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**CONTEXTS FOR WRITING: UNDERSTANDING THE CHILD'S  
PERSPECTIVE**

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SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF Ph.D.  
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1998



17 JAN 2000

## ABSTRACT

The integration of social theories into a cognitive explanation of the composing process enlarges our notion of context, calling attention to the historical, social and ideological forces that shape the making of knowledge in educational settings. These approaches suggest that context cues certain actions and that students gain entry into academic contexts if they learn the appropriate forms and discourse conventions. However, methodological approaches to teaching do not address how individuals construct meaning, use knowledge for their own purposes, or engage in reflective processes that influence how individuals will act in a socially-governed situation. Nor do they address the issue of how school-acquired knowledge may be transformed to enable individual students to take ownership of their writing. These concerns motivate the attempt to form a cognitive-social epistemic that acknowledges and explains the role of the individual in constructing meaning within culturally-organized activities in primary educational systems. Through questionnaires, interviews and classroom observations, and applying qualitative analytical procedures, the study discloses layers of complexity in a multi-level description of the ways context and cognition interact. At the general level, a comparative analysis of teachers' and pupils' rationales underlying given writing tasks produces converging references to the educational purposes for writing. At a deeper level, findings that writing possibilities and social possibilities are dynamically interlinked with the emergence of identity, suggest that learning is a constructive process of meaning-making which is uniquely manifested in diverse ways. Studies of classroom interaction determine the impact of strategies deployed within classroom communication to control the meaning-making process and make it possible to discuss the efficacies of peer-interaction in the classroom. A second strand of contextual-oriented research in a non-school setting, which incorporates the computer as a writing tool, reinforces the view that children are primarily social players negotiating roles and relationships by whatever mediational means are made available to them. In light of these results, the thesis acknowledges the complexity of a largely implicit cultural architecture for directing the context of action, and concludes that this structure will be explicated only by adopting an inclusive research strategy to encompass simultaneous acting influences.

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## Key to data transcriptions

Chapters 2 through to 5 present sequences of dialogue extracted from the full transcripts of interviews with children which can be accessed from the disc. For reference purposes, each sequence is headed with a code as in, for example SA.Y3.Ca, which distinguishes the school (SA), the year level (Y3) and the classroom (Ca) from which the interviewed pupils were drawn. Where appropriate, line numbers are attached to the heading or otherwise included in the text. Speakers are identified by single letters as in B (boy) and G (girl), or P (pupil) where the sex is unknown, T (teacher), and R (researcher). The names used in the text have been altered for the protection of identity. Supplementary information concerning what the speakers were doing at the time of speaking is included in italics where it is considered necessary. Since the focus of interest is on content rather than linguistic structure, capital letters and full stops to indicate the beginning and end of sentences are retained, commas are avoided, and the minimum conventional formatting of sequences used to indicate such as pause or simultaneous speech for ease of reading.

### Transcription conventions

(...) Words undeciphered

. . . Omitted discourse irrelevant to the issue under discussion

... Sequence starts or ends within a speaker's turn

/ Pause of less than two seconds

// Pause of greater than two seconds

**Bold type** indicates emphatic speech

[ Simultaneous or interrupted speech

Example:

Speaker 1: . . .you not only share the ideas/ [you share

Speaker 2 [you share the blame as well...

(&) Continuing speech, separated in the transcript by an interrupting speaker

Example: speaker 1 continues talking without pause despite interruption:

Speaker 1: . . .you can put in [what you want (&)

Speaker 2: [what happens

Speaker 1: (&) what happens/ just to make it up as you go along. . .

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## PUBLICATIONS

Johnson, P.G. (1993). The meaning of symbols: The effects of word processing on writing. *Proceedings of the British Psychological Society*. Vol 1, August.

Johnson, P.G. (1995). A social-constructionist approach to writing environments. *Proceedings of the British Psychological Society*. Vol 3, No1. February.

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## CHAPTER 1

### THE IMPORTANCE OF WRITING

#### 1. Aims and Purposes

This thesis comprises a number of studies which explore the socio-cognitive processes underlying children's perceptions of what is involved in learning to become literate. Based primarily upon discussions with children and observations in instructional settings, these studies evolved out of a personal conviction that writing is a problematic yet potentially empowering medium of self expression, and the initial desire to represent the child's own literate experiences and expectations. Although understanding children's assumptions about learning to be literate provided the beginning aim of the thesis and the impetus for research, the process of fashioning literacy in their terms obliged me to go beyond the child's perspective to confront the broader issues of literacy, learning and development both in educational settings and society at large. Thus the research agenda which began with a simple faith in the power of literacy and a narrow focus on children in relation to writing, acquired an increasingly wider focus, and involved a flexible methodological approach, to encapsulate the dynamics of cultural and social-historical forces involved in the development of children.

Although different research programmes across a range of disciplines have entered the classroom to study language and its relationship to learning to write, less attention has been paid to the social motives individuals have for writing. Nor have these approaches addressed the issue of how school-acquired knowledge may be transformed to enable individual students to take ownership of their writing. In this thesis, I have attempted to build on different lines of work to offer an account of how different aspects of children's lives come together through the medium of writing. It has involved envisioning children as positioned in a network of relationships in order to locate the genesis and operation of the underlying intentions, motives, and purposes children have when writing. These motivations underpin the following three broad aims for the research. The first aim is to explain (or understand) how the social institution of school influences the child's perspective on literacy by investigating how and to what extent participation in the school culture reifies particular beliefs, values, and ways of knowing.

The second aim is to examine the communicative processes whereby children construct their definitions of literacy in accordance with the functions and purposes for writing found in a particular social setting. On the one hand, this involves attention to specific



local learning activities in the contexts of school in order to understand the manner in which knowledge is constructed between teachers and learners. On the other hand, the discourses children produce also reflect their relations with the culture more widely. To bring together these aspects and influences in children's lives we need to go beyond the school to a more informal setting to take the perspectives of children as they act and react to make up a context.

The third aim is to integrate the findings of contextual studies reported in this thesis in terms of the contributions they make; first, to the debate on how the study of context should be addressed; and second, to our understanding of the nature of development, or more specifically, how a writer develops a sense of being a member of society. However, in order to see why this challenge may be useful, it is first necessary to outline briefly the territory to be explored.

In order to clarify the aim towards understanding the effects of schooling on children's thinking about writing, we need to account for the ways social theories have positioned 'social context' within a cognitive explanation of the writing process. These approaches frame the construction of knowledge in terms of the shaping power of historical, social and ideological forces (e.g., Bizzell, 1986). Social constructionism, for example, attempts to account for the social and cognitive psychological dimensions as well as the textual dimensions of writing (e.g., Flower, 1994). And increasingly, researchers have adopted the term 'discourse community' (cf. Swales, 1990) to describe the diversity of language use in different social practices (Faigley, 1985). Those interested in studying the community of schooling from this perspective have raised several questions about the nature of school literacy, drawing our attention to the aims and purposes underpinning teachers' definitions of language-learning tasks, and to whether or not presuppositions about literacy are central determinants in the classroom communication systems that develop and which operate to define social relations among participants. Related arguments question the extent to which school literacy is perceived as autonomous or as linked to the wider processes of cultural transmission. All these questions have extensive coverage in contemporary educational research. My prime interest, however, lies in recovering the answers from the child's point of view in, for instance, the extent to which pupils respond to task demands, orient towards teachers expectations, develop consensus, or modify their own perceptions to accord with the norms and conventions of the entity that they identify as 'school'.

In considering the second aim to examine the underlying processes in the construction of knowledge, we need to link ideological questions about literacy to general questions

asked about the nature of learning. Social theorists focus our attention on how children are positioned in the learning process. What factors are involved? Social constructionists heighten our awareness of the *active* nature of the learning process forcing educators and teachers to ask what precisely is the child's role in the formation of knowledge. More recently, poststructuralist theories based on the work of literary theorist, Bakhtin (1981, 1986), and Vygotsky (1987), move us further towards discussing how children acquire knowledge, or how task and context circumscribe writing performance. These dialogic theories of discourse and development provide a framework for analysing the social and cognitive processes at work in the construction of knowledge and meaning. Applying this perspective to the primary school classroom allows us to examine how learning is negotiated between teacher and pupil as each brings their own cultural expectations to the learning event.

The above focus upon cognitive and social concerns in the formation of knowledge may help us account for the ways that the school community influences thought. However, to develop a more integrated theory of writing, we need to shift the problem, momentarily, to focus on the long-term objectives and motives individuals have for writing in particular ways that grow out of social practices beyond the classroom. Cross-cultural comparisons of the social uses of literacy (e.g., Heath, 1983; Street, 1984; Scribner & Cole, 1981) challenge traditional assumptions of literacy as a 'neutral technology', heightening our awareness that language is always ideologically charged and closely tied to context, as well as being intrinsically involved in the cultivation of specific skills. One of the conclusions drawn from this line of research is that school literacy cultivates specialized skills through the operation of a restricted set of literacy activities underpinned by a limited vision of literacy.

Yet these studies also remind us that children bring to school identities conceived in terms of the history of their involvements with various literate forms and cultural practices, each with different motives and objects or social purposes for writing. Moreover, the 'object' in these situations is not normally the text itself as is often the case in school literacy. Rather, the text is used to operationalize some shared object (or focus of activity) and motive that people do things with, beyond discourse. How shall we move from classroom conversations and other local constructions of knowledge and action to include these sorts of shared objects and long-term motives in an analysis? Furthermore, these different sorts of practices embrace individuals or groups who also use a range of nonconversational actions (gestures, movements), and nonlinguistic (maps, drawings) and mechanical tools (computers), often in conjunction with speaking and writing, to carry out some action towards a goal. How shall we account for the

tools-in-use that are organised in part through writing? For this purpose, it may be useful to go beyond the classroom to focus specifically on a different setting to see how children act together when using writing and computers. In doing so, I am concerned to explore the social relatedness among participants, physical context, and the tools-in-use and how they collectively contribute to ongoing, motivated action over time. At the same time, this makes it possible to focus on the individual whose social identity in the setting is conceived in the face of social suggestions from others, and expressed in terms of the on-going choices s/he makes for and about the self when writing. This last demonstration may be crucial to understanding the terms in which children and teachers act together in a situation as well as for understanding how writing works most powerfully.

Thus I am suggesting that a broader unit of analysis than text-as-discourse and wider levels of analysis than the dyadic may be necessary if we are to understand writing, and if we are to find ways of researching the full range of issues that classrooms present. The goal of such a search would be to develop a multi-levelled description of the ways social and cognitive forces interact that will inform us about the processes of entering a discourse, and learning to write, one that accounts for the role of the social individual in constructing meaning within culturally organized practices. This last exposition meets the third aim of the thesis.

### **1.1 Structure of chapter**

The process of inquiry briefly outlined above needs to be understood as part of a more fundamental climate change involving the evolution of ideas about the nature of knowledge, and the relationship between language and meaning. In this chapter, I seek to trace the changing conceptions of language as they have historically affected our understanding of writing, text, and meaning. I examine conflicting ideas about oral and written channels of communication. I describe the emergence of a community of writing research as its focus began to transcend traditional problems of effective pedagogy to address the central problem of meaning in discourse. I describe the shift in focus within the field of writing research from text, to individual/cognitive and how 'cognitive', with the inception of sociolinguistics, became 'social'. I briefly outline how initial, conflicting theoretical formulations of writer, reader, and text have come to be subordinated within the larger framework of 'discourse community' to reflect dynamic communications among purpose, participants, genre, setting, and code (Hymes, 1972). Following this, I examine the outcomes of programmes of primary curriculum writing research that have informed pedagogical practice. I trace the genesis of genre-based cultural explanations of writing, and explore current controversies over a genre

approach to the teaching of writing. Finally, I provide a brief outline of the Vygotskian model of development and describe how those researchers working within a Vygotskian framework have elaborated key concepts of his theory in diverse ways. I describe the implications of the sociocultural perspective for practical approaches to teaching and learning, and for expanding the scope of analysis.

## **1.2 Introduction: Attitudes to writing**

A cursory glance at any historical account of symbolic evolution reveals that writing is not merely a value-neutral channel for conveying information. There can be little doubt that writing systems are components of social organization, and that within social structures literacy is intricately associated with social and political power. History records the endeavours of competing nations to impose their own culture by obliterating the artifacts, the written symbols of another. It is not without significance that Cortez, having conquered Mexico in 1520, ordered the burning of the Aztec books - the symbols of a glorious past, and that the Spanish Inquisition burned the Talmud along with the Jews. In Gelb's (1963) words: 'Writing exists only in a civilization and a civilization cannot exist without writing' (1963:222).

Gelb's (1963) interesting study of symbolic evolution reinforces the notion that writing embodies the externalized thoughts, ideas, beliefs representative of a particular culture. The progression in complexity from ideographic representation through to the early phonetic systems of the Sumerians, Egyptians, Hittite and the later economy of the phonetic Semitic writing systems correlates with a progression in the complexity of social organisation. More recently, Olson (1995) advances the analysis of the effects of writing beyond its mnemonic and communicative purposes to hypothesize that 'writing systems provide the concepts and categories for thinking about the structure of spoken language' (1995:100).

Historical accounts also show that social valence is implicit in the distribution of writing abilities within a population (e.g., Gelb, 1963; Goody and Watt, 1963; Havelock, 1963). Despite the great advances in administration and technology witnessed in ancient civilisations, literacy was confined to a relatively small proportion of the population - a literate elite group, whose influence crucially depended on preserving the existing social order (Goody, 1977). Rubin (1988) similarly recognizes political implications in the ways access to literacy is bestowed or withheld selectively, noting that 'few slave transgressions were so severely proscribed as book reading' in slave-holding America' (1988:21).

### 1.2.1 Oral and literate thinking

More speculative, but of profound import, is the claim that oral language and written language involve different epistemologies or ways of knowing. In a seminal paper written in collaboration with Watt in 1963, Goody sets out to counter-balance what he perceives to be the 'relativism and sentimental egalitarianism' within anthropology that ignores distinctions between oral and written cultures. Focusing particularly on the ways the cultural heritage is differently transmitted in literate and non-literate societies, Goody and Watt begin by defining the distinguishing features of oral and literate modes of thinking. In a non-literate society, the oral mode of transmission favours consistency between past and present. Cultural tradition is transmitted almost entirely by face-to-face communication, and changes in content are accompanied by a homeostatic process of forgetting or transforming of those traditions no longer considered relevant. In contrast, the written records of previously-held attitudes and beliefs in literate societies foster an increased awareness of inconsistency between past and present. This results in scepticism which encourages an intellectual inquiry characteristic of the Greek endeavour to distinguish truth, *episteme* from current opinion, *doxa*, in sixth-century Ionia (Goody and Watt, 1963:344).

### 1.2.2 Questions of Reality

Several authors perceive the consequences of this Greek enterprise in terms of an increasing emphasis on the role of language in constituting reality (e.g., Ricoeur, 1973; Popper, 1972). For example, Ricoeur argues that written language provides a means of investigating and enlarging reality, and Popper claims that 'science is a branch of literature' in which the logical process of deduction derives from a particular literary technique (1972:185). For Locke and others, writing came to serve as an exploratory device for examining problems, and in the course of examination, generating new knowledge. Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) exemplifies the technique of examining an assertion to determine all its implications, testing the veracity of those implications, and using the results to revise or generalize from the original statement (Olson, 1977). This 'objectivist' view of the nature of writing and the style it recommends supports Chomsky's assumption that the meaning of a sentence can be found in the syntactic structure of the sentence itself. Whereas in oral contexts, the listener has access to a variety of information with which to recover the speaker's intentions, autonomous written language requires that all the information relevant for communication is present in the text (Olson, 1977). In this view, prose text embodies rules of logic for deriving implications and, as such, constitutes a powerful instrument for constructing abstract theories of reality.

Yet the kind of truth extractable from these abstract theories, may be far removed from the intuitive and common sense notions of truth as wisdom, the product of practical intelligence. The question then arises as to whether or not written language can bring us closer to representing 'reality'. Frye challenges the implication that all knowledge is located in human intellectual activity by arguing that utterance and text appeal to two different underlying assumptions of what is true; 'truth as wisdom' and 'truth as correspondence' (Frye, 1971). Frye argues that truth in oral utterances is primarily concerned with truth as wisdom, in that a statement is considered true if it seems reasonable, plausible, and congruent with conventional thought. From this perspective, a statement appeals for its meaning to shared experiences and interpretations that are grounded in commonsense knowledge and intuitions. Truth in prose text is primarily concerned with the correspondence between statements and observations. In order to serve the requirements of written language, all the information relevant to the communication of intention must be present in the text. In short, the text must become an autonomous representation of meaning. For this purpose, the meanings of the terms and the logical relations between them must be conventionalized. Words must be defined in terms of other words according to strict rules of grammar so that they indicate the text's underlying logical structure.

From a linguistic perspective, Austin (1962) and Halliday (1978) extend the argument above by distinguishing between oral and written language in terms of the communicative functions and purposes each modality serves. In this view, conversational utterance and prose text involve different alignments of the functions in language. Any utterance thus serves at least two functions simultaneously - the rhetorical or interpersonal function and the logical or ideational function. In speech the interpersonal function is primary in that the utterance is directed towards a listener. Thus, if a sentence is inappropriate to a particular listener, then the utterance is a failure. In contrast, the primary function in written text is the logical or ideational function because of the indirect relation between writer and reader. The differing functions of utterance and prose text shift the emphasis from direct communication between speakers based on shared representations of what is true, to indirect communication based on logical relations between suppositions. The emphasis on logical relations of linguistic text features forces a demand for explicitness and a higher degree of conventionalization in written text. Consequently, there is an ever present danger that the degree of explicitness required in written text leads to false suppositions based on logic rather than commonsense reality.

### 1.2.3 The Greek Legacy

Goody and Watt conceive the social consequences of the spread of literacy in Western Societies in terms of disunity and fragmentation rather than the idealistic manifestation of the 'democratic text'. In their view, what characterises literate culture and justifies the distinction from oral culture, is the enormous complexity and variety of the cultural repertoire which prevents the individual from 'experiencing the cultural tradition as any sort of patterned whole' (1963:335-336). Although the strong barrier between writers and non-writers in proto-literate societies no longer exists, relative expertise in the handling of the tools of reading and writing leads to social differentiation in contemporary western cultures. This differentiation extends beyond social stratification to the more minute differences between literate specialists based on what people read. Culture conflict is created when the oral tradition - still the primary transmissary mode of values within a literate culture - is out of step with the various literate traditions. This conflict is most highly focused in schools where the public literate tradition often clashes with the private oral traditions of family and peer group. In non-literate societies these conflicts are largely avoided since cultural tradition is transmitted more uniformly through the individual's social experience and immediate personal context. By contrast, the 'decontextualized' thinking associated with literacy is fundamentally at odds with the concreteness of daily life and common experience.

Interestingly, some of these tensions are manifest in Plato who used writing extensively as a medium for expression in critiquing the views of his peers. It is difficult to imagine how a complex series of arguments such as those presented in *The Republic*, for example, could be sustained and understood in oral form. And yet *The Dialogues* compose the most explicit invective against the written channel as a mean of conveying thoughts and values. For Socrates in *The Phaedrus*, writing epitomized the alienation of rhetors from their messages, and he decried its potential for irresponsible and irresponsible human relations: 'Anyone who leaves behind him a written manual, and likewise anyone who takes it over from him, on the supposition that such writing will provide something reliable and permanent, must be exceedingly simple minded' (Phaedrus, 277c, cited in Goody and Watt, 1963:328). Plato's preference for a dialectic method of inquiry as a more direct and coherent means of transmitting knowledge between generations, and his distaste for the shallowness and impermanency of the written word makes the point that written statements can neither be interrogated should a misunderstanding occur nor altered to suit the requirements of the listener.

Leaving aside Plato's concerns about the effectiveness of reading in the transmission of knowledge, other problems result from the literate process: 'the abstractness of the

sylogism...and the compartmentalization of knowledge...restricts the kind of connections which the individual can establish and ratify with the natural and social world' (Goody and Watt, 1963:337). Furthermore, the permanency of writing makes words available for much more prolonged scrutiny than is orally possible, thereby encouraging private thought and an increased awareness of individual differences in behaviour. This abstract and solitary process is to be contrasted with the more direct personal interaction that obtains in childrearing practices and other forms of socially-directed activity that depend on speech. As Goody and Watt (1963) point out: 'The relationship between oral and written traditions must be regarded as a major problem in Western cultures' (1963:345).

Despite this useful attention to the problems attending the acquisition of literacy, the strong claims made by Goody and others for its uses and consequences have not gone unchallenged. Other projects have come to flank this earlier interest in cross-cultural comparison of literate practices and controversies have arisen over traditional assumptions about the qualities intrinsic to literacy and its potential for universal intellectualism. Street (1984) and researchers who favour anthropological perspectives on literacy (Heath, 1983; Scribner and Cole, 1981), argue that our culture habitually confuses the the technology of writing with the phenomenon of abstract, rational, 'high-order' thought. Street calls attention to some of the erroneous assumptions in much writing on literacy from which high/low assignments are made. These high/low comparisons have been applied to different periods of historical development where the development of literacy is infused with a sense of 'progress' or 'civilization' (e.g., Goody and Watt, 1963; Olson, 1977); different contemporary societies, where syntagmatic thought is 'more primitive' than paradigmatic thought (e.g., Luria, 1976); and different social classes where context-free 'elaborated' codes are more sophisticated than context-bound 'restricted' codes (Bernstein, 1971). It is these assumptions that result from the polemicizing of oral and literate modes of communication which, in Street's view, lend authority to the narrow culture-specific practices found in schools.

In particular, Street (1984) argues at length that strong text theories isolate speaking and writing as distinct modalities and ignore social and cultural ideologies and the social practices that define literate acts. Scribner and Cole's study of Vai literate practices, for example, draws attention to 'different literacies', and challenges the prevailing 'monolithic' view of writing by demonstrating the linkage between specific skills and specific practices. Vai, Arabic, and English operate among the Vai people of Liberia. Each literate practice serves different functions and is learned by different individuals in different contexts. Vai literature is an indigenous writing system that is learned through

personal tuition outside of school. Knowledge of Arabic script is principally associated with rote learning of the Koran while English, the language used for administrative purposes, is learned in schools outside the community. A comparative analysis of these specialisms finds that specific practices enhance specific skills that are not necessarily transferable to other practices. For instance, Vai literates developed explicit verbalization skills, and Arabic literates performed better than others on certain kinds of memory tasks. Those who learned English in school developed skills in tasks involving abstract reasoning and logical explanations. This work challenges claims for the 'universal' qualities attributed to literacy per se by those more generally disposed towards an autonomous approach.

#### 1.2.4 Writing as externalized thinking

For other scholars, Olson's (1977) doctrine of written language as externalized thought and its implication for 'autonomous' texts promised to shed new light on the uniqueness of writing as an intellectual process and its role in discovery and learning (e.g., Bruner, 1966; Bruner & Olson, 1977; Elbow, 1983; Murray, 1980). Yet few, until relatively recently, chose to grasp the opportunity. Some scholars attribute this neglect to a historically-held view of writing as part of the 'high' literate tradition - a mysterious process that only those 'good at writing could do (e.g., Pea, 1987). Other authors suggest that the widely publicized jokes about absent-minded professors and the idiosyncrasies of well-known writers contributed to this mystique (Green & Wason, 1982; Plimpton, 1981). For example, Somerset Maugham (1963) comments:

The peculiarity of the artist is that he is in some particular different from other men, and so the world of his construction is different too. It is this idiosyncrasy that is the better part of his equipment. When the picture he draws of his private world appeals to a certain number of persons, either by its strangeness, its intrinsic interest or its correspondence with their own prepossessions...his talent will be acknowledged. If he is a writer he will fulfil some need in the nature of his readers, and they will lead with him a life of the spirit that satisfies them better than the life circumstances have forced on them (pp. 52-53, *The Summing Up*).

Somerset Maugham's comment illustrates a distinction that can be made between writing as an art and writing as communication. While most of writing is communicative, not all of writing can be considered artful. Rubin (1988) makes a similar distinction between the 'functional' literacy exhibited by the vast majority of adults and the few adults who display a more 'profound understanding of how to use writing for any advanced purposes'. In the same critical vein as Street and others, Rubin

argues that 'despite the ideal of universal literacy - the writing curriculum can be viewed as nothing other than an instrument for reproducing social status and disenfranchisement. Serious efforts to transform the teaching of writing are efforts to transform society' (1988:22).

For those interested in language education, these 'serious efforts' were inspired by the need to respond to a perceived crisis of literacy skill brought on by a dramatic rise in university admissions of non-traditional students in the 1970's. The resulting heterogeneous quality of undergraduates forced teachers to confront both their responsibilities and their inadequacies in relation to writing instruction. Questioning the extent to which writing could be taught as an art raised many seminal issues about the nature of writing and related questions concerning interrelationships between reader, writer and text. Although important conceptions of writing predate the 1970's (notably Moffett, 1968), many researchers mark this period as signifying the emergence of coherent research programmes marrying theoretical conceptions with empirical research. The new interdiscipline, a 'psychology of writing', is informed by diverse fields, including classical rhetoric, tagmemic and transformational linguists, sociolinguistics, semiotics, problem solving, cognitive psychology, and critical theory. If composition studies began with localized concern over traditional problems of effective pedagogy, its emergence as a scholarly discipline transcended pedagogical concerns to extend to the general intellectual climate.

### **1.3 Orientations within a field: Debates and issues**

In this section I outline the historical dimensions of a new interdisciplinary approach to the psychology of writing. I draw on the accounts of several writers (e.g., Faigley, 1985; Berlin, 1988; Nystrand, 1993) to describe three dominant theoretical approaches to writing; the textual, the individual/cognitive, and the social, that have emerged during the past two decades. I examine these approaches as they have variously influenced our understanding about the nature of writing and the relationship between knowledge and meaning. I point out how one orientation builds on another, responding to, and conditioning those that follow. In so doing, I hope to situate these issues and questions in an ongoing debate about writing instruction.

#### **1.3.1 The Autonomy of Texts**

Recently, Nystrand's (1993) historical exploration of the evolution of composition studies records the dominance of formalist thinking about literature and instruction in almost all disciplines prior to the 1970's. The essence of formalist philosophy lies in the assumption that all meaning can be derived from the text with minimal reference to the

writer's autobiography, or intentions, or the context in which it was written. In this view, writing is thought made explicit and, as such, the purpose of text was to fix the meaning in a stable, objective representation, later characterized as "autonomous text" (Olson, 1977). This conception of literature and composition, incorporated behaviourist principles by emphasizing the relationship between text elements, rhythm and rhyme, images, and figures of speech. Pedagogically it functioned to instantiate the notion of the 'model' text defined in terms of the five-paragraph theme, consisting of an introductory paragraph, a three paragraph body, and a concluding paragraph. Connors (1985) captures the tenor of the prevailing ethos by wryly commenting that English composition came to mean only one thing: 'the single-minded enforcement of standards of mechanical correctness in writing' (Connors, 1985:61).

Above all, Nystrand illustrates how writing assessment during this period served to standardize reader response by imposing a univocality of text meaning. He reports that the problem of variability in reader response to a given text was solved by weighting factors, such as quality of ideas, structure, organization, and mechanics (spelling and punctuation) equally, thereby enforcing interrelator reliability on the salience of text features.

### **1.3.2 The New literacy: an individual/cognitive perspective**

The challenge to formalist conceptions of literature and composition came in the late 1960's with reformers such as James Britton and Douglas Barnes in Britain, James Moffett in America proclaiming its inadequacy as a model for guiding students' thinking. The Anglo-American conference at Dartmouth in 1966 provided a forum for openly questioning the traditional skills-based approaches to writing and literary interpretation. Both Moffet and Britton called for a re-emphasis on students' lived experience thus laying the foundations for a Growth model (e.g., Dixon, 1967) based on an individualized and cognitive conception of writing. In Moffett's words: 'Rendering experience into words is the real business of school, not linguistic analysis...or rhetorical analysis, which are proper for college' (Moffett, 1968:114). Arguing that writers' always write about 'something to someone', Moffett theorized that discourse is reflective and relational (concerned with the writer's relation to topics at various levels of abstraction), and rhetorical (concerned with the writer's relation to a reader). Stating that language learning was largely a 'cognitive' issue, Moffett argued that writing development entailed learning to write with increasing abstraction to an increasingly wider audience. In building representations of meaning (signifying external and conceptual realities) writers select information on the relevance principle. Consequently, prior experience shapes focus and helps make connective inferences: 'What happens...is that features are not

only selected but reorganized, and...integrated with previously abstracted information'. (Moffett, 1968:22).

This debate, in combination with the publication of seminal works on writing and learning (e.g., Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod and Rosen, 1975), was instrumental in introducing U.S. educators to the British model of language instruction. In his critique of traditional conceptions of writing and instruction, Britton, drawing on cognitive theory (e.g., Piaget), linguistics (e.g., Sapir) and echoing Dewey's ideas on progressive education, stated that, 'The primary task for speech is to symbolize reality: we symbolize reality in order to handle it' (Britton, 1970:20). Language was not only the primary means of systematically representing experience but also the individual's chief means of revising the resulting representation. Britton identified expressive writing as most closely involving the personal values and opinions of the writer. He further distinguished two modes of expressive language as emerging from self-expression, characterizing poetic language as that used by writers (or speakers) to verbalize their experiences, and transactional language as the writer's efforts to influence others (through persuasion). In foregrounding the role of the individual in language development, he noted that schools often silenced expressive writing by having students work to prescribed practices. Britton's study of students' writing led him to speculate that language learning and the construction of meaning is an interactive process involving social conditions and the individual mind.

In placing the personal, linguistic, and psychological growth of students above subject matter and linguistic demands of disciplines (Applebee, 1974), both these Dartmouth-era critiques of school writing anticipated student-centred and process-centred models of reading and writing, supported by research into individual composing processes (Emig, 1971; Shaughnessy, 1977). In *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*, Emig (1971) argued against such formalisms as the conventional five-paragraph theme: 'One could say that the major kind of essay too many students have been taught to write in the American schools is algorithmic, or so mechanical that a computer could readily be programmed to produce it' (Emig, 1971:52). In a critique of Warriner's (1950, chapter 11) 'good writer' who 'puts words together in correct, smooth sentences, according to the rules of standard usage', Emig suggests that 'processes of writing do not proceed in a linear sequence: rather they are recursive' (Emig, 1981:26). Emig reiterated the importance of writer's purpose in the composing process, contending that school writing often vitiates authentic purposes by inhibiting self-sponsored or personal writing focusing on the writer's own experiences.

### 1.3.2.1 The meaning of Text

While Emig was actively criticising approaches to the composing process, Stanley Fish was making several similar points in relation to reader-response, effectively raising many questions concerning the stability of text meaning. Unlike the New Critics, for whom meaning was characterised as propositional, fixed in formal text elements, meaning for Fish was not an object in itself but rather 'an event, something that happens to, and with the participation of, the reader'. (Fish, 1970:83). Both Fish and Emig directed attention away from text onto dynamic cognitive processes of the writer/reader. This shift in focus was informed by research in cognitive psychology, linguistics, and psycholinguistics at Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the 1960's, specifically the work of Chomsky, Miller and Jerome Bruner (Nystrand (1993). Chomsky (e.g, 1986) challenged early empirical and behavioural tenets of linguistic formalism and shifted the focus of linguistics from formal language structures to the 'deep structures' of the individual mind. Put simply, within Chomsky's framework of transformational-generative grammar, the structure-building operations of the mind enable the practical development of an individual's linguistic competence. This orientation towards cognitive processes brought about a complementary shift in research emphasis on writing and reading as dynamic cognitive processes of constructing meaning.

These challenges to traditional conceptions of language and meaning provided a rationale for many cognitive studies during the late 1970's and 1980's, including Applebee's research on writing in secondary schools (Applebee, 1984); Faigley and Witte's (1981) studies; Daiute's (1981) psycholinguistic study of the writing processes; the development of children's writing abilities through instruction and writing practices (e.g., Bracewell, Frederiksen, & Frederikson, 1982; Flower & Hayes, 1980, 1981a, 1981b; Hayes & Flower, 1980), and studies of interventionist strategies for the purpose of improving writing instruction instigated by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (e.g., Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1982; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1985). Generally, by the 1980's writing was viewed as a dynamic meaning-making process comprising activities distinguishable as planning, translating, reviewing and monitoring (Pea, 1987).

### 1.3.2.2 The process approach

Flower and Hayes' model characterized the writing process in terms of its complexity, by focusing on the many cognitive demands which impinge on the writer at the same time. Beyond the most obvious traditional constraints of spelling, word meaning and grammar, researchers (e.g., Collins and Gentner, 1980) outlined the importance of paying attention to the 'pragmatics' of the situation - the purposes and goals, the

anticipated audience, the familiarity or otherwise of the topic, the genre of the composition as a whole. From this perspective, writing assumed an aspect of problem-solving analogous to the general theory of problem-solving developed by Newell and Simon (1972). While this perspective has been applied successfully in areas where the goals are relatively well-defined such as science and mathematics, the act of writing differed in one important respect: in the recognition that goals themselves can be redefined by means of the writing activity itself (Murray, 1978; Bereiter, 1980).

#### 1.3.2.2.1 Novices versus expert writers

The work of Flower and Hayes, Bereiter and Scardamalia, and others has proved instrumental in describing the differences between experts and novices, particularly in the processes of planning and revision. In the developmental literature on writing, the term 'novice' writer refers to both children and adults, while 'expert' writers are 'those who are recognized as such by their peers in the genre they have mastered' (Pea, 1987:293). Flower, (1979) distinguishes the 'writer-based prose' of the novice from the 'reader-based prose' of the expert which reflects the purpose of the writer. Writer-based prose demonstrates the tendency to translate oral speech conventions into written language (Shaughnessy, 1977) which produces text written in linear, non reflective fashion (Larson, 1971) without regard for its intended audience (Maimon, 1979). Bereiter and Scardamalia (1983) term this procedure the 'what next strategy' which several authors, notably Kroll (1978), attribute to the 'cognitive egocentrism' of the novice writer. The development of writing abilities is generally conceived in terms of a continuous shift from knowledge-telling to knowledge-transforming that results from reflective thinking while writing (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987).

Important insights into the way people write have been gained using this model as an observational tool. First, the basic processes of writing are organized hierarchically in contrast to earlier "stage models" of writing, such as Pre-Write, Write, and Re-write (Rohman, 1965), that propose writing to proceed in linear form. Second, writing becomes an act of purposefulness by the creation of a hierarchical network of goals which direct the sequencing of mental processes. Finally, studies of mature writing processes demonstrate the epistemic potential of writing as writers revise their goals, read and revise their texts (Scardamalia, Bereiter, & Steinbach, 1984; Murray, 1978). In these ways, writing was viewed as a form of situated mental action.

Equally, some of the difficulties experienced by novice writers can be presented in terms of this model. First, novices find difficulty in planning, in generating ideas from long-term memory, and in organizing them (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1982). Expert

writers demonstrate explicit goal setting (Flower & Hayes, 1981b) in contrast to novice writers (Perl, 1979; Sommers, 1980). The protocols of children generally reflect a lack of awareness of goal-setting and conflicts between various schemes (Burtis, Bereiter, Scardamalia & Tetroe, 1983). Second, in translating, novices tend to concentrate on grammar and spelling and ignore pragmatic constraints such as whether the information is old or new to the reader (Nold, 1982). Third, when reviewing or revising text, the novice writer is unable to think beyond the text itself in terms of goals, organizational structure, and content (Cooper & Matsushashi, 1983; Flower and Hayes, 1984). Revision tends to be restricted to small mechanical corrections of grammar and spelling, word/phrase substitutions and deletions, rather than restructural organization (Sommers, 1980). Finally, novices demonstrate executive limitations in their failure to monitor writing processes. Monitoring depends on the ability of the writer to recognize that writing is a multistage rather than a linear process. Novices have difficulty recognizing their problems and gaining access to techniques and strategies to overcome them.

#### 1.3.2.2.2 Children versus novice adult writers

Clearly, the distinction in maturational and experiential histories assumes that child novice writers have more obstacles to overcome than adults in the development of writing skills (Pea, 1987). Adults have developed metapragmatic knowledge through extensive experience in communicative contexts, social exchanges and through reading, and thus have a broader knowledge-base from which to generate ideas, topics and word knowledge (Miller & Johnson-Laird, 1976). Furthermore, adults have a more highly-structured and net-worked long-term memory than children which affects organizational ability and text self-evaluation (Pea & Kurland, 1987). For adult writers, the sheer automacity of translation with regard to punctuation, spelling and writing skills allows greater fluency in translating from thought to text (Scardamalia and Bereiter, 1985; Stevenson & Palmer, 1994). In addition, school children's less well-developed mental processing capacities severely limits access to complex revision techniques (Case, 1985).

The work of Scardamalia and Bereiter, (1985) provides considerable evidence to indicate that child novice writers do not use executive control skills for flicking between different subprocesses of writing, attempting instead to cope with them all simultaneously. Only between sixth and eighth grade do think-aloud protocols of novices begin to reveal abstract planning processes (Burtis et al., 1983). As a means of overcoming these limitations, Scardamalia & Bereiter (1985) improvised the techniques of 'procedural facilitation' interventions using prompts and cue cards to improve the quality of the texts produced by novice writers.

### 1.3.2.2.3 The legacy of the process approach

Although other language-processing models were evolving elsewhere in the academic community (e.g., Rumelhart, 1980), Ackerman (1993) explains that the expositions of the 'process' movement gained popularity 'because they presented cognitive theories that carried assumptions, metaphors, and goals attractive to writing teachers in English departments who were not necessarily accustomed to thinking about mental models and information processing' (Ackerman, 1993:339). Research and theory forged relationships among audience, purpose, and the mental processes of the writer forming a rationale for a process approach to the teaching of writing. Building on the deeply-held values of integrity, spontaneity, and creativity espoused by the 'expressive' movement (e.g., Britten et al., 1975; Elbow, 1983), advocates of 'process' as a model for writing-to-learn conferred a new status on the child writer as author with new implications for empowerment, ownership, and control over writing (Bloome, 1984; Dyson, 1988; Hudson, 1986, 1988). An emerging emphasis on social aspects of writing resulted from the very success of the process movement itself. Problems of text, social context, and genre became more salient and interesting to researchers who, previously, had tended to focus almost exclusively on essayist techniques. The wider academic community began to address the shortcomings of a developmental model that, Ackerman suggests, 'does little to capture the socialization process of language use in higher education' (1993:350). Moreover, theories of writing and learning seemed to ignore culturally valued participant structures and communicative competences within communities (Phillips, 1972).

### 1.3.2.2.4 Problems with the process approach

A converging line of evidence points to a growing concern about the adequacy of instruction consisting of informal, expressive and exploratory practices. Gilbert (1994), for example, articulates some of the concerns expressed in the wider community in suggesting that school literacy merely perpetuates the authoring mystique by constraining learning narrowly within the context of literary discourse. This perspective generates expectations of a style of writing definable in terms of originality, creativity and the presence of 'personal voice' in the text. The application of such terms as 'authentic authorship', 'creative writing', and 'personal response' Gilbert argues, serves to 'authorize disadvantage' because 'they construct an image of language learning which is personal, not learned; individual, not social; innate, not environmental' (Gilbert, 1994:260). At the core of this critique lies a growing disenchantment with an ideological commitment to an individualistic, highly personalised, and speech-orientated theory of writing where learning is largely a matter of personal discovery. It will be useful at this point, to consider the underlying theoretical assumptions about

writing and learning and the consequences that follow from process-based instructional practices.

First, the commitment to personalist and individualistic approaches to writing reveal long-held assumptions derived from earlier linguistic theory, about the relation of speech to writing. In simple terms, earlier generations of linguists (e.g., Bloomfield, 1964) failed to delineate the distinctive characteristics and functions of each mode of language. Since speech is primary in the development of language use, it was assumed that the main function of writing as a secondary 'abstract' language system is to represent speech. The effect of this inability to recognise the multifunctionality of writing is apparent in the tendency to confuse one model with the other (Street, 1984). On the one hand, the strong cultural bias towards written forms leads theorists, often implicitly, to construct models of speech based on studies of the rule-governing forms of the socially-higher valued written form (Kress, 1982). On the other, a 'unifunctional' view of language results in the tendency to view writing in the same terms as speech - as a natural communication between writer and reader. Powerful writing thus depends on the ability to reproduce those features characteristic of speech - the spontaneity of the human 'voice', the authentic expression of individual subjectivity. Conversely, writing that appears merely to imitate the forms and conventions of written language is seen as contrived, artificial and inauthentic (Gilbert, 1994). On this point the 'process movement' and the 'expressive movement' (Britten et al., 1975; Elbow, 1983; Graves, 1983), share similar theoretical assumptions particularly with respect to theories concerning the development of writing abilities. In each case, conceptions of power are constituted in the individual, and the individual is always the starting point for analysis.

This questioning of assumptions underlying 'process' approaches to writing may be extended to the 'learning by discovery' methods of teaching which cater for the tendencies outlined above. Following Piaget (1971), the term 'discovery' embodies an image of the child as agent actively engaged in the search for meaning, 'who relates new knowledge to past experiences, formulating and refining hypotheses and moving slowly towards the adult model' (Czerniewska, 1992:129). It is this Piagetian model with its emphasis on individuality that authorizes learning through play, exploration, and discovery and gives support to a teaching role as organizer, facilitator, and supporter as the most effective means of promoting personal growth. This philosophical position frames learning in terms of a process of enquiry and critical reflection which is best sustained within a stimulating environment with the teacher 'leading from behind' (Edwards and Mercer, 1987).

The difficulties with this approach are that the kind of cognitively demanding, probing, and eliciting (rather than telling) questions in the collaborative classroom recommended in, for instance, the Plowden Report (1967) often generate confusion and contradiction in social institutions like schools. The circumstances of learning and practice often constitute 'interventions' which make it difficult for teachers to implement the advised recommendations. Gilbert (1994) argues that many of the confusions for children acquiring literacy arise because these children are not explicitly taught the craft of writing. And, despite the predominance of narrative in the early years, many children leave the primary grades with only a slight understanding of the typical generic expectations of this style of writing.

### 1.3.3 A genre-based approach

The arguments opposing approaches to instruction based on personal expression and discovery learning outlined above are advanced by theorists based in the University of Sydney's Department of Linguistics who work in the systemic or 'Hallidayan' tradition (cf. Halliday, 1978). These theorists propose to address the issue of student empowerment through the deployment of a 'genre-based' approach to writing instruction. The term genre, in this perspective, is defined as 'purposeful, staged cultural activity in which human beings engage' (Christie, 1984:20), and comprises a semiotic system for accomplishing social purposes by verbal means. The main thrust of this argument is that children (particularly working-class children and ethnic minority groups) are denied opportunities for social empowerment by a teaching agenda which orients towards personal narrative and story, and does little to promote those impersonal genres of factual and expository prose most salient in society. The claim that is being advanced by this argument is that an appreciation of genre conventions is fundamentally valuable to the realization of social goals. In making this claim, leading proponents of the Australian 'genre' movement (e.g., Martin, Christie, and Rothery, 1987), and notably, Kress (1982) in the UK, argue for paying attention to the larger textual structures beyond the sentence, for focusing on the political dimensions of genre, and for initiating the project of genre education.

At this point, it is important to recognise the extent to which these arguments derive strength from developments within the field of linguistics, and the concepts that have since emerged. In the following section, I briefly consider these developments as they have contributed to a burgeoning research interest in the kinds of language use that are typical of different social situations. I discuss how distinctive sociolinguistic and functionally-oriented approaches emerged to challenge some of the fundamental

assumptions underlying Chomsky's structuralist views about language. To understand these developments, we first need to consider the concept of 'discourse community'.

### 1.3.3.1 Discourse communities

The studies of scholars like Hymes (1972, 1974) on the varieties of language usage delineated a much broader scope of linguistic analysis than Chomsky's basic distinctions between competence and performance could accommodate. Hymes effectively challenged Chomsky's description of universalist principles of grammar particularly syntax, in which all people have competence, by specifying the different 'language competences' of the language user. Attention to language varieties made it possible to conceive the differences among languages in terms of the different social functions of language use associated with specific social purposes. This focus on linguistic differences gives rise to the notion of a 'speech community' defined as 'a community sharing knowledge of rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech. Such sharing comprises knowledge also of its patterns of use' (Hymes, 1974:51). More recently, scholars operating from a 'social' perspective have appropriated the concept of speech community to interpret the specialized forms and conventions of academic writing in terms of discourse communities (e.g., Bizzell, 1982; Faigley, 1985). Such a social view of writing postulates that individuals write as members of communities which constrain the ways they structure meaning.

These developments can be traced to insightful research in the pragmatics of language use by philosophers of language, Austin (1962), Grice (1975), and Searle (1969). For example, Austin's functional analysis of an utterance first distinguished its *illocutionary* force (what the speaker intends to mean) from its *locutionary* (literal meaning) and its *perlocutionary* effect (the effect that is produced). Subsequently, Grice (1975) conceived the complexity of the illocutionary force of an utterance in terms of conversational implicatures to refer to what the speaker intends to mean by an utterance as distinct from its literal meaning. Grice observed that conversation normally proceeds according to a set of 'maxims' (e.g., quantity and relevance) based on the cooperative principle. Deliberate violations of a maxim signify the speaker's intention to reveal an implicature of the utterance that contrasts with its logical meaning. This complex theory of language use is a powerful indication of the importance of context (relationships between speakers and shared knowledge about their situation) for predicting the meaning of a sentence. These challenges to Chomsky's theory provided the groundwork for further advances in linguistic pragmatics, the study of why and how language is used (e.g., Levinson, 1983), and discourse analysis (e.g., Stubbs, 1983).

Many of the concepts emerging from these developments in the pragmatics of language have extensive contemporary currency throughout research communities. In particular, researchers began to investigate the role of language in specific social situations and discourse communities (e.g., Cook-Gumperz, 1986). Influential studies in the field of composition studies include Shaughnessy's (1977) research on the logic of error in the writing of nontraditional student populations; Sommers' (1980) approach to revision in terms of the writer's anticipation of discrepancies between readers' expectations and their texts; Heath's (1983) and Scribner and Cole's (1981) studies on the influence of discourse communities on individual members and their abilities to meet the demands of typical school tasks, and Dyson's (1985, 1988, 1991) studies on emergent literacy. The implications to follow from this research were that students' failure in school could not be simply explained in terms of deficits in intellectual capacity. Rather, it resulted largely from unfamiliarity or lack of practice in the forms and conventions of academic discourse (Bizzell, 1982; Shaughnessy, 1977). Bizzell (1982), recognized the implications of this line of thinking for attacking instructional practices that disempower or marginalize students by focusing on the 'deficiencies' in their thinking instead of on the differences between their own culture and those of the mainstream. These are the terms in which the Australian genre researchers frame their commitment to the explicit acknowledgement of the political dimension of genre.

Before outlining the practical implications of a 'genre-centred' education, I will examine the theory and conceptions that underlie this approach to social context in sufficient detail to reach a clearer understanding of how they have been translated in the classroom context. In what follows I describe some of the theoretical assumptions of the 'Sydney School', drawing on the work of scholars who have contributed to the field. I then describe more precisely the basis on which these theorists propose a challenge to process-based teaching methods, and follow this by directly addressing the strategies they employ.

#### 1.3.3.2 Conceptualizing 'genre'

Traditional literary studies conceived genres, such as a sonnet or a play, as 'types' or 'kinds', characterised by similarities of content and form. Current genre studies, which tend to concentrate on the non-literary genres, also focus on textual regularities in, for example, the aim, method, procedure, observations, and conclusions in the organization of the research report. More importantly, however, contemporary theorists seek to link this recognition of regularities in textual types with a broader social and cultural understanding of language use. The view that genre is rather more than text is reflected in the operational definition supplied by Swales (1990). Using terminology familiar to

applied linguistics, a genre is defined primarily by its common communicative purposes which, when combined with its role in the environment, give rise to specific textual features (see Swales, 1990, for a detailed discussion of the redefinitions of 'genre'). For Swales and others interested in an educational application, genre is a powerful facilitator for the management of ideas and for the organisation of various textual constituents. Swales' analysis of the relationship between the writer and genre incorporates the notion of a communicative context composed of three closely related, interacting elements, each of which is motivated by shared communicative purposes. These elements are the writer's task, the concept of genre, and the concept of discourse community, a socio-rhetorical community formed for the achievement of certain common goals. However, Swales takes a less deterministic view of discourse communities than social constructionist notions of community. Neither 'assimilation of a world-view' nor 'a threshold level of personal involvement' are criterial; in fact, involvement in such communities and the use of the relevant discourse may be entirely instrumental (1990:31).

Since established members of a community are characterised by their familiarity with how genres are used to accomplish shared goals, it must be the case that genres essentially 'belong to discourse communities, not to individuals, other kinds of groupings, or to wider speech communities' (Swales, 1990:9). The writer's task is conceived in terms of a 'genre-type communicative event' comprising the encoding and decoding of oral and written texts which are modified by the role of genre in a community. For Swales, an activity needs to be *goal-directed* in order to achieve task status. The simple writing exercise per se does not, in Swales' view, reflect a task-based approach. Rather, genre skills are dependent on the development of genre-specific schemata through experience with appropriate 'acquisition promoting text-task activities' (1990:10). The value to the writer of a focus on genre is also emphasized by the Sydney School. This is the specific topic of the next sub-section.

