From Composition to Transcription: A study of the conceptual understanding and levels of awareness in thinking used by children during specific genre writing tasks.

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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October 2013

**Abstract**

This naturalistic study of cases explores the interrelationship between children's awareness of their own thought processes, their ability to understand key concepts and concept vocabulary and integrate new ideas into their existing knowledge base when engaged in specific genre writing tasks.

An adaptation of the framework, originally devised by Swartz and Perkins (1989), was used to identify the levels of awareness in thinking displayed by eight Year 3 children, when engaged in genre writing tasks during one academic year. The addition of 'collaborative use' to this framework highlights ways in which collaborative thinking can act as a support for young writers. When children co-construct ideas they endeavour to make their thinking explicit thus enabling teachers to assess levels of conceptual understanding whilst the children are engaged in a writing task. Evidence also suggests that young writers move in and out of the suggested levels of thinking depending on the complexity of the task, their prior knowledge and understanding of key concepts and awareness of the working strategies and thought processes they employ.

This study not only contributes to current research on genre writing within school based contexts but makes a unique contribution by highlighting the need for pedagogical strategies to focus on the way young writers think about and understand the underlying concepts and principles related to genre writing tasks. Evidence also suggests that learning objectives presented to this age group often focus on the factual and procedural aspects of a writing task. However, when factual, procedural and conceptual aspects are made explicit through clear, thought-provoking learning objectives then children are able to develop their own creative responses within the linguistic and textual structures of the given genre without being confined by them. In addition, as conceptual understanding develops, young writers are able to incorporate new ideas into their existing knowledge base with increasing confidence.

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# Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors Professor Mike Watts and Dr Paula Zwozdiak-Myers, in particular, and acknowledge their invaluable support and advice during each stage of writing this thesis. I also extend my thanks to my colleagues in the School of Sport and Education who have provided a huge amount of guidance and encouragement relating to the nature of my research.

I am indebted to the host school for their willingness to provide opportunities for a naturalistic study of cases whilst, at the same time, continuing to deliver an engaging and dynamic English curriculum for their pupils.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction and Rationale

### 1.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the rationale for my research into the levels of awareness in thinking employed by Year 3 children when engaged in four specific genre related writing tasks. The study also explores the interrelationship between children's awareness of their own thought processes, their ability to understand key concepts and concept vocabulary and integrate new ideas into their existing knowledge base. An outline of the teaching experiences from which the research grew is provided as well as the current issues, perceptions and learning contexts upon which the study is founded.

### 1.1 Research interests and experience

During my teaching career I have been able to experience pupil responses to a wide variety of writing tasks within different genre contexts. Whilst teaching literacy across Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 I found that many children, of different ages and levels of ability, encountered a number of challenges when composing and transcribing text across some of the literary forms prescribed in the National Curriculum (QCA, 1999). I recognised the need to encourage children to develop self-awareness by becoming consciously aware of, not only how they approached a writing task, but also why they chose specific learning strategies to help them solve any problems encountered when writing. The importance of supporting children in developing an understanding of key concepts and concept vocabulary, related to genre writing tasks, has also been an area of interest, particularly when working with Year 3 children. This year group is a pivotal year as it represents the transition from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2. In the United Kingdom, the content of the curriculum alters to reflect the knowledge, skills and

understanding children are expected to acquire during the four years they remain in Key Stage 2. During this transition year children encounter increasingly complex concepts and concept vocabulary when engaged in genre writing tasks and need to be given opportunities to develop a clear conceptual understanding of each task.

My experience with Initial Teacher Training has presented opportunities to observe student teachers as they share learning objectives with children across the primary phase. I have been able to support student teachers in their mapping of learning objectives for writing and help them to develop an understanding of the underlying reasons and principles for sharing learning objectives with children. This engagement with Initial Teacher Training, in addition to my classroom-based teaching experience, has highlighted the need for both trainees and experienced practitioners to:

- Identify children's awareness of their own thought processes when engaged in specific writing tasks to help them develop self-awareness in learning
- Explore children's understanding of the key concepts and concept vocabulary, related to specific genre writing tasks, to provide a firm foundation for new learning
- Be aware of the different language experiences children encounter within the learning environment, both at home and at school, and how this may impact on the development of their writing skills
- Investigate children's use of prior knowledge, help them address any difficulties with conceptual understanding and integrate new ideas into their existing knowledge base
- Be aware of the increasing demands made on Year 3 children during the transition from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 when the knowledge, skills and understanding needed for composition and transcription become more complex.

These areas of need reflect the priorities I have identified during my own practice to support the development of children's writing. They are also

pertinent to the teaching of writing in primary schools and continue to require further research.

## 1.2 Writing within the primary school context

Beard et al. (2009: 1) highlight the fact that, despite national concerns regarding children's school-based writing and ensuing debate about how to raise standards, government policies in this area appear 'to have had at least some short-term impact on the reading attainment of eleven year olds but considerably less impact on writing'. For this reason I feel there is need to identify ways in which children respond to school-based genre writing tasks whilst, at the same time exploring the interrelationship between children's awareness of their own thought processes, their ability to understand key concepts and concept vocabulary and integrate new ideas into their existing knowledge base within naturalistic learning contexts.

Crystal and Varley (1998) refer to what is read or heard by children as their receptive vocabulary, and what is written or spoken as their expressive vocabulary. It is generally accepted that children's receptive language develops at a greater rate than their expressive language, as children recognise more spoken words than they can produce on paper or on screen. Likewise, reading requires the learner to decode meanings whereas writing challenges the learner to both encode and decode meaning through text (Kress, 1994).

The Rose Review (2006) highlighted the need to develop both decoding and encoding skills in the teaching of early reading and writing emphasising that such teaching should be set within a broad and rich language curriculum to ensure children understand that composition and transcription skills are interrelated:

- *'High-quality, systematic phonic work as defined by the review should be taught discretely. The knowledge, skills and understanding that constitute high-quality phonic work should be taught as the prime*

> *approach in learning to decode (to read) and encode (to write/spell) print.*
> - *Phonics work should be set within a broad and rich language curriculum that takes full account of developing the four interdependent strands of language: speaking, listening, reading and writing and enlarging children's stock of words.'*

(Rose, 2006: 70)

The Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum (Rose, 2009) draws on prior research which advocates the creation of classrooms saturated with high-quality texts and stimulating opportunities for children to engage with literacy in a variety of contexts (Fisher and Blachnowicz, 2005; Alexander, 2004; Biemiller, 2003; Wray et al., 2002). Yet, despite the recommendations being favoured by many primary practitioners, it was rejected at government level and criticised for its reorganisation of the curriculum into 'areas of learning' rather than discrete subjects (Alexander, 2009). Alongside this debate, teachers of Year 3 children continue to express concerns regarding the gap between some children's levels of attainment in reading and writing, as measured by national norm-referenced tests, despite the provision of a language rich learning environment.

Researchers have argued that, as writing is largely an expressive activity, it provides greater challenges for the learner, often resulting in significant differences between children's reading and writing abilities (Medwell et al., 2009; Bourdin and Foyal, 1994; 2002). In my experience of teaching across the Key Stages this is particularly noticeable in the transition years where there is a greater change in the breadth of study expected, often resulting in less time for engaging with the creative aspects of written composition (Cremin, 2006).

In the past, and at this moment in time, practitioners are required to deliver a broad and engaging English curriculum. The wide variety of genres presented during Key Stage 2 has often resulted in learning objectives containing '...semantically laden words related to conceptual knowledge' (Sinatra, 2008: 173). For example a current objective used in Year 3 is: *to identify the structure and language features of a non-chronological report* (D2: Appendix 6)*.* Children are often expected to have a working knowledge

and understanding of the key concepts and concept vocabulary used in such learning objectives without necessarily having prior sociocultural experiences of specific genres.

Genre literacy pedagogy, within primary classroom contexts, is often heavily weighted toward exploring pupils' prior knowledge and understanding of a variety of school-based genres with the result that young writers often encounter a range of textual and linguistic experiences with which they are unfamiliar (Kress, 1993; Myhill, 2005). These experiences make cognitive demands that do not always relate to the pupils' prior sociocultural knowledge, particularly in the transitional year from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2. In addition, genre-based pedagogies for writing rely strongly on the teacher deconstructing the linguistic and textual structures of the given genre, which can often result in pupils being taught to reproduce the form rather than responding creatively to that form (Cremin, 2006). Duncan (2008: 1) supports this argument through reference to the National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 1998) and its legacy:

> *One of the consequences of the ever-changing and increasing coverage demanded by the literacy strategy has been the creation of an 'extract culture' whereby children are introduced to sections of high-quality literature solely for the purpose of searching for word classes or examples of figurative language.*

It has been suggested that one impact of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) Framework (DfEE, 1998) and the Primary National Strategy for literacy (DfES, 2006) has been that schools are more concerned with the objectives in literacy that need to be taught rather than the key concepts children need to understand in order to engage in deep learning (Alexander, 2004). Practitioners may feel constrained by the demands of curriculum coverage rather than the need to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of key concepts.

With the delivery of the Primary National Strategy for literacy (DfES, 2006), a greater amount of time is said to be given to interactive whole class teaching. However, there still appears to be little time for children to ask questions or explore ideas. 'The requirement for predetermined outcomes and a fast pace

seem to militate against reflection and exploration of ideas' (Myhill et al., 2006: 16). The drive for well-paced, whole class teaching resulting in the achievement of prescribed objectives seems to have steered the direction of teachers in primary schools for the last decade. Looking ahead to the new curriculum structure for 2014 (DfE, 2013), it is hoped that teaching may revert to a more cross curricular approach providing more time for whole class and peer group interaction and collaboration since '…what is needed is a classroom culture of questioning and deep thinking, in which pupils learn from shared discussions with teachers and peers.' (Black and Wiliam, 1998: 10).

As shown in Figure 1, the breadth of study for writing, introduced during Key Stage 2 as part of the National Curriculum being followed at the time of this study, presents an enormous challenge to some Year 3 pupils, particularly those who experience poverty of language at home or those who have not yet mastered some of the secretarial skills required for writing. For these children, understanding new concepts and concept vocabulary, and developing new composition and transcription skills at the same time as being asked to talk about their understanding of a task may pose real difficulties.

Figure 1: Breadth of study for Key Stage 2 En3: Writing, English: the National

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**Breadth of study**

8.      During the Key Stage, pupils should be taught the knowledge, skills and understanding through addressing the following range of purposes, readers and forms of writing.

9.      The range of purposes for writing should include:

        a.      to imagine and explore feelings and ideas, focusing on creative uses of language and how to interest the reader

        b.      to inform and explain, focusing on the subject matter and how to convey it in sufficient detail for the reader

        c.      to persuade, focusing on how arguments and evidence are built up and language used to convince the reader

        d.      to review and comment on what has been read, seen or heard, focusing on both the topic and the writer's view of it.

10.     Pupils should also be taught to use writing to help their thinking, investigating, organising and learning.

11.     The range of readers for writing should include teachers, the class, other children, adults, the wider community and imagined readers.

12.     The range of forms of writing should include narratives, poems, playscripts, reports, explanations, opinions, instructions, reviews, commentaries.

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The new National Curriculum for English (DfE, 2013) is less prescriptive in content allowing teachers more flexibility when planning cross curricula writing activities. The programmes of study for writing are separated under the headings 'transcription (spelling and handwriting)' and 'composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech and writing)' (DfE, 2013: 15). Figure 2 (p. 8) shows the statutory requirements under the heading of 'composition' to allow for comparison with the breadth of study displayed in Figure 1.

Figure 2: Programmes of study for writing under the heading of 'composition' (DfE, 2013: 38-39)

**Pupils should be taught to:**

**Plan their writing by:**

*Discussing writing similar to that which they are planning to write in order to understand and learn from its structure, vocabulary and grammar*

*Discussing and recording ideas*

**Draft and write by:**

*Composing and rehearsing sentences orally (including dialogue), progressively building a varied and rich vocabulary and an increasing range of sentence structures*

*Organising paragraphs around a theme*

*In narratives, creating settings, characters and plot*

*In non-narrative material, using simple organisational devices*

**Evaluate and edit by:**

*Assessing the effectiveness of their own and others' writing and suggest improvements*

However, the new National Curriculum for English (DfE, 2013) does appear to be more prescriptive in the teaching of specific age related composition and transcription skills. Nevertheless it also advises that children engage in writing tasks requiring the development of knowledge, skills and understanding of these tasks in relation to purpose, reader and form.

This study recognises that some problems, encountered by children when writing, can be solved by learning and applying rules such as in spelling and grammar. However, in order for composition and transcription skills to develop together there is need to encourage children to become more consciously aware of their own thought processes enabling them to choose appropriate strategies to complete the variety of writing tasks encountered in the classroom.

## 1.3 Current issues within the national context

My interest in identifying the levels of awareness in thinking employed by Year 3 children as well as their understanding of key concepts and concept vocabulary, related to genre writing tasks, has been deepened by current political debate. The debate focuses on policy development surrounding changes to the primary curriculum for 2014, elements of which include the teaching for, and the assessment of, progression in literacy at Key Stage 2. Suggested changes in the structure and organisation of Key Stage 2 may have implications for the way literacy is taught in primary schools. It has been stated in The National Curriculum in England: Framework document for consultation (DfE, 2013) that Key Stage 2 will be split to form two new Key Stages (Lower and Upper Key Stage 2). Schools will be encouraged to set out their own schemes of work using this structure and organisation. These recommendations are to be implemented in September 2014. As a result, primary schools could be encouraged to focus on teaching fewer topics in greater depth. The review panel (DfE, 2011) suggested that 'deep learning' is a key factor in the success of high-performing countries and needs to be considered when making changes to the National Curriculum. 'Deep learning', derived from the original research by Marton and Saljo (1976), is defined as an equilibrium where the learner not only retains but is able to transfer learning into other contexts. This has been characterised as the '…accumulation of knowledge and conceptual understanding' (Oates, 2010: 2) and is discussed further in Chapter 2.

