screen (now incorporated into Creative Scotland), SQA has piloted a Scottish Survey of Literacy (primary 4, primary 7 and secondary 2) which will feature multimodal texts such as moving image as well as traditional monomodal texts. Scottish Screen’s Moving Image Education project has been successful in a number of schools and local authorities (Scottish Screen 2009). The Dundee-based Consolarium has implemented games-based learning in many schools (Miller and Robertson 2010). And recent CPD events for primary, secondary and teacher educators on games-based learning and 21stC literacy involved
over 300 educators from all sectors of Scottish education. Also Creative Scotland has commissioned a study on how to implement a programme of 21stC Literacy which should report by the end of 2011.

So far so good; but an even more important matter remains to be addressed. A common feature of the traditional, constructivist, ‘back to basics’, vocational and digital generation discourses is that they have inadequate conceptions of 1. the structures of different disciplines and how they develop, and 2. the intellectual skills needed to open up disciplines to learners. And despite its radical claims, I believe that the CfE is replicating these inadequacies.

This paper will argue that the deficiencies of CfE can be overcome by bringing subject disciplines centre stage. This is no reactionary move. What the paper proposes is that we need to transmit not just subject knowledge, but the key to acquiring that knowledge within each discipline, namely metacognition. Knowing that you know, and knowing how to know, are as important as the knowledge itself. And this requires an adjustment to the assessment procedures of SQA so that traditional performance assessment is complemented by metacognitive assessment which aims to measure the students’ awareness of their own learning processes.

To this end the paper will further argue that all curriculum designers would benefit from insights from educational linguistics, a hybrid field formed by fusing educational sociology and linguistics. The most potent ideas come from the combination of Basil Bernstein’s analysis of knowledge structures with concepts from Michael Halliday’s systemic functional linguistics.³

³ Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) is based on the work of Michael Halliday (Halliday & Mathiessen 2004; Eggins 2007). The term ‘systemic’ refers to the fact that language is a network of systems for making meaning. ‘Functional’ refers to the fact that language has evolved to fulfil three functions (Halliday describes them as ‘metafunctions’): ideational (what the text represents), interpersonal (the stance of the writer and how the text addresses the reader); textual (the flow and cohesion of the text). SFL has been combined with critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995) and multimodal social semiotics (Van Leeuwen 2005; Jewitt 2009; Kress 2010) in the theorisation of multimodality thus extending SFL’s reach to the full range of text types e.g. art (O’Toole 2010); mathematics and science (O’Halloran 2005, 2007); print, web and film (Baldry and Thibault 2005); sound (van Leeuwen 1999).
The paper will show how teaching high-level intellectual processes such as abstraction and metacognition can and should be included in curriculum and assessment design.

Few of CfE’s critics have actually suggested how to repair its obvious shortcomings. This paper is a constructive attempt to put academic disciplines and the pursuit of excellence back into the Scottish curriculum. It will address these questions:

- What is the best curriculum model for CfE?
- What theory of knowledge would best underpin CfE?
- What teaching approaches would be appropriate?
- How can these ideas be applied to curriculum subjects (in this case, English)?

**CURRICULUM MODELS**

**CfE Critique**

One correspondent to *The Herald* newspaper summed up many teachers’ feelings by describing CfE as “the most ill-conceived, ill-thought out, ill-described ragbag of empty verbiage and feel-good platitudes that I have encountered in 27 years of teaching”.

Academic critique has been thin on the ground apart from contributions from the Royal Society of Edinburgh (2008), Lindsay Paterson (2010), Mark Priestley and Walter Humes (2010). Paterson has described CfE as ‘anti-intellectual’ and ‘anti-knowledge’ in that its Outcomes are not grounded in the progressive structure of disciplines.

Priestley and Humes (2010) have based their critique on archetypal curriculum models as outlined in AV Kelly’s *The Curriculum: Theory and Practice* (Kelly 2009). Kelly outlines 3 canonical models:

- Content model: curriculum as content and education as transmission
- Objectives model: curriculum as product and education as instrument
- Process model: curriculum as process and education as development.
Kelly details the benefits and shortcomings of each model and his account will be familiar to teachers who have experienced all three. The archetypes are useful in that they provide a framework for analysing and critiquing curriculum developments.

The analysis also has a degree of sophistication in that particular developments can be viewed as hybrids of the canonical three. For example the Content and Objectives models can be combined to produce the Mastery model and the Objectives and Process models can be combined to produce the Outcomes model.

Despite the availability of such academic studies of the curriculum there is no acknowledgement in the official discourse of CfE documents of the historical and contested context of curriculum developments. Such dishonest anti-intellectualism has alienated many teachers who favour its progressive aims.

One would have thought that it would be essential that all involved in developing CfE should be aware of the conceptual and ideological differences between the Content, Objectives and Process models. As Kelly (2009: 114) says:

“The [content model] sees the role of content as central and finds the criteria of selection in the content itself – either its presumed intrinsic value or its usefulness. The objectives model places its aims and objectives first and offers these as the criteria for selecting content, suggesting that we select content which seems to be most likely to help us achieve our aims. The process model requires us to select that content which will promote the processes or forms of development which are its concern and to make such selection in the light of procedural principles derived from these.”

I wish to argue that, as the ideas of CfE are implemented within the new SQA National Qualifications, it will require an intellectual framework based on Kelly’s Content and Process models. An important feature of this Process model is metacognition which needs to be central to the learning experience across the curriculum.
Metacognition is an intellectual skill which, once learned, enables the lifelong development of higher order processing which can be applied in any field from car mechanics to quantum mechanics. As it is about the processing of disciplinary content, it seems natural to see metacognition as a hybrid of Kelly’s Content and Process models.

Let us examine metacognition further. It can be seen as having two related components: metacognitive knowledge (knowing about knowing) and metacognitive regulation (knowing how to know) (Lai 2011, Tarricone 2011).

Metacognitive knowledge can be encouraged by asking questions such as:

- “Do I understand this?”
- “How do I know I understand this?”
- “Can I communicate my understanding to myself and others in words, images and/or symbols?”
- “What is special (e.g. mathematical, scientific, aesthetic, social scientific, ethical, practical) about the way I am thinking?”

Metacognitive regulation can be encouraged by asking questions such as:

- “Do I understand this?”
- “If not what can I do about it?”
- “Can I communicate my current lack of understanding to myself and others in words, images and/or symbols?”
- “What actions or ways of thinking do I know (from this or other subjects) which might be helpful?”
There is a substantial body of evidence that metacognitive teaching and learning approaches benefit learners. Lai (2011) reviews evidence which uses the statistical method of calculating the mean effect\(^4\) between the experimental group (given the metacognitive training) and the control group.

Dignath et al. (2008) carried out a meta-analysis of 48 studies of the effect of metacognitive self-regulation and metacognitive strategies amongst primary level pupils. Training approaches that combined metacognitive methods with cognitive and motivational strategies respectively had mean effects of 0.97 and 0.8. This is equivalent to the average person (i.e. 13\(^{th}\)) in an experimental group of 25 being respectively 4\(^{th}\) and 6\(^{th}\) in the control groups. Similar results are obtained in other studies and meta-analyses so the research strongly suggests that this is a robust effect (Lai 2011).

Kelly’s models (plus the notion of metacognition) can therefore be represented as a Venn diagram (Figure 1).

\(^4\) The mean effect is given by the formula:

\[
\text{Mean effect} = \frac{\text{(mean score of the experimental group} - \text{mean score of the control group)}}{\text{standard deviation of the population}}
\]

As the standard deviation of the population is never known it has to be estimated from the samples. So the mean effect basically tells you how many standard deviations the experimental group scored above/below the control group. To get a sense of what the mean effect tells you, imagine 2 classes of 25 students each. A mean effect of 1.0 would be equivalent to the average person (i.e. 13\(^{th}\)) in the experimental group being 4\(^{th}\) in the control group. For a clear explanation of the mean effect in educational research see Coe 2002.
If we now map some Scottish educational developments and qualifications on to the curriculum Venn diagram it would seem that curriculum practices are generally moving in an anticlockwise direction round the diagram. As we enter school session 2011-2012, SQA is developing new qualifications for all curriculum areas which embody the developmental aims of CfE as well as engage with disciplinary and craft content. In my view this would be best achieved by aiming to transform subject teaching by the explicit teaching of metacognitive skills appropriate to each discipline/craft. The previous Venn diagram could now be amended to that in Figure 2.
I have no idea what the area in the middle of the Venn diagram represents other than the Holy Grail of the curriculum model that pleases everyone!

THEORIES OF KNOWLEDGE AND TEACHING APPROACHES

Powerful Knowledge

Schooling is the transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next. Most subject teachers have theories about how to transmit that knowledge – for example, constructivism – but have no theory of knowledge and so no real way to carry out a critical review of their specialism. Therefore a pessimistic prediction for the new SQA qualifications is that any changes will be cosmetic.

What is needed is a theory which allows us to consider what kind of knowledge should be in the curriculum and how it should be learned. CfE’s ‘outcomes and experiences’ give one account. What is needed though is a rationale that allows us to critique CfE and ensures that learners are exposed to critical disciplinary thinking which both motivates and fosters their intellectual development.

In my view the most promising development is the social realist analysis of subject disciplinarity which has evolved by fusing systemic functional linguistics with the sociology of education of Basil Bernstein and Michael Young.

So, what is knowledge? One approach to analysing knowledge structures is to use Basil Bernstein’s ideas. First Bernstein identifies two knowledge discourses:

1. **Horizontal discourse** which leads to practical mastery of common-sense knowledge e.g. everyday skills such as how to tie one’s shoe laces, how to use

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5 Social realism is a critique of relativist conceptions of knowledge. It holds that “knowledge is a social product and that it is fallible as a consequence, but that an objective reality exists and that the purpose of knowledge is to understand that objective reality” (Maton and Moore 2010: 97). The social realist sociology of education aims to place knowledge and its instantiation in pedagogic discourse as the central concern of education. Key social realist texts are Bhaskar (1989), Bernstein (1996, 1999), Muller (2000), Christie & Martin (2007), Young (2007, 2008), Moore (2009), Maton (2010), Maton and Moore (2010), Wheelahan (2010) and Christie & Maton (2011).
Facebook. Horizontal discourse is segmentally organised in that the knowledge is localised and activity-specific.

2. *Vertical discourse* which is essentially a written form and leads to symbolic mastery of school knowledge such as the sciences, social sciences and the humanities. Vertical discourse is not segmentally organised but hierarchically organised as in the sciences or as a series of paradigms as in the social sciences and humanities. It is uncommon-sense (think of modern physics!) which goes beyond everyday experience. Its acquisition generally requires schools and universities to construct appropriate content and pedagogy (Bernstein 1999).

Michael Young has called such vertical discourse ‘powerful knowledge’ and says:

“For children from disadvantaged homes, active participation in school may be the only opportunity that they have to acquire *powerful knowledge* and be able to move, intellectually at least, beyond their local and the particular circumstances. It does them no service to construct a curriculum around their experience (context-dependent knowledge) on the grounds that everyone’s experience is equally valid, at least for them; if schools do no more than validate the experience of the pupils, it can only leave them there.” (Young 2008: 15)

We as teachers all know that powerful knowledge resides in disciplines and crafts. However most of us realise that, in implementing SQA courses and meeting examination pass targets, our ideals degenerate into an inferior caricature of genuine learning. Assessment practices and over-assessment often reduce true understanding of subjects to rote memory of facts and routines quickly forgotten after pupils sit final examinations. Rather than subject learning having any intrinsic value to the individual it becomes a chore or at best a way of picking up university entrance tokens.
So what is required is an analysis of knowledge which lets us identify the qualities of powerful knowledge as well as an analysis of assessment practices which encourages deep rather than surface teaching and learning (Christie & Macken-Horarik 2007; Macken-Horarik & Christie 2011).

**Knowledge structures**

Bernstein (1999) says that vertical discourse has two principal variants of knowledge structure: the horizontal and the hierarchical. A discipline with a horizontal knowledge structure can be viewed as comprising a range of different ‘languages’ which may well be incommensurable or contradictory. Bernstein represents this as a list i.e. \( L_1, L_2, L_3, \ldots \). A good example of this is the subject English which in the school setting is struggling to cope with the claims of basic skills, cultural heritage, personal growth, functional language studies, media/cultural studies and new literacy studies.

A discipline with a vertical knowledge structure (e.g. physics) is able to create high-level general theories which explain a large range of lower level phenomena. Such a structure can be visualised as in Figure 3.

![Bernstein's visual metaphor for vertical knowledge structure](image)

*Figure 3: Bernstein’s visual metaphor for vertical knowledge structure*

The development of such a discipline can be viewed as a process of “sharpening the tip and broadening the base” (Maton and Muller 2007: 24). In the educational context one can also see that many topics covered have a common pedagogical goal: to sharpen learners’ understandings of specific concepts and to see how they apply (or fail to apply) to different contexts.
The social sciences can be seen as aspiring to the hierarchical and best represented as a series of competing triangles. Different sizes of triangle might represent the relative richness or dominance of particular paradigms (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Bernstein’s visual metaphor for horizontal discourses**

Development in a horizontal knowledge structure can be seen as adding to the range of perspectives available. We could now view disciplines as ranging between two extremes as in Figure 5.

**Figure 5: Comparative map of disciplinary knowledge structures (based on Martin 2011)**
Progress in Knowledge Structures

Knowledge structures are dynamic. So a question which arises is: why do disciplines progress and develop in different ways? Bernstein suggests two mechanisms. One is verticality – the development of ever more integrative general propositions – and this is best exemplified by subjects like astrophysics. But why has astrophysics developed a vertical structure whereas sociology has a horizontal structure?

One answer to this is the complexity of the object of study. A star may be massive but has a low degree of complexity. This means that it is relatively straightforward to refer to the empirical world to gain unambiguous evidence for or against astrophysical conjectures. Society, on the other hand, has a high degree of complexity and so the empirical evidence for conjectures is likely to be partial and ambiguous. Bernstein calls this feature ‘grammaticality’ but as this is likely to prove a confusing rather than illuminating term, I will use a more semantically congruent term corroborability to refer to the capacity of a discipline to generate convincing evidence.

Thus verticality and corroborability can be seen to be the motors of disciplinary progress. In the case of physics the ability to receive external corroboration for theories results in greater vertical integration. In the case of sociology the lack of, or partiality of, corroborative evidence leads to the discipline developing horizontally. Mathematics is interesting because, at academic level, its corroboration is internal rather than empirical. The history of mathematics has many examples where a piece of abstract theory is developed and internally corroborated before, many decades later, being used in science where it finds external corroboration (O’Halloran, 2007).

Applying Linguistics to Knowledge Acquisition

What are the processes which produce verticality in both hierarchical and vertical discourses? One that has been identified is Michael Halliday’s notion of grammatical metaphor (Halliday 1993). In everyday language there is generally a match (or congruence) between grammar and semantics as shown in Table 2.
In grammatical metaphor there is a mismatch between the part of speech and its semantic referent. One type of grammatical metaphor is *nominalisation* in which we find not only participants, but also processes, qualities and logical relations expressed as nouns (Table 3). The process of nominalisation is a key process in abstract discourse and is often achieved in language by the use of common suffixes. For example the verb ‘measure’ is nominalised as *measuring* or *measurement* or *mensuration*.