#### 1.3.3.2.1 The Sydney School

As mentioned earlier, Halliday's (1978) discussion of register, that is, functional language variation, provides the foundation for the current concept of genre developed by, for example, Kress (1982) and Martin, Christie and Rothery (1987). Register provides a framework for analysis in terms of the three variables of *field*, *tenor*, and *mode*. Field refers to the context (type of activity, content or ideas) in which the discourse operates. Tenor refers to the roles and relationships among participants, while mode indicates the channel of communication - typically, speech or writing (e.g., Swales, 1990: 40). In a narrative, for instance, the field of discourse refers to what is

being talked about, the tenor of the discourse refers to who is doing the talking, and the mode of discourse indicates which channel of communication is being used, that is, whether it is oral, written, telephone conversation or lecture.

More recently, attempts have been made to separate the concepts of register and genre within systemic linguistics as genres have evolved to represent 'functional' social processes. For example, Couture (1986) explains the distinction between them in terms of the kinds of constraints each respectively impose on the text. While Register imposes stylistic choices of language in terms of vocabulary and syntax (e.g., language of legal system; language of journalism), genres operate at the level of whole text structure (e.g., the legal report, the newspaper report). Martin positions genre as the underlying structure determining language use (Martin, Christie, and Rothery, 1994).

In addition, members of the Australian School insist on distinguishing between 'genre' and 'field' by pointing out that certain topics can be explored through different genres. Martin gives the example of the life of Joan of Arc which may be presented in biographic form or as part of a historical account of the crusades (Martin et al., 1994). Genres function as vehicles of meaning which combine with field (context) to contribute meaning to the text. Mode is equally critical in determining the meaning of the text. Each channel of communication serves different motives and purposes, and embodies different ways of knowing. The 'abstractness' of writing is achieved by nominal constructions (e.g., failure, influences, tolerance, understanding) which create a distancing effect. These nominalisations also serve to organise and 'objectify' the text (e.g., Martin et al., 1994; Halliday, 1989). The text then becomes an object of conscious reflection thus presenting a view of the world that is different to speech. In contrast, speech involves a dynamic exploration of the world as process thus providing an alternative view of 'reality' that is more susceptible to change (Halliday, 1978; Martin et al., 1994).

The above analysis moves us towards explaining why the Australian movement propose a genre-centred approach to the writing curriculum in preference to other methodological approaches. As Martin points out, the difference between ways of learning and knowing in speech and writing makes it difficult for children 'to understand in their own spoken words what generations of scholars have interpreted in writing' (Martin et al., 1994). The complexity of the more reflective written modes must be mastered in order to gain access to cultural texts. This strengthens the arguments against 'discovery' methods of learning that depend ultimately on Britton's model of expressive writing as the foundation for other kinds of writing. Observations of teacher-

child interactions in Australian primary classrooms found the most significant determining factor in writing development to be the way in which the teacher sets up the writing task (e.g., Martin, 1984). Martin further suggests that the strong bias toward narrative leaves children ill-prepared for the genres favoured in secondary schools and in the social world beyond.

These are the terms in which genre theorists formulate their proposals for a genre-based approach to the writing curriculum. They propose that teachers begin by learning the skills to analyse children's writing using the Hallidayan socially-based system of textual analysis with the object of explicating these features to pupils. For example, in order to teach their Grade 2 children narratives, Rothery advocates *focusing on a genre* in which teachers begin by 'modelling a genre *explicitly* by naming its stages; e.g., identifying the stages of Orientation, Complication and Resolution in *Little Red Riding Hood*' (Martin et al, 1994). The combination of narrative focus, the guidance through questions and comments, and the opportunities for teacher-pupil consultation provide the foundation 'for teachers and students to jointly construct a model of the genre in focus' (Martin et al, 1994:240).

This understandable orientation towards explicit accounts of the sequences in different forms of written language may be intuitively appealing to teachers who are desperately trying to find ways of responding to the ongoing criticisms of student 'illiteracy'. And few would deny that a bias towards narrative in writing classes may lead to the neglect of other genres more useful in the future lives of children. On the other hand, as Swales has pointed out, firm evidence for the value of the genre-centred model of teaching has yet to be supplied (Swales, 1990). Although most scholars concur on the need for more precise definitions concerning the nature of given school tasks, critics express reservations about the exclusivity of focusing on the language of specialist disciplines that would seem to be implied in a genre-centred approach. Beyond the specific linguistic requirements of a particular genre are the more general linguistic demands implicit in the ground rules of schooling (e.g., Sheeran and Barnes, 1991; Edwards and Mercer, 1987). This line of thinking is pursued later in the chapter.

#### 1.3.3.2.2 'Genre' debates

Other scholars have challenged both the prescriptivism and the implicit static vision expressed in the Australian educational enterprise. This opposition comes particularly from the North American field of genre studies. Despite a shared commonality in giving primacy to the social in understanding genres and the role of context, each development is derived from different origins to reveal implicit differences in theorizing. One striking

difference is reflected in the North American insistence on emphasizing the dynamic quality of genres. North American theorists argue for a much more fluid conception of genre than the Sydney School project implies. In Miller's (1984) view, for example, genres are more fragile and sensitive to contestation, and therefore more vulnerable to change.

This position owes much to the influence of the Soviet scholar Mikhail Bakhtin who viewed discourse as a forum where individual cognition, social ideology, and convention 'dialectically interpenetrate' each other. For Bakhtin, the fundamental unit of analysis is the oral 'utterance', or one conversational turn, rather than the word or the sentence. An utterance is defined in terms of its relationship with other speakers' utterances (both preceding and succeeding). The boundaries of an utterance are determined by a '*change of speaking subjects*' (1986:71, original emphasis). This brings to the notion of discourse a sense of the dialectic or 'addressivity' as each utterance anticipates an audience's response while, at the same time, responding to the larger textual conversations already in progress within a discourse community. In addition, Bakhtin observes the existence of both primary and secondary genres (1986:62). Primary genres, such as formal greetings, letters or lists and their regularities, derive from the situations that evoke them. From these primary genres, more complex 'secondary' genres of writing, such as the novel or research paper, are formed. Of particular significance for North American genre studies is Bakhtin's insistence that the more complex genres are in a constant process of subsuming the primary genres. Genres are thus sites of struggle, having both stabilizing (recurrent conventions and structures) features and destabilizing features, as users and their discourse communities constantly remake and reshape them. Bakhtin further insists that 'genres must be fully mastered to be used creatively' (1986:80).

Different pedagogical implications emerge from these fundamental differences in genre conceptualization between the two schools of thought. For example, scholars immersed in the North American tradition have argued against the authoritarianism implicit in the new genre pedagogy, and the potential for ideological indoctrination (e.g., Freedman, 1996). Others object to the naivety of concentrating on *linguistic forms* as constitutive of genre while ignoring the complexities of communicative purpose and discursive context (e.g., Freedman, 1996:63). Educationalists have questioned the assumption that explicit teaching of genres can in fact lead to acquisition, and have further questioned the assumption that acquisition of these forms confers power (Sawyer and Watson, 1987; Barrs, 1994; Freedman, 1996). Related arguments address the issue of whether or not explicit teaching is really necessary. Freedman (1996), for example,

raises the question of whether it is possible for students to acquire genres out of context. This inquiry draws attention to other theorists, notably Lave and Wenger, who have advanced models of acquisition in which explication is not part of the learning process. Lave and Wenger (1991), define learning as *situated* within communities of practice in which novices acquire the skill to perform in the context of engagement with an expert. This theory of practical cognition combines with a burgeoning literature in discourse analysis, and sociolinguistics to indicate a common stance on the premise that meaning, understanding, and learning are all defined relative to contexts of action rather than to underlying structures. The debates, issues and questions briefly alluded to here emerge in following chapters and are given further discussion in the final chapter of the thesis.

### 1.3.4 Summary

This section has sought to review changing conceptions of writing as situated within a global intellectual history concerning the problem of meaning in discourse. Many historians of writing describe the influx of non-traditional students into academic institutions in the 1970's as generating a literary crisis which forced practitioners to reconsider the adequacy of traditional approaches to writing instruction. The work of Emig, Britton and others interested in education served to reenergize scholarly thinking about writing qua writing. Input from cognitive psychology, linguistics and psycholinguists, specifically the work of Noam Chomsky in the 1970's contributed to an increasingly interdisciplinary debate culminating in the rejection of empirical and behavioural principles dominating the first half of the century.

Dominant formalist assumptions concerning the objectivity of texts elements and in particular, the formalist idea that meaning resides in texts were gradually superseded by new ideas about language as a constructive generative process and the validation of the role of mind in shaping human experience. This view of language as a cognitive, constructive process motivated scholars like Emig (1971), Fish (1970) and others to reconceptualize writing as a dynamic constructive process and paved the way for systematic psychological study.

During the 1980's new interests in the social character of writing emerged as both literature and composition sought to understand the social dimensions of writing. Following the work of Hymes and others in the pragmatics of language use, interpretative and discourse communities became the focus of interest, paralleling sociolinguists' interest in speech communities. Whereas meaning had been mainly a cognitive matter located in the individual mind, it now became 'social' reflecting the

pragmatics of social life. During the same period there has been a rapid development of new conceptual frameworks for understanding language, literacy and learning. From the field of anthropology, and sociolinguistic studies of discourse communities and critical theory, a perspective has emerged to challenge the 'uniqueness' of literacy, and to cast these processes as specific social practices culturally embedded in everyday communication and negotiated interaction. Such developments have demonstrated that language, literacy and learning are highly contested areas of the curriculum.

Although it has been possible to identify continuities and certain complementarities in these developing theoretical frameworks, it is not clear that the gains for teachers have been commensurate with this increased attention. For example, critics have questioned the theoretical assumptions about writing, learning, and development underlying process-based approaches to teaching. Corresponding issues have been raised about textual access and power. Critical questions have been asked about the nature of teachers' interventions in the development of children's writing, the role of language in the classroom, and about how forms of literacy may be linked to the wider processes of cultural transmission. On these last points, it may be profitable to turn to Vygotsky's theoretical framework and the concepts it provides.

#### **1.4 Vygotsky: A sociocultural perspective**

Current research that addresses the role social context plays in writing and the ways cognition and social context dialectically inform one another is inspired by Vygotsky's sociohistorical view of the development of thought and language. In this section, I outline Vygotsky's contribution to subsequent theoretical approaches to language and learning, and to educational practice. I briefly review the sources of influence on Vygotsky's thinking about learning and development. I discuss some key concepts in Vygotsky's theory, for example, the zone of proximal development, the notion of 'scaffolding' and the idea of 'appropriation', which researchers have seized upon. I describe the teaching implications and the applications for subsequent research.

Of prime importance to contemporary researchers is the Vygotskian interpretation of the relationship between the formation of knowledge and practical activity through the mediating role of language. Spoken language is the means whereby problems are publicly defined and acted upon and, through participation, the means of socialization into communities, (Wertsch, Minick and Arns, 1984). This view of development is based on the notion that cognition itself is not the final goal of the individual, but the means by which individuals adapt to their cultural environment. Implicit in this perspective is the notion that to understand changes in cognition, one must account for

the social context in which those changes take place (Azmitia and Perlmutter, 1989). From a developmental perspective, Vygotsky's theory is frequently recommended as a viable alternative to Piaget's cognitive theory of mental development, as one that unifies concerns about the social formation of the mind with concerns about individual cognition.

Vygotsky's intellectual energies were primarily engaged in developing a psychological methodology for the study of consciousness. In this enterprise, scholars discern several theoretical influences in Vygotsky's thesis (e.g., Wertsch, 1985; Lee, 1985). For example, Vygotsky reformulated Marx's theory of dialectical materialism which distinguishes the natural activity of animals from the inherently social structure and organization of human activity to explain child development in terms of the fusing of two lines of development - the natural (organic maturational) line, and a social line of development that depends on acquiring language. The two lines of change interpenetrate to form the socio-biological development of the individual.

Building on Marx's interactionist thesis with reference to the distinction between human labour and animals in their use of tools, Vygotsky focused on the functional differences between goal-directed tool use and signs, particularly speech, in terms of its inherent reversibility, (Lee, 1985). Drawing on the Pavlovian distinction between signalization and signification, he argued that speech is reversible because words can be both stimulus and response: 'A heard word is the stimulus, and a word pronounced is a reflex producing the same stimulus' (Vygotsky, 1979:78-79). This property of language as self-reflexive enables users to reflect on their experiences and control their behaviour. Drawing on Sapir (1949), Vygotsky also proposes that the structure of language involves both the potential for categorization thereby creating the possibility of abstract thinking, and that language and thought dialectically inform one another. Vygotsky applied these ideas to development, arguing that language mediates thought. 'The child plans how to solve the problem through speech and then carries out the prepared solution through overt activity. Direct manipulation is replaced by a complex psychological process through which inner motivations and intentions, postponed in time, stimulate their own development and realization'. (Vygotsky, 1978: 28). The child develops higher forms of thought by means of the process of reflection made possible through language.

In essence, Vygotsky's theory of development involves the fusing of two lines of development, the social-cultural-historical and the biological. As children develop biologically, they simultaneously acquire the use of tools and speech through socially-

mediated activity. Thus, social and cultural institutions, technologies, and the tools for learning fashion the nature of interpersonal interactions which, in turn, mediate the development of higher mental functions such as memory, reasoning, problem-solving, and language. 'Both series of change converge, mutually penetrating each other to form, in essence, a single series of formative socio-biological influences on the personality' (Vygotsky, 1983:22)

#### **1.4.1 The zone of proximal development**

A key element of Vygotsky's approach to education is that any higher psychological function appears 'twice, or on two planes... it appears on the social plane and then on the psychological plane. First it appears between people as an interpsychological category and then within the individual child as an intrapsychological category' (Vygotsky, 1978:57). In line with this view of mental functioning, Vygotsky developed the notion of the 'zone of proximal development', which he defined as the difference between a child's 'actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving' and the higher level of 'potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers' (1978:86). This attention to the child's actual developmental level and the potential level of performance 'under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers' arose out of concern about evaluative techniques which measure only a child's performance while failing to address the crucial issue of a child's growth potential. According to Vygotsky, 'Instruction is only useful when it moves ahead of development. When it does, it impels or wakens a whole series of functions that are in a stage of maturation lying in the zone of proximal development' (1978:212).

#### **1.4.2 Vygotsky and writing**

In addressing the nature of the relationship between the spoken and the written word, Vygotsky recognized the difficulties children face in making the transition from home to school. Whereas children acquire spoken language with ease in the natural course of growing up, the process of writing is typically taught within the narrow constraints of the school curriculum. Children do not need to write in the same way as they need to speak and therein lies the difficulty of acquiring what Vygotsky termed 'the second order symbolism'. Essentially, written language comprises signs designating spoken words that refer to objects in the environment. Children demonstrate their potential for acquiring mastery of this symbolism during the course of developmental history, first through communicative gestures and then, in pretend play. Children's games and early graphic drawings provide evidence of early understanding that everyday concrete objects and entities can be represented in different ways.

### 1.4.3 The legacy of Vygotsky

Many of the authors cited throughout this chapter acknowledge the significance of Vygotsky's formulation of the sociocultural perspective in the recent move towards a culturally-based pedagogy. For example, Vygotsky's important contribution is acknowledged in earlier views of teaching and learning articulated by Barnes (1976) and Britton in the Bullock Report of 1975, and in later research on classroom talk (Sheeran & Barnes, 1991; Edwards & Mercer, 1987; Edwards & Westgate, 1994). Wells (1992) attributes the current theoretical coherence to reformulation of Piagetian and Vygotskian constructs by scholars in a wide range of disciplines. Subsequent research has emphasized the context-specific nature of cognitive development and learning (Cole, 1991, 1992; Crook, 1991; Edwards, 1990). A number of scholars have examined the broad implications of 'the zone of proximal development' for contemporary educational practice, including Bruner's (1977, 1985) notion of 'scaffolding' to describe an appropriate social-interactive framework to support the learning process (Mercer and Fisher, 1993). Others have examined the potential for peer collaboration in traditional Piagetian tasks (Forman and Cazden, 1985) and writing (e.g., Freedman, 1987), and have extended Vygotsky's theory to examine the zone of proximal development in a variety of non-school settings (e.g., Cole, 1991). Common to all such research approaches is the explicit recognition of the primacy of the social in understanding the role of context, and the implication of language processes in the acquisition of knowledge. Questions immediately arise as to how far these ideas have penetrated the classroom. It is to answering some of these questions that the following section gives further attention.

### 1.5 Links between theory and practice

It is difficult to get a clear picture of how many inroads theoretical concerns about the role of language in learning and development have made to the teaching of English since the Dartmouth era critiques. But the ideas of such as Britton and Barnes for integrating, reading, writing and talking across the curriculum have been officially sanctioned and extensively diffused in, most notably, The Bullock Report, National Writing Project, the National Oracy Project, and National Curriculum for English (DES, 1989).

The National Writing Project, which began introducing teachers to the writing process model in 1973, provides ample evidence of a connection between theory and practice, and is now supported through its ties with the Faculty of Education, University of California at Berkeley. More recently, the National Writing Project (1985-1989)

produced a series of booklets to support curriculum development. This collection of classroom reports from primary school teachers and samples of children's work, offers a glimpse at both the new thinking about how children write, and the transforming potential of write-to-learn approaches (cf. NWP, 1989c). Typically, these activities are informal in the sense that pupils spend less time at desks practising skill acquisition exercises for critical audiences. Peers often serve as audiences and sometimes communicative needs are met by audiences found in other schools or in the local community. The teachers in this collection also describe writing activities coordinated with reading, talking, visual play, and demonstrations led by the teachers themselves. Write to learn assignments that tended to be more structured or recursive include stories, letters, recipes, and school guides that were drafted and redrafted in response to the demands of older/younger children (NWP 1989c:33).

These accounts reflect a shift in teacher assumptions to feature democratic and child-centred activities that urge pupils to take responsibility for their learning and which represent writing as purposeful social activity. In *Learning to Write*, Czerniewska (1992) provides evidence that process approaches, including the use of techniques to support revision (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987), and direct guidance in the structure of narrative, are gaining a foothold. Furthermore, Czerniewska (1992) observes that young writers' achievements in perspective-taking when provided with 'real' audiences and clearly defined purposes for writing confirm the work others (e.g., Donaldson, 1978) who would challenge traditional notions of young children's egocentrism. These accounts illustrate the claims that have been made about the successful integration of theoretical approaches in terms of pedagogical practices which have offered useful ideas for classroom strategies in the early years of schooling.

As a result of its devolution through The National Writing Project and The National Oracy Project (1987-1991), the view that talk is central to learning and knowing, long held by scholars such as Barnes (1976) and Wilkinson (1965), currently receives widespread official recognition. This view also underscores the rationale for a burgeoning area of research investigating the role of classroom language in the transmission of knowledge (e.g., Edwards and Mercer, 1987; Maybin, 1991; Mercer, 1992). Yet, despite widespread support for the efficacy of pupil-talk in developing understanding, contemporary researchers report that changes in pedagogical practice have not kept pace with prescriptions (e.g., Edwards & Westgate, 1994). The vocabulary of ownership and control did much to revitalise interest in the social context of writing leading researchers and practitioners to add healthy qualifications to claims for student empowerment, learning and discovery (e.g., Edwards and Mercer, 1987;

Sheeran and Barnes, 1991). In particular, they register their concerns about the problematic implications of a strongly-hierarchical teacher-pupil relationship evidenced in the organization of classroom language for limiting 'real' discussion, and the discontinuities between the communication systems of home and school disadvantaging pupils with restricted communicative experience (e.g., Donaldson, 1978; Heath, 1983; Bernstein, 1990; Edwards, 1987). Hull's (1985) study of classroom discourse reveals the extent to which assumptions about remediation not only shape classroom practice, but also influence assumptions about students' individual abilities.

Even the most enlightened teachers tend to locate educational failure in the minds of individual learners. Cazden (1979) suggests the school environment imposes an interactional pattern that contrasts dramatically with that experienced by some children in the home setting, and these differences pose severe difficulties particularly for children from minority communities. Heath's (1983) comparison of middle-class and working-class children which describes the nature and consequences of differing interactional demands, reminds us that the well-established narrative patterns of black and white children differ from one another and both are unlike those they encounter in school. These differences are manifested in the different 'ways of taking' meaning from books, amongst other things, in Mainstream and non-Mainstream communities. Pre-school children in Mainstream families learn a pattern of interaction which corresponds to those later encountered in schools through interparticipatory events. Heath conceives a 'literacy event' to incorporate an action sequence involving more than one person in talking about reading or writing. In these events, Mainstream children become practised in responding to questions related to pictures in books, and are encouraged to suspend reality by 'fictionalising' their own experiences of the real world using their knowledge from books. This patterning of interaction encourages the ability to shift into other frames of reference. On the other hand, children in Roadville, a white working class community, experience books as sources of entertainment, instruction and moral improvement. Talking and reading, fact and fiction are more clearly separated in Roadville's church and community life. Roadville parents do not extend the context beyond the stories related in books and discourage attempts to fictionalise accounts of real-life events. Consequently, Roadville children cannot 'decontextualise' their knowledge, or move into other interpretive frameworks as Mainstream children do. In both cases, the particular ways of 'taking' articulated with the rules and conventions of an ideology and, in both cases, the resulting nature of knowledge resonates with the nature of a society. Heath's studies and other accounts of the culture of schooling such as those earlier cited, combine to suggest that writing and learning is not so much a product of conscious and direct instruction as it is the outcome of prolonged induction

into interpretative frameworks, and the cultural norms and expectations of an ideological activity.

This useful attention to early socialisation of language use goes part way towards explaining the difficulties some children encounter in meeting the demands of formal education, and suggests the need for sensitivity on the part of teachers towards different learner requirements. For Sheeran and Barnes (1991), these difficulties arise whenever a teacher sets a writing task: 'the pupils' success depends upon their sharing that particular teacher's unspoken expectations about what will constitute an acceptable piece of work' (1991:3). These 'tacit' expectations extend beyond the rules governing classroom discourse to what Edwards and Mercer (1987) term 'the ground rules of educational discourse' which define the conditions pupils must meet in order to achieve success within the system. The thrust in this literature is towards a constructivist approach to learning and teaching as collaborative in which talk is central to understanding because it helps to make explicit the social and cultural viewpoints of all participants.

Although a sociocultural perspective on development presents some compelling arguments for how social interaction might support the learning process, a number of questions remain unanswered about the nature of context and, in particular, how social interaction may be characterised. In the following section, I give further attention to suggestions about how context may be analytically framed.

### **1.6 Towards expanding the unit of analysis**

The essence of Vygotsky's work is that it provides the means to locate the individual through the use of tools within the broader confines of socio-cultural and historical contexts. The nature of the relationship between the individual and his society is represented as one of dynamic interaction in which the one acts on the other to change the nature of both. Not only are the cognitive structures of the individual altered to form new concepts but cultures evolve over time as a result of human action and social interaction. The issue of how human action is taken up is a topic pursued by those who work within a Vygotskian framework in sociocultural research (e.g. Wertsch, 1995; Bruner, 1990; Cole, 1991). Drawing attention to the recent controversies (e.g., Flower, 1989; Greene, 1990) over whether to give analytic primacy to psychological or sociological or cultural processes, Wertsch (1995) suggests a more inclusive analysis - human action - is necessary to account for the interrelationship of the individual and society. Drawing heavily on Vygotsky's analysis of 'psychological tools' or 'mediational means', Wertsch interprets action as involving 'interrelated moments' of 'irreducible tension' among individuals employing mediational means (includes language and other

artifacts). In essence, Wertsch sketches out a basic framework for the study of human action which includes an expanded notion of agency defined as 'individual-operating-with-mediational-means' (1995:64). This formulation derives from the fact that the tools-in-use that shape mental functioning are themselves aspects of a particular sociocultural setting. The focus of interest in this view is on the way psychological and cultural processes come together to transform action.

The issue of how the individual and sociocultural processes come together is also taken up by Cole (1995); Cole and Engestrom (1993), and Rogoff (1995). In Rogoff's formulation the unit of analysis is the 'activity' or 'event' which includes 'active and dynamic contributions from individuals, their social partners, and historical traditions and materials and their transformations' (1995:140). Her approach involves an analysis of development on three levels corresponding to 'personal', 'interpersonal', and community/institutional processes. The processes corresponding to these three levels of analysis are 'participatory appropriation', 'guided participation', and 'apprenticeship' respectively. She emphasizes the need to include all three levels in an account of developmental processes.

Following the cultural-historical theories of such scholars as Vygotsky, Leont'ev (1979), and Luria (1976), Cole and Engestrom's (1993) version of activity theory posits the activity system as the basic unit of analysis of behaviour. An activity system is any ongoing, goal-directed, historically-conditioned, dialectically structured, tool-mediated human interaction. Some examples include a family, a religious group, a political movement, a school, a discipline, and a profession. The activity system is the basic unit of analysis for both individuals' and groups' behaviour, in that it analyzes the way tools are used to mediate the motive, and focus or direction of behaviour, and changes in it. Acknowledging the influence of Bronfenbrenner (1979), Cole outlines a 'mesogenetic' approach to cultural mediation in creating and sustaining a sociocultural system, the 'Fifth Dimension'. For Cole, the key to understanding changes in behaviour involves an approach in which the time scale falls between microgenesis and sociocultural history. His project provides opportunities to examine the dynamics of an activity that are associated with the socialization of the individuals in it. For example, he examines processes whereby new generations of researchers, undergraduates as tutors, and elementary school children enter the system, and how this cyclical process transforms the system as well as the individuals who operate in it. The argument emerging from this discussion is that a more inclusive unit of analysis is required if we are to trace the interactions among people and the tools they use, including speaking and writing. In so

doing, it may be possible to address the issue of how children and teachers use classroom writing in relation to other social practices.

### 1.7 Conclusions

The foregoing sections constitute an abbreviated account of a history of ideas concerning the nature of written discourse as a dynamic process of change resonating with, if not quite corresponding to, evolving theoretical perspectives on developmental processes. This complex, interlacing, connective flow of influences underpinning the structure of a scientific field reflects the multifaceted nature of writing itself and reveals the difficulties in reconciling diverse approaches to the study of writing. For although history has seen the reorientations from text to cognitive to social registering relocations of meaning in discourse, the debate has not produced a univocal theory about writing which will reliably inform instructional practice.

The recent shift in composition studies from a study of cognition to the study of writing as 'situated' in a social activity is significant since it cultivates an understanding of writing as a form of cultural production and the individual as a social construct determined by ideological forces. Importantly for practitioners, applying these insights to school and culture calls attention to the practices that disempower students, the roles that culture and ideology play in learning, and the kind of teaching that enables pupils to become educationally active. At the same time, scholars express dismay at the dismissal of the individual as an agent for change within culturally organized practices and point to this omission as a limitation in sociological accounts of writing (Flower, 1989; Greene, 1990).

Attempts to produce a comprehensive theory of writing are further obfuscated by the traditional distinctions made between the various functions of writing. For example, the act of writing has been variously described as: a means of generating ideas, a means of expression, a means of learning and a means of communication. In proposing a solution, Halliday (1978) advises the use of the term 'potential' to assert that the meaning potential for any language use involves the simultaneous operation for all these functions. Hence a comprehensive theory of written language would involve a synthesis of the contextual, cognitive and social perspectives. Viewed in this light, the respective claims for individual accounts of knowledge construction and social constructionist views must be understood as complementary and reciprocal in order to establish a basis for a culturally viable theory of writing. If we are to expand the explanatory power of our theories, we need to acknowledge the power of social and ideological forces that circumscribe thought and action while at the same time recognize the roles that

individuals play in constructing meaning through the manipulation of a community's symbols. The goals of this thesis reflect the pedagogical concerns of those researchers interested in facilitating writing development and who wish to work towards a theoretical basis capable of supporting human understanding. This understanding necessarily entails an integrated vision of development as a dialectic between social processes and individual child.

### **1.8 Outline of the thesis**

The thesis has six chapters. As has been seen, Chapter 1 opened with an exploration of its aims and purposes framed against a background of recent developments. Each of the following chapters has the following contributions to make. Chapter 2 provides a descriptive account of the nature of school literate activities. It is descriptive in the sense that it presents teachers' rationales for given writing tasks and compares these rationales with their pupils' own views and experiences of these same writing activities. Additionally, it provides a provisional record of the kinds of school writing undertaken by children over a certain period. We may learn, on the one hand, what aspects of writing teachers consider important to know. On the other hand, children offer evidence of the extent to which they verify, modify or orient towards their teachers' expectations of what really counts in the process of learning to write. More broadly, Chapter 2 sets out to frame the community of school in terms of its purposes and goals, and explore the extent to which children establish familiarity with the language learning tasks that are used in the furtherance of those purposes and goals. This analysis provides a basis for briefly discussing the effects of schooling on children's thinking about writing, and how attitudes may be shaped by an accumulation of school experience.

Chapter 3 deals with some of the additional dimensions created by a focus on task roles and task environments. The chapter discusses and illustrates the value of a grounded theory approach to understanding the relationship between children's functional representations of school writing and their experiences of school-based writing tasks. Children's views of writing contexts are given clear prominence. Levels of involvement in various forms of writing are explored, interspersed with illustrations and examples of pedagogical activities. Other sources of tension are identified from both within and beyond the school. The chapter then establishes a firmer basis for addressing the aims of the thesis in permitting some tentative conclusions to be drawn about the socializing influences on the development of thinking about writing, learning, and schooling. In so doing, the chapter explores issues of emerging concern for the young writer, particularly those issues that relate to the constraining conditions of the task. The chapter discusses the kinds of disadvantage that may result in terms of the context-dependent knowledge

accrued and levels of involvement in writing, and draws upon examples of activities to suggest how they might be reduced.

The aim in Chapter 4 is to offer a selection of classrooms in order to examine how learning is negotiated between teacher and pupil. Using methods of observation and participant observation, it takes a somewhat condensed look at styles of teaching writing and the types of strategies used to regulate interactive behaviour. The chapter is primarily concerned to articulate the ethos of particular writing events, for there is a body of evidence to suggest that presuppositions about literacy and the nature of learning in large part determine interactionary processes and the kind of learning that results. The chapter addresses the issue of roles and relationships between teachers and pupils. In essence the chapter argues that redefining these roles and relationships may have a number of generative and empowering consequences. Other concerning issues that are discussed are the effects of the observer on the observed for interpretative analysis, and the value of redefining the notion of context.

Chapter 4 ends with an assumption that it is possible for the teacher to concede some control to engender a sense of ownership and control among pupils. Chapter 5, in contrast, does not make that assumption; instead, by turning attention away from the formal activities characteristic of classrooms, it attempts to show how children may invoke a context for writing and learning in the informality of a non-school setting. The chapter opens with a brief review of research on writing with the computer informed by Vygotsky's notion of tool-use, and the role of play in development and learning. The chapter's discussion centres on the phases of interaction that are sustained around computers and the possible contributions these episodes make to the writing process. The chapter then discusses the value of this approach where the relevant behaviours cannot be easily manipulated, for exploring the interrelatedness of participants, physical context, and the tool-in-use, and how they collectively contribute to meaningful and intentional action. Essentially, the chapter argues what the thesis advances as a whole which is the assumption that the motives and intentions of participants cannot be divorced from the writing process.

The thesis concludes with a discussion chapter which summarises the findings of empirical studies and then briefly reviews the aims and purposes of the thesis in the light of what these studies have achieved. It discusses the methodological problems that challenge the value of qualitative methods of research. The chapter then discusses in a necessarily limited way some of the implications to be drawn from this research that may usefully be applied in pedagogical activities. The chapter closes with a short section

which identifies and discusses what seems to me to be some complexities which invite investigation in the immediate future.

## CHAPTER TWO

### WRITING IN THE CLASSROOM: TASKS AND GOALS

#### 2.1 Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is to characterise the relationship between children's developing understanding of assigned writing and the ways children learn to participate in the community of school. This involves on the one hand, examining the nature and scope of teacher-structured tasks and, on the other, documenting children's reported constructions of the designated nature of these tasks. In this chapter I use the term 'task' to refer to any writing activity employed in the classroom with the assumed overall purpose of facilitating language learning.

Several scholars concur on the distinguishing features of writing in school as typically teacher initiated and controlled, often for evaluation or judgement in other content areas rather than for the ability to compose (Florio & Clarke, 1982); circumscribed within copying, completion, or text-based exercises (Dyson, 1984a, 1988) and constrained in topic, format and function by commercially produced materials (Bloome, 1984). As a consequence, most school -assigned writing, in Bloome's words "eschews production of connected discourse" (1984:99).

Furthermore, these researchers and others (e.g., Applebee, 1984; Britton et al., 1975; Emig, 1971; Hudson, 1986, 1988) point to the predominance of curriculum-constrained writing at all levels in school settings. Emig (1971) and Hudson (1986, 1988) comment on the difference between assigned writing on specified topics directed at a limited audience, usually the teacher, and self-sponsored writing on self-selected topics often directed to a peer audience, finding self-sponsored writing to involve more purposes and goals. Ethnographic studies of the sociology of literacy have found similar differences in the self-sponsored writing undertaken in home and community and the assigned writing done in schools (Bissex, 1980).

Yet recent studies of younger children's writing suggest that such contextual stylistic generalizations oversimplify issues of control by failing to account for the phenomenology of socio-cognitive construction. Studies of children's school writing interpret classroom ownership as a continuum of control (e.g., Bloome, 1984; Florio & Clarke, 1982; Dyson, 1988). This line of work suggests that writers, as well as speakers, may invoke a complete social context, including audience, purpose, setting and topic domain (Ong, 1975; Ede & Lunsford, 1984; Rubin, 1988). Furthermore,

Hudson (1988) observes that many researchers work on the basis of an adult's operational definition of ownership which implies that the person who initiates the writing is likely to control it. By contrast, Hudson's research emphasis is on analysing and interpreting talk as evidence of what researchers need to know about the limits and possibilities of school writing. Her interest thus lies in examining a corpus of texts produced within a matrix of settings (home and school) from their authors' perspectives.

Hudson's (1986, 1988) participants were selected from approximately 2,500 children in three elementary schools, grades 1 through 5, in a middle-class suburban school district in South-east Iowa. Through questionnaires and interviews with 114 selected children, she identified 20 apparently self-motivated and articulate writers who wrote often and in a variety of contexts. Based on interviews with these 20 selected children - two boys and two girls at each grade from first through fifth - and focusing on a range of written products collected from home and school, Hudson found that the young writers' construction of social context sometimes differed from the a priori definitions of their writing situations. On these occasions children apparently perceived their writing to be self-initiated even though teachers required the compositions as assignments tied to the curriculum. Hudson draws the conclusion that the child's sense of ownership is more akin to an adult's definition of composer, rather than that of initiator. She proposes this revised definition of ownership to encompass a range of possibilities within the school setting. Her analysis not only allows for child-perception of control over teacher-assigned writing but concludes that when children do assume control of writing, they have usually worked out their own meanings, purposes, audiences and genres. She also cautions that more freedom to compose can generate confusion in task interpretation since, ultimately, the curriculum constraints remain.

Paradoxically, many curriculum-driven tasks also remain context-less leaving children in the uncomfortable position of being forced to construct their own representations while being constrained from doing so. Such research points to contextual factors as sensitively related, suggests the need to account for writers' views of context, and for how developmental changes in perception may be similarly context-related. Hudson's studies and the concerns therein provide a framework for the work described in the present chapter.

Hudson's conclusions concerning the nature of self-sponsored writing emerged from data produced in home and school settings by a group of selected children. This chapter is chiefly concerned with school events and presents information which builds on

Hudson's analysis in the following ways: first, by examining the rationales underpinning the range of writing tasks commonly given to school children (aged 7-11 years). Second, analysis of these tasks according to the children's perspectives enables a comparison between the perspectives of teachers and children in relation to contextual factors. Thirdly, exploring the similarities and differences in perceptions across age groups addresses the notion that developmental changes in perceptions may be similarly context-related as children encounter a wider range of settings, audiences, purposes and genres in their writing. Finally, the study raises issues which invite reflection on the meaning of contexts by examining children's experiences of school-organized writing situations.

Section two describes teacher's perceptions of the contexts of writing tasks. Five contexts are considered based on those observed by Hudson (1986,1988). These are ownership, setting, audience, purpose, and genre, and each has a number of subcategories. In section three, the same contexts and their subcategories are examined from the perspectives of the children and the two viewpoints compared.

## 2.2 TEACHERS

### 2.2.1 Method

The present investigation initially involved a) soliciting the co-operation of a number of local authority primary schools in the North East area of England, b) visiting the schools for the purpose of meeting with head-teachers and teachers of targeted age-groups (in year levels 3, 4 and 5/6), c) negotiating a specific week when interested teachers would undertake to complete a number of prepared questionnaires, d) negotiating further visits with the teachers in question to collect the questionnaires and interview children about the tasks referred to in the questionnaires completed by their teachers, e) categorising the tasks according to teachers' brief summaries of what the activity primarily entailed, f) examining teachers' descriptions of writing tasks to identify common patterns and themes in writing situations. This section reports the results of (e) the categorisation process, and (f) examining which of the five contextual factors indicated by teachers apply to each task at each age level. Further details of the questionnaire findings, including the small group meetings with children, and the comparisons of questionnaire results are reported in the section three.

### 2.2.1.1 Selection of Participants

Twenty-five teachers from ten different schools participated in this study. These teachers were selected according to the following procedure. First, letters were sent to the head-teachers of forty local authority schools in the area describing the aims of the study, and asking if the teachers in these schools would be willing to take part in the research. Twenty-five head-teachers responded, indicating whether or not their teachers were willing to participate. The positive responses yielded 25 participating teachers, of whom 9 = year level 3 (age-range 7/8years), 9 = year level 4 (age-range 8/9 years), and 7 = year level 5 & 6 (age-range 10/11 years). Second, preliminary meetings in schools with Heads of school and interested teachers were arranged in which the research objectives and the details of the task requirements were discussed.

### 2.2.1.2 The Task

Teachers were asked to indicate a specific week when they would undertake to complete a number of questionnaires, each of which described one writing activity according to categories of ownership, setting, audience, purpose and genre. Each of these main categories contained a variable number of subcategories. For example, 'Ownership' consisted of three subcategories; self-sponsored, assigned and invited, and 'Setting' consisted of three subcategories; desk, centres, and floor. For the full list of items under each category see Appendix I. Teachers were instructed to briefly summarise the task in the space provided in the questionnaire, advised to indicate (by ticking the appropriate boxes) as many of the following categorical items as were deemed appropriate to the task, advised that the items listed as sub-categories should not be regarded as mutually exclusive, and asked to complete one questionnaire per task indicating the day in the week on which the task was undertaken.

### 2.2.1.3 The Questionnaire

For the purpose of this study, I formulated a questionnaire (Appendix I) encompassing a broad rhetorically-oriented contextual definition of writing (e.g., Rubin, 1984), based on Hudson's (1986, 1988) studies of children's writing. This questionnaire lists five categories of ownership, setting, audience, purpose, and genre, each with a set of related subcategories. The questionnaire was based on Hudson's categories derived from the responses children in her study. Prior to offering the questionnaire to the teachers participating in this research, its comprehensibility in terms of structure, content and the language used was pronounced to be satisfactory by a teacher unconnected with this study.

#### 2.2.1.4 Procedure

Participating teachers were shown a copy of the questionnaire, and asked to identify a specific week in which they would agree to complete a number of these questionnaires (up to a maximum of ten) in accordance with the demands of the task described above. That is, they were asked to summarise and define each writing task given to their pupils during a one week period using a separate questionnaire for each task. It was explained that the completed questionnaires would be used as a basis for discussing writing activities with a sample of children drawn from the classes concerned, and that these discussions were to be recorded and the tapes later transcribed and used as data. Dates for re-visiting the schools to collect the completed questionnaires and interview children were negotiated. Bearing in mind that the interviewees were primary school-aged children, we agreed that these interviews should take place in the consecutive week to coincide, as near as possible, with the completion of the writing tasks referred to in questionnaires. In accordance with this procedure, convenient dates and times were arranged to revisit schools to collect completed questionnaires and conduct interviews with children.

The 25 teachers who agreed to co-operate in the research returned a total of 115 usable questionnaires, each of which represented a different writing activity given to their class during a one week period. A total of 50 questionnaires came from 9 teachers of children in year 3 (aged between 7-8 years), 41 questionnaires from 9 teachers in year 4 (aged between 8-9 years), and 24 questionnaires from teachers of year 5/6 (children aged between 10-11 years). These 115 questionnaires provide the corpus of information underpinning this section and constitute a basis for comparison in the next. In this section we are concerned with comparing multiple instantiations of organized literacy practices and abstracting common characteristics. This procedure is employed to enhance generalizability thereby enabling inferences to be made about the educational process.

## 2.3 RESULTS

### 2.3.1 Types of tasks and their relative frequencies

To facilitate discussion and comparisons across situations, I classified each of the 115 questionnaires representing a writing task according to teachers' brief preliminary descriptions. In some cases, where these brief descriptions referred to a variety of functions and purposes for writing, the process of categorization was made difficult. In particular, activities which involved copying words or sentences from blackboard or book sometimes served a variety of functions. For example, a blackboard summary of

the week's history topic was described as reinforcing the topic as well as hand-writing practice, and copying instructions from the board was described as handwriting practise in addition to assisting a science experiment. I resolved the issue by categorising according to teachers' perceptions of what the activity primarily entailed. If, for example, a teacher indicated that the task in question primarily involved the activity of copying from the blackboard or published material, then it was categorised under the heading of 'copy', regardless of any other purpose. A total of seven categories were derived in this way, comprising copy, diary, grammar, letters, poetry, topic and stories in accordance with the following typical descriptions. Table 2.1 shows the percentage number of responses for each of these categories at each year level.

1. Copy	Copying history information from blackboard following discussion of the same.
2. Diary	Weekly diary, children are encouraged to write about experiences they have had over the previous week.
3. Grammar	Compose sentences using verbs and and adverbs in addition to nouns and adjectives.
4. Letter	Children were presented with a picture of a hotel in Spain. They were instructed to write a letter home to their parents describing the flight, arrival, hotel and holiday so far.
5. Poetry	Poem about food, e.g., I like...
6. Topic	Research reading on aspects of the Vikings. Writing and account (individual) collecting information from members of the group.
7. Story	Creative narrative/imaginative writing. The children were asked to write a story about waking up one day and discovering that everything had turned to chocolate.

Table 2.1 Overall percentage of responses referring to each task at each year level.

	1 Copy	2 Diary	3 Grammar	4 Letters	5 Poetry	6 Topic	7 Stories
3	14	8	18	10	4	26	20
4	7	5	24	12	2	37	12
5/6	8	4	17	0	8	33	29

These categories accounted for the bulk of the responses from teachers concerning the range of tasks in which children engaged during their school week.

Most of the tasks are self-explanatory. However, classifications under the general heading of grammar included a variety of tasks directed towards building skills in the mechanics of language and expanding vocabulary:

- a) use a set number of prepositions in sentences of their own composition.
- b) put pictures in sequence and caption each one as a separate sentence.
- c) add 'er' on to words such as rob, swim, dig, and pot following the grammatical rule of doubling the last letter.
- d) compose sentences using verbs and adverbs in addition to nouns and adjectives.
- e) construct sentences that 'have to make sense' exercising the use of capital letters, full-stops and commas.
- f) compose sentences with an emphasis on spelling for the purpose of vocabulary extension.
- g) create word searches in groups focusing on single vowel words (a) double vowels (ee; oa).

Such tasks typically involved filling in missing words or listing short decontextualized answers and tended to be strictly controlled in content and format on the one hand, by both oral and written directions and, on the other, by space available on pre-printed paper. This writing is intended to promote simple skills contributing to more complex skills such as, for example, arranging pictures in sequence and writing a sentence about them as an introduction to the more complex business of story writing. Tasks intended to increase use of vocabulary requiring children to list words around a particular theme or add word endings, and tasks designed to encourage skills in asking questions all exemplify 'building' tasks.

Several types of writing, that can be appropriately described as having a function, resist simple classification. For example, a task described as 'writing a capital letter in Anglo-Saxon ink which was later decorated' was omitted from the analysis altogether. This illustrates the multifarious nature of writing activities at the primary school level, and draws attention to the difficulties inherent in the categorization method which often over-simplifies, distorts, or otherwise misrepresents natural phenomena as they actually occur in context. The uninformed reader, at this point, might be forgiven for assuming that writing activities were organized and undertaken independently without regard for the ways in which they inform and cross-reference one another. The reality is that literacy permeates the entire curriculum. A more complete picture would have to account for the interrelationships and thematic consistency with which some tasks are planned, organized, distributed across the curriculum and over time (as described in

2.3.1.2). These issues call for further explanation about what teachers mean to accomplish in organizing these tasks.

#### 2.3.1.1 Patterns and Themes

A survey of the kinds of literate activities described in particular classrooms revealed a purposeful order in the weekly organization of given tasks. In one classroom, for example, Monday's task involving work sheets on adjectives and adverbs anticipated Tuesday's discussion about the descriptive devices used in a poem. These exploratory exercises combined to support Wednesday's more complex activity where children were required to practice grammatical skills in the context of stories. Typically, in classes of older children, such hierarchical arranging of tasks emerged across the week.

Close examination of the thematic content of given tasks designed to encourage distinctive modes of writing, such as imaginatively-based stories and topic-related reports, reveals the extent to which skills are practiced around a common theme. Such continuity is evidenced in a classroom of 7 year-olds where the teacher planned writing activities to focus on the term's History topic dealing with the Saxon and Viking period. Associated tasks required children to describe particular objects in Saxon riddle style for other children to identify; writing capital letters in Anglo-Saxon ink (made by the children themselves from a curious mixture of egg-white, soot and honey); and writing an imaginative story about a piece of broken pot from an archaeologist's viewpoint; 'who owned it, what happened to it, was it useful or magic?' Such interrelated tasks illustrate purposeful intentions to invoke imagination, encourage participation and enable children to appreciate the particular historical period under review.

#### 2.3.1.2 Age Differences

Similar variations on a theme were evident in other classrooms though organization and presentations of tasks differed according to the personality of the teacher and the age of children. For example, in a different school to that mentioned above, a class of older children wrote individual factual accounts of the Vikings based on prior research undertaken in groups. In addition, the children produced Viking adventure stories as their individual contributions towards a book of the same. The task was described as 'ongoing' and involved several stages from planning, drafting and redrafting to final product.

These examples not only illustrate the ways teachers strive for thematic continuity in their teaching but also demonstrate how writing activities may be organized differently in line with the increasing age and abilities of students. In classes of 7 year-olds, time

allocated for the writing of both factual and fictional accounts never exceeded 60 minutes whereas similar tasks undertaken by 9 year olds were described as 'on-going' and often comprised several distinct parts. Tasks tended to increase in complexity in parallel with increasing age thus providing scope for group work particularly in researching facts about a given topic. Researching a topic frequently involved collating information from several sources including books and videotapes. On two occasions, lay persons were invited to the schools to address the children on related topics. Activities involving instances of creative writing were expanded to encourage peer-cooperation in the appropriation of good writing skills, including the practices of planning, writing, revising and redrafting. For example, a class of 9-10 year-olds were instructed to choose a nursery story from a short list and re-write it according to the villain's viewpoint. Children read out their first drafts to partners for comments before drawing up a second draft. The task also involved the production and illustration of a booklet of stories for presentation to children in year 3. While the task's stated emphasis lay in 'writing dialogue and new line', its organization clearly identified the audiences and functions in writing.

Other age-related differences in relation to task requirements were apparent. Teachers in classes of 7 year-olds often expend a deal of time and effort in planning tasks that will encourage children to write more. As one teacher put it 'they seem to say all they have to say in one short burst. If you tell them to go away and write more, the quality deteriorates' (c.f. Scardamalia and Bereiter, 1982). However, with ever-increasing vocabularies and a wider variety of experiences from which to draw, two years on, children do indeed begin to write at greater length. This tendency 'to write more' creates problems for teachers who plan multi-component tasks. For instance, the tasks of revising and redrafting are greatly facilitated if the text is shorter rather than longer. Revising and rewriting a lengthy piece of work is a daunting prospect for an immature writer and places further demands on a teacher's time. For this reason, some teachers consciously restrict the potential of extended products by planning writing activities within the timed-constrained conditions prevailing in school. As one teacher explained 'if you run out of time and ask the children to finish off a story at home, there's no limit to how much they will write'.

Paradoxically, Hudson (1988) claims that a sense of ownership is more likely to be encouraged by freeing writers to write as they please. According to Hudson and others, the more extended the discourse, the more opportunity for making meaning, and the more likely they are to claim ownership for a classroom product, no matter who was

the originator. Such contradictions recommend caution in formulating over-prescriptive generalizations without considering the practicalities of the situation.

### 2.3.2 Assignment of Tasks to Categories and Their Subcategories

This section examines the frequencies of the different tasks in the different categories of ownership, setting, audience, purpose and genre. The differences between tasks are ignored and the focus is on the way teachers perceive any writing task as being within a given context.

#### 2.3.2.1 Ownership

We begin by discussing indications of each type of ownership categories for different writing activities in relation to issues of control. Table 2.2 shows the percentages of writing tasks assigned to each subcategory of ownership by teachers for each age level.

##### 2.3.2.1.1 *Assigned writing*

Inspection of Table 2.2 indicates that assigned writing is the most frequent subcategory of ownership of tasks across age-groups for teachers, that is, controlled by teachers (on the blackboard) or through the use of published materials.

Table 2.2 Percentage of tasks assigned to ownership subcategories for teachers collapsed across writing situations for years 3, 4, & 5/6.

	Year		
	3	4	5/6
Assigned	73	93	88
Self	14	2	12
Invited	14	5	0

Note: In this and subsequent tables in this chapter, the percentages in each column do not necessarily add up to 100 because the subcategories were not mutually exclusive e.g. a task could have more than one setting, audience, purpose etc.