Progression in learning is also at the forefront of educational debate. The revised arrangements for inspections of maintained schools (Ofsted, 2012a; 2012b) places greater emphasis on children's learning and the progress they make from their starting points. The quality of learning and progress made by pupils are key inspection judgements. Children's ability to express their thoughts and ideas, through writing, plays an important part in the assessment of their progress. Therefore it is essential that an understanding of the cognitive development of children, particularly in the area of literacy, should be considered in a National Curriculum, as emphasised by Oates (2010: 16):

> *If a National Curriculum is stated in a way that the model of progression does not tie with fidelity to the cognitive development of young children, then this will severely compromise assessment, the rate of learners' learning, their engagement with learning, and so on. The transition between key phases (early years to primary, primary to secondary) will be dysfunctional. Material placed too early in the structure will provide too great a challenge. Material placed too high in one subject may be out of sync with what is required in other subjects (particularly true of maths and English).*

The Independent Review of Key Stage 2 testing, assessment and accountability – Final Report (Bew, 2011) recognised that significant issues surround the assessment and marking of Year 6 Statutory Assessment Tests (SATs) for writing. These issues have been raised by a large body of the teaching profession over a number of years and are highlighted in the report:

> *There are clearly significant issues with the current writing tests. Respondents feel they do not reflect classroom practice, whereby children take time with their writing and put effort into spelling, punctuation, grammar, vocabulary and handwriting. Others observed that many children produce their best work as part of a structured lesson following an inspired discussion or school trip, while it can be difficult to write creatively under pressured test conditions.*
>
> (Bew, 2011: 60)

The unpredictability of writing genres is a point of particular contention; especially where pupils respond in the wrong genre or it is felt that the test includes a 'more difficult' genre. Perhaps the most significant point is the frequently-made criticism over the inconsistency and subjectivity of external marking. This has fundamental consequences for professionals' confidence in the writing tests, as one respondent observed: 'results are clearly inaccurate... It makes a mockery of pupil achievement measures' (Bew, 2011).

In listening to teachers' concerns and acting upon them, The Independent Review of Key Stage 2 testing, assessment and accountability: Final Report (2011), emphasised the importance of developing motivating learning contexts and understanding children's responses to these learning contexts. My research explores children's responses, learning behaviour and awareness of their own and others' thought processes, set within specific

writing contexts. The findings will contribute to debate on how Year 3 pupils respond to the curriculum demands placed upon them, as they move into a new Key Stage, particularly in the area of writing.

**1.3.1 The Year 3 dip**

National statistics and related studies have shown that children's achievement in writing during Year 3 shows a dip and they appear to take a step backwards from their level of achievement in writing, as measured by Statutory Assessment Tasks (SATs), at the end of Key Stage 1 (Ofsted, 1993; Doddington et al., 1999; Doddington et al., 2001; Bearne, 2002). Year 3, as a transition year, makes new curricula demands where children encounter a wider variety of genre writing tasks although, as will be argued later, this may be only one reason for the differences in achievement between reading and writing.

After scrutiny of national inspection data, Ofsted (1993) reported a distinct slump in pupil performance in Year 3. The picture has remained the same during the last decade despite varied initiatives which have been introduced such as 'The Big Write' (Wilson, 2003), 'Talk for Writing' (DCSF, 2008) and 'Everybody Writes' (National Literacy Trust, 2011). These were developed specifically to combat difficulties faced by children, such as greater emphasis on sustained writing and mastery of a greater breadth of literary forms. Prior to inspection data (Ofsted, 1993), Woods (1987: 20) recognised:

> *...The 7-8 age group is a crucial one in the development of those attitudes, abilities and relationships that go into the making of educational success at that level. In this sense the transition is not only from infant to junior. Like joined-up writing and the second set of teeth, there are the other ultimates here, and they lay down the means for the next transfer to secondary, and indeed for later life.*

Six core themes, related to the Year 3 dip, emerged from a study by Doddington et al. (2001: 14) as presented in Table 1 (p. 12). Each theme is significant in that it reflects pupils' perceptions of moving to a new Key Stage and what impact these themes may have when it comes to meeting new curriculum demands.

Table 1: Year 3 pupils' perceptions of what may hinder or support their ability to meet new curriculum demands (adapted from Doddington et al., 2001: 14)

| Themes | Progress dips with examples of negative outcomes | Progress Sustained with examples of positive outcomes |
|---|---|---|
| **Importance of Friendship** | Feelings of anxiety or insecurity during transfer/transition heightened by loss of friends | Encouragement and support from peers helps pupils to cope with transition and work collaboratively |
| **Independence and Responsibility** | Pupils find difficulty in coping with the expectation of working more independently | Pupils enjoy new approaches offering greater independence and responsibility |
| **The Curriculum** | Increased curriculum demands lead to pressure and can result in some pupils falling behind | The new phase offers challenge and enhances motivation for learning |
| **Ways of Working** | Pupils are unfamiliar with new ways of working and have difficulty in coping with them | New ways of working offer variety and help pupils to develop useful skills for collaborative learning |
| **Monitoring and Assessment** | Pupils' anxiety about assessment can depress self-esteem and lead to a loss of confidence | Effective monitoring highlights problems so they can be quickly addressed |
| **The Home Dimension** | A fall-off in parental involvement in Year 3 means some pupils receive less support | If parents are given information on Year 3 and Key Stage 2, they can offer appropriate support |

My research explores the challenges for Year 3 children, highlighted in Table 1, of new ways of working, both collaboratively and independently, across areas of the curriculum. Key concepts and concept vocabulary are unfamiliar and there is need for children to become more aware of their own thought processes in order to make decisions on the most effective strategies to use during a writing task.

## 1.4 Levels of awareness in thinking and problem solving

To identify the levels of awareness in thinking employed by children both during and after specific genre writing tasks a framework, developed by Swartz and Perkins (1989) and adapted by Williams and Fisher for writing (2002), was used. Jones (2008) subsequently used Williams and Fisher's adaptation to categorise children's thinking. These frameworks, as shown in Table 2, distinguish four levels of thinking that Swartz and Perkins (1989) and Williams and Fisher (2002) considered to be increasingly metacognitive.

Table 2: Levels of awareness in thinking and problem solving

| Swartz and Perkins (1989: 54) | Williams and Fisher (2002: 12) |
|---|---|
| *Tacit use* – The individual does a kind of thinking without thinking about it. | *Tacit use* – Children make decisions without really thinking about them. |
| *Aware use* – The individual does that kind of thinking, conscious *that* and *when* he or she is doing so. | *Aware use* – Children become consciously aware of a strategy or decision-making process. |
| *Strategic use* – The individual organises his or her thinking by way of particular conscious strategies that enhance its efficacy. | *Strategic use* – Children are able to select the best strategies for solving a problem. |
| *Reflective use* – The individual reflects upon his or her thinking before and after, or even in the middle of, the process, pondering how to proceed and how to improve. | *Reflective use* – Children reflect on their thinking, before, during and after the process, evaluate progress and set targets for improvement. |

Swartz and Perkins' (1989) original framework is based firmly on theories of constructivist learning and is embedded within the infusion approach to teaching specific thinking skills and developing metacognitive awareness. This approach highlights ways in which children can be shown how to become aware of their own thought processes when undertaking tasks within a range of curricula contexts. Perkins (2008: 102) describes the framework further in his book *Smart Schools: From Training Memories to Educating Minds*:

> *My colleague Robert Swartz and I have defined four levels of metacognition: tacit, aware, strategic and reflective. Tacit learners are unaware of their metacognitive knowledge. Aware learners know about some of the kinds of thinking they do – generating ideas, finding evidence – but are not strategic in their thinking. Strategic learners organise their thinking by using problem-solving, decision making, evidence seeking and other kinds of strategies. Finally, reflective*

*learners not only are strategic about their thinking but reflect on their thinking-in-progress, ponder their strategies, and revise them.*

Chapter 2 looks more closely at the hierarchical nature of Swartz and Perkins' levels and examines each in more detail in addition to presenting theory underpinning the framework. It also examines the adapted frameworks of Williams and Fisher (2002) where the four levels are applied to critical thinking in writing. The 'ladder of metacognition' developed by Swartz and Perkins (1989) also forms part of a discussion on the hierarchical nature of these frameworks.

The terms 'metacognition' and 'reflection' are often used by educationalists as being synonymous with more complex thought processes, as discussed in Chapter 2. However, within the context of this study, there is need to review their meanings and discuss related research making links to my own findings.

## 1.5 Context and purpose of the study

In this study the context of the writing task, the concepts introduced, and the thinking strategies used by Year 3 pupils to complete written tasks, were explored. Writing, in the primary classroom, is a taught process which requires the formation of ideas and the shaping and ordering of what is already known with what might be produced (Medwell et al., 2009). It is a complex process involving the simultaneous interaction between composition and transcription. For many Year 3 pupils a gap between their composition and transcription skills can be observed when involved in school-based writing tasks.

Williams and Fisher (2002) see assimilation between the two happening when children are able to critically reflect upon and think about the process of writing itself. Children need to be given opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding of how composition and transcription support one another in the writing process. Some researchers have argued that this requires children to think about *how* they are learning, to write by developing their metacognitive awareness (Williams and Fisher, 2006; Jones, 2008).

There is an established body of research which argues that metacognitive awareness can play an important role in children's learning (Flavell, 1979; Jones, 2008; Jones, 2010; Larkin, 2010). However, in this study, metacognition is not a theme for research but is acknowledged and defined as a way of describing the awareness that individuals have of their own thinking which results in the active monitoring of their own cognitive processes. In this way children are encouraged to:

- plan how to approach a task
- monitor understanding of a task
- review and evaluate progress during and at the end of a task

The children's ability to manipulate these skills during the writing process was of particular interest to the Head Teacher and staff at the research site. This interest had been evident during previous visits to the school by the researcher while supervising student teachers. It was noted that the children were encouraged to monitor and review their own progress, using success criteria appropriately linked to the learning objectives, when writing. Year 3, as a transition year, was considered to be an important year within the school as it had a wide variety of feeder schools and children with varying levels of ability. This wide-ranging mix of abilities typified mainstream junior schools in the county. Raising achievement in writing through supporting the children's ability to compose and transcribe text simultaneously was an important element of the class teacher's teaching style. This often mirrored my own teaching style and both my own and her interests in this area of learning had prompted the classroom-based study. The above factors were key determiners in the selection of both school and class.

In this study detailed observations of eight Year 3 children, assessed by the teacher as being of average ability in writing using Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) levels, were undertaken. APP is a formative assessment practice introduced as a key approach to school improvement. Although the present Government does not prescribe any specific approach to formative assessment many schools continue to use APP as a way of tracking pupil progress. Assessment of the children's writing was made prior to this study

being undertaken and graded children using National Curriculum levels. During Year 3 pupils are expected to be working towards National Curriculum levels 2A and 3C.

I observed learning contexts, learning behaviour, the children's understanding of key concepts related to specific genre writing tasks as well as the levels of thinking employed by these children during and after the tasks. This enabled me to identify areas of writing, for this age group, where a 'can do' (Bew, 2011: 61) attitude towards writing was evident.

My classroom-based study of cases explores the interface between the conceptual understanding of a task and the planning, monitoring and reviewing strategies used by children throughout specific genre writing tasks. Completed transcripts were analysed to capture the direct relationship between the children's understanding of key concepts, the levels of awareness in thinking and the use of prior knowledge by Year 3 children. Analysis of findings in Chapter 5 adds clarity to the role that cognitive processes play in the development of writing, an area of learning acknowledged to be of importance and relevance to current education policy goals.

The Independent Review of Key Stage 2 testing, assessment and accountability: Final Report (Bew, 2011) whilst recognising complexities surrounding the assessment of pupils' writing advocates that robust assessment and reporting arrangements are essential to improving children's literacy skills. Therefore, it is relevant to consider how these arrangements may encourage practitioners to contemplate the importance of children's conceptual understanding during writing composition:

> *We therefore recommend that writing should be assessed through a mixture of testing and summative teacher assessment. Due to its importance, we believe that writing composition should always form the greater part of overall writing statutory assessment. We recognise that we are recommending a very significant change to the statutory assessment of writing, addressing the profession's strongly-held concerns.* (Bew, 2011: 62)

The report suggested that tests of spelling, punctuation, grammar, vocabulary and handwriting could be introduced. These tests may be introduced to assess the development of essential writing skills. At the same time teachers' formative and summative assessments would be made and moderated within common learning contexts. The report also acknowledged the importance of allowing children the opportunity to take part in a range of writing experiences in stimulating and motivating learning contexts:

> *We believe this shift in the assessment of writing composition will help develop the creativity of the teaching profession. We want pupils to be taught a wide range of writing genres and to be encouraged to produce their best work each time they write rather than having strict time constraints. This is more likely to lead to a 'can do' attitude towards writing and greater enjoyment than is the case if teaching across the year is based on a build up towards the current test.* (ibid: 61)

## 1.6 Research aims and questions

The aims of this study were fourfold:

- To analyse children's levels of awareness in thinking when engaged in specific genre writing tasks.
- To explore children's understanding of the key concepts related to specific writing tasks within four genre contexts.
- To investigate ways in which children use their prior knowledge during these tasks.
- To explore ways in which children integrate new ideas into their existing knowledge base during genre related writing tasks.

Four key questions were developed to frame the research:

- What evidence is there to show that children employ different levels of awareness in thinking when engaged in specific genre writing tasks?
- How do children display their understanding of key concepts and concept vocabulary related to specific writing tasks within four genre contexts?

- How do children show they have used their prior knowledge during these tasks?
- How do children show that they have integrated new ideas into their existing knowledge base during genre related writing tasks?

These questions are situated within a qualitative interpretivist approach to research by seeking to illuminate the individual cases presented in this thesis. There are eight cases in total, consisting of a group of Year 3 pupils. A naturalistic study of cases seemed the most appropriate for the purposes of this investigation as the research aims require a rich description of the individuals to be presented (Bassey, 1999).

The research sample has been drawn from a partnership school which works closely with the host institution to provide school-based training for primary teacher-trainees. It consists of a small group of seven and eight-year-olds who were assessed as achieving at age appropriate levels, that is National Curriculum level 2B, in literacy on entry. The research design includes semi-structured participant observations, open-microphone recordings, semi-structured group interviews and analysis of writing samples.

The research strategy consists of observations made in sequences, allowing for comparison and analysis to be made of pupil responses (Edwards and Mercer, 1987). Consideration has been given to the importance of conferences with children to elicit their understanding of the writing task. Identification of ways in which the children apply their prior knowledge across specific writing tasks is provided to increase depth and richness in the study.

In summary, the research design includes planned and semi-structured observations of the context in which learning objectives were introduced, observations of children's behaviour in relation to each writing task, researcher-participant interaction and analysis of children's oral response to questions regarding their conceptual understanding of the task as well as the strategies they perceived as appropriate to complete each task. In addition, an analysis of the children's completed transcripts helps to explore the interrelationship between children's awareness of their own thought

processes their conceptual understanding and ability to integrate new ideas into their existing knowledge base when developing learning strategies to complete a genre writing task.