**Table 2: Congruent grammar**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semantic referent</th>
<th>Part of speech</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>Adjective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logical relation</td>
<td>Conjunction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3: Nominalisation as incongruent grammar**

Nominalisation has the effect of being able to simplify grammatical expression by reducing the number of clauses whilst at the same time packing meaning into lexically dense groups.
For example, a pupil might describe an action in a science lesson as follows: “I heated the gas and its volume expanded by 10 ml”. In scientific discourse this might be written as “Heating led to a gas volume expansion of 10 ml”. Note the reduction in number of clauses and conjunctions and the use of lexically dense noun phrases such as “a gas volume expansion of 10ml”. As befits the alleged objectivity of scientific observation, human agency has been removed in the scientific version.

For many pupils, such nominalisation is a major barrier to understanding. Ask any teacher who tries to get an S2 class to understand the verbal statement of Pythagoras’ theorem: “The square on the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is equal to the sum of the squares on the other two sides.” Pupils of this age are much more likely to understand Pythagoras by instructions like “In all right-angled triangles (longest side) x (longest side) = (side 1) x (side 1) + (side 2) x (side 2)” with an accompanying diagram.

In science and mathematics, everyday experience is mapped on to a grammatical metaphor which is then symbolised. For example the related adjectives ‘cold’, ‘warm’, ‘hot’ are nominalised as ‘temperature’, symbolised as $T$ and then mapped on to a linear scale. The concept has moved vertically from the fuzzy categorical imprecision of language to becoming a quantifiable continuous quantity capable of precise experimental measurement and of combination with other abstractions such as time $t$ (see Figure 6).
Temperature can be combined with other abstractions such as pressure \((P)\) and volume \((V)\). These multiple abstractions can then be combined and magically condensed in mathematical formulae such as Charles’ Law \((V/T=k\) where \(k\) is a constant).

Note the multimodal nature of this process: it moves from embodied experience through to language, symbolic and visual modes. Also note how the vertical trajectory of abstraction gives a concept a dynamism which then allows us to think deeply, dynamically and relationally. It is abstraction that allows thought to take flight.

If the abstraction involves an \textit{upwards} trajectory from embodied experience through different modes towards symbolisation, then \textit{metacognition} involves thinking in a \textit{downwards} direction. Thus to form a deep understanding of a formula such as Charles’ Law means not just verifying by experiment, but understanding it in different modes and at different levels of abstraction:
symbolically: inspecting the formula and seeing that it implies that an increase of temperature will lead to an increase in volume.

- visually: in one’s mind’s eye visualising the kinetic model of gas molecules gaining energy by heating, causing the molecules to spread out, thus increasing volume and decreasing density.

- linguistically: explaining it to yourself in words.

- embodied experience: realising that this explains everyday knowledge, for example, how hot air balloons work.

Thus, in science, metacognition, whose goal is internal intellectual corroboration, works hand-in-hand with external experimental corroboration.

Explicit metacognitive teaching should be a standard part of any teacher’s repertoire at all stages of education. As an example imagine asking primary pupils to show why 5 x 3 = 15. A pupil with metacognitive understanding can arrange blocks into 5 rows of 3, show that it is the same as 3 rows of 5, then split off ten leaving five singles which we write as 15 because that means 1 bundle of ten and 5 units. This simple exercise shows an understanding of the commutative nature of multiplication as well as of place value. This is way beyond mere rote memorising of ‘five times three is fifteen’.

Martin and Halliday (1999) have analysed scientific language and identified seven difficulties which block learners’ progress in both science and mathematics:

1. interlocking definitions (e.g. the relationship between terms like circle, centre, radius, diameter, circumference)
2. technical taxonomies (e.g. being able to distinguish between two types of relationship: member-class (‘a is a kind of b’) and part-whole (‘a is a part of b’))
3. special expressions (e.g. ‘A function $f$ is defined on the set of real numbers by $f(x) = 4x + 3$’)
4. lexical density (e.g. ‘the atomic nucleus absorbs and emits energy in quanta’)
5. syntactic ambiguity (e.g. words such as ‘associated’ could be causal or correlational)
6. grammatical metaphor (e.g. nominalisation as previously discussed)
7. semantic discontinuity (i.e. leaps in reasoning).

Note how a little bit of linguistic and multimodal theory has the power to illuminate how we humans think and reason. It has rendered what is generally implicit, explicit. It has enabled us to go well beyond the CfE Literacy Across Learning document (Scottish Government 2009) and shows what could be done if we injected a few basic linguistics concepts into our teaching.

As an aside, nominalisation is a key concept in understanding how language can be used ideologically to conceal full meaning. Thus, in politics, a noun phrase such as ‘efficiency savings in education’ actually means cuts in financial resources and job losses for educators. Nominalising this process as ‘efficiency savings’ also allows one to form sentences where the agent of the process becomes ‘efficiency savings’ rather than actual politicians and managers. A recent example of a politician trying to obscure agency occurred when disgraced Defence Secretary Liam Fox said “Serious mistakes were made”. This example of the rhetorical device of non-apology apology suggests that an understanding of grammatical metaphor is also a key skill for critical citizenship.
**Implications for Assessment**

Metacognition is evidently related to critical thinking as both involve evaluating whether ideas make sense. Metacognition essentially relates to one’s own thinking whereas critical thinking links to the thinking of others. Hence if the learners are capable of thinking about their own thinking they should equally be able to critique the thinking of others. Metacognitive assessment is often rejected because of its complexity and the fact that it is not directly observable. However the link between metacognition and critical thinking suggests that we should be able to measure it by utilising test instruments which require critical thinking.

One way to do this in any domain is to present examinees with examples of flawed communication, methodology, argument or conclusion and ask them to give a reasoned critique.

Of course, traditional performance testing will still be necessary. But what I am calling for is that metacognition and critical thinking to be given greater emphasis in teaching and assessment.

How this is implemented will depend on the subject involved. For example, consider the above discussion of abstraction and metacognition in science. What it suggests is that it is not enough to require pupils to substitute numbers into a scientific formula and calculate a result. That can be done by having no understanding of the underlying physical processes. To test depth of knowledge you need to design questions which ask pupils to demonstrate they can move up or down the abstraction chain and express their understanding multimodally in symbols, images and words. With regard to words, Martin and Halliday’s 1999 study suggests that other types of question should require pupils to ‘unpack’ lexically dense phrases and explain grammatical metaphors.
APPLICATION TO CURRICULUM DESIGN

Subject Structures
Curriculum designers recontextualize discipline knowledge structures as subject structures. Discipline knowledge structures range from the vertical to the horizontal. But if subject structures are to encourage deep and critical metacognitive learning rather than segmented rote learning (alas most learners’ preferred mode) they should be structured vertically rather than horizontally.

One way of introducing verticality into curriculum structures is to identify abstract principles or themes which are common to separate topics within one subject (subject themes) or across several or all subjects in the curriculum (interdisciplinary themes). We can use Bernstein’s triangle to picture this. For example we might use energy as a concept which unites the traditional sciences (Figure 7).

![Figure 7: Energy as an example of an interdisciplinary theme](image)
An example of the use of themes can be found in the current SQA *Arrangements for Higher Media Studies* (2004) where key aspects (Categories, Language, Narrative, Representation, Institution, Audience) are used to link the analytical and production units. Learners are expected to use the key aspects to critically analyse texts as well as review and refine their own production work. In assessment the highest marks are awarded to pupils whose analysis or production shows integration of several or all of the key aspects. This is a prime example of verticality in a subject based on a social science discipline with a horizontal structure.

The notion of themes is of course related to Bruner’s notion of the *spiral curriculum* (Bruner 1960). Such themes form a spiral backbone to courses in that they will be constantly revisited and deepened as learners cover diverse course topics. The themes become the ‘glue’ which holds the whole course together and enables teachers and learners to adopt a deep approach.

*To sum up, if we wish to reconnect CfE to subject disciplines we need to consider the following:*

- the knowledge structures of disciplines
- appropriate subject structures which have built-in verticality
- subject themes which are common to all or most topics within a subject
- interdisciplinary themes which are common to many or all subjects e.g. multimodal literacy, abstraction, metacognition
- a congruent hierarchical assessment taxonomy which promotes skills and abstract/metacognitive/critical thinking.

Such an analysis would produce powerful knowledge. Let us now consider how to apply it to subject English.

**Subject English**

As subject English is primarily concerned with language development it should be based on the discipline of linguistics. Linguistics is of course a highly contested field of competing paradigms. My belief is that multimodal social semiotics based on
systemic functional linguistics provides the most comprehensive theoretical base for subject English because it models both monomodal and multimodal communication. However the current *Arrangements for Higher English* (SQA 2010) seem not to have advanced beyond the linguistics of the 1970s. Thus we have mention of register and genre but none of powerful concepts developed by Halliday (1993), Gunter Kress (2010) and Theo van Leeuwen (2005) since then.

Another ground-breaking study is Lakoff and Johnson’s *Metaphors We Live By* (1980, 2003) which shows that metaphor is not just a literary device but an all-pervasive feature of human language and thought. Thus the conceptual metaphor POLITICS is WAR is repeated endlessly in the media, even embedding itself in the very structure of the House of Commons debating chamber. Alas the *Arrangements for Higher English* (SQA 2010) do not mention the term metaphor!

Another key term missing from the Higher English Arrangements is discourse. There is a mention of ‘ideological’ but none of ‘ideology’ or ‘discourse’. As Catherine Belsey (2002: 4) says, “Ideology is inscribed in discourse in that it is literally written or spoken in it” so it is difficult to see how one can critically analyse or reflexively construct a communication without using such concepts.

In Figure 5, the discipline of English was depicted as a series of incommensurable ‘languages’ L₁, L₂, L₃, L₄, ... . This suggests that there is no connection between them which of course is far from the truth. The different ‘languages’ are in fact different perspectives on what constitutes subject English and they exist in a dialogic relation to one another. Each perspective has partial corroborability with what it means to communicate in the English language.

To restore intellectual credibility to subject English we need to explore the range of available models. Christie and Macken-Horarik (2007) identify six perspectives. They are (in historical order) basic skills, cultural heritage, personal growth, functional language studies, cultural analysis/multiliteracies, new literacy studies. In Table 4, to make their analysis more congruent with Scottish terminology, I have renamed the last three functional literacy, multimodal literacy and 21st century literacy.
### Table 4: Six perspectives on subject English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perspective (19C-21C)</th>
<th>Basic Skills</th>
<th>Cultural Heritage</th>
<th>Personal Growth</th>
<th>Functional Literacy</th>
<th>Multimodal Literacy</th>
<th>21st C Literacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Object of study</strong></td>
<td>Language as spelling, phonics, grammar.</td>
<td>Language as art.</td>
<td>Language as a means of personal expression.</td>
<td>Languages as systems which enable orchestration of modal elements (words, images, audio, ...) into cohesive wholes to fulfil communicatio n; genre.</td>
<td>Languages as a set of diverse systems of communicatio n with meaning spread across texts &amp; in constant dialogue &amp; flux.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Reading/writing practices** | Reading & writing as accuracy. | Reading as personal or more abstract response to canonical texts. Writing as emulation of canonical texts. | Writing as self-discovery; Reading as sensitive personal response to texts. | Writing as the selection of appropriate register & genre for the context; writing as orchestration of elements into cohesive wholes which engage reader & achieve purposes. Reading as critical evaluation of effectiveness of text in achieving its purposes. | As left but applied to multimodal texts & monomodal texts. Design as a key element in the planning of digital texts. Reading as critical evaluation of effectiveness of text in achieving its purposes. | Reading & writing for personal expression, socialising, connecting to interpretive, social activist & creative communities. |

A holistic reading of Table 4 is that cultural heritage, multimodal literacy and 21st century literacy are the contexts within which basic skills, personal growth and functional literacy are developed. At the same time, subject English needs to develop
the language skills which foster pupils’ intellectual development and ease their understanding of the abstractions in other disciplines.

Developing monomodal and multimodal literacy is an iterative (or spiral) process of revisiting pupils' textual knowledge bases and expanding these resources via the encounter with an ever wider range of increasingly complex texts.

A useful heuristic device for the discussing and planning of course structures is a subject structure table. With the linear text arrangement of SQA arrangements documents it is often difficult to discern subject or teaching structures. Subject structure tables are designed to represent a holistic view of a subject in a compact form so that the ‘gist’ of a subject and its cognitive demands are quickly conveyed to both teacher and learner.

Table 5 is a subject structure table whose purpose is to stimulate and share ideas about the revision of Higher English. The table has the following sections:

- interdisciplinary themes which could be shared with, for example, mathematics, the sciences, history, geography and media
- subject themes: e.g. rhetorical structures and devices, communication functions, language structures
- perspectives: English language development, multimodal language development, contexts
- course content outlined under each perspective
- the learner’s initial knowledge base.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECT: HIGHER ENGLISH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTERDISCIPLINARY THEMES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUBJECT THEMES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERSPECTIVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCEPTS/CONTENT/ACTIVITIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**INITIAL KNOWLEDGE BASE**

| Using & creating a range of monomodal texts for personal expression & other purposes. | Using & creating a range of multimodal texts for personal expression & other purposes. | Reading, writing, listening, talking, interacting & creating using a range of age-appropriate & self-selected monomodal & multimodal texts. |
| Congruent grammar (e.g. nouns for objects, verbs for actions). | Reading, writing, listening, talking about multimodal texts. | |
| Basic skills of writing, grammar & spelling. | |

**Table 5: Possible subject structure table for subject English**

**Assessment in Subject English**

Just as the social sciences can be seen as having a horizontal set of competing perspectives, so assessment can be viewed in the same way. Most of the perspectives have a vertical structure to model skills and intellectual development. There will be differing views on the corroborability of the model according to one’s own subject and role (teacher, examiner, SQA officer).

The dominant paradigm within SQA seems to be Bloom’s taxonomy (Bloom, 1956) but I believe it is important that SQA qualification design teams consider other models. For example, Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) have revised Bloom’s taxonomy and placed creativity at the top – very attractive to teachers of English, media and expressive arts! I have added the SOLO taxonomy (Structure of Observed Learning Outcomes: Biggs and Collis 1982) as it is often used in academic assessment and has some similarities with SQA Media Studies assessment criteria.

A major development in assessment is the move from purely monomodal assessment to a mixture of monomodal and multimodal assessment. If we are to integrate assessment across both classes of text, as well as give pupils explicit guidance on the analysis and production of the texts, we need a common set of principles to guide us.
In my opinion the discipline of SFL provides a set of such principles (Macken-Horarik and Christie 2011).

It seems to me that we need therefore to consider the following perspectives on assessment:

- Bloom’s taxonomy
- Anderson and Krathwohl’s revision of Bloom’s taxonomy
- SOLO taxonomy
- Multimodal perspective on assessment
- SQA assessment criteria for subject English (SQA 2011).