##### 2.3.2.1.2 *Self-sponsored writing*

Self-sponsored tasks tended to correspond with those incorporating some elements of choice. Activities manifested choice elements in a variety of ways and were mostly associated with factually-based reports and use of imagination in stories (see Appendix

II.I for ownership subcategories for teachers across writing situations). Clearly, several different kinds of choice might be expected to operate in the context of story writing where title, characters and content can all be matters of individual choice. In this study, teachers frequently limited the options for younger children by having them work within story starts and given endings while older children were expected to assume greater responsibility for the composing process. The minimal choice indicated in tasks given to year 4 relative to other years (Table 2.2) is explained by the large number of grammar exercises and increased proportion of prescribed factual topics undertaken by these children coupled with fewer opportunities to exercise choices through the more expressive medium of story writing (Table 2.1). These findings suggest the ways in which teachers at this level pay more attention and inevitably respond to curricula demands. Commenting on curricula constraints, several teachers expressed their dissatisfaction at the sheer volume of material they are required to teach at primary level. As one teacher put it, 'Children are given a lot of information at a very superficial level. The result is superficiality'.

#### 2.3.2.1.3 *Invited to write*

Invited writing occurs in tasks as an aspect of group work in which group members chose the writer. These activities, which sometimes involved the children in researching information in books or video presentations (for younger children), accounted for those occasions where teachers indicated that the child had been invited to write. The task usually involved some kind of group work in which children fed information to one group member who performed the actual writing.

#### 2.3.2.2 Setting

We will now examine the percentages of tasks that teachers indicated as being in the setting category. Table 2.3 shows these percentages.

Out of four possible work areas listed under setting, the data reveals that most writing was done at the children's desks. As reported earlier, some topic-related activities required children to work collaboratively in researching information, using designated floor or reading areas where books and equipment were located, and involved pooling this information at child-centred seating arrangements. However, as can be seen from Table 2.3, these activities were fairly rare.

#### 2.3.2.3 Audiences across tasks

The percentage of tasks assigned to each audience subcategory is shown in Table 2.4. for audience categories as shown in Table 2.4 are discussed in relation to the different task requirements.

Table 2.3 Percentage of tasks assigned to setting subcategories for teachers collapsed across writing situations for years 3, 4, &amp; 5/6

	Year		
	3	4	5/6
Desk	87	93	72
Centres	7	2	13
Floor	4	5	6
Reading	2	0	9

Table 2.4 Percentage of tasks assigned to audience subcategories for teachers collapsed across writing situations for years 3, 4, &amp; 5/6.

	Year		
	3	4	5/6
<b>School</b>			
Adults	36	38	29
Peers	8	15	14
Adults & peers	20	14	36
<b>School</b>	64	67	79
<b>Home &amp; Community</b>			
Adults/peers related	11	7	7
Adults/peers unrelated	1	3	0
<b>Home &amp; Community</b>	12	10	7
<b>General</b>	23	20	12

### 2.3.2.3.1 *School audiences*

Inspection of Table 2.4 indicates that school audiences are the most frequent. Moreover, findings within this category confirm the salience of the teacher as primary audience for childrens' writing. There is also a tendency for the intended audiences for writing to become increasingly focused within the school community at progressive year levels. However, within this framework, the percentage of tasks that include an audience shared by teachers and peer increases with age, particularly in year 5/6.

### 2.3.2.3.2 *Home and Community Audiences*

The Home and Community audience subcategory reveals the extent to which these teachers organize writing to reach beyond the classroom to an audience outside school. The results reinforce the observation that audiences outside the school situation are generally limited for these writing tasks and become more so at progressive year levels. In addition, the table indicates that teachers perceive family members as primary targets in the non-school audience subcategory, thus effectively limiting the communicative functions of writing while seeming to favour an academic display purpose for school assigned writing.

The most explicitly social and functionally communicative writing is the kind of negotiation that goes on between letter writers. Important audience limitations emerge in the ways teachers incorporate audiences within the contexts of five letter writing activities teachers described for the purposes of this study. In one instance, 7 year olds wrote letters for the purpose of exchanging information with their counterparts in a school in France. In another classroom, the task required 7 year old children to write two letters to form a dialogue between two garden creatures. Sometimes the contents of the letter were closely related to the topic theme for the term as, for example, when children wrote to their families on the theme of journeys, describing the flight, arrival, destined hotel and resort. One teacher directed his class of 7 year olds to write letters to the British Museum on the theme 'Should the British Museum keep the Greek statues' as a way of reinforcing the term's topic theme on Greek myths and legends, and also 'to encourage persuasive writing used by adults in essay writing'. A similar theme-oriented task required children to take the role of a Victorian 'philanthropist' expressing concern about the plight of the working classes in a letter to the prime-minister.

The task of writing to school children in France, mentioned above, was one of only two sets of letters that were directed towards a real audience in the expectation of receiving

a letter in return. The second example, which involved an unrelated audience, enlisted the cooperation of elderly residents of a nursing home in seeking replies to children's letters asking for experiential information on 'Schools in the past'. The most distinguishing feature of this task lay in its organization originating from an intention 'to motivate children to write and to see it as a reciprocal process'.

#### 2.3.2.3.3 *General Audiences*

General audiences refer to internally displayed work. In theory, such audiences make it possible to widen the audience for school writing. In practice, however, this work is functionally limited to writing for an academic purpose; hand-writing, spelling etc. (see Appendix II.IV), and the audiences to those encountered within the school. The data reveals further that this use of a general audience decreases at progressive year levels.

#### 2.3.2.4 Purposes

Table 2.5 shows the percentages of times teachers assign different purposes to writing tasks: fulfilling a curriculum requirement, facilitating learning and remembering, interacting, sharing, creativity and play. The data reveal that the purposes of requirement, interaction and facilitation are the most frequent with fewer teachers mentioning sharing, creativity or play.

##### 2.3.2.4.1 *To fulfill a requirement*

Within the requirement subcategory, teachers indicated practise in handwriting and more so spelling as important at each level though the frequency of this latter requirement fell slightly at the highest grade. Tasks which required children to comprehend a piece of text and answer questions about it were not undertaken by the younger children but featured (although with low frequency) among the requirements for years 4 and 5/5. In addition, teachers listed a variety of other more specific purposes for particular tasks. For example, a class of 7 year olds were required to write a story 'with an emphasis on sequence or structure' of the story. Writing up science experiments were partly designed for 'learning presentation skills' in the context of writing reports. A number of grammar-oriented exercises served 'to increase knowledge in the use of words'. Moreover, teachers tended to identify more specific purposes for writing in line with progressing levels. For example, diary writing in one classroom of 9 year olds focused on nationally occurring events and was intended 'to promote interest in current affairs'. Poetry was taught 'to reinforce poetic devices' and grammar tasks were reported with an emphasis 'sentence construction'.

Table 2.5 Percentage of tasks assigned to each purpose subcategory for teachers collapsed across writing situations for years 3, 4, &amp; 5/6

	Year		
	3	4	5/6
<b>Purpose Categories</b>			
<i>Requirement</i>			
Handwriting	6	8	6
Spelling	10	10	7
Answer	0	4	5
Other	6	10	13
<i>Interact</i>			
Communicate	9	10	12
Inform	9	8	6
Entertain	9	4	8
Announce	0	1	2
Complete	1	2	5
<i>Facilitate</i>			
Use	1	3	3
Remember	8	7	4
Learn	15	13	11
Get mark	2	3	4
<i>Share</i>			
Give	1	2	0
Show	4	1	3
Display	5	3	4
<i>Create</i>			
Write	5	4	5
Experiment	1	1	2
<i>Play</i>	2	1	0

#### 2.3.2.4.2 To interact with others

In the interactive category, teachers clearly intended writing to communicate, to inform and to entertain as indicated by the frequency of these subcategories. Interactions described as aiming to entertain occur most frequently in connection with expressive

writing where children were encouraged to exercise their own imagination. Interestingly, teachers in year 4 indicated the entertainment category less frequently than other years which may be related to the fact that children in this age group were provided with fewer opportunities to write stories. The subcategories 'to announce' and 'to complete' work with another were indicated less frequently. The low frequency of completing work with another can be explained with reference to the ways certain tasks were organized to incorporate some kind of group work in order to collate information prior to writing. For example, one Geography-oriented task required children to watch a BBC television broadcast from the series 'Look and Learn' and note the differences between various countries in relation to climate, life-style and so on. In another classroom children were invited to share their thoughts on what might be needed for different types of journeys as a preliminary to writing individual accounts of journeys they had made. In the first case, writing was optional, since one member of the group acted as 'scribe' for the remainder. On the second occasion, children wrote individual accounts on the basis of the preliminary discussion. According to teachers, children were sometimes 'invited' to participate in situations which encouraged the sharing of ideas with others. In neither of these situations did children actually complete work with another. The few examples of tasks where pairs of children collaborated in producing a piece of work occurred amongst the older age-groups. In these situations one child acted as writer while the other did the drawing.

#### 2.3.2.4.3 *To facilitate*

Writing to learn and remember are the two most salient aspects of writing indicated within the facilitative category. Teachers sometimes identify precisely what they want children to learn. In particular, teachers indicate learning as a function of tasks which involve the factual assimilation characteristic of report writing, and only slightly less frequently, report the learning intended to occur in the context of grammar exercises. Other purposes, such as to use a product or, surprisingly, to receive a mark or grade, are less frequently indicated.

#### 2.3.2.4.4 *To share an object to be admired*

Teachers indicated the sharing category mostly in the context of topic-related work and story writing which involved showing the finished products through public display. Interestingly, the frequency of writing to share with others decreased with age in line with the decrease in the salience of parents as audiences discussed earlier (see Table 2.4).

#### 2.3.2.4.5 *To create*

Table 2.5 records a small percentage of creative writing 'to write for its own sake' particularly in topic-related tasks, stories and, to a lesser extent, poetry. Few teachers assigned the purpose of experimenting with materials for writing.

Finally, the purpose 'play' was rarely indicated and categories 'to occupy time', and to express emotion were virtually ignored by teachers at all three levels (Appendix II.IV).

#### 2.3.2.5 Genres

In addition to ownership, audiences and purposes, teachers were asked to indicate the genre for each writing task. As indicated in the previous chapter, the concept of genre is problematic as the work of authors like Swales (1990) implies. My understanding of genre is close to the position adopted by several scholars interested in defining genre. These theorists (e.g., Swales, 1990; Miller, 1984) tend to take a pragmatic approach which involves a classification based in rhetorical practice. That is, the term genre is used to refer to text types construable as situation types (Halliday, 1978) and, as such, may be recognized as potential genres in that they are created through repeated use in situations that are perceived as similar.

Table 2.6 shows the percentage of writing tasks assigned to different genres for each age group. Among the hand-written communication categories, non-fiction is the most frequent, which suggests that a greater proportion of children's time in school is devoted to factual report writing associated with Geography, History and Science topics.

The second most frequently reported category is fiction which features less prominently for year 4 than for the younger and older children. This finding is consistent with the earlier observation that these children were provided with fewer opportunities to write poetry or stories and were required to complete more grammar exercises than their younger and older counterparts. The third most frequently mentioned category is communication, and these occurred mainly in association with letters and, to a lesser extent, topic in years 3 and 4 (see Appendix II.V). Interestingly, teachers did not regard stories as communication, and diaries were not mentioned in this category. Completion exercises occurred most frequently, and poetry less frequently in year 4 than in years 3 and 5/6. There were very few instances of the remaining categories.

Table 2.6 Percentage of tasks assigned to genre categories for teachers collapsed across writing situations for years 3, 4, & 5/6

	Year		
	3	4	5/6
<b>Hand written communication</b>			
Non-fiction	30	20	29
Fiction	17	13	26
Communication	8	10	6
Completion	7	13	6
Poetry	7	3	9
Lists	5	7	0
Record	3	2	3
Performance	2	2	6
Reminders	0	3	0
Comics	2	0	0
Newspaper	0	2	0
Game	0	0	0
<b>Other methods</b>			
Drawing	17	15	17
Scribbling	0	2	0
Print	3	8	0

Among other mediums, drawing accounted for the bulk of indications and featured fairly consistently across age groups in work on topic and stories. The use of computers emerged in the context of printing out previously hand-written stories for display purposes. Surprisingly, there was no reported use of computers in year 5/6.

Thus far, the discussion has foregrounded teachers' intentions with respect to school tasks and goals. On the assumption that children actively construct their own experiences of written language (e.g., Dyson, 1988), and that children's views of the curriculum may differ from those of their teachers and independent researchers (Hudson, 1988), the following section also accounts for children's views of the curriculum. These insights enable a comparison between teachers' and children's perspectives across age groups in relation to official writing in terms of ownership, audience, purpose, genre.

## 2.4 CHILDREN

### 2.4.1 Method

#### 2.4.1.1 Participants

25 classrooms from 10 different schools produced the 150 children who took part in this study, of which 54 = year level 3 (aged 7/8 years), 54 = year level 4 (aged 8/9 years), and 42 = year level 5/6 (aged 10/11 years).

#### 2.4.1.2 The Task

For this phase of the study, I conducted 30-45 minute, small group interviews with no more than six same-grade children at one time during the school day. At each interview, I referred to the completed questionnaires, explaining that they identified certain writing tasks undertaken by the children during the previous week, and this meeting was organized for the purpose of discussing this writing. I requested permission to tape-record the session, and with the completed questionnaires for reference, asked a series of open-ended questions.

#### 2.4.1.3 The Questions

With the completed teacher questionnaires for reference together with samples of relevant products, the children were asked, in simple terms, to describe each writing task previously defined by their teacher. Questions corresponded to those that appeared on the questionnaire as follows:

1. Ownership - who decided you would do this?
2. Setting - where were you when you wrote this?
3. Audience - who was your audience - who saw this?
4. Purpose - why do you think you did this writing?
5. Genre - what kind of writing is this - is it pretend or real?
6. Did you like doing this writing? Why/not?

In addition, children were asked a series of more general open-ended questions summarized as follows:

7. What kind of writing do you like best? Why?
8. What kind of writing do you like least? Why?
9. Where do you most like to write? Home/School? Why?
10. Who do you most like to write for? Teachers/parents/peers? Why?

11. Have you ever used a computer to write?

Where? Home/School?

What did you write?

Do you like writing with the computer? Why/not?

On these occasions, an instant coding method was employed with respect to responses to questions about ownership, setting, audience, purpose and genre. That is, each task was discussed and each category mentioned by children was recorded once on the same questionnaire used by the teacher to describe the task. Following these interviews the audiotaped recordings were transcribed for retrospective analysis. Despite the anticipated difficulties with transcribing and the coding of separate utterances, group-focused interviews were considered preferable to individual attention as situationally more comfortable and less intimidating for young children, and as constituting an altogether more naturalistic setting to support discussion.

#### 2.4.1.4 Procedure

At the pre-arranged times, each participating school was revisited and the completed questionnaires collected from the teacher or teachers concerned. Six children (three boys and three girls) from each participating class were randomly selected and interviewed as a group in a suitable location (staffroom, empty classroom, or library area) within the school. With the teachers' questionnaires for reference together with samples of relevant products, the children were asked as a group to describe each writing task previously defined by their teacher. During the course of these meetings notes were taken and an instant coding method employed (see above).

Discussions were normally limited to a period of approximately 45 minutes to fit in with the school schedule. Prolonged discussions ensued on exceptional occasions which were sustained by children's verbosity and where circumstances permitted. The audiotaped recordings were transcribed and each interview assigned a code for reference purposes representing the school, grade level, and classroom from whence the children were drawn.

The tabulated data sectionally presented below accounts for both the summated definitions provided by teachers' and children's definitions of their writing situations supplied in response to questions one through to five listed above. This comparative analysis together with specific information related to children's willingness to expand on the topic in response to the question, 'Did you like doing this writing?', provides the explanatory basis on which this chapter is founded. At this point we are concerned

more descriptively and generally with defining the school context. However, encouraging children to talk about their writing makes it possible to gauge the level of interest expressed in particular acts of writing, and is the generative move in producing a richer, more accurate account of experienced activities. These discussions with children reveal subtleties that defy the instant coding method of analysis employed and presented within this chapter. For example, a particularly engaging task yielded extended discourse possessing a quality of animation altogether lacking in the brief disinterested language used to characterize the less-meaningful task.

Immediate interpretation of discourse talk is further problematized by repetitions and non-sequiturs as speakers often returned to an event that captured the imagination during the course of the interview. Viewed as a whole, the resulting transcripts often showed as dislocated, ambiguous, and sometimes contradictory discussion. This requires a significant methodological shift away from researcher-driven interpretation that depends on pre-defined categories towards reinterpretation of categories via an analytic inductive constant comparison process corresponding to the "grounded theory" approach (e.g., Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In general accordance with this procedure, transcripts are systematically and repeatedly scanned, first, to identify emergent themes, and then to specify patterns of interaction and relationships among variables in order to achieve a more coherent understanding of the data set. Thus a system of testing is implemented by subjecting themes or patterns to verification or modification via a process of cycling back and forth between raw data and more general categories. Operating this comparative procedure not only heightens internal validity but, at the same time, referent theoretical constructs in the literature, may be elaborated or modified through interplay with this data collection. The outcome of this procedure is discussed in the following chapter.

## **2.5 TEACHERS VS CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES**

### **2.5.1 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section compares the percentages of the different tasks for teachers and children for each year in the different categories of ownership, audience, purpose, and genre. Setting is considered the least interesting of the five categories, and is therefore incorporated within discussion of ownership. Expanded versions of tables for all five categories are displayed in Appendix III.

## 2.5.1.1 Ownership and Setting

Table 2.7 shows the percentages of writing tasks assigned to each category of ownership by teachers and children for each age group.

Table 2.7 Percentage of tasks assigned to ownership subcategories for teachers and children collapsed across writing situations for years 3, 4, & 5/6.

	Year					
	3		4		5/6	
	T	C	T	C	T	C
Self	73	94	93	93	88	80
Assigned	14	2	2	5	12	20
Invited	14	4	5	2	0	0

Within ownership subcategories, the data reveal few discrepancies between children and teachers at each year level in perceiving the majority of tasks as teacher- assigned. Within setting categories most tasks were performed at the children's desks (see Appendix III.II).

In general, children across all age groups felt a low sense of involvement in what Hudson (1988) calls curriculum - constrained writing activities and relegated most of the tasks to the realm of teacher control. Such tasks were commonplace and the writing limited, strictly controlled in content and format by both oral and written directions, and space available on pre-printed paper. Children's perceptions of curriculum-constrained tasks echoed these limitations finding almost no purpose beyond fulfilling a requirement. Typically, they had little to say about these assignments, completing them because 'we had to do it' or 'Teacher told us to do it'. As one child put it, 'I don't know why we did it. I suppose it is to learn something'. There were, however, small disagreements among teachers and pupils in year 3 and years 5/6.

#### 2.5.1.1.1 Ownership in year 3

In examining the data for ownership subcategories in year 3, more children than teachers indicated their writing as wholly initiated and controlled by teachers, with fewer children claiming they had been invited to write or claiming to 'own' their writing. As explained in the previous section, these teacher-inspired invitations tended to reflect situations which theoretically enabled children to play a more active role either through collaborative group work or through individual creative writing. Despite teachers' efforts to widen the scope of writing, these younger children continue to perceive their writing as solely teacher-assigned, claiming 'I had to write'.

#### 2.5.1.1.2 Ownership in year 5/6

The data for year 5/6, however, show an interesting reversal, with pupils claiming to 'own' more products than previous years, and also exceeding their teachers' indications in the self-sponsorship category. For example, children refer to writing their 'own stories' in diaries, even while finding this mode of expression limited in certain other ways (for elaboration, see chapter 3).

Two possible explanations may account for these differences. The first explains ownership as a function of the task. As noted earlier, the range of tasks undertaken by these pupils differs significantly from those of previous years. While their younger counterparts struggled with the basic mechanics of writing in relatively simple, de-contextualized exercises, these older children apply their accumulated skills within the contexts of more in-depth factual reports and story writing. Some of these activities generated opportunities for collaborative work and, through division of labour, the devolution of responsibility to the individual child. One such example involved children working in pairs to write and illustrate a booklet of stories for younger children. The children's emphasis on choice of title, content and even use of materials (computer or pen and size of paper) characterised the task as largely child-controlled. Restrictions in content were perceived only in regard to the selection of words to suit the needs of their readers: "We had to make words that were not too hard that they were able to read" and "as long as it's not too scary".

Hudson (1988) observes how a teacher's intervention may impede expanded meaning and ownership in children's writing. Florio and Clarke (1982) suggest that curriculum-sponsored writing "relies on the teacher...to free the children to design and control as much of the writing process as it will take to reach fruition" (Florio and Clarke, 1982:126). On this reasoning, the writing more likely to be perceived as self-initiated by

these children originated in situations in which the structure of the task rather than the teacher supports the activity.

The second explanation finds ownership expressed as a function of age. For example, ownership is articulated in a different sense as a group of children describe how they build on what the teacher provides in the way of inspirational support to produce their own stories.

### **SJY5Ca (II 316-319)**

#### **Sequence 2.1**

- G1 Mr H. tells you to to write/ but it's not his story/ if it's not like your own story/ it's like his story that he's told you to do. But if you make up your own/ it's not by him/ you make it up/ it's your own work.
- R So what would be something that he would tell you to do that you would regard as his story rather than yours?
- G1 Like/ if he read a short story out. Cause in our story/ just for the poem/ we had to write about that. And from 'The Hobbit' he gave us a little bit/ he read a little bit from that to give us some ideas/ cause in the poem it said it was dark and you could hardly see anything/ er/ you could use it [for describing
- G2 [For ideas/ because  
it had bats and squirrels and ideas like that.

At this point there are certainly dangers in interpreting the concept of ownership and control too narrowly, as in attempting to unify pupils' conceptualizations, given the possibility to be discussed in the following chapter, that they may reflect influences of many kinds. Yet the evidence so far available broadly supports Hudson's (1988) contention that in certain circumstances children do work beyond the influence of any curricular control.

#### 2.5.1.2 Audiences across tasks

Table 2.8 shows the percentages of writing tasks assigned to each audience sub-category by children and teachers for each age level.

##### 2.5.1.2.1 School Audiences

Within the narrow confines of the classroom, children's perceptions of teachers as sole audiences for writing generally exceed those of their teachers, particularly for children in year 4. Peers are infrequently mentioned as audiences particularly among younger children who are also less likely to view their writing as shared with peers and/or teachers. For the oldest age group, writing is increasingly viewed as shared by teachers and peers. These differences fade as children increase in age to parallel an increasing trend to find audiences in the immediacy of the classroom.

Table 2.8 Percentages of tasks assigned to audience subcategories for teachers and children collapsed across writing situations for years 3, 4, &amp; 5/6.

	Year					
	3		4		5/6	
	T	C	T	C	T	C
<b>School</b>						
Adults	36	54	38	61	29	38
Peers	8	8	15	10	14	14
Adults & peers	20	6	14	8	36	29
<b>School</b>	65	69	68	79	79	81
<b>Home &amp; Community</b>						
Adults/peers related	11	22	7	7	7	7
Adults/peers unrelated	1	1	3	2	0	0
<b>Home &amp; Community</b>	12	23	10	8	7	7
<b>General</b>	23	8	20	13	12	12

#### 2.5.1.2.2 Home and Community Audiences

Parents who took the opportunity to view their children's work during school open-nights were indicated in the category Home and Community. The data reveals that twice as many children in year 3 were more conscious than their teachers of the parental role as audience. Interestingly, the salience of the parental role as audience decreases for both teachers and children with increasing age and school experience.

Up to this point, the discussion has centred almost exclusively on the audiences encountered within the narrow confines of the school community. It may be significant that children repeatedly referred to who saw their products and not to who read them. We attribute these percepts to observing the repertoire of audiences reduced to two sets of unrelated audiences that were accessed by means of letters. Generally, children agreed with their teachers in perceiving letter-writing tasks less in terms of an audience than as a mode of 'doing school', to practise handwriting, for example, while at the same time reinforcing the topic under review. Indeed, the children recognized all these

activities as tied to the curriculum and frequently referred to the topic when asked about purpose. 'It's part of the topic', said one child or, 'We are doing Journeys this term', said another. The fictional aspect was also emphasized, 'We are just pretending we are Romans for our topic' or 'we had to pretend we were on holiday so we could tell our parents about it'. Beyond being 'just made up' in order 'to learn how to write letters' some children could relate the purpose of letters to a communicative function which was 'to tell people about things', though more often its purpose remained firmly tied to the curriculum to, for example, 'learn things about insects - what kinds of things they have on their bodies'. As Hudson (1988) points out: 'Writing intended only as proof of academic competence rather than as communication of meaning may simply require no "audience" per se' (p. 48).

#### 2.5.1.2.3 Audience in General

A general audience was mentioned by children in the context of work displayed on the classroom wall or school corridor where a wider audience was possible, though in reality, possible audiences were those most often located within the school. Significantly fewer children than teachers mentioned a general audience, and this difference is particularly marked among the youngest age group. The remarks of several children may serve as explanation for this discrepancy. Products were only displayed on walls of classrooms and corridors 'if they were good enough', thus implying some kind of reward-system based on the teacher's evaluation. On the same terms, audiences were widened for meritorious work to include heads of School, other teachers and, in one case, even nannies and dinner-ladies. In these circumstances, the salience of this kind of audience depends upon the child's personal experience. If the work fell below the standard required by the teacher, then presumably the audience narrowed accordingly. By operating this principle, schools may work to single out the achieving individual perhaps to further disadvantage the less able writer.

#### 2.5.1.3 Purposes Across Tasks

Table 2.9 shows the percentages of writing tasks assigned to each purpose category by children and teachers for each age group. A full table of data is shown in Appendix III.IV.

##### 2.5.1.3.1 Comparison of teachers' and children's purposes for year 3

###### 2.5.1.3.1.1 *To fulfil a requirement*

The younger children readily perceived tasks as fulfilling some sort of curriculum requirement, exceeding their teachers' indications for handwriting and more

particularly, spelling subcategories. Within the requirement category, teachers occasionally listed other more definitive purposes directed towards learning presentation skills in the context of writing reports, arranging the sequence of events in writing stories, and increasing knowledge in the use of words. Children understood these tasks in more general terms of 'having to do them' in order 'to learn something'.

Table 2.9 Percentages of tasks assigned to purpose subcategories for teachers and children collapsed across writing situations for years 3, 4, & 5/6.

Purpose Categories	Year					
	3		4		5/6	
	T	C	T	C	T	C
<i>Requirement</i>						
Handwriting	6	8	8	7	6	7
Spelling	10	14	10	5	7	8
Answer	0	2	4	5	5	5
Other	6	2	10	12	13	13
<i>Interact</i>						
Communicate	9	6	10	7	12	9
Inform	9	12	8	8	6	6
Entertain	9	9	4	5	8	8
Announce	0	0	1	0	2	0
Complete	1	2	2	2	5	5
<i>Facilitate</i>						
Use	1	0	3	2	3	3
Remember	8	5	7	6	4	5
Learn	15	20	13	18	11	14
Get mark	2	4	3	3	4	3
<i>Share</i>						
Give	1	1	2	2	0	0
Show	4	2	1	2	3	2
Display	5	7	3	2	4	4
<i>Create</i>						
Write	5	1	4	2	5	5
Experiment	1	0	1	1	2	2
<i>Play</i>						
Play	2	3	1	2	0	1

### 2.5.1.3.1.2 *To interact with others*

*To communicate.* Within interactive subcategories, there is a slight but potentially interesting tendency for children to assign fewer tasks than teachers to a communicative function. Close examination of the writing situations obtaining in year 3 generates two possible explanations for this observation. In the first instance, teachers perceived tasks as necessarily communicative when they were organized to incorporate some kind group work in order to collate facts about a particular topic prior to writing. For example, one such Geography-oriented task required children to watch a BBC television broadcast from the series 'Look and Learn' and note the differences between various countries in relation to climate, life-style and so on. In another classroom children were invited to share their thoughts on what might be needed for different types of journeys as a preliminary to writing individual accounts of journeys they had made. In the first case, writing was optional, since one member of the group acted as 'scribe' for the remainder. On the second occasion, children wrote individual accounts on the basis of the preliminary discussion. According to teachers, children were invited (see Table 2.2) to participate in situations which encouraged the sharing of ideas with others. Children, however, perceived a narrow function for these tasks and, as noted earlier, tended to view this writing as assigned by the teacher, having the teacher as sole audience.

*To inform.* In contrast, more children than teachers perceived an informative purpose underlying tasks. It is important to clarify at this point that 'to inform' was included in the interactive category in its indexical sense 'to inform others'. On the understanding that few audiences exist for writing beyond school audiences, it seems logical to assume that teachers and pupils similarly perceived a task to be informative in the sense of its intended school purpose to inform children about something. Children fashioned their explanations in accordance with this understanding. For example, teachers wrote information or instructions on the blackboard for children to copy so that 'we know how to spell things'. On the same terms, grammar exercises given to inform children about sentence construction or parts of speech were 'to know things', and factual reports compiled in relation to history topics were 'to learn what happened'. In this sense, writing situations were 'interactive' in that they involved the flow of information from the teacher as agent to the child as recipient.

*To entertain.* Several children alongside teachers mentioned stories in the entertainment category in the context of an audience. Stories read out loud in class or to younger children within the school were rated as having entertainment value. The notion that writing could be self-entertaining went hand in hand with degree of

involvement in the task. As noted in the previous section, most tasks given to this age group were limited in choice of topic, time and space available. Even with story genres, these younger children were often constrained within a framework of beginning and end sentences. Within these constraints, children found writing altogether more purposeful if the subject was in a favourite topic area or if they were motivated enough to make it entertaining. To announce or perform was not mentioned by either teachers or pupils, and few writing events required children to complete work with another.

#### 2.5.1.3.1.3 *To facilitate*

Facilitative categories assume that tasks were aimed towards facilitating or encouraging writing skills. These younger children assign more learning purposes to their writing situations than teachers and learning is indicated more frequently for writing than any other purpose category. Teachers were more likely specify what was being learned by indicating more purpose categories for the same task. Fewer children reasoned that tasks, particularly grammar exercises, were given 'to remember' something and, rather ironically, questions about purpose provoked the not uncommon but rather perverse response, 'I can't remember'.

*To get a mark or grade.* Few explicit references were made towards obtaining a mark or grade and yet the issue of evaluation is constantly implied throughout discussions with children. Indeed, there is some reason to think that children perceived the school setting as a 'testing' situation (see Chapter 3). Two possible explanations may account for this perhaps surprising observation. When pressed on the subject, one child commented that 'you never see how good you've done...because they don't tell you'. Evaluation of work by these overt means may be so low key for these younger children that it passes unnoticed by the vast majority. However, this account does not explain why traditional methods of evaluation are not salient for teachers. It seems likely that children's performances in the school setting are constantly vetted in some fashion. A culture that has evaluation built into the fabric of its construction renders articulation superfluous.

#### 2.5.1.3.1.4 *To share*

As indicated in the audience category, the notion of sharing work was generally understood to involve the displaying products on classroom walls and school corridors. These younger children equalled their teachers' perceptions in the total number of indications in the sharing subcategory.

The above account frames the content of discussions with children in this age group in relation to purposes underlying given tasks. Scant reference was made to writing in order to create, to occupy time, or to play.

#### 2.5.1.3.2 Comparison of teachers' and children's purposes for year 4

##### 2.5.1.3.2.1 *To fulfil a requirement*

Within requirement subcategories for year 4, Table 2.9 shows children in general agreement with their teachers in perceiving tasks purposed towards practising handwriting or answering questions. The only noticeable difference in the spelling category where the percentage frequency of teacher-occurrences exceeds pupils' responses, would seem to suggest an emphasis on the need to spell words correctly not fully understood by pupils at this level. However, where teachers indicated other, more specific, purposes for tasks, children evidenced little difficulty in articulating them. For example, where the practice in one classroom of writing a weekly account in diaries of some recent nationally-reported event, was intended 'to promote interest in current affairs', children recognized a specific function in 'telling you what's going on in the world' as well as 'helping us to write better'. Stories initiated for 'practice in narrative writing' were accepted on the same terms, 'to give us an idea of how to write stories'.

##### 2.5.1.3.2.2 *To facilitate*

Children were appropriately explicit even when discussing the often laborious, curriculum-constrained grammar and comprehension exercises, recognizing the purposes of these tasks as not merely 'to learn something', but to learn how to ask or answer questions, 'learning new words' or more generally 'to help with our writing and reading'. The competence of these pupils manifested in their apparently 'accurate' interpretation of the nature and function of school tasks, suggests that they are accruing the skills needed to identify and move into their teacher's frame of reference. Paralleling these children's developing competencies is a growing tendency to view formal practice, at least potentially, in an increasingly 'sympathetic' light. For example, these older children often appeared willing to acknowledge the value of certain practices: 'Because you are learning stuff what you don't know already', or 'When the teacher writes a word out when you've got it wrong, I think it's really good because it helps you learn that word'.

##### 2.5.1.3.2.3 *To interact with others*

The high degree of correspondence between teachers and pupils apparent in other purpose subcategories is paralleled in interactive subcategories. Perceptual differences

surface only in the finding that children attribute fewer communicative aspects than teachers to their writing situations. These results are taken as evidence of progressive assimilation into a culture that recommends compliance with the norms and standards which that culture represents. It seems that with ever sharpening understanding of school aims and objectives, children elicit greater preparedness for the demands made on them in classrooms. At a deeper level, the comprehension that emerges seems to embody the notion of self as these young writers begin to work out their own sense of identity in the setting.

#### 2.5.1.3.3 Comparison of teachers' and childrens' purposes for years 5/6

If it is convenient to analyze attributes of text according to their dominant function, it is also useful to bear in mind the mutual predisposition or dependency which exists between them. The relevance of this conception to the present discussion resides in the assumption that an interfunctional connection exists between contextual elements including audiences and purposes in writing. In accordance with this reasoning, limiting audiences for writing predicts equal constraints within the functions and purposes for writing. The earlier noted finding (5.1.2.1) that audiences for the oldest children are exclusively focused within the classroom likewise assumes that purposes and functions in writing will be similarly construed as classroom-oriented. One consequence of this lack of diversity is the development of specialized knowledge made apparent in children's increasing skills in articulating that understanding within the framework of common definitions.

##### 2.5.1.3.3.1 *To fulfil a requirement*

When we turn our attention to the third age group, the data reveals that the frequency of occurrences indicated by pupils for requirement subcategories, as for most purpose subcategories, matches those of their teachers. More generally, they have less difficulty in assessing their own needs in relation to literacy development and in accurately perceiving whether tasks were intended as practice in the skills of handwriting, spelling or answering questions. More children were able to appropriate an adult's understanding of other more specific reasons underlying instructional contexts and therefore in producing the kinds of specialized language appropriate to them. For instance, poetry was taught to 'reinforce poetic devices' and understood as 'practice in writing poetry' and learning 'to play with words'. Grammar tasks focusing on sentence construction were accurately pinpointed, for example, as 'practice in describing nouns with adjectives and verbs with adverbs' and perceived as strategically necessary, 'to get what you need for your story'. Thus skills acquired in the context of completion exercises contributed to successful story writing. Alongside the growing

capacity to interrelate these tasks, we recognize an increasing tendency to regard classroom literacy as a useful means of accessing new insights into how subtly language can work.

#### 2.5.1.3.3.2 *To facilitate*

A second noticeable consequence of this classroom focal-orientation is the evident preoccupation with correct grammar usage. For example, teachers' determination to emphasize the mechanical skills of writing finds an equivalent response in children consistently attributing these purposes in a wide variety of tasks across the curriculum. Even the more expressive writing commonly associated with stories appears restricted in meaning when it is primarily directed towards practising these skills. As one child explained: 'It's like to learn adjectives and putting adjectives in and doing your punctuation and doing capital letter and full stops and question marks and that'.

#### 2.5.1.3.3.3 *To interact with others*

Although teachers' intentions exceeded children's perceptions in attributing interactive and communicative elements to certain tasks, a higher percentage of children reported this subcategory than was evidenced in previous years. This finding reflects the potential of multicomponented tasks in providing work-sharing opportunities. Two heads were definitely better than one when it came to researching facts about a given topic: 'If your partner hasn't got a particular bit of information that you've got, you can write that bit of information down if you've remembered it and your partner didn't.' In general, those activities which encouraged children to play a more active communicative role tended to be perceived as extended in functional range. This writing often included an audience shared by teachers and peers. For example, in the context of sharing their stories these children found other motives for writing:

### **SJY5Ca (LI 236-261)**

#### **Sequence 2.2**

- R: Who are you writing for then/ are you writing for yourself?  
 G1: You're writing it for other people so that they can share the enjoyment with you so they can be excited.  
 G2: You can share [it with them  
 G1: [You can share your ideas with them.  
 G2: You are helping somebody else with your work  
 .  
 .  
 .  
 B1: Sometimes it entertains the teacher because he gets excited.

G2: He gives us points for a good story and if it's a good story he gives you a merit/ he calls them monkey points (*laughs*)

Despite a lack of information about the context to which the talk refers, this brief extract illustrates in a preliminary way the enabling possibilities of interaction that is less teacher-centred and when pupils are given more responsibility for managing their own talk. Some of the possibilities are manifested in the terms of mutual reference which these children use to explicate the benefits of pupil-pupil talk. These co-operative encounters seem to bring their own rewards and the supportive role of the teacher in celebrating the 'good' story along with his pupils can be equally reinforcing. Similarly a different group of children found additional motives for writing when their readers were younger children:

**SD.Y6.Cf. (ll.68-74; ll.136-138)**  
**Sequence 2.3**

- G1: We had to make words [that (&  
 B1: [That were not too hard.  
 G1: (&) that they would be able to read.  
 B1: That were easy to read for them  
 G1: It's just to help the infants with their reading  
 B1: Cause we were showing them it [and  
 G1: [Cause they've got books that they can take  
 home like/ their teacher reads stories to them on the carpet in the class and  
 we decided that we could read a story to them on the carpet/ so we made  
 these books.  
 .  
 .  
 .  
 G1: Because sometimes we can go into the infant class and we can help [and  
 G2: [Cause  
 you can write easier when it's for them and you can explain things.  
 G3: The reason I like writing stories for younger children is because we used to  
 get/ like/ books read to us by older ones/ and that was nice.

These pupils found particularly engaging the task of writing for a younger less critical audience, drawing evident satisfaction in the change effected in status which these circumstances bring about. It seems the opportunity to play a nurturing role underscores preferences for these occasions in affording children a greater sense of control and often a heightened sense of status within the school community. Children wrote 'to help infants with their reading' perceiving themselves both as teachers and

entertainers. A child from a different school described a similar event in these profitable terms: 'It gives us confidence in writing, makes you feel like other writers, like a real writer'.

#### 2.5.1.3.3.4 Other trends in sharing and creating

Other trends of interest emerge in noting that exhibitory purposes for writing decline with age while conversely, there is a progressive response to the notion that writing can be creative corresponding to increased claims for ownership among these older children. Greater reflective self-awareness in writing further sharpens understanding of the constraints inhibiting self-expressive tendencies. Older children must adapt their experiences to meet the demands of more complex writing yet compromise their ingenuity in adapting to the constraints of the setting. The following sequence illustrates a certain dilemma which children confront in redrafting a story:

### **SJ.Y5.Ca (ll. 61-69)**

#### **Sequence 2.3**

- G1: ...It takes a long time because when you write the first draft you can make it up as you go along/ you can make it more exciting but on the second draft it's a bit boring.
- R: It is/ it's hard work isn't it/ it sometimes takes even longer to do that than it does to write it in the first place.
- G1: Because you've got to write neater. Yes you've got to write neater and you've got to make sure that all the spellings are right by every letter that you do.
- B1: When you are writing in the book he doesn't tell you that you've got to do a redraft of it so you write about ten pages or something
- G1: Yes I wrote four and a half pages.
- R: So if you had been told you were going to have to redraft it/ would you have written so much?
- G1: No.
- R: You wouldn't?
- G1: No/ we would have made it sort of exciting but not as long.

These children elicit the oft-experienced tension between the sheer pleasure of self-expression and the painful tedium of accommodating the product to conventional language use. They further illustrate the constraints perceived in curriculum-sponsored writing which discourage some children from experimenting beyond accepted interpretations. Responses to redrafting a lengthy product ranged from one boy's apparent relief 'to get it all over and done with - all that writing', to a girl's more

considered response, 'It's sometimes good in the redraft cause you can make it better and change it'. Such different attitudes to writing may possibly be explained in terms of the development of coping strategies to assist complex revisionary tasks. For example, the latter speaker explicates the following procedure: 'The parts you change you put like a little star and put a 1 next to it and 2 and 3 and things, and then at the end of the story you put what you've got to change and then in the redraft you put it in.' Such organizational strategies which can simplify a potentially daunting task were rarely expressed among the children participating in this study.

#### 2.5.1.3.4 Comparison of frequency of occurrences for Genres

Table 2.10 shows the percentages of tasks assigned to different genres by children and teachers of different age groups.

Table 2.10 Percentages of tasks assigned to genre categories for teachers and children collapsed across writing situations for years 3, 4, & 5/6.

	Year					
	3		4		5/6	
	T	C	T	C	T	C
<b>Hand written communication</b>						
Fiction	17	19	13	13	26	25
Non-fiction	30	37	20	24	29	31
Communication	8	6	10	8	6	3
Record	3	2	2	2	3	3
Game	0	0	0	0	0	0
Newspaper	0	0	2	2	0	0
Performance	2	2	2	2	6	6
Poetry	7	3	3	3	9	8
Completion	7	5	13	13	6	6
Comics	2	0	0	2	0	0
Lists	5	5	7	5	0	0
Reminders	0	0	3	3	0	0
<b>Other methods</b>						
Drawing	17	16	15	15	17	19
Scribbling	0	0	2	2	0	0
Print	3	5	8	8	0	0

Inspection of Table 2.10 indicates that children have little difficulty in matching an adult's perception of genres, recognising for instance, the functional distinction between imaginative writing (fiction) as represented by stories and writing to convey information (non-fiction) as represented in reports. These two distinct styles of writing predominated among discourse types encountered by elementary pupils and, consequently, represent the main focus for student comment during discussions.

Responses to generalized questions about writing preferences that encompassed both home and school settings are relevant here, because they predominantly related to experiences in school. When asked about preferred modes of writing, children typically indicated they liked writing stories 'Cause that's like your own thing'. The plethora of tasks grounded in factual-based topics prompted one child's musing comment, 'I don't know why we have to do so many subjects'. Preferences for report writing were conditional upon degree of personal involvement in the topic, 'It depends whether you like the topic that we are doing'. An interesting subject elicited an enthusiastic response supported by a remarkably detailed accurate and frequently graphic account of what had been learned. One subject that particularly captured the imagination concerned the workings of the digestive system:-

### Sk.Y5Cc (II.175-180)

#### Sequence 2.4

- B1: What I like doing is doing the sheets that we did yesterday like we had to do a food journey and we had all these like/ little diggers doing certain jobs like mashing it all up.
- B2: Mashing the food down the gorge.
- B1: And then like/ going into the intestines/ and then going to the toilet.
- B2: And then we had all these jumbled up words and then you had to write the journey/ it goes mouth, gullet, and then it goes intestines and then it goes to your/ um/ wait a minute/ [it goes (&)]
- R: [This has obviously caught your imagination
- B2: (&) it goes to your duodenum and then your rectum.

However, if the topic failed to capture the imagination few children alluded to it or, as one child flatly put it, 'If it's not something I'm interested in I don't like doing it'. Other stylistic forms such as poetry and letters feature far less frequently in school-assigned writing and their inclusion among the sample of tasks appears to coincide with the degree of interest expressed by particular teachers in writing. Those few and admittedly exceptional teachers who engaged in private literary pursuits tended to offer a wider range of contextual experiences. In these classrooms, poetry was often read to pupils as a stimulus for expressive writing. The majority of children found reading poetry

pleasurable, but were less enthusiastic about writing them, 'Because you can't think of a word that will make sense with the other rhyme and that will rhyme at the same time', finding the stylistic conventions difficult to master, 'You have to set them out in a certain place and we don't know where to put the words'. Similar reservations to be discussed in the following chapter were expressed in relation to school-assigned letter writing, in which pupils seemed rather less concerned with structural matters than with the need to find meaningful purposes for writing other than those defined by the curriculum.

## 2.6 Conclusions

In focusing this chapter on more abstract commonalities, it fulfills a primary objective in framing the specific concerns of subsequent chapters within the more general context of schools. At this level of understanding, two points stand out. First, there is considerable agreement between teachers and children about the functions and purposes of school writing which sharpens with age as children draw from their experiences of writing in the school context.

Second, we draw from the observation that most of these tasks were assigned by teachers and that most audiences were at least school-oriented (including parents and displayed products), if not exclusively the teachers themselves, the assumption that school writing is both initiated, controlled by and written for the teacher. These observations combine to give the sense in which children's understanding of literacy is formalized within the constraints operating in schools.

These findings contrast somewhat with Hudson's (1986, 1988) results which showed a gradual expansion in types of audiences and purposes mentioned by children across grade levels. Possible explanations for the difference may lie in the fact that Hudson's studied the accounts of a relatively small number of children, four children at each of five grade levels. By her own account, these children were unique cases, selected from a large population in a white, suburban middle-class area for their writing and verbal ability. Hudson further reported these children's accounts of writing undertaken in the home and at school, which implies a certain uniqueness in the fact that they did at least write extensively in the home. Hudson's findings of expanded audiences and purposes for older children rather suggests that she was dealing with a set of self-sponsored and spontaneous *writers* rather than self-sponsored *writing situations*.

It is not by any means certain that writing as a leisure pastime is enjoyed by children in general. For the children in this study, who represent a wide range of abilities, the

occurrence of writing varied according to personality and the constraints that prevail in the home as well as in school settings (see Chapter 4). When asked about the kinds of writing engaged in at home, many declared that they rarely if ever wrote outside the school setting. However, when discussing writing preferences, it emerged that most children, at some time or other, engaged in written discourse which took the form of letters to relatives and friends or which cultivated reciprocal communication of the kind that occurs between penpals.

These contradictions rather suggest that children make a perceptual distinction between writing as work that is clearly associated with the school purpose and the writing undertaken during the natural course of every-day life in which children found their own purposes. As one child explained: 'At school you're stuck with work and you have to do it, like you have to do it at school but you don't have to do it at home'. Yet, it became apparent that children think differently about the writing most likely to correspond with personal concerns: 'I like letters, like thank you letters for presents and I just sometimes decide to write to them, like to, sometimes to, tell people what I'm doing'. Emig's (1971) case studies suggest that students' self-sponsored writing produced at leisure displays an intimate and transactional quality that is quite distinct from their classroom composition. The extent to which contextual experience shapes thinking about writing and influences performance in school is further explored in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### A TESTING SITUATION

#### 3.1 Introduction

From the very first days of the child's development his activities acquire a meaning of their own in a system of social behaviour and, being directed toward a definite purpose, are refracted through the prism of the child's environment (Vygotsky, 1978:30).

The above quotation situates thought and intellectual development firmly in its sociocultural context thus drawing attention to the relationship between the contexts in which children participate and the concepts they acquire (Vygotsky, 1986:190-209). This provides the rationale for focusing more particularly on children's 'ways of taking' meaning from school literacy events (Heath, 1982). The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the outcomes of an analytic approach to data known as Grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In essence, this involves explicating the patterns and themes that are developed from the analysis, and highlighting some of the essential features of child discourse as an aid to discussion. Grounded theory is a method for generating theory in the sense of developing plausible relationships among concepts, through interplay with data collected during the research project. Its tactical usefulness lies in the possibility of integrating other 'voices' in an interpretative analysis and therefore, of characterizing how children position themselves in a culture.

Prior to entering school, children engage in literacy events which take the form of exploratory play and experimentation with print as a means of self-expression during the course of everyday routine. Principally through observation and participation, they import the notion of its cultural significance by comprehending its functional use in a variety of contexts. By contrast, written language is frequently the object of planned activities in school literacy events rather than the means by which social goals are achieved. A general consequence of eliminating the social dimension is observed in the tendency to focus inwards towards an emphasis on structure of language and mastery of form (Staton & Shuy, 1988). Written literacy thus becomes disembedded from the familiar rubric of everyday life and, to all intents and purposes, rather ill-defined. A second related consequence arises from the observation that many school contexts restrict opportunities for children to engage in the whole writing process (e.g., Florio and Clarke, 1982). For example, the many activities which revolve around board work or

publishers work sheets make it unnecessary for children to formulate their own thoughts into graphically encoded words.

A third observed feature of formalized literacy raises concerns about the role played by formal evaluation in certain school literacy events which serves to reinforce the strong emphasis on academic performance (Florio and Clarke, 1982), and limit other purposes for writing. These observations combined with the comments elicited towards the end of the previous chapter remind us that emergent writers simultaneously operate in separate worlds with different histories and logic, and potentially conflicting literate aims and purposes.

As indicated above, the major intention in this chapter is concerned with acknowledging and explaining the ways in which institutional and social structures shape thought, give meaning, and enforce a particular way of seeing the world. The process of explication will, in addition, make it possible to identify the sense of self and others which develops through the growing awareness that language competencies can serve economic and political interests.

### **3.2 Method**

Six children (three boys and three girls) from each participating classroom were interviewed as a group in accordance with the procedure outlined in the preceding chapter. That is, with the teachers' responses for reference, the children were asked to give their viewpoints on given writing tasks and their responses were recorded. These task-focused questions were supplemented by additional open-ended questions designed to generate information encompassing all the contexts in which children use writing including the home setting. Each group session was audiotape-recorded and the utterances transcribed from the tapes. The resulting data provides the opportunity to formulate a more comprehensive picture of children as writers.