The processes and tools used for this study capture what Cohen et al. describe as 'interpretivist' (2005: 40) research. Characteristics of which include the scale and nature of the study, and its subjectivity due to my involvement as participant-observer. It is important that these tools fulfil the research aims and provide insight into the central theme for research: a study of children's levels of awareness in thinking during specific writing tasks.

Samples of the children's written work and their oral responses have been analysed for evidence of different levels of awareness in thinking and whether this awareness was transferred from composition to transcription. From *A Room with a View* Forster writes 'Life is easy to chronicle, but bewildering to practise' (2000: 132). This provides an analogy between the transcriptional and compositional aspects of writing. Regurgitating mere lists of events demand little more than the manipulation of a pencil and basic grasp of vocabulary, grammar and the conventions of spelling. The real practice, of living, becomes a much more complex process as decisions need to be made at every stage in life's composition.

### 1.6.1 Conceptual issues

> *The process of research design… is reflexive and multi-faceted. It must take into account the needs of the researcher, the subject(s) of the research, the eventual audience, and the cultural context within which the research is taking place.*

(Jacob, 1992: 339)

In order to explore the central themes for study which are caught up in the complex processes of classroom interactions, close analysis of the way children react to, behave and engage with written tasks is important. This type of investigation clearly lends itself to a qualitative approach to gain a

deeper understanding of issues which underpin the research themes requiring a naturalistic study of cases to be developed due to my belief in the social construction of knowledge through language experiences. The epistemic and ontological loci of the study which views knowledge as soft and internally constructed, with the researcher becoming participant observer, requires particular approaches to data collection and provides a clear direction for analysis. These issues are explored further throughout Chapter 3 where the conceptual framework for research is established logically, arguing for the necessity of aligning the framework for research with the research questions (Stake, 2000).

## 1.7 Philosophical belief systems

Philosophical belief systems stand for the embracing of a paradigm which will permeate every part of a research project or inquiry. Every part of the inquiry must be associated with the common thinking surrounding that paradigm (Newby, 2010). Therefore, I feel it is important to immerse myself in the philosophical belief systems assumed to ensure that the data collection methods used do not contradict the philosophical assumptions held.

At this point it is necessary to consider ontology, which is concerned with each individual's view of social reality. Research cited throughout this study predominantly aligns itself with the assumption that there are multiple realities constructed within an individual's or researcher's mind. Others would contest this view, arguing that there exists just one external reality. However, within this study the ontological view has been influenced by my personal philosophical assumptions. The beliefs held are that there are multiple social realities which are created within a person's mind. Therefore the methodology used relies on analysis of qualitative data, in the form of a study of cases. I believe that immersion in rich description allows for the illumination of each case and provides evidence that furthers our knowledge and understanding of the nature of the writing process for young children through the close study of classroom interactions and dialogue.

The epistemological stance is therefore influenced by the views which have been established. If knowledge about the world is regarded as tangible and rigid, a researcher's view of social reality is considered to be external. For example, the researcher is detached from that knowledge and social reality remains unaltered as it is considered universal. If knowledge is viewed as being internally constructed then it is unique to a situation or individual, calling for greater explanation and understanding of its uniqueness (Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

In the case of the latter, I have not been detached from the data but established a personal connection with the children as knowledge regarding their understanding of genre writing tasks became a personal and situated experience. Therefore the epistemological stance influences methodology greatly. Conversely, for those who hold the former view that knowledge is hard or tangible, focusing on the general rather than what is distinctive, the methodology must analyse factors and search for universal laws (Cohen et al., 2005). Methods employed to establish these laws are predominantly quantitative and commonly manipulate large amounts of statistical data. Validity and reliability are the prime focus for quantitative methods (Newby, 2010). Those who view knowledge as a personal experience take an opposing stance. The focus is on the unique, rather than the universal. Methodology is generally qualitative; seeking to illuminate what is exclusive to individuals. Cohen et al. (2005) summarise how this is often termed idiographic with depth and richness being sought, rather than reliability and universal truth.

The majority of studies reviewed in this area take the stance that knowledge is soft and multiple realities exist with methodologies reflecting the uniqueness of an individual situation. The present study draws upon the methodologies used in previous studies which seek to illuminate the particular rather than formulate universal laws by using statistical information considered valid and reliable by quantitative methodologies. This study explores individual children's responses to the writing process from an idiographic perspective and assumes that knowledge must be viewed as the illumination of the particular rather than becoming general and quantifiable.

In this study, my assumptions determined the data collection methods used and adhere to my belief in the existence of multiple realities. Therefore, knowledge is viewed as socially constructed where children's spoken interactions are situated and dependent on context. The methods used for data collection have been designed to reflect the subjective stance of the researcher and nature of the study. The adoption of qualitative methods of data collection supports my view that multiple realities exist and the social world is a construction of the mind and that knowledge built through spoken interaction illuminates the unique.

Cohen et al. (2005) argued that a researcher's view of social reality can fall into one of two broad approaches. These are the subjectivist approach which concurs with the present study in that it is interpretive employing an idiographic approach, and the objectivist approach which uses a nomothetic approach which is positivist (Crotty, 1998; Sparkes, 1992). A subjective approach has been adopted for this study. My assumptions, as researcher, underpin the methodology used and have been derived from this approach.

## 1.8 A summary of the interpretive paradigm within the context of this study

As already established the methodology used in this study is qualitative, and has sought richness and depth through a naturalist study of cases, the aim was to explore the distinctiveness of the individuals studied. The existence of underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions has been established leading to compliance with an idiographic approach to the study which is interpretive. The subjective nature of the study has been acknowledged alongside my belief in internally constructed multiple realities through language experiences.

The methodology consistent with this paradigm is of a qualitative nature and employed in this study by the use of field notes, transcriptions and children's written work which have been studied in depth to gain a rich and deep

understanding of each individual participant. Qualitative research assumes the uniqueness of situations, which are unlikely to be replicated due to their idiosyncrasies. However, it can be argued that the interpretive nature of qualitative research provides illumination of the particular which can sometimes be applied to the general (Bassey, 1999).

In conclusion this study aims to inform and build upon the small number of studies which have begun to recognise that, at the outset of Key Stage 2, children are still developing the necessary awareness of their own thought processes, understanding of key concepts as well as mastery of the composition and transcription skills in order to manage the challenges of a wider curriculum. Therefore, evidence of how children display different levels of thinking, understand key literacy concepts and integrate new ideas into their existing knowledge base when undertaking specific genre writing tasks will help to inform current pedagogy.

**Chapter 2**

**Review of literature**

## 2.0 Introduction

As highlighted in the previous chapter, one of the aims of this study is to identify the levels of awareness in thinking employed by children when engaged in specific genre writing tasks. Ideas developed by Swartz and Perkins (1989) and adapted by Williams and Fisher (2002) for writing (see Table 2, p.13) provide a framework for the exploration of children's writing experiences and responses within naturalistic classroom contexts. In addition this study explores the interrelationship between children's awareness of their own thought processes, their prior knowledge and understanding of key concepts and ability to integrate new ideas into their existing knowledge base. The study is set within the context of current pedagogy relating to writing in the primary curriculum.

## 2.1 The place of writing in the primary curriculum

Writing is an integral part of the Primary National Strategy for literacy (DfES, 2006) and continues to dominate the National Curriculum for English (DfE, 2013). The Primary National Strategy (DfES, 2006) presents twelve strands of learning in literacy. Over a third of these strands relate to writing, each including a set of learning objectives. In addition, much of the formative and summative assessment carried out in primary schools relies heavily on certain elements of writing. Current statutory and non-statutory National Curriculum tasks and tests are dependent on children producing written text which can be evaluated to inform teacher assessment. Statutory assessment and reporting requirements for Key Stage 2 (DfE, 2013) includes reading, grammar, spelling and handwriting with arrangements for compositional writing to be teacher assessed.

Medwell et al. (2009: 13) emphasise the following objectives as being important in the teaching of writing at the beginning of Key Stage 2:

*9. Creating and shaping texts*

- Write independently and creatively for purpose, pleasure and learning.
- Use and adapt a range of forms, suited to different purposes and readers.
- Make stylistic choices, including vocabulary, literary features and viewpoints or voice.
- Use structural and presentational features for meaning and impact.

*11. Sentence structure and punctuation*

- Vary and adapt sentence structure for meaning and effect.
- Use a range of punctuation correctly to support meaning and emphasis.
- Convey meaning through grammatically accurate and correctly punctuated sentences.

These objectives highlight the knowledge and skills Key Stage 2 pupils need to acquire but do not describe the underlying conceptual understanding required in order to meet these learning objectives.

The National Curriculum for English (DfE, 2013: 15) does however emphasise the importance of providing children with opportunities to develop a balance of knowledge, skills and understanding of the writing process:

> *Writing down ideas fluently depends on effective transcription, that is, on spelling quickly and accurately through knowing the relationship between sounds and letters (phonics) and understanding the morphology (word structure) and orthography (spelling structure) of words. Effective composition involves articulating and communicating ideas, and then organising them coherently for a reader. This requires clarity, awareness of the audience, purpose and context, and an increasingly wide knowledge of vocabulary and grammar.*

This study explores the ways in which opportunities are provided for Year 3 children to use different levels of thinking, display an understanding of key concepts and concept vocabulary, and integrate new ideas into their existing knowledge bases when engaged in specific genre writing tasks. It also identifies the adult/peer and peer/peer interactions which support pupils with articulating and communicating their ideas.

Throughout the literacy framework there exists a progressive emphasis on the development of writing. Children are expected to develop their

understanding of the stylistic requirements of different genres, both narrative and non-narrative. More detailed consideration of purpose, audience, style and form is often necessary at Key Stage 2 as the production of a range of writing forms places a greater cognitive demand on the learner (Williams and Fisher, 2002; Torrance and Galbraith, 2006). Furthermore, Medwell et al. (2009) suggest that, although the teaching of writing has improved during the last decade expectations have changed, with teachers focusing more on quality rather than quantity. However, the review 'Could do better: Using international comparisons to refine the National Curriculum in England' (Oates, 2010) describes the current curriculum as 'overladen' and 'overblown' resulting in the erosion of 'deep learning,' an issue to be discussed later in this chapter. The review calls for a curriculum which pursues fewer topics in greater depth to facilitate the retention and transfer of new learning across the curriculum.

Initiatives, such as 'The Big Write' (Wilson, 2003), allow teachers to create extended periods of time for writing in context rather than focusing on small sections of text or specific features of literacy in isolation. Wilson (2003) highlights four points of focus to support the improvement of writing in schools. These are vocabulary, connectives, openers and punctuation. She suggests they can act as a checklist for pupils engaged in the writing process. However, Wilson's (2003) recommendations function under the assumption that children, at the start of Key Stage 2, have the requisite knowledge, skills, conceptual understanding and maturity to use these four points of focus independently when involved in school-based genre writing tasks. Brundrett and Duncan (2011: 19) argue that such initiatives suffer as they '…produce only a façade of change followed by a gradual sinking back into old ways of working.' My observations, of teachers and students in schools, confirm that this does happen when initiatives do not become a whole school pattern for working over an extended period of time. This thesis identifies some of the conceptual demands made on children during a pivotal year, as they move from being infants to juniors, and recognises the importance of ensuring that children build their knowledge and understanding

of key concepts on firm foundations whilst, at the same time being encouraged to transfer this understanding into other learning contexts.

For children to develop as writers throughout Key Stage 2, Medwell et al. (2009: 113) advise that certain skills need to be taught explicitly and argue that the acquisition of the following abilities can lead to success in writing:

- being able to develop ideas into a form capable of being written;
- understanding the demands of a chosen writing form;
- being able to meet these demands in writing a particular form;
- being able to plan ahead in writing;
- being able to monitor, evaluate and revise what is being and has been written;
- understanding and meeting the demands of particular audiences for writing.

Whilst this list provides a solid foundation upon which primary practitioners can begin to build clear learning objectives, it does not take into consideration pupils' prior knowledge, conceptual understanding or sociocultural experiences.

At present, current pedagogy is very much driven by government directives and initiatives particularly when related to Ofsted recommendations. These initiatives are often founded on international research (What Works Clearinghouse, 2012; Andrews, et al., 2009) and can provide useful support for practitioners with the teaching of writing.

A report by the Education Standards Research team (DfE, 2012: 3) identifies a number of strategies that have been found to be effective in the teaching of writing, which are:

- teaching pupils the writing process (planning, drafting, revising and editing)
- teaching pupils to write for a variety of purposes
- teaching pupils to become fluent with handwriting, spelling, sentence construction, typing and word processing
- setting specific goals and fostering enquiry skills
- providing daily time to write
- creating an engaged community of writers.

The report draws on current research (What Works Clearinghouse, 2012; Gillespie and Graham, 2010; Andrews et al., 2009; Santangelo and

Olinghouse, 2009) and suggests that these strategies can be used when and where appropriate and adjusted to meet the needs of each learning community. With this in mind the National Curriculum for English (DfE, 2013) aims to allow practitioners more freedom, with content and context, although it does specify the key knowledge, skills and principles to be taught. In the past, the development of documents such as The Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 1998) and the Primary National Strategy for Literacy (DfES, 2006) have been heavily criticised for being too prescriptive in content.

This study of cases explores individual children's responses to specific genre writing tasks within a Year 3 classroom environment. Many of the strategies, identified as effective by the Education Standards Research team (DfE, 2012), were implemented by the teacher. The data, presented in Chapter 4 therefore, reflects current pedagogy in action. In addition, the identification of children's levels of awareness of their own and others' thought processes further enhances the current research surrounding the development of children's thinking (Mercer and Hodgkinson, 2008; Mercer and Littleton, 2007; Dawes et al., 2003). It also raises the question as to whether the ability to think collaboratively can support children with their understanding of key concepts as they cope with the often complex, cognitive demands of writing.

## 2.2 Models of Writing

During the 1980s and 1990s, significant research both in the UK and internationally, exploring the development of children's writing, was undertaken (Hayes and Flower, 1980; Perera, 1984; Bereiter and Scardemalia, 1987; Graves, 1983; Raison, 1994; Berninger et al., 1996). This resulted in the development of theories regarding the writing process and much of this research continues to inform current pedagogy. Models of writing can be viewed broadly as either taking a product or process approach. However, as shown in Chapter 4, these two approaches are not necessarily incompatible within an interactive and flexible learning environment.