Again I find it useful to construct a table which might allow us to critically review assessment in subject English.
## ASSESSMENT MODELS & ENGLISH

### QUALITY ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practicability</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
<th>Validity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking/metacognition</td>
<td>Performance authenticity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PERSPECTIVE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bloom (nouns)</th>
<th>Revised Bloom (verbs)</th>
<th>SOLO</th>
<th>Subject English from multimodal perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Evaluation</td>
<td>1. Create</td>
<td>1. Extended abstract (generalisation of knowledge into new domain)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Synthesis</td>
<td>2. Evaluate</td>
<td>2. Relational (aspects of knowledge integrated into a structure)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Analysis</td>
<td>3. Analyze</td>
<td>3. Multistructural (several relevant aspects known)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Comprehension</td>
<td>5. Understand</td>
<td>5. Pre-structural (incompetent)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Knowledge</td>
<td>6. Remember</td>
<td>Creation of an extended critical analysis or evaluated &amp; refined design &amp; production which shows emergent control of modal &amp; intermodal interactions used to fulfil rhetorical purposes (ideational, interpersonal, textual).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(N.B. These are realised via:

1. Rhetorical structure:
   - Discourse (i.e. reflecting personal &/or identifiable ideological perspectives)
   - Generic structure & conventions (& appropriate deviations from these e.g. breaking ‘rules’; generic hybrids)
   - Design.
2. Rhetorical devices:
   - Use of modes & intermodal interaction
   - Use of abstraction &
Table 5: Possible assessment models

Now compare the entries in Table 5 with Figure 8 which shows the marking criteria for the highest level of performance in the Higher English folio (SQA 2011).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category 1 (25 marks):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A sophisticated and stylish piece of writing in which the content is particularly well selected and shows qualities of insight/imagination/sophisticated thought. The structure is highly appropriate and there is skilful organisation which significantly enhances the overall impact of the writing. Expression is concise and effective. Word choice is consistently apposite, and sentence structures are skilfully varied to achieve effects. Techniques associated with the genre are used very effectively.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Imaginative** writing in this category will be characterised by a strong sense that the writer has command of and insight into the genre and is skilfully introducing and developing thematic concerns; the writing has flair and individuality which permeate the ideas and use of language.

**Personal/Reflective** writing in this category will be characterised by a strong sense of mature reflection; the writer’s personality and individuality permeate the ideas and use of language.

**Discursive** writing in this category will, as appropriate to the specific genre and purpose, be characterised by a strong sense of engagement with the ideas/issues and a sophisticated understanding of them; the line of thought is subtle and sustained; as appropriate, the writer’s stance permeates the ideas and use of language.

Figure 8: Extract from 2011 SQA Higher English folio marking instructions
In Table 6 I have matched descriptions in Figure 8 with the right-hand column of Table 5. Some of the descriptions could of course be placed in more than one category. Unsurprisingly there is a match between the two as they are just different perspectives on the same empirical phenomena.

| Metacognition/critical thinking | “a strong sense of engagement with the ideas/issues”
|                               | “shows qualities of insight/imagination/sophisticated thought”
|                               | “sophisticated understanding of [ideas/issues]”
| Abstraction                    | “Expression is concise and effective”
|                               | “Techniques associated with the genre are used very effectively”
|                               | “developing thematic concerns”
|                               | “line of thought is subtle”
| Textual function (i.e. composition and textual cohesion) | “the writer’s personality and individuality permeate the ideas and use of language”
|                               | “The structure is highly appropriate and there is skilful organisation”
|                               | “Word choice is consistently apposite”
|                               | “the writing has flair and individuality which permeate the ideas and use of language”
|                               | “the writer’s stance permeates the ideas and use of language”
| Interpersonal function (i.e. personal stance and impact) | “[structure/organisation] significantly enhances the overall impact of the writing”
|                               | “sentence structures are skilfully varied to achieve effects”
|                               | “the writing has flair”
|                               | “the writer’s stance permeates the ideas”
| Ideational function (i.e. information, ideas, experience) | “content is particularly well selected”
|                               | “the line of thought is [...] sustained”

Table 6: Matching SQA marking criteria with multimodal criteria

What is powerful about the more systematic multimodal approach to English assessment is that it covers both monomodal and multimodal texts. This should have a positive backwash effect on teaching. Because as teacher and pupil spiral through contexts (for example: critical analysis of Macbeth, Irn-Bru ads or opinion blogs;
scripting and creating audio podcasts and video ads; writing movie blogs) it will be necessary to demonstrate that effective and impactful communication has the same underlying principles whatever the medium and genre.

**CONCLUSION**

It seems evident to me that one way to save CfE from its surface approach is to infuse the new SQA qualifications with some disciplinary rigour and depth. Such an approach may help to restore credibility in CfE for many secondary teachers. I believe I have shown how linguistics can be useful within and across subjects, and have focused on subject English. The same analysis can be applied to any subject, but teachers need help in this area. A positive development for Scottish education would be to set up a university-based educational linguistics department to work alongside Education Scotland, SQA and teachers/lecturers.

In conclusion, here are ten questions which qualification design teams and departments could usefully pose about their subject:

1. What are the current problems in the delivery and reception of the subject?
2. What is the knowledge structure of the discipline?
3. How does knowledge develop in the discipline?
4. Which parts of the knowledge structure are appropriate for the learner in the 21st century?
5. What is the knowledge base for the subject?
6. What abstractions and metacognitive skills are required to progress from that knowledge base?
7. What subject themes would cohere the subject?
8. What interdisciplinary themes would cohere the subject?
9. What is an appropriate subject structure?
10. What assessment practices will support both skills development and deep metacognitive learning in the subject?
REFERENCES


**About the author**

Rick Instrell has taught mathematics, computing and film/media studies in secondary school and continuing education. He is a freelance media literacy consultant and CPD provider. He serves on the management committee of the Association for Media Education in Scotland (AMES).
Exploring Alternative Pedagogical Approaches to Children’s Literacy in India
Elisabeth Lee, University of Hertfordshire

Abstract
The Indian education system is currently characterised by didactic teaching, learning by rote and rigidly following state government text books. However currently there is a drive within the Indian academia and the National government, to move towards a more interactive, socially constructivist approach to teaching. This paper presents findings from on-going research which seeks to explore the extent to which drama and other creative approaches to reading and writing could be introduced into the Indian context. This project outlines findings from the first stage of the research, which took place over a two year period and involved several short visits to India, working with student teachers and lecturers in Delhi and Mumbai. This paper describes the positive response of the students to these new approaches but also the difficulties the students found when trying to implement these approaches in Indian classrooms. It concludes with the author identifying some of the current barriers to change in the current Indian system and suggests some possible ways forward.

Key Words: drama, social constructivism, change, creative pedagogies, children’s literature, culture and pedagogy, dialogue, interaction, India

Introduction
This research grew out of an initial exploratory trip to Kolkata where there was an opportunity to visit state, slum and private schools, as well as to give some workshops to teachers on more creative approaches to teaching reading and writing. Contacts were made on this trip, which lead to five more trips to Delhi and Mumbai, to work with ITE lecturers and student teachers. These visits helped the author gain greater understanding of the complex Indian education system, which consists of different types of private schools, as well as NGO run, business funded, slum and state schools.
Class sizes can be as large as 100 and even private schools can have class sizes up to 50 pupils. There is a pedagogy and culture of didactic teaching, learning by rote and rigidly following set text books, with little opportunity for creative teaching (Alexander, 2000). Schools are poorly resourced, lacking items such as up to date children’s literature and the learning environment can be rather an austere one. Even in the private school visited, the play area in the nursery featured a rather dilapidated Wendy House, (see picture below) but no role play area for example.

Private School Kolkata

There were also enormous differences in the size and facilities of the classrooms of the private school compared to the NGO run slum school that was visited. At the private school there were neat uniforms, desks, new exercise books and well produced text books. By contrast, at the slum school, the children were taught altogether in one room, with all ages mixed together. There was no furniture and the children had to eat whilst sitting on the floor (see picture below). Despite this, huge efforts were clearly being made to create a visually interesting learning environment, with very limited resources.
Alternatives to the class comprehension exercise

Despite the current concern in Indian academic and government circles to introduce a more socially constructivist pedagogy, it became apparent at a conference attended in Delhi 2010 that there currently seem to be few models of what this might look like in practice. This lead to the focus of the research being the introduction of a range of drama techniques and other ways of responding to story, and exploring whether they
could be adapted to the Indian context. It was hoped that this would broaden the teaching repertoire from one based solely on whole classes working through comprehension exercises.

Drama was one of the key strategies introduced to student teachers in Delhi and Mumbai, because it was apparent that other than role play, few other drama techniques appear to be known about in India. The drama techniques introduced are usually referred to as process drama (O’Neill, 1995). Drama was introduced because it is a multi-sensory and motivating way of engaging children with stories and also supports the development of empathy and an affective response to characters in stories. Drama also develops the imagination and encourages children to learn actively, through dialogue and negotiation with each other and therefore provides a very good example of social constructivism in practice (Cremin and Pickard, 2009; Grainger et al. 2005).

Writing in role was introduced following the drama techniques of freeze frame and thought tracking. The aim was to show how this can be a very motivating way to support writing, because writing in role sustains the emotional engagement created by the drama activities. It also helps children to see events from different viewpoints and to write in a different voice (Barrs and Cork, 2001; Bunting et al., 2005, Grainger 2004). Talk and social interaction is currently not encouraged in Indian classrooms, so talk partners and ‘Tell Me’ questions (Chambers, 1993) were introduced, to illustrate how to support children to reflect on their reading and to develop extended dialogue, so encouraging a sociocultural approach in the classroom (Mercer and Littleton, 2007).

Other ways of responding to story were introduced such as retelling stories and story maps to support children’s understanding of story structure and ability to tell a story in their own words (Bunting et al., 2005). Students were also asked to create emotion graphs and to make small books as a means of helping children to understand stories and to support their own writing.

**Student Responses to the strategies**
In both Delhi and Mumbai the lecturers and students responded very positively to the approaches. For logistical reasons, the structure of the sessions in both cities was very different. In Delhi, the approaches were introduced over several days in November 2010 to 30 students. There was a follow up visit for feedback in May 2011 to investigate how the approaches had worked in the schools. In Mumbai, the work consisted of two one hour sessions, one in November 2010 and one in March 2011, with a much larger group of over 100 students.

In Delhi, the students immediately included some of the strategies into their planning to use in their placement schools the following week. At the tutor’s request, western children’s literature was shared and left with the students, since the range of children’s literature available in India is somewhat limited compared to the west. Complex picture books such as those written by Anthony Brown or, Lauren Child are not available and there appear to be no Indian equivalents. The students were keen to read and borrow the children’s books and teacher resource books, which were left to support them to plan work for school placement. They responded particularly well to Beegu (Deacon, 2004) and resourcefully they created their own versions of the book to take into schools.

In Mumbai, introducing drama with over 100 students was difficult, but it provided possible solutions to introducing such interactive approaches with large class sizes. The use of culturally relevant material, such as Madhur Jaffrey’s version of Rama and Sita (1995), had a notable impact on engaging the students with the drama. Hot seating was carried out in threes with the students in their seats, whilst activities such as conscience alley, freeze frame and thought tracking were carried out with a few willing students at the front of the room, who modelled these approaches to the other students. Although only a few students were directly involved in this activity, all the students managed to write a letter in role, in English, after watching their colleagues carry out thought tracking around an extract from Private Peaceful (Morpurgo, 2004).

To my love, dear, this may be my last letter to you. The conditions on the front are severe. But I hope the war ends soon. I hope no more lives are lost further. I hope that no more children become orphans, no women a widow
and nor mothers should cry at the loss of their son. I want to see the rising sun each day and so do others in the war. Hope to see you soon.’

All the students were asked to give their thoughts on whether these approaches would work in the Indian context. Many thought that drama would help children remember new learning for longer and that learning would be easier, more interesting and enjoyable. Some thought it would help develop critical thinking and that it encouraged active and interactive learning, rather than learning passively through text books and listening to a teacher.

‘Instead of just mugging up things, they can learn by doing. It can make the classroom more interesting.’

‘And surely this will help in my teaching as it will not only help to my students to express themselves but also help them to discover new ideas and think critically.’

There were also a number of comments on the power of drama to build relationships between children and with the teacher. They found focussing on emotions helped their own writing and thought that drama would help children to express themselves and develop empathy. There were also interesting links made with the impact on pupils’ behaviour and how drama could be used across the curriculum.

‘For sensitive subjects like gender or race discrimination, religion can be taught by this method. It will give sympathy and empathy in pupils’ attitude. There imagination, intelligence might increase. It will give some relief from their education regular hectic periods. It will make pupils attentive in class.’

There were however some reservations about barriers to implementing these approaches: the large class sizes; the old and limited availability of suitable texts to base work around and the restrictions on the curriculum imposed by the regional state boards.

Impact of the approaches in schools in Delhi
Despite their enthusiasm and understanding of the potential of these approaches, the students encountered a number of difficulties in the classrooms of their placement schools. The children themselves were very resistant to the drama, which they found ‘embarrassing’ and they had a lot of difficulty in empathising with the characters. One of the students tried to model thought tracking by writing a frame on the board ‘this makes me feel .....’, but all the children simply copied the emotion suggested by the student teacher, rather than thinking of one for themselves.

The students’ tutor suggested that this is due to a number of pedagogical, social and cultural factors. Pupils in India are conditioned to learn by rote and are not used to think about emotions. Most questions are literal and do not encourage children to infer or to develop their own opinions. Furthermore the parents of many of the children in the state schools are illiterate, so they are unused to a culture of reading. There were also institutional barriers such as teachers not allowing the students to move desks for group work, so discouraging interaction and dialogue. A further barrier to change is the ‘tyranny of the text book’ (Kumar, as cited, Alexander, 2000, p 97). Schools have to rigidly follow text books, which leaves little time or freedom to introduce more interactive and creative approaches to learning.

**Reflections and possible ways forward**

It would seem that there are **four key barriers** that can be identified from this research to date. These are:

- There are **material barriers** of class size and limited resources such as quality children’s literature. However, there appear to be ways to introduce drama to large classes and the students were very resourceful and able to make a lot of their own resources.

- The **current macro pedagogy** and culture in India is a further barrier. However, at a student level, there is genuine enthusiasm and understanding of the potential value of these different strategies, so focussing on initial teacher education would seem to be a potential way to bring about change.

- The third barrier is the **established teaching culture and pedagogy** of the schools, which also impacts on the culture, expectations and openness of
the children. At present this is preventing the enthusiastic response of the students to translate into any real impact in the schools.

- A further barrier is the schools’ current lack of freedom to move away from a **reliance on text books**. Without changes at this level, it could be difficult to bring about meaningful change.

From the results so far, it would seem that this type of intervention would need more funding to support students for a longer period of time, whilst on placement. However, one of the main barriers to change appears to be the current culture and pedagogy of the teachers and schools. Therefore involving teachers in the workshops alongside the students would seem to be essential for this type of intervention to have any impact in the future.

**References**


**Children’s Books**


Empowerment through Literacy: Literacy shaping futures

Teaching Creative Writing in the Primary School: An exploratory study
Associate Professor Robyn Cox, Australian Catholic University, Australia
Julie Maclusky, University of Worcester

Abstract

This paper will build on work done by Maclusky and Cox (2011) that explores creative writing exercises in the current primary English classroom. By theorising the primary classroom as a ‘creative space’ aligned to notions of ‘creative industries’ a series of classroom exercises where trialled in five primary classrooms in England.

Notions of creativity have long held a place of importance in Education and the links between the curriculum and its ability to either support or stifle creativity have once again engaged theorists and writers. This paper seeks to offer insight into creativity in the primary writing classroom by presenting the findings of a study into the implementation of the lessons presented in the book Teaching Creative Writing in the classroom: Delight, entice, inspire.

The study involves classroom observations and interviews with pupils and teachers. The analysis of the findings seeks to explore the efficacy of the classroom as a ‘creative space’ and to more importantly ascertain the strength of the belief of the researchers that lessons of this type can flourish in a curriculum context where teachers need to provide outcome data for system wide scrutiny.
Introduction

Written language holds a special place in the process of communication. Its formality offers a standard that society values. This standard is closely monitored by society and it is common to see comments written in letters to the Editor of major newspapers commenting on the suitability of the written English usage of one of the paper’s journalists. Writing also has a special status which comes mainly from its ability to be permanent; written formulations such as contracts and agreements which are legally binding are written.