It will be relevant at this point to clarify the purposes and methodological goals underlying the choices made with regard to the collection and display of data. As briefly intimated in the previous chapter (2.4.1.3), the group-focused interview has its advantages and disadvantages. The decision to conduct group interviews rather than one-to-one conversations is motivated by a desire to move toward equalizing the relationship among participants as an aid to conversational interaction. The value of adopting this strategy is that it encourages a more even distribution of talk or different kinds of talk, in circumstances which children construe as a novel opportunity to talk more openly than they might otherwise have done in a confrontation between adult and

child. Set against this benefit is the practical difficulty of distinguishing speakers during the transcription process. This problem was surmounted by transcribing a recorded interview sooner rather than later, and using abbreviated notations of the contributions made by different participants taken during the interview as a useful point of reference. One further point that needs to be made about the disadvantages of using audio-recordings is that other contextual information such as non-verbal communication (body language, eye gaze, gestures) is considerably reduced. In a seminal discussion on 'Transcription as theory', Ochs (1979) argues that the tendency to foreground verbal behaviour over non-verbal behaviour is partly due to this methodological constraint in recording child behaviour. Despite these limitations, the methods used are deemed appropriate for the purposes of this study. In the contexts described above, the interest lies in the content of talk as an expression of ideas rather than on non-verbal cues. Ochs main point, however, is that 'transcription is a selective process' and the principles underlying selection should be explicated (1979:44). The importance of contextual information varies according the phenomena studied and the goals of the researcher, and these considerations need to be reflected in the transcriptions. With this in mind, the position adopted with regard to layout and transcription conventions is outlined below.

### 3.2.1 Transcription procedure

Several authors focus on the choices to be made in the display of data, and insist on the suiting of methods to the questions being asked (e.g., Ochs, 1979; Edwards and Westgate, 1994; Swann, 1994). For those inquiring into classroom processes the work of Edwards and Westgate (1994), for example, sets out the possibilities in a diversity of approaches from which examples may be taken and modified to suit different kinds of purposes. Drawing on the discussions of the authors cited above and existing studies of classroom processes (e.g., Edwards and Mercer, 1987), I have relied on a relatively 'untechnical' approach to reflect my interest in gaining access to the ideas expressed in the language children use to describe their experiences of writing in diverse contexts. To satisfy this end, transcription conventions are employed as described in the data transcription key (page iv), and in accordance with the focus on content and meaning rather than linguistic structure and form. I have thus avoided 'technicalizing' the script by recording such details as breath intake, stress, syllable lengthening and intonation using symbols intended to produce an accurate but less accessible account of spoken language. In general, I have used standard orthography except in readily identifiable instances such as 'yeah', to mean 'yes' in a representation of accuracy. I have also adopted the classic 'script-like' format in which each child's utterance counts as a separate speaking turn and one turn follows the preceding one. This option has a number of theoretical advantages. First, it seems to me to more accurately represent the sequentially-expressed utterances

characteristic of the group interview than the alternative method of display in parallel columns often associated with studies involving children. Second, parallel columns make it possible to attend to activities other than the verbal behaviour important to the analysis (Swann, 1994), and to avoid conventional biases towards adult speakers (Ochs, 1979). These features reflect purposes more associated with research into language acquisition or when the focus is on relationships or participant-interaction in problem-solving situations. The standard display used throughout this chapter is intended to foreground verbally-expressed information as the particular focus of study.

A third and important theoretical issue considers the status of an utterance as a propositional unit. Swann (1994) draws attention to the uncertainties in defining the boundaries of child utterances as a point of particular concern when categories are derived using the utterance as the basic unit of analysis. The smooth turn-taking talk characteristic of adult conversations not only anticipates contingency but proceeds on the assumption that each utterance corresponds to the expression of an idea. By contrast, child-language is characteristically noncontingent. A child may take several utterances to encode a single proposition. In an attempt to neutralize these inferences made by adult speakers/readers, conventional punctuation in the transcription is kept to a minimum to avoid premature assumptions of contingency and relevance. Turn beginnings are marked by speaker change and speakers are differentiated from one another by numbers. Additionally, those features used to indicate relative pause length and overlapping speech help in the evaluation of what constitutes a propositional unit (see page iv for the key to data transcriptions).

### 3.2.1.2 Data Analysis

Unlike the categorical presentation in the previous chapter that depended on a pre-established classification scheme, this chapter is chiefly concerned to present the results of developing categories derived from retrospective analysis of all the recorded data obtained through adopting an inductive-oriented design. Data analysis was accomplished by applying principles similar to those underlying "grounded theory" (e.g., Glaser & Strauss, 1967) which broadly operates an inductive, constant comparative method of procedure involving multiple comparable cases. The categories of purpose discussed in this chapter were constructed in accordance with the analytic procedure outlined below. In the analysis of these categories, each group of children is treated as a unit, called a 'set' of individuals or cases. The tasks discussed with each group are understood as pertaining to that particular group or set of individuals.

1. *Identification of concepts.* For each set of children, I examined each task that was discussed and reduced its description to its component parts. This involved (a) taking apart each child's utterance and giving each discrete incident or idea a representative label which described the function(s) of each task, and (b) comparing description with description giving similar ideas the same conceptual label. By way of illustration, the sentence *I especially like it when you find out about the Vikings and then draw pictures about it* was conceived in terms of 'learning', 'discovering' and 'liking'. The same task described by another child as *You find out what they do* was labelled as 'learning' and 'discovering'. On the other hand, the task as described by a third child, *It's to learn adjectives and doing punctuation, capital letters, and full stops* was labelled as 'learning' and 'practising'.

2. *Identification of categories.* I then examined each set of data to identify clusters of concepts sharing patterns or themes that recur across cases. This involved (a) counting the number of purposes forming a cluster as supportive evidence of relationships, that is, counting the number of orientations towards learning mechanical skills or learning facts, and (b) subsuming the cluster of purposes under a more abstract classification or category representative of a larger phenomenon. For example, utterances such as 'practice in handwriting/ to see if we can turn the sentence round properly/ it helps with spelling/ to improve our reading', were all considered to serve the function of promoting basic literacy skills. These instances were then categorised more abstractly forming the subcategory 'Writing to facilitate literacy development'. Instances considered to serve the different function of learning facts were initially subsumed in the category of 'Writing to learn information'. Ultimately, these subcategories were discovered to share certain properties or attributes of context along a number of dimensions. That is, each type of function was given specificity in terms of frequency and type - of task, of audience, how it was evaluated, whether it had entertainment value and so on. These are the conditions which give meaning to the formulation of 'Writing for academic performance'. A graphic illustration is given below.

3. *Confirmation.* A confirmatory procedure was implemented which consisted in testing each formulated category with recourse to multiple comparison of data across groups of children. That is, once a category was established, it was possible to recycle through the data in order to verify the conclusions. During the course of each analytic cycle, verification was secured through the constant interplay of exploration and confirmation by first proposing concepts and then categories, and continually checking these formulations with reference to the data.

### The Paradigm Model

---

(WFLD + WLI) = WAP

*category*

learn

*types of purposes*

practice

inform

help

test

use product

*Attributes*

*Dimensions    conditions*

Frequency

Task

Type

Audience

Evaluation

Interaction

---

This methodological approach had the simultaneous effect of deconstructing prior conceptions of a particular phenomenon such as, for example, the idea that self-sponsored writing is a form of self-expression, while the process of construction enables associated attributes to be reformulated into the conceptual framework of 'writing for oneself' in association with one's anticipated position in the world.

#### 3.2.1.3 Conceptual classification

The above analysis generates categories that enable us to encapsulate children's thinking about their contextual experiences as reflected under the broad headings of (a) writing for academic performance, including writing to learn information and writing to facilitate literacy development; (b) writing for oneself; and (c) writing to communicate, including writing to entertain. These formulations permit description in accordance with their respective emphases on external processes, internal processes, and transactional or interactive processes. In broad terms, writing for academic performance articulates a line of thinking which largely refers to the demands made by the external world, writing for oneself reflects the role played by internal processes, and writing to communicate emerges in response to demands made by communicative processes.

If, for practical purposes, the research objective is to make these simplifying assumptions, it can be argued that these distinctions may be of small use in the territory in which cultural behaviour is organized. Yet at least the mode of inquiry makes it possible to envisage such distinctions as qualitatively interactive, underpinned by network of associated influences, and internally and externally distributed along a continuum of pupil involvement in the task. Thus the methodology establishes what can be described as functional forms of *thinking* about literacy that are contingent on a host of culturally implicit factors complicating learning and literate practices. And their explication will not be viable without reference to the cultural activity systems in which they are externally distributed. The challenge implied here is one that involves explicating the implicit through examining the multiple constraints of educational events.

With these concerns in mind, this chapter explores some examples of individual events and how the incidents to which they are linked turn into a meaningful configurational structure. Of interest here are circumstantial similarities and differences on whose foundation children build their understanding of the world. The key to these diverging references revolve around such issues as authenticity, active participation, ownership and control. I discuss these themes in the context of those literary events of particular relevance.

#### 3.2.1.4 Examples of data

Out of the 150 children interviewed, a total of 80 children or 15 groups (4 = year 3, age-range 7-8 years; 6 = year 4, age-range 8-9 years; 5 = years 5/6, age-range 10/11 years), produced the transcriptions incorporated within this chapter. These transcriptions help to illustrate the patterns and themes that are developed from the analysis.

Questions of particular interest guiding the analysis and interpretation of data are the following:

- (a) What are children doing in respect to school writing, for whom and why?
- (b) In what ways do children's thinking change as a function of age and school experience?
- (c) How do children's task functional interpretations of assigned writing vary in response to the ways tasks are organized?

### 3.3 OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.3.1 Writing for Academic Performance

Children seem to appropriate an adult's understanding of the nature and purposes of school literacy tasks with maturation and an accretion of school practice. In considering the consequences of becoming so attuned to school objectives, we recall the accounts of several others who express their concern about the predominance of modes of teaching that emphasize evaluation (Ackerman, 1993). So commonplace are these observations that they explain, in Elbow's words, 'why we experience writing as inherently a medium for getting it right'. (1985:285). Although pupils make few references to writing specifically for a mark or grade, their perceptions of the setting seem to reflect such strong notions about performance assessment as an active and powerful situational constituent that authors such as Florio and Clarke (1982) and Hudson (1986) suggest that children reason according to this agenda. To illustrate, compare the following discussions about what children across age groups think they are doing with respect to particular writing tasks.

[In all these transcribed sequences, R = Researcher, G = Girl, and B = Boy. The full key to data transcriptions can be found on page iv]

#### SH.Y3.Ca (II.11-20)

##### Sequence 3.1 Portrait of Mum and Dad (year 3)

- R: Why do you think you did this writing? What do you think it is practice in doing?  
 G1: Writing  
 G2: Yes/ writing  
 B: Colouring in/ working  
 R: Do you think it was practice in spelling?  
 G1: No. Mrs B gave it so we can practice in writing about yourself  
 B: She always gets the right answer  
 G2: No/ sometimes she gets it wrong  
 R: Practice in writing about yourself?  
 G2: No/ practice in writing about your Mam and Dad

#### SD.Y4.Cd. (II.78-80)

##### Sequence 3.2 Letter written to parents while on a supposed holiday (year 4)

- R: And why do you think you did this?  
 G: Just if you go on holiday/ how to write/ er/ how to write letters  
 B2: Like if you were writing a letter it would show you how/ like/ it was a test to see if you could get it right.

**SD.Y6.Cf. (II.55-66)****Sequence 3.3** Stories for younger children (year 5/6)

- R: Why do you think you did this?  
 G1: Just to see how good we can write/ like stories and that  
 G2: Cause other years did stories for our year about three years ago. They made us stories.
- ·  
 ·
- R: ...Any other reasons?  
 G1: Like/ it's English.  
 B1: To test us.  
 B2: Like/ it's English Language  
 G2: Cause we made the books up like/ out of our imagination  
 B3: To try how good we are at writing stories.

Although the activities may differ, each of these sequences illustrate the evaluative climate that pervades the classroom. In the first example, 7 year olds seem uncertain about how to define the present context and simply assume they are being tested as they try to second guess the reasons underlying given tasks. The second and third sequences show children able to make contextual distinctions while continuing to explicate purposes with an evaluative emphasis. These older children, while demonstrating articulatory abilities in relation to purposes and goals, seem to project an understanding of the school context as constituting a testing situation.

Particular attention is paid to the last sequence in the foreknowledge that no such evaluative purpose was intended. On the contrary, this activity presented a number of opportunities including choice of topic, freedom of movement and unlimited access to pens and paper, and participants were allowed to proceed without intervention at a leisurely pace in line with the teacher's intention to engage children's interest during the weeks preceding the summer vacation. Despite these conditions which might be said to more closely resemble those existing in non-school settings, it is interesting to note children's consistent references to the school academic purpose. In short, it would appear that children interpret functions according to acquired normative understandings through accumulated school experiences.

For children generally, their understanding of writing for academic performance seems to fall into two identifiable categories. For example, practice in writing, 'It's for handwriting'; spelling tests, grammar exercises and even stories, which one child equated with a grammar exercise, 'I think grammar is writing stories', all fall into the category of writing intended for practice and assessment of writing skills. Children also distinguished

writing to serve other academic ends such as an aid to memory as in a geography lesson. 'to help us know about other places'; as description resulting in insights about phenomena, 'to see how St Cuthbert felt and what it's like to live with the monks'; and as explanation that the student had learned the concept as, for example, the "food journey"; '...it goes mouth, gullet and then it goes intestines and then it goes... to your duodenum and then your rectum'. These examples are typically distinguished as 'writing to learn information'.

These two functional representations encompassed a broad range of activities sharing characteristic constraints in topic, format and predetermined function in that they were neither pupil-generated nor ultimately pupil-controlled. Furthermore, the bulk of academic performance activities involved the teacher as sole audience and evaluator. In these respects, the findings corroborate those of other classroom studies (e.g., Dyson 1984a, 1984b; Florio and Clarke, 1982) that comment on the relationship between teacher-evaluated performances, task constraints and lack of student control (Hudson, 1988).

It seems relevant at this point to elaborate on an earlier comment (2.5.1.3.1.3) that evaluative practices form the structure, and hence constitute the nature, of the school culture. Considering the full impact of evaluative practices enables a fuller understanding of what individuals do to alter or change or determine in significant ways, the settings in which a text is produced or used. In what follows, I examine the various roles played by evaluation processes in the school community and the directional influences, who is doing it and with what consequences.

### 3.3.1.2 *Trial by adults: causes and consequences*

Display of work on classroom walls or to other members of staff was frequently perceived as an acknowledgement of a good performance eliciting the comment, 'They go up on the wall if they're especially good' typical amongst younger children. The worthiness of a product was judged on the standard of hand-writing and the accuracy of spelling. It is clear that children perceived spelling as providing the particular focus of a teacher's attention, 'Sometimes she sees our spellings to see if we've got them right', and the means of attaining some kind of reward, 'because you get housepoints if you get them right'. Children also apprehended the consequences of sub-standard performances:

#### **SB. Y4.Ca (II.103-106)**

##### **Sequence 3.4**

- B1: If you have bad writing you get shouted at.  
 B2: No/ but that's not all/ but if you get a spelling wrong.

- B1: You get useless.  
 B2: Yeh and where you get a spelling wrong he puts a great big black line through it and he writes SP at the top and how many spelling mistakes you get.

Such conditions are less likely to foster a positive approach to writing than cultivate overriding concern with accuracy and undermine confidence; consequences evidenced in the following comment: 'I like writing stories but I hate writing stories because Miss, I don't like it because I always get it wrong'.

This early emphasis on mechanical skills also sets the required standard and provides the norm by which children begin to critically assess their own performances. Comments such as 'I don't like me work ...cause nobody else understands it' (year 3), 'Spelling lets me down' (year 4) and 'I'm not good at spelling' (year 5) help illustrate the main focus of children's progression through school. They also point up the constraints associated with school-situated writing and explain children's preferences for writing stories at home. Choice of topic 'that they don't tell you to do', control over content, 'you can put put whatever you want to in it...make it exciting', and unlimited time, 'you're not rushed at home', combine to illustrate the distinction between self-generated writing and the restrained writing propagated in school activities. In particular, fear of evaluation motivated children's setting preferences, 'Like you know nobody's behind you saying 'That's good, that's bad, start again'. These comments help foreground children's individual performances in different settings.

Although self-evaluative statements focused on spelling abilities feature prominently among children's perception of what constitutes literary success, this is not to suggest that all self-directed comments comport a negative orientation. Some children find that school affords them unique opportunities gauge their competencies, initially under the guidance of a teacher, and then in the context of peers. Comments such as, 'You get ticks and things at school, you don't get ticks at home' and, 'you can get well-done and it makes you feel proud', distinguish the school context, pointing to the teacher as a primary source of motivation.

For some children, it is the relentless pressure imposed by parental evaluation that evokes an antagonism towards home-based writing, and underscores the preference for writing at school, 'Because if you write letters to your parents they go "Oh that word's spelt wrong".' In some instances, children found their teacher easier to please and there was more to gain from doing so, 'Cause the parents keep coming over and if you get a word wrong, the word's wrong but Mr. M. (the teacher) he'll just help you with it'. As

the following sequence exemplifies, they appear to make a qualitative distinction between what is perceived to be outright criticism and constructive evaluation:

**SA.Y3.Ca.(II.217-220)**

**Sequence 3.5**

- B1: Because the teacher knows more writing than your Mam and Dad.  
 G: She'll put spelling corrections in your books if you write for her  
 B1: And your Mam [and Dad doesn't  
 B2: [And your Mam and Dad don't/ they just say/ they just go 'read this'./ Your Mam and Dad just point to a spelling mistake over there and you couldn't see it.

In matters concerning literacy, teachers are judged more knowledgeable and therefore better qualified to fulfil children's literary needs. Moreover, the critical aims of teachers are directed towards a purpose compatible with children's own literate aims, and their neutral position vis a vis pupils renders criticism eminently more acceptable.

In considering further the critical role that school-based writing plays in children's lives, there is an important distinction to be made between *self-generated writing* and *self-motivated writers*. Despite their evident preference for self-generated writing, few children would describe themselves as self-motivated writers. Instead, they rely on the structure school activities provide because, 'you get told what to do it's easier', and look to the teacher for inspiration because when it comes to literacy, 'teachers are more interesting than parents'. And, as one child put it, 'I like writing for the teacher because I know I have to do it and at home I just don't do it'.

**3.3.1.3 Peer-evaluation: causes and consequences**

If teachers are the primary source of motivation, then the school context also locates the second important source of inspiration that is manifested in interaction between peers. The norms and standards prevailing in the classroom may depend initially upon a teacher's proclivities, yet it is the meaning-making activities between pupils which work to sustain prescribed values and effect changes in the individual. Let me illustrate this point in respect to values placed in academic performance by indicating a variety of ways in which children use the potential of peer evaluation. Arguably, for most individuals a sense of self-worth depends on maintaining parity with peers, and children prove no exception in this respect. The social-collective operating in the classroom provides unique opportunities to display competence and occasionally to engage in a piece of one-upmanship:

**SC.Y3.Ca (II.144-149)****Sequence 3.6 Spelling**

- B1: I am nearly the best speller in the class  
 G1: One of the best.  
 B1: Quickness and things like that.  
 R: You've got what?  
 B1: I've got spellings like equipment/ argument/ and amusement/ and they've got stuff like arrive/ dive/ five/ alive/ stuff like that. Last year I'm the only one who's got the hardest spelling in the class.  
 G1: Last year we got Tutenkhanem and nearly all of us got it right.

The above sequence provides a typical example of a competitive exchange about spelling competencies, where one child's claim for an exceptional skill is quickly dismissed by another. However, assessments of peer skills were grounded in presumptions of what is fair and could take either a positive or negative direction depending on the other's stance, as is demonstrated in an exchange about drawing skills:

**SA.Y3.Ca (II.98-101)****Sequence 3.7**

- G1: I love drawing pictures  
 B1: I don't like drawing pictures  
 G1: I thought you liked drawing pictures cause you're excellent  
 B2: I know/ you are excellent at drawing pictures. You should see his army pictures.

In the interests of justice, children are as ready to admire another's competency and promote a low-estimated performance as they are to challenge an over-modest claim.

A further opportunity for comparing performances arises from the school practice of displaying products around the classroom 'to show how good you've done'. While children in year 3 interpreted their displays as reward for doing good work, older children seized the opportunity to share work and monitor competence:

**SA.Y4.Cb. (II. 57-58)****Sequence 3.8**

- B1: You get a chance to hear everybody's so then you can enjoy hearing the other books.  
 B2: You can pick out the best ones for reading.

Dyson characterises the relationship between the peer culture and school literate activities with the term "unintentional helping" that summarises the variety of ways in which children help each other learn about literacy. Purposes for writing, and techniques

used to capture an audience's interest, were acquired incidently in social intercourse. At the same time, she marks the contrast between this underground swell of supportive activity and the lack of social discourse to support the literate activities provided by the official curriculum (Dyson, 1988:222).

In the intertwining of children's social and academic concerns, literacy could also present a common problem, one that identifies the child collective and motivates these expressions of failure to meet academic demands:

**SD.Y5.Ce (ll. 124-127)**

**Sequence 3.9**

B1: I'm not good at spelling.

G1: Neither am I.

G2: I'm not.

G3: I'm not.

The foregoing examples collectively portray peer influence as a powerful motivating force in children's lives and suggest that the competing demands of the children's official and unofficial worlds may give further cause for concern. Dyson (1984a, 1984b, 1985) cautions that aspects of conventional practice which fail to recognize the unofficial world of peer culture may make school literacy a negative unifying force in children's lives. In particular she critiques as divisive those institutional practices which force children to compete with each other and value adult more than self or peer approval.

Significant others locate their interest in peer talk both as an inevitable unofficial component of classroom life, and as a potentially useful medium for official academic tasks (Cazden, 1986). According to Vygotsky, "The higher functions of child thought at first appear in the collective life of children in the form of argumentation and only then develop into reflection for the individual child" (1981:157). For Piaget, the benefits accrued in peer-collaborative enterprises are manifested through cognitive conflict: in the confrontation with alternative points of view one realizes the limitations of one's own (1950, Ch.6).

Despite theoretical support for socially facilitated learning practices, one is hard pressed to find such values operating in the classrooms surveyed here. The response to the few activities that are reported to co-ordinate the official and unofficial worlds suggests that such practices have the potential to transform classroom environments. One such opportunity to share work and monitor performance actualized in the officialdom of the classroom is illustrated in the following sequence:

**SA.Y4.Cb. (ll. 32-39)****Sequence 3.10**

- R: Do you think it helps you to write when you read things out?  
 G1: Yes.  
 G2: Because other children can tell you if it's good or bad.  
 R: So you get quite a feedback from other children?  
 G1: Yes.  
 G2: Sometimes she says at the end 'Put your hands up if you think it was good'.  
 B1: You get told all your mistakes.  
 G2: You get told that if it doesn't make sense you can do it again so it does.

Peer evaluation, when it is organized in the context of a literate activity, instantiates a change in the relationship between official and unofficial worlds so as to coincidentally construct a discourse community composed of writers and readers. In a discourse community, students work towards a consensus about "...what is worth communicating, how it may be communicated, what other members of the community are likely to know and believe to be true about certain subjects, how other members can be persuaded, and so on" (Faigley, 1985: 238). At the same time, the social collective provides a scaffold upon which children construct their sense of the general social nature of literacy. Perhaps most importantly, the above statements point to the educational value of harnessing the potential of peer evaluation as a powerful tool for promoting learning in the classroom.

**3.3.2 Writing for Oneself**

Previous studies of school settings have identified two further functions for classroom writing, namely, writing to know oneself and writing to occupy free time (Florio and Clarke, 1982; Hudson, 1988). Florio and Clarke associate these functions with genres of personal narrative defining such as stories and diaries as the most informal types of classroom writing and the least likely to be shared publicly or evaluated. Hudson endorses these claims suggesting that such curriculum-sponsored writing "may be the fulcrum of the balance of ownership between curriculum constraints and complete freedom in composing" (1988:52). In the sense that curriculum-sponsored products are heavily infused with original composition, children's enthusiastic response suggested a degree of involvement rarely expressed in other contexts. In the following example, children explain their preference for writing a story:

**SJ.Y5.Ca. (ll.24-33)****Sequence 3.11**

- R: Why do you like it?  
 G1: Cause you can make it how you want it/ your own/ without being told how to write it.  
 R: Do you find it entertaining?

- PP: Yes  
 R: Why entertaining?  
 G1: Just cause it's your own story and you can put in [what you want (&)  
 B1: [what happens  
 G1: (&) what happens/ just to make it up as you go along/ make it more exciting as you're thinking.

This sequence expresses evident enjoyment in terms of various components of control over writing in which a sense of freedom over topic and of choices within a topic combine to evoke a sense of self in writing. Other examples of pupil-talk, however, indicate that ownership of so-called curriculum-sponsored writing is frequently constrained by teacher intervention. Instances of diary writing illustrate this last point where children elicit expressions of ownership, 'It's our story', but acknowledge a teacher-audience, 'If you open your book she just likes to see what you're capable of. In the following sequence, a group of older children discuss the circumstances surrounding the diary situation in response to queries into least favoured school writing:

**SB.Y5.Cb. (II.285-299)**

**Sequence: 3.12**

- Dn: I like least writing about things you've done during the week  
 K: Yeh the diary  
 Dn: Cause some things that you've done/ you can't think of anything to write in your diary because you never do nothing/ you've stopped in and watched telly all day  
 K: Maybe/ like/ you went to a funeral maybe you don't want to write it in/ or you went to a wedding and no one doesn't want to know about it/ or maybe your mam's had a baby and no one's interested in that.  
 R: But if it's a personal diary then isn't it nice for you just to write?  
 Dn: But it isn't a personal diary really./ Everyone sees it.  
 Dw: Yeh/ the teacher will see it or your friends will see it.  
 K: And if like/ you don't feel like writing in your diary and/ like/ if you write nothing cause you didn't do anything else during the weekend/ your teachers get angry at you and you just feel that I don't want to write that cause it's personal/ I don't want to talk about it.  
*(All the children agree with this last point)*  
 Dw: It's just some things are private.  
 Dn: Some things are stupid that you write about and people pick on you cause you've written it.

This frank and lengthy discussion expresses the conventional notion of diaries as affording an outlet for psychological states: thoughts, wishes and innermost feelings about matters of personal concern and particular interest. According to social convention, such writings which touch on issues related to the 'core self' are not usually intended for public consumption. However, the circumstances as described seemingly contravene the right to privacy normally accorded to diary writing and hence constitute a

situation made problematical on several counts. Of primary concern here is the resulting ambiguity that clearly does not originate from children's difficulties in conceptualizing stylistic conventions but rather in what they regard as a teacher's failure to uphold the rules underlying conventional usage. On the one hand, the task is perceived to require written discourse of a personal nature and, on the other, personal contributions are exposed to public evaluation by the teacher and potential ridicule from peers. When faced with this dilemma, it is not difficult to understand why children deny the affective dimension such writing portends, reducing its potential for extending self-knowledge to recording the mundane details of shopping baskets. As one child put it, '...you go on forever with your beans, bacon and sausage...' (1.303).

The above example demonstrates how teacher intervention can undermine a writer's sense of control by privileging academic performance above other important concerns for writing. The consequences of contextual misrepresentation are apparent elsewhere and explain one child's understanding of what it means to write a story: 'I think grammar is writing a story'.

A further expression of 'writing for oneself' emerges in individual accounts of the role school literacy plays in helping to amass the kind of capital to enable them to engage the world on its own terms. In this sense, the notion of writing for oneself raises issues which touch on the relationship between individual cognition and social context, and lead us to focus "on writing as a form of cultural production linked to processes of social empowerment" (Chase, 1988:14). The following extracts present some empirical bases for the 'writing for oneself' as a culturally-produced ideological construct. A story writing episode provided the focus of discussion in this first extract:

### **SC.Y3.Ca. (II.56-59)**

#### **Sequence 3.13**

- R: Do you think it is to learn something? Do you think it is to understand something?
- B1: We are trying to like/ learn to write things properly and get our handwriting better as we do it (&)
- B2: And...
- B1: (&) so we get better at writing stories so that when we go to bigger schools/ that you have to pass exams and you have to write a story/ you can write stories and everything.

Although the question was aimed at eliciting children's learning experiences in a particular story-writing event, these responses touch on the larger issues of what children understand about the nature of school literacy tasks and the purpose of 'doing

school'. They reflect an understanding of the relationship between literacy competency and academic performance and they look upon the primary school experience as the first step on the academic ladder.

A similar perspective is reflected in a discussion about writing the title page of a booklet on the subject of energy and electricity:

**SF.Y4.Cb. (II.54-61)**

**Sequence 3.14**

- R: Why do you think you do this kind of writing?  
 B1: To teach us to learn about energy and electricity.  
 G: To teach us/ if we were to be a teacher when we grow older/ if we want to teach school/ we would know what to teach.  
 R: Any other reason do you think?  
 B1: To learn.  
 G: To get a good job.  
 B1: That's why we go to school/ if you didn't go to school you wouldn't do anything  
 B2: If you got bad marks when you went to university you would end up a bimbo  
 G: If you go to college you get a better job.

These older children subscribe to a world perspective similar to their younger counterparts while demonstrating the capacity to rationalize the school experience on the basis of social and educational implications. They also illustrate an ideological sense of purpose in the setting in reflecting on the consequences of *not* fully participating in the school learning process.

The third sequence marks a final stage in the ontogeny of children's thinking about the role of writing vis a vis schooling:

**SJ.Y5.Ca. (II.225-233)**

**Sequence 3.15**

- R: When you write at school who do you think you're writing for/ or when you write at any time who do you think you're writing for?  
 G1: Myself  
 G2: I am writing for myself. Sometimes Mr. H tells you what to write/ but I'm writing for myself and not Mr. H.  
 R: And that's at school?  
 G2: Cause it works up to your GCSEs'.  
 R: So you think you're doing it for you/ do you?  
 G1: Cause it's not the teacher's fault if you don't pass tests/ it's our fault cause you don't work hard enough but if you keep at work you get better.  
 B: Sometimes he gives us sheets for handwriting.

G1: Yes for handwriting practice.// You're not doing it for the teacher/ just to get us out of the way/ you're doing it for yourself so you can get good at writing.

The above extracts of pupil-talk display features of cultural assimilation which several authors suggest illustrates the power of social structures to shape and perhaps circumscribe thought and action. From this perspective, it would seem that children's literacy aspirations reproduce the prevailing cultural ideal. Such descriptions give rise to the belief that knowledge is a social construct "influenced by particular communities' belief systems, work agendas, and agendas about what is important to study" (Schrifer, 1989:273). Yet an emerging sense of self clearly emanating from within the third exemplified discussion suggests that learning is a constructive process in which students make sense of and give personal meaning to social context. It is the teacher who is acknowledged as initiator in the learning process, though the teacher eventually fades from view with the insertion of individual will and intention. On this view, it could be said that children do well to understand the nature of school literacy tasks and the ideological forces underpinning the school culture for, as constituents of culture, children are motivated to write and rightly look to the world as a source of motives for learning to write effectively. Taking this argument further, one could argue, as Knoblauch (1988) implicitly recognises, that empowering students also consists of helping them to amass the kind of knowledge to enable them to understand the modes of inquiry that are privileged in academic community.

Nevertheless, the monologic nature of these utterances seems somewhat problematic. Nor is the issue of motivation fully resolved since it appears that children know in general why writing is an important skill to acquire yet this knowledge remains at high levels of abstraction.

Laying out the problems brings to mind an earlier made point about children coexisting in different settings and the distinction they themselves make between writing produced in the school setting and the production and use of much written discourse - in the writing of letters, signing of cheques, contractual arrangements, newspapers and television broadcasts - encountered on a daily basis. Such texts - and their aims and functions - simply cannot be cast aside as anomalies of no particular interest. They are, as Kinneavy (1980) notes, "ethnologic" in terms of the aims of discourse, embedded "within a biographical and historical stream" (p.249). Following Bahktin's (1986:37) notion of the "dialogic", they evoke what Halliday (1978) calls a "meaning potential" (p.19) because they relate not only to one another but to a culturally enacted stream of discourse that enables people to construct particular meanings through particular kinds of texts.

Bakhtin's concept of dialogue also underscores Nystrand's (1989) theory of reciprocity to describe the inherent conversationality in writing - the negotiation of turn taking, topic shifting and coherence that governs the relationship between reader and writer. In accordance with this conceptualization, the writer constructs a context in collaboration with 'conversational partners' also participating in that universe of discourse.

The main concern here is that the cultural literacy enforced by a legacy of schooling may not be the kind of knowledge that enables students to take ownership of their learning. Although school practices may prepare children with the literate skills they need to pursue learning, there is little to ensure that they will manage this knowledge in order to persuade others about what they see or apply what they know appropriately in different situations. In pursuing this argument we need to look further into the ways social context cues cognition by ascertaining how children summon prior knowledge, construe purpose and make sense of their contextual experiences.

In addressing issues of control, ownership and authenticity, the following sections identify other discourse functions; namely, writing to communicate and writing to entertain, and locates them within those activities that seem to serve legitimate personal and social purposes in the classroom community.

### **3.3.3 Writing as Communication**

#### *3.3.3.1 Aspects of ownership in pupil-centred communication*

The literature is replete with examples of activities that are proposed to engender legitimate personal and purposeful meaning in the classroom. Florio (1979) notes, for instance, the consequences of instantiating classroom postal systems, and Graves (1983) suggests that personal narratives and informational pieces enable children to share their knowledge and experiences with others. Yet it is the teacher who identifies, initiates and orchestrates these themes, and it is the teacher's authority that privileges, problematizes and otherwise constrains the meaning-making potential of context. And as Dyson (1984) and Florio and Clarke (1982) earlier recognized, children's views of their contextual experiences may differ significantly from the views of their teachers and those of outside researchers.

The following examples drawn from a group of children in the same class may serve to illustrate this point. The first exchange refers to a task which required children to choose a piece of broken pot and write about it from an archaeologist's viewpoint. Whereas this

writing was intended to be self-sponsored, the children perceived it to be teacher-assigned. A second task, perceived by both children and teacher to be self-sponsored, provided children with a choice of writing poetry either in the form of Saxon runes or riddles. The two activities generated the following discussions.

### Sequence 3.16

#### SE.Y3.Ca (ll.226-237)

- R: This task/ Did you have any choice in writing this task?  
 PP: No.  
 R: You had to write it?  
 PP: Yes.  
 R: Where did you write it?  
 PP: In our jotters.  
 R: And who saw it?  
 B: Mrs H. and nobody else.  
 R: Why do you think you did this?  
 G: Interest and learning.  
 R: And was it entertaining?  
 G: Yes.

### Sequence 3.17

#### SE.Y3.Ca (ll.51-76)

- R: Oh/ Saxon runes/ r-u-n-e-s. What are they?  
 G1: Well they're [sort of like  
 B1: [The Anglo Saxons thought they were magic.  
 B2: Anglo Saxons thought they were magic so we did them. Mrs H. said that might come up/ a hundred pounds under our bed.  
 G2: I wish yeh.  
 G3: You wish  
 B2: I wish but//  
 R: So what did this do? Was it entertaining [this...  
 B1: [Yes I loved it.  
 R: And was it to communicate something?  
 B1: Yes/ we did kind of messages to our friends/ we gave it to them to see if they could work it out.  
 B2: Yeh I wrote mine to Calvin.  
 B1: I wrote mine to Daniel.  
 B3: So did I.  
 R: And did you do it by yourselves or did you do it with everyone?  
 B1: We did it by ourselves.  
 G2: We had to make it up.  
 R: But you didn't do it with another person?  
 B1: No./ I said 'Daniel I love you/ you're my best friend' (*laughs*)  
 R: So it was to give to some-one because/ what did you do/ send a message?  
 PP: Yes

- B1: I gave it to Daniel.  
 B2: I gave it to Calvin.  
 B3: Well you would/ wouldn't you.  
 G2: Yeh he would.  
 B1: Daniel gave his to me.

Although it seems that each task makes different demands, it is worth focusing on the situations they invoked as a means of furthering our understanding about the situatedness of writing. On the teacher's reckoning, each situation provided children with the opportunity to assume authority in writing but the offer of choices within a task may not in itself suffice to shift the balance of control in the children's favour. Such occasions, as Florio (1982) observes, often arise spontaneously and rely on a teacher's sensitivity to perceive the potential of an experience that has captured the imagination.

Children's preparedness to prolong debate about a situation of most significance to them speaks volumes about the quality of that experience. And as illustrated, the brief comments attributed to writing the story sharply contrast with the enervated nature of talk centering around the second activity. Within Hudson's (1988) framework, the above example would presumably fall into the category of 'curriculum-surpassed' writing as one initially based upon an assignment but in which children found a meaningful audience, purpose and genre; that "in some way, an assignment not only became their own, but also surpassed the 'had to' demands of the curriculum" (p. 58). Yet Hudson's explanation of ownership of assigned writing leads us to ask about the ways in which children impose authority on assigned writing and the conditions likely to promote that transformation? No matter how we might decide to ultimately answer these questions, it is clear not only that meaning-making is central to any conceptualization of writing but also that meaning-making functions at different levels through both the activities.

In the first example, the information that is directly elicited seems to reflect little other than children's understanding of the function of school and its educational purpose. In this respect, it represents a perspective grounded in a single vision of the writing process; one that considers an individual text as a totality. What it fails to represent is the intertextual nature that situates language, and that includes texts, as a part of life. As Todorov (1984) puts it, that "there is no [meaningful] utterance without relation to other utterances" (p.60).

The evidence in the second extract suggests that these pupils not only constructed a context in the act of writing but they reconstructed it on reflection. It seems almost as if the same kind of collaborative intercourse that characterised the act of writing is

revitalised in the act of speaking about the situation. To improvise Halliday's (1978) notion of language as "meaning potential", we might say that children recognized the messages as meaningful because, as part of an intertextual network, they relate not only to one another but also to a culturally enacted stream of discourse. In reconstructing the situation, they defined their understanding of culture and, as constituents of culture, they were able to infer the communicative function for writing.

In an analysis of the interrelationship between interpretation, language and culture, Malinowski (1946:309) explains that "...the meaning of a word must always be gathered, not from the passive contemplation of the word, but from an analysis of its functions, with reference to its given culture". On this view, such inferences made about the function and meaning for this writing are unlikely to have been acquired independently from the way written discourse seems to be understood operationally in Western culture.

### 3.3.3.2 *The Problem of Authenticity*

If the above described context displays some of the benefits obtained from pupil-centred communication, the following extracts illustrate some of the communicative consequences when pupils encounter letter-writing at the more formal end of the curriculum. In the first sequence a group of 8 year-olds describe the purpose of writing a letter seeking a job interview. The second sequence forms the response to letters linked with an on-going study of the Victorian era. In the role of 'Philanthropists' children were required to write letters to the Prime Minister pleading the cause of the working classes.

#### **SC.Y4.Cb (II.214-223)**

##### **Sequence 3.18**

- R: So what is this practice in?  
 G: It's practice in writing.  
 R: What are you doing in the letter?  
 B: Well we are learning about how to write things in a letter.  
 R: Right/ how to communicate in fact./ What kind of writing is this?  
 G: You can either do handwriting or printing.  
 R: Right/ but it's a letter isn't it/ is it real/ it's not about pretend things?  
 B: Yeh it's about real/ if you're like/ an adult/ and you have to apply for a job.  
 R: Do you like doing this?  
 B: Well I don't really because its quite boring/ I don't know what to write/ you get confused sometimes and forget what you are writing about/ like you're thinking how to start writing some questions.

**SK.Y4.Cb (II.58-66)****Sequence 3.19**

- R: So why did you do this? Do you think it's learning about something/ to communicate something like/ to tell somebody something?
- G1: It's just learning/ that's what all the classes did/ the reception and year 1 up to year 6 did it.
- R: Oh/ that's interesting. It's just to learn something is it?
- G1: I think so.
- B1: Yeah
- G2: We don't really know that.
- R: Well/ you can guess at the reason as to why you do these things.
- G1: We've read about America/ it said 'Discover America'.
- G2: Oh/ it looks like that might be what we're doing next.

The confusion expressed or implied in the above comments is compelling because it draws attention to a number of factors which constrain children's capacity for meaning-making and undermine their sense of control. First, theoretical models of literate practice generally recommend moving students gradually from familiar to unfamiliar subjects on the presumption that emergent writers will write best about topics that are near to their concrete experiences (e.g., Moffet, 1968). According to this reasoning, children are least likely to comfortably manage those assignments that require them to role-play on topics which range beyond their experiences or immediate concerns. The studies of McGinley and Tierney (1989) provide some empirical support for this approach in concluding that learning is less likely to occur unless the composer is engaged with the task and topic.

A second and related difficulty emerges in relation to contextual-misrepresentation which further complicates tasks demands. As mentioned earlier, the context of culture allows us to recognize the function of particular writings, and letters epitomize the kind interpersonal communication in which the predominant focus on the interpersonal needs or problems of writer and recipient characterises the person-centredness of communication. In these respects both activities, in failing to satisfy conventionalized notions of communicative discourse, also fail to instantiate a meaningful purpose for writing. Dyson (1984) surmises such situations as 'inauthentic' in ultimately failing to make 'human sense' to children, as the above comments demonstrate.

The third important factor influencing contextual representation concerns the particular difficulty distinctive to the medium of writing which relates to the physical separation of writers from their audience. Vygotsky (1987) appreciated the problem of audience in noting that writing is twice abstracted from immediate social interaction, "Even the most

minimal level of development of written language requires a high degree of abstraction. Written speech lacks intonation and expression. It lacks all the aspects of speech that are reflected in sound". More significantly, the writer must construct an abstract representation of audience since "Written speech is speech without an interlocuter... It is a conversation with a white sheet of paper, with an imagined or conceptualized interlocuter" ( Vygotsky, 1987:202).

At the very least writers must create some sort of representation of their readers if they are to generate the kind of autonomy written text demands to make it intelligible to a spatially and temporally remote audience. Such operations require metalinguistic abilities just beginning to emerge around the time children enter school and instruction in writing begins. Surely these are important issues to consider in the primary grades because, as Ackerman (1993) points out, "the writer relationship to subject matter, in terms of perspective or familiarity will influence the success of writing as a mode of learning" (1993:359).

### **3.3.4 Towards reconciling the Cognitive and the Social**

The foregoing discussions suggest that written language - as well as spoken - is situated in a particular context and communicative style is an outward reflection of the writer's mental representation of that context. While illustrating how classroom tasks may be detached from children's everyday experiences, these examples generate other questions about context such as: What elements of situation constitute those necessary to create a meaningful context which will engage children in productive writing? Can we predict which situational elements are likely to be important and which unimportant? And, given the circumstances currently existing in the modern classroom, how can teachers instantiate beneficial contexts for learning? The minimum response to such questions recommends that writing instruction needs to address the many meaning-making activities we have come to associate with contemporary culture. Beyond this, it needs to consider the role played by individual action, motive and intention in constructing a meaningful event. The following examples illustrate two classroom-orchestrated situations which display some of the features appropriate and necessary for uniting the cognitive and the social, and which are identified as being significant to young learners.

As mentioned earlier, our discussions about writing letters produced only two such events perceived as engendering the interactive function we normally attribute to this communicative style. One of these tasks involved an exchange of information between a class of 9 year-olds and their French counterparts regarding school life in their respective countries. These letters were purposely written in order 'to find out about people', in the



expectation of receiving equally informative letters in return. A similar communicative context, and one that invites elaborated attention, concerns an exchange of letters between a class of 7 year-olds and the elderly residents of a local nursing home. The task required that children initiate an exchange of information about current and past school experiences. This activity is distinguished among other formalized letter-writing events previously cited in the particular intention 'to motivate children to write and to see it as a reciprocal process', underlying its orchestration.

**SC.Y3.Ca (II.84-101)**

**Sequence 3.20**

- B1: We had five people to choose from and we could choose anyone.  
 G1: I chose SC. and R S.  
 G2: I wrote to A T.  
 B2: I just haven't wrote these before cause/ mmm/ they were in Mrs. Carol's when we did them last year.  
 G3: I wrote to W A and I did this picture and it was of a mother holding a baby and she liked the picture a lot and she stuck it up on her bedroom wall.  
 R: Did she?  
 G3: And she wrote me a special letter back.  
 R: Where did you do this?/ At your desk?  
 B1: Yeh  
 G1: You did it for your teacher but you also did it for the people you were writing to.  
 PP: Yeh  
 B1: Cause Sir says/ I think he's trying to arrange a day for us to go for the Christmas.  
 B2: It's a shame we didn't do this when I lived in Ireland because my Nanna whose got Alzheimer's disease/ she's in an old peoples home./ If I was in Ireland and I lived nearer I could write to her/ I could write Nanna.  
 R: Why do you think you did this./ What do you think it taught you?  
 B1: How to spell words.  
 G1: And learning a lot about questions/ because you had to write questions.  
 G2: You had to write questions about shopping [and...  
 B3: [And we asked them some questions on their school and we gave them back and they were all answered.

It is clear from these responses that to consider the context as much as individual processes or attributes of writing can serve both the school purpose and provide opportunities to help children conceive motives for writing other than academic performance (...you also did it for the people you were writing to). Constructing a context for writing that links school and community not only enables children to practice parts of the written communication repertoire that are transactional and useful in everyday life, but also enhances the value for children of the school literary objective. Surely the necessity of learning to correctly spell words assumes greater importance in

the context of a welcoming reader, and practice in writing questions becomes altogether more reasonable in the expectation that they will be answered. Besides promoting the value of social exchange, such learning practices enable children to perceive the connections between the school curriculum and the outside world, and can even locate a community of interest that otherwise might have lain dormant.

In attempting to bridge the gap between text, cognitive and social, this approach represents one enlightened teacher's way of addressing some of the problems associated with formalized write-to-learn assignments that make sense only in the context of school. The fact that writing imposes multiple constraints in the form of linguistic conventions and audience concerns suggests that writing will invite learning only when the learning is situationally supported and encouraged. This may depend less on recommended text structures than on the philosophy underlying a teacher's approach to orchestrating a supportive environment.

#### 3.3.4.1 *Widening participation*

The terms pupils use to describe their experiences suggest that degree of involvement in the task is a useful measure for gauging the values attributed to writing and learning activities in a particular classroom. Yet these accounts linking children's testimonies with teachers' approaches to writing have so far ignored the important role played by a supportive school or administration in the successful translation of a particular individual's philosophical aims into activities that encourage exploration, authority and creativity.

As an illustration of the multidimensional structuring that may be necessary to support innovation, the following example describes a project which involved considerable professional co-operation in planning and co-ordinating a series of events leading up to writing a newspaper report on the term's topic "Energy and Electricity". In an area once heavily dependent on the coal-mining industry as a source of energy and income, the locality provides a range of opportunities to revitalise interest in the many facets of coal production. Drawing on this potential, teachers devised a programme of activities which included an outing to the pit-head of the county's only remaining working mine to 'see the winding gear', and a personal account of working life based on the authority of an examiner's reflections on his own experiences. These insights might usefully be expected to sustain interest and have additional value in situating the topic within the larger historical framework of a declining community. Following these events, pupils observed and made notes while recordings were made with their headteacher 'interviewing' the examiner about life at the coal-face. This activity, in turn, provided inspirational support for

a similar child-centred enterprise in which pupils created their own roles as journalists and interviewees and recorded the results. In this relatively brief extract, the children evaluate the learning potential of this episode of events:

**SA.Y4.Cb (ll.104-133)**

**Sequence 3.21**

- B1: We learned a lot.  
 G1: We learned about coal.  
 B1: What the stresses were for coal miners and things.  
 B2: And we learned how to be a proper journalist for a newspaper and we learned how to set the newspaper out properly.  
 G2: And the letter helped/ and the letter from Mr H. helped us to understand what the man said because we didn't understand a lot of it.  
 B1: He told us which mine he worked at.  
 R: So it told you something about being a journalist as well as a coal miner.  
 G2: Yes/ as well as working on the topic.  
 B3: And then we had to make the questions up.  
 G2: Introductions.  
 .  
 .  
 .  
 B3: Because some people [were journalists  
 G3: [Because some people wrote about coal miners.  
 B2: And then we got the camcorder.  
 B1: Then we watched it on television.  
 .  
 .  
 .  
 R: Did you enjoy doing that?  
 B1: Yes/ we got to use the camcorder more.  
 B2: It was fun.  
 B1: It was good experience.  
 B3: A different thing that we don't get to do many times.

Of course, it is not possible to predict enduring effects on the basis of a given instance. Yet the above comments linking writing and learning are significant, at least among the majority of activities reviewed in this study, in that they also point to the link between learning and doing. Explanations of the situated nature of learning (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Lave, 1988; Rogoff, 1990) challenge theoretical assumptions that view knowledge as a discrete entity, fundamentally distinct from what or how it is learned. Instead, they propose an alternative theoretical assumption based on the notion that the knowledge that is accrued is inseparable from the activity in which it develops and is deployed. Prevailing school practice, on this view, may authorize representations of

knowledge that enable students to pass exams and yet many of the activities undertaken would simply "not make sense or be endorsed by the cultures to which they are attributed" (Brown et al., 1989:34). On this reasoning, the mental manoeuvres and interiorized school practices long associated with learning through writing may have little currency in other settings.

It is clear from the varying responses to the sorts of writing activities described in previous examples that children soon acquire an implicit sense of what constitutes a legitimate or illegitimate activity, or what counts as a 'good experience' and what does not. With reference to the activity just described, the good experience is interpreted to mean productive of useful learning or other wise authentic because it resembles the coherent, meaningful and purposeful activities they see operating in the culture of everyday life.