The product approach views writing as a set task which can be presented, analysed and modelled using examples of the specific genre to be studied. The linguistic features of the genre are highlighted and children are asked to focus on the techniques employed by the writer (Pincas, 1982a). Often, during this approach, children are asked to practise some of these techniques in isolation such as the correct use of vocabulary, syntax or cohesive devices (Pincas, 1982b). For example, when writing non-chronological reports, children may be asked to practise writing using structural features such as headings, sub-headings, introductory and summary statements. They may also be asked to practise using the language features of reports such as the correct tense, the third person, suitable connectives to link information and specific concept vocabulary related to the subject. In summary, a product approach can follow these stages:

- Texts are modelled and features of the genre highlighted.
- Formal practise, of the highlighted features, is undertaken as a separate task.
- Research and gathering of ideas or information.
- Organising ideas or information.
- Children use the structures, language features and key concept vocabulary they have practised in order to complete the genre writing task.

The product model as presented by Pincas (1982a) shows writing as the sum of its parts by deconstructing the different features of a genre and allowing for writing practice in these areas. However, children can often become confused and overwhelmed by the introduction of so many different parts and may have difficulty in producing a whole text within the given genre. As shown in Chapter 4 of this study, aspects of this approach are used by the teacher, within each genre, but skilfully interwoven with the process model. Some genres, such as non-chronological reports and letter writing, are more suited to the product approach in which the focus is on

format, layout, organisation and grammar whilst narrative genres may lend themselves more to a process approach.

The process approach views writing as either linear or recursive (Hodson and Jones, 2001). The linear model shows the writing process as a series of sequential steps involving planning, translating (drafting), revising and editing. The recursive model places the same structure within the context of the cognitive and psychological environment of the writer in which the steps are constantly revisited in order to achieve the best possible completed outcome.

In 1980, Hayes and Flower developed a model of writing to convey the recursive nature of skilled writers' cognitive processes when their compositional thoughts and ideas move from mind to paper as shown in Figure 3 (p. 31).

Figure 3: Hayes and Flower's (1980: 10) model of writing
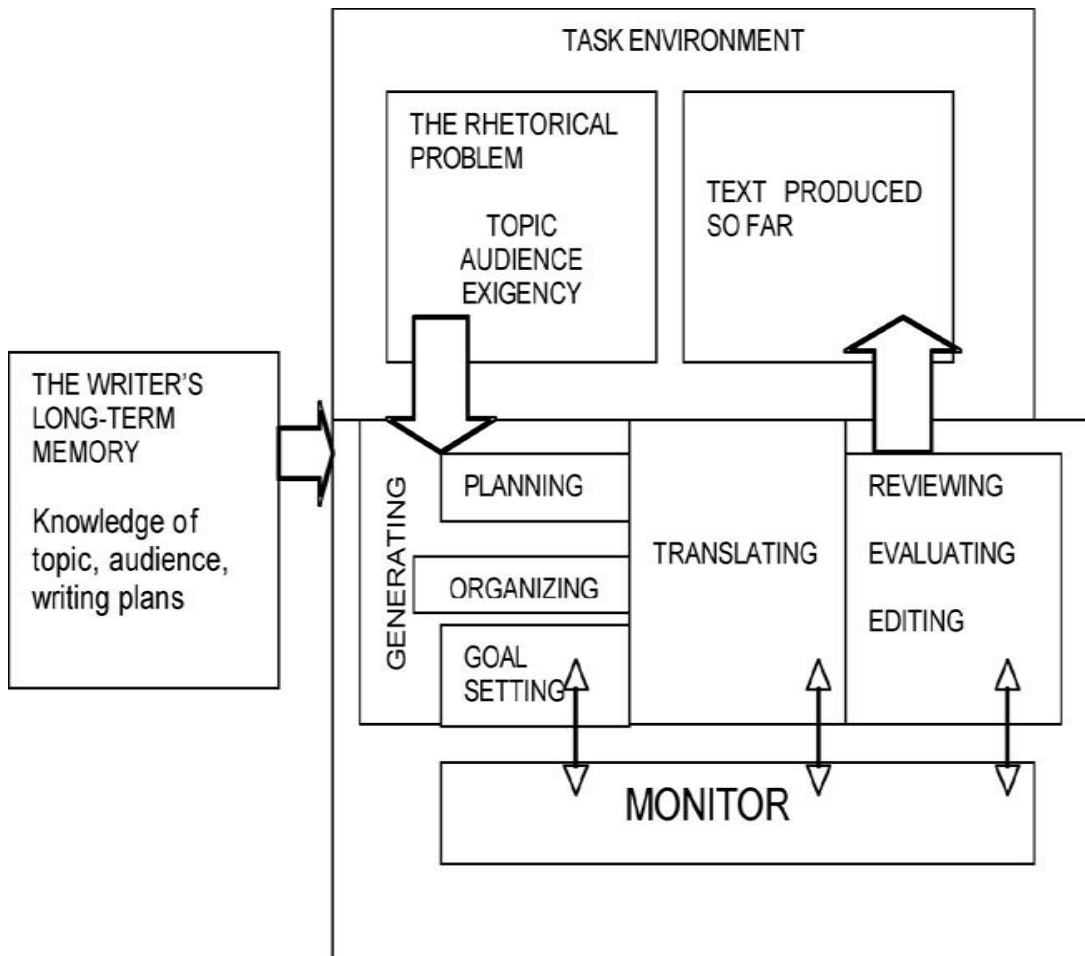


Hayes and Flower (1980) considered how writing utilised the three inter-related components of: planning, translating and reviewing. The first component was connected to generating ideas and decisions regarding how to approach the task. They considered this to be the 'planning' stage of writing. A second, inter-related component was termed 'translating'. This part of the writing process comprised of ideas becoming written text. Lastly, 'reviewing' referred to the rereading and editing of the writing. Hayes and Flower (1980) did not propose that this should be a linear process, as each component should be re-visited at different points.

Myhill (2010) provides a critique of Hayes and Flower's model arguing that it only portrays individuals who have achieved writing proficiency that is those who do not need to consider handwriting, letter formation, word spacing, punctuation or spelling. When applied to emergent writers Hayes and Flower's model makes no reference to the need for explicit teaching of new

writing forms and formats. In addition it assumes implicit understanding of the range of skills required when composing and transcribing. Year 3 children are still developing some of these skills and benefit from focused support where needed. This view is supported by Berninger et al. (1996: 198) who argue that:

> *…in skilled writers, planning, translating and revising are mature processes that interact with one another. In beginning and developing writers, each of these processes is still developing and each process is on its own trajectory, developing at its own rate.*

Arguably the most widely used of the writing models, by primary practitioners, is the process approach attributed to Graves (1983). This is characterised by the three core processes in writing: planning, revising and editing. As the process approach is widely regarded as recursive and reflective this model has been expanded and developed by numerous researchers since the 1980s and is widely accepted in primary education. The new National Curriculum for English (DfE, 2013) advocates the use of this model, e.g. '…pupils should be taught how to plan, revise and evaluate their writing.' (DfE, 2013: 15). However, the process approach may not suit every young writer or develop their understanding of the different genre writing tasks with which they engage throughout the primary phase. In practice, most teachers skilfully interweave the process and product approach.

Berninger et al. (2002: 293) construct a further model designed to support the development of writing in the classroom which they conceptualise as 'the simple view of writing'. The simple view of writing synthesises research into writing composition where a child's working memory is represented as a triangle. Transcription skills and self-regulation become the base vertices facilitating text generation at the top vertex. This model draws on social constructivist views of writing development where writing is viewed as a social act involving interaction between participants.

> *Writing may be conceptualised as a social activity in which writers not only compose for an audience but also co-construct – through dyadic discussion – goals, plans, content, strategies, and even initial and revised version of text.*

Drawing on current classroom research, the Talk to Text Project (Fisher et al., 2006) presents a framework for using talk to support writing, which mirrors many earlier models in its structure and content. It differs from earlier models in that it presents a working model which practitioners can apply to their own classroom practice. It is useful in the sense that it considers children as emergent writers and offers a framework for the development of their writing.

Table 3: Framework for using talk to support writing (Fisher et al., 2010: ix)

| Element | Definition | Example | Child speak |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Idea generation** | This provides children with the opportunity to talk in groups or pairs or with puppets/small world play, etc. about the topic of the writing. It is about the content of their writing. | Role play of a scene from a story, draw on picture and explain it to a partner, talking about own experiences using artefacts. | Getting ideas |
| **Write aloud** | This gives children the chance to put what they want to say into words before they write it. This also means reading their writing aloud…to help them 'hear' what their writing sounds like. It is to help with the form of their writing. | Trying out sentences or phrases with a talk partner.<br><br>Reading invisible writing. | Say it –<br><br>write it |
| **Reflection** | This has two elements: reflection on the process of writing and reflection on the product of writing. | The ending was difficult because I didn't know what to write. I didn't know what to write next and then I remembered my Red Riding Hood story.<br><br>This is a good piece of writing because it is funny. | Thinking about writing |

The framework in Table 3 draws attention to both the product and process approach to writing, giving young children the opportunity to consider both

aspects of their writing. For example, 'reading invisible writing' refers to giving children the chance to imagine the form of their writing before the actual transcription process takes place. However, although the emphasis is placed firmly on the role that talk plays in the development of writing, it is evident that the framework reflects the sequences of writing contained in earlier models such as that of planning, creating and reviewing as represented in the Hayes and Flower's (1980) model. However, unlike the Hayes and Flower's model, Fisher et al. (2010) consider scaffolding to be an important aspect of support for early writers.

Scaffolding, a term introduced by Bruner (1986), has become synonymous with Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) where a learner can achieve greater success when assisted by a more experienced mentor. Once the pupil, with the benefit of scaffolding, develops an understanding and mastery of the task, then the assistance or scaffolding can be removed and the pupil is able to complete the task independently.

By providing the support, or scaffold, of specific resources such as writing frames and guides as well as teacher modelling of a task, young children begin to understand how to develop as writers. In addition, the provision of opportunities for adult/peer and peer/peer interaction to share thoughts and ideas can help children become independent learners. Writing places huge demands on early writers and the use of appropriate scaffolds can also help to reduce the demands placed on a child's cognitive abilities. Nevertheless, as Myhill (2005: 58) so clearly points out, some scaffolding can inhibit the development of independence if used as a control rather than a learning support strategy:

> *The prevalence of writing frames and teacher questioning which gives strong clues to the 'right' answer are examples of how easy it is to slide from scaffolding as a learning support mechanism to scaffolding as a device to enable pupils to complete a task successfully, without necessarily grasping the learning at the heart of the task.*

## 2.3 Cognition and writing

Writing is considered to be one of the most cognitively challenging activities with which children are faced (Fisher et al., 2010; Medwell et al., 2009; Torrance and Galbraith, 2006). Jones (2010: 21) argues that writing:

> *...requires the motor skills to form letters and words, the oral and cognitive skills to match a phonetic sound to a written letter and then to build these letters into words conforming to conventional spelling, and the ability to translate spoken language into written forms, as well as linguistic knowledge about sentence formation, punctuation and grammar.*

The cognitive challenges of writing (to be discussed later in this chapter), require the careful coordination of conceptual knowledge and understanding and procedural skills in order to master the process effectively (Purcell-Gates, 1996). An analogy can be drawn here with the skills required for driving a car. Most car drivers learn to develop and coordinate the range of skills required for competence, some have difficulty in coping with coordinating these skills, while others are able to master more advanced driving skills. In the same way many children become competent writers, having learned to coordinate a range of knowledge and skills as they mature, some have difficulty in coping with the cognitive demands of the writing process well into adulthood, while others become fluent, thought-provoking writers producing writing of great quality. Purcell-Gates (1996) argues that children who have a greater conceptual knowledge of literacy at school entry make more rapid progress in the acquisition of procedural knowledge than those with less conceptual knowledge.

Kress (1994) suggests that writing is a more challenging process than reading because it requires both the encoding and decoding of meaning through the written word whereas the demands of reading are focused on decoding meaning from text. Decoding meaning through text is predominantly a receptive language skill whereas the writing process demands the use of both the learner's expressive and receptive language skills. When children are asked to edit and proof read for a clearly defined purpose they are able to complete tasks with a greater degree of

independence. By reducing the cognitive demands, for some aspects of a writing task, teachers are able to build children's confidence.

Bloom and Lahey's (1978) model of the components of language shows different aspects of language that need to be understood by learners and serves to illustrate the range of knowledge and skills required of pupils when they undertake a writing task. The cognitive challenges of using language in its written form highlight the complexities of communication.

Figure 4: The Components of Language: The three areas of language based on the language model developed by Bloom and Lahey (1978).
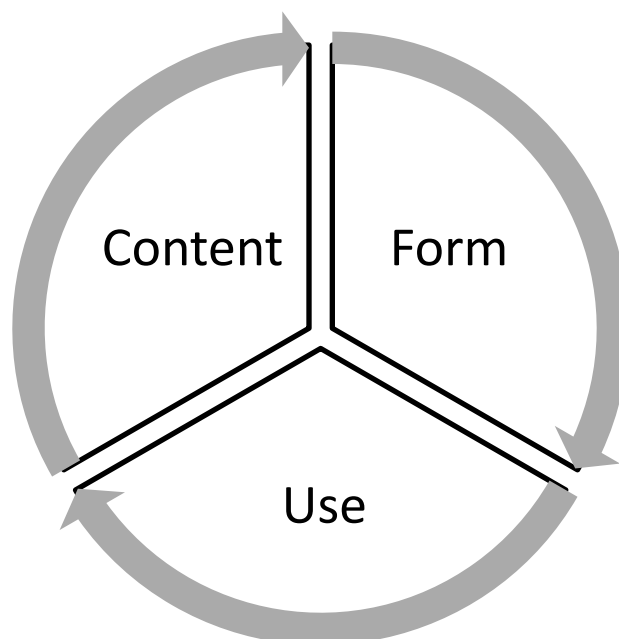


- **Content** is the aspect of language that explores vocabulary and how children understand concepts and use words in order to communicate with others. It includes semantics (vocabulary, word meanings and word relationships).
- **Form** includes phonology (the speech and sound system), syntax (the grammar of sentences) and morphology (the grammar of words).
- **Use** is the purpose and function for communication. It includes pragmatics and social communication.

The Bloom and Lahey model (1978) highlights the conceptual demands made on young children as they encounter content, form and use of

language both in literacy and across other areas of the curriculum where speaking, listening, reading and writing are an integral part of the learning process.

Writing therefore, as one aspect of communication, makes multiple and simultaneous demands on younger children's cognitive abilities. Myhill suggests that research in the field of cognitive psychology has '...advanced our understanding of the process of writing and of the kinds of demands that writing makes on our cognitive resources...' (2010: 2). Nevertheless, further research into the ways in which young children cope with these demands and ways in which effective teachers support young writers is still needed.