It has long been a primary responsibility of the school to produce pupils who are able to write effectively. But at times this ‘adult view’ of effective writing coupled with an outcomes driven curriculum across many national educational systems has resulted in a writing curriculum which has lost its focus on creativity and resulted with lessons being taught which ask writers to produce texts which contain evidence that can be securely matched with outcome statements.

An unexpected collaborative partnership between two scholars, an ex-primary school teacher who is now a university researcher and a creative writing teacher who is now a university lecturer produced a powerful synergy which ultimately led to the development of a set of writing exercises which aimed to put the creativity back into a writing curriculum which seems to have lost its way.

The recently published Teaching Creative Writing in the Primary Classroom: Delight, Entice, Inspire (Maclusky and Cox, 2011) has taken selected elements of creative writing exercises which are in common use in adult creative writing programmes throughout the world and adapted these for use in primary classrooms. This adaption was developed in partnership and has resulted in an exciting model of teaching creative writing embedded in a robust theoretical framework of teaching writing in the primary school and a deep understanding of the Primary National Strategy in Literacy (UK).

The authors were determined that this book was not published and left “to find its own way in the world”, we wanted to support teachers in the use of this book in their classrooms by offering teacher workshops and also to undertake some well planned data collection in primary classrooms as a way of evaluating its impact on the teaching of writing and its ability to entice child writers.
The following paper gives: a brief introduction to the literature; the research aims, research design and methodological decision; results and findings and then the conclusions from this preliminary research. This research is still in progress and other data collection sites are still being identified.

**Creativity in the world of work and the classroom**

Creative professions include writing, art, design, theatre, television, radio, motion pictures, related crafts, as well as marketing, some aspects of scientific research and development, product development, some types of teaching and curriculum design, and more. Given current economic growth imperatives the development of creative individuals who are able to manage and develop their working lives for the future economic benefit is crucial.

There is much discussion over time about creativity in education and what it is, and often times the literature retreats from giving a specific definition however, Nolan (2004) gives us some insight when he suggests that there are three aspects to creativity:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creative thinking</th>
<th>Generating new ideas, concepts, wishes, goals, new perceptions of problems.</th>
<th>What is generated is new thoughts which in themselves do not change anything in the real world unless they are implemented in some way (Nolan, 2004:1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creative behaviour</td>
<td>Those behaviours which facilitate the creative process</td>
<td>The first step is to suspend judgement (Nolan 2004:1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative action</td>
<td>Actually doing new things</td>
<td>Including doing things for the first time as well as ‘doing things which are new to the world’ (Nolan 2004:1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The exercises presented by Maclusky and Cox (2011) are part of a pedagogical model of teaching creative writing which aims to engage pupils as creative individuals rather than as producers of expert text (MacLusky and Cox, 2011). Thus, in our opinion, provides a new opportunity for the teaching of creative writing. By bringing writing lessons to the classroom that enable learners to engage in thinking and reflecting on
their personal ‘story experiences’ suggests that those pupils who struggle with more formal writing lessons may become more engaged in the lesson and the subsequent writing task.

Research tells us that primary aged pupils who struggle with more formal aspects of literacy curriculum often bring with them a full history of frustration and failure to the formal literacy lesson in school (Alvermann, 2001; Ivey, 1999). Moreover, when the aspect of literacy being taught is writing – where each child is expected to complete a written text - this sense of frustration and failure often increases. It is not uncommon for pupils to respond to frustration by misbehaviour or passive disengagement. (Long et al., 2007).

The Current Study

The aim of the research is: To determine the efficacy of the model of teaching creative writing presented in the book *Teaching Creative Writing in the Primary Classroom: Delight, Entice, Inspire* (Maclusky and Cox, 2011)

The specific aims of the research are to:

1. Observe student engagement in writing lessons using a purpose designed student engagement tool.

2. Conduct short semi-structured interviews with pupils (the same pupils from the engagement observation) after the writing lessons (interview about 4-5 mins long).

Methodology

The methodology builds on a research method that has been in the education research literature for some time and is utilised in a number of recent classroom studies. A good definition of this data collection instrument is provided by Skinner, Wellborn, and Connell, (1990) when they state:
The term engagement encompasses pupils’ initiation of action, effort, and persistence on schoolwork, as well as their ambient emotional states during learning activities in this study, engagement was assessed by asking teachers to act as expert raters for each child in their class. (Skinner et al., 1990: 30)

A momentary time sampling system of this kind was developed by the researchers which would suit the aims of the data collection. Initially we were seeking to assess the engagement of pupils in the writing lessons and a random convenience sample of pupils was used. An observational engagement proforma was given to the teacher or teacher aide in each classroom with the simple brief to record whether behaviour was present or absent at the moment that the time interval ends.

Using this method, pupils’ behaviours are coded as engaged/disengaged at the specific moment in which they were observed. This has been adapted from a number of established protocols are available in this area (e.g., Ellett and Chauvin, 1991). Once the data were collected we carried out a descriptive analysis of the engagement of pupils within the lessons and reported these using descriptive statistics both across the lessons and within each lessons. Further and more recent use of engagement scales have been used by Fraser (1998) and Patrick, Ryan and Kaplan (2007).

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with the same sample pupils who were observed during the lesson and they were asked the following questions:

– What did you write today?
– Do you like writing?
– What did you like about the writing that you did today?
– Do you think you will finish the writing that you started?

These semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher/teacher and the questions were chosen to be non-threatening to the pupils and simple to answer. At times the pupils were prompted by the researcher/teacher to remind them of events which occurred during the individual lessons. The interviews were transcribed and reported to provide data to support the observational data from each of the lessons.

The Pilot Study
Observational data findings from the pilot study are presented in Table 1 below. Clearly the four sampled pupils are engaged most of the time with only momentary indications of disengagement. Pupil 4 took some time to get focused but then remained engaged for the rest of the lesson. This is presented here to demonstrate the nature of the data which was collected.

Table 1: The raw data from engagement data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minutes</th>
<th>Pupil 1</th>
<th>Pupil 2</th>
<th>Pupil 3</th>
<th>Pupil 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engaged</td>
<td>Not engaged</td>
<td>Engaged</td>
<td>Not engaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>25</td>
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<td>30</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As an overview of engagement the pilot study data affords a view of strong engagement during the writing lesson. This data was collected during one of the early exercises (The Atmosphere exercise) and established that using an engagement instrument does allow insight into how the lessons engaged the pupils’ attention. We are very aware that some critical educators have raised concerns that definitions and assessments of student engagement are often exclusive to the values represented by dominant groups within the learning environment where the analysis is conducted. As a research team we are aware of this as a potential flaw in the research process but at this stage as we begin to ‘roll out’ the larger study we have decided to continue with this methodology.
As can be seen below when the engagement time across all the pupils is presented as a percentage of whole lesson time there is clearly evidence is a high percentage of ‘on-task’ behavior.

![Pie chart showing engagement and non-engagement time across all pupils in a lesson]

Figure 1: Descriptive analysis of pilot study data

**The larger study**

The larger study was conducted in a range of sites across England and a range of Key Stage 2 classrooms. The sampling of these classrooms was dominated by ease of access, this access was negotiated initially through the Head teacher who on each occasion was interested in the book and in bringing some level of creativity back into writing classrooms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1</td>
<td>Worcester</td>
<td>Pilot study</td>
<td>Year 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Surrey</td>
<td>Lesson 1</td>
<td>Year 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2</td>
<td>Lincolnshire</td>
<td>Lesson 2</td>
<td>Year 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lesson 3</td>
<td>Year 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 3</td>
<td>Surrey</td>
<td>Lesson 4</td>
<td>Year 6 (post SATS)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Writing lessons based on exercises from the book (Maclusky and Cox, 2011) were conducted at each of these sites and observations were taken using the engagement scale instrument developed for the purpose. The data is presented as a percentage of engagement or non-engagement of sample students in the whole lesson time. Clearly
there is evidence of a higher percentage of ‘on-task’ behavior than from the pilot study data..

Table 2 below shows the level of engagement across each of the lessons and indicates that the pupils were engaged in each of the 4 sample lessons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pilot Study</th>
<th>% of engaged time across all sample pupils in the lesson</th>
<th>% of non-engaged time across all sample pupils in the lesson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 1</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 2</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 3</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 4</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td><strong>77.25%</strong></td>
<td><strong>25.25%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Engagement of sample pupils in the lesson “The Atmosphere”

**Interview data**

Pupils were involved in semi-structured interviews following the lesson as we wanted to find out how they felt about the writing tasks and whether they enjoyed the exercises. On each occasion the same questions were asked, however, as some pupils did not address the detail of the question we allowed them to lead the discussion. The answers below were transcribed from the taped interviews with referral to notes made during the interviews.

The interviews with the 22 pupils conducted immediately following the lessons showed that pupils expressed positive comments and the pupils were at times unable to curb their enthusiasm about the lessons. When asked if they liked writing the majority of the pupils said yes – with a few brave respondents saying: “a bit”; “not really”; “it depends what I am writing about”; “I’m not really into writing but today it was good”. It is positive that the most of the pupils said that they like to write and this augers well for this model of writing.
When the pupils were asked what they wrote in today’s lesson the answers ranged from: “It was a scary story” to more lengthy monologues which retold the key elements of the story, such as:

I wrote about a hero – he was running away from the – and the path got smaller and smaller and finally it stopped and he kicked opened the door and then he went into a room and he didn’t bother to turn the light on and then he turned around and he heard footsteps coming from behind him and he found out it was just one of his friends trying to find him.

Another pupil said:

I wrote about a girl called Cassie and her sister called Jessica and they both fight because one of them likes Justin Beiber – just Cassie doesn’t like Justin Beiber so she starts ruining all her posters. She is always writing on her wall “please don’t touch my things.”

The most illuminating of the interview questions was the one which asked: “What did you like about the writing you did today?” This provided some very strong evidence for the engagement of individual writers with the structure and framing of the writing exercises embedded in the lesson. Over and over again we got the comments like this one: “You did not have to write on one topic just choose what you wanted to write”; or, “You could write whatever you want and you could use your imagination”; and “You could do it how you like – you could do it scary or anyway you like. One pupil even said something which has strong implications for current curriculum offerings in writing lessons: “Well I liked the idea that you could do your own story.”

Some pupils commented more specifically on the linguistic expectations that they are be given in lessons by teachers. The following two comments demonstrate links to outcomes statements in writing in Key Stage 3. She said:

I liked it because I got to use lots of different words that I wouldn’t get to use usually because sometimes the teachers are always saying “use connectives” and all that. But today I got to write what I wanted.

Another two pupils talked about the requirement for dialogue in pupil writing when they said: “You didn’t have people talking in the story and you didn’t have to write all
the dialogue”, and “I like that there is a task. In most writing we do you have to write where characters speak”

Perhaps suggesting that children are being taught to tell the story via character dialogue which is according to the model presented in the exercises by Maclusky and Cox (2011) is a very sophisticated way of a writer telling the story clearly these exercises are providing the pupils with richer and alternative ways of getting the ‘story told’.

Conclusion

The research findings presented above suggest strong engagement in the lesson using a classroom observation protocol focussed on pupil engagement and furthermore the analysis of the interviews with the pupils suggests both enjoyment and freedom from outcomes based writing activities in primary classrooms. These findings augur well for the future of the creative writing exercises in the book Teaching Creative Writing in the Primary Classroom: Delight, Entice, Inspire (Maclusky and Cox, 2011). These exercises can be used by teachers immediately and a perfect vehicle for teachers to give some clear instructions but introducing pupils to a richer range of writing experiences.

References:


Empowerment through Literacy: Literacy shaping futures

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Abstract
Recent reports have highlighted concerns about standards in reading literacy among primary school pupils in Ireland (DES, 2010, 2011). The English language curriculum for primary schools which was introduced over twelve years ago (DES/NCCA,1999,1999a), adopted a three strand approach to literacy teaching which aimed to integrate oral language, reading and writing. Reports have shown that this approach presented difficulties for teachers particularly in the area of planning and assessment (DES, 2005). For learners who have a specific reading disability/dyslexia, the outcomes are more worrying as normal classroom teaching does not enable children with significant literacy difficulties to catch up (Brooks, 2007). The aim of this presentation was to review the current level of literacy teaching in Ireland, to re-examine what the research tells us about effective literacy teaching and to consider how teachers’ classroom practices and attitudes to literacy have implications for reading pedagogy in Ireland.

Teacher attitudes to literacy teaching in Ireland; examining theory and practice.

Current context - how are we doing?
Recent reports have highlighted concerns about standards in reading literacy among primary school pupils in Ireland (DES, 2010, 2011). Standards in reading and maths have not improved in thirty years and one in ten children have serious difficulty with reading or writing (Eivers et al, 2005, 2010). For pupils in disadvantaged schools this figure is as high as one in three (DES, 2005a). The decline in performance of second level students from 5th to 17th place in international literacy tests has also been noted (OECD/PISA, 2010).

Some of the key concerns highlighted by these reports have been: the amount of daily instruction time for English literacy teaching, the limited use of assessment information to
inform teaching and planning and the continued practice of withdrawing children from class for additional literacy support (Eivers et al, 2010). Furthermore, reports by the Inspectorate identified a lack of emphasis on comprehension instruction, the overuse of workbooks and teachers’ difficulty aligning the curriculum with lesson planning. The teaching of writing was also considered weak (DES, 2005, 2010).

In response to these reports, the Department of Education and Skills launched a national strategy in July 2011 to improve literacy among children. This was preceded by a Draft strategy, which invited submissions from all stakeholders to contribute to the proposals outlined (DES, 2010a). Among the concerns identified in response to the Draft Plan was the need to conceptualise literacy in broad terms based on international research on how literacy should be developed in schools. The final document incorporates a conceptualisation of literacy as follows: *Literacy includes the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language, printed text, broadcast media and digital media*’ (DES, 2011, p.8)

There is broad welcome for many of the proposed recommendations in this National Strategy which include: increasing the daily time for literacy instruction for all pupils to 90 minutes per day, standardised testing of pupils’ reading attainment at four intervals during their school career, integrating literacy teaching across all subjects and increasing the involvement of parents as partners in their child’s literacy education. However, the current economic reality in Ireland has resulted in reduced resources and increased responsibilities for the class teacher. For example, the percentage of immigrant pupils in schools roughly doubled between 1996 and 2006 to 12% (Smith et al, 2009). The inclusion of pupils with special educational needs, Traveller pupils, and pupils with additional literacy needs in the mainstream class highlights the challenges faced by primary schools to raise the achievement levels of all pupils.

Given the general concern regarding pupils’ literacy attainment, there is a danger that the response to a renewed focus on literacy instruction could lead to a narrow ‘back to basics’ approach to literacy and an over-emphasis on skill and drill and lower level decoding tasks. Uncertainty and disquiet has also been expressed that a shift from the ‘content objectives’ expressed in the Primary School Curriculum (DES/NCCA, 1999a, 1999b) to a ‘learning outcomes’ or ‘attainment targets’ will narrow the focus of learning which may in fact lower standards. Although a national plan for literacy is welcomed, (National Literacy Strategy,
DES, 2011) this also increases the focus on the need for reform of the primary English curriculum.

**Effective literacy teaching- what the research says**

There is a large body of research on effective schools and also research specific to reading achievement (Taylor et al, 2002), effective classroom teaching practices and ‘exemplar’ teachers of reading (Wray et al, 2001). This work has identified key principles and characteristics to inform educators on how best to provide literacy instruction for all children.