Previously in the present chapter, I specified cultural viability and individual agency as two factors that a psychology of writing and learning needs to address. Let me summarize briefly what I think the example described has to say about what those criteria include. We note, first, the structure encompassing several events which begins with situating a source of energy in its historical context and locating its impact on the community in a particular meaningful way. This induction might be expected to focus attention while forming a strong foundation on which to build the next phase of the project. The second phase comprises 'in situ' modeling which engages pupils in what Lave (1988) defines as "legitimate peripheral participation" to describe a form of learning through observing the behaviour and conversation of more experienced others. This activity generates the move from periphery to centre stage where children engage collaboratively in the behaviour they previously observed. Collaboration also necessarily involves reflecting the various viewpoints and articulating the issues raised during the course of previous activities, a process that may eventually foster a deeper understanding of the topic under review. This overview of events forms a sequential structure which has the effect of scaffolding the learner towards the point of actually writing.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

Beyond attempting to identify this or that property of activity as a situational determinant, what this chapter tries to advance as a whole is the need to reconceptualize the writing process to include the meaning-constructive events and social-constructive dimensions which lead up to the act of writing as a necessary first step in understanding the reports that the children finally produce. This implies that a contextual model for

writing must also be able to account for both the protracted and the collaborative nature of composing.

The illustrative account of the linkage between writing, learning and doing, draws our attention to criteria important in organizing contexts that may result in promoting a sense of community, increased engagement and responsibility from students. Yet it would be foolish to speculate that writing in a given instance would provide all or even most of these benefits. The most promising learning situations may also be the most pedagogically demanding and it seems reasonable to believe that sustainable classroom change on the order implied in this example could evolve only in the midst of a major restructuring. Sadly, it would appear that, in general, the constraints of the compressed curricula militate against extended writing or sequences. As represented, the multi-component and rich learning experience is, as one child put it, 'a different thing that you don't get to do many times'.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE POLITICS OF CLASSROOM LANGUAGE: HOW TEACHERS CONTROL THE WRITING

The aim of this chapter is to move us closer towards reconciling the cognitive and the social. In this interest, I intend to examine more closely the particulars of writing events as they occur in the classroom. In the sections that follow, I argue for a conceptualization of writing that is predicated on a broader and more culturally appropriate and realistic understanding of text and writing. Drawing from observations in three classrooms, I indicate primarily through contrastive examples of the ways teachers initiate writing activities, what the thesis as a whole advances - the need to make knowledge continuous with children's concrete and everyday experiences. I discuss how the levels of interaction are heavily influenced by the aims, attitudes, personality and active participation of teachers in the education of their pupils. I further argue that children derive meaning from the way tasks are structured, the quality of interaction permitted and the rules and norms that guide behaviour within them, and illustrate the circumstances which make it possible to explicate this understanding.

#### 4.1 Introduction

In order to learn, students must use what they already know so as to give meaning to what the teacher presents to them. Speech makes available to reflection the processes by which they relate new knowledge to old. But this possibility depends on the social relationships, the communication system, which the teacher sets up. (National Institute of Education, Report of Panel 5, 1974 p.1, cited in Cazden, 1986)

The contribution of the above-mentioned report towards setting a research agenda related to the ethnography of communication in the classroom illustrates in a preliminary way some of the issues I address in this chapter. As the quotation above indicates, and as any perusal of the literature interested in characterizing the nature of institutional talk will confirm, this talk is developed in several distinct ways and is replete with myriad contingences.

Although, a considerable number of studies address finely ordered small phenomena in order to understand the character of school language, there is some dissension among authors about the constituent issues attending the question of talk and social structure.

These constituent elements include, for instance, how to conceive the notion of social structure itself (e.g., Zimmerman and Boden, 1991), and how to characterize the relationship between large-scale institutional constraints and the localized patterns of talk-in-interaction (e.g., Mehan, 1984).

To recover these arguments between disciplines is beyond the scope of the present chapter. Neither would replicating the richly detailed, fine-grained analytic performances executed in studies of classroom talk, including those of Gumperz (1981), Dorr-Bremme, (1990), Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), and Mehan (1979), advance the arguments presented thus far. Regardless of how scholars differently decide to investigate situated action, a central theme woven through this collection is that talk-in-interaction has both enabling and constraining properties. For example, the conventional configuration of speech exchange system in the classroom, according to this research, involves repetitive episodes that exhibit a discourse structure comprising a three part sequence of teacher initiation, student response and teacher evaluation or feedback. Mehan (1979) additionally observes a variety of non-verbal communicative cues such as the teacher's posture and intonation signifying the larger unit which he terms the 'topically related set into which the three part sequence is organized.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) investigate the conventional interpretation of words or utterances in the classroom as their contribution towards how forms of talk-in-interaction configure to reflexively produce and reproduce social structure. Their structural analysis of teacher-pupil talk proposes a hierarchic system of functional units of discourse which specify what a speaker is using language for. This hastily summarized, and far from complete list, shares common ground in defining the discourse structure and specifying the contingencies of talk-in-interaction within school-based activity systems.

Although these microsociological accounts play an important role in helping to reveal the nature of traditional classroom talk as a rule-governed system, attending only to the form of language used will not permit us to account for the content of classroom talk or understand the many meaning-making activities we have come to associate with the production and use of written text. Rather, the intention here is to view the classroom through a slightly different lens to focus on the content of classroom talk, the ways teachers differently present tasks to children, and engage with pupil culture using a variety of strategies to encourage (or inhibit) interactions between child and teacher and between peers. A number of other studies appropriately inform and guide this purpose, and I refer to these sources during the course of the present discussion.

### 4.1.1 Patterning Classroom Discourse

In drawing attention to the similarities, it is clear that the evidence supports a high level of generalization in the organization of classroom talk. For instance, the asymmetry of teacher-pupil relationships underpinning classroom discourse means that communication almost invariably remains centred on the teacher. Thus it is the teacher who dominates discourse by asking the questions, deciding who else is to talk, evaluating the answers, and generally directing the sequence as a whole (e.g., Mehan, 1979; McHoul, 1978; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975; Edwards & Mercer, 1987). The configuration of moves forming the three part sequence describes the set of rules underpinning a communication system that is unique to the contexts of schools. As McHoul (1978) summarizes, it is the pre-allocated rights of the teacher that determine the speech exchange system and 'only teachers can direct speakership in any creative way' (1978:188). These pre-allocated rights are predicated upon the authority of the teacher as expert, and they provide the locus of control over information being transmitted, social relationships, and participatory structure operating within the classroom. Specifically, the observation that the teacher's authority is manifested in the 'pre-allocation of turns, and of certain kinds of turn' makes it possible to differentiate between the 'closed system' where the teacher's authority is a point of persistent reference and the relatively 'open' classroom which offers pupils a greater range of semantic options thus enabling them to 'direct speakership in a creative way', in McHoul's words.

As an adjunct to control, the known-answer status of teacher questions have also been the focus of much attention, not just on grounds of saliency, but for the central role they play in constituting events. Many observers make the functional distinction between the information-seeking question characteristic of casual conversation between social equals, and the variety of functions known-answer questions serve in the classroom in, for instance, checking pupils' attention, testing pupils' knowledge, and as a means of establishing a frame of reference in which to direct pupils' thought and action (e.g., Edwards and Furlong, 1985; Mehan, 1979; MacLure and French, 1980). These questions are variously described as test questions (Labov, 1972b), pseudo questions and closed questions (Barnes, 1976), convergent and guess-what-I'm-thinking questions (e.g., MacLure and French, 1980). In whatever way they come to be defined, Edwards and Mercer (1987) note their interpretative significance as constituting a set of implicit rules underlying classroom discourse. These rules operate to regulate the exchange system and guide normative understandings of appropriate discursive behaviour in particular domains. In an English lesson, for example, they include rules that enforce a degree of explicitness and formality unsolicited in normal conversation - such as a literacy

comprehension exercise demanding that pupils answer questions with a whole sentence. Most importantly, these researchers also observe the function of what they have summarily called 'educational ground rules' (Mercer and Edwards, 1981) as control processes for creating joint activity, and 'their role in the establishment of shared understandings' (Edwards and Mercer, 1987:130). In their view the implicit nature of educational ground rules and the difficulties participants encounter in interpreting communicative processes makes the transfer of knowledge and control in educational settings essentially problematic.

Several authors have advanced linguistic explanations for under-achievement in education, focusing on the 'disembeddedness' of school language 'abstracted from any supportive context of meaningful events' (Donaldson, 1978:76), the differences between speech and writing (e.g., Goody & Watt, 1963), and on social-class differences (elaborated or restricted codes) in language use (e.g., Bernstein, 1971, 1990; Atkinson, 1985; Edwards, 1987). The main thrust of this argument is that the conversational experience of middle-class children presupposes and orients towards 'the orders of meaning and relevance' which predominate in schools. As a consequence, they have less difficulty than children whose other communicative experience is restricted in its range, in adapting appropriate language to different instructional contexts. These claims are put into perspective by the fact that parents appear increasingly concerned to pay attention to their children's linguistic development. The frequency of question-answer responses, and decontextualizing naming practices in middle-class parental communication apparently serve as an exercise in 'pre-school literacy' (Heath, 1982) and to be historically linked to the increasing influence of formal schooling (Scribner and Cole, 1981), or more generally linked to culturally held beliefs and attitudes regarding the nature of language-learning (Street, 1984; Heath, 1983).

The conclusion to be drawn from this debate is that the decontextualized nature of literate activities degrades the potential for students to assume control of their learning. In his 'theory of the structure of cultural transmission', Bernstein explains educational success in terms of 'continuity of culture' between home and school. The aim in this chapter, is to explore precisely what is transmitted, what 'continuity' comprises, and how it is created to establish 'common knowledge' in the classroom. With these interests in mind, the primary objective is to establish a sense of 'continuity' between what children understand by the nature of school literacy tasks and their instructional experiences in the classroom.

## **4.2 Method**

Following the interviews which provided basis for discussion in the previous chapter, this phase of the project involved re-establishing contact with a small number of cooperating schools and teachers of year level 3 and year level 5/6, seeking permission to enter their classrooms using tape recording equipment to facilitate purposeful observation.

### **4.2.1 Participating classrooms**

A total of seven classrooms ( $n = 3$ , year level 3;  $n = 4$ , year level 5/6) from five different schools participated in this study. The decision to concentrate on these age levels and exclude the intermediate age group, assumes increased (and therefore more observable) differences in managerial strategies shaping patterns of interaction as a function of age. I used the children's comments in the discussions considered in the previous chapter to guide the choice of classrooms for this study.

### **4.2.2 The observational task**

Observations focused on a variety of different literary tasks and the ways teachers differently initiate these activities to shape distinctive interactive patterns of pupil behaviour. These observations are supported by transcribed videotapes of teachers' introductory sessions, audiotaped conversations of children's on-task talk, field notes made during the course of lessons, and localised information transmitted by interested teachers during the course of the year.

### **4.2.3 Procedure**

Each observational session lasted approximately one hour or until the lesson was completed. In each case, data was gathered using a hand-held video recorder to capture the ways teachers initially structure lessons and any whole class intervention made by the teacher concerning the execution of the task. Audiotaped recordings captured as much as was audible of one group of pupils' verbal responses to the structure of the task and any localised intervention made by the teacher. Supplementary field notes recorded the pattern and direction of pupil-teacher contact at ten minute intervals during the course of the lesson. Recordings were transcribed for subsequent analysis.

### **4.2.4 The sampling of classrooms: choices and issues**

Three of the seven classrooms studied, were focused on for the purposes of this chapter. I have already acknowledged the primary influence of pupils' perspectives for its directive role in the present research. In particular, my attention was initially drawn to the three selected classrooms by the interactional tone of these pupils' responses in interview

encounters. For example, children from classroom A produced descriptions of school tasks in terms of conflict and competition. Reticence and passivity characterised the contextual information supplied by children from classroom B. By contrast, prolixity characterised the encounter with the children in classroom C, which was a class of same-aged children in the same school as classroom B. I then talked to the teachers concerned to discover how they described their classrooms. This enabled me to represent these views of teachers and pupils or, more importantly, the intersection of these viewpoints by attempting to illustrate the dynamics of the systems observed.

One theoretical point for the present discussion is that I can make no claims for 'objectivity' in the sense of being free from background influences or hypotheses. This holds both for the way I selected the classrooms, and for the observations and inferences I made. There seems to be a degree of consensus among researchers, however, that while observations can never be free from 'contamination', the notion of 'objectivity' in research is derived from a critical tradition whereby objectivity is achieved when work is sufficiently transparent to stand up to the scrutiny of a critical community. For example, Phillips (1993) cites Popper among others in support of the argument that 'objectivity', in the context of discovery, is not the property of the individual researcher. Rather, it is 'a property of the context of justification...for it depends upon communal acceptance of the critical spirit' (1993:70). The debate over what constitutes objectivity acquires further dimensions when dealing with the effects of the observer on the 'reality observed'. Edwards and Westgate (1994) discuss this two-sided issue with reference to theoretical notions of context, and how it may be adequately framed given the distorting effects of the observer. For example, they defend the possibilities of an historical view of context that implies the relevance of past representations for understanding the dynamics of behaviour in the immediately visible present. This view of context motivated the attempt to explore the manner in which motives and intentions of participants materialize in effective conduct. This perspective is given prominence in the classroom A where I have set out, on the one hand, to interpret behavioural regulations as historical and cultural constructions and, on the other, to address the issue of how the structure of regulation may be related to the presence of an observer.

The second and third classrooms were selected to allow comparison between high and low reported degrees of involvement. This choice also provides an opportunity to move into areas of educational concern, because the interest lies in the outcomes achieved by contrasting patterns of interaction induced by different regulatory processes. In each case, I am driven by a body of literature concerning classroom processes (e.g., Edwards and Mercer, 1987) to pursue the effects of mutual misunderstandings dictated by

traditional modes of behavioural regulation, and the value of a focus on talk (Edwards and Westgate, 1994) to inquire into conditions obtaining in a more informal environment. It should be clear at this point that the criterion of typicality has not formed the basis of selection of these case studies, nor have I attempted to generalize the findings from one source to another, which seems contrary to the qualitative approach as I understand it. Instead, I have elected to report those findings that best illustrate particular issues and have ordered my studies to allow me to speak more adequately on current social and educational trends.

### **4.3. OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.3.1 Classroom A: Effects of observational activity**

It seems important to begin by signifying the presence of a stranger in the classroom armed with recording equipment, even one who tries to remain inconspicuously at the back of the classroom, as constituting an intervention that changes the context in more or less definable ways. This shared common problem is often reported as the distortionary effects induced by observational activity on the phenomena observed. For example, Edwards and Westgate (1994) record some successful strategies to minimize distortions that are consistent with participant observation methodology (e.g., Milroy, 1980) which include an ongoing involvement that legitimizes researcher presence in the setting.

In this analysis I have adopted a different strategy which attempts to treat these effects as ubiquitous and as playing an essential role in the formation of context. From this perspective, they provide a point of primary interest, since how children are likely to react to intrusion inevitably depends on how their teacher decides to deal with the situation. Teachers who attempt to normalize the situation by choosing to ignore the presence cue a similar reactive response from children, and the interactive sequence of the lesson is allowed to proceed, at least visibly, much as it would on more normal occasions. Some departure from that norm is apparent in this classroom in the teacher's initial explicit introductory reference to the research presence and recording equipment, and the surprising behavioural consequences of her continued implicit acknowledgement of its presence and purpose throughout the session. Such circumstances anticipate some distortion of context, but what in fact was observed was the instantiation of two contextual levels for framing behaviour: first, at the interactive level of the task, the actual writing activity provided a frame of reference; and second, at a participatory level of performance, participants perfectly enacted their roles as teacher and pupils in surreal imitation of a writing situation.

I invite the reader's interest in this account, first, because it demonstrates a version of control achievable in the classroom that is based on reciprocity, cued action and shared knowledge; second, because the extraordinary constituting features of the context were, as becomes apparent, deliberately orchestrated to make a point; and third, because a full understanding of that point also demonstrates the notion of 'continuity' as a dynamic source of relevance linking past, present and future-oriented understandings. In order to fully comprehend the nature of continuity as it applies here, we need to situate the significance of this teacher's purpose in its historical context, and this I shall do during the course of the following discussion.

### **A creative writing task: changing the ending**

Prior to writing, a ten minute introductory session locates the whole class seated on a carpet in front of the class around their teacher who proceeds to 'invite' children to choose a well-known fairy story, write the familiar version to a mid-point and then change the traditional ending to one of their own choosing. I use the term 'invite' advisedly because the 'less-confident' children were also given the option to forego this task and illustrate cartoons instead. Following this preliminary discussion, the teacher then orchestrates a demonstration as a means of checking that the writers understand task requirements. The whole class activity including child-teacher interaction was videotaped while a tape-recorder, situated on a table around which a group of children were seated, captured as much of the conversation as was audible.

#### **Sequence 4.1**

- T: Choose one of these stories/ anything you like.// What you have to do is tell half the story and then you have to try and finish with a different ending.// So your story can't end in the same way./ You've got to think of a different ending.// Think of a story.  
(*Teacher chooses one of the upraised hands*)
- P1: Jack and the Beanstalk.
- T: Jack and the Beanstalk. How does Jack and the Beanstalk end?  
(*Teacher chooses a child to answer*)
- P2: They live happily ever after
- T: They live happily ever after but what...?  
(*Teacher nods permission for a child's response*)
- P3: They got all the stuff
- T: They get all the stuff/ that's a good word/ stuff/ isn't it/ all the stuff back from the giant and they came out with their chocolate and stuff down to the bottom of the beanstalk and they are rich now. They got the golden egg/ they are rich and they are happy// You've got to think of a different ending// They didn't get the stuff back/ they didn't live happily ever after. The giant didn't murder/ he's gone on to bigger and better things// Right// decision time// just find a place// this table for writing. (*Points to a table*)

T: The next thing is/ once you've got your pencils you can talk about your story to the person next to you because that's what the tape-recorder is there for/ to pick up you talking about your work./ So you can talk about which story you've chosen and how you think it might end.

This scenario displays several features typically observed in lesson structure beginning with the familiar circle time as a locus of control and attention, the establishment of shared understandings in the reference to known stories and familiar sequencing, and the use of the word 'right' to mark the transition between teacher time and student time. The last recorded instruction specifically recommending task-talk for the benefit of the tape-recorder clearly anticipates some change in classroom representation, not least because the knowledge that conversation is recorded inevitably induces the very reverse of volubility. However, observational experience in several classrooms shows that children soon overcome initial reticence and gradually revert to the patterns of behaviour established in their classroom and to the particular task in hand. When we focus our attention on the six children seated at the writers' table, it seems that initial disagreement about precisely what was being permitted suggests this instruction represents an unaccustomed departure from normal routine.

#### Sequence 4.2

P1: We have to talk about the story  
 P2: We don't  
 P1: We do

Apart from a whispered 'I'm doing Red Riding Hood. Which one are you doing?' linking one child with her nearest seated neighbour, and the occasional whisper about spelling, children did their "own" work. Their teacher's approach, however, heralded a noticeable change in behaviour and prompted the following exchange:

#### Sequence 4.3

1. V: What do they call the horse in Beauty and the Beast? *(to the teacher)*
2. T: I don't know/ anybody help please? Vicky has a question.
3. V: Does anybody know what they call the horse in Beauty and the Beast?
4. G: Feline.
5. T: Feline/ I had better put that on the board// what are you doing? *(to another child)*
6. H: Little Red Riding Hood.
7. T: Little Red Riding Hood/ and how far have you got?
8. H: When she gives the cake to her Grandmother.
9. T: Right/ so when is it going to change?// something could happen to Grandmother when she....*(prompts)*
10. H: [I'm changing er
11. D: [I know what you can do/

12. T: Come-on then David/ say what she can do.
13. D: When Grandma is in the cottage she might have a fire and she can light it up to show where she lives.
14. T: She might just yes// but then there's no one there who can give Grandma the cake// Can anyone think about that for change?
15. R: She might not want to give her the cake
16. T: No well/ she might not want the cake/ well David?/ She might not want to. She might want to eat it herself/ mightn't she?/ Or/ what happens if she did give her the cake. What could happen? Grandma has the cake...(prompt)
17. H: It could be poisoned.
18. T: It could be poisoned/ or it could be something else/ that's a bit drastic isn't it Helen. It could be/ something else. It could be a...(prompt)
19. R: It could be a magic cake.
20. T: It could make Grandma do funny things.// Did I read to you 'George's Magic Medicine'?
21. R: No
22. T: Have I not read that one to you?
23. PP:No
24. T: Thought I had./ Right/ well we'll have to see about that because that made Grandma do some weird and wonderful things.  
(Children giggle)
25. T: How are we doing Sarah? Are you changing the story yet?
26. S: No/ I'm changing now.
27. T: Right so what's going to happen next?// What's going to happen to Grandma then?
28. S: The wolf's going to come and eat her
29. T: The wolf's going to come and eat her. Alright/ so that's quite a change. Ian that's very good.// You're writing a lot aren't you./ Well done/ good boy! Right/ Rachel/ how far have you got?  
(Rachel reads out what she has written so far)
30. T: Is that right!/ What are you going to do next?
31. R: I'm not sure.
32. T: Well maybe Beauty in your story doesn't even need a beast.
33. S: He might be a human being [instead.
34. T: [Might be a human being/ that's a good point Sarah.
35. S: He gets married when he's older when he's about 60.
36. T: So maybe your story is going to have a happy ending and live happily ever after. Right?
37. K: Mine isn't.
38. T: Yours isn't!/ Why not?/ Come on then/ listen to Karen// I don't think Karen is feeling very happy today/ so maybe she's going to make a sad ending./ Is that right Karen?
39. I: Shall I give you a kiss (to Karen)  
(Teacher and children laugh)

Although the sequence begins with the teacher's attempt to initiate a child-centred discussion by redirecting a self-addressed question to the other children (2), these communications bear the hallmarks of control processes characteristic of

initiation/response/feedback dialogue. As elicited contributions, they mainly fall within the constraints of the teacher's line of questioning in presuming content relevance and appropriateness (Edwards and Mercer, 1987). David's offer (11) to provide a suitable alternative to story-line is the first spontaneous contribution to the discussion although it is interesting to note that permission must be given before he makes it. It is also clear that the ultimate fate of any such contribution continues to remain within the teacher's control. On this occasion, David's contribution is considered to be sequentially incoherent and the teacher makes the necessary adjustment before opening the question to other participants (14). Helen's elicited contribution is similarly rejected as "too drastic" (17), but Rachel's "magic" word response (19) generates scope for thinking about all the "weird and wonderful things" that can only be understood in the context of make-believe fairy-tale worlds.

This allusion to incongruities between real and imagined worlds, and the shared laughter it provokes, marks for this analysis an important point "at which the boundaries of school knowledge and action knowledge become negotiable" (Walker and Goodson, 1977:223). Lemke (1982) points out that "it is commonplace in our culture that humour is a principal "lubricant" of social interactions" (p.128), and it is clear here that as the situation progresses, children's readiness to offer more unprompted suggestions not only increases but a sense of playfulness emerges culminating in Ian's unsolicited light-hearted offer of a kiss to cheer Karen's sombre mood.

Apart from enacting some of the well-documented discursive control strategies distinctive in any classroom, this example serves to illustrate several other note-worthy points. First, it helps conceive the notion of context as a dynamic construct constantly evolving through time, to 'make continuous' past, present and future intentions. A second point of interest considers the issue of power relations with reference to the striking observation that communications extend to playfulness while still remaining under the tight and persistent control of the teacher. What seems to be at 'play' here are the sociocultural values and assumptions which belong to a reality extending far beyond the observed setting, not merely reenacted in the event itself but acting to inform and to be reformulated within it. Viewed in this light, the significant reality of the event is judged to be the shared history of a class and its teacher, and the point of real interest concerns the emerging nature of the teacher-pupil relationship currently displayed.

This particular history begins with shared difficulties and mutual misunderstandings regarding issues of appropriate behaviour and classroom control. Drawing on children's early perceptions recorded near the beginning of the school year, they report an

authoritarian style of teaching with few options and little choice given within writing tasks: 'We always have to do what (the teacher) says. We lose housepoints if we don't', summarises children's classroom understandings at that time. At one point during the interview one child staged a lively demonstration of their teacher's behaviour, standing on a chair in a desperate bid to capture her pupil's attention. The teacher afterwards described these early encounters as a constant battle to achieve the control necessary to transform a mainly negative, emotionally draining teaching and learning experience into a positive and enjoyable experience both for herself and the children.

Six months later, classroom observations present an altogether different picture. Children proceed quietly to their seats and begin to work without fuss. At intervals during that work, a child would take their writing to the teacher for help, encouragement, or simply to be admired. The teacher's assumption of control is achieved by the deliberate employment of certain strategies. For instance, she is always available to answer questions and constantly assumes a supportive role by praising success and keeping quiet about failures - a strategy which serves to build confidence and help forge a teacher-child relationship based on trust. Consequently, when children are invited to read out their work to the rest of the class, they perform willingly without fear of ridicule or risk to self-esteem. This strategy of giving uncritical feedback was one she deliberately adopted, she afterwards said, in order to reinforce good behaviour and a positive attitude to work among the children. Moreover, children not only implicitly learn what is to be gained by working quietly in the classroom but also quickly learn that to be *observed* obeying the rules also has its own rewards. She publicly reinforces this point near the end of the session:

#### Sequence 4.4

T: Do you like having a choice?

PP: Yes.

T: Isn't it nice to have a choice rather than me saying: / 'Do this/ Do that/ without any choice at all.

The message is clear. To be given a choice is a privilege but privileges have to be earned by conforming and, importantly, *being seen* to conform to expected standards of classroom behaviour. Under these circumstances, we may expect to find peer interaction to be strictly confined within teacher-controlled events such as the one observed, or located in the organised 'chit-chat' session terminating the lesson. A typical observation in any primary school classroom sees the level of noise rise to signal wavering attention and loss of concentration on the task in hand. In the classroom presently described, Mrs

H.'s coping strategy includes collectively engaging children in a relaxation exercise with dramatic overtones involving the expression of moods; happiness, sadness surprise outrage and so on, and then instructing them to engage with a partner in talking about the weekend's activities. The teacher explains afterwards that affording the children the opportunity to engage officially in social chat ensures better concentration on school tasks.

What may be drawn from this discussion is an elaborated notion of context, one that takes account of the cultural history of the classroom to give meaning to the visible features of behaviour and interaction. The 'significant reality' underlying observable events is the teacher's concern to structure an environment bolstered by certain implicit rules for the mutual comfort of herself and the children. Her encouragement to stay on task, her queries about their progress, her public praise of their efforts, all contrive to shape children's behaviour and elicit a particular kind of response. The foregrounding of background knowledge lends significance to her explicit reference to the observer's presence in the classroom and the 'pointed' public statement subsequently made. Within this frame of reference, it becomes clear that the strategic organisation of the children's social world also contributes to the ground rules serving to regulate classroom interaction. We understand this enforced partition of the children's world as intended to convey an understanding of particular kinds of behaviour as appropriate to particular times and places. It is also clear from this example that what constitutes the reality under discussion 'is a reality of mind as well as action, saturated with more cultural and social knowledge as well as personal connotations' (Edwards and Westgate, 1994:75). Such a demonstration makes empirical Mead's (1934) notion of context as 'emergent present'.

The foregoing discussion also raises several interesting questions concerning the status and position of group work relative to the control procedures operating in the classroom. Working collaboratively on an enterprise was clearly not manifested within the normal experiences of the 8 year-olds in the classroom, as evidenced in their initial confusion and muted response to their teacher's exhortation to engage in it. Having inculcated a certain set of behavioural constraints, it may be unrealistic to expect children to spontaneously adopt an alternate set of rules with any degree of success.

The example raises a further question about situation as well, such as: Is age and level of maturity an important factor in determining whether or not collaborative working can be instantiated as a fruitful method of learning? Teachers also argue against the efficacy of group work on the grounds that it makes problematic the role of assessment reemphasized in the recent introduction of SATS at ages 11 and 14 years. Teachers have

a valid point. How does one keep track of individual progress for work produced as a result of collaborative effort? Several teachers have expressed to me their pedagogical concerns about the introduction of alternative methods of teaching that may result in the loss of overall control in the classroom. Such fears and concerns underly the assumptions of one teacher, who comments that he feels unequal to cope with several groups of children engaged in a variety of activities at the same time. This classroom is the subject of the following discussion.

#### **4.3.2 Classroom B: The effects of close interactional control**

Most observed classroom teaching styles and methods encompass a broad spectrum or continuum of control, ranging from whole class teaching methods where the teacher traditionally addresses the whole class with a task description and the children proceed to work individually, to the more Plowdenesque progressive philosophy embodying child-centred learning methods. In ideal circumstances, styles of classroom management might be said to vary according to the ideological assumptions of the teacher, and the variability of task demands. In practice, large numbers of children, limited resources and compressed curriculum often degrade the ability of teachers to maximise learning potential. Consequently, the literacy activities in most of the classrooms observed within this study are presumed to represent a compromise of teachers' intentions falling somewhere midway along this continuum of control.

In contrast, the classroom of current interest, comprising 23 children of mixed ability aged between 9-10 years (year 5), is selected for its location at the extreme end of the continuum in exclusively operating the formal teaching style characteristic of whole class teaching. At this point, it is important to make clear that it is not the intention here to critique personal styles of teaching nor to argue the merits of one particular style of classroom management over another. These arguments predicting successful teaching and learning styles have yet to be proven and continue to remain the subject of contentious debate (cf. Ackerman, 1993). Rather, my interest in tracing children's understanding of their learning environments through to the ways these activities are orchestrated, leads me to confront the ways teachers differently engage with the problem of control.

At first glance, the teacher's direct style of teaching is strikingly at odds with the physical setting which comprises small work spaces connecting larger classroom areas divisible only by the occasional flimsy sliding screen. The buzz of one working classroom is clearly audible in another. This layout would appear to lend itself to more informal open styles of teaching supportive of teacher-pupil interaction and child-centred learning. The

teacher summarizes earlier attempts to 'adapt to the landscape' through organizing sub groups to work on different projects in the following words: "I couldn't keep track of what they were doing. I was never sure that they fully understood what they had to do". The different temperaments and abilities of the children and his own perceived sense of diminishing control combined to mitigate against the success of the enterprise. In directing the whole class towards a single focus and giving individual attention where it is needed, the teacher presently operates the system which he feels to be most comfortable and more productive. Children sit at tables in groups of four or six - a seating arrangement shared by most classrooms in this study, and one which seems particularly unsuited to whole-class styles of teaching since it forces pupils to adopt contorted seating positions in order to face the teacher wherever he stands to address the class.

#### 4.3.2.1 Framing a context

The task in question is a grammar exercise involving a series of sentences each of which require subject/object manipulation. In this opening instruction the teacher sets the agenda and is concerned to locate the current proposed activity within a contextual framework that accounts for pupils' past, present and future classroom experiences.

#### Sequence 4.5

- T: You were given the map/ and you were given some paper/ and what you will do is find the routes.// You were writing down the routes which you would take from the house.// That's the second job to finish after the first job.// The first job is a nice easy one.// Do you remember at the beginning of the year you looked at the subject and the predicate? The subject of the sentence is....(*prompts*)  
(*children raise their hands to respond*)
- P1: The noun.
- T: The noun/ what the rest of the sentence is about/ and the predicate is...(*prompts*)  
(*child response*).
- P2: The rest
- T: The rest of the sentence/ and we did a bit on that/ and we have done some work on changing the sentences round because sometimes we want to change a sentence around to make it more interesting.// I have a little exercise here that is looking at the sentence and turning it round so that the sentence is swapped around in a different order/ and you were given some help/ because you have part of a sentence which is highlighted to tell you this bit has to come first.// So I will give you an example first and then you can have a look.// We'll go over it again so that you know exactly what you've got to do.// This is the first job and the routes that we started earlier in the week is the second job/ OK/ Get your green books.

Framing the context in this account involves recalling those features of past activities which have most educational significance for the task in hand. Although two past activities are regenerated as currently relevant on this occasion, only the first exercise in manipulating sentences is actually undertaken. In recalling past activities and asking these particular questions, the teacher's two-fold primary concerns are to monitor current knowledge status and to establish a shared basis of mutual comprehension on which to build knowledge and future understanding. The questions manifest some of the managerial constraints typical of IRF sequencing, such as the strategy of cueing elicitations by means of intonation and pauses which function to test children's knowledge and generate thinking about the relevance of past experience to the task in hand.

In the above extract, the teacher is also observed to elaborate or paraphrase these elicitations as, for example, 'the noun/ what the rest of the sentence is about'. Such "paraphrastic interpretations" of pupils' responses operate the evaluative function of the IRF sequence and support the recapitulation process. The talk makes further use of what are termed "joint knowledge markers" (Mercer, 1992; Edwards and Mercer, 1987) such as the use of the royal "we" to indicate the relevance of the past event to the current activity. These strategies are among those featuring most prominently in classroom talk, serving to "express the complementarity of teacher and pupils' knowledge" (Edwards and Mercer, 1987:132) and ground that knowledge in joint understanding.

Although the strategies described predominate in classrooms, they are not the only means of classroom control at the teacher's disposal. The following extract reveals more complex forms of control as the teacher continues to reinforce children's understanding by exemplifying the requirements of the task.

#### Sequence 4.6

T: Ready?// Look at the example at the top of the page.// You've got an example at the top of the page.// They've given us a sentence/ 'A ruined castle at the top of a hill'.// The sentence is about a ruined castle/ so the subject is first/ and then they make up the same sentence again/ and they turn it round so that now they have/ 'On top of the hill stood a ruined castle'. They've swapped the sentence around.// They've taken the subject and instead of having it at the front/ they have the subject at the end.// You have some sentences and you have to turn them around into the opposite order.// Look at number 1.// The two boys went to a film show last night/ and they've highlighted the important word/ and they want that bit Daryl/ to be put at the front so instead of the two boys went to the film show last night/ you will write...(prompt)

*(Children raise hands and teacher nods permission to respond)*

- P: Last night two boys went to a film show
- T: That's right.// Last night the two boys went to a film show.// Of course/ when you turn a sentence round to perhaps make it more interesting/ it might not be more interesting/ it might be better the first way round.// You sometimes have to change some of the words or you might have to miss an odd word out to make it make proper sense.// You might not be able to use the words exactly as they were/ but we've got to keep the sense of the sentence the same.// Sometimes you have to change the odd word.// If you don't change the word/ you change the sense of the sentence/ so you have to make sure everything is the right way round and still says the same in a different way.// Do we know what we're doing?/ That we're making these sentences say the same thing/ just swapping the order/ and they've told you what to start with./ Andrew what does the sentence begin with?

*(Several children seek permission to respond)*

- T: Oh there are a lot of people called Andrew all of a sudden/ And don't forget/ of course/ if you are putting the last bit first/ and then you are going back to the beginning because// what's going to happen to the capital letter that they've got at the beginning?// It won't need to be a capital letter any more unless/ unless it happens to be a proper name/ in which case it will be a capital letter.// Is there anybody who doesn't know what we're doing?/ Anyone who would like it explained again?

*(Two children raise their hands).*

Everyone else knows what to do?// Let's see if we can answer these questions/ turning the sentences round./ Take care with your writing./ No spelling mistakes because all the words are there./ Let's see if we can get them all finished today.

*(Teacher moves towards the first child who raised her hand for help to explain it all again face-to-face. Some classroom chatter causes him to raise his head)*

- T: It's a shame that one or two people have to show themselves up by being very silly.

*(Addressing the girl)*

Try again./ The two boys went to the film show./ Last night the boys went to the film show./ Do you get it? You are swopping the order of the sentence to try and make it more interesting./ OK.

The above passages finds several examples of more subtle strategies used by teachers to reinforce the asymmetrical teacher-pupil relationship and exert authority in the classroom. For example, near the end of the first passage, the name 'Daryl' appears during the explanation. We understand this strategically-placed nomination to function as a warning to the individual concerned to pay particular attention to the demonstration.

The phrase "Oh there are a lot of people called Andrew all of a sudden" elicited after the nominated student's turn is overlapped by other pupils, functions as an admonition to the others. And "It's a shame that one or two people have to show themselves up by being very silly" addressed to class when the noise level increases, invokes not only the norm against uninvited pupil-talk in class but also the deeply implicit convention that violation done in the teacher's presence poses a deliberate challenge to the teacher's authority. These educational statements urging persistent control over classroom communication are "the acts whereby a teacher *controls the flow of information* in the classroom and defines the relevance of what is said" (Stubbs, 1976:107).

These extracts see the teacher constantly monitoring different aspects of the communication system in the classroom: controlling the amount of pupil-talk by asking them to speak or keep quiet, controlling the content and relevance of talk, in checking that pupils are paying attention, and attempting to control understanding: "Is there anybody who doesn't know what we're doing?". Stubbs refers to such language as metacommunication which he defines as "communication about communication: messages which refer back to the communication itself, checking whether it is functioning properly" (Stubbs, 1976:106).

In patterning the features of discursive structure, the above analysis allows us to recover some of the underlying assumptions that make the tight communication system a precondition for reaching educational goals, and also serves to bolster resistance against radical innovations that predict alternative systems of communication. Yet, as many scholars argue, these managerial constraints limiting communications pose the greatest threat to pedagogical aims to achieve the kind of conceptual knowledge which enables children to take control of their writing.

In association with their own research on the teaching of numeracy and scientific concepts, Edwards and Mercer (1987) suggest that it relies on the teacher to provide the appropriate framework to adequately support the kind of communication that enables children to engage purposefully in meaningful activities. They postulate that formal educational practices frequently advance only contextual-bound procedural or 'ritual' understandings rather than the development of generalized 'principled' understandings approximating those valued in the real world. It is an analysis which, at least partly, attributes contextual-failures to the disembedded quality of educational language and the 'closed' nature of the IRF structure and raises further questions about the efficacy of such questions that function largely as an invitation to step into the teacher's frame of reference. Are they functioning effectively to establish the meaning and purpose of the

task in hand? To answer this question, we refocus our attention on the classroom under review to locate the teacher monitoring individual progress.

#### Sequence 4.7

- T: Read the sentence  
(*Boy reads what he has written*)
- T: Because it's...(prompts) Start here go to the end/ get back to the beginning// you did not go back to the beginning
- T: (*To another boy*) Start it here (points)// So where do you go from here?// You started here/ then went to the end/ and missed one.  
(*Boy reads and teacher repeats what the boy is doing wrong*)
- T: Come on. Concentrate.
- T: (*To another boy*) Read this one to me  
(*Boy reads his work and teacher repeats it*)
- T: Is that right?// Read it again and find out where you've gone wrong  
(*T. continues to circulate room marking work*).

The following extract marks a point midway through the lesson to indicate that some children, enough at least to warrant major intervention, have failed to demonstrate that they have the requisite knowledge to fulfill task demands:

#### Sequence 4.8

- T: Can you all stop a moment please (*stands at one table at the side of the room*)
- T: Can you all look at number 1 for a moment/ number 1// I know most people have got it right anyway.// On the page/ how many lines does it take?
- P: One.
- T: One// Look at number 2./ How many lines does it take?
- P: Two (*Teacher ignores this response and looks to another pupil to answer*)
- P: One.
- T: One./ Look at number 3./ How many lines does it take?
- P: One and a bit.
- T: It takes one and a bit lines// Some of you are ignoring the bit every time./ You keep ignoring the bit.// Look at the sentence that's there and then those people whom I have not seen can make sure they get it right/ Christopher/ It says/ "My brother decided to become a policeman / because he is so tall and strong' and you're being asked to start with because// but when you start with because// what are you going to put first// because what...?
- P: Because he is so tall and strong.
- T: Because he is so tall and strong./ That comes first.// Some of you are ignoring the tall and strong bit and you are writing 'because he is'/ and then going back to the beginning and writing 'my brother'/ not because he is your brother.// Some people are not thinking.// Make sure you read the sentence first before you start/ and get things in the right order.// See if you can get these finished.

This second extract clearly reveals that a considerable number of pupils have encountered difficulties in progressing beyond the first sentence that was publicly demonstrated. A number of possible explanations may account for this apparent failure to progress, not least the explanation supplied in the teacher's admonition that "some people are not thinking". If the problem is simply one of "not thinking" as the teacher suggests, then I would argue that the conditions regulating interaction provide little or no opportunity for children to engage in thinking about the task. In considering what these conditions comprise, a cursory glance at the text reveals that questioning is the predominant technique for initiating and controlling classroom discourse. Edwards and Mercer's insight notes the primary pedagogical function of such known-answer questions as constituting a useful framework for intermental creation and register their concern that this process may lead to ritualistic understanding rather than principled knowledge that goes beyond the immediate settings of acquisition.

The situation described here raises more fundamental concerns about whether such techniques actually do serve their prescribed pedagogical functions to create common knowledge and construct a scaffold to further that knowledge. The main criticisms of the inherent characteristics of known-answer questions is that they frequently limit the educational possibilities they are intended to promote. For example, Edwards (1992) expresses concern about the efficacy of a communication system that serves to focus attention towards the sought-for answer and consequently away from the actual content that may be emerging from the 'discussion'. Others also note some disabling consequences for both teachers and pupils in the tendency of such questions to determine the quality of elicited responses (e.g., Wood, 1992; Hargreaves, 1984; Dillon, 1988). For instance, Wood (1992) suggests that classroom questions compromise learning potential in closing off the promise to elaborate meaning and promote reflective inquiry.

These concerns about failures in educational communication expressed elsewhere might seem to have particular relevance in the present context. The discursive mode seen operating here provides interactional constraint on more 'open' questions that might usefully have clarified points of previous misunderstanding. Reassured by the false evidence such language provides, the teacher labours on apparently unaware of his pupils' failure to understand. Yet in discovering the error, his attempt to simplify his exposition can furnish only a ritualistic understanding of what the task requires so that pupils may be forgiven for thinking about sentences in terms of length "one and a bit", instead of their sense-meaning activity.

While it is all too easy to adopt a critical analytic style from the relatively comfortable position of an observer's viewpoint, it is altogether more difficult to cope with organizational problems of managing turns and shaping meanings in whole-class teaching situations. Wood's (1992) evidence seems to suggest that anything longer than two second pauses in the question-response routine is liable to produce unofficial talk which threatens to disrupt the task of maintaining orderly discourse. The fast pace of classroom exchanges, as Wood points out, provides few opportunities for more truly exploratory talk that requires time and patience on the part of listeners and some protection from disruption. These circumstances explain this teacher's intentions in hastily redirecting the question in order to get a usable answer and even, as observed in the first transcript (4.6), answering it himself in the interests of getting "the first job" done.

Perhaps the most powerful motivational constraints on pupil potential are those conditions that leave the purpose of the task inadequately explained. The teacher's initial recommendation for changing the sentence to "make it more interesting" which is curiously undermined by the admission that "it might not be more interesting, it might be better the first way round", is less likely to motivate pupils to engage purposefully in the task than leave them wondering whether it is worth the effort. A more likely consequence is that poorly explained functions and ill-defined purposes will lead children to disengage from the task and engage instead, in unofficial and potentially disruptive talk. Ironically, it may be the control features entrenched in the conventional teaching exchange which provoke the very conditions this teacher clearly wishes to avoid.

A tight communication system not only challenges the viability of more inquiry-oriented 'open' questions, but also clearly constrains the type of activity undertaken because of the unpredictability of what may follow. Such situations encourage routinous curriculum-tied activities which are more likely to cultivate an understanding of the school purpose. In putting to children the question of purpose, it will hardly surprise the reader to find that they had little to say on the subject beyond that it was "just to see if we can turn the sentence round properly", and "if we don't like, do them now, when we grow up we won't know what to do".

The foregoing discussion profiles components congruent with the teacher's traditional role as acknowledged expert transmitting information to less knowledgeable pupils in their role as passive recipients. The next classroom to be discussed explores some possibilities which are opened up when that task is redefined.

### 4.3.3 Classroom C. Reconceptualising roles and relationships

This example makes it possible to recall the power of peers in managing social relationships discussed in the previous chapter, through a teacher's preparedness to redefine the traditional teaching model to tip the balance of control in favour of pupils. Located in the same school, with a similar population, this classroom represents a striking contrast to the one just described in its orientation towards alternative teaching and learning practices. Here, the underlying purpose in creating the conditions which enable 22 pupils to explore and extend their own understandings at their own pace, reflects a very different understanding of how children learn.

Before exploring the possibilities of teacher-less discussion, it is important to make clear that enabling children to play a greater educational role does not imply a complete abdication of the teacher's authoritarian role. Instead, that role is redefined to take on the responsibility for constructing a framework which makes it possible for pupils to assume some of the responsibilities normally reserved for the teacher. Briefly, these structural features include class division into two 'teams' (A and B) according to levels of attainment which allows the teacher to selectively attend to particular educational requirements, and further placement in smaller 'reading' groups where pupils are encouraged to explore meanings collaboratively. It is interesting to note that, unlike the previous classroom, this organization takes full advantage of the 'convenient' seating arrangements and small interconnecting rooms - the particular feature of this school setting.

A second complementary structural component involves the use of work sheets which enables each individual pupil to assess their own weekly progress in particular topics. In practical terms, this requires the teacher to set each team separate weekly targets for each curriculum subject. It is the responsibility of pupils to record individual marks attained in such as spelling tests, mathematics, and reading levels against these objectives, and compile this evidence within a personal work file. This system serves a dual purpose in motivating pupils to work towards clearly-defined goals, and in enabling both the teacher and pupils to monitor and assess particular achievements during the course of the year. One of the demonstrable benefits to be gained from operating this system is that it aids the development of reflective self-awareness. In the following sequence the children describe how they gauge their competence in reading:

#### SB.Y5.Cb

#### Sequence 4.9

- 162 R: So you are quickly getting an idea of what you are capable of in fact?  
 163 Dan: Yeah

- 164 Dawn: Yes
- 165 Kay: Yes// and I can get a book out/ take a look at it and say 'I am not reading that'.
- 166 Dan: What we really have to do is open the book at any page and then read the page and look at the spellings and if you can't read ten words you should put it back and get a different one.
- 167 Andy: That's what the teacher says/ see if you can read ten words.
- 168 Dan: So it's not too hard// If it's too easy you can read it like on short circuit
- 169 Kay: If you can read it on short circuit/ then its too easy for you
- 170 Hayley: Sometimes you can tell by looking at the front
- 171 Dan: See/ (*points to a book*) that looks boring to me
- 172 R: Why does that look boring to you?
- 173 Dan: Because the picture looks a bit like what you've seen before/ you've seen it all before
- 174 Kay: See/ you look at one book and say I've seen it all before.
- 175 R: So if it's familiar it gets boring does it?
- 176 Dan: Well if you've read it before./ With my books I've got thick books./ My thickest book is like that/ (*makes a grand gesture*) it's a giant Bible.  
(*Everyone laughs*)

As apparent in the above extract, the teacher's redefinition of the pedagogical task is to take an advisory role to enhance opportunities for self-assessment. Also subject to change in situations where pupils are encouraged to work without their teachers' authoritative voice, is the rule-governed structure that shapes interpretation. In the absence of constraints associated with asymmetrical relationships and IRF-dominated discourse, the ensuing talk displays features consistent with normal conversation. Very different communication competencies are demanded in circumstances which shift the responsibility for managing discourse from teacher to pupil. The following transcript records the conversation of one boy and three girls working together in their reading group. The official task requires them to read a story together, and they have decided to role-play the main characters in the story but still have to negotiate as to who takes the major roles.

#### Sequence 4.10

1. Dan: Let's make a start.// (*reads*) Once upon a time there was a woman who dearly wished to have a [wee child (&)
2. Dawn: [a wee little child (*giggles*)
3. Dan: (&) (*reads*) but she didn't know where to get one  
(*General laughter*)
4. Dan: (*reads*) when she went to an old witch and said to her
5. All: (*read in unison*) I wish so much to have a little child/ Aaaaah
6. Dan: (*reads*) Will you not tell me where I may get one?
7. Marie: Oh yes/ said the witch (*in a high witch-like tone*)
8. Kay: No let me/ no no no.// You're being Peter/ I'll be Thumberlina (*to Dan*)
9. Hayley: Who am I?

10. Dan: I'll be the story-teller// Me and Dawn'll be the story-tellers and the others can play the parts.
11. Kay: Right// Go.
12. Hayley: Can I just start// Once upon a time [there was a woman
13. Dawn: [No/ I say that//  
(*long pause to consider*)
14. Dan: No story teller can say that.
15. Hayley: She wouldn't.
16. Dan: Alright come on then// Oh yes// I know// Right/ You say 'once upon a time'.
17. Dawn: Right you read up to **her** right.
18. Dan: **Her** (*rising intonation*)/ where's **her** at?
19. Dawn: Just before/ 'I wish so much'
20. Hayley: Shall I be Thumberlina and you be the witch?
21. Kay: No/ I'm Thumberlina
22. Marie: I'm the witch aaaah (*in a witch-like tone*)
23. Hayley: Well we could share the part like them two...