The National Literacy Strategy: Grammar for Writing (DfEE, 2000a: 12) further summarises some of the challenges of writing for young children and directs attention to the impact on their learning when success is not achieved due to cognitive overload:

> *They have to plan what they will write, think of which words and sentences to write, work out the spellings and transcribe it all onto the page. Often, most of their attention is taken up by spelling and scribing, leaving little mental space to think about the compositional aspects of their writing. Repeated experiences of this kind are likely to reinforce, rather than overcome, children's problems, making them increasingly reluctant writers in the process.*

This description summarises clearly some of the cognitive challenges of writing for younger children and draws attention to the impact that negative experiences of writing can have on children's writing development. However, classroom practice such as the provision of creative writing frames, word banks and opportunities to construct text in collaboration with others can successfully support young writers with the challenges described by the DfEE (2000a).

More recently, researchers have explored the hypotheses children develop regarding the process of writing. It has been suggested that these hypotheses evolve as children grow in maturity.

> *As children develop as writers they are able to cope with a wide range of written styles, learning to use these to get across their thinking*

*compellingly and with ever-increasing precision in terms of style and form.*

(Williams and Fisher, 2006: 91)

This seemingly natural progression from novice to expert writer is not without challenge. The cognitive demands of achieving competency as a young writer remain immense. Therefore, it is valuable to consider further research examining writing development to inform and further understand the cognitive demands of composition and transcription.

The language programme 'First Steps' (EDWA, 1997) originally developed from research by the Education Department of Western Australia (Raison, 1994), included the design of a continuum developing groups of 'key indicators' which were suggested to mirror the writing behaviours of children at different stages in their development. The phases were described as:

Phase 1:    Role-play writing

Phase 2:    Experimental writing

Phase 3:    Early writing

Phase 4:    Conventional writing

Phase 5:    Proficient writing

Phase 6:    Advanced writing

These phases provide useful indicators of the development from novice to mature writer but they do not allow for the recursive nature of genre writing where pupils may need to revisit earlier phases when an unfamiliar genre or text type is encountered.

In an attempt to explain how children develop as writers, Perera (1984) identifies a pattern for language development. Perera argues that stages of development can be identified as children mature as writers. The features of language development presented by Perera can be summarised as follows:

- clauses and sentences become longer
- verb phrases develop
- complex sentences emerge
- adverbial clauses are used frequently

- cohesion develops slowly
- evidence of paragraphing

Perera's (1984) research only focuses on grammatical development in children's writing with each feature presented as successive. However, as young writers are expected to adapt grammatical features for the purpose of different genre writing tasks, I would argue that these features cannot always be viewed as successive with some genre writing making more complex demands on young writers than others. Nevertheless, the different stages of cognitive development can often be observed as children engage with and develop a wide range of writing forms and begin to understand key concepts and concept vocabulary related to specific genres.

Myhill (2010) comments on how the quality of children's oral contributions far exceeds what is subsequently produced as written text, arguing that this imbalance is due to the cognitive demands writing places on a child's working memory. Resolutions to this problem have been presented by various researchers. Kellogg (2008) provides one such resolution by suggesting how elements of a written task can be divided into manageable pieces instead of being addressed as a whole. As previously stated, some models and frameworks for writing have attempted to represent this. In this way children can be given opportunities to master specific elements of a task before being required to orchestrate the different parts into a whole. Therefore it has become common practice for teachers to use writing frames, paired and group tasks where different aspects of the task are shared, word banks, sentence starters or for a more experienced writer to scribe ideas in order to reduce cognitive load during a writing task. Whilst this has been shown as an effective way to ease cognitive load and develop writing skills in younger children, it does not always allow the writer to see the task as a whole. Neither does it cater for children who need to make their own decisions about how to tackle a writing task and enjoy being in control of the order in which to address each aspect of the activity.

Recent research (Mercer, 2000; Medwell et al., 2009; Myhill, 2010) has focused on the benefit of oral rehearsal in the writing process. Oral rehearsal

is considered to be an important strategy for reducing cognitive load as it helps to highlight any conceptual difficulties that young writers may be experiencing. Oral rehearsal is included as an important element in some writing frameworks (Fisher et al., 2010).

> *By asking children to orally rehearse a sentence or phrase before writing it, you are also reducing the cognitive load because the child has to retrieve the ideas and vocabulary and shape them into a syntactically appropriate form before attempting the challenge of transcription.*

(Myhill, 2010: 69)

This strategy appears effective in theory but there is a lack of research surrounding the ability of younger children, who are unfamiliar with some literary forms and features, to be able to retain their oral constructions long enough to reproduce them on paper.

In a broader study, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) carried out substantial research in the USA regarding the teaching of writing. They found young writers often become confused about their writing targets and outcomes during writing tasks. This would result in a loss of flow. By observing both expert and novice writers, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) concluded that novice writers engage in something they termed 'knowledge telling', while expert writers use a 'knowledge transforming' strategy to achieve their writing goal. For example, young writers would plan their writing in the form of a list and regurgitate their knowledge in a descriptive way. However, the more experienced writer would plan their writing with an audience in mind and with the purpose of communicating something specifically.

For children to develop as writers they need to engage in knowledge-transformation rather than knowledge-telling to achieve their goal particularly when involved in school-based genre writing. Bereiter and Scardamalia argue that this can be achieved when greater attention is given to 'reflective thought during composition' (1987: 307). Within their study, reflective thought is defined as the type of cognition which is intentional, that is to say, the switching on of a learner's awareness of the types of thinking required to develop a written composition. However, Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1987)

arguments are limited by the fact that they presented research into 'intentional cognition' as neither informing nor transforming practice due to the lack of teaching expertise. This study of cases explores the 'intentional cognition' employed by a small group of Year 3 children both with and without adult intervention.

Classroom-based research into the development of reflective thought in young children (Jacobs, 2004; Larkin, 2010) revealed that it is possible to encourage children to think about and evaluate their own thought processes, within the normal learning environment, if the class teacher uses skilful questioning. Jacobs (2004) and Larkin (2010) both use the term 'metacognitive awareness', first introduced by Flavell (1979), to describe children's ability to reflect upon their own thought processes. They advocate the use of open-ended questioning to encourage children to think about their own and others' thought processes; a strategy that has been recognised by many practitioners during the past decade as supporting the process of writing.

Some research suggests that children who are able to monitor their own cognitive processes during a task are more likely to be independent, motivated and successful learners (Mercer, 2000; Alexander, 2004) managing the cognitive demands of writing effectively. It may be suggested that, by engaging in this monitoring process, children gain conscious control over decision making and the evaluation of what makes a successful piece of writing. This study highlights the importance of meaningful teacher/pupil and pupil/pupil interaction to ensure children are given opportunities to develop the skills of monitoring, reviewing and evaluating.

Williams and Fisher (2002: 12) adapted a framework they considered to encompass the range of thoughts and actions children take when engaged in the process of writing and state:

> *What do children do when they do not know what to do? What they need then is not just the application of knowledge but awareness … that they have a number of learning strategies at their disposal. These strategies develop over time but they also develop through practice, manifesting themselves in different levels of awareness.*

## 2.4 Reflecting on the writing process – towards a framework for thinking

When engaged in writing tasks with children across Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, I have found that, for children to develop as writers, the teacher must make the role of the writer explicit. Each stage of the writing process needs to be made transparent so that children's knowledge and conceptual understanding of writing as a construct increases (Hodson and Jones, 2001; Fisher et al., 2010).

Williams and Fisher (2002) argue that writing develops as children become increasingly aware of how they are learning and the different strategies and thought processes they are using to produce a piece of writing. Within this context, Williams and Fisher introduce their version of 'levels of awareness in thinking' adapted from the original ideas defined by Swartz and Perkins (1989). Like Swartz and Perkins they view these levels as being hierarchical and developing alongside children's cognitive skills. Myhill (2010) also makes links between children's awareness of their own thought processes and the development of both their compositional and transcription skills stating that; 'As children's thinking develops, so does their writing' (ibid: 12). Williams and Fisher (2002) suggest that as children develop a greater conceptual understanding of the cognitive processes involved in writing, they become more equipped to make conscious decisions as to how to approach different writing tasks. In addition, I would argue that an awareness of their own and others' thought processes helps them to consider the most effective strategies to achieve their writing goals.

Although there is some evidence to suggest that learners who display self-regulation in the form of monitoring and control when completing a writing task are intrinsically motivated and autonomous in their approach (Ryan and Deci, 2000), whether this can make them more or less successful as writers is still a matter for debate. Johnson's (2003) findings suggest that children's motivation and subsequent success in writing is directly linked to their levels of interest in the subject matter and way in which the writing task is presented. Nevertheless, an ability to monitor and control learning is considered to be an integral feature of developing higher order thinking skills

by many researchers (Shayer and Adey, 2002; Fisher, 2005, Larkin, 2010). Shayer and Adey (2002) argue that any particular aptitude or talent is developed from a learner's general intelligence and is a result of social and motivational influences as opposed to cognitive ones. General intelligence is open to modification and intervention during the process of cognitive development. The ability to process and execute different elements of a task simultaneously is the key to its success (Shayer and Adey, 2002).

Larkin (2010) suggests that successful writers are those who can transfer between thinking about how they are thinking about a task and creating the finished product. This process represents the shift between how the learner is monitoring his or her own thoughts about both task and product. It is the movement between monitoring and control which allows the learner to make conscious decisions regarding how to achieve a set goal through monitoring and evaluating the progress that has been made. Some research suggests this process can become automated as the writer develops in maturity (Myhill, 2010; Williams and Fisher, 2002). I would argue that purposeful writing opportunities need to be provided where thinking skills are developed explicitly and where the tasks require children to make decisions about how to approach, plan, monitor and evaluate them in order to develop a greater mastery of the writing process.

Jones (2006) introduces the notion of 'fixing learning' as a strategy for developing greater mastery. This involves providing children with a concrete way of remembering what the learning intention is and what is required of them. ''Fixing' involves providing aids that enable them to be aware of *how* they are learning in the course of developing new knowledge and to help them to make their implicit knowledge explicit...' (2006: 161). This can be an effective tool in practice (Fisher et al., 2006; Jacobs, 2004).

It has been suggested that levels of thinking become deeper as the learner moves from implicit to explicit understanding (Swartz and Perkins, 1989; Adey and Shayer, 2002; Jones 2008). By verbalising their thought processes children are able to explore concepts and share strategies when engaged in writing tasks. However, the frameworks developed by Swartz and Perkins

(1989) and adapted by Williams and Fisher (2002), (Table 2, p. 13) view the child as an independent learner and make no reference to the sociocultural aspects of learning and thinking.

There is no indication in either framework that children may move between the different levels at different points during a writing task or use a different level of thinking according to their prior experience or conceptual understanding of a given genre. An important aspect of this study is to identify children's learning responses, within naturalistic classroom contexts, in order to explore their understanding of their own and others' thought processes.

## 2.5 Using talk to develop awareness in thinking

Developing children's awareness of their own thinking during writing can be highlighted by the provision of thought-provoking tasks which encourage collaborative interaction and place value on children's thinking and reasoning (Mercer, 2000; Jones, 2008). Littleton et al. (2005) identify exploratory talk, where children are engaged in collaborative work, as having particular significance to the development of awareness in thinking. Within the context of this study, exploratory talk provides a foundation for the development of a community of inquiry in the classroom and encourages the 'active joint engagement of children with one another's ideas' (Littleton et al., 2005:169).

Exploratory talk, originally conceived by Barnes (1976; 1992), allows critical challenges to be identified through explicit reasoning within a framework of collaboration. However, this process of shared inquiry needs to be structured with guidance given by the teacher to allow children to move forward in their learning (Mercer and Dawes, 2008). Exploratory talk can be used to encourage children's engagement in speculative discussion where hypotheses can be formed. It has also been suggested that if children are encouraged to think aloud they are able to begin hypothesising and speculating, clarifying their thoughts and ideas (Dawes, 2005). Mercer (2000) describes children's involvement in the joint construction of meaning

as 'inter thinking'; pupils are required to voice their thoughts aloud in sustained discussion with other pupils. It also requires children to use speculative words and phrases to describe their thought processes; an area of writing which will be explored further in a later section.

Mercer and Littleton (2007) suggest that some classroom research highlights the fact that children often work alongside each other rather than with each other. To overcome this issue, they emphasise the need for direct instruction, as well as teacher modelling, to ensure children can develop meaningful exploratory talk:

> *For children to become more able in using language as a tool for both solitary and collective thinking, they need involvement in thoughtful and reasoned dialogue, in which their teachers 'model' using language to reason, to reflect, to enquire, and to explain their thinking to others.*

(Mercer and Littleton, 2007: 49)

This study of cases not only highlights the role that the teacher plays in modelling the language of critical reasoning but also in ensuring that children have a clear understanding of the key concepts and concept vocabulary needed for reasoning, reflecting and enquiring. Jones (2008) and Littleton et al. (2005) argue that the encouragement of exploratory talk in the classroom develops children's awareness of the writing process. Furthermore, Shayer and Adey (2002: 6) emphasise the importance of language as providing the 'tools for thought':

> *Vygotsky's emphasis on language as a mediator of learning suggests not only that meaning is constructed as children talk amongst themselves and discuss with adults, but also that language provides the tools for thought.*

However, if children are to become more aware of their own thought processes, they need to be encouraged to practise and use the appropriate technical or descriptive vocabulary required for conveying those mental processes.

Williams (2000) demonstrates how teachers can model their own thought processes, to support children in the development of this skill, by vocalising their own thinking. This has been termed 'think aloud' and is a strategy used

by many teachers in primary schools whereby children can be encouraged to develop awareness of their own thought processes. A 'think aloud' may need to be rehearsed in groups or pairs and questions used to probe children's awareness of the thought processes involved. Similarly, Larkin (2010) considers children's acquisition of knowledge regarding their own cognitive processes to be crucial to their development as writers. Larkin also presents questions which she believes are designed to stimulate reflection on the process of writing e.g., 'How am I thinking about this?' and 'Would it be better if I thought about this differently?' (2010: 65)

However, when modelling these 'think aloud' questions teachers need to be aware that their modelled answers are as important as the questions. Further research into the impact that teacher modelled 'think alouds' have on the children's ability to discuss their own thought processes is needed.