Research on effective schools has identified the overall school-level characteristics linked with superior reading achievement such as: focusing on improved student learning, strong leadership, strong staff collaboration, ongoing professional development, using research based practices, sharing student assessment data and reaching out to parents (Pressley et al, 2002)

Research on the content and the pedagogy of effective reading instruction is extensive and underlines the importance of teacher knowledge of both the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ of teaching. The Report of the US National Reading Panel (2000) highlighted the key components of effective reading instruction for all children: phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary instruction and comprehension (NICHHD, 2000). Although some elements of reading instruction such as motivation, engagement, parental involvement and the interrelatedness of reading and writing, were not addressed in this report, these aspects of literacy development are already considered to be part of current best practice (Farstrup & Samuels, 2002; Pressley, 2006; Gambrell et al, 2007).

The international evidence suggests that effective teachers put a high value on teaching reading and writing and emphasise that reading is an enjoyable activity. Large scale reviews of the literature report that effective teachers of literacy enable pupils to create meaning using text and make this explicit. They teach aspects of reading and writing such as decoding and spelling in a systematic and highly structured way, but also in a way that makes clear to pupils why these aspects are necessary and useful. Shared texts are used as a means of making the connections between text, sentence and word level knowledge explicit to children. Other aspects of their teaching include varied classroom organisation –whole
class, small group and individual work, lessons are conducted at a brisk pace, focused observation and record keeping is evident (Hall & Harding, 2003; Wray et al, 2001; Taylor et al, 2002).

Current understanding of best practice in literacy teaching has broadened in recent years to a richer and more ‘balanced’ model of the reading process. (Pressley, 2006). Effective teachers of literacy have been found to balance whole class, small group and individual instruction (Pressley et al, 2006). This implies instruction across all the essential components of literacy, with explicit instruction in skills and strategies developed in the context of real reading and authentic writing. Pupils need to participate in a balanced framework of classroom literacy practices, which include the development of key skills: phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension and in addition, they need to experience the links between reading and writing during each lesson (National Institute of Child Health & Human Development, 2000; Clay, 1993; Hall & Harding, 2003).

Pupils with additional needs in literacy

In primary schools in Ireland, a three stage approach to support for children who have additional needs in literacy is provided: Classroom support, School support and School support plus (NEPS 2007; DES, 2003, 2005b). For children who are identified as having a ‘dyslexic type’ difficulty or are assessed as having dyslexia, the option of special support is also available. Special and intensive literacy support for a two-year period in a special class (known as a ‘reading unit’ attached to mainstream) or in a special school (known as a ‘reading school’) is available. Pupils who are assessed by a psychologist as having literacy scores in the second percentile or below and whose ability is in the average range are eligible to attend a special placement (McPhillips & Shevlin, 2009).

The research literature has questioned whether there is ‘specialist’ pedagogy for pupils with dyslexia. For children with a specific learning difficulty there is little evidence of the need for distinctive teaching approaches although responding to individual differences is crucial (Davis & Florian, 2004; Lewis & Norwich, 2005). Small group interventions and one to one tutoring is effective but the focus is firmly on classroom literacy instruction for all children (Slavin, 2009; Brooks, 2007). Specialist teaching programmes for children with dyslexia recommend multisensory
and systematic teaching, reinforcement of basic skills and an emphasis on metacognition for these learners (Rose, 2009).

**Literacy practices in specialist and mainstream classrooms-an Irish study**

There is convincing evidence that teachers in Ireland have a difficulty integrating a ‘balanced’ approach to reading, writing and oral language instruction as outlined in the integrated strands of the 1999 English Curriculum (NCCA/DES 1999; Eivers et al, 2005).

A recent study in Ireland revealed a serious imbalance in the range of teaching skills prioritized by teachers supporting pupils with dyslexia (McPhillips & Shevlin, 2009). There was a large emphasis on phonics teaching and ‘bottom up’ skills based teaching at the word level. The underlying skills of phonological awareness and phonemic awareness were not emphasised to the same extent. Explicit links between word, sentence and text did not receive equal attention. Although the acquisition of word level skills, and grapho-phonics skills is important for all learners and particularly those with dyslexia, this has been found to be more effective and ‘inclusive’ if embedded in a holistic way in classroom activity, rather than isolated skill development frequently associated with remedial programmes (Nind & Wearmouth, 2006). Of serious concern was the low priority given to the development of writing skills among learners with dyslexia. In fact, parents reported this aspect of literacy development to be a source of worry as the child moved on to post primary school (McPhillips et al, 2009). The findings indicated that there was no significant difference in the literacy teaching practices of mainstream and specialist teachers. Hearing individual reading, spelling practice and phonics teaching are used most frequently as interventions. Teachers report the most common teaching method as listening to pupils read aloud. However, strategies such as miscue analysis and running records can also provide insights about children’s developing use of strategies. Limited use of formative assessment data among Irish teachers has already been reported (DES, 2005). Teachers need opportunities and time to consider models or frameworks of theoretically based instruction in order to reflect on their practice (Duffy- Hester, 1999). A balanced literacy framework which includes the four key elements of literacy – Alphabets, (i.e.phonological/phonemic awareness, phonics) Comprehension, Writing and Motivation (engagement) can provide teachers with a model to link research and practice in relation to the literacy development of all pupils (Fountas & Pinnell 2006; Pressley 2006).
Emphasis needs to be put on teachers planning balanced literacy instruction for pupils, particularly those receiving supplementary literacy support, those who are struggling with reading and/or dyslexia. This has considerable implications for school based professional development for teachers and underlines the urgent need for review of the English language curriculum. The new National Literacy Strategy (DES, 2011) has the potential to be the catalyst for much needed change in literacy pedagogy in Ireland.

References


Empowerment through Literacy: Literacy shaping futures

Investigating Student-teachers’ Literate Identities in a Changing Context

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Karen Daniels, Sheffield Hallam University
Lyndsay Gray, Sheffield Hallam University
Sheila Sharpe, Sheffield Hallam University
Cathy Burnett, Sheffield Hallam University

Introduction
Recent policy developments present a number of challenges to literacy educators and students in initial teacher education in the United Kingdom. On the one hand the government has called for greater freedom for schools to make decisions relating to teaching and learning, whilst on the other endorsed specific approaches, notably synthetic phonics, as the key to success in early reading (DfE, 2010). External measures of standards and student experience meanwhile retain a central role in monitoring and evaluating the success of individual schools and initial teacher education providers. All this is occurring during a time when broader educational policy is leading to a period of significant change and uncertainty for higher education and for teacher education in particular (DfE, 2011). At the same time, new kinds of literacies continue to emerge around new technologies. Increasingly multimodal and networked texts are associated with diverse and changing literacy practices. Much has been written about the educational implications of this both in relation to new pedagogical opportunities and for shifting notions of literacy and literacies (Jenkins et al, 2006; Lankshear and Knobel, 2011).

Against this background, we explore findings from a study which sought to develop understanding about how student-teachers negotiate this complex context and the
ways in which they make sense of their development as literacy educators in relation to their own experience as literacy users. Through the study, we aimed to privilege student-teachers’ perspectives in gaining insights into what they felt was significant to their thinking and the opportunities and tensions they experienced. In order to contextualise this experience against broader shifts in literacy practice, we also sought to explore connections between student-teachers’ literate lives within and beyond initial teacher education. In doing so, we aimed to explore the implications of such connections for their developing professional identities as literacy teachers.

**Methodology**

Our methodology was influenced by life history studies of teachers’ developing professional identities (Clandinin and Connelly, 1998; Goodson and Ball, 1984; Nias, 1989). Such work has highlighted connections between teachers’ lives within and beyond educational contexts and considered the significance of teachers’ life experiences, values and beliefs for their professional practice (Olson, 1995).

Five final year undergraduate student-teachers took part in the study. They were the first to respond to an open invitation to 154 final year students enrolled on a BA Primary Education with QTS or BA Early Years Education with QTS. Each of the five participants was interviewed twice: before and after their final block teaching placement. Individual semi-structured interviews were used to explore their thoughts and perceptions of literacy in their lives generally and in their literacy teaching. As a prompt for the first interview, participants were asked to bring a mind-map of the use of literacy in their lives; for the second, they brought a representation of how they saw themselves as literacy teachers.

The interviews were conducted by Primary and Early Years English tutors. Each was allocated the same participant to interview on both occasions. In order to minimise tensions that might arise for participants wishing to respond openly to interview questions but aware of professional expectations, no student was interviewed by a member of staff who would act as their literacy tutor, assessor or referee during the remainder of the course. Pseudonyms were used at the point of transcription and retained during the remainder of the research process. Nevertheless, the particular context for these interviews is likely to have been significant to how these student-teachers presented their experiences, thoughts and values. If, as Fontana and Frey
(2010) explore, interviews are mutually constructed and involve elements of identity performance (Goffman, 1969), then the incidents that participants chose to share with us, and the way in which they presented these, will have been influenced by how they felt it was appropriate to present their experience. This in itself was interesting to us, however, as it prompted us to explore how the participants seemed to see our own priorities, beliefs and assumptions about literacy and literacy teaching. In analysing the interviews, we therefore considered both what they were saying and how they presented this, noting thematic patterns across individuals and across the group.

**Personal and professional identities**

Like many others working in the field, in theorising identity, we drew on perspectives which have seen identity as multiple, situated and fluid (Moje and Luke, 2009). In particular, as explored above, we recognised that we needed to consider the kinds of identity performance in which participants may have engaged during the interviews. At the same time, we noticed many aspects of identity that spanned their presentations of personal and professional contexts and this led us to an interest in the tensions between their perceptions of official expectations for professional identity and more consistent self-narratives (Giddens, 1991) that individuals may strive to sustain as they navigate their lives. In exploring these tensions, we drew on what Akkerman and Meijer (2011) call a ‘dialogic perspective on identity’, recognising the drive from each to present a consistent sense of self but also how the presentation of their identity seemed to shift at different times. In what follows, we provide pen-portraits of two participants - Claire and Tom – in order to illustrate some of the continuities and discontinuities that seemed to accompany these tensions.

**Claire – Enthusiasm, Skills and Progression**

In describing her personal literacies, Claire presented her childhood experiences of literacy as significant. She described herself and her siblings being encouraged to read by her parents who she presented as not being passionate about reading themselves. She recalled:

*books were always bought for us and we had to develop literacy.*
Whilst remembering little of school literacy apart from lack of success in transcription skills and a lack of enjoyment of subject, Claire was regarded as successful and recalls being in the ‘top set’. However, she 'hated' English at secondary school.

Claire expressed her own enthusiasm for reading children’s fiction and also non-fiction. Like other participants, she was also enthusiastic about using digital literacies in her daily life. When describing her use of Facebook she talked about how she organised and maintained her social relationships whilst simultaneously researching information and writing assignments:

*It is my main method of communication, especially between me and the people who don’t live in Sheffield – so like all my old school friends and people like that. I put every single photograph I take up on it pretty much [chuckling] and I just love the fact that... Like I was sat doing my planning now and I’ve just sat and talked briefly to my friend ....*

As a literacy teacher, Claire felt it was important to communicate passion for the subject in order to generate enthusiasm amongst children. She provided examples of resources and contexts she had used to generate interest and enthusiasm:

*I’d love it if they all had a passion for it. I would really, really love to see the kids come into literacy and go ‘Wow! Literacy, yeah! Oh, brilliant!*

One positive reference Claire made to secondary school was to a drama teacher who was also passionate, an individual, who she described as unconventional and separate from other staff. She referred to her own flamboyance and excitement as a means to encourage children’s enthusiasm when teaching:

*silly dances and waving my arms around and getting all enthusiastic about it and the kids were sort of... I just remember everybody’s face looking at me thinking ‘She’s weird! What’s she doing?’ but I was really enjoying it.*

Claire was asked to describe a teaching episode where she was being the literacy teacher she wanted to be:
Definitely when I was levelling up the work on the whiteboard ... The work was packed with everything I was looking for. Okay, it didn’t look great, but it was packed with everything I was looking for...

On being asked what 'levelling up' involved, Claire explained and described this in terms of children’s acquisition of literacy skills and of progression:

Improving a text and making that text the best it can be – adding or taking away or rearranging it so that it reads better and shows more skills than it did before.

It got the message across that you’re going to put openers, connectives, wow words and you’re going to think about the ordering of sentences and they all got it and they all produced a high level piece of work and some of my lowers produced work that didn’t reflect everything else that was in their literacy books. So again that was moving them on a little bit, sort of pushing them.

Claire identified a change in her view of literacy in the classroom as she 'moves away' from an emphasis on the completion of a piece of work and its appearance, shifting to the importance of the process and the skills involved. References to standards, testing and assessment were embedded within Claire’s comments here and these aspects seemed to be significant to her view of herself as a successful teacher.

Tom – Subject knowledge, Correctness and Tensions

In describing his personal literacies, Tom talked much less of early literacy experiences involving school or family. He commented on being unaware of how he became literate:

It is all because that’s just naturally what I do and what I take for granted. I must have learnt it somewhere but I can’t really remember to be honest.

Tom described and valued his ability to use 'electronic literacy in our fast-paced society'. Like Claire this enabled him to access information for interests and assignments, to organise social events and his life generally although he discussed social networking less than other participants. Tom made a distinction between digital literacies and what he termed 'traditional literacies'. He valued digital literacy
and acknowledged it as a vehicle which offers 'different kinds of expression' comparing this with 'traditional literacy' to which he linked a notion of correctness. He viewed this mastery of the 'traditional' as a foundation which enabled use of digital literacies. Tom emphasised how he valued correct spelling, punctuation and grammar. He noted how this supported his use of search engines and that he adheres to this in informal communications.

In relation to his professional identity, Tom described himself as a role model as a reader and how he valued the opportunity to read aloud to children:

*I do enjoy reading, but I don’t really find the time for it. But when I’m in school I really enjoy reading to the children and that is my perfect time to read to them.*

Like other participants, he described ensuring that children’s engagement in literacy was secured by using relevant contexts and stimuli. However, the desire to enthuse children could also lead to tensions with the perceived need to address curriculum requirements. Tom described a placement where there was ‘no time’ to read aloud and recalled teaching a session popular with children called 'Kung Fu Punctuation'. He reflects:

‘Okay, we've done this now. You've had your little bit of fun. Now let's get down to some literacy’. Not that literacy isn’t fun! [laughed]

During the first interview, Tom explored how he had valued his acquisition of extensive subject knowledge. This, he felt, had enabled him to become the literacy teacher he wished to be:

*At the heart of it there is subject knowledge because you’ve got to have good subject knowledge. It doesn’t matter how good you are as a teacher or your personality or anything else; if you haven’t got the subject knowledge then the children aren’t going to get the subject knowledge because you don’t know it.*

This however, created some tensions for Tom. In his second interview he commented:
I was asked to teach like different genres and it sounds very simple, but then it was written down, ‘Just refresh all the genres’ and I was kind of like ‘What are all the genres? There's hundreds.’

We're social beings, aren't we, and like as far as I'm concerned we're going to learn... Children, they're going to learn ... and us like in the greater society and in the real world so to speak, there's a lot of social kind of interaction and if the children aren't aware of the social interaction and aren't very socially kind of fluent, then they're not really going to be successful. I think there's more to life and there's more to learning than how to link a sentence. Not in a bad way, I'm not undermining literacy but literacy's part of a bigger picture....