The absence of their teacher who would normally allocate rights to speak and roles to play makes it necessary for these children to take on those responsibilities for themselves. Consequently, these youngsters must negotiate not only their own terms of interaction to reach a consensus but also manage their relationships with one another. An initial attempt by Dan to begin reading is speedily diverted back to the issue of main concern. Here, the problem arises from the fact that there are too many people pursuing too few parts. While Marie has early secured her role as the witch and Dan's concessionary suggestion to occupy a sharing role as story-teller is generally accepted, Hayley's search for a role leaves her to confront Kay. In view of Dan's earlier willingness to 'share', Kay can hardly do other than accept Hayley's proposal without appearing less than generous, and the official task is allowed to continue without further interruption. The salience of friendship in classroom life may make children reluctant to take the social risks of disagreement with friends. As Edwards and Westgate (1994) note, these pressures may contrive to force children to compromise in order to reach a consensus. Clearly such situations usefully extend pupils' social awareness in many ways, and may also increase their willingness to comment explicitly on their behaviour afterwards. One fruitful consequence may lie in recognizing the importance of learning to manage social relationships as a first step towards maximising the efficiency of the group.

#### Sequence 4.11

- 435 R Do you think it's a skill then to work in a group?/ Do you think it has to be taught or do you think it's just practice?
- 436 Kay: Oh it's just practice really.
- 437 Dawn: Me and Daniel don't get on very well but then/ when we work in groups we're OK/ except for the odd occasion. (*laughs*)

- 438 Dan: We're not at each other's throats or punching each other (*laughs*)  
 439 Kay: And like/ if you go with some one/ you've got to go with who you are  
 with/ and you can go 'Oh well I don't know them'./ You like to get to  
 know them first and your teacher expects you [to  
 440 Dan: [Get along with them.

In eliciting the need to put aside personal interests in the interests of the group, what is so strikingly implied and insightfully recognized here is the need to distinguish between personal inclinations and 'professional' life. On this viewing, the value of group work surely lies in the opportunity to practise the kind of skills necessary to participate in the adult world.

A second consequence emerges in children's conscious awareness of the responsibilities placed on them as working members of a group. The following sequence shows these children frankly discussing both the merits and some of the drawbacks of work-sharing opportunities.

#### Sequence 4.12

- 419 Dan: Well/ if one person's got it wrong then the rest of them has got it wrong  
 and the teacher can't shout at you without shouting at everybody else  
 because it's their fault as well.// It's not **just** yours.  
 420 R: So you not only share the ideas/ [you share  
 421 Dawn: [You share the blame as well// So you can't  
 get the whole blame unless it's you who made the group go wrong  
 422 Kay: In our group we can all do something wrong because we've been relying  
 on one person to do the work./ I don't think that's very good.  
 423 Dan: Mmm/ that's one of the disadvantages/ one person gets all the work.//  
 Everyone relies on that one person to do that one thing.

Of course, sharing the work also means sharing the blame. It may also be argued that positioning children in a group may adversely affect the performance of some members by encouraging them to rely more heavily on the contributions of others. Yet these deliberations contrived in an atmosphere of orderly debate define the possibilities of collaborative interaction that, if developed over time, may also provide a platform for new understandings. Once the conditions for pupil-controlled interaction are in place, the greater challenge for the teacher may be to trust pupils' growing expertise in the art of social management to realise that potential.

If teacher-less discussion leads to changes in the rules that govern discourse, then other rule-changes may also be anticipated. In a classroom which features co-operative work-sharing enterprises, a particular focus of interest is how children make sense of the rules related to what is normally considered to be 'cheating'.

## Sequence 4.13

- 347 Kay: It was just the other day/ I was doing some English and Marie/ the girl who was sitting next to me/ was trying to copy and I told her the wrong answers and then like/ she looked at my book and they were the wrong answers/ and then I scribbled them out and then put the right answers.
- 348 Dan: And she got them all wrong
- 349 Kay: (*laughs*) And she thought that I did do that/ and I said 'It serves yourself right for copying'.
- 350 R: It's a fine line isn't it [between...]
- 351 Andy: [Like/ copying// Alex/ he just copies the right answers down and when I get mine right he would say I would get wrong for him copying off me/ right// Dawn got wrong for Marie copying off her didn't you?
- 352 Dawn: Yeh I got wrong off the teacher and she blamed it all on me when it was Marie copying off me and I got the blame for it
- 353 R: If you're working in groups though and you are pooling your ideas/ there's a fine line between that and copying.
- 354 All: Yes
- 355 R: Where do you draw that line?
- 356 Dan: We allow each other to copy if you're working as a group.
- 357 Andy: When we were doing group reading on 'Letters and the Bear'/ I worked hard and Victoria was sitting next to me/ and I hadn't seen Victoria's/ and then (the teacher) read mine and she said/ 'You've copied off Victoria'
- 358 Dawn: And she might have copied off him/ you don't know.
- 359 R: But the point I'm trying to get at is that if you're doing group work and you're pooling your ideas/ and of course then you are swapping ideas.
- 360 Dan: Because we allow each other then.// When we are doing our normal work individually we are not allowing the person next to you to look over your shoulder and to say/ 'What have you put?/ What have you put/ like (Tina) does.
- 361 R: That's it isn't it// It's what you allow
- 362 Dan: If you allow the person next you to copy it's your fault cause they're copying./ But when you work in groups you allow each other.// You are sharing with them.// You are not exactly copying you are sharing all your ideas and choosing the best idea out of them and writing them down rather than just writing down the answer and the other person saying 'that's my idea'.
- 363 R: So there is a definite distinction between the sharing and the copying.
- 364 Dawn: If you're doing single work like someone could say/ 'No you're not doing mine'/ but like if you're in a group/ you allow them.

The above transcript is illustrative of the kind of exchange that emerges in the absence of constraints to reach authoritatively defined conclusions. Such conditions make it possible for children to engage in exploratory collaboration to establish new levels of understanding. Even in the present 'contrived' investigative circumstances, it is interesting

to note that choosing to play a less than directive more guiding role, makes it possible to simultaneously display the communicative competencies of these 10 year-olds and their developing capacity to make meaning in their own terms.

At the level of content, this talk reflects a context-sensitive application of the rules that govern particular situations which children must learn to enact in order to partake in the educational enterprise. What seems to be accomplished collaboratively here is a new explicated understanding of what has previously been learned and enacted implicitly. According to Barnes' (1976) hypothesis, the advancement of new knowledge and understanding through the explicit formulation of meanings is an essential factor linking oral language to writing:

The distinction between exploratory and final draft is essentially a distinction between different ways in which speech can function in the rehearsing of knowledge. In exploratory talk and writing, the learner himself takes responsibility for the adequacy of his thinking; final-draft talk and writing looks toward external criteria and distant unknown audiences. Both uses of language have their place in education. (1976:113-114).

Barnes' distinction between these two functions of language predicts later views of writing as a process that begins with more exploratory attempts. This image of speech as a thought-language dialectic closely resembles Vygotsky's (1986) notion of 'inner speech' as an independent linguistic function, which serves as an agent for self-discovery. In terms of practical pedagogy, Barnes' (1992) recent call to institutionalize 'exploratory talk' points to the need to identify more precisely those contextual features most likely to sustain successful communication in small group situations. Barnes and Todd's (1977) analytic scheme expresses a view of talk that accounts for the 'simultaneous interplay' between two frames of reference. They usefully apply this scheme at one level, to locate the content of what participants say to one another and, at a second level, to account for the communicative competence that participants interactively display. The resulting integration of this 'interplay' between content and interaction contributes to the overall fluency and coherence of the talk.

In considering the above extract from this perspective, it is the smooth integration between content and interactive features which characterises the level of collaborativeness observed here. First, and of particular interest at the interactive level, is the conversational tone of the exchange in which each child allows their utterances not so much interrupted as to be completed by another. We note, for example, that Dan's

utterance "And she got them all wrong" (348) simultaneously acts as a completion and as implicit support for Kay's substantive contribution to further encourage other similarly framed contributions. Other demonstrations of support are manifested in the frequency with which the children explicitly agree together (354) or implicitly accept a contribution or endorse another's claim (358).

Also noteworthy here, is the way these children collectively manage their conversational opportunities; no child interrupts the other or attempts to hog the floor. Instead, each child orients towards another, seeming to take the floor only to start things off as, for example, when Andrew takes the floor (351) and then nominates Dawn as the next speaker to add her contributory weight to the discussion (352). The resulting 'interplay' between content and interactive features gives an appearance of fluency and coherence which makes their contributions seem more collaborative than competitive.

A second strand of inquiry concerns the generative move from particular experiences to the general formulations, or to use Halliday's (1978) terms, how the developing use of language in interaction transforms a 'behaviour potential' into a 'meaning potential' (p.21). In this particular, we need to consider more closely the mechanisms operating in this exchange. Research into the development of reasoned language usage points to the prominence of experiential narrative in both oral and written text as an effective limitation on adolescent abilities to successfully use language in an argumentative fashion (e.g., Berrill, 1988). As Berrill (1988) puts it, the problem with narrative or anecdote is its tendency to introduce "irrelevancies into what is an otherwise focused and even logical discussion" (p.57). In problematizing anecdote, Berrill makes an important contextual distinction between the relative efficacy of a single anecdote and a string of anecdotes in the development of argument. In recounting a single episode, a commonality of experience cannot be explicitly tested thus rendering any assertion-based hypothesis confined to a single point of view. In the context of small group discussion the 'logic' of anecdotal exchange is conceived in the creation of common knowledge as a springboard towards synthesizing the generalisation.

Viewed in this light, the verbalising of experiences observed in the above extract functions to add weight to an already implicit generalisation. Each successive personal contribution adds to the preceding account to produce a combined experience which enables individuals to evaluate their own personal experience against a 'world' perspective. This conversation allows us to infer the function of anecdote and generalisation in the development of argument as dynamically interrelated: each one

refers back to the other. That is to say, each one stands in symbolic reference to the other through a mutual validation process.

It is clear, in the nature of talk which incorporates hypothesis-forming and testing, that a needed lengthy procedure is involved to allow time for pupils to accumulate enough evidence to generate generalisations. The temptation might be to force a conclusion while the children are still engaged in exchanging personal information. For example, the attempt to intervene (350) appears precipitous in light of Andrew and Dawn's subsequent experiential exchange (351-352). Even Dan's first partly-synthesized definition "We allow each other to copy if we are working in a group" (356) draws further experiential support from others before the emergence of a more extended version - that noticeably continues to incorporate context-bound information, "...When we are doing our normal work individually we are not allowing the person next to you to look over your shoulder and to say, 'What have you put? What have you put', like (Tina) does" (360). It is Dan's next utterance (362) which both synthesises and reinterprets the previous 'discussion' to explicate the distinction between sharing and copying, and Dawn's subsequent emphatic rephrasing, "If you're doing single work like someone could say, 'No you're not doing mine', but like if you're in a group you allow them" (364) that serves to indicate consensus. In comparison to previous utterances where word choice is determined by personal experiences and interpretations, these formulations characteristically display embryonic features of the paradigmatic mode, which is relatively free of human factivity and context-bound information.

Bruner (1986) recently describes these two modes of thought and language, the narrative and the paradigmatic, along two axes: the vertical and the horizontal. The narrative end of the vertical axis allows choice of specific lexical items (Galda and Pelligrini, 1988) and is more concerned with connotation than denotation. Because narratives or anecdotes reflect people acting in real time, noun/verb phrases tend to be conjoined with temporal and additive conjunctions (e.g., and, then), as for example, in Kay's utterance "...and I told her the wrong answers *and then* I scribbled them out *and then* put the right answers" (l. 347). The horizontal axis is concerned with the combinative, or generative elements of language to allow explicit denotive reference. As noted above, the paradigmatic mode is relatively free of personal connotation and interpretation. This mode characteristically comprises logical argumentative 'if-then' constructions, and is often conjoined with causal and adversative conjunctions (e.g., but), as illustrated in Dawn's formulation, " *If* you're doing single work (then) like someone could say, 'No you're not doing mine', *but* like *if* you're in a group (then) you allow them".

As Galda and Pellegrini (1988) note, various scholars have traditionally represented and evaluated the narrative and paradigmatic modes of language and thought at opposing ends of the developmental continuum (e.g., Goody and Watt, 1963; Olson, 1977; Luria, 1976; Bernstein, 1971). These ideological accounts postulate a dichotomous modal distinction which conceives the relationship between narrative and paradigmatic in developmental progression from pre-literate context-bound language to abstract context-free thought (Pellegrini, Galda, & Rubin, 1984). Yet the argument emerging from the above analysis repositions these two processes as complementary and reciprocal, aligned with Halliday's (1978) notion of the "ideational" as the "experiential" and the "logical" (p.128), each playing an essential role in the constitution of meaning. This view draws some scholarly support in the notation that both experiential and paradigmatic accounts equally although differentially operate to provide valuable scientific information (Stone, 1979; Galda and Pellegrini, 1988; Bruner, 1986). It can be argued further, that talk exhibiting 'hypotheses-forming and testing' of the kind demonstrated above bears some resemblance to the sequential moves commonly associated with scientific methodological procedure.

I exemplify this talk first because it augments the enabling possibilities of exploratory 'discussion' in revealing the range of social and cognitive skills which these 10 year olds collaboratively display. These skills, as Edwards and Westgate (1994) make clear "should not be thought of as a static repertoire brought in from outside, but rather as skills constituted in the process of interaction, and in behaviour validated and sanctioned as it occurs" (p.158). This practical demonstration of communicative skill challenges the tendency to explain situational failures in terms of individual competences, while simultaneously raising awareness of conceptual and theoretical reflectivity. In Barnes' (1992) words, "reflection outside the event" (p.127) can help the group talk about its emerging character and make its own ground rules explicit. In terms of practical pedagogy, the above extract reminds us of the powerful effects of situation to either limit the possibilities for pupils to control meaning and generate their own understanding or enable that potential. In light of the foregoing discussions, we may conceive the enabling consequences as contingent on a sensitive teaching role, one mindful of the need to transfer ownership of the task and the imputation of contingently responsive interventions to allow enough time for pupils to 'scaffold' their learning.

The illustration also helps call attention to what seems most problematic in previous research that proposes to study classroom contexts because it implies that children are not merely judgemental dopes (Garfinkel, 1974) programmed to enact the requirements of sequential structure. Instead, it portrays pupils actively deploying their own resources

for managing their own and each other's conduct to achieve the orderly features of their activities. Much previous research treats the cultural transmission of the classroom as locally contrived within teacher-pupil dialogue. With too autonomous a focus on conversation, researchers too often, either implicitly or explicitly, foster a deterministic view of context which trivializes questions of agency and reasoning through practical literate activity. Yet the above extract enables me to both challenge that conception as too locally confined, and argue that a greater accountability may be achieved only by situating cultural reproduction within a larger frame of reference. What is locatable here is an entire classroom governed by powerful social conventions: by traditional expectations of appropriate teacher-pupil dialogue and by powerful peer group pressures confirming and reaffirming accepted classroom practices. In short, it portrays an elaborated notion of context in which agency emerges as an essential feature of social organization. From this perspective, social structure is not merely imposed, it is recurrently accomplished on singular occasions through the practical management of its members.

#### 4.4 Rationalizing the educational process

It would seem appropriate and commensurate with the title of my thesis to end this chapter with the children in question postulating their views about the educational project. As an example of talk expounding the school purpose, the sequence recapitulates themes of earlier chapters with reference to contextual limitations as well as discussing the pragmatics of 'doing school':

##### Sequence 4.14

- 138 Dan: Some people think 'oh school's boring' but it's still helping us.  
 139 Kay: Yeah it's helping us.  
 140 Dawn: And when you get into the last stage it can tell you what you can be/  
 like/ say you want to be a teacher but you hadn't been working good and  
 you could only be a shop assistant.  
 141 Kay: Yes it tells you what you're capable of.  
 142 Dawn: So you don't go in and apply for a job  
 143 Dan: That you can't do  
 144 Dawn: And you can't get it/ and you don't have the right qualifications.  
 145 R: So/ what's telling you what you're capable of?  
 146 Dan: Well the reading.  
 147 Kay: You know when you have tests./ It's the English tests/ maths tests./ It  
 depends on what marks you get really.  
 148 Dan: And if you can't read/ you can't go in for a library assistant.  
 149 Andy: We're lucky this year because we're not doing tests/ so it doesn't matter.  
 150 Kay: If you can't do tests you can't count money.  
 151 Dan: And if you can't count money/ you can't go for a shop assistant./ If you  
 can't use a computer you can't go for a computer job/ like that/

- 152 Dawn: Say if you got a good mark like/ you could be a teacher/ you could go for anything / couldn't you?/ You could go for a shop assistant.
- 153 Dan: Cause you can count money.
- 154 Dawn: As long as you are good at maths.
- 155 Andy: Some people come in here and end up fooling about.
- 156 Dawn: Some people look at the pictures with a little bit of writing [and
- 157 Kay: [Cannot read it.
- 158 Dan: That's what I was like in the first year...

#### 4.4.1 Conclusion

The phenomena outlined in foregoing discussions can only be understood by taking into consideration implicit directive processes as well as cognitive processes that are shaped by issues of historical significance. This historical orientation leads to an elaborated view of context which enables us to see fundamental connections between earlier forms of behaviour and those presently observed. The implications of this reasoning are that classrooms should not simply be viewed as stable experimental contexts, but as developmental dynamics of processes incorporating the observer as well as the observed. This view recognizes the functional nature of classroom language as evolving in the service of the transmission of cultural knowledge. At the same time the communication system, as exemplified, is illustrative of the functional limitations that may have consequences antithetical to the expressed intentions about its design. Such concerns bring us back to the issue raised at the outset of this introduction, the problem of language and the limitations imposed by traditional classroom organization. Only the analysis of implicit models of action will permit us to comprehend the possible alternatives of organization.

## CHAPTER 5

### CHILD'S PLAY

#### 5.1 Introduction

Vygotsky argued for the importance to educators of the relation between the contexts in which children participate and the concepts they acquire (Vygotsky, 1986). A framework that emphasizes intra-psychological functioning as a result of participation in a socio-cultural world invites us to examine more closely the state of research involving contexts, including those where children use computers. The particular focus in this chapter is on two components of a formative experiment: (1) the specific details of constructing a context incorporating the use of cultural artifacts in the production of oral and written texts; and (2) the individuals who constitute the context as they engage in social-interaction through which subsequent coordinations and discoordinations can be observed for analysis.

##### 5.1.1 The computer as a tool for writing

As a tool with production and revision capacities, computers are thought to have unique potential for supporting the goals of elementary writing curricula with a process emphasis (Calkins, 1986; Graves 1983) where language is used as a vehicle of learning rather than merely a mode of production. Of particular interest has been the facilitating quality of word processing to remove the difficulties of print production to allow physical manipulation and revision of text without the necessity of rewriting and recopying - tasks which young writers often find laborious and even counter-productive. Moreover, the public nature of the screen display may encourage students to read each others' work and so promote more peer review and collaboration (Dickinson, 1986; MacArthur, 1988), and develop a sense of audience. The availability of printed script may eliminate the sense of failure generated by poor penmanship (MacArthur, 1988), and facilitate the production of reports, newsletters and the like, to give a perception of writing as a meaningful and valuable means of communication (Bruce, Michaels, & Watson-Gegeo, 1985; MacArthur, 1988). Accordingly, writing educators have held high expectations for the ways in which computing technology might support writing and writing instruction (e.g. Daiute, 1985; Green & Flinders, 1990).

However, research findings on student writings with word processors have yielded contradictory results. For instance, Hawisher (1986) reports that of the studies that examined the effects of word processing on revision, six reported increased revision when students used computers, two found mixed results, three found no difference, and

one found less revision with word processing than with pen and paper. It is still unclear whether the relative ease of revision made possible by the use of technology will enable students to move from the surface level of text editing of spelling and syntactical errors typical of novice writers to the type of revision characteristic of experts which focuses on the form and substance of the text (e.g., Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987; Sommers, 1980).

Hawisher (1986) argues that some of the inconsistencies among studies have undoubtedly arisen as a result of the use of a wide variety of different technologies and the employment of different methodologies. For instance, Haas and Hayes (1986) found the features of both the software and the hardware to significantly affect the impact that the computer has on writing. In addition, the experience of participants in these studies with computers has ranged from two weeks to ten years. To date word processing research has failed to take account of these confounding variables in its efforts to discover the general effects of word processing on the writing process.

Several recent studies suggest that age and the level of pre-existing skills in revising and editing may significantly determine the degree to which students benefit from the use of word-processing (Cochran-Smith, 1991). Improved text quality has been most consistently found in studies that used college-aged students as subjects (e.g., Bernhardt, Wojahn, & Edwards, 1988; Sommers, 1980; Teichman & Poris, 1989). However, Cochran-Smith contends that "word processing, in and of itself, does not improve the overall quality of students' writing" (1991:114). The mere presence of tools and procedures to facilitate revision may not be sufficient to engender better writing practices in those who have previously used a linear mode of processing. Research indicates that young writers continue to use old methods in the new medium (e.g., Wolf, 1985).

However, for those students who have reached an appropriate level in their writing ability, word processing may well promote further growth (Pearson & Wilkinson, 1986). Moore (1987), for example, found that students using word processing made more content changes in text than did those using pencil and paper. But there is evidence that some novice writers are unable to benefit from word processing until they have been taught how to revise and edit effectively. Evans (1986) looked at junior school classes - a process writing class in which children were taught how to edit, and a skills writing class in which they were not. Children in the skills class wrote more after the introduction of word processing but did no more editing than before. In contrast, children in the process class wrote no more but became skilled at editing and revising. Kahn, 1988, found the quality of revision with word processing superior to that in hand-written work but that

the nature of the revision undertaken reflected the different types of instruction in editing and revising techniques. This implies that the growing confusion in word processing research arises as a result of more fundamental disagreement among practitioners about how best to teach writing process.

### **5.1.2 The computer as catalyst for interaction**

A growing theme in the literature reflects the view that computer-aided written texts cannot be evaluated in isolation (e.g., Snyder, 1993; Cochran-Smith, 1991). Studies that have considered the total learning context of the writers (e.g., Snyder, 1993) found that computers served as catalysts for social interaction among students and teachers thus emphasizing the importance of the whole social context in shaping the writing process. Moreover, we saw in the previous chapter that children not only construct and test theories of language use but also constantly reconstruct them within the context of their social interactions with others (Vygotsky, 1978). Accordingly, therefore, the nature and form of instruction, the context of adult-child interaction, the tasks assigned and the writing tools are all factors that shape children's understanding of the nature and function of writing in the world. On this view, word processing, like computer technology in general, is regarded as a variable device, interpreted diversely across writing contexts.

Word processing then, is viewed as neither cause nor effect in writing classrooms, but as interacting with people, learning conditions, classroom cultures, and the goals of teachers and children over time. This account assumes that different classroom cultures will establish different learning conditions and hence, different learning outcomes for participants even when the computer technology is the same. On this view, a consideration of how word processing effects the writing process also entails understanding the learning processes that occur in a particular culture. This, in turn, suggests the need to understand the dynamic interplay between sociocultural contexts and learners' thinking.

### **5.1.3 Peer-interactive contexts**

We saw in the previous chapter that peers as well as teachers are capable of providing scaffolding for the efforts of beginning writers. Dyson, (1988) describes the manner in which children's writing can emerge and be supported by virtue of the children's participation in an informal social "collective". Dyson takes the view that writing is an integral part of the flow of social events involving issues of peer status and social identity in much the same way as any other activity in which children can find opportunities for play. Writing can become the particular focus of the social group or collective when children are displaying their own competence or monitoring the competence of their

peers. The social collective is a powerful structure which allows children to work through an agenda relating to peer acceptance and affect while engaging in particular literate acts. They comment upon and critique each other's writings in ways that help the writers make connections between their own thoughts processes and a world constructed in orthography. The social collective thereby, provides a scaffold upon which children construct their sense of the general social nature of literacy.

However, Dyson (1988) points out that the effects of peer interaction may not be uniformly positive. Research indicates that successful collaborations are marked by evidence of cognitive conflict, but that this conflict is embedded in interaction characterised as playful and fun (Daiute & Dalton, 1988). In this respect, collaborative text construction resembles problem-solving activities researched in many different social contexts. The most successful problem-solving groups are not those that are marked by tension-free interaction. Rather, the most effective groups manifest cognitive conflict and yet have sufficient solidarity to resolve that conflict constructively. This orientation invites us to pay attention to certain aspects of context and underlies the strategy to construct a context and articulate the activities within it.

#### **5.1.4 Constructing a context**

Two lines of research influenced the decision to create a context rather than draw on naturalistic observations of existing situations where computers are used in school settings. The first concerns the limitations of naturalistic studies in classrooms where computer use is heavily circumscribed within preexisting pedagogical practices (Mehan, Moll, & Riel, 1983; Griffin, Belyaeva, & Soldatova, 1992). Children generally link their experiences of computer use to home-based recreational pursuits and recount their school experiences in terms of private use as a reward for 'doing good work' or for presentation purposes. These accounts concur with the commonly observed strategy of teachers to isolate computer-based activities from classroom life, a practice which Crook (1991) suggests is 'quite incompatible with any notion that further work has to be done to absorb the learning experience into a framework of common knowledge' (1991:87). While the data may reveal much about the particular form, content and practices of education conforming to current expected societal ideas, it may well inhibit ideas for creating propitious environments for computer use (Mehan et al., 1983).

A second line of research involves the creation of a writing activity system based on a collaborative culture which emphasizes the role of play and imagination in learning and writing development. Theoretical inspiration for this approach is drawn from the frameworks of both Piaget (1932/1965) and Vygotsky (1966, 1978) who see play as

having an important role in fostering rule systems implicit in the process of learning and cognitive development. This framework provides the rationale for the attempt to construct an educational context in which collaboration, play and imagination have a central role. Thus we might say that these theoretical concerns reflect a particular perspective that is less concerned with the computer as a writing tool than with the learning opportunities made possible by computer-mediated collaborative discourse. Further inspiration for this approach comes from the notion that children clearly do find the technology engaging. This 'engaging' characteristic is quite often visibly displayed in some 'quiet' corner of the classroom where the computer frequently provides a focal point for (unofficial) gathering.

The above discussion foregrounds the decision to create a context for writing that incorporates elements more closely resembling playground activities than those of school classrooms, and also highlights a number of issues of practical concern here. The first addresses the computer's potential to contribute to an environment that is playful, and therefore, more akin to children's immediate concerns. The second reflects the need to characterize particular qualities of playful interaction and its effect on the writing process. Finally, we ask in what ways do texts produced in this writing activity system compare with those written in the formal school setting?

## **5.2 METHOD**

### **5.2.1 Participants**

Five children, four girls and one boy, aged 8 years old were drawn from a year 3 classroom in a local primary school to use resources located within a university. Initially, a total of seven children, three boys and four girls were selected by their teacher on the basis of an assumed familiarity with home-owned computers. Prior to the first scheduled meeting at the chosen location, two of the boys withdrew leaving Adam, Katy, Gayle, Naomi and Elizabeth to continue with the study. In contrast to school where scarce resources limit access, each child was given individual access to a PC, loaded with a simplified version of Word for Windows. The children met voluntarily for 1-2 hours weekly after school for an eight week period during the summer term. Data was collected using observation, field notes and videotapes.

### **5.2.2 Tasks and goals**

The approach I have adopted in setting up this writing activity system is to consider tasks and goals as objectives and motives of activity directed towards accomplishing a shared outcome. The purported outcome of this particular enterprise is a journal to which each

individual writer contributes a story. Copies of the journal will be subsequently sold in school and the proceeds will assist the funding of new equipment. This outcome depends on a number of factors; first that these writers acquire a degree of competence in using computers to write their own stories, and second, that they play the role of editors with responsibility for supporting, monitoring and critiquing each other's work during composing and conferencing sessions. To maximise achievement, a number of subgoals are incorporated by ordering the activity according to the following series of writing tasks. These tasks are organized into a hierarchical system of increasing levels of difficulty, beginning with a simple word substitution exercise which requires children to replace pre-written information about an imaginary child with personal information about themselves, including names, birthdays and hobbies (Task A). The second task presented a series of well-known nursery rhymes with jumbled words entailing the use of editing techniques (Task B). The third task proceeded on to an autobiographical writing task which involved children in composing an autobiography without the aid of a pre-written script (Task C). Each subgoal was designed to advance mastery of keyboarding skills to facilitate a final writing task where, in creative writing mode, the children each wrote their own version of the adventures and idiosyncrasies of an imaginary professor and his inventions entitled Professor Brilliance and Time Machine (Task D). It should be clear at this point that the task of research design is provide a framework which encourages collaboration and which motivates children to persist in their efforts to accomplish a common goal.

### 5.2.3 Measures

The most crucial problem posed by this type of research is how to make public 'what is going on' in the context of a dynamic socio-cultural system. The question of interest is not individual performance on particular tasks but, rather how participants work together to support individual development in the writing process. In evaluating individual development in different contexts, the most appropriate unit of measurement was deemed to be the written product. In this respect, the children's word-processed stories about the imaginary "Professor" were compared to samples of their own hand-written texts produced in the school classroom and rated according to length, linguistic complexity, and overall quality (see Table 5.1) by their class teacher and a teacher from another school unconnected with the children.

The last category of overall quality was coded according to the holistic qualities pertaining to stage 3 of the advancing levels of attainment (1 to 5) as laid down in the National Curriculum attainment targets for English (English in the National Curriculum, 1989). Since the stages do not directly correspond across levels in the official document,

it was decided to focus on three dimensions of writing which reflect holistic quality - competence, focus/organization and mechanics. The dimensions are defined in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1. Dimensions for Evaluating Holistic Quality

Dimension	Definition
General Competence	The overall or holistic impression of a piece of writing as to how clearly it communicates a message to the reader
Focus/Organisation	The extent to which the topic is clearly indicated and developed in an organised manner and has a defined meaning
Mechanics	The extent to which organisational devices, such as sentence punctuation, including commas, and the setting out of direct speech, are used to increase writer's effectiveness in communicating.

#### 5.2.4 Methodological Analysis of talk

A second problem arises in considering how to capture the range and diversity of talk in which children engage in undertaking tasks with differing demands. Given the essential literate nature of the enterprise, the most appropriate analytical approach was considered to involve systematizing the talk according to literary intent. Accordingly therefore, a detailed analysis of data produced a series of categories comprising cognitive modes of literate talk. It is important to note that taxonomies were developed from the data rather than established ahead of time. To accomplish this effect, analyses of data were conducted in two phases, each of which was directed towards fulfilling a different objective. Observations during the first phase were concerned with familiarizing the children's expressed intent. The second observational phase established why they were saying it, that is, the context in which the interaction took place. Both these objectives were achieved after a series of successive viewings taken over several weeks. Categories were established on the basis of shared characteristics between utterances. In all, a total of six major categories of talk were identified across the writing tasks. These included talking about procedures (1); monitoring form and content (2); interpersonal communication (3); composing (4); evaluating, explaining and negotiating (5), and

confirming and disconfirming (6). These categories are illustrated in Table 5.2 with examples of talk associated with each type.

Table 5.2 Categories and Examples of Talk by Participants

Categories of talk	Examples
<b>1 Talking about procedures</b>	
1.1 Writing processes	"I make up as I go along"
1.2 Typing and word processing	"The keys are in the wrong order"
1.3 Asking	"What do I have to press"
1.4 Explaining	"Press space"
1.5 Helping	(Child gives physical aid with mouse or keyboard) "First move the curser..."
1.6 Statements about computers	"I love using the mouse"
<b>2 Monitoring form and content</b>	
2.1 Punctuation	"Put in a comma here"
2.2 Capitalization	"That needs a capital letter"
2.3 Spelling	"How have you spelt...?"
2.4 Oops	"Whoops I've done it again"
2.5 Monitoring content	"You've lost a Humpty"
<b>3 Interpersonal communication</b>	
3.1 Judging	"I think my hair is darker than yours"
3.2 Affect	Giggles "I don't care"
3.3 Naming	Children call each other by name
3.4 Incidental talk	"When I went to America..." "On my seventh birthday I got a goldfish called Bubbles"
<b>4 Composing</b>	
4.1 Literal suggesting of text sequences	"She could put..." "They could crash into a wall"
4.2 Gisting	"He goes quacky elephants...he goes whoosh" "If you don't know what I am about to say...then read on"
4.3 Literal spelling	"h-o-r-s-e-s"

4.4 Requesting text content	"Then what should I write?"
4.5 Repeating exactly	"Humpty Dumpty. Humpty Dumpty"
<b>5 Evaluating, explaining and negotiating</b>	
5.1 Explaining	("Why did you put in the speech marks")
	"He's still talking"
5.2 Evaluating	"That's wrong"
5.3 Checking facts	"What was Bluebird?"
5.4 Negotiating	1 "I didn't know dinosaurs could swim"
	2 "Well this one could"
	3 "Couldn't he have had a lilo"
5.5 Suggesting alternatives	"She could put we were watching a film and eating chocolate..."
5.6 Stating rules	"My teacher says that you have to have a beginning, a middle, and an end"

Once these categories were established, further refinement became possible and this was achieved by assigning utterances to subdivisions within a category. For example, talking about procedures involved issues concerning writing and asking questions, offering explanations and lending a helping hand with problems posed by typing and word processing. The basic coding procedure was to code each speaker's turn. Thus one complete utterance might fall into two categories and be coded twice. For example, "When my mummy used the spell check some of the words were wrong because it spelt the American way" was an example of interpersonal communication and also a statement about computer procedures. Inaudible utterances accounted for as much as 15% of a tape, were disregarded as uncodable and not considered in the analysis.

### 5.3 RESULTS & DISCUSSION

#### 5.3.1 Individual Texts

Analyses of individual texts, audiovisual tapes of composing and conferencing sessions and interviews with students revealed several generalizations about the various influences of computers and group interaction on children's writing. A quantitative assessment of

the influence of computers on the children's texts (Table 5.3) precedes discussion of students' talk both to illustrate the quality of their collaboration and its influence on writing processes. Samples of school hand-written products and computer club word-processed texts are displayed in Appendix IV.

As shown on Table 5.3, all the children wrote more with word processing than they did with pencil and paper in the school classroom. Adam wrote a staggering 494 words more on the computer than with pencil and paper. Even Elizabeth, who encountered some difficulty in generating ideas and in mastering the mechanics of word processing wrote more with the computer than by hand. Taking the average sentence length to indicate linguistic complexity, there is a tendency to produce longer and more complex sentences in the computer club context than those produced in school.

Table 5.3. Comparison of word-processed (WP) texts with school-written pen and paper (PP) texts

Subjects		No of Words	Av. Sentence Length	Holistic quality
Adam	WP	614	13.74	5
	PP	120	9.73	3
Gayle	WP	531	11.44	5
	PP	134	12.23	4
Katy	WP	360	12.70	4
	PP	87	9.08	4
Elizabeth	WP	160	9.70	3
	PP	119	8.00	3
Naomi	WP	361	11.59	5
	PP	130	11.23	4

Close examination of both sets of texts reveals the use of short exclamatory phrases and quotation marks to indicate elements of dialogue between characters in the word processed text which were entirely absent in the text written with pen and paper. In

terms of holistic quality, three of the word-processed texts were rated superior in to those hand-written in school, while the remaining two remained at the same standard in terms of competence, organization and mechanics (see Table 5.1).

In presenting this analysis, we disclaim any expectations that our writers, in the space of a few short weeks, would make great developmental leaps in the quality of their writing. Of greater interest here is the finding that all the children wrote considerably more with computers in this context than they did with pencil and paper in the classroom (Table 5.3). The crucial problem remains as how to account for this result without seeming to isolate the effects of discrete variables. For example, we might seek for explanation, as others have done previously, within the differing nature of the materials used in writing, and certainly, in this respect, the children have their own views about the facilitating qualities of the computer. As Adam summarises "it's easier, you don't have pages, you don't have to turn the pages over, you can write for longer and your hand doesn't get tired". Indeed, the common finding that longer and better-written documents are produced with word processing suggests that quality and document length may be related due to the "end of the page effect" (Jacoby, 1984) that fails to occur in computerised writing. Word processing clearly offers the child an infinite amount of space in which to generate new ideas (reflected by more words). Yet even this undeniably superficial claim and all too particular emphasis lays itself open to the charge of confusing the "empirical" with the "experimental" and is incompatible with the conception of cognition that is pursued here. At this stage in the proceedings perhaps the modest but more appropriate explanation might lie in attributing this increased productivity to the persistence which characterized the children's attitude towards writing in this context and reflects the constraints inherent in writing activities as they are organized in school.

### **5.3.2 Analysis of talk during the four writing tasks**

Clearly, the data presented above is incomplete, for it not only obscures important details of the writing process but gives little indication as to the social effects of using computers in writing classes. This next section is intended to give a fuller account of the computer as impetus for social-interaction, and how the nature and quality of that interaction influenced the writing process.

#### **5.3.2.1 Talking about Procedures**

A major topic of conversation to emerge from the data was talk about word processing procedures. These elicitations were naturally more frequent during the first two tasks (30.4% and 37.37%) when children were learning about word processing. Initially,

questions about procedure were directed toward adults and included those specific to using the mouse like "Why does it have two buttons?", or more generally "How do you go on to the next line?", "What do I have to press?" or "Now do I save it?". Answers were given in the form of explanations, such as "You have to press space" or "you have to give a file a name you can easily remember". Gradually, the adult advisory role diminished as, with growing confidence and expertise, the children took on their own individual roles as members of a group. As with any peer group, one individual emerges as the more competent other.

Table 5.4 Categories and Percentages of Occurrence of Talk on Four Sequential Writing Tasks: Talking about procedures.

Categories	Tasks			
	A	B	C	D
<b>Talking about procedures</b>	30.4	37.37	20.58	15.82
1.1 Writing processes				2.68
1.2 Typing & word processing	30.4	37.37	20.78	13.74
1.3 Asking	18.4	15.15	8.40	4.17
1.4 Explaining	7.2	15.65	5.88	5.37
1.5 Helping	4.0	6.56	3.36	2.35
1.6 Statements about computers	0.8	1.51	2.94	1.19

A = substitution task; B = editing task;  
C = autobiographical task; D = writing a story

The speed with which Gayle picked up on procedures and the proficiency she afterwards displayed in both writing and word processing skills designated her a 'specialist' role within the group. In playing out this role, Gayle was less often seen sitting at her own computer than bending over one of her neighbouring peers who had requested help with mouse or keyboard. It soon emerged that Elizabeth required more assistance than the others in grasping these procedures and in these early stages, seemed to draw heavily on Gayle's 'expertise' in managing the tool. Leaning over and observing Gayle's activities provoked such questions as 'How come you have highlighted the bit on the end?' or with reference to cutting and pasting procedures 'Now I've cut it where do I put it now?' Gayle rarely responded verbally on these occasions preferring to offer a practical demonstration on the other's machine. Others were equally willing to step in when the occasion demanded. When Naomi drew attention to a strange fuzziness on Elizabeth's

screen with the comment "Lizzy's computer has gone all funny", it was Adam on this occasion who obligingly tackled the problem. These practical demonstrations of expertise contrasted with occasional outbursts displaying a playful frustration with computers.

### Example 1

- G: I can't find D/ where's D gone to now.  
 N: I always can't find letters as well.  
 K: I could bash this computer on its head.  
 G: This computer's a spoil-sport/ it won't do what I want it to do.  
 E: This computer is naughty/ it does 4s and 9s the wrong way round/ Teacher says that's wrong.

This pattern of behaviour continued during the second more procedurally-complicated task (37.37%) with the oral accompaniment of child-initiated computer-oriented questions that marked the children's focus on the task in hand, and gradually diminished with successive writing tasks (20.78% and 13.74%) as the other children familiarized the procedures. The following sections mark a significant shift in focus from talk about the technicalities involved in operating computers to talk about writing.

#### 5.3.2.2 Displaying competence: Monitoring Form and Content

As evident in the above discussion, the children were clearly interested in each other's activities and the computer screens greatly encouraged this involvement in making spellings and stories readily available for interested comment. Monitoring form included questions about spelling and indeed these sorts of questions predominated in the free writing and creative writing tasks, as shown in Table 5.5, replacing the computer-oriented questions that featured so frequently in the early stages. Concern about spelling words correctly persisted throughout these writing occasions despite frequent adult reassurance to allay these concerns. However, hearing another child express a need for a spelling consistently gave rise to offers of help from peers. Indeed, noting another's errors or need for spelling often presented the children with opportunities to display their own competence, especially when the word in question posed a particular challenge. When Elizabeth asked how to spell Bodicea, Adam who by this time had become very involved in writing and printing out drafts of his own story was sufficiently challenged to supply a correct version of the word. Occasionally these words were interesting enough to warrant a short debate on the word.

### Example 2

- K: How do you spell Stegosaurus?

- G: It's STYGO...SOR...US  
 E: Is roar RR or OH?  
 and:  
 N: Is workshed one word or two words?  
 R: That's a very good question  
 G: I think it should be one word because it's a shed that you work in.

Table 5.5 Categories and Percentages of Occurrence of Talk on Four Sequential Writing Tasks: Monitoring form and content.

Categories	Tasks			
	A	B	C	D
<b>2 Monitoring form &amp; content</b>	14.4	11.10	19.74	25.66
2.1 Punctuation		2.02	0.84	2.08
2.2 Capitalization		0.50	1.68	0.89
2.3 Spelling	4.0		6.30	5.67
2.4 Ooops	4.0	3.03	3.78	3.88
2.5 Monitoring content	6.4	5.55	7.14	13.13

A = substitution task; B = editing task;  
 C = autobiographical task; D = writing a story

Monitoring content also occurred most frequently in tasks C and D and this involved leaning over to look at another peer's display and calling attention to what was written there with questions such as "What are you doing?" and comments "Look what she's done now". The latter comment served as a rallying call for others to group round somebody else's screen. That somebody was usually Gayle whose earlier displayed confidence in computing skills carried forward into experimenting with writing. Generally, it was Gayle who drew the others' attention: "Look what I'm doing/ he goes quacking elephants/ he goes whoooooosh", and the others would gather round peering over her shoulder to scrutinize the screen. By holding down a key, Gayle found the means of simulating a sound effect as, for example, in "whoooooosh", whiiiiiiiiiz and craaaaaasssssh. Inspired by this experimental display, soon the other children followed suit in producing sounds from static words. These children found equally fascinating the way in which Gayle artfully included direct speech to identify her characters within their dialogic roles. Her cheerful exclamation, "Whoops I've forgotten to put the speech marks in" reminded the others to 'liven up' their own stories by introducing a conversational tone. If there is substance in the oft-quoted phrase 'imitation is the sincerest form of

flattery' then, beyond merely expressing curiosity, we may interpret these imitative responses as implying positive evaluation.

Quantity was also a much valued commodity in the children's world. For example, Adam's query, "How much have you written?" called for the measuring of texts displayed on the screens and then comparing that productiveness between thumb and forefingers. In the sharing of their literary accomplishments, each child became aware of their own progress. Not all the children's responses to another's efforts resonated with such positive affect. During the autobiographical task Elizabeth ran out of ideas. The organization of an impromptu consultation elicited the following response:

### Example 3

- R: Listen to Elizabeth a minute while she reads out her story because she's stuck with it and needs some help.  
*(Elizabeth reads what she has written so far from the computer screen)*
- R: Any suggestions? How can she make it better?
- A: She needs a capital letter (at the beginning of the sentence)
- N: And a capital I and full stops when they are needed.
- R: Never mind all that/ what else can she put?
- N: What hobbies has she got?
- E: None
- R: I'm sure you have
- A: I saw you playing football in the (school) yard yesterday
- R: Well there you are then.
- E: Oh I'll put that down shall I?

It may be that low confidence in writing ability and lack of competence in editing techniques combine to place Elizabeth at a distinct disadvantage particularly in view of the determination to focus on mechanical skills. Many of these straightforward errors noted by her peers may simply be due to unrectified typing mistakes. If the above extract illustrates how children, in a matter-of-fact fashion, point up perceived short comings of their peers, it also reveals the backlog of 'common knowledge' underpinning the present context and the extent to which past experiences of mutual relevance engage in shaping it anew.

#### 5.3.2.3 Interpersonal communication

In the course of documenting educational achievement in establishing common knowledge, Edwards and Mercer (1987) note a disinclination on the part of teachers to admit into classroom talk items of information that make sense in pupils' own lives. Inversely proportionate to the features of restricted discourse that predominate in instructional settings, it is the fact of digression that is of constitutional relevance here. It

is mainly with reference to these digressionary features that we locate talk embedded in activities of immediate relevance to the child. For example, writing about themselves enabled the children to openly display their own desires to be interesting to others while, at the same time, confirming their natural interest in one another. Several exchanges of information of a personal nature inspired questions such as "What colour are my eyes?" prompting the response "Your eyes are blue", and the same question in return. The same reciprocity was observed in the close attention paid to each other's hair, especially when certain similarities made those comparisons particularly interesting to their owners. The fair heads of Katy and Gayle came under lengthy mutual scrutiny until Gayle finally settled the matter "I think my hair is darker than yours".

Table 5.6 Categories and Percentages of Occurrence of Talk on Four Sequential Writing Tasks: Interpersonal communication.

Categories	Tasks			
	A	B	C	D
<b>3 Interpersonal communication</b>	20.00	14.14	14.28	7.46
3.1 Judging	1.60	1.01	0.84	1.19
3.2 Affect	6.40	6.06	7.98	5.07
3.3 Naming	3.20	3.53	2.52	1.19
3.4 Incidental talk	8.80	2.02	3.36	

A = substitution task; B = editing task;  
C = autobiographical task; D = writing a story

Writing on topics of particular relevance to the person concerned, such as date of birth would sometimes lead to further disclosure: "I was born at 4.45 am" Elizabeth announced on this occasion. In thinking about hobbies, Adam revealed a current preoccupation with a computer game called "Lemmings". None of the girls could match either Adam's knowledge or his interest in computer games and this topic was not pursued. But Gayle picked up on the animal connection to reveal a lifetime's experience in the ownership of seven rabbits:

#### Example 4

- G: I started with one rabbit / moved/ and then got another one/ it ran away/ got another rabbit/ ran away/ then got another rabbit/ got rabbit cold and died.
- N: On my seventh birthday I got a goldfish called Bubbles/ had it two years then it died a bit later/ got another one but it died and we didn't replace it.

Gayle's anecdotal reference concerning the demise of pets draws from Naomi a similar tale of woe suffered in the context of her experiences with goldfish. In this fashion the children identified with each other in the sharing of past experiences. They also provided the framework for playfully creating new ones concerning the idiosyncrasies of pets: "My cat Wellington has this habit of rolling over and over". These utterances were coded as incidental talk and generally occurred at the beginning of the study during the first writing task (8.8%).

During the work with nursery rhymes Naomi begged to be allowed to recite an alternative version of Baa baa black sheep. What followed is too rude to print here, but encouraged by peers' amused response, Adam invited the researcher to play the stooge in his knock-knock joke:

### Example 5

- A: Knock-knock  
 R: Who's there?  
 A: It's Andrew. Will you be my friend in ten years time?  
 R: Of course  
 A: Knock-knock  
 R: Who's there?  
 A: Look you've forgotten already.

These playful exchanges set the tone for even more elaborate interaction. Not to be outdone when Katy confided that she was learning to play the piano, Naomi sprang out of her seat announcing "I can make trumpet sounds using my fingers" and proceeded to perform a passable imitation of trumpet sounds. The other children also took the floor and all began to "play" the musical instrument of their choice with appropriate arm gestures and accompanying "musical" sounds, vying with each other as to who could make the loudest noise. No particular specified educational objectives inspired these encounters. Instead, it seemed that within these spontaneous, pleasurable and engaging behaviours the children found ways of offering themselves in friendship, declaring unity, and laying the foundations of their social world. It is particularly with reference to these recreational and essentially playful activities that we observe an altogether different type of collaboration in which children co-constructed and managed their own community. This foregrounding of the children's social world not only serves to emphasize its functional role as a tool for binding children together but its importance in providing the inspiration and motivation for the serious business of writing.

## 5.3.2.4 Composing

By the means identified above the children not only picked up on each other's playful non-literate behaviours but also other observed behaviours manifesting a more serious intent. It is mainly in the context of composing their own narratives that the light-hearted exchanges gave way to lengthy periods of concentrated effort as the children simultaneously pursued an independent focus on the task in hand.

These creative episodes manifest a different type of communication that was apparently addressed to no one in particular. Such utterances that took the form of low murmuring of a previously typed word repeated, the odd whisper or the occasional statement spoken out loud to test its rhetorical effect as in Naomi's "If you don't know what I am about to say...then read on", or Gayle's declaration, "This is what PB says he goes "Quacking Elephants!", are suggestive of their operative role in the composing process.

Table 5.7 Categories and Percentages of Occurrence of Talk on Four Sequential Writing Tasks: Composing.

Categories	Tasks			
	A	B	C	D
<b>4 Composing</b>	20.8	10.10	20.16	18.80
4.1 Literal suggestions	5.6	3.03	4.20	3.28
4.2 Gisting	3.2		5.04	6.26
4.3 Literal spelling	2.4		2.52	3.28
4.4 Requesting text content	4.0		2.10	1.49
4.5 Repeating exactly	5.6	7.07	6.30	4.47

A = substitution task; B = editing task;  
C = autobiographical task; D = writing a story

This inner-directed talk accompanying concentrated typing spells was periodically interrupted by what seemed to be episodes of silent absorption when the children were observed to adopt a more relaxed posture to view the screen. Although this sequence of behaviour was found to be commonly engaged, it is the striking frequency of Naomi's "thinking" spells that attract particular attention. Drawing her out on the subject elicited the following exchange:

**Example 6**

- N: I'm thinking about the ending./ You know those endings when in a story/ a person says "oh no not again"./ Well that's what I thought.
- R: How come you've got your ending but not the middle bit?
- N: Well I've got the ending in mind after a few more sentences./ I'll try not to plan anymore because when I plan I stop writing/ I can't think when I am writing because I can't think of two things at the same time./ I have to think what I am writing or I make lots of mistakes.
- R: So you plan as you go along to a certain extent?
- N: Yes but when I am planning I have to stop writing.
- A: I just write.