Williams and Fisher (2006: 107) conclude that engagement in writing itself can support the development of children's awareness of their own thinking on three levels:

- Knowledge of task: what is the writing task – its form, audience and purpose?
- Knowledge of process: what do you do – draft, revise, edit, share?
- Knowledge of self: what kind of writer are you – what helps you write well?

This would only appear to be beneficial if children have been engaged in joint inquiry throughout the writing process where each task nurtures young writers to explore their own and others' knowledge of task, process and self.

The present study explores the complex range of thinking required of children when they are involved in specific genre writing tasks. It highlights the interrelationship between these levels of thinking, the conceptual understanding of a task and ways in which Year 3 children integrate new ideas into their existing knowledge base. There is a need for teachers to model not only the end product that is required but also the process involved in genre writing. In this way children can be encouraged to move from 'knowledge telling,' that is the retelling of modelled ideas, to a deeper

awareness of the strategies they choose in order to complete a task and to give reasons for their choice of particular strategies.

## 2.6 Thinking skills in the National Curriculum

It is interesting to note that the new National Curriculum (DfE, 2013) alludes to the use of thinking skills, yet the term is not readily used in current documentation.

Larkin (2010: 143) illuminates the place of thinking skills within the National Curriculum when she argues that:

> *Thinking skills were seen to be based on theories of constructivist learning which foreground the learner as an active participant in creating knowledge and understanding. Their effect on learning was to give children the skills of inquiry enabling them to go beyond the given; to cope with new and complex tasks; to take a critical stance towards material; and to communicate* ideas.

There is an emphasis on the development of self-awareness and self-knowledge in the policy document 'Excellence and Enjoyment: Learning and Teaching in the Primary Years' (DfES, 2004). This document includes strategies for developing reflection (to be discussed later in this chapter) and self-evaluation as well as the statement that children should be encouraged to 'think about their own thinking' (DfES, 2004: 15). In addition, the new National Curriculum for English Key Stages 1 and 2 (DfE, 2013: 10) states that:

> *Pupils…should learn to justify ideas with reasons; ask questions to check understanding; develop vocabulary and build knowledge; negotiate; evaluate and build on the ideas of others; and select the appropriate register for effective communication. They should be taught to give well-structured descriptions and explanations and develop their understanding through speculating, hypothesising and exploring ideas. This will enable them to clarify their thinking as well as organise their ideas for writing.*

This appears to encourage the use of strategies such as 'think aloud' and calls for the provision of opportunities for children to engage in exploratory talk as discussed in the previous section. However, it provides no specific

guidance for teachers on ways in which this type of exploratory talk can be structured to promote thinking skills.

During the last few decades a variety of thinking skills programmes or approaches have been designed to develop children's awareness of their own thought processes (Dewey and Bento, 2009). Some of the approaches are used within the context of children's learning environments and operate across the curriculum. One of these approaches is entitled 'Activating Children's Thinking Skills' (ACTS). ACTS is an on-going project, which began in 1995, and was set up 'to develop and trial a methodology for enhancing thinking skills in upper primary classrooms in Northern Ireland' (McGuiness, 2000). ACTS uses an infusion approach, as advocated by Swartz and Perkins (1989), where curriculum content and thinking skills are developed together, with thinking skills mapped across the curriculum. Emphasis is placed on encouraging children to reflect explicitly on the learning and thinking strategies used during activities.

In their book 'Teaching Thinking: Issues and Approaches' (1989) Swartz and Perkins used the term 'infusion' to describe their approach to the teaching of thinking. This approach is not subject specific and encourages the teaching of thinking skills across the curriculum. Swartz and Perkins (1989: 68) advocate 'infusing teaching for thinking into everyday classroom instruction by restructuring the way traditional curriculum materials are used'. They highlight ways in which teachers could infuse thinking skills into lesson content 'based on a blending of metacognitive awareness of the appropriate forms of thinking to be used and reflection on new and varied examples' (ibid). In this way, they argue, pupils would become aware of the skill or strategy being used and develop an understanding of how to apply these in other learning contexts. They describe an infusion lesson as having the following features:

- The active, structured use of thinking skills
- Creating an awareness, by pupils, of the thinking that they are doing
- Varied, reflective practice in applying the skill. (ibid: 87)

These features are reflected in the levels of awareness in thinking they considered to be increasingly metacognitive. Although Swartz and Perkins

stressed the importance of 'varied, reflective practice in applying' thinking skills (1989: 87) they tend to portray the child as an independent thinker. This does not take into consideration the context in which the learning takes place or the part played by children's sociocultural differences and prior experiences.

Despite certain shortcomings, programmes connected to the development of thinking skills do go some way to recognising the importance of encouraging children to become more aware of their own thought processes as they engage in learning tasks. The foundation upon which many thinking skills programmes are built reflects the influence of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (1956). Bloom presented a model which categorised the thinking processes into various levels highlighting how tasks involving knowledge and comprehension represent a relatively low level of cognitive engagement, whereas, analysis, synthesis and evaluation require a higher level of thought or cognitive engagement. This taxonomy was revised by Anderson et al. (2001) with the main differences being:

- Rewording noun categories into verbs, e.g.
    - Knowledge – Remember
    - Comprehension – Understand
    - Application – Apply
    - Analysis – Analyse
    - Synthesis – Evaluate
    - Evaluation - Create
- Repositioning and rewording the last two categories
- Additions illustrating how the taxonomy interrelates with different types of knowledge – factual, conceptual, procedural and metacognitive

The revised taxonomy is a useful tool for teachers when planning learning objectives and determining which levels of cognition as well as which dimensions of knowledge they require from their pupils.

It is within the context of these ideas on the development of thinking skills and children's levels of awareness of their own thought processes and

cognitive engagement that this study is set. By exploring children's writing experiences and responses within a naturalistic classroom context, it is possible to identify some aspects of the interrelationship between children's awareness of their own thought processes alongside their ability to understand key concepts and integrate those concepts into their existing knowledge base. Furthermore, this study raises questions about the cumulative hierarchy of thought processes described originally by Swartz and Perkins (1989) and investigates ways in which children adapt their thinking to suit different writing tasks. In this study the term 'thinking' is used as a broadly inclusive term in order to provide a richer discussion of children's conceptual understanding in writing.

### 2.6.1 Levels of awareness in thinking

Swartz et al. (2007), drawing on Swartz and Perkins' (1989) original framework, highlight ways in which pupils visit and revisit different levels of thinking when engaged in a range of learning tasks. They use the metaphor of a ladder to describe the development of thinking skills, which they argue to be increasingly metacognitive, within the learning situation. This ladder is viewed as a further framework for the development of pupils' knowledge and understanding of their own thought processes and was designed to encourage the habit of skilful and enriched thinking in a progressive way. Pupils are asked to examine and explain their thought processes before, during and after each task.

On the first rung of the ladder pupils are asked to describe what kind of thinking they will be, are, or were doing. At this stage pupils are encouraged to identify and classify their thought processes. In this way they become aware of the different kinds of thinking they employ during specific tasks. Moving to the second rung of the ladder requires pupils to describe the sequence of their thought processes and explain how they will, are, or have approached a task. At this stage pupils are not only aware of what kinds of thinking they are doing but also how they are using those thought processes. On rung three of the ladder pupils are asked to evaluate the effectiveness of

the thinking strategies they chose to employ before, during and after a task. The final rung of the ladder involves the ability to plan ahead and transfer the most effective thinking strategies to other learning situations.

The 'ladder of metacognition' has been used, within classrooms, as an approach to encourage pupils to develop awareness of their own and others' thought processes within different learning contexts. However, this approach has not been applied to this study as the core themes of the study do not deal with the development of metacognition but rather seek to identify the different levels of thinking employed by children, when engaged in specific genre writing tasks, both with and without adult intervention. A key aspect of this study is to highlight the interrelationship between children's prior knowledge and conceptual understanding of a task as well as their ability to be aware of the thought processes that help them to complete the task successfully.

Whilst the 'ladder of metacognition' represents a framework that can be used as a teaching approach the earlier framework, developed by Swartz and Perkins (1989) and adapted for use during this study (see Chapter 1), has been used in order to identify children's levels of thinking within a naturalistic classroom environment.

Swartz and Perkins describe pupils' 'tacit use' of their thought processes as being 'a kind of thinking – say decision making – without thinking about it' (1989: 52). Perkins refers to tacit learners as being 'unaware of their metacognitive knowledge' (2008: 102).   Likewise, Williams and Fisher, when applying the levels of awareness to writing, define 'tacit use' as 'children making decisions without really thinking about them' (2002: 12).   However, within the context of this study the use of the word 'tacit' has been examined carefully in relation to the Oxford dictionary definition of the word 'tacit' as something that is 'not openly expressed or stated, but implied.' Therefore the identification of children's tacit responses needs to be examined within the context of their prior knowledge and understanding of the key concepts related to each genre writing task.

Both Swartz and Perkins (1989) and Williams and Fisher (2002) describe pupils who display awareness of their own and other's thought processes as being consciously aware of when they have used a strategy or decision making process. For example:

> *In aware use, you are aware that and when you are generating options. This is valuable in the development of thinking for several reasons. It helps you see what role option finding plays in your overall pattern of thinking. It may also help you recognize when you need to seek options; through awareness, you are likely to find occasions where you tend to follow your first impulse but should not. It may help you focus attention and increase effort: knowing that you are generating possibilities, you may stick to the task better.*

(Swartz and Perkins, 1989: 53)

I would argue that children can be viewed as being aware of their thought processes when they can make their thinking explicit and can describe what and how they are thinking. Careful questioning, within the context of specific genre learning situations, can encourage children to express this awareness. As children develop an understanding of effective writing strategies through experimentation and application, an awareness of how to approach further writing tasks can grow.

However, this presents a certain blurring of the boundaries between children's aware use and their strategic use of thinking. Perkins (2008: 102) describes what he believes to be the difference between aware learners and strategic learners:

> *Aware learners know about some of the kinds of thinking they do – generating ideas, finding evidence – but are not strategic in their thinking. Strategic learners organize their thinking by using problem-solving, decision making, evidence seeking and other kinds of strategies.*

Confident writers think carefully about the cognitive processes they are using when constructing a text and make strategic decisions. I would argue that children can be identified as making strategic use of their thought processes when they select strategies and apply them at various points during a writing task and are able to explain why and how they have chosen those strategies. Swartz and Perkins state '…*strategic* use of option finding means that you

are consciously directing your thinking, deploying strategies in order to generate more and better possibilities.' (1989: 53). Whilst they argue this encourages children to achieve higher levels in thinking as their writing develops, I would argue that 'strategic use' can be employed by children at different stages of a writing task.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word reflective, when related to mental processes, as the ability to think meditatively, that is, the application of the mind to sustained thinking. Educational theorists (Shayer and Adey, 2002; Fisher et al., 2010; Larkin, 2010) have referred to learning where pupils engage in careful consideration of ideas to gain a deeper understanding as being reflective. Reflection '…necessitates being able to hold in the mind different variables simultaneously – to think about how one is processing information whilst actually working on a task – and then to remember how one worked on a task in order to reflect upon it.' (Larkin, 2010: 65) In this way children are able to explore why and how they have chosen specific learning strategies, explain their thinking and evaluate ideas about their practice.

Reflective thinking involves using a number of skills including asking questions, making connections, reasoning, considering alternatives, drawing conclusions and making judgements. In this study reflective thinking is identified when children display these skills. Swartz and Perkins' (1989: 53) description of reflective thinking has informed the present study:

> *…if reflective, you ponder in advance how to approach a particular task. You ask yourself afterward, "How did it go? Did the strategy serve well? How else could I approach this?" You may interrupt yourself midstream, asking, "Is this really going well? Am I on track? Should I switch strategies?"'*

However, I would argue that reflective thinking for Year 3 children relies to a certain degree on adult modelling, support and guidance before independent use during writing tasks.

Although reflection, where children are asked to develop an understanding of how they learn, evaluate their progress and identify areas for development, has become part of the personalised learning concept, it is not easily

observable in young writers as they often have difficulty in verbalising their thoughts. Personalised learning is characterised by its highly responsive approach to teaching and learning where the needs of individuals are met through high levels of participation by pupil, parent and teacher (Last, 2004). This idea relies heavily on children's ability to monitor, control and reflect on their own thinking in relation to self, task and strategies. It also relies on children having an understanding of, and ability to use, the language which allows them to talk about their thought processes:

> *For all children, purposeful reflection should be an integral part of the whole writing process. Before children embark on a new piece of writing, it is essential to look back on what they have recently completed. This reflection can have many different purposes for children, to reflect on what they have learned, to identify key areas for development and to move them forward as writers.*

(Hodson and Jones, 2001: 17)

There is limited evidence in prior research such as that of Fisher et al. (2006; 2010) to draw conclusions regarding children's abilities to reflect on the writing process. Hodson and Jones (2001) describe an environment where children are provided with opportunities to use prior learning to develop their writing skills. Children's abilities to reflect on prior learning to inform and manage new learning often requires skilful and repeated support from the practitioner. Much of this support involves developing children's knowledge of language, both to aid conceptual understanding and provide them with the language tools necessary for meaningful reflection.


## 2.7 Language for thinking

Larkin (2010) claims that one reason why reflective thought has been recognised as developing in older children is that younger children are not considered able to use 'mental state' words. These are defined as words which show the ability to talk about our own thought processes, e.g. 'think', 'know', 'imagine', 'believe', 'guess', 'remember', 'knew' (Larkin, 2010).

Children need to gain knowledge of how language can be used for reflection and how it is structured to develop as writers. Metalinguistic knowledge is

concerned with knowledge of how language works, e.g. sentence structure, punctuation, grammar, spelling and genre (Gombert, 1993). It is worth considering how important the knowledge of linguistic terminology and mental state words are for children to develop as successful writers. When approaching linguistic terminology, Wray et al. (2002: 134) found 'effective' teachers '…begin by demonstrating particular language features in use within a clear context before deriving a definition…Children in the classes of these teachers were thus much more heavily involved in problem solving and theorising about language for themselves rather than simply being given 'facts' to learn'.

Wray et al. (2002) present the idea that it is necessary for children to acquire knowledge of linguistic terminology as language needs to be explored and discussed as a joint action between child and teacher, requiring a shared vocabulary to be created and built upon. It is this interaction between teacher and pupil which helps to develop knowledge and understanding of key concept vocabulary and how language works within different genres.