Tom’s experiences appeared to be leading him to question certain literacy practices and his earlier conception of the literacy teacher he wished to be, which centred around his own subject knowledge. However, he seemed to lack a language with which to describe any alternative model of literacy or literacy provision.

**Continuities and discontinuities**

The enthusiasm and commitment expressed by Claire and Tom and the way in which they were able to rationalize what they described in relation to their practice are significant. At the same time it is important to notice the very different ways in which Claire and Tom conceptualized literacy and presented themselves as literacy teachers. These two examples highlight a series of continuities and discontinuities which seemed to pattern these student-teachers’ stories of their personal and professional literacies.

Continuities and discontinuities were evident in participants' narratives in relation to the following:

- **Texts:** Whilst stories of current personal literacies focused on digital texts, stories of classroom use - either as teachers or pupils - were dominated by paper-based texts, predominantly children’s literature.
- **Social context:** Whilst stories of literacy in their own lives were often about participation in networks or communities, classroom stories of literacy were about individual achievement.

- **Values:** Values seemed to shift. Sometimes, participants valued freedom and creativity whilst at other times they seemed to prioritise correctness and achievement.

- **Feelings of competence and confidence:** Participants shifted in how they presented themselves, for example sometimes presenting deficit views of themselves as literacy users and then more positive views of themselves as literacy teachers.

- **Identities:** There were differences in the kinds of teaching identities participants associated with literacy teaching, for example sometimes focusing on organisation and precision and sometimes on creativity, passion and enthusiasm.

- **Conceptualisations of literacy and literacy provision:** Participants described literacy in their lives as constantly shifting but literacy in classrooms was often seen as fixed, book-based and defined as a set of skills. When they did question this, as Tom seemed to do, they seemed to lack a clear way of describing alternatives.

**Acknowledging richness/messiness**

These student-teachers described a richness and complexity across the range of literacy practices in which they engaged. Their experiences had provided them with valuable insights into the diversity of literacies in everyday life. They seemed to struggle however to accommodate this experience within their professional identities as beginning literacy teachers. In describing their experiences, there were few occasions where students problematised the context in which they were becoming literacy teachers. None made explicit references to the wider political contexts for their work. Instead, we saw them draw on dominant discourses in explaining their
practice - Claire’s reference to ‘levelling up’ the children is one example of this. There are other discourses too, of course – for example, we might trace the frequent references to children’s literature back to our course design which contains a strong emphasis on reading and responding to a wide range of novels and picturebooks. Occasionally, experiences did seem to have come together for students in ways that prompted a critique. Tom’s comments may be an example of this. However, in these few cases, we sensed that participants were struggling to articulate an alternative model of literacy provision. In her analysis of pre-service teachers’ narratives of professional identity, Alsup (2006) uses the notion of borderland narrative to identify moments when teachers are able to find ways of navigating competing discourses in ways that are professionally fulfilling and possibly empowering. The participants in this study, at least in the context of interviews, rarely identified such tensions and when they did so, seemed to struggle to articulate them.

For us, this work has implications for how we support student-teachers in navigating this complex context. In order to enable our students to build on their enthusiasm and experience we need to see them as beginning teachers with multiple identities - rather than trainees who have yet to develop a professional identity. Just as we might encourage students to enable children to explore varied experiences of literacy in life beyond the classroom, we would argue that it is also important to create a learning environment in which student-teachers too can explore their understanding and experiences of literacy and literacy teaching. Strategies to support this work may include:

- Exploring ways of sharing stories and exploring understandings of literacy, literacy teaching and literacy teachers;
- Recognising, valuing and exploring students’ diverse literacies within teacher education;
- Encouraging students to consider the significance of their own positioning re-literacy;
- Facilitating the sharing of narratives of tension and borderland narratives and reflection on these
- Articulating as tutors our own positions in relation to literacy and teaching.
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References


Empowerment through Literacy: Literacy shaping futures

Empowering aliterate adolescents to engage with personal reading

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Abstract
This study of adolescents with aliterate reading tendencies builds on Achievement Motivation Theory. It uses the Motivations for Reading Questionnaire (Wigfield, Guthrie and McGough, 1996) and the Title Recognition Test (Cunningham and Stanovich, 1990) as a foundation. Self-reported motivational, print frequency and summative reading achievement data were collected from 123 adolescents in a large inner city intermediate (11-13 year old) school in New Zealand. Results suggest that the motivational constructs originally designed by Wigfield and his colleagues for primary school children were also present in this group of adolescents. Moreover, distinctly different patterns of reading motivation seemed to exist for keen, poor and aliterate adolescents, as defined by their summative reading and Title Recognition Test scores. A succeeding intervention over six months explored the effect of teaching reading self-selection skills with the sample of students identified with aliterate tendencies. Significant improvements in the students’ intrinsic motivations of reading curiosity and reading challenge occurred. In addition, the breadth of borrowed library genres and authors improved although the amount of borrowed library books fell. Further controlled studies are required in order to determine the unique effects of the intervention.

Background to the study
This New Zealand based study seeks to gain greater knowledge of the nature of recreational reading in those adolescents who can read adequately but who choose not to read for their own interest and pleasure. Aliteracy defines this condition. Previous international studies have demonstrated a decline in adolescents’ motivation for recreational reading (Mullis, Martin, Gonzalez and Kennedy, 2007;
Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2000; 2010). Dissonance between what schools and students consider as ‘engaging reading’ is widening (Ivey & Broadhuss, 2001; Wilheilm & Smith, 2002). In the light of evidence of poor literature knowledge amongst teachers (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Cremin, Mottram, Bearne, & Goodwin, 2008), the need for pragmatic ways to empower adolescent students to address aliteracy for themselves seems pertinent.

Reading motivation has a long pedigree. In 1915 Mayen noted; ‘It should be the teacher’s aim to give every child a love of reading, a hunger for it that will stay with him through all the years of his life’ (Mayen, 1915, p. 40). Today the research and teaching communities have long been aware of the importance of reading motivation even thought it has not always been seen as a priority at policy level (Cassidy, Montalvo-Valadez and Dee-Gareet, 2010; Clarke & Rumbold, 2006; Dombey, 2010).

One of the difficulties in the literature is that it is inconsistent in quantifying indicators of individual reading motivation. Literature tends to rely upon variable centred analytical techniques that concentrate on relationships across general groups of adolescents, rather than upon patterns and analysis within and across sub-groups. Consequently, it fails to account fully for adolescents with various degrees of fixed or periodic aliteracy. Studies tend to concentrate on broad and chiefly cognitive psychological processes and academic domains, or on broad phenomenological perspectives. In this current study, examination from a combination of phenomenological and cognitive angles aims to illuminate adolescents’ common sense or assumed meanings of aliteracy, reading and recreational reading.

Particular classroom practices empower adolescents to engage with personal reading. These include class teachers reading aloud (Ariail & Albright, 2006), Concept Orientated Reading Instruction (Guthrie, Hoa, Wigfield, Tonks and Perencevich, 2006) supported silent reading (Parr and McGuinness, 2005) and student led book discussion (Kasten and Wilfong, 2005). Only a small number of studies address adolescent empowerment from a classroom perspective (e.g. Harmon and Wood, 2001; Versaci, 2001). However, few consistently measure readers by their level of reading motivation and engagement as well as their summative reading achievement. In order to address this lack of cohesion, established psychological principles from achievement motivation theory (Wigfield & Eccles, 2002) have been used to frame both the research methodology and the literature underpinning this current study.
Method
This study builds on the multiple dimensions of reading motivation and reading frequency outlined by Wigfield et al (1996) and Cunningham and Stanovich (1990). It uses the Motivations for Reading Questionnaire [MRQ] and an adolescent version of the Title Recognition Test [TRT], specifically developed for this study (Cunningham and Stanovich, 1990; Wigfield et al., 1996). The TRT measures print frequency, familiarity with common reading titles. Studies using highly scrutinized reading motivation tools are rare. The MRQ and the TRT were selected because of the complexity of their reliability and validity data.

In the academic year 2009, data was collected from 123 volunteer students aged 11-13. The students attended a large inner city intermediate school in New Zealand. Initial data was collected from four sources: a reading preference survey, summative reading scores, and MRQ and TRT scores. TRT and summative reading comprehension scores were used as indicators of reading motivation and engagement. A stratified sample of students, with current aliterate tendencies, was selected from this screening data. Over the following six months, weekly teaching interventions took place designed to teach reading self-selection behaviours to this group of students. Pre, post and delayed post intervention data was collected that included group interviews, school library observations, MRQ and TRT scores and students’ library borrowing records. This paper presents a summary of a fraction of this data.

Research Questions

For this paper, the author asked two initial questions:

1. What are the characteristics of reading motivation in 11-13 year old adolescents who display aliterate tendencies?
2. How do taught, self-selection techniques support 11-13 year olds with aliterate tendencies?

Results
1. **Research question 1:** What are the characteristics of reading motivation in 11-13 year old adolescents who display aliterate tendencies?

**MRQ and TRT items:** Wigfield, Guthrie and McGough (1996) identified 11 motivational scales on the MRQ for primary school children. Reliability on the questionnaire items was assessed for this study using Cronbach’s alpha. A score of .7, or higher was used as an indicator of acceptable internal validity (Nunnally, 1978). Analysis indicated an overall internal consistency measure of $\alpha = .87$. Data was analysed using multiple regression and correlation procedures.

Motivations to read for reasons of curiosity, challenge and aestheticism significantly correlated in keen, aliterate and poor readers but not to measures of reading comprehension or TRT scores in any group of students. Aestheticism here defines students’ emotional engagement and immersion in text. In keen readers, summative reading comprehension scores and TRT scores significantly related. This did not occur for either poor or aliterate readers.

A number of significant reading motivation patterns occurred that were suggestive of variances in TRT and reading comprehension scores in keen, poor and aliterate readers. The patterns were particular to each type of engaged reader. Only the significant reading motivation characteristics of adolescents with aliterate tendencies appear here. Eight headings summarise them:

1. Reading motivations driven by challenge and reading importance significantly predict variance in reading comprehension scores ($b=.555$, $p<.01$, $b=-.334$, $p<.05$) Challenge predicts significant variance in reading repertoires [TRT]($b=.503$, $p<.05$)

2. Social motivations to read significantly predict variance in TRT scores ($b=.499$, $p<.05$) but predict significantly negative variance in reading comprehension ($b=-.364$, $p<.05$)

3. Significantly positive relationship between reading comprehension and motivations driven by reading challenge ($r=.244$, $p<.01$)

4. Significantly negative relationship between reading challenge and reading repertoire [TRT] ($r=-.257$, $p<.01$)
5. Significantly negative relationship between reading comprehension scores and the importance of reading \( (r=-.272, p<.01) \)

6. No relationship between summative reading grades, rewards, social or competitive reasons to read

7. Male aliterate readers had significantly greater social reading motivations than female aliterate readers did

8. Aliterate readers in year 7 were significantly more motivated to read for aesthetic reasons than year 8 readers were

**Interview analysis:** Thematic analysis revealed four overarching themes. They distinguished adolescents’ perceptions of reading, recreational reading, factors that influenced their motivation to read and reader identity. In summary, the themes revealed a link between two contrasting continuums of reading motivation each element of which appeared to have corresponding links with the other. Reading interest, effort, skill and the peer groups’ perception of reading identity lay alongside perceptions and influences from the reading environment, reading time and reading choice.

**Research question 2:** How do taught self-selection techniques support 11-13 year olds with aliterate tendencies?

**MRQ and TRT items:** A ten-week teaching intervention took place with the 47 students screened for current aliterate tendencies. The weekly 20-minute sessions consisted of modelling reading self-selection behaviours plus use of a rubric based on the principles of Expectancy-value Theory (Wigfield and Eccles, 2000). Results suggested significant increases in students’ motivations to read for curiosity and challenge, sustained at the delayed post intervention stage, plus sustained and significant increases in TRT scores. These combined with maintenance of the number of books borrowed from library that deteriorated once intervention ceased plus an increase in the breadth of self-selected genres from the school library at the delayed post intervention stage.
Conclusion
The current exploratory study described above provides a platform from which to carry out a further controlled study of the effectiveness of the self-selection rubric. The overwhelming conclusion from the data in this initial exploratory study is that adolescents with aliterate tendencies have distinct reading motivational patterns. They are different from both keen and poor readers (space precludes details of the latter in this paper). Teaching self-selection behaviours based in Expectancy-value Theory appears to address the motivations to read for challenge and social reasons that were a feature of the cognitive and phenomenological data collected from the adolescents with aliterate tendencies in this study. Reading challenge, reading curiosity and intrinsic social reasons for reading seem to be a critical variable in the relationship between sustained recreational reading and aliteracy. These social motivations to read do not necessarily equate to external motivations, like social competitiveness. Instead, particular skills, like effective self-selection, may enhance their intrinsic development in the adolescent with aliterate tendencies.

This exploratory study also raises a number of other questions that indicate further lines of enquiry. These include the question of text ownership, the conceptualisation of reading challenge and their dual effect on the quantity and quality of self-selected reading.

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References


Reflective writing is good for your health!
Teaching and learning in the National Health Service

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Reflection plays a central role in one of the postgraduate teacher education programmes run by the education department of Kent Surrey and Sussex Postgraduate Deanery. Hospital consultants undertaking the programme have their teaching observed a number of times by experienced education advisers appointed by the Deanery. These observations take place in clinical settings such as ward rounds, operating theatres or clinics as well as in seminars or lectures. Consultant and adviser then spend time reflecting together about the session in a professional conversation and the consultant then continues to reflect by sending written notes to which the adviser responds.

It is these written reflections which are the focus for this short paper. What we aim to explore here is the way in which they allow the consultants to develop their thinking further about how they teach, how their trainees learn, and how patient care might be improved as a result of this teaching and learning.
**Background to the course**

The Qualified Educational Supervisor Programme (QESP) has been developed over 17 years and it was introduced when a group of hospital consultants asked for support with their teaching. Like mainstream teacher education, the course is practice-based. Following the QESP Part One introductory workshop, a minimum of three negotiated visits are undertaken and each visit is followed by a one-to-one professional conversation between the education adviser and the hospital consultant candidate, the purpose of which is to support critical reflection of educational practice through talk. Following each professional conversation, brief written reflections are sent by the candidate to the education adviser, who responds in writing.

The course aims to further develop the characteristics of educational supervisors, as summarised in the Characteristics of an Educational Supervisor course document, which is coherent with the GMC (formerly PMETB) standards for trainers.

**Claims made for the value of reflective practice**

Much has been written about the value of practitioners reflecting critically on their educational (and other) practices. We would argue that the reflective writing undertaken by QESP candidates is a form of ‘reflection-on-action’ (Schön, 1996), building on the shared experience of the observed session and of the professional conversation. As Bolton argues, ‘a reflective practice examination of personal practice needs to be undertaken alongside open discussions with peers on the issues raised, an examination of texts from the larger field of work and politics, and discussions with colleagues from outside practitioners’ own milieu.’ (Bolton, 2001:3).

We aim to work supportively to help candidates develop their ability to reflect by being the ‘outside practitioners’ who can bring an educational perspective to their practice. Eraut states, ‘Reflection is a very important process which enables a learner to make meaning out of experience (making the invisible visible),’ (Eraut, 1994:71). QESP candidates have not usually had their teaching observed nor have they had opportunities to reflect on it with an educational professional.