The above extract encapsulates something of the tension which every writer experiences when faced with the move from individual expression toward competent written language.

Most relevant to issues concerning composing processes is research that disseminates the differences between expert and novice writers in terms of planning and goal-setting. Researchers have noted the tendency for expert writers to plan more extensively (e.g., Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1982), and demonstrate more explicit goal-setting (e.g., Flower and Hayes, 1981b). From this perspective, Naomi's struggles to grapple with the complementary strategies of planning, goal-setting and revision bear the insignia of a promising young writer. Equally apparent here are some natural limitations that challenge the emergent writer's ability to cope simultaneously with all the cognitive demands imposed in writing: they have yet to acquire the adult's automacity in mechanical skills that assist fluency in translating thought into text. Furthermore, as in the case of Elizabeth, it is also possible that the unfamiliar tool complicated Naomi's production problems. The explanation, "Well I'm doing the next page" when asked about the frequency of hard returns displayed in the text suggests the difficulty that many young writers experience in adapting to a page-less medium for writing.

Besides throwing into relief some of the problems which beset the young writer, the above extract also allows us to briefly comment on the personalities underlying the different approaches taken by the children concerned. Although, Adam and Naomi both demonstrated above average writing potential, Naomi's hesitant composing approach and fretful attention to detail is to be contrasted with the uninhibited style of writing Adam adapted to the computer. This comfortable and copious writing style, and his ease with the idea of correcting spellings afterwards allowed him, as a consequence, to be among the first to finish any task leaving Naomi to tail in at the end.

### 5.3.2.5 Evaluating, Explaining and Negotiating

Of particular interest in the context of peer evaluation is the observation that most of the children's evaluations of themselves and each other were implicit. If an explicit comment was made to another, it was generally couched in terms of encouragement such as "that's alright", "it's good" or "that's better". Sometimes these low murmurings appeared to be expressions of personal satisfaction after making some perceived improvement to the text. The relative infrequency of talk discovered to be 'stating a rule' reflected the implicit nature of the children's teaching. Verbal explanations of written language-related rules tended not to be offered but were rather learned by demonstration, example or imitation. Such statements as Elizabeth's pronouncement: "My teacher says you have to have a beginning, a middle and an end" and the children's critique of Elizabeth's use of mechanics "She needs a capital letter/ at the beginning of the sentence and a fullstop at the end", seeming to reflect the school experience, were a noticeable rarity in this context.

The most frequent type of talk, located under the general evaluation category, emerged in conference sessions organized during the creative writing task (23.88%).

Table 5.8 Categories and Percentages of Occurrence of Talk on Four Sequential Writing Tasks: Evaluating, explaining, negotiating.

Categories	Tasks			
	A	B	C	D
<b>5 Evaluating, explaining, negotiating</b>	7.2	10.10	13.86	23.88
5.1 Explaining	1.6	1.51	4.20	10.44
5.2 Evaluating			2.10	3.28
5.3 Checking facts		2.52	0.84	2.68
5.4 Negotiating	1.6	2.02	2.52	2.08
5.5 Suggesting alternatives	4.8	4.04	3.78	4.77
5.6 Stating rules			0.42	0.59

A = substitution task; B = editing task;  
C = autobiographical task; D = writing a story

These 'discussions' provided the opportunity for each child to share and comment on each others' work before writing the final drafts. Apart from Naomi's comment on Elizabeth's use of mechanics, this talk is significant in locating the children's principle interest in the content of the stories. They questioned the logic of each other's writing by

referring to the internal consistency of the story-line. Sometimes clarification was recommended and the explanations forthcoming in response to these requests accounted for 10.44% of the discourse. They also questioned the behaviour of objects or characters in the story as consistent with their own understanding of how the world worked. Before turning to these examples, it is important to point out that although the stories may have shared the title, each text expressed individualism both in content and narrative style (see Appendix IV). In particular, Adam's imaginative style of writing differed from the others' more 'purist' imaginative roles in the tendency to reflect his interest in real personalities and events of a factual nature. Drawing on his musical inclinations and his recent viewing of a video featuring Donald Campbell, this narrative included references to Richard Starkie and Donald Campbell's attempt to break the world's waterspeed record in his craft, Bluebird. When Adam read out his story to his less-informed audience, the following occurred:

#### Example 7

- N: I didn't understand that about Bluebird  
 R: What was Bluebird, Adam?  
 A: He (Donald Campbell) was trying to break the land speed record but crashed at 300.  
 R: Right./ Well I know what Bluebird was but no-one else knows./ You might explain who Donald Campbell was and what Bluebird was./ Anything else?  
 K: I didn't know who Richard Starkie is.  
 R: Me neither.  
 A: Richard Starkie was the drummer of the Beatles and he changed his name to Ringo.  
 R: You might make that clear./ A lot of people won't know that.

Adam evidently considered these proposals justified and, to accommodate his audience, he incorporated some linear explanations within the final draft. For example, he wrote "...we ended up in the middle of Richard Starkey's drumkit (the Beatles' drummer)" and "We saw Bluebird on the water and Donald Campbell climbing in to break the world speed record on water". Other occasions saw children unwilling or perhaps unable to make the required macrostructural revisions in response to anomalies pointed out by peers. According to Gayle's account, the professor had taken three years to invent his time machine and then "didn't know which buttons did which things because he hadn't labelled them while he was making this machine". Having pressed one of the buttons, the machine and its inventor had travelled back in time "to the first second of life" where he had met God. God had declared "...I think I'll make the solar system now". When Gayle finished reading out her story, the following comments were made:

**Example 8**

- A: Surely, the professor would have known which buttons to press if he had invented the machine?
- G: Well he didn't because he had forgotten./ It took him three years to invent the machine.
- K: God would not have invented the solar system after inventing the earth./ Surely the solar system would have been invented before the earth? (*appeals to Researcher*).
- R: Well Gayle?  
(*no reply*)

Adam's line of questioning and Gayle's response indicate a subtle difference in ways of thinking about the story. In effectively asking how the machine's inventor can fail to know the workings of his own invention, Adam's logic is rooted in his perception of how living characters act in real-world events. Gayle's defence, on the other hand, takes account of an alternative logic in implying that her professor's actions are perfectly consistent with his absent-minded characterization in the story. Such a defence succeeds because it makes the subtle distinction between the real and the story world.

A similar kind of logic underpins Katy's move to question the internal consistency of the story when the sequence of actions are performed by a supposed 'real' character as opposed to an obviously fictional character. There is a fine literary line to be drawn between what is considered to be 'true' or 'false', credible or not credible, in a fictional piece of work and it would appear that certain situationally appropriate rules apply. In the best stories even a mythical figure is given 'reality' by seeming to possess attributes of character leading to behaviour consistent with the mythical status. The God-like figure as portrayed in Gayle's story is judged inauthentic in accordance with logical sequence of events in the 'real' story. Thus it seems that these children are impelled to remove all possible ambiguities of meaning in the need to distinguish between what is 'real' and not 'real' in the literary world. The failure to respond to Katy's comment is later reflected in the absence of any major sense-making change to the final draft. It is only speculation here that we attribute Gayle's silence to recognition of a problem that requires more than mere explanation. It requires the ability to conceptualise major and complex reorganizations of text which she may have been unwilling to tackle or lacked the intellectual maturity to achieve.

In the sharing of written texts a further opportunity to explore the distinction between real world and literary truths arises in the context of Katy's story. We note here that it is

fascination with the behaviour of Dinosaurs which invites particular interest. In the first draft she wrote:

'...Prof climbed out of the time machine "what a brilliant spesermin. Now, where did I put my tape measure". While Prof was searching for his tape measure, that brilliant spesermin ate the telephone box! The Prof looked over his shoulder were his time machine was before that brilliant spesermin had eaten it. "you've eaten it havent you" he said he climed into its mouth and guess what it did, it started to chew didn't it. At first it said Yummy but then said phuey and spat Prof out and flouded the place with tears and floated away to its mother!'

### Example 9

- A: I didn't know dinosaurs could swim (raising his eyebrows)  
 K: Well this one could.  
 G: Couldn't he have had a lilo?  
 K: That's right. He had a lilo or somethin'.

This brief extract similarly demonstrates the mechanisms which operate to force children to grapple with the distinction between what is possible in a world based on generalities and what is enabled within the machinations of the individual mind. In confronting Katy with the now familiar problem of accommodating two world perspectives, we recognize that Adam continues to work within a different frame of reference. Katy's first inclination, in response to this critique, is to defend her original statement, but then soon recognizes the utility of Gayle's suggestion as a means of reconciliation. It becomes evident that Adam's worldly observation about the capabilities of dinosaurs is a point of concern in noting the subsequent enclosure in parentheses "(By the way, the Stegosaurus had a lilo)" in the final draft.

The following sequence reminds us that ambiguity is also frowned upon in the children's world, and that a good story must 'have a beginning, a middle and a ending'. Naomi's earlier mentioned preoccupation with the problem of satisfactorily resolving the ending of her own story makes her understandably quick to point up the professor's predicament in Katy's narrative:

### Example 10

- N: We don't know what happens to PB at the end.  
 A: He could have got eaten by the Stegosaurus and then spat out.  
 G: You could put that the professor went up to heaven with the dinosaurs  
 E: She could put we were watching him in a film and eating chocolate biscuits at the same time.

Naomi's observation calls forth a number of useful suggestions from the others, each one expressing the differing viewpoints and personalities of the individuals concerned. It may be that the lack of a verbal response to these offers to end the story makes all the more significant Katy's subsequent literary response clearly indicated in the final draft. In the best soap-opera tradition, the story concludes with an explicit statement acknowledging that the ending is indeed speculative: "As for Prof and the time machine well the time machine just stayed in the Stegosaurus's tum, but Prof just floated off in the tears and I have no idea what happened to him so I can't tell you". In responding to this critiquing, the author evidently reserves the right to accept or reject another's ideas according to her own operational definition of what constitutes the literary truth.

Two observations concerning commonalities between the foregoing extracts are striking here. First, we note the observation that alternative suggestions are invariably posed without discussion of their merit. It seems that each of these critiques reflects orderly turn-taking and coherent exchanges of ideas, rather than displaying the features of 'real' discussion. The notion that 'differently intended talk' is foreshadowed by an accumulation of prior experience of classroom talk is often cited as the most influential factor inhibiting truly 'exploratory' talk in other contexts (Westgate and Corden, 1993:119). Barnes' (1992) functional distinction between what he describes as 'presentational' and 'exploratory' talk may also help to shed light on children's reticence here. Presentational talk is described as more oriented towards a reader's expectations than the speaker's ideas thus presenting a 'final draft' display for the kind of evaluative emphasis most frequently evidenced in schools. In contrast, exploratory talk is speaker-oriented in that it functions to extend the speaker's own understanding by first trying out ideas on others. The very tentative nature of exploratory talk makes it necessary to establish a reassuring, non-aggressive and receptive environment to enable it to flourish. Barnes (1992:126) is at some pains to relate the two types of talk as equally important in the learning process, but calls upon teachers to redress 'the balance of opportunities'. It is the perceived lack of opportunity to engage in exploratory talk that leads Edwards and Westgate (1994) to emphasize the need for constant reassurance to enable children overcome the inhibiting consequences of their accustomed contexts. These comments have some explanatory merit for the verbal reticence observed here and also proscribe the limitations of the present context. As noted in the previous chapter, talk that is valued more for its process and less in terms of 'right answers' is a practiced skill that clearly requires more time to cultivate than the brief period allotted to this study.

On further examining the forms these critiques take, what seems interesting is that evaluation is rarely explicit, and yet constantly implied nevertheless. And in spite of the

absence of verbal response, the issues are seemingly taken on board, reflected upon, and the possibilities reflected in written form. It is as though the writer simply chooses to take one of his or her conversational turns on paper rather than in speech. In this respect, the written word is very much an extension of dialogue. The important concern here is how the collaborative process moves children to engage in what Tizard and Hughes (1984) aptly describe as 'passages of intellectual search' (p.114) to wrestle with the contradictions between two world perspectives. Although Tizard and Hughes' focus of inquiry concerns the features of mother-child talk, their term usefully encapsulates the kind of intellectual inquiry that involves critical thinking about the implications of future decisions and the modification of existing knowledge with recourse to other information. In a literary context, these exchanges provide the opportunities for reflection on the distinction between speaker and listener, reader and writer. At the same time, this continual movement between an imaginary world and a rule-governed world provides the impetus for new knowledge and the development of understanding. As Britton (1985) observed: 'In taking part in rule-governed behaviour...the novice, the individual learner, picks up the rules by responding to the behaviours of others, a process precisely parallel to the mode by which the rules first came into existence' (1985:74).

The above discussion incorporates the range of categorised utterances considered important for contextual elaboration. Other less informative categories (e.g., confirming and disconfirming) which remain undiscussed are displayed in Appendix V.

#### **5.4 The writer as individual**

The foregoing sections locate a network of cooperating children in which the display of friendship, the playful monitoring of another's techniques, the interest in and support for each others stories, in fact sets the tone for the group's interpersonal climate. At the same time, further reflection on the literary consequences of these activities induces a sense of individual writers defining for themselves their communicative purposes, and sometimes refining those purposes as a consequence of some dissonance experienced in conversation. This shift from playful collusion to the serious and apparent private business of writing calls to mind an earlier discussion in which a group of older children define a rule-governed contextual distinction between sharing ideas and copying another's work. There is a clear case for contextual similarity in the sense that writers collaborate with conversational partners not by integrating them into some form of corporate authorship but by using those partners as consultants and informants. Although no such notional explication is advanced by any of these younger children, we extrapolate from that discussion the same principles in operation here. We note for instance, the pooling of resources in the shape of ideas or in the form of writing

conventions such as spelling and punctuation marks, the sharing of technical expertise, and the copying of literary techniques. But the structure and content, the peculiarities of characters and ensuing events of each story is the product of individual creativity - part of that individual's uniquely defined sense of self. Others describe this sense of authorship in terms of ownership and control (Hudson, 1986, 1988), or the need to 'rise above the crowd' and declare oneself as 'special' among peers (Dyson, 1988). Each of these interpretations implies individual actors negotiating the broad social forces of convention and conflict. It seems that here just as elsewhere, writers not only construct a social context but at the same time adapt to social context in selecting contextually appropriate behavioural strategies.

### 5.5 Conclusions

The previous sections describe the manner in which children's writing emerges and is supported by virtue of participation in an informal 'social' context. The complex and dynamic view of context outlined in this chapter presents a three-dimensional picture composed from the interpenetration of the children's play world, the enacted real world and the world constructed through the inventive manipulation of written symbols. Within the play world the children used computer potential in much the same way as they would use any toy - as scope for imaginative exploration and self-expression. If the play world saw them identifying as children in co-ordinated action, the real world saw them distinguishing themselves as individuals through and around written language. The position adopted in this discussion is that writing forms an integral part of the flow of social events - providing the same rewards of peer status and identity in much the same way as any other situation which affords children opportunities to display their own competence and monitor the competence of peers.

In the collectively defined "computer club", children worked through their own agenda related to peer acceptance and affect, and held more to their own goals in distinguishing themselves as individual authors. In what is essentially a recreational context, writing was a natural beneficiary of the collaborate climate the children constructed for themselves. In the course of commenting on each other's work, they provided valuable lessons in what counts as coherent discourse. While we mark the tendency to judge writing according to its conformity to conventions of the written code, we also note what seems to be rarely found in schools: the flexibility of this evaluation that preserves the sanctity of individual written creation .

In considering some of the educational implications that emerge from this analysis, there are obvious differences between prevailing conditions in this context and those persisting

in more formal instructional settings which exclude efforts to translate this model directly into those systems currently operating in schools. In spite of these constraints, there emerges from this context some broader practical and theoretical implications considered worthy of pursuit.

First, of particular interest, is the observation that children have the potential to scaffold their own learning given the right linguistic opportunities. Much contemporary classroom-based research reports depression of this potential yet the interactions discussed above give rise to notions of repertoire and variability as participants draw from a remarkable repertoire of skills to display similarities or differences, assimilation or resistance, according to their own perceptions of the setting. In suggesting ways of fostering this potential, it is not the intention to advocate a move away from the discipline of the classroom towards playground 'lores', or to undermine the teacher's crucial role in organising structured literate activities. On the contrary, it is clear that in the underpinning of the present context there is a definitive structure that functions on two levels: first, at the level of the computer club in which a group of children choose to participate in shared playful activity towards a common goal; and second, at the level of a series of disciplined individual writing activities on which acceptance depends for the success of the enterprise as a whole. It is precisely this interpenetration of play and discipline which structures the activity and sustains the social group. What seems apparent in this context is that the origin of the discipline comes rather less from the authority invested in any particular figure than from the activity itself.

Second, it is equally apparent that the effects of peer interaction on writing are not uniformly positive. There may be some students who find literate activities with a high level of peer interaction a complicating factor in their literacy development. Elizabeth, who by her mother's account was a reluctant writer, is a good example of one who clearly found the medium problematic. Undoubtedly, there are some children who, for a variety of reasons, rely more than others on a sensitive and supportive teacher to make for them a comfortable and productive writing situation. In the same cautionary vein, Ackerman (1993) makes the more general point that mismatches between learning styles and methods and students' differing values and competences frequently result in conflict, not harmony. There may be a fine divisible line between conflict that effectively promotes learning (e.g., Piaget, 1950; Brown & Ferrara, 1985), and excessive conflict that risks demotivating the writer and which may even slow down or halt literacy development. It is these references to the importance of integrating literate activities to accommodate differing levels of communicative competences that serve to highlight rather than diminish the role of the teacher.

I have come round to echoing the claim in the previous chapter for reformulating that role to advance a different model of writing: one that pays as much attention to classroom contexts and for giving voice to student writing than simply to writing and learning tasks. This analysis suggests that a theory of writing must account for the social dimension as well as the textual (structural) and the cognitive dimensions. It is this crucial dimension which is normally stifled as 'interference' in the more formal pursuits of school. This conclusion is supported by noting the determined efforts made by these children to involve themselves in the enterprise over time, and borne out by the relative productivity achieved in each context. The increased productivity in the computer club, as measured in terms of individual output, is seen as the outcome of a more flexible environment where peer interaction is allowed to flourish. Observations of even such small group activity indicate that the nature of peer interaction varies according to the motives and intentions of individuals, ranging from the spontaneous playfulness of collective identity to the more provisional exploration of oppositional viewpoints. In this analysis both kinds of action are understood to play a complementary role in scaffolding the writing process. This position is consonant with Dyson's (e.g., 1988, 1995) observations whose interest in foregrounding 'off-task' talk lies in its perceived potential to support individual intellectual development.

One final relevant point arising from the analysis concerns the way concrete tools (including computers) are used to mediate the direction and focus of the behaviour of participants in the present context. The computer-specific effects are not simply separated from other interactional effects or, as Cochran-Smith (1991) suggests, from other contextual factors such as the nature of task, the way it is set up, pupils' perceptions, their skills and prior experience. Nevertheless, the implications of this research are that writing and computers are extremely flexible and handy amplifiers of pupil involvements. For the purposes of analysing interactions in different kinds of classrooms, contextual manipulation of computers may be crucial for understanding how powerfully writing works.

## CHAPTER 6

### TOWARDS A FULLER UNDERSTANDING: REMAINING ISSUES

#### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter attempts to link social and cognitive aspects of developmental processes to provide a more complete picture of the social construction of writing. In the sections that follow, I summarise the empirical work reported in previous chapters and discuss the conclusions that can be drawn from the results with respect to the aims of the thesis. I discuss some limitations of these accounts with respect to methodological issues and concerns. I examine the implications that can be drawn from this research and the issues raised as a whole for constructing a framework for writing and learning. Finally, I sketch out the possibilities for future research.

#### 6.2 SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

##### 6.2.1 Framing the setting

In Chapter two I sought to 'frame' the educational setting in which children learn to write. I aimed to describe the nature of school literacy by asking teachers to respond to a questionnaire categorizing features of social context - ownership, setting, audience, purpose and genre. Pupils were interviewed and asked to identify their own ways of categorizing these features. Following this, I conducted a comparative analysis of teachers' and pupils' respective viewpoints as they related to the writing tasks employed. These studies enabled me to describe in general terms; (1) the aims and purposes which teachers ascribe to given tasks and the extent to which pupils of different ages match their teachers' expectations in these respects; (2) teacher-assigned writing and how children perceive the constraints of school writing. The first overall finding is that children seem to have little difficulty in understanding the aims, objectives, functions and purposes of school writing. On closer examination, more subtle differences between the discourses of the younger and older age-groups are apparent. The discourses of the younger children rarely identified features of the events being described beyond the events themselves. By contrast, the older children demonstrated a developing acuity with respect to these ideals. They were better able to articulate the terms in which these tasks were proposed by correctly and explicitly identifying the purposes of certain kinds of writing. They displayed a more wholistic understanding of curriculum objectives in recognizing how one writing practice might inform another, and by linking this patterning with the ways tasks were organized across the curriculum. Paralleling this

developing understanding was an increasing tendency to consider the value of school writing as it affected their own personal development.

Second, teachers and children agreed that the majority of school tasks were teacher-assigned or initiated and most audiences for this writing were those found within the school if they were not the teachers themselves. The particular interest lies in how children perceive the constraints of school writing as it affects their sense of control and level of involvement in writing tasks. Teachers in year 3 apparently planned more tasks to concede control than children were either willing or able to identify. Conversely, children in years 5/6 claimed to 'own' more products than was predicted. This apparent unpredictability is best explained in terms of levels of participation in the described events. Younger children, for example, tended to claim ownership if they found the topic engaging or otherwise entertaining, and especially when encouraged by an enthusiastic and supportive teacher. Older children's claims for ownership, particularly in the context of reports and stories, crucially depended on a sense of shared engagement with the teacher or peers or when the writing appeared to be goal-directed towards a wider audience. In other words, younger children tended to write for the pleasure of creation and often found school writing limiting in this respect. By contrast, older children's reasons for writing were more socially motivated.

In general, the observations suggest that children act upon their own representations of an assignment. Some support for this conclusion comes from children's stated setting preferences in the context of certain described events. For some children at each age level the home setting presented the best immediate opportunity for meaningful engagement with writing. The broader implication is that there may be more to the concept of ownership than the level of personal involvement in the writing. The suggestion is that the term 'ownership' may be rather more usefully deployed in a developmental sense to imply the extent to which children are enabled to think of themselves as participatory members of a community.

### **6.2.2 Issues of involvement in writing**

The aim in Chapter three was to obtain a more intimate understanding of children's involvements in the community of school by focusing more particularly on school writing activities. Three interrelated categories of children's thinking about their contextual experiences were developed from the data by using a grounded theory approach. These were 'writing for academic purpose', 'writing for oneself', and 'writing to communicate'. This analysis made it possible to consider: (1) children's attitudes, beliefs and values as they relate to school writing and how these attitudes change as function of

age and school experience; (2) how functional interpretation of assigned writing varies in response to the ways these writing activities are organized. I discuss these points of interest in terms of the three categories developed from the data with respect to relevant issues such as ownership, control and authenticity.

First, the category of 'writing for academic performance' suggests that children attribute a performance-based, evaluation-oriented purpose for most school-assigned writing. They consistently referred to a school academic purpose regardless of what conditions might dictate. This indicates that children interpret the functions of school writing on the basis of an acculturated understanding acquired through accumulated school experience. One suggested consequence of this belief is that it works to undermine a sense of ownership and control over writing. This is best illustrated in concrete terms by exemplifying spelling as the major source of children's general conceptions about the school academic purpose. Spelling as a focus of contentious concern was the most frequently cited criterion for distinguishing educational success from failure on the basis of performance. Its evaluative use in the classroom as a reflection of societal ideals would seem to be an alienating force in some children's lives, serving to increase tension between parents and children, promote competition among peers, and further undermine the less confident writer. However, peer evaluation can also work to advantage when, for example, writing is put on display. Children create their own opportunity to learn through (unofficially) work sharing and monitoring - activities which can provide a perspective for critiquing their own writing and that of others.

Second, findings indicate that 'writing for oneself' is elicited in two important senses. First, it involves engagement in the task to the extent that concerns for academic purpose are replaced by a sense of freedom to compose one's 'own' product. In the context of different activities, there is a common enough view that stories and diaries will foster this kind of engagement. The small number of activities described in Chapter 3 serve in a limited way to illustrate how children's perceptions of the task have strongly affected the outcome. The diary writing episode, for example, usefully emphasizes that the conditions of the task need to acknowledge the child's own social expectations of different forms of writing as they are conventionally understood, if not reinforce them. In another sense, writing for oneself can also be understood to be directed towards an anticipated, idealistic self as it relates to the purposes, goals and expectations which children describe in such terms as 'passing exams', 'going to college' in order 'to get a better job'. These ideals articulate with the academic purpose, and go some way toward explaining the pressures on children to distinguish themselves in school.

The study indicates that children perceive the function of 'writing to communicate' when they find their own meaningful context (which includes purposes, audiences and genres) to work within. Giving choice within a task, for example, did not in itself suffice to concede control or endow the writing with the quality of 'authenticity' (e.g., Dyson, 1984), particularly when children perceive their involvement in it in terms of the object or motive of schooling. My understanding of inauthentic writing is that it fails because it is too remote from children's own interests or concrete experiences, as in writing job applications for example, and consequently appears autonomous and context-free. If children have difficulty in seeing the connection between their own purposes for writing and the educational purpose for writing, the potential uses of writing often remain vague. Conversely, authentic writing is used to describe those activities in which children are motivated to expand their involvement, as in the cited letters to the nursing home, to the extent they could appropriate its object and motive. From the child's perspective, the term authenticity would seem to be synonymous with relevance. Writing has the quality of authenticity if it resonates with children's own interests and concerns and where, as in the newspaper project, it is embedded in a learning context that is perceived to resemble other social practices.

### 6.2.3 Classroom Interactions

Chapter 4 focused specifically on three classrooms and the role that discourse and teacher-pupil relationships play in organizing interactional behaviour and modes of thinking in these contexts. Classrooms, such as those discussed, can be strategic sites for making visible the tensions underlying institutional, disciplinary and cultural practices. I included in the analysis the kinds of facts considered relevant to the focus of inquiry and distinguished those defining characteristics which illustrated the nature of events. The first of these case studies provided the opportunity to make two important theoretical points. The interpretation derives from the strategy adopted by the teacher to draw on the observer's presence to make visible, through the interaction displayed, those rules that regulate roles and relationships implicit in the classroom. These rules, as they are explicitly (re)defined, configure the structure of choice and discipline in a two-sided regulatory process. They articulate in a concrete way the principles of participation on which the educational process depends; that is, if the enabling possibilities arise from having choices, this necessarily depends on voluntary acceptance of the rules. Hence, the first point of interest lies in presenting an inclusive account, one in which the outsider is seen to be a critical integral factor constituting the phenomenon observed. A second point of theoretical expansion conceives the notion of context as infused with past as well as future anticipated behaviour. I am referring to the apparent lack of mutual understanding described by the teacher and children in early-year encounters. This

information influences the interpretation of the immediate context. A full understanding of the situation would thus seem to require an extended view of context to involve a shared classroom history as an index to the motives and intentions which lie behind the actions observed.

The second of these case studies examined an approach to classroom management that effectively limits choice, interactional possibilities, and modes of thinking by operating a teacher-centred style of instruction. This context is distinguished by characteristic features typically associated with whole-class directive teaching in which instruction comprises of a large number of questions eliciting brief and factual responses thus closing off the possibilities of any extended display of reasoning. This teacher's overriding concerns with the routine management of classroom tasks has the effect of intensifying control aspects of classroom relationships. The consequences were made apparent by reporting low levels of pupil-involvement and a failure to achieve the understanding needed to accomplish the task. The resulting confusion or mutual misunderstanding is suggested to derive from a restricted communication system and is further exacerbated by poorly explained purposes and ill-defined goals.

The third case study examined the consequences of restructuring a classroom to provide a framework within which reader-writer collaboration, peer interaction, self-assessment and self-determination are encouraged and supported. In this context, the inquiry focused on the management of talk in teacher-less discussions and the modes of thinking that emerge. The following observations were reported. First, in the interview situation the children demonstrated an awareness and an appreciation of their own rate of progress in reading and writing. Second, the children were observed on a reading/writing task to display the capacity to negotiate the terms of interaction and their roles in relation to each other. Third, the resultant discourse appeared less driven by a compelling desire to learn than motivated by children's desires for affiliation as they worked to establish mutual cooperation and understanding. Fourth, a large part of this understanding entailed mutual recognition, acceptance, and mutual (re)enforcement of a culturally-oriented, shared system of rules. Finally, the analysis identified the form and function of narrative (experiential) and hypothetical (propositional) modes of talk in the explication of social rules. The structure and direction of the talk and the way meaning comes to be collaboratively defined are assumed to play a facilitative role in transforming oral language to written discourse.

#### **6.2.4 Social relationships in a different setting**

Chapter 5 focused on the interactional processes involved when children voluntarily participated in creating a context for writing in a non-school setting that incorporated the use of computers. The resulting findings were presented in terms of the writing that was produced and the nature of interaction that constituted the context. First, when compared with school hand-written texts the results show an increased productivity in the Computer Club while three of the five children were rated as having slightly improved the overall quality of their writing. Second, this result would seem to suggest that the Computer Club as a context for writing worked more successfully than the school context. Specifically, the outcome expressed as increased productivity indicates that the Computer Club generated an increased level of involvement and greater commitment to the writing. This involvement was manifested in the interactional patterns of talk. For example, children readily sought one another's help with the computers, monitored each other's writing, offered suggestions, and displayed their collective identity through spontaneous playful interaction. Third, the analysis reinforces the view that technological tools (including writing and computers) are useful catalysts for social interaction which cannot easily be separated either from each other or from other contextual factors.

#### **6.3 Towards understanding the child's perspective**

In the move towards providing a more coherent understanding of the child's perspective I shall now attempt to relate these insights to the aims and purposes broadly set out at the beginning of Chapter 1. I would hope thereby to be in a better position to consider those aims by taking into account the participants' own perceptions.

It may be recalled that the first aim of the thesis had to do with specifying the consequences of immersion in the community or culture of schooling as they are expressed in children's beliefs, values and ways of knowing. In the light of the findings summarised above, it appears that modes of thinking are closely aligned to concrete forms of social practice. One developmental determinant is manifested in the capacity for children to appropriate their teachers' expectations of task-goals over time from a succession of involvements in assigned writing activities. This requires the learner to construct a mental representation of what counts as conforming to the expectations, purposes and goals of given tasks, or more specifically, the value of being able to 'second guess' how their teachers will react to particular writings. At a more subjective level, the social motives of participants in school literate activities are also operationalized in response to perceived conditions recognized as recurring, in anticipation of their future involvements with them. The findings would thus indicate, on the one hand, that

accretion of school experience leads to ways of knowing how to tap into the primary concerns of the consensual construction. On the other, the implication is that there is much to be gained from the child's vantage point by adopting this position. They sense that there is more at issue here than completing an otherwise unnecessary exercise and that they can affect the outcome. 'Writing for oneself' in this second sense anticipates a more autonomous self made powerful by mastery of written language. At the same time, we need also to bear in mind that most assigned writing was identified with an evaluation-oriented purpose and academic performance-based goal, and the rhetorical contexts as they relate to audiences, purposes and genres for writing remain quite circumscribed, particularly in relation to the range of texts produced by other social practices.

Equally, the forms of classroom language examined in Chapter 4 would seem significant not just for the inequalities arising out of considerations of power and status. Ideological questions about the nature of literacy and learning surely inhere in the kinds of language used to regulate the interaction through which knowledge is transmitted, displayed or avoided. One of the Chapter's purposes was to provide a deeper or multi-layered account of the forces at work in the classroom which variously shape children's thinking about writing. There may be some pedagogical value in attempting to provide a descriptively-adequate account of the localized linguistic choices teachers make in managing their classrooms, and which subsequently operate to orchestrate particular patterns of classroom interaction. The resulting findings may be viewed in terms of the contributions they may, or may not, make to communicative effectiveness. Moreover, the observed outcomes of these practices in the forms of behaviour displayed can be evaluated positively or negatively only in so far as they are examined in the historical context of the classroom, and in as much as the discourse produced reflects the wider processes of cultural transmission. In other words, to understand the writing, and the power relations in classrooms and elsewhere, it may be necessary to dispense with metaphors of context and use instead metaphors of dynamic systems or networks.

More particularly, the insights gained from these studies provide a useful bridge to approach the questions posed in setting out the second aim of the thesis which was to delineate the factors involved in the process of learning. In this respect, two points are worthy of emphasis. First, I have attempted to show that each of the classrooms exemplified can be characterized as an artificially (culturally) structured system mediated by a set of rules that are constituted and reconstituted by participants during the course of activity. Acceptance of the rules implies acceptance of the purposes and motives of the teacher as an educational agent. Such a process has two implications: (a) knowledge

is first sociocultural on the grounds that it is acquired within 'scripted' activities in which an institutional (cultural) structure is implicated, and (b) the process of learning may be characterised by the appropriation of the discursive structures themselves, an aspect of the developmental process during which participants learn to modify their actions and give status to the motives and purposes of others. Some reference to the previous chapters may help to clarify what is meant by these claims.

The analysis as I described it in Chapter 2 indicated (within limitations) that ways of framing pedagogical activities orally were being affected and to some extent shaped by an accumulation of experience of school. The following chapters provide a fleshing out, as it were, of the motives and purposes individuals have for acting (including speaking and writing) in certain ways and not others that grow out of the social practices of the classroom. The analysis in Chapter 3 provides both an elaboration of the means by which children are directed towards a set of goals specified by the school culture which is shared by teachers and family members (and ultimately, those of society), and provides helpful terms of reference for examining the motives children have for writing. Even when the conditions of the task were less rigid, children continued to ascribe academic purposes and goals for most assigned writing. Through repeated encounters with teacher-structured tasks and school-oriented goals, it appears that they may also to a certain extent, as was suggested above, appropriate those educational goals at the psychological level.

Classroom observations provided opportunities for examining the means by which children are socialised into a culture. In each of the three classrooms, it could be said that certain verbal behaviours were reinforced and others were discouraged through the specific ways in which literacy was taught. It was apparent in Classroom A that while the teacher's prime purpose was to bring her pupils to change the messages of their stories, in fact she was also socialising them into rule-governed activity. It was in their learning of these rules and expectations and how and when to employ them appropriately that pupils learn the often implicit ideological assumptions - the rules constituting their culture. Although the rules specifying appropriate kinds of participative action seemed altogether more flexible in Classroom C than it appears to have been in Classroom B, there were similar conventions regulating actions to which pupils were accountable, that they came to share with their teacher, and which carried over or were (re)produced in peer-interactive contexts. Ways of thinking and talking were thus being framed and coloured by a structure of participation that reflected the ideological underpinnings of a culture.

For those working within a Vygotskian sociocultural framework, neither of these claims will be particularly controversial. Increasingly over the the last two decades, researchers have combined the ideas of Vygotsky and Bahktin's analysis of speech genres to articulate the mutual interdependence of psychological structures and sociocultural structures (e.g., Cazden, 1989; Wertsch, 1991; Stone, 1993). More theoretically challenging is the increasing tendency to acknowledge the potentially distributed nature of cognitions (Brown, Collins and Duguid, 1989; Lave and Wenger, 1991). The implications of such a view (in its more radical formulation) is that cognition is principally distributed in all forms of human activity systems (e.g., Cole, 1991; Cole and Engestrom, 1993). As discussed in Chapter 1, this corresponds with a line of thinking which advocates the shift from the individual as the basic unit of analysis to the larger unit of the joint socially mediated activity in a cultural context (Cole, 1991) or the 'individual(s)-operating-with-mediational-means' (Wertsch, Tulviste, & Hagstrom, 1993:342) in such a way as to emphasize the necessity of examining the system as a whole rather than its components in isolation.

Although this approach provides a useful corrective to the long-held view that cognitions are possessed solely by individuals, there is, I suggest, something a little unsatisfactory about a theory of distributed cognition in which *all* cognitions are distributed over people and situations. For one thing, it poses an unresolved contradiction between the possibility of improving our understanding of the sources of influence and the understanding that the individual and the distributed system are inseparable and thus cannot be described in isolation. A disregard for individual representation, critics contend, invites situational determinism, passivity, and an implicit static vision of the distributed system (e.g., Salomon, 1993; Nicolopoulou and Weintraub, 1998). For example, Serpell (1993) makes a telling point when observing that it is the 'open-ended creativity of individual behaviour within a framework of constitutive rules that ensures that the culture will not be static but will change over time' (1993:366). The thrust of these arguments is that we should recognize that cognitions can be and often are distributed and that actions are indeed situated in sociocultural context. But this does not get us very far towards explaining how distributed cognitions and situated action interact with those other components of the system one traditionally associates with the individual mind. In other words, a genuinely dialogic theory of development needs to account for the interplay of the contributions of individuals, the focus and direction of the activity, and the tools-in-use that are historically (re)constructed over varying periods of time.

The position adopted in this thesis then, is that the motives and purposes of the second category of agent - the pupil - have a significant role to play in shaping the learning process. Consider the perceptual teacher-pupil 'mismatches' related to claims of ownership for work which show that pupils undertaking the 'same' writing task in a classroom may be operating with different motives, and writing for different purposes from their social-psychological perspectives. The role of the learner's perspective is demonstrated even more forcefully in the episode of diary writing in which the capacity for resistance is more prominent than the passive acceptance of another's definition of the task as one's own. Furthermore, the motives and intentions that lie behind the discursive actions of participants in the third described classroom and in the Computer Club would seem to have less to do with the object of learning as in an academic goal-directed activity, although there may be much mutual appropriation, than with social concerns about who they are and what they can achieve within the constraints of these particular activities and settings.

To give a brief outline of how individuals, the focus and direction of the activity, and the tools-in-use may be conceived to interact, let us return to the Computer Club setting as a particular example. When the focus of analytic interest is on the whole dynamic over time, one could say that at different levels and at different moments during the evolution of interaction, a consensus about situation definition is achieved among some if not all of the children as they share a focus of attention and a common object, a (provisionally) shared purpose or motive (e.g., joke-telling, story-writing with computers). Yet, when the focus of interest is on how individuals' *act* during the course of interaction using the tools at their disposal, we can observe the asymmetry of implicit power relationships in the ways children differently display their own competences or monitor another's, or challenge each other during conferencing. Hence, we might say that the children's positioning configures a 'shared world' concerning the conditions that sustain the environment, but not a perfectly shared understanding' concerning individual perspectives. In fact, with the introduction of conferencing, the configuration of the group dramatically changes - in the sense that there is no reciprocity, shared reality, sustained conversation or verbal negotiation. Rather, interaction is composed of both synchronic and diachronic elements which carry over in one form or another into the writing. As Salomon put it, 'Seeing actions as a sequence rather than a string of unrelated events, one cannot but consider the role that individuals' representations play (1993:119).

The relevance of the above demonstration to the present argument, despite its lack of theoretical clarity, is that it would seem to more adequately reflect the experience of the individuals (not forgetting the participating observer) who create and define the situation,

then perturb it to define it anew. Furthermore, it is possible to point to various other more significantly detailed lines of work in currency on the same theme (e.g., Litowitz, 1993; Goodnow, 1990; Smolka, De Goes, and Pino, 1995) Despite their diversity, they share an interest in confronting the problems that remain in conceiving the nature of learning as an essentially purposeful, goal-directed, cooperative enterprise which leads to the maintenance of the normative state. They do this in their different ways by drawing attention to the pragmatics of human action and thus open up the possibility of dealing with purposes at several levels, not just one.

In attributing individual motives to the scene of rhetorical action, I am not suggesting either that one dimension of a rhetorical situation should take analytical precedence over another, or that motives reside in the individual mind. Motives are not necessarily private or idiosyncratic; they are socially constructed through involvement in various activity systems (family, peer groups, school, and other institutions) that use language in different ways (e.g., Heath, 1982). But activity systems using social languages (including writing) with different motives and purposes also interact in the lives of participants to produce conflict, contradiction and resistance, as Bakhtin makes clear, '...language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past,...between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, school, circles and so forth, all in bodily form'. (1981:291). Following this definition, it is frequently the case that individuals experience conflict and may be placed at cross purposes as a result of the multiple activity systems with which they interact. Consequently, they must make difficult choices about expanding or (refusing to expand) involvement with an activity system when they write. For example, *Diary* was not the same genre when it was used by the teacher for a school academic motive/purpose as when it was used by the children for other different purposes. They did not write in accordance with their teacher's definition and were not motivated to start doing so. The issue of how far a generic label will stretch may only be resolved by accounting for the individual representations of participants.

I am suggesting that it may not be useful (or even fruitful) to classify the process of appropriation as always unidirectional (adaptation or simple socialization into a new language). Equally, the frequent use of the term 'learner' in educational research is potentially misleading. It carries with it an undercurrent of ideology which does not reflect the way the motives of participants are engaged by particular situations. Pupils often do not see the relevance of their writing to the academic motive/purpose or other social practices. They may refuse involvement causing a rupture in the activity thus affecting a change in the network. Salomon (1993) argues that such changes are the

outcomes of reflective processes based on representations: 'change is brought about by affecting the cognitions or behaviours of one or another member (the choice is very often pragmatic) whereby a quasi-stationary equilibrium is upset, thus requiring all other components to adjust' (1993:120). In other words, every action results from an interpretative process. Before we can act, we must always interpret an indeterminate situation; we define or 'determine' a situation. Salomon's account of 'reciprocal determination', is useful because it shows the importance of individual inputs in terms of represented knowledge and skill to development and change. In short, human action is based on and guided by meaning. Assigning only one definition to an action implies that the direction of the activity is uncontestable and not open to change through the operation of the many motives and purposes that participants bring to the classroom as their legacy of involvement with other activity systems. There may be both theoretical and practical pedagogical value in making this explicit. Choices of interpretation of context must always be value laden representing the motives, purposes, and interests of both researchers and participants.

The perspective on distributed cognition proposed here has implications not only for criticism but also for education. It suggests that successful appropriation of a new social language or genre is part of a process of expanding involvement in a cultural activity. As noted, if a literacy activity conflicts with the cultural values of pupils, or otherwise inhibits capacity for children to display what is known, the process of appropriation may be slowed down, halted, or even turned back on itself. There may be nothing new in this. Even so, the motives and purposes children have for writing, and the skills they playfully demonstrate with regard to both critical reflection and social interaction continue to be undervalued in most modern classrooms. In this thesis, I have tried to draw attention to the possibilities of 'alternative' social practices in which children are motivated to expand their involvement in the typified actions of an activity system. These learning opportunities suggest that growth and development consist of not just the appropriation of academic purposes and goals or even strategies for achieving personal goals, but more importantly, how to understand the situations in which they find themselves and the potential for success or failure in cooperative action.

#### **6.4 Methodological issues**

The questions to be addressed in this section relate to the appropriateness of research procedures employed in the studies reported here, and the ways in which these procedures may be challenged. In line with 'interactionist' perspectives, the studies reflect the shift away from a strictly experimental emphasis on performance and towards what may be broadly called ethnographic studies (by observation, participation, interview

and questionnaire) of developmental processes. This orientation would seem to be particularly suited to particular phases of this research process in two important respects. First, while there is an attempt to build on a critical examination of previous theory, the primary purpose is to identify patterns of development, and therefore the interest is in generating rather than testing specific hypotheses. Second, the object of analysis is neither the texts nor minds nor conceptual schemes per se but what is in between - the social intercourse. For this latter purpose, observational methods of behaviour in 'natural settings' have a certain contribution to make. However, the use of such procedures involves us in debates about methodological concepts such as representativeness and generalizability that were previously held to be unproblematic within an experimental framework (e.g., Hammersley, 1992, 1993). Although many of the arguments that have recent currency fall beyond the scope of this thesis, it may be appropriate to consider some of the thinking behind these conceptions for the methods advocated in this thesis.

We begin, however, by considering some of the problems that arise when a major part of the data base comprises exploratory interviews conducted with children in schools for the purpose of formulating impressions of various aspects of writing contexts. Questions arise about how far the asymmetrical nature of interviewing research influences the kinds of data elicited in the research setting. At first sight, the problem is a daunting one. Siegert (1986), for instance presents the dilemma as follows: 'the children's verbal behaviour is shaped mainly by three factors: the school setting, the adult-child interactional format in the interview and, finally, by the opposed interactional logic which covers the interview constellation on the one hand and the object of investigation on the other' (1986:373). Siegert's premise is open to a variety of interpretations. Certainly if 'the adult-child format' is literally defined and understood according to the model of classroom interactions, then he may well be right. But that was not the format initiated in this project. Rather, as some of the preceding chapters show, the 'group' interview has been one of consciousness raising, of discussing texts, and of widening discourse beyond the school. Nevertheless, Siegert's comment serves as a general reminder of the special or limited significance which the actors' role expectations give to the data.

A further challenge to the veracity of the data arises with respect to the dependency of data on categorical labels. By that I mean to refer directly to the effects of using pre-formulated categories administered in questionnaires to elicit teachers' concepts of writing tasks that provided the data-base presented in Chapter two. It is not difficult to recognize the risks or limitations of basing rhetorical units on a priori categories. Hammersley (1994), for example, warns of the possible misleading consequences of actors shaping their own responses to fit the investigator's a priori categorization. They

impose a homogeneity of content at the expense of important variations in communicative purpose and teacher-pupil relationships. Arguably, an inductive analysis based on interview evidence on the structure of tasks might have clarified certain social and historical elements of context that otherwise could be missed. Despite these shortcomings, there is some interest in discovering what categories have been used in the community of school as these reveal elements of task-based writing activities which the community considers salient. There may also be occasions when an exploitation of a priori categorization could be useful as, for example, in this attempt to build on a critical examination of the insights from previous research (e.g., Hudson, 1986, 1988). Furthermore, this initial narrowing of scope has been compensated for by an interest in providing a deeper or multi-layered account.

However, the inherent difficulties of reactive effects are compounded by an additional problem encountered when comparing the logics of the participants involved in the inquiry. Here the problem relates to the task-focused teacher-pupil comparative analysis of data presented in Chapter 2. The point to emphasise is that we are confronted here not just with two types of representation but with the possibility of two different underlying conceptions of what is significant about the task being represented. The possibility of discerning conceptual differences between children and adults are reduced in this analysis because it relies on what the actors say rather than on what they do.

A second concern relates to the fact that the two methods of data collection, the questionnaire and interview involving teachers and children respectively, may be too radically different to bear direct comparison because they involve different modes of discourse. These differences are difficult to reconcile and may only be resolved by using a combination of different methods to investigate the issues of concern. Consequently, the outcomes of alternative procedures reported in Chapter 3, where it is possible to let the words speak for themselves, are intended to provide a second, complementary, and more 'meaningful' account of child-data. Yet even here the internal issues that could be discussed are manifold. In addition to the issues arising in the context of the interview method of data collection discussed above, there is the additional problem of distinguishing the utterances made by different participants in the interviews in producing the full corpus of transcribed audiotapes on which the analysis is based. The disadvantages of audio-recordings in the loss of 'background' information, the usefulness of supplementary notations to document the numbers of participants and their relevant contributions, as well as the rationale for the use of transcription conventions, were set out earlier in Chapter 3. Although these methods proved adequate for the purpose of exploring children's perspectives on school writing, the resulting plain transcriptions of

the words and their script-like display are unlikely to serve other interests such as, for example, the development of idioms of masculinity and femininity, which depend upon finer distinctions in the data (Ochs, 1979; Edwards and Westgate, 1994).

Related issues that need to be discussed have to do with notions of representativeness and possibilities of generalization in qualitative accounts. For example, questions could be asked about whether the cited transcripts constitute a representative sample of the full corpus of data collected or, whether the conclusions drawn from the study of a small selection of cases can be justifiably presented as having a more generalized relevance. Or, alternatively, what criteria does the reader use to assess the criteria of representation of the researcher's case? (e.g., Edwards and Westgate, 1994). These questions pose problems not simply overcome by publishing for external auditing the full corpus of data collected. The issues involved go well beyond this. Some authors (e.g., Guba and Lincoln, 1982) construct a strong argument against the concept of generalisation as it is conventionally understood on the grounds that explanations of human behaviour are always conditional, context-dependent and indeterminately applicable - features not necessarily limited to qualitative studies. Before attending to the possibilities of generalization, we need first to clarify what is to be understood by a study of the 'case'.

The case study has been discussed by Stake (1994), among others, who attaches to the term a variable and uncertain usage. He notes, for instance, that cases can range from the simple to the more complex. Some relevant examples include a child, a group of children, or a classroom. A further problem with definition derives from the fact that researchers have different purposes for studying cases. For this reason, Stake goes on to consider a number of these purposes. One is the *collective case study* typified as the study of a number of cases considered to represent a particular population. That is to say, cases are selected for the purpose of achieving a better understanding, or perhaps better theorizing, about the population. In what Stake calls *intrinsic* case studies, representativeness is not the primary objective. Rather the interest lies more particularly in understanding the case as an integrated system and in discovering what is important about that case within its own world. At the same time, Stake acknowledges the limitation of this definition in that intrinsic case studies may also be *instrumental* in providing insight into a specific issue or refinement of theory. As he pertinently observes 'Because we simultaneously have several interests, often changing, there is no line distinguishing intrinsic case study from instrumental; rather, a zone of combined purpose separates them' (1994:237). Stake's observation has some relevance for the case study presented in Chapter 5. Although the patterns of behaviour observed in the Computer Club are key factors in understanding the dynamics of the system, ultimately, we may

also improve our understanding about the complexities of interaction and other matters of educational concern such as the role of 'off task' talk in the process of writing.