As children mature, and experience these types of words in various contexts, they begin to understand them but may not always use them correctly. Jacobs' (2004) classroom-based research supports the view that even young children are capable of displaying awareness of their own thinking within the context of thought provoking learning situations. Her research indicates that when children are exposed to sets of predictable questions related to their writing, as suggested by Graves (1994), they become more able to acquire and use the vocabulary necessary for talking about their thinking. Jacobs uses evidence such as the children being able to use mental state words like 'thinking', 'mind', 'idea' and 'remembered' (2004: 22) as an indication that they were able to think about their own thinking regarding the writing process.

However, the presence of mental state words such as those used by the children in Jacobs' (2004) study is not necessarily an indication of their ability to monitor and reflect upon writing activities effectively. 'Studies of language development have shown that an understanding of these words develops

during the early years, but 6- and 7-year-old children may still use these mental state words inconsistently' (Larkin, 2010: 112). An important aspect in the development of writing in young children is the teacher's ability to model the language of thinking and learning. In this way children can be given opportunities to use language to aid both conceptual understanding and develop awareness of their own thinking regarding a writing task.

The acquisition of language and ability to manipulate vocabulary fluently is central to achieving success as a writer. Sinatra (2008: 176) argues that certain strategies can be applied to aid language development in children, leading to more competent readers and writers and an increased ability to deal with a wider variety of writing tasks. One suggested strategy is to engage children in topic-based work. This allows children to experience and use language in creative ways across the curriculum. Children are able to build connections between words developing their own taxonomy or classification system. It could be suggested that the knowledge of relationships between words and ability to understand the meanings of words in different contexts enables new learning to take place within a range of contexts.

The investigation of language in relation to the writing process draws on the research of Johnson and Pearson (1984) and Duke and Moses (2003). They argue that engagement in analogy tasks encourages playful interaction between word relationships, creating classification systems through direct comparison, thus impacting on children's development in literacy. Blachowicz et al. (2006) use the term 'semantic relatedness' to describe the ability to consider how words and concepts are related. This can be illustrated through the example of exploring the language associated with formal letter writing presented in chapters 4 and 5.

The understanding of key concepts and concept vocabulary, when engaged in genre writing tasks, is as important as the understanding of key concepts in mathematics and science. Poor understanding of a task can leave young children confused and lacking confidence in their ability as writers. If encouraged to think about the writing process and develop an understanding

of language use, children can begin to transfer their knowledge to genres which are less familiar.

## 2.8 Concepts, principles and learning

The nature of concepts and conceptual development has been, and continues to be, the subject of much debate across different fields in education (Luntley, 2008; Reiss and Tunnicliffe, 1999). It is not my intention to add to these debates but rather acknowledge them as differing approaches and adopt a broad view of the meaning of conceptual development in line with its use in current educational documentation; 'Could do Better' (Oates, 2010) and the Independent Review of Key Stage 2 Testing, Assessment and Accountability: Final Report (Bew, 2011). I acknowledge that educational inquiry is characterised by constant shifts in emphasis, as in the case of research into conceptual development. However, this study explores the interrelationship between children's awareness of their own thought processes, their conceptual understanding and ability to integrate new ideas into their existing knowledge base using the language of current documentation to achieve clarity and aid pedagogy. By placing the study firmly within a naturalistic setting and school-based genre writing contexts the relationship between concepts, thought processes as well as knowledge and understanding of language can be considered clearly.

Researchers such as Davidson (1982), Brandom (2000) and Tomasello et al. (2003) argue that natural language acquisition is necessary for conceptual understanding. The study of concepts highlights the conflict between different theories of the nature and origins of concepts:

- Empiricism - views the origin of concepts in experience
- Pragmatism - views the origin of concepts in their practical use for action and problem solving
- Rationalism - views the origin of concepts as an innate part of rational nature which can be activated by purposeful reasoning.

Many cognitive psychologists and educators view the development of conceptual understanding as an active process of adaptation to new and different experiences with new concepts reflecting cognitive change (Carey, 1985; Bloom and German, 2000; Ozdemir and Clark, 2007). The socioculturist view emphasises the role of mediation in conceptual development where pupils are given opportunities to regularly discuss and reflect on their learning with both adults and peers in order to support their understanding of new concepts. Every day pupils engage in activities at school and at home which require them to conceptualise their thinking and learning. Verbal conceptualisation follows the structure of language and requires children to verbalise their thinking, both implicitly and explicitly, as they develop their ideas together.

Debate surrounding the former English National Curriculum (QCA, 1999) and analysis of some of its problems has been emphasised in the paper 'Could do better' (Oates, 2010: 9) which sets curriculum review within an international context. It argues for a stronger focus on concepts, principles, fundamental operations and key knowledge:

> *There is strong empirical and theoretical evidence for a very strong focus on concepts and principles. Transnational comparisons make clear that high-performing systems indeed focus on concepts and principles.*

The focus of my thesis, by exploring children's understanding of key concepts within school-based learning contexts, allows for links to be made with current educational initiatives and provides a rich discussion about ways in which children display their conceptual understanding of genre related writing tasks. Oates (2010: 9) refers to the need for teachers to develop children's understanding of concepts and principles in their learning emphasising the importance of providing opportunities for children to develop an understanding of key concepts during the learning process:

> *Concepts and principles are critical. The specific information embedded in contexts can decay into mere 'noise' unless individuals have concepts and principles to organise and interpret the content of those contexts.*

Oates (2010) also suggests that, alongside the focus on concepts and principles 'deep learning' is a key factor in the success of high-performing countries and needs to be considered when making changes to the National Curriculum. 'Deep learning', derived from the original research by Marton and Saljo (1976), is defined as an equilibrium where the learner not only retains but is able to transfer learning into other contexts. By making connections across different aspects of their learning, deep learners become more aware of their own thought processes and can understand the implications of using different approaches to their learning.

Being able to transfer learning to other contexts is a key aspect of writing development as once the concepts and skills required for one genre have been mastered, young writers are expected to transfer some of these to other genres. This involves utilising prior knowledge and understanding of concepts and principles within the context of new learning. Concepts may be ideas, symbols, processes or events although 'most concepts do not represent a unique object or event but rather a general class linked by a common element or relationship' (Johnson & Pearson 1984: 33). Concept vocabulary refers to those words that encapsulate a thought or idea. Some concept vocabulary expresses abstract ideas which are difficult to understand without concrete examples. The vocabulary of position (above, below, behind, around, between), of time (before, after, first, last) and of quantity (more, less, few, many) represent just a small part of the concept vocabulary used in primary classrooms.

The ability to understand the meanings of words in different contexts as well as knowledge of the relationships between words (categories, opposites, synonyms, word associations) supports the learning of new ideas. However, words are only the verbal representation of a concept and, in order to develop a better understanding, children need to be given opportunities to make connections between concept and word through practical learning experiences. If children cannot retain an understanding of the meaning of concept vocabulary they will have difficulty in understanding new ideas as well as expressing their own ideas.

The development of knowledge and understanding of key concepts and concept vocabulary in literacy is a recursive process. As children revisit ideas and word meanings, within different learning situations, their knowledge and understanding of these ideas grows and evolves:

> *A concept, for example, will continually evolve every time it is used, because new situations, negotiations, and activities inevitably recast it in a slightly different form. So a concept, like the meaning of a word, is always under construction.*

(Wray et al., 2006: 62)

However, in order to be able to understand and use new key concept vocabulary effectively children need to be given opportunities to explore its multiple dimensions (Bromley, 2012). This may include:

- Investigating the relationship of new vocabulary within the children's prior knowledge and understanding of similar vocabulary
- Identifying the correct grammatical use of the new vocabulary (e.g., noun, verb, adjective) within the context of writing
- Understanding the significance and meaning of new concept vocabulary within genre related contexts.

The growth of conceptual understanding relies on children being able to build on prior conceptual knowledge and then interpret and apply their understanding to different learning situations.

Sinatra highlights the importance of a teacher's awareness of 'concept density' (2008: 180). The teacher needs to consider the degree of concept density and the assumed knowledge and understanding of the children when constructing initial encounters with writing tasks. Concept density can be measured by the breadth of knowledge and understanding an individual must draw upon to interpret or bring meaning to an unfamiliar concept. The broader the meanings related to the concept, the greater density it can be said to have. Chapter 5, of this study, highlights some ways in which 'concept density' affects children's responses to specific genre writing tasks due to their conceptual demands.

Although this study aims to investigate some of the ways in which children use their prior knowledge of genre writing, the focus is not on how they organise this prior knowledge into schemata, a theory discussed subsequently but not adopted for the purposes of the current study. For many Year 3 children some school-based genre writing is unfamiliar and presents a challenge where new information, concepts and concept vocabulary are met for the first time. If support for understanding these concepts is not given then young writers may experience difficulties when writing.  It is for this reason that the study focuses on Year 3 children's understanding of key concepts and how this understanding may be transferred to new or unfamiliar writing genres encountered within the classroom. The interrelationship between children's awareness of their thought processes when engaged in genre related writing tasks and ability to integrate new concepts into their existing knowledge base plays a key role in supporting young writers to transfer their knowledge and understanding to new learning situations. The focus of this thesis therefore is not an exhaustive study of the debate surrounding theories of conceptual development but rather the underlying principle of conceptual understanding as described in current educational documentation.


## 2.9 Prior knowledge and new learning

Wray et al. (2006) consider the development of learning to be dependent upon the interaction between what a child already knows and what they are in the process of learning. Williams and Fisher (2002) attempt to extend this idea by arguing that effective learning is not just about placing new knowledge on top of what is already understood, but about illuminating the process of learning itself. By making the learning process explicit, the learner is able to think about what has been assimilated and make connections with new learning. I would argue that if children are encouraged to discuss prior learning experiences alongside new learning this enables them to make essential connections that enhance their understanding of new writing tasks.

Each child arrives in the classroom with a unique collection of understanding created through individual and sociocultural experiences. The teacher's task is to enable connections to be made between these unique and shared experiences. However, teachers need to be careful not to make generalized assumptions about children's understanding when introducing a new topic (Myhill and Brackley, 2004; Myhill et al., 2006; Wray et al., 2006). Teachers need to explore the prior knowledge children may have developed outside the classroom and consider this before introducing a topic. Likewise, it should not be assumed that children can make connections independently between what has been learned within the classroom environment in the past and what is being taught during the present. Children may not be able to make connections if they have not had opportunities to transfer and apply their knowledge and understanding of a topic across a range of learning situations and wider learning environments.

Edwards and Mercer (1987) describe the connection between prior knowledge, that which is in their existing knowledge base, and new learning as 'the given and the new.' They argue that meaningful connections need to be made aiding the development of conceptual understanding or 'principled understanding' (1987: 95) and it is through talk that connections can be found and principled understanding built. Mercer (2000) emphasises the importance of classroom dialogue in the development of principled understanding. Mercer drew on the work of Vygotsky (1978) by highlighting that language is the corner stone of learning and an essential tool for the formation of knowledge. '…language provides us with a means for *thinking together*, for jointly creating knowledge and understanding' (Mercer, 2000: 15).

Similarly, Myhill et al. (2006: 28) argue 'that altering our speaking and listening practices as teachers is a powerful tool in promoting learning' as talk is the device which aids the structure and development of new learning. Teacher and pupil talk can facilitate the formation of connections between what is known and what is to be learnt.

*Through talk, children can articulate for themselves what they know and understand, and the process of verbalizing thought in words helps to crystallize emerging understandings.*

(Myhill et al. 2006: 23)

During the process of his research into classroom interactions, Mercer (2000: 52) developed five strategies to facilitate effective links between children's prior knowledge and knowledge to be introduced: notably,

- Recap – brief review of earlier experiences;
- Elicitation – usually to draw out information;
- Repetition – repeating what a child says either to confirm or question the response;
- Reformation – paraphrase;
- Exhortation – 'try and remember' questions asking for recall.

A majority of the above are well developed ways in which teachers introduce new learning in the primary classroom. Each type of interaction presented by Mercer (2000) usually takes place during a lesson introduction and can be observed in current practice.

Myhill et al. (2006) argue that prior knowledge is rarely explored in any depth during this time as teachers tend to rely on the Initiation-Response-Feedback model (IRF). This model has been heavily criticised as it does not allow children's understanding to be explored in any depth (Jones, 2008). This suggestion calls into question the value of Mercer's (2000) strategies and need to develop them further in order to break away from their use solely during lesson introductions.

In recognition of this Wergerif et al. (2004) have since developed the 'Thinking Together' approach through sustained classroom-based research designed to inform pedagogy. This approach encourages children to think and reason together during learning experiences across the curriculum. Whilst greater mastery over language is essential in the development of children's learning across the curriculum, the Thinking Together approach assumes all children have the ability to engage in sustained and meaningful interactions in every subject area. It must be recognised that children's abilities to engage in meaningful dialogues will vary greatly from task to task

and from subject to subject depending on the nature of their prior sociocultural and academic experiences.

Myhill et al. (2006) promote the use of paired discussion or partner talk throughout literacy lessons so that a shift away from the traditional IRF model can be achieved. Myhill et al. (2006) emphasise the importance of asking children to share their own experiences within the context of classroom learning. Mercer supports the exploration of common or prior knowledge during classroom interactions, commenting 'In order to combine their intellectual efforts, people have to create foundations of common, contextualising knowledge' (2000: 44). Whether younger children have the necessary skills to understand how another's learning strategies can be utilised to enhance their own learning is a matter for further consideration. However, through shared experience and the contextualisation of learning researchers such as Myhill et al. (2006) and Wergerif et al. (2004) argue it is possible that an understanding of new information or conceptualisation of the writing process can be reached.

Mercer (2000: 44) suggests contextual resources can be used to enhance connections between prior knowledge and new instruction. These can be discovered in:

- the physical surrounding;
- the past shared experience and relationships of speakers;
- the speakers' shared task or goals;
- the speakers' experience of similar kinds of conversation.

For these techniques to be used effectively, teachers need to make both formative and summative assessments regarding children's developing knowledge and understanding to ensure that new learning is built on firm foundations.

## 2.9.1 Schema theory

Schema theory first proposed by Bartlett (1932) and drawn upon by Piaget (1969; 1976), places prior knowledge at the centre of the development of new understanding. Recent research, such as that of Sinatra (2008), has drawn on schema theory to understand and highlight ways in which the activation of prior knowledge can support the development of new learning. Myhill et al. argue that 'Schema theory identifies prior knowledge as a fundamental contributor to the creation of new learning...' (2006: 21). Children's knowledge and understanding is shaped by the interaction between what they already know and their experiences with new ideas. This grows and develops as connections are made in their thinking so that they can structure and interpret new experiences, such as writing for different purposes. In whole class teaching children can be given opportunities to integrate what they hear with what they already know.

> *So children actively construct knowledge and understanding through interactions between their new knowledge and their previous knowledge; their understanding builds and accumulates upon prior understanding. Schemata of knowledge, stored in the long-term memory, are expanded and modified in the light of new and changing experiences or understanding.*

(Myhill et al. 2006: 23)

Schema theory argues that knowledge is organised into units within which information is stored. Children's prior knowledge and sociocultural experiences affect the development of each schema. For example,

> *Schemata can represent knowledge at all levels-from ideologies and cultural truths to knowledge about the meaning of a particular word, to knowledge about what patterns of excitations are associated with what letters of the alphabet. We have schemata to represent all levels of our experience, at all levels of abstraction. Finally, our schemata are our knowledge. All of our generic knowledge is embedded in schemata.*

(Rumelhart, 1980: 41)

In summary, the idea of cognitive schema has been presented as a tool to enhance thinking in younger pupils in order to develop understanding of new

learning and the ability to engage in writing tasks successfully by some researchers (Sinatra, 2008; Myhill et al., 2006). Within the context of this study schema theory has not formed part of the research and therefore has not been discussed in depth. Although schemas provide useful mental frameworks whereby learners can organise and interpret the range of information available to them in their environment, in some situations, pupils may be prevented from exploring new ideas because they do not conform to their pre-existing beliefs and ideas. Genre writing in Year 3 not only presents children with new and unfamiliar forms and formats but also introduces them to new concepts and concept vocabulary. It is important that, during this pivotal transition year, children are not confined by prior knowledge but are given opportunities to explore new ideas and develop an understanding of the fundamental concepts and principles relating to a writing task in order for them to construct their own unique strategies to support future learning. This study recognises the importance of identifying ways in which children display their understanding of key concepts and concept vocabulary and integrate new ideas into their existing knowledge base whilst, at the same time, exploring the interrelationship between their conceptual understanding and awareness of their own and other's thinking when engaged in genre writing tasks.

## 2.10 Writing as a social process

As discussed previously, many educational theorists such as Mercer (2000) and Alexander (2004) advocate the importance of purposeful interaction, especially talk, in the development of children's ability to think, reason and reflect on their learning. Jones (2008) considers talk to be fundamental in the process of enabling children's implicit thought to become explicit. Likewise, Larkin (2010) argues that it is through talk that children are able to bring their thoughts to a conscious level and in this way knowledge is socially constructed. Vygotsky (1962) presented the idea that words are tools for thought and through the development of this consciousness, children begin to understand how they learn and acquire ownership of this process.

It is important to consider how children gain self-awareness and awareness of others and understand their connection to other people and their environment when looking at how they develop as writers. The view that writing is a social process needs to be considered carefully. A great deal of research since the 1970s has focused on developmental and cognitive psychology and information processing models related to writing such as that by Hayes and Flower (1980). However, research in the field of social psychology is extremely relevant when searching for evidence of writing as a social process in younger children.

Many children enter school with a general knowledge of the purpose of text and some of its different forms. Most have been exposed to text in their everyday world in a variety of forms and formats and will have formed ideas relating to its purpose (Clipson-Boyles, 2012). It would appear that, for many children, their language development both oral and written is commensurate with their social and emotional maturity. This is confirmed by Myhill (2010: 13) who argues that 'Language development in writing is predominantly a social process, heavily influenced by children's home and school experiences of talk, but also by their growing encounters with talk, both as producers of text and consumers of texts'. However, teachers need to be aware that some children enter school with little knowledge and understanding of the way written language works:

> *...there is also a need to understand that the nature of the writing process includes the writer being aware of the larger linguistic community of which they are part. The context in which we sit down to write, along with our perceptions of the task and needs of the audience, influences the ways in which we communicate our written message.*

(Larkin, 2010: 80)

In my experience as a classroom practitioner I have found that children can develop knowledge of the larger linguistic community by engaging in meaningful collaborative writing tasks and drawing on their wider knowledge of the world. For example, this might include writing about experiences that have taken place outside the classroom such as educational visits. In order for children to view writing as something that is constructed socially and

practised with others there is need to give them opportunities to take part in a range of writing activities both in and outside classroom contexts. If a task is truly collaborative, requiring a certain amount of negotiation to take place, then the development of children's awareness of their own and each other's thought processes is encouraged.

Kellogg (1994) describes writing as a social process as it is a way of communicating which depends on the learner's ability to use their writing skills to express their thoughts and ideas and to develop an awareness of the reader.

> *For young writers, a significant social development which interacts with language development in writing is being able to write for a reader, rather than wholly for oneself…As children mature, they become more confident shaping text with readers in mind, although sophisticated mastery of the reader-writer relationship remains a problem even in secondary school (and beyond!).*

(Myhill, 2010: 13)

Researchers such as Myhill (2010) and Perera (1987) suggest that children's awareness of the reader is evident in the type of language they use and the complexity of syntactical structures within their writing. In addition, I would argue that the genre of writing can greatly affect a child's ability to be reader aware. When children are aware of a wider audience, they are able to reflect on the success of their writing with the reader in mind.

Larkin summarises the importance of a child's own consciousness by arguing that '...social interaction and especially talk is important for developing higher levels of reflection. It is through sharing and explaining our ideas that we bring our own thinking to conscious awareness' (2010: 114). It has been argued previously that this is dependent upon a learner's ability to engage in self-reflection.

Translating spoken words into written form is explored in both the 'Talk to Text' project (Fisher et al., 2006) and 'Talk for Writing' project (DCSF, 2008). These were both based on a social constructivist view of learning and explored the talk/writing interface in a similar way to the simple view of writing (Berninger et al., 2002). Findings from all three research projects

suggest that teaching strategies which support learners in externalising and sharing their thinking as they become involved in different aspects of the writing process are beneficial for young writers.

Developing writing through talk should not be a linear process but reciprocal in the sense that children should be allowed to initiate and respond to new writing experiences, generating ideas and forming concepts through interactions which promote higher levels of thinking.

This alludes to the importance of dialogic teaching (Alexander, 2004) to enhance learning in the primary classroom, encouraging the transfer of learning. Wray et al. (2006: 52) illustrate the role of the teacher in this process:

> *...the role of the teacher is to facilitate discovery by providing the necessary resources and by guiding learners as they attempt to assimilate new knowledge to old and to modify the old to accommodate the new. Teachers must take into account the knowledge that the learner currently possesses when deciding how to construct the curriculum and to present, sequence, and structure new material.*

Alexander (2006) argues how the quality of classroom dialogue facilitated by the teacher can influence cognition and learning. Therefore Alexander (2004) advocates the use of dialogic talk to promote and extend learning opportunities. Dialogic talk is central to the earlier thinking of Bakhtin (1981) who argued that spoken interactions allowed learners to form new meanings which could diverge from prior understanding.

Mere repetition or reformation of children's oral contributions is no longer sufficient (Alexander, 2004). Pedagogic practice needs to change so that both dialogic teaching and exploratory talk become the predominant tools to facilitate enquiry in the classroom, nurturing 'higher levels of interaction and cognitive engagement' (Smith et al., 2004: 408). The development of dialogic talk in the classroom is also dependent on the provision of thinking time instead of the expectation of an immediate response (Alexander, 2004; Smith, 2005). The Mad Hatter's rude interruption as Alice is trying to

formulate her thoughts is illustrative of the importance of teachers allowing time for children to think about their responses:

*Alice:* *"I don't think – "*

*Mad Hatter:* *"Then you shouldn't talk,"*

(from *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll)

It can be seen that a number of educational theorists (Alexander, 2004; Wergerif et al., 2002; Mercer, 2000) emphasise the importance of social interaction, especially exploratory talk, in the development of higher levels of thinking when engaged in the writing process. Likewise, Larkin (2010) argues that through talk children are able to bring their thoughts to a conscious level and in this way knowledge is socially constructed.  It would appear that collaborative thinking and social interaction do play an important part in the development of children's writing. However, the role of the teacher in providing collaborative thinking opportunities during writing sessions needs to be explored further.


## 2.11 Writing as a situated process

Theory surrounding the process of learning accepts that children need to contextualise their learning. Indeed, Wray et al. argue that 'All learning is temporary and contextually situated' (2006: 62). Yet it has only been during the last two decades that the context for learning has been considered as important as the skills and knowledge introduced within that context (Lave and Wenger, 1991). If a child has moved beyond the bounds of mere transcription in the writing process, teachers frequently have difficulty in understanding why they may have difficulty in using different forms and formats when writing across the curriculum. Wray et al. (2006: 61) explain that:

*Traditionally education has often assumed a separation between learning and the use of learning, treating knowledge as a self-sufficient substance, theoretically independent of the situations in which it is learned and used. The primary concern of schools has often seemed to be the teaching of this substance, which comprised*

*abstract, decontextualised, formal concepts. The activity and context in which learning took place were thus regarded as ancillary to learning...*

In view of the recent research into situated learning and cognition, in particular that of Wray et al. (2002; 2006), it could be argued that learning to write, particularly across a range of text types, is context dependent. Therefore, the mental processes in operation during this time are fundamentally situated. The skill of writing in a particular genre is not easily applied to another context as *what* is learned cannot be separated from *how* it is learned. The writing task itself becomes a fundamental part of what is learned.

Myhill comments that 'Learning to write is not simply about learning how to generate written text; it is about learning how to create meaning through text' (2010: 6). Therefore the *how* of learning becomes more, or as, important than the *what*. The teacher must take account of the fact that every child brings with them their own social experience of writing. Experiences of writing at home for some children can be 'social and functional' (Nixon and Topping, 2001: 44), providing children with a reason for writing within the context of the home. In the classroom environment, writing is often related to specific language targets with the focus on *what* needs to be learned rather than real reasons for writing. Myhill (2010) argues that a solution can be found to this problem. She writes that 'The creation of writing environments in classrooms which embed writing in play and allow children to generate authentic contexts for writing, helps to avoid some of these discontinuities between home and school' (2010: 8).

This claim was tested through the Talk to Text project (Fisher, et al., 2006) which investigated the importance of creating classrooms that were rich in discourse and recommends that this kind of environment would nurture the development of writing. In connection with the research, Myhill (2010: 8) also suggests that 'Creating a classroom which is conducive to the learning of writing is essentially about developing a writing community which allows for high levels of exploration, experimentation and talk within the context of sensitively structured teaching input'. Finding time in the curriculum to

develop and share knowledge and understanding of the writing process provides quite a challenge for teachers struggling to cope with a crowded curriculum. However, the creation of writing communities where collaborative writing takes place and meanings are jointly constructed is essential if the transfer of learning is to be facilitated.

If learning to write is a situated process its development is inextricably linked to the learning context. The teaching of writing skills across the curriculum enables children to not only develop a knowledge and understanding of written language in one context but also to transfer it to other areas of learning.

The view that writing is an interactive social and cognitive process allows for the construction of negotiated meaning throughout writing tasks. The specific demands of the task and the goals and prior knowledge of the writer create a tension that helps the writer to negotiate meaning (Flower, 1994). The writer is involved in a self-regulating process in which thoughts and ideas can be communicated successfully after social judgements have been formed.

In summary, children need to experience writing tasks within a context which allows them to negotiate meanings together and explore different possibilities during the writing process. For effective learning to take place, children need to be given the opportunity to apply their knowledge and understanding of writing in various contexts and in collaboration with others. These types of experiences allow them to adapt to different writing tasks and aid the transfer of learning across the curriculum and into other areas of life. However, it is more cognitively challenging for children to transfer knowledge gained and accessed within a certain context and then apply it to another if they have not developed the strategies that enable them to use this skill. Not only must the learning be contextualised and purposeful, but children need to be supported in order to devise problem solving strategies during the writing process. Therefore a more flexible model needs to be developed exploring exemplars of the varying degrees of engagement in planning, monitoring and assessment that a pupil may display when engaged with different stages of

the writing process. In this way, an understanding of the transfer of learning across a range of writing experiences can be explored.

## 2.12 Composition and transcription as process and product

Some research argues that writing is a process which demands the interaction of composition and transcription for meaningful text to emerge (Myhill, 2010; Williams and Fisher, 2002). Composition has been conceptualised as the ability to formulate ideas, and transcription, as the skill of recording these ideas on page or screen. When these elements work in cohesion, the writer is able to communicate ideas to an audience effectively (Williams and Fisher, 2002). Indeed, as children mature they become used to writing for the reader rather than for themselves (Flower, 1979).

Myhill (2010: 4) suggests that the challenge for most young writers is that writing is a 'perceptual-motoric' skill and, as such:

> *...it demands an interplay between fine motor skills and visual perception and evaluation. Learning to control a pencil so that you can shape letters accurately and become a fluent hand writer is a prerequisite skill for developing as a writer.*

Connelly and Hurst (2001) found that children who were more fluent hand-writers produced more effective texts. Therefore, it could be argued that there may be a link between what has been termed 'writing fluency' and 'writing quality' (Myhill et al., 2010). It is not neatness of writing that is an issue but the fluency of production so that less physical and mental effort is required for the transcription part of the process as children develop handwriting fluency (Medwell and Wray, 2007).

Wray (1993) conducted a large scale study to investigate what children considered were good or successful features of their own writing. As many practitioners may predict, a majority of responses were concerned with the secretarial aspects of writing, or what has been termed the 'transcription' elements. Medwell et al. (2009: 116) also highlight this aspect of children's perceptions of writing:

*It seems that primary children on the whole do not value aspects of writing connected with composition but pay greater attention to transcription. This suggests that when children are writing they are likely to be giving so much attention to transcribing that they have little to spare for composition, which is arguably the most important dimension of writing.*

Myhill (2010) also found that children often spent more revision time on the secretarial aspects of writing such as neat handwriting, correct spacing, spelling and punctuation than on the compositional aspects of their writing. The 'Talk to Text' project (Fisher et al., 2006) used exploratory talk as a facilitator to enable children to evaluate and reflect on both the writing process and completed product. As shown in Table 3 (p. 33), the 'idea generation' element involves talking about writing with the aid of concrete resources to stimulate or experiment with ideas. The 'write aloud' element allows children to hear what their writing might sound like by saying it aloud and aims to support children with the form of their writing. Finally, the 'reflection' element encourages children to think about the processes they went through together with the end product achieved.

For children to reflect on both product and process, they need to be able to move between different types of involvement with writing. The research reviewed suggests that a child engaged in writing will need to stop the flow of their writing at some point to reread what they have written. They will need to think about the purpose of the task at this point and reflect upon whether they are achieving their goal. So the child has to transfer the focus of engagement between rereading and correcting