**What do QESP candidates reflect on?**
Candidates are observed in clinical contexts, where they are supervising less experienced doctors conducting a range of specialist medical practices, e.g. administering anaesthetics, managing caesarean sections, interpreting x-rays and other images, assessing patients. It is the job of the education adviser to help make visible some aspects of educational methodologies which underpin the safe supervision of clinical practice, and which facilitate learning.

From the hundreds of written reflections available to us, here is a very brief selection of some of the topics which candidates reflect on:

- differentiation for differently experienced learners
- formative assessment of doctors’ prior experience and understandings
- the purposes and efficacy of teacher questions
- encouraging learner questions and learner talk
- physical settings, spaces, for teaching
- team working and learning from others
- power relationships between teacher and learner
- teaching by being a role model
- teaching at the bedside
- teaching in theatre
- teaching in clinics.

People also regularly comment on being nervous about being observed, but finding the process helpful. For example, a psychiatrist wrote, ‘Having someone observe you teach is a bit unnerving but the opportunity to have your style observed and discussed in a positive way to improve ‘the style’ I think is excellent and bears results!!’. It is often also clear that candidates are not used to writing reflectively, ‘I managed to write something towards the reflections on the Professional Conversation. This is my first reflective writing in my career. Hope you find it not too boring and bland.’

In the case studies below, we look at what two candidates chose to reflect on. Candidates and their work contexts have been anonymised. Direct quotes from their reflective writing are in italics.
Case studies

Case Study 1: a consultant anaesthetist’s reflections

In the chronological summary that follows, this consultant reflects on the importance of the validation of her own established teaching approaches; maximising learning opportunities; the value of planning ahead; the usefulness of preparation of simple learning aids like a single sheet proforma; the significance of modelling; and the benefits of grouping learners in a non-clinical situation and exploiting learners' own knowledge to support their learning.

First observation: teaching a doctor in a pain clinic

This consultant had prepared for the first observed teaching session by identifying what it was she wanted to change if possible. She had also read the articles from the introductory workshop for QESP candidates. As a result she developed a proforma for the junior doctor to use during the pain clinic to give a focus. ‘Until today I was rather at a loss as to how to engage our trainees in chronic pain, as to them it may seem very dull and unproductive as we never ‘cure’ patients…..But what we did was a bit new and different today and I’m pleased it seemed to work well. I will feed back to H about how well she worked with me.’

She wanted to build on this session for her trainee and for herself: ‘I will...ask her what she now wants to find out or work on in chronic pain. This will be useful. From now on I will make a more conscious effort to plan ahead and come up with a suitable method of imparting the knowledge.’

She also recognised how the external observation helped her to reflect: ‘I am so used to it [the clinic] that it’s nice to have an ‘outsider’s’ view on what we strive to achieve there.....it’s an experience I’ve not had before... You ... drew my attention to the details of my approach, which was most helpful. I don't really reflect often enough on how things went...a fault which should be easy to remedy now. One of the problems with working in a very small unit is that there is little chance to watch others at work. and we sometimes carry on without asking for feedback or
criticism... Your session today has been reassuring that we are demonstrating useful skills in Clinic that trainees may indeed appreciate ..... It was very useful to hear your comments on the methods I use even if subconsciously.

She acknowledges the importance for learners of modelling, saying how much she herself learnt about communication from ‘a great teacher and role model ... and she showed me this art of talking to patients, even angry ones.....’

**Second observation: teaching a second year postgraduate doctor in theatre**

The second session enabled the consultant to make the most of a very specific learning opportunity: ‘I enjoyed teaching the trainee about the airway in what turned out to be a difficult intubation situation and the discussion that followed. It was good to hear your observations on my approach which is certainly to be encouraging and supportive and to let trainees lead the way if possible.... I hope she began to appreciate the options open to her when faced with a difficult intubation.’

She also noted that she had used opportunities as they arose to emphasise for the trainee the importance of working as a team, being willing to ask for help in difficult situations and the responsibility of hand-over to the recovery team to ensure the patient’s safety.

**Third observation: teaching a large group of patients as part of a programme for patients with chronic pain**

‘I had done some planning to give some thought to what would get the maximum amount of involvement and interaction within this patient group [for this session]. I had delivered a rather factual lecture to them last week about the role and side effects of drugs in pain management.’ (Patient evaluations had been that it wasn’t easy to take in, although they knew it was important.)

She put the patients into small groups, asking them to discuss what they themselves thought they knew already about medication for pain control and management; she then took feedback from a spokesperson from each group, collating the information
onto a diagram on the board – with two main columns and scales for most and least effective and most and least side-effects. ‘The format that we ... tried out today worked very well and was much more productive than I ever thought possible. It shows the power of this way of teaching! I have been enlightened by advice on how to make sessions so much more productive; this group could have been a challenge, but weren’t in the end!’

Reflection during the professional conversation after the observation had covered i) the way that this learner-centred approach met the needs of the teacher (it showed the teacher what exactly it was that the learners knew so that she could adjust the content of the teaching, and plan more focused follow-up ); ii) what it did for each learner (valued the knowledge each individual held) and iii) what it did for the group as a whole (increased their knowledge and understanding through pooling of individual knowledge so that it became knowledge held in common by the whole group.)

The consultant also reflected on ways of building on this session: ‘maybe getting [the patients] to make a plan for what their next steps were going to be at the end of the session; and making arrangements with the PM team to do a follow up hour with the patients when they come for review at 6 weeks just to see if they were able to make any of the changes we discussed...... I have also considered a letter to their GPs explaining that we have talked about meds in this group and that they may come along for a drug review.’

She concludes:

‘Overall I have learnt so much and have been enthused about the different ways of teaching to various recipients and I feel much more confident about how to achieve defined goals.’

**Case Study 2: a consultant surgeon’s reflections**

This consultant surgeon began his first reflection by doubting the value of the course, appearing to see it as an unnecessary assessment. I briefly quote from his first and third reflections to give a flavour of the development of his thinking.
Despite his initial doubts, the consultant reflects on: the importance of being a role model; developing the confidence of Specialist Registrars (SpRs) by giving them supervised opportunities to work; the value of listening to SpRs; creating a positive training environment; offering rationales for alternative clinical techniques; getting learners to get their thinking out.

**First observation: teaching a Specialist Registrar in theatre**

This consultant began by writing, *'Mostly – I feel that the process has very little worth, and I continue to be really concerned at how it is thought that this is all of any real use.'* He argues that trainees make *'the most relevant assessment of whether we can teach or not'*. However, despite this unpromising but honest beginning, he goes on to write, *'One interesting point to come out of the discussion that we held – was the issue which you highlighted about our being 'role-models' for these trainees. I had not really thought about that, and so yes, this did raise a point .... Quite worrying to think about how we may be role models – but illuminating and thought-provoking! This thought will certainly make me think about my conduct as a teacher'*.

This concept of teaching by role modelling was picked up as potentially useful in that it doesn’t take up any extra time, but involves learners in observing the consultant’s practice.

He also debates the value of my observing him teaching on a busy ward round for the next session – although he is perhaps beginning to question what is meant by ‘teaching’. He writes: *'It is purely now a 'business round' – and a rushed one at that, if there are quite a number of patients on the wards then. I think that the round has very little display of teaching, as such, in it. I do try to encourage the SpR to lead / run the round – and so there may be very little of me actually trying to teach, as such'*. He does not appear at this stage to have yet made explicit links with the idea of teaching by example, ‘role-modelling’.

**Third observation: teaching / supervising an experienced SpR in theatre**
In this third observation, the consultant wrote that our professional conversation had raised some useful points. He commented on ‘showing the SpR that I had real regard for his ideas and opinions, and that these are valued’. He also comments on our discussion about the tone of his communication during the procedure, which he hoped was ‘genuinely supportive of, and constructively fostering, a positive training environment’. He comments thoughtfully on the balance between giving the trainee opportunities to operate, and ensuring a ‘good surgical outcome for the patient’ and the need for him to keep assessing and reassessing the ability and needs of the learner. The consultant reports that he had talked with the SpR following the operation, and that the SpR said that he had found it ‘instructive and enjoyable, and that he had felt that his confidence had been bolstered in this type of surgery. He also commented that he found the attention directed at assessing his learning needs most reassuring and positive’. The SpR had also commented on ‘the way that he had been shown a new detail or two about the operation technique .... was useful and instructive: this especially as this ‘different’ technique was offered as one alternative to a requirement or problem – which he was to feel absolutely no pressure to adopt’.

The consultant reflects that he ‘could have been more flexible in encouraging the SpR to suggest the sequence and the conduct of the procedure, himself, rather than my ‘getting him started’ .... Perhaps I had erred in giving him more ‘direction’ than was appropriate for the procedure in hand; as his ability and experience should allow / equip him to progress through these steps with less ‘direction’ from me’. This comment picks up on our discussion regarding the potential usefulness of seeing learner talk as a form of active learning, and as supplementing the ‘hands on’ experience which is always to some degree limited within theatre, because of time pressures and patient safety issues. He finishes by writing that he will give ‘a ‘good’ SpR more free rein and ‘space’ to set out and plan the course that he/she envisages an operation will take. I will make more of developing this approach to operative surgery in future’. He also concludes by saying (perhaps with some surprise!) ‘I found the whole assessment process and experience most constructive’.
**Conclusion**

As indicated, there are many hundreds of reflections from hospital consultants that KSS education advisers have been privileged to read and respond to. These two case studies encapsulate contrasting reactions and subsequent learning journeys in the development of thinking about teaching and learning. One other consultant wrote: ‘*I have found the programme very useful in a way that would not have been achieved by purely attending a workshop or completing online training. Having to organise the sessions, reflect on them and be observed, stimulated much thought and reflection. Very useful.*’

Sometimes the course has a very immediate impact on improved patient care. More often, we can only anticipate that better teaching and more effective learning by trainees has a long term effect on patients, and that reflection is, therefore, good for patients’ health. Trainees are beginning to recognise the value of QESP themselves and when looking for placements within the Kent Surrey and Sussex region some are enquiring whether their consultant supervisors are ‘QESP qualified’.

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**References**


**Further reading**


Empowerment through Literacy: Literacy shaping futures

Literacy as infinite empowerment


Abstract

Literacy is the principal human intellectual technology. In a presentation to conference and in a forthcoming book (Wells, forthcoming, 2012), I propose that a framework for the study of literacy can be created using the resources of the theories of evolution and computation. These two powerful bodies of theory enable us to understand how literacy enhances the pre-literate capacities of our species as well as providing new tools like mathematics. Literacy can be viewed as an infinite enhancement of capability and its denial or withholding as an infinite deprivation.

Introduction

As a first time delegate to a UKLA conference I was struck by the diverse range of issues explored in both the keynote addresses and the parallel sessions. Amid the diversity, however, one feature which most of the presentations had in common, was a focus on the here and now. How should children be taught to read and write? What impact are cyberspace and digital culture having on experiences of literacy? How can inequality of opportunities to get an education and become literate be tackled? I am interested in these questions too but my explorations of literacy have been based on a longer time frame than the here and now. I would like to understand what difference literacy has made to us on an evolutionary time scale. Systematic agriculture began about 10,000 years ago and the first writing systems were invented some 5,000 years ago. Ancient though these developments are, they are both very recent when seen in the context of the deep time over which biological evolution has occurred. The human lineage has been evolving independently from our closest biological relatives, the chimpanzees, for about five million years, but even that is a tiny fraction of the billions of years over which the whole
story of life on earth has unfolded. Biological evolution is an extremely slow process; it has taken a very long time to build the cognitive and social adaptations on which literacy depends. The best evidence we have suggests that these underlying systems have not yet been much altered by literacy.

**Evolutionary theory**

The conclusion I have drawn from this immense chronology is that if we want to understand the scope and limitations of literacy we should do so, in part, by studying the non-literate heritage on which our literate skills and practices rest. Thus my work is infused with ideas drawn from the Darwinian theory of evolution. In particular I have absorbed the understanding that there is a shared set of adaptations which constitute human nature. Humans in all known societies, both literate and non-literate, share more than three hundred distinct social and cognitive characteristics which Brown (1991) calls ‘universals’. These universals dispose us to act in certain ways, for example in tending to favour our close genetic kin rather than strangers, and in having built in capacities for both conflict and co-operation. Human universals, I argue, are the basic capacities on which literate skills and practices are founded. They are enhanced rather than transformed by literacy. Literacy augments existing social and cognitive capacities as well as offering some completely new avenues for development.

Evolutionary theory alone is insufficient as the basis for a satisfactory theory of literacy because it does not explain the properties of symbol systems. Three key properties of the symbol systems on which literacy depends are that they are external, durable and combinatorial. External representation, the result of writing things down, creates records which exist independently of the vagaries of human memory and can be shared. Durable written representations, which last significantly longer than utterances, create the possibility of systematic history and of both private and public study. The combinatorial properties of symbol systems, particularly clearly demonstrated in alphabetic writing systems, provide cheap and efficient vehicles for the representation of an indefinitely large number of meanings. ‘Bat’, ‘bet’, ‘cat’, and ‘cot’ are four of the combinatorial possibilities of three letters that make up the three word resources of written English. ‘Scrabble’ enthusiasts will know that there are about one thousand three letter words in English. This means that there are about one billion possible three word sentences using
just those three letter words. Many, perhaps most, of those sentences are ungrammatical but the example illustrates the huge representational power of external symbols.

**The theory of computation**

The theory of computation, based on the pioneering work of the British mathematician Alan Turing in the 1930s, studies the properties of external symbol systems and demonstrates both their scope and limitations (Turing, 1936; Wells, 2006). Computational theory applies equally to traditional media such as paper and pencils and to digital media. This makes it an important resource for literacy scholars because it helps us to understand the possibilities opened up by computers and the internet. At the core of Turing’s theory is a formal model, now called a Turing machine, which is based on the example of a human working with paper and pencil. The model has two principal components, one representing the mind of the human agent, the other the external medium used for reading and writing. Turing’s model has been much studied by computer scientists and mathematical logicians among others and they are agreed that it captures the essential syntactic features of external symbol systems. Using the model, Turing was able to prove some fundamental theorems which are informative about literacy. One of the most important was based on what he called the ‘universal machine’. The universal machine is a model of a system which can read and write without any limitations. It is, in other words, a model of a fully literate human being. Turing demonstrated that the universal machine has infinitely greater representational power than other systems with more restricted literate capacities and I have used this idea to argue that literate skills are infinitely empowering. To get a practical idea of what this might mean, consider how much the internet has extended the potential, intellectual range of someone with mature literacy skills. The other side of the argument suggests that if literacy is deliberately withheld from people, an infinite deprivation is being inflicted on them.

**A framework for the study of literacy**

In my presentation to conference, and in a forthcoming book (Wells, forthcoming 2012), I have proposed that evolutionary theory and the theory of computation taken together provide the basis for a framework within which many key issues to do with literacy can be
explored and debated. The theory of computation gives us a handle on the syntactic properties of literacy and evolutionary theory helps us to understand why literacy matters and why it is embedded in social practices which do not always have positive outcomes. Given my institutional affiliation I am well aware that many social psychologists and other critical social theorists treat evolutionary theory with deep suspicion. It is often viewed as a vehicle for the reification of gender differences and for the naturalisation and justification of inequalities of various kinds which typically have negative consequences for women and girls. The histories of Social Darwinism and eugenics in the twentieth century tend to support this view. However, the theory of evolution should no more be blamed for these misuses than nuclear physics should be blamed for the development of atomic weapons or meteorology for the poor weather we often experience in Britain. One could, with greater justification I believe, use evolutionary theory to argue for the superiority of the female sex in sexually reproducing species. Critical theorists may also suspect that the use of computational theory has a tendency to treat humans as robots and to privilege machine metaphors and a drive towards uniformity over diversity and individual differences. I have not used it in this way.