On the question of what can be learned from the particular case as it relates to the issue of generalization, Stake defends the possibilities of both propositional and experiential knowledge as outcomes of processes which he terms *naturalistic generalization*. That is to say, the outcome in terms of the knowledge generated ultimately derives from a process of delineating the ways in which one case differs from or resembles other cases. Generalization is a product of both explicit and implicit processes of comparison and cannot be avoided. Case reports are of particular value for providing the reader(s) with opportunities to learn vicariously what happens in particular situations and to draw their own conclusions. Furthermore, Stake argues that case studies are especially valuable for establishing the limits of generalizability through illustration of the negative case, as well as for theory-refining and suggesting complexities for further research.

This leaves us with the question: What criteria does the reader use to assess how convincingly an argument is made? Again this points us towards some of the broader issues involved in the debate over what constitutes a good interpretation in qualitative research. Despite considerable epistemological differences between them, contributors have found some common ground in addressing the issues and problems relating to assessing ethnographic work if not for resolving them. For example, there has been some convergence of interest on the need for self-reflective awareness in the methods employed and how this is demonstrated. Altheide and Johnson (1994) provide some clarification of the use of four criteria of ethnographic quality: plausibility, credibility, relevance, and importance of the topic, within the framework of 'analytic realism'. Their position is close to Hammersley's notion of 'subtle realism' in reflecting the assumption that the 'social world is an interpreted world, and not a literal world'. This interpretative process is the focus of the ethnographic work. Central to the ethnographic ethic is the concept of validity as 'reflexive accounting'. Researchers are obliged to account for the interrelationships among themselves, the methodologies and the subjects in the settings studied. This need for accountability is underlined by the assertion that all knowledge is perspectival, and therefore the practice of ethnography should be concerned with clarifying the researcher's perspective so that the claims being made can be systematically evaluated by a research community (e.g., Hammersley, 1992; Altheide & Johnson, 1994). In line with this reasoning, one criterion of verisimilitude for assessing work is learning about the choices made in the research process and their implications for the reading of research.

The emerging view shared by many qualitative researchers is that neither generalizability nor representativeness in the classic sense, are criterial in choices involving cases (e.g., Schofield, 1993; Hammersley, 1992; Huberman and Miles, 1994). Rather, the goal is to produce an illuminating description of the conditions under which a particular finding appears and operates. However, Schofield's (1993) analysis suggests that researchers pay attention to the importance of selecting cases to study or represent on the criterion of 'fittingness' (Guba and Lincoln, 1982). The notion of fit entails the need for clear and detailed descriptions to enhance the potential for 'comparability' with other situations of interest. It also involves the purposes and goals that researchers have for choosing cases to study or represent. The question then arises as to what criteria of 'fit' can be applied to the selectivity demonstrated in this project. The strategy of the 'collective case' study comprising sets of children chosen randomly to represent a number of classrooms in different schools might be regarded as well-suited to the study of the typical. The notion of typicality carries with it certain assumptions about shared characteristics (e.g., of pupils, teachers, schools, particular communities and so on). In the present study, selection on the basis of typicality was undertaken to increase the potential for generalizability.

However, there are a number of reasons for caution. First, no single example is typical in all respects (e.g., Schofield (1993)). The ever-present risk in selecting multiple cases to study, as Huberman and Miles have pointed out, is the potential for superficiality or misinterpretation that results from analysing commonalities at high levels of abstraction. In consequence, the 'smoothed set of generalizations' that are produced may not be applicable to any single case (1994:435). Second, interpretations of data tend to persevere against a background of substantial change in activity in schools and classrooms over the yearly life cycle (e.g, Ball, 1993; Schofield, 1993). Thus the resulting interpretations of data may be more specifically limited to particular experiences or events taking place in the classroom or school life cycle at a given point in time.

In choosing classrooms to study social interaction in this project, typicality was not the primary objective, although all of the classrooms initially selected for observation are assumed to share some aspects of typicality. Given the constraints of full-time employment, my strategy was rather to choose a small number of year 3 and year 5/6 exemplars to offer balance and contrast, moving towards those that promised a compelling representation of interaction on the basis of information from interviewed pupils and from follow-up approaches made to the teachers concerned. Choices were weighted by considerations of access and hospitality, variety and opportunity to learn. For example, although the process of negotiating access to schools was initiated via the

headteacher, the decision to observe particular classrooms crucially depended on the degree of interest, willingness to co-operate, and the hospitality demonstrated by the teachers concerned.

In the three selected classrooms, the sources of data included background information from interviews, questionnaires, and comments elicited from teachers as well the pupils' behaviour in a writing activity. In the first of these examples, my visits to the school in question for reasons unconnected with research spanned several years. This relationship with various members of staff and my acquaintance with a history of events intensified in the year leading up to the period of study. I have used this familiarity relatively uncontroversially, I think, to shape my study in a way that allows it to address more adequately the issues of concern. For example, pupils' reactions when interviewed at the start of the school year appeared to be influenced by many of the conflicts and negotiations which characterise initial encounters between teachers and new pupils. Similarly, the teacher produced a familiar account of her new pupils' disruptive behaviour. This history would appear to be critical in understanding ongoing interaction, for dealing with the problematic issue of 'participant' observation, and for illustrating how the classroom operates as a rule-governed system which evolves over time.

In several respects, the second and third classrooms, or perhaps more accurately the events discussed, display even less typicality than the first exemplar in that they appear at polar ends of a continuum of teacher-management style. This positioning appeared to be a continuing 'issue' within the school in the sense that there were clear divisions of loyalties among the staff with regard to the respective merits of different styles of teaching. At the one extreme were those who saw 'progressive' practice as having the potential to revolutionize education. Others took a more 'traditionalist' viewpoint, emphasizing the failure of much touted pedagogical innovations to bring about fundamental changes. Given these conditions, I seized on what seemed to be an important opportunity to undertake research focused on understanding the impact of different teaching styles on pupils and classrooms. On the question of 'fittingness', I saw in this selection of classrooms the potential for increasing the likelihood that the issues foregrounded in each of these works would 'fit' or be relevant to important contemporaneous issues of education.

In contrast, the study reported in Chapter five exemplifies an opportunity that is not given but created to maximise learning from the case. To use Stake's terms, the immediate interest is intrinsic in the sense that there can be no a priori assumptions at the outset of what the perceptions, the issues, or the theory are likely to be. Rather, the

method is designed to draw attention toward understanding of what is important to know about the case 'within its own world, not so much the world of researchers and theorists, but developing its issues, contexts, and interpretations' (Stake, 1994:242). It can be argued that the end result presents something unique in that the findings appear to be linked to the specific characteristics of the system and hence have limited generalizability to other systems. They may be nonetheless important for learning whether any contextual factors (computers, tasks, and goals etc.) have strongly affected the outcome. They may also provide a basis for future studies examining different kinds of social processes and outcomes for communicative success or failure.

One further observation of relevance to this discussion is that the selectivity inherent in the meanings of situation, observation, reporting and reading would seem to increase the likelihood of subjective bias, misunderstandings and misinterpretation. The emerging 'facts' are already the products of interpretation on several planes. The issue then is whether or not case studies, like other ethnographic data, can have any analytic validity. As noted at the beginning of the section, there are virtually no algorithms or agreed-upon rules for the conduct of qualitative research. Rather, one is dependent on a number of procedural commonalities to reduce the likelihood of biased explanations. The extensive diffusion of versions of 'grounded theory' in qualitative research reflects its appeal in offering the researcher a clearly-defined set of procedures to follow that would seem to encapsulate the basic rigour of scientific methodology. The complementary more phenomenological strategy, usually called triangulation, uses several sources to learn about a particular phenomena. Examples might include the viewpoints of teachers and researchers as sources of information. However, critics (e.g., Barnes and Todd, 1977; Huberman and Miles, 1994) refer to the inconsistency of sources with no easy means of resolution - an issue discussed earlier with respect to interviews and questionnaires. Barnes and Todd (1977) also write of the difficulties in reconciling the various elicited views of teachers and researchers. It is thus considered no more adequate for ensuring validity than the 'insights' of researchers integrating evidence from various sources (Edwards and Westgate, 1994).

More generally, the grounded theory perspective has also been criticized for its top-down theory-driven approach (e.g., Lincoln and Guba, 1985) which has the resulting effect of biasing interpretation towards the researcher's reading of the situation. Beyond this, critics contend that readings in the postpositivist tradition have yet to engage the sensitivities of interpretative research in the poststructural and postmodernist traditions (for a review of these criticisms, see Denzin, 1994). Whatever the diversity of interests that lie behind these emerging frameworks, there is enough overlap to challenge the

conventional character of research: (a) for remaining too closely tied to the model of science; (b) for its orientation towards description and explanation rather than emancipation; and (c) for its attempt to represent reality 'in its own terms' (Hammersley, 1993).

In summary, the main purpose of this section was to review the studies in this thesis in broadly methodological terms. In doing so, I considered the methods used in terms of what they were designed to achieve. I attempted to describe a range of writing tasks associated with the community of schooling by bringing together the viewpoints of the key players in the arena, teachers and pupils, on school-based writing activities. I discussed the disadvantages of using categories derived from previous research, the problems of interpretative bias, and the difficulties of reconciling interview and questionnaire methods of data collection. I examined some of the more general concerning issues that have arisen in the context of qualitative research, particularly with respect to perceived threats to the external validity of qualitative accounts. I discussed the notions of representation and generalizability defined in qualitative terms as a matter of 'fit' between the situation studied, and other situations or issues of interest and/or concern. I then attempted to deal with each of the case studies represented in this thesis in terms of its potential for generalizability, for maximizing the opportunity to learn, and also for its relevance or 'goodness of fit' with the current issues of educational concern. Throughout this section I have endeavoured to incorporate a measure of accountability by justifying the choices made on the basis of the insights gained, while still recognizing the problems and limitations of research that have yet to be resolved.

### **6.5 Some educational implications and suggestions for further research**

This section aims to consider some of the educational issues expounded in Chapter 1, about which there is currently fundamental disagreement. As a mere participant-observer in primary education, I feel there are areas of sensitivity in spite of Hammersley's (1994) attempt to defend the efforts of those engaged in conventional educational research. Nevertheless, the hope is that some tentative conclusions can be drawn that may have a more general application.

The intellectual debates about the nature of knowledge, learning and development provide little consensus on what constitutes an effective educational process. Instead, they frequently evolve into distinct positions, forcing us as researchers, to make choices about psychological models or cultural models of learning, and as teachers, about the efficacy of rote or progressive, transmission or negotiated, explicit or implicit teaching. My inclination is to resist the temptation to prolong the debate. For if the move towards

a culturally-based pedagogy tells us anything, it is that all claims about teaching and learning methods are by definition culturally contingent. Ethnographic studies of literacy have demonstrated how discourse works. They have shown that responses to the literacy of schooling are determined by how one learned to learn, 'ways of taking meaning' in communities (Heath, 1982), rather than prescriptions about correctness of teaching method. If the ways we use literacy are indeed the consequence of sociohistoric construction then the pursuit of the 'right' method of teaching reading and writing is a futile one. Rather, the educational task is to find ways of building upon people's local discursive resources, and to teach them how to learn to generate innovative critical action.

At the centre of the debate between the process-writing theorists (e.g., Sawyer and Watson, 1987) and the linguists (e.g. Martin et al, 1994) is the question of whether genre is fundamental to the form of a text or at the boundary. This translates into pedagogical debates over whether to give priority to form or content - that is, whether it should be taught as a set of rules or whether it can be appropriately added on during the process of redrafting a text. There is something a little unsatisfactory about each of these views. The process theory approach, on the one hand, seems to imply a separation between content and form. It seems unlikely, however, that we learn the content of a text before learning its appropriate expository form. On the other hand, given the current redefinitions of genre (e.g. Swales, 1990), it seems equally unlikely that it is the linguistic form of a text that is constitutive of genre and that teaching these forms will result in appropriate text, hence leading to empowerment. The work of Swales (1990) and others has shown that genres are social action or rhetorical responses to recurring situations or contexts which include a range of social practices using a variety of semiotic systems that serve as enabling strategies. If one assumes the linguists' position, it would be necessary to have a strong grasp of the intricacies of the full range of genres at work in society in order to teach effective reading and writing skills.

If we take the common starting point of all sociohistorical viewpoints to be the assumption that learning is culturally contingent, then we might consider apprenticeship as a description of how people learn to operate in their everyday work life. The particular apprentice I have in mind is a young Senior House Officer (SHO), a surgeon-in-training, in a busy city hospital. Aspiring surgeons, apparently, acquire the kinds of skills essential to competence in the hierarchically-arranged zones of medical theory and practice. As young apprentices in medical school they begin learning the job, the basic genres of the medical profession, acquiring a practice of tasks, tools and techniques. These 'basics' include the fundamental systems of anatomy, biochemistry and physiology.

They learn through a combination of rote-learning, memorization, demonstration, practical training in mildly invasive techniques beginning with peers, and then graduating to cooperative patients. By these means, they implicitly and explicitly learn the skills of their profession. When they graduate they find the work-place is not a homogeneous activity system. They learn that the genre system extends from the experimental articles of researchers through practitioners in related fields to various publics extending beyond patients to G.Ps., public health agencies and drug companies. They learn that task efficiency involves more than patient diagnosis and treatment, it involves a process of negotiating roles and relationships; Doctor/Patient, Doctor/Nurse, SHO/ Consultant, and so on. Equally, it could be argued that learning the genres of the classroom is partly a matter of explication, and part of the apprenticeship of learning to appropriate one's role in relation to other texts, learning the kinds of genres - the kinds of literacies - that are likely to have value in a rapidly changing world.

In mapping the agenda for the classroom in the light of the above considerations, the apprenticeship model formulated as everyday or practical cognition (e.g., Lave and Wenger, 1991) will not serve as it stands because, ironically, it too raises critical questions about unequal power relationships, situational determinism, and pedagogical prescriptivism (Salomon, 1993; Brown et al., 1993). In general, the questions about communities of practice hitherto addressed have been concerned with how the text is accomplished and what function it serves. Responses have been couched in terms of neutral descriptions of situational elements and the situatedness of the participants. To see human relations as abstract elements of a system is to suppress the knowledge that the system is constituted by experiencing beings. In contrast, this project reflects a need to go beyond considerations of performance to consideration of its communicative purposes and effects on the individuals concerned. The young professional described is one among many who could testify to a deeply-felt frustration - or worse - experienced during her struggle to come to terms with the working practices of a discipline which, from the insider's viewpoint, is marked by instances of inequality, injustice and exploitation.

From the perspective of the experiencing human being, the critical issue is doing the task effectively, whether the task involves patient diagnosis or treatment, or negotiating roles and relationships, or filling in the appropriate forms in circulation. Not doing it effectively for whatever reason is, by contrast, demoralising and socially disempowering. The evidence, whether it concerns the vocationally-oriented disciplines or the discipline of schooling, points to the conclusion that understanding the task would seem to be the important thing. This understanding involves knowing about its place in the

scheme of things, how one's position relative to the other is defined by this place, and what the functional requirements are in the interchange of each of the roles that are defined (Freadman, 1994). On this view, it is not stretching the point to argue that the participants in Classroom C and in the Computer Club came to understand the task(s) quite well. I have already attempted to sketch out the design - the tasks and goals, their arrangements, the tool use, and the lack of institutional authority - as frames for the kinds of dialogue - both oral and written - invented in these settings. It is unlikely however, that any particular feature taken in isolation could be held to be the defining feature of an activity setting. Rather, it is that the combination of features count as constitutive, and that the functions and roles entailed by the situation determine the dialogic structure. The notion that the form of dialogic structure is determined by context can be restated to say that knowing the rules of a text is also learning to appropriate its position in the interplay of other texts: learning all the rules at play in the situation. If one of the tasks is to learn how to position oneself in relation with others in order to secure some kind of useful rhetorical responsiveness, this can be said to constitute at least one of the critical elements of context.

In mapping the agenda for future research in the light of all the above considerations, we need to distinguish between the value of consciousness raising by explicit acknowledgement of the educational 'ground rules' as a common resource (Sheeran and Barnes, 1991; Edwards and Mercer, 1987), and the prescriptivism expressed in the Sydney School project. While the array of observational and anecdotal evidence points to the essential logicity of the former, there remain several underlying questions about the validity of explicit genre instruction. The most important of these relate to the need to inquire precisely into the conditions under which explication becomes possible.

First, in questioning what is possible, it appears that we need to commit ourselves to an examination of genres as implicated in political and ideological processes. We need to consider, for instance, whether the underlying complex web of meanings can ever be explicated without simultaneous exposure to authentic models of writing. Second, the question as it more particularly relates to explicit instruction is essentially a question about timing or when children are developmentally ready to appropriate a particular feature of context. I have in mind the example of explication with respect to the unstated rules regarding cheating and sharing work (4.13). This shows that the possibility of raising the participants' consciousness to the point of explication depends on the degree of conceptual readiness. It suggests, in turn, that this may also depend on the degree of exposure to the relevant context. As an example of the kind of conditions generating reflective awareness, however, it remains highly specific. The question as to the optimal

conditions under which gains made in one situation can be transferred to another emerges as a highly significant investigative issue.

## **6.6 Summary and conclusion**

*Understanding the child's perspective* reflects an interest in becoming a more informed and alert teacher by paying more attention to those who need to develop their communicative competence in writing in order to achieve their educational goals. The thesis attempts to bring together what is known, and to depict via various approaches how our understanding may be deepened. This chapter summarizes and critically examines the empirical work of previous chapters, and tries to link their findings to broader developments in fields such as Genre studies with implications for education and future research. In the light of the studies represented in this thesis, the evidence suggests that, in general, children do not see their school writing as autonomous or context-free (e.g., Donaldson, 1978). On the contrary, they perceive that schooling *is* the context. Writing often appears context-free because children typically do not have sufficient history of purposeful interaction with the system to be in a position to develop a sense of agency or power. I could add the obvious; they may never be if they do not develop a history of involvement by learning to appropriate, and thus potentially to transform, the kind of genres through which it interacts with other social practices.

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APPENDIX I

**Children's Writing in the Elementary school years****General Instruction**

This research aims to provide information about the nature, function and purpose of the many and various writing tasks which engage children in school. In order to obtain this information, you are asked to describe individual writing tasks using the forms provided. Each form relates to a separate writing task (up to a maximum of ten) given to children during a one week period. The form assesses an individual writing task according to the five categories of ownership, setting, audience, purpose, and genre. Each category, in turn, contains a number of possible contextual factors which describe the category of the particular writing task under review. If possible, please give the appropriate information on the same day in which the task was undertaken.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Please indicate the day of the week (Mon = 1) and the duration of the task.

Day \_\_\_\_\_ Duration (mins) \_\_\_\_\_

Please give a brief description of the writing task in the space provided below and then tick the appropriate boxes in each category.

**Brief description of writing task**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**(1) Ownership**

- 1. Self-sponsored (child given free choice)
- 2. Assigned (child required to write)
- 3. Invited (child encouraged but not required to write)

**(2) Setting**

- 1. desk
- 2. centres
- 3. floor
- 4. reading areas

**(3) Audience**

**A. School**

- 1. Adults at school (teacher)
- 2. Peers
- 3. Adults and peers

**B. Home and Community**

- 1. Adults or peers (related)

2. Adults or peers (unrelated -e.g., Prime-minister, Jim'l fix it, Santa)
- C. Child (no intended audience beyond the child)
- D. General
1. Anyone (people to see by chance because product available)
2. Everyone (wide audience included)
3. Some one else and the child (as much for self as others)
- (4) Purpose**
- A. To fulfill a requirement
1. Hand-writing
2. Spelling/punctuation
3. To answer questions
4. Other-please specify
- B. To interact with others
1. To communicate
2. To inform
3. To entertain
4. To announce
5. To complete work with another - Joint authorship
- C. To share an object to be admired
1. To give to some-one
2. To show to some-one
3. For public display
- D. To create
1. To make, to write (just for its own sake)
2. To experiment with materials of writing (no other goal)

E. To facilitate

1.To use product as an object

2.To remember

3.To learn (understanding something through writing)

4.To get something in return (grade/mark)

5.To enter, compete (contest, competition)

F. To occupy time (when bored)

G. To play (as part of a game/ role playing)

H. To express emotion (thinking; of anger, frustration, sadness, happiness)

**5. Genres**

A. Hand-written communication

1.Fiction (e.g.,story, pretend/imagination)

2.Non-fiction (e.g.,report, experience, opinion)

3.Communication (e.g.,letter, card, note)

4.Record (e.g.,scrap-book, log, map)

5.Game (e.g.,scrabble, Dungeons and Dragons)

6.Newspaper (article, newsletter)

7.Performance piece (e.g.,recital, play)

8.Poetry (e.g.,rhymes, limericks)

9.Completion exercises

10 Comics and cartoons

11.Lists

12.Reminders

B. Other methods

1. Drawing/colouring

2. Scribbling

3. Other forms of print (tying, computer print-out)

C. A combination-please specify

Any other comments

.....

.....

Appendix II  
Tables: Teachers

Appendix II.I

Percentage of ownership subcategories for teachers across writing situations for years 3, 4, & 5/6.

OWNERSHIP	3			4			5/6																	
	C	C	C	D	D	D	G	G	G	L	L	L	P	P	P	T	T	T	S	S	S	OC	OC	OC
SELF	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	5	0	4	5	2	8	14	2	12
ASSIGNED	12	7	8	7	5	4	14	24	16	8	12	0	3	2	8	14	32	28	15	10	24	73	93	88
INVITED	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	5	0	2	0	0	14	5	0

Key to tasks

C = copy; D = diary; G = Grammar; L = letter; P = poetry; T = topic; S = story; OC = total occurrences

Appendix II.II

Percentage of setting subcategories for teachers across writing situations for years 3, 4, & 5/6.

SETTING	3			4			5/6			T	T	T	T	S	S	S	S	OC	OC	OC				
	C	C	C	D	D	D	G	G	G												L	L	L	P
DESK	11	7	6	7	5	3	17	24	9	9	12	0	4	2	6	20	31	25	19	12	22	87	93	72
CENTRES	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	4	2	6	0	0	3	7	2	13
FLOOR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	4	2	6	0	0	0	4	5	6
READING	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	6	0	0	3	2	0	9

Appendix II.III

Percentage of audience subcategories for teachers across writing situations for years 3, 4, & 5/6.

AUDIENCE	3	4	5/6																						
	C	C	C	D	D	D	G	G	G	L	L	L	P	P	P	T	T	T	S	S	S	OC	OC	OC	
<b>SCHOOL</b>																									
<b>ADULTS</b>																									
T	4	4	2	2	3	0	8	11	5	4	3	0	2	1	0	8	13	12	7	3	10	36	38	29	
PEERS	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	1	3	0	1	3	0	2	6	2	3	3	10	8	15	14	
<b>ADULTS &amp; PEERS</b>																									
T	2	0	2	2	0	0	3	3	5	2	1	0	1	0	5	4	6	10	5	4	14	20	14	36	
<b>SCHOOL</b>																									
T	6	4	5	4	3	0	13	15	12	7	7	0	3	4	5	15	24	24	16	10	33	65	68	79	
<b>HOME &amp; COMMUNITY ADULTS OR PEERS RELATED</b>																									
T	2	0	2	0	1	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	4	1	2	3	1	2	11	7	7	

	C	C	C	D	D	D	D	G	G	G	L	L	L	P	P	T	T	T	S	S	S	OC	OC	OC
ADULTS OR PEERS UNRELATED	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0
COMMUNITY	2	0	2	0	1	0	2	3	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	4	1	2	3	1	2	13	10	7
CHILD	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	2
GENERAL	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ANYONE	0	0	2	0	1	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	3	2	4	0	5	10	7	10
EVERYONE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	1	2	2	1	0	4	4	2
SOMEONE	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	4	0	2	3	0	8	8	0
GENERAL	0	0	2	1	1	0	5	3	0	0	1	0	5	1	0	3	8	5	8	4	5	23	20	12

Appendix II.IV

Percentage of purpose subcategories for teachers across writing situations for years 3, 4, & 5/6.

PURPOSE	3			4			5/6			C	C	C	D	D	D	G	G	G	L	L	L	P	P	P	T	T	T	T	S	S	S	OC	OC	OC	
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3																										1
A TO FULFILL A REQUIREMENT TO FULFILL	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	4	3	1
HANDWRITING	2	2	1	1	0	0	1	2	1	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	2	1	3	6	8	6	6	6	6
SPELLING	2	0	1	2	1	0	3	3	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	3	1	3	10	10	7	7	7	7
ANSWER	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	1	0	4	5	5	5	
OTHER	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	2	2	5	6	1	1	1	6	10	13	13	13	13
FULFILL	5	2	3	3	1	5	8	8	1	7	0	1	0	1	0	2	2	13	11	7	3	7	25	35	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32
B TO INTERACT WITH OTHERS INTERACT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0



	C	C	C	D	D	D	D	D	G	G	G	L	L	L	L	P	P	P	P	T	T	T	T	S	S	S	S	OC	OC	OC	OC
LEARN	2	0	2	1	1	1	4	4	3	1	2	0	1	0	0	5	6	5	1	1	1	15	13	11							
T TO GET	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	2	3	4							
T TO ENTER	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0							
T FACILITATE	5	0	3	1	1	3	8	8	4	2	3	0	2	0	1	6	12	9	3	4	3	26	28	22							
T F OCCUPY TIME	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0							
T G PLAY	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	1	0							

Appendix II.V

Percentage of genre categories for teachers across writing tasks for years 3, 4, & 5/6.

GENRES	3			4			5/6			T	T	T	P	P	P	S	S	S	S	OC	OC	OC	OC	
	C	C	C	D	D	D	G	G	G															L
A. HAND WRITTEN COMMUNICATION FICTION	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	15	8	20	17	13	26
NON FICTION	5	0	3	7	3	3	2	2	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	17	13	20	0	0	0	30	20	29
COMUNICATION	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	3	3	7	0	2	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	3	8	10	6
RECORD	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	3	2	3
GAME	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NEWSPAPER	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PERFORMANCE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
POETRY	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	3	0	2	0	0	0	3	2	2	6
T	0	2	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	0	0	0	3	2	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	3	9

	C	C	C	D	D	D	D	G	G	G	L	L	L	P	P	P	T	T	T	S	S	S	OC	OC	OC
COMPLETION	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	5	10	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	7	13	6
COMICS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
LISTS	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	5	7	0	0
REMINDE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
B. OTHER METHODS																									
DRAWING	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	8	7	9	5	7	6	17	15	17
SCRIBBLING	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
PRINT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	3	0	3	8	0

Appendix III

Tables: Teachers and Children

Appendix III.I

Percentage of ownership subcategories for children and teachers across writing situations for years 3, 4, & 5/6.

OWNERSHIP	3			4			5/6			C	D	D	D	G	G	G	L	L	L	P	P	P	T	T	T	T	S	S	S	S	OC	OC	OC	OC
	C	D	T	C	D	T	C	D	T																									
SELF																																		
C	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	5	13	2	5	20			
T	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	5	0	4	5	2	8	4	5	2	8	14	2	12					
ASSIGNED																																		
C	13	7	7	8	5	3	17	24	13	9	12	0	4	2	7	25	33	27	19	10	23	19	10	23	94	93	80							
T	12	7	8	7	5	4	14	24	16	8	12	0	3	2	8	14	32	28	15	10	24	15	10	24	73	93	88							
INVITED																																		
C	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	2	0	0	0	4	2	0				
T	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	5	0	2	0	0	0	8	5	0	2	0	14	5	0				

Key to tasks  
 C = copy; D = diary; G = Grammar; L = letter; P = poetry; T = topic; S = story; OC = total occurrences





	C	C	C	D	D	D	G	G	G	L	L	L	P	P	T	T	T	S	S	S	OC	OC	OC	
<b>HOME &amp; COMMUNITY ADULTS OR PEERS RELATED</b>																								
C	2	0	2	2	2	0	1	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	5	2	2	8	2	2	22	7	7
T	2	0	2	0	1	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	4	1	2	3	1	2	11	7	7	
<b>ADULTS OR PEERS UNRELATED</b>																								
C	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0
T	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0
<b>COMMUNITY</b>																								
C	2	0	2	2	2	0	1	0	0	2	3	0	1	0	0	5	2	2	8	2	2	23	8	7
T	2	0	2	0	1	0	2	3	0	1	3	0	0	0	4	1	2	3	1	2	13	10	7	
<b>CHILD</b>																								
C	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
T	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2
<b>GENERAL</b>																								
<b>GENERAL</b>																								
C	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
T	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>ANYONE</b>																								
C	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	3	2	0	0	5	4	3	10
T	0	0	2	0	1	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	3	2	4	0	5	10	7	10
<b>EVERYONE</b>																								
C	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	1	3	2
T	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	1	2	2	1	0	4	4	4	2
<b>SOMEONE</b>																								
C	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	1	3	0	4	7	0
T	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	4	0	2	3	0	8	8	0
<b>GENERAL</b>																								
C	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	4	0	0	1	7	5	1	5	5	8	13	12

T 0 0 2 1 1 0 5 3 0 0 1 0 5 1 0 3 8 5 8 4 5 23 20 12



	C	C	C	D	D	D	D	G	G	G	L	L	L	P	P	P	T	T	T	S	S	S	OC	OC	OC	
FULFILL (total)	6	2	3	4	4	2	3	7	8	2	4	0	1	1	2	3	9	11	7	4	9	27	31	34		
C	5	2	3	3	3	1	5	8	8	1	7	0	1	0	2	2	13	11	7	3	7	25	35	32		
T	<b>B TO INTERACT WITH</b>																									
OTHERS	INTERACT																									
INTERACT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	
C	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	
T	COMMUNICATE																									
COMMUNICATE	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	2	0	1	0	1	0	2	3	2	0	2	5	6	7	9	
C	0	1	0	1	0	1	2	1	1	2	3	0	1	0	1	0	3	4	4	1	2	6	9	10	12	
T	INFORM																									
INFORM	2	0	0	2	1	0	2	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	6	0	0	0	12	8	6	
C	1	0	0	1	1	0	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	4	5	6	0	0	0	9	8	6	6	
T	ENTERTAIN																									
ENTERTAIN	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	1	1	1	0	5	3	7	9	5	8	
C	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	5	2	6	9	4	8	8	
T	ANNOUNCE																									
ANNOUNCE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
C	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
T	COMPLETE																									
COMPLETE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	3	2	5	5	
C	0	0	0	2	1	0	5	0	2	3	5	0	2	1	2	10	11	9	5	5	14	29	22	27	27	
T	B INTERACT(total)																									
B INTERACT(total)	1	1	0	2	1	1	6	3	2	2	6	0	2	1	3	11	10	11	6	5	16	30	26	32	32	
C	C TO SHARE AN																									
C TO SHARE AN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	
OBJECT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	
TO GIVE	INTERACT																									
INTERACT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
C	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
T	COMPLETE																									
COMPLETE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	



	C	C	C	D	D	D	G	G	G	L	L	L	P	P	P	T	T	T	S	S	S	OC	OC	OC
TO GET																								
C	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	3	3
T	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	2	3	4
TO ENTER																								
C	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
T	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
FACILITATE (total)																								
C	6	0	4	1	2	2	9	15	3	2	4	0	1	0	2	9	13	11	2	2	5	29	35	26
T	5	0	3	1	1	3	8	8	4	2	3	0	2	0	1	6	12	9	3	4	3	26	28	22
F OCCUPY TIME																								
C	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
T	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
G Play																								
C	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	2	1	0	0	0	3	2	1
T	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	1	0

Appendix III. V

Percentage of genre categories for children and teachers for years 3, 4 & 5/6

GENRES	3			4			5/6			C	C	C	D	D	D	G	G	G	L	L	L	P	P	P	T	T	T	S	S	S	OC	OC	OC	
	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C																									C
A. HAND WRITTEN COMMUNICATION FICTION																																		
C	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	6	2	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	13	8	19	19	13	25
T	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	15	8	20	17	13	26	
NON FICTION																																		
C	5	0	3	6	3	3	2	2	3	2	2	0	0	0	0	16	15	19	6	3	3	0	0	0	17	13	20	6	3	3	37	24	31	
T	5	0	3	7	3	3	2	2	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	17	13	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30	20	29	
COMMUNICATION																																		
C	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	3	6	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	3	6	8	3	
T	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	3	7	0	2	0	0	3	2	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	3	8	10	6	
RECORD																																		
C	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	2	2	3	
T	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	3	2	3	
GAME																																		
C	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
T	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	



OTHER

C	0	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	11	8	8	8	10	6	21	24	19
T	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	12	9	8	8	10	6	20	25	17

## **Appendix IV**

### **Examples of children's work**

**1. Computer-club word-processed**

**2. School hand-written products**



## Professor Brilliance and the Time Machine

by

Gayle

PB was in his workshed. He hadn't been seen for a while, in fact not for 3 years. He was inventing a time machine and eventually he came out and showed his machine to his friends. "But the time machine has already been invented !" they cried. " Not this one", said PB. "This one is better it is real it is there". Now PB didn't know this, but he also didn't know which buttons did which things (which would make a few troubles) because he hadn't labelled them while he was making this machine. So he could only make it again which would take another 3 or 4 years or test the machine out. Well, he did think of a name for his machine. He called it Max. He made one of his choices which was (you've probably guessed!) testing it out. So he went in the woods and found an enclosed space to fly Max. He found one eventually, but before he found it he looked every day and lodged in the woods for a month. The next day he got in, had a mouldy cheese cracker (which had been in his lab coat for about 9 months!) and started pressing different types of buttons. Then suddenly a spring pinged out of the wall causing PB to duck. "Quacking elephants! My dear Max is falling to bits and causing me to duck!" he shouted. So he pushed the spring back in place then:-

WWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWOOO( "so that spring means go!" he said)  
 OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOSSSSSSSSSSSSH he went backwards in time.  
 He could see the great fire of London, Victorian times and much more. He even saw the dinosaurs! He found another spring ("that means stop") so he pressed it. Well he couldn't go back any further because he had gone to the first second of life. "Wow!" said PB "this is excellent!". "I'd better go and eggsplore. (I put egg because he found an egg). Well that's what he thought it was. It was really a God dropping. He tried to climb on top of it but he sank in to it instead, making a tremendous SQUEEEELCCCCCCCCCH. Then PB got picked up. "Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaag" said PB, in one of those woouup like voices. "Well", said the big thing which had picked him up. "You've got a big breath to say that, you know. Well by the way I'm God. You're called PB, aren't you?" "Yes" said PB surprised. "Sorry about the mess, I (then God started whispering) don't think you'll mind making or rather inventing the toilet. Do you mind? "Course not!" said PB. "I think I'll make the solar system now" said God. "And by the way, this is my house." So that's what he did. PB went for a ride on God's shoulder. "Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa", shouted PB. "Now that was fast. I'll go now". So he did. But he accidently forgot to press stop at his house. He went backwards and forwards, back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. "Now, let me see. What is um....er? Let me see 50000 or was it 60000 no it was definitely 90000 decades. He still would have remembered his adventure 100 years from then. He always said that it was great. "I would never be so happy now if I hadn't gone on that adventure" and he told it to every body 1000 times to remind them of his excellent adventure. Sometimes even more than 1000 times sometimes 1000000 times. Wouldn't you if you lived that long!?!?

## Professor Brilliance and the Time Machine

by

Naomi

Professor Brilliance ( nicknamed Proffy ) was thinking about what he might do in 50 years time: Maybe I'll meet International Rescue! Or maybe I'll put my feet up and watch satellite TV! Then the idea came to him: "I'll build a time machine!" He jumped up, rushed over to the cupboard and came back carrying paper and pencils for making a plan. After about an hour, Tim and Bert were passing by when Proffy came out of his shed carrying about 1000 different things! "Looks like Proffy's got another one of his start well and end with a head-ache ideas!" said Tim. The next week Tim and Bert were passing by again: "I wonder where Proffy is," said Bert.

"So do...." and Proffy came out of his house with a strange looking machine. "Do you like my time machine?" he asked. "So that's what it is!" said Bert. "I like it if Bert does," said Tim. Proffy called his time machine Um, but didn't quite get round to telling anyone.

Anyway, Proffy took Tim, Bert and Um to visit his friend, Wally. "What on Earth is that?!" exclaimed Wally, pointing to Um. "You mean to say you don't know?!" said Proffy. "Tell Wally it's name, Tim. Not knowing, Tim just said, "It's um....." "See! Even a kid knows!" said Proffy. "But what is it?" asked Wally. "A time machine! What else could it be?" said Proffy. "A 3 story tumble drier?" mumbled Bert. "Now who wants to come 50 years into the future with me?" asked Proffy. "Okay, you can, Tim and Bert," said Proffy, even though they hadn't said they wanted to, simply because they didn't.

When they were in Um, Tim said, "He's potty!" "Probably can't even spell Thunderbirds!" said Bert. "Can you tell me how to spell Thunderbirds?" asked Proffy! "You see I'm writing a letter to them in case we bump into them." "Told you so!" laughed Bert and told Proffy. At last they reached 50 years in the future. It had taken 50 minutes as they had been going at 1 year per minute. "There they are! There they are!" yelled Proffy. "Who?" asked Tim. "Thunderbirds of course!" Proffy said and ran off pulling the boys behind him! Proffy chatted on and on to Scot Tracy. "He can ignore us if he wants," said Tim, gloomily. "Don't you see?" said Bert, "We can get away from Proffy now - get an ice-cream or something!" so off went Tim and Bert, in search of an ice-cream van. Proffy was still talking to Scot, when the boys got back. Then there was a voice: "Cooley!" At that, everyone ran off. Only Proffy, Tim and Bert were left. "Lets go back, now," said Proffy, but when they were in Um, that "Cooley!" came again and a silly lady came up to them. Quite a while went by and the lady seemed nice, but she ended up being a pain in the neck! Proffy thought of a plan to get rid of her and when they tried it, it worked! Or so they thought. At last they were home.

Proffy was sitting around, when he heard that "Cooley!" and a face appeared! I'm dreaming! he thought, but he wasn't!

## Professor Brilliance and the Time Machine

by

Katy

One bright Sunday morning Professor Brilliance was thinking of something to do.

The phone rang and he picked it up. "Hi and bye" and he put the phone down. "Thats it!" he cried. "I'll invent the phone again! (silly aren't I). It will be a special phone though (well a phone box)."

So off he went to his favourite place, and guess where that was- the JUNKYARD! He came back with sacks full of junk. When he got home he went into his junk - oh sorry - workshop and didn't come out for two weeks!

Untill at last crrrrreeeeeeeeeeek! Out came Prof pulling a.... er... well sort of a... well... a telephone box!

He stepped into it, picked up the receiver and pressed the numbers 102. He pressed 1 and then pressed o' clock. Then the Prof put his hand where the buttons said am or pm, and pressed pm.

VVVVVVRRRRRRRRRRRRRRUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUMMMMMMMMM  
CRASH!

He'd landed.

He clambered out coughing and spluttering untill the dust had cleared up. He whiped his glasses on his white coat and said, "Thats better. I can see now".

Suddenly the ground began to shake. "Oh!" He said stunningly "I think a thunder storm is coming this way. I'd better get into my time machine for cover".

But of course it wasn't. It was a baby Dinosaur, well- a baby Stegosaurus. Prof climbed out of the time machine "what a brilliant spesermin. I wonder if it will fit into my time machine. Now, where did I put my tape measure?" While Prof was searching for his tape measure, that brilliant spesermin ate the telephone box! The Prof looked over his shoulder to where his time machine had been before that brilliant spesermin had eaten it. "You've eaten it haven't you" he said. He climbed into its mouth and guess what it did, it started to chew didn't it.

At first it said Yummy but then it said phuey and spat Prof out and flooded the place with tears and floated away to its mother! (By the way the Stegosarus had a lilo).

As for Prof and the time machine.... well, the time machine just stayed in the Stegosaurus's tum, but Prof just floated off in the tears and I have no idea of what happened to him, so I can't tell you!

## Professor Brilliance and the Time Machine.

by

Adam

One Saturday morning, I was going to the Science Museum. There was going to be a professor there to talk to people about the exhibition. I saw the professor standing next to a phone-box kind of thing. He said to me "step inside the phone box", and he followed me inside. He said "what is your name"? I answered "Andrew." He asked me which year I would like to go to and which place? I said Antarctica 1066. So he dialled 1066 and suddenly we were wearing thick gloves and boiling clothes. We turned hot and red and then we blew up into tiny pieces. We woke up in Antarctica in one piece lying next to the phone box. There was something crawling on my face and as I looked I realised it was a lemming because it was grey with a black stripe across it. I chucked it in the phone-box and woke the professor up and the professor asked "where are we"? I said, "Antarctica 1066. We came in the time machine remember"? He said, "Oh yes, I remember. We were boiling hot and then we were knocked out and that is all I can remember". We walked along the ice and came to some water. There was a canoe there so we got inside and went across to the other side of the water.

I asked a man, who was fishing, the way to the nearest phone box. He said, "Turn around and keep walking and you should see one". We had to cross a river and there was our wooden canoe on the ground, wet. I saw the phone box with a lemming inside. The professor saw the lemming and he did not like rodents. He collapsed on the ground and I dragged him into the phone box where he woke up. The lemming nearly escaped but I caught it just in time. The professor woke up after I had hidden it in the big warm pocket of my warm coat. Meanwhile the professor had pressed nineteen sixty-four. The same thing happened as before and we ended up in the middle of Richard Starkeys drumkit (the Beatles' drummer). He didn't look very happy and said "Who did that?" I quickly dialled nineteen sixty seven at Coniston water in the Lake District. We saw Bluebird on the water and Donald Campbell climbing in to break the world speed record on water. I quickly jumped on top of Bluebird which started to move and got inside through the window and he closed the window. He saw me and told me to get beside him. He said, "It is lucky there is enough room for two." Then, suddenly, we were tossed into the air, turned around twice and landed in the water with a massive explosion! I jumped out and landed at the bottom of the lake.

I pulled Donald Campbell out and he floated to the top. I got inside and, as I had watched him control it, I was able to press the button that started it. The professor was getting worried and he thought he would get the blame for letting me go into that damn thing. Then he saw Donald Campbell float to the top and he sent the boats out. I had realised I could breathe underwater. The professor thought that Donald Campbell was a idiot for letting me get inside because it was life-risking to get inside. Then suddenly he saw Bluebird whizzing along and said, "there you go." The professor was shocked and speechless. I landed on the shore, with a bump and I was wet. Bluebird was put in a museum. We got back in the time machine and pressed London nineteen ninety three and, after collecting a lifesaver badge, we went back home into the museum. No time had passed at all and we went back home by catching the number seven bus with Cecil

the lemming for a pet. Everybody was asking where I had got Cecil the lemming from, but I didn't tell anyone at all. The only person that knew was Professor Brilliance. He was a good friend that has now got used to rodents!

# The

# Story

# of

# an

# egg

Once upon a time there was a big blue egg in a nest. One day a small crack appeared and, after a while, out popped....

another egg! But this egg was wrapped up in spotty foil! It suddenly rolled out of the nest and into a bush.

Hopsey the Easter bunny and her friend Hoppity the rabbit found the egg and Hopsey put it in her basket. "This'll be a good one!" she said. "Yes, it will," said Hoppity. Later that day when Hopsey and Hoppity had given out almost all of the Easter eggs they heard a small voice. "I'm hot!" it said and the egg wrapped up in spotty foil pushed its way to the top of the basket. "Ah, much better!" said the egg. "I'm Egbert. Who are you?" After a long talk Egbert went for a walk. Suddenly he turned into a normal egg and hatched into a chick with dotted legs.

Name  
N/A

# THE STORY

Once upon a time there was a big blue egg in a nest. One day a small crack appeared and, after a while, out popped....

A lemming. It was grey with a black stripe across its back. The lemming had black beady eyes. It had a lot of hair so I called it punk. I decided that I was not very happy so I said it backwards. Then I called it Knup. I picked up Knup and took him home. I put Knup in my old hamster cage. I looked in my Encyclopedia to see what lemmings ate. They eat fish and little insects. I found some insects in the garden and Knup ate them all up. Knup saw the drink in the hamster's water bottle. He had a long drink out of the water bottle. Knup stayed with me for a long time but eventually he left.

Name

Andrew Marti

# The story

Once upon a time there was a big blue egg in a nest. One day a small crack appeared and, after a while, out popped....

A ~~litter~~ sky blue pink and yellow ~~dot~~ ~~aling~~ ~~po~~ ~~ted~~ ~~out~~. Just then the ~~mother~~ came it ~~seed~~ ~~with~~ is a ~~priky~~ ~~ating~~. It ~~and~~ ~~seed~~ me me I am a ~~priky~~ ~~aling~~. His mother picked him up and ~~took~~ him to a cave and put him down. I went into the cave I ~~heard~~ his parent's ~~talk~~ ~~king~~. The ~~litter~~ ~~aling~~ ~~seen~~ me the parent came in ~~wher~~ I was and the ~~ating~~. We ran out of the cave we ran to where the egg was. His parents ran after us we ran as fast as we could they caught up to us. They took us back to the cave they built a ~~fliper~~. I went back to my parent's ~~cogie~~. I ~~lotted~~ ~~the~~ a ~~baught~~ the ~~alings~~ they ~~seed~~ ~~ther~~ is no ~~soch~~ things.

I went back ~~evry~~ ~~day~~ ~~to~~ ~~sch~~

Name

Victoria Joblin

# The

# story

# of

# an

Appendix IV . 4

At 3 L

4 L

5 L

Once upon a time there was a big blue egg in a nest. One day a small crack appeared and, after a while, out popped...

an egg with legs!

The egg walked about a bit, then laid down.

It sat up and started to shout, Mama Mama

it cried, suddenly a great

egg with legs and wings appeared. She was

ignorant, suddenly she sat on the little egg. Crack!

Crack! She stood up and looked down. The little egg

had grown a pair of wings. It started to fly

down the hill where his mother followed him. They

soon reached the

Holayfan mountains.

Where they are

probably still living

today.

Name

Catherine

# The Story

Once upon a time there was a big blue egg in a nest. One day a small crack appeared and, after a while, out popped...

a winged, two legged, striped worm. He had big eyes and brown hair, his stripes were light green and yellow.

When he grew to be 19 he went where nobody knows. Soon more of these creatures

existed and followed the first one to a planet called Dunglebimb. The first one decided to name the creatures Dragonfires because when they flew fire came from their tails and they looked Dragonflys. His name is Draglo. All was peace and joyful except a big bad frog called Dr Lebrednar. He was nice then and kind before the ~~wind~~ winds came. Then he <sup>went</sup> opposite because he is called Dr Canderbel now. So Dr Canderbel decided to extinguish Dunglebimb. But Draglo heard. So all the Dragonfires got their fire and burnt him to death. Now he is dead he will not disturb anyone again.

Cander  
lebrednar

Name

Gillian Turnbull

APPENDIX V

Table of categories and percentages of occurrence of talk on four sequential writing tasks.

Categories	Tasks			
	A	B	C	D
<b>1 Talking about procedures</b>	30.4	37.37	20.58	15.82
1.1 Writing processes				2.68
1.2 Typing & word processing	30.4	37.37	20.78	13.74
1.3 Asking	18.4	15.15	8.40	4.17
1.4 Explaining	7.2	15.65	5.88	5.37
1.5 Helping	4.0	6.56	3.36	2.35
1.6 Statements about computers	0.8	1.51	2.94	1.19
<b>2 Monitoring form &amp; content</b>	14.4	11.10	19.74	25.66
2.1 Punctuation		2.02	0.84	2.08
2.2 Capitalization		0.50	1.68	0.89
2.3 Spelling	4.0		6.30	5.67
2.4 Ooops	4.0	3.03	3.78	3.88
2.5 Monitoring content	6.4	5.55	7.14	13.13
<b>3 Interpersonal communication</b>	20.00	14.14	14.28	7.46
3.1 Judging	1.60	1.01	0.84	1.19
3.2 Affect	6.40	6.06	7.98	5.07
3.3 Naming	3.20	3.53	2.52	1.19
3.4 Incidental talk	8.80	2.02	3.36	
<b>4 Composing</b>	20.8	10.10	20.16	18.80
4.1 Literal suggestions	5.6	3.03	4.20	3.28
4.2 Gisting	3.2		5.04	6.26
4.3 Literal spelling	2.4		2.52	3.28
4.4 Requesting text content	4.0		2.10	1.49
4.5 Repeating exactly	5.6	7.07	6.30	4.47
<b>5 Evaluating, explaining, negotiating</b>	7.2	10.10	13.86	23.88
5.1 Explaining	1.6	1.51	4.20	10.44
5.2 Evaluating			2.10	3.28
5.3 Checking facts		2.52	0.84	2.68
5.4 Negotiating	1.6	2.02	2.52	2.08
5.5 Suggesting alternatives	4.8	4.04	3.78	4.77
5.6 Stating rules			0.42	0.59
<b>6 Confirming &amp; disconfirming</b>	4.8	6.56	4.62	4.77

Task key: A = substitution task; B = editing task;  
C = autobiographical task; D = writing a story

APPENDIX VI

Transcripts of interviews

The following is the list of files contained on the enclosed disk. The files were created on a PC386 using Word for Windows 2.0 and are stored as both .DOC files and .TXT files

SAY3CA  
SAY4CB  
SBY4CA  
SBY5CB  
SBY5CC  
SCY3CA  
SCY4CB  
SDY3CA  
SDY3CB  
SDY4CC  
SDY4CD  
SDY5CE  
SDY6CF  
SEY3CA  
SFY3CA  
SFY4CB  
SGY4CA  
SGY5CB  
SHY3CA  
SHY3CB  
SJY5CA  
SKY3CA  
SKY4CB  
SKY5CC

Key: SA = school; Y3 = year; CA = class