From my perspective the theories of evolution and computation have enormous emancipatory potential. Let us note, first, that both are products of the literate epoch. Neither theory is conceivable without the resources of literate societies. The empirical base on which evolutionary theory rests is so vast that its development is quite beyond the scope of unaided human memory and relies essentially on the documentary record. Charles Darwin was an assiduous correspondent and masses of books, letters and specimens arrived daily at his house in Kent from a social network spanning the globe (Darwin, 1859; 1871). The theory of computation is a theory of the symbol systems underlying literacy and could only have been developed in a literate society. Literacy is such a mundane, pervasive, phenomenon that I think we sometimes fail to understand just how extraordinary an invention it is. For the first time ever, in the history of our planet, and possibly in the history of the universe, there is a species, *Homo sapiens*, which has begun to understand its own nature and its origins. This is a consequence of literacy and literacy, in its turn, is in part a consequence of the kind of creature that we are. Thus evolutionary theory and the study of literacy are mutually informative.
Theorists of social evolution point to the exceptionally well developed social instincts of humans as key to our behaviour and ecology and I suggest that human sociality is crucial to understanding why our ancestors were able to invent literacy and why it is such a powerful technology. Before the development of systematic agriculture, human societies were limited in size by the resources that local environments offered for hunting and gathering. Maximum human group sizes were in the hundreds at most and often much smaller. Systematic agriculture made it possible, for the first time, for humans to live in groups of thousands and tens of thousands. The social pressures of life in these early agrarian societies are likely to have been among the stimuli that led to the invention of literacy. Among the earliest surviving documents are clay tablets recording the distribution of food among different classes of workers. Damerow (1996) has found that in the ancient Uruk civilisation, about one thousand years after the invention of writing, ‘food rations were deliberately scaled to rank, and that rationing had economic and power dimensions’ (Damerow, 1996:149). If we add to this the likelihood that the scribes who made the records were among the more privileged members of society, we see in embryonic form in these early texts good reasons for the emphasis on social practices and ideology that has become prominent in the study of literacy in recent decades. Important though this is, however, computational theory reminds us that there are also distinct skills associated with literate expertise and this serves as a corrective to the view that literacy is nothing but sets of social practices.

At the global level it is clear that literacy skills and the possibility of education are patchily distributed. There are some 750,000,000 illiterate adults in the world today and more than 60,000,000 children who are not in school. In both cases roughly two thirds are women and girls. (Unesco, 2011) From an evolutionary perspective the gendered nature of these statistics suggests the existence of social practices that are rooted in biology. To say this is not in any way to endorse the discrimination embodied in these practices. It does, however, suggest that if we wish to change them we need to understand them properly. If women and girls are to be empowered as they should be, the roots of inequality have to be tackled. Understanding that inequality may have roots in evolved biology is not an admission of defeat but part of the groundwork on which practical action can be based. A key possibility of literacy is the design of social institutions with legally enforceable provisions to promote equality of rights and opportunities.
Gender based inequalities are only part of the story. Economic inequalities are also an important source of disadvantage in access to literacy and education. Poor literacy and poor economic development tend to go together. An evolutionary understanding of human groups suggests that we care much more readily for those near to us, both geographically and genetically, than for the more distant. This natural tendency can be countered by the development of global institutions which promote the free movement of goods, people and ideas. These institutions are typically enshrined in documents and in part constituted by them. That their provisions are often honoured in the breach is a cause for concern, but without them the global situation would be more conflictive and probably more unequal than it already is.

Literacy can be infinitely empowering if adequate training and resources are made available to everyone. For this to happen we need to develop powerful social institutions which enhance the positive, co-operative aspects of evolved human nature and minimise the negative effects of its conflictive aspects. Had we not been the kind of hyper-social primate that we are, literacy would most probably never have been invented. Now that we have it, we can use it to understand ourselves better and thus, we might hope, to achieve a more sustainable view of what human life and culture could become.

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Empowerment through Literacy: Literacy shaping futures

Investigating the impact of curriculum imperatives on teacher practice
Jeannine Wishart

As with England and the United States of America, Australian educational policy changes over the two previous decades have been many and varied. Of particular interest, is the impact of changes of policy at Federal level on the day to day educational occurrences in the classroom. It is critical that the politicians and policy makers ensure the policy and curriculum changes are relevant and useful to the many and varied contexts of schools. The narrow definitions of literacy, politically mandated use of programs, resources and prescriptive teaching which reduces literacy to a narrow skill set are to be avoided (Ewing 2006, Meyer 2002). Although the interpretation of the recent Australian Curriculum has been largely the remit of the Australian States and Territories, “... the increasing emphasis from the federal government on benchmarks, reporting instruments and basics have constrained the range of possible interpretations open to teachers...” (Snyder, 2008, p 208), means that the politicians are setting the classroom agendas.

This paper sets out to briefly review recent education policy changes in the United States of America, England and Australia, discuss the effects of these changes in terms of pedagogical changes and set out an agenda for investigating what is really occurring in Australian literacy teaching.

A Brief History of Educational Policy Changes

This selective review describes some of the educational policy changes of English speaking countries comparable to Australia, namely the United States of America (USA) and England.

Evidence from the USA depicts a large list of reports and resultant literacy policy changes, many of which have resulted in mandated approaches to the teaching of literacy (Meyer 2002). The ‘Preventing Reading Difficulties’ Report (Snow et al, 1998) investigated the teaching of reading by reviewing and synthesising quantitative
studies of reading that used experimental methods. This report placed an emphasis on the teaching of phonemic awareness and phonics, but recognised the value of children being taught using a balance of phonemics, sight words etc.

The Education Act commonly known as the ‘No Child Left Behind’ act was introduced in 2001 on the premise that the implementation of an act of Congress would result in all children progressing in reading and no child being left behind. This act resulted in the some states introducing prescribed pedagogical approaches and resources (Meyer, 2002).

The National Reading Panel Report (NIHCD, 2000) had a wide scope and used a scientific review approach. It produced a meta-analysis of common approaches such as the teaching of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension and vocabulary in terms of efficient teaching of reading.

Literacy teaching in England has been subject to a similar barrage of reporting and policy changes. The National Curriculum which stipulated content and pedagogy for all years across England was introduced in 1989.

1998 saw the introduction of The National Literacy Strategy in an attempt to ensure effective and efficient literacy teaching. This stringently directed strategy required teachers to teach predetermined skills in predetermined stages through the use of the ‘Literacy Hour’ (as cited by Clarke in Locke, 2010).

In 2000 The National Literacy Strategy was revised to include a ‘Grammar for Writing’ component. Much discussion occurred resulting in a review of research which indicated that this strategy was ineffective, however these recommendations were not implemented (as cited by Clarke in Locke, 2010).

The ‘Rose Report’, a review of the teaching of early reading was released in 2006. The key recommendation was that synthetic phonics be considered as best practice pedagogy for teaching early readers (Wyse & Styles, 2007). This was followed by ‘The Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum’ (Rose 2009) and contained recommendations that appeared contrary to the previous National Literacy and National Curriculum strategies. It advocated cross curricular approaches to learning, timetable and curriculum organised at the school level and English as one of the six areas of learning (as cited by Clarke in Locke, 2010).
2007 saw the National Literacy Strategy being replaced by the Primary National Strategy which contains end of year level standards similar to those of the recently released Australian Curriculum.

Despite the reports and subsequent policy changes, English schools’ results for the Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA) remain consistently low. Over almost a decade the results for English students have shown a decline that has resulted in a significant drop in the rankings against other countries that complete the test. The drop from being ranked seventh to twenty fifth occurred despite the English government increasing education funding and spending more on education than comparable countries (Gove, 2010).

In the Australian context, the Australian Reading Report (Rowe, 2005) ignited a heated but rather spurious media debate regarding the most effective ways to teach reading, commonly known as ‘the reading wars’ (Ewing, 2006, p1). This debate focussed on the efficacy of whole language instruction as opposed to explicit phonics instruction and echoed similar debates in England and the United States. The federal government of the time implemented recommendations that had significant impacts on the teaching and reporting of reading.

That same year saw the release of the research report entitled “In Teachers’ Hands” (Louden, Rohl, Barratt-Pugh, Brown, Cairney, Elderfield, House, Meiers, Rivalland & Rowe, 2005). This report investigated the pedagogical practices of early childhood teachers by observing them in situ, rather than relying on the scientific/experimental research reports used by Rowe et al. This report found that effective teachers implemented literacy pedagogical practices according to the needs of the students at the time and used a variety of explicit and contextualised practices (Louden et al 2005).

In 2008 state based testing regimes were replaced with the National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). Australian students in years three, five, seven and nine complete competency tests in reading comprehension, writing skills and conventions as well as numeracy skills and understandings. Data from the tests is collated, analysed and returned to schools, indicating school performance in comparison to schools of similar socio-economic status and schools generally. Individual student data is also provided to parents to indicate where a child is
situated on achievement ‘bands’ (Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority, 2010).

The My School Website went live in 2010 to ensure greater transparency of school information. The site contains general data as well as NAPLAN data, that compares the aggregated results of school NAPLAN test to other schools of similar SEI and population, as well as to the general population (McGaw, n.d.).

The generation of an Australian Curriculum began in 2008 with the release of framing papers. In 2011 the National Curriculum 1.2 was released. It explicitly states the content and skills that the students must learn in all subjects, but refrains from stipulating pedagogical approaches (Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority, 2011).

This brief description of some of the reports and changes in policy across USA, England and Australia serves as an overview of the state of curriculum generally in these countries. All appear to be searching for the ‘holy grail’ of teaching, the one perfect way of structuring curriculum so that all students will achieve the benchmarks. England and the USA have gone so far as to dictate pedagogical approaches, a step that Australia is yet to take, and hopefully will avoid. Meyer describes this search as ‘senseless’ and makes the point that ‘... no one is looking at what the teachers are doing in their classrooms...’ (Meyer, 2002, p2).

**Defining High Stakes Testing and Backwash**

National and state mandated testing regimes have become known as ‘high stakes’ tests. A clear definition is needed in order to understand the nature and influence of these tests. For the purposes of this paper, a high stakes test is one that could be said to have significant social and cultural capital attached. Cultural capital can be described as the success, recognition and status gained from having knowledge or skills in a particular setting. Having cultural capital means that person also has social capital, which is the relationships with other people that can assist an individual in achieving that success, or that are formed from having success (Harris, McKenzie, Fitzsimmons & Turbill, 2007; Diaz, Beecher & Arthur, in Makin, Jones Diaz & McLaughlan, 2007). Social capital is “…the conversion of one kind of capital
into another in a particular social context, which can provide power for some and inequality for others.” (Diaz in Makin, Jones Diaz & McLaughlan, 2007, p37)

High stakes tests are the tests that are used for school comparisons that result in publication of student achievement at the levels of school, cohort and individual. These are the tests that politicians impose on education to ensure greater transparency of student results by comparing one student against all others of the same age/year, and to ensure that all students are achieving according to the standards inherent within the test. These are the tests which give some students kudos and cover others with shame, that confer social and cultural capital on schools, teachers and students that perform well, while conferring the opposite on those that do not.

‗Backwash‘ or ‘washback‘ is the term to describe the influence of tests of literacy skills and knowledge on the teaching of literacy skills and knowledge (Wall, 2000). Cheng (1999) has used the term ‘backwash‘ in language teaching to describe the phenomenon of teachers teaching specifically what is necessary to pass the language test. When the language test is changed, then the teaching, particularly of content, is changed. Backwash could be described as flowing in two directions: a wave that flows to the learners, whereby the students taking the test receive information about the test; and another wave of that informs the curriculum developers, administrators, teachers and others involved about the test (Bailey, as cited in Wall, 2000, p 502).

According to Slomp (2005, p 142), high stakes writing tests contributed to a “...narrowing of pedagogical focus for writing teachers in schools...” Slomp found that teachers struggled with the idea of teaching to the test, but became resigned to the inevitability. He also observed that “…standardised language assessments are resistant to change, rarely integrating new understandings of language into assessment designs. This reticence, in turn, limits advances in pedagogy.” (Slomp, 2005, p 141) That is, literacy tests only measure what can be recorded within a certain timeframe, using a certain format or technology. Anything outside these boundaries cannot be included in the test. In a backwash effect, teachers use only the technology and formats that are within the test. Mills (2008) suggests that the
high stakes tests become an unofficial blueprint of what to teach and when – an unacknowledged curriculum.

Conversely, Perkins and Wellman (2008) stated that high stakes testing could be of benefit as the tests inform students of results and increase motivation as effort is associated with rewards. They also describe greater teacher engagement with standards, with what to teach (curriculum) and with the teachers seeking alignment between their instruction and the standard.

Amrein and Berliner (2002) summarise positive effects of testing and include an increase in professional development, positive effects on classroom assessment and improvement of instruction and learning. Anecdotal evidence from conversations with fellow teachers by this author also indicate that mandated testing regimes may have some unexpected positive outcomes, even if it is moving teachers, in response to the tests, to admit that they now teach grammar once a week.

There are two opposing points of view on mandated tests, the first and most vociferous being that these tests have a very negative effect on teacher pedagogy. The other viewpoint is that there are advantages to the tests. Could it be that mandated tests are a tool for good as well as evil?

**The Changing Face of Literacy Education in Australia**

The above discussion raises the question of how Australian teachers are responding to the NAPLAN testing regime. Is there a narrowing of pedagogy and teaching to the test? Or is there the continuation of usual practice, or a greater engagement with standards and curriculum? In order to investigate what is actually occurring in the current environment of mandated testing regimes in Western Australian Primary schools I intend to use Meyer’s notion of ‘...looking at what teachers are doing...’ (Meyer, 2002, p2). The content area that appears to be most challenging for teachers is the NAPLAN ‘Writing Conventions’ test which includes spelling and grammar. Grammar has been well disguised in previous iterations of Western Australian curriculum, referred to as language ‘conventions’, text features, text organisation and linguistic features. Such knowledge has recently reverted, through the introduction of the Australian Curriculum, to be known as grammar.
Some research has already been completed into the grammar knowledge of teachers. Harper and Rennie (2008) investigated preservice teachers’ Knowledge about Language (KAL). They found that preservice teachers did not have an adequate understanding about written grammar and highlighted the need to take a strong approach to teaching it as simply knowing about KAL will not necessarily enable teachers to use it effectively.

Love (2009) conducted similar research regarding secondary teachers and Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK). PCK recognises that subject areas have their own characteristic language forms and entail distinctive literacy practices that need learning experiences that are designed for those forms and practices. This study found that teachers need training in the literacy demands of their subject area in order to improve results, and to understand the spoken interaction and development of advanced academic knowledge in secondary school disciplines.

This discussion could lead the reader to surmise that the teaching of literacy is in a dire state. The recent reports provide a top down view – a view from the policy makers. There exists a need to posit an alternative view: an explanation and description of what is actually taking place in classrooms when teachers are teaching literacy, a view from the ground up. There are questions raised regarding the type of grammar being assessed in the NAPLAN test, the pedagogical content knowledge of the teachers and finally the positive or negative effect of the NAPLAN tests on teachers’ actions in the classroom. Analysing the beliefs, assessing the knowledge and observing the practice of a comprehensive sample of primary school teachers will provide a more evidence based viewpoint on the current teaching of literacy in Australia.
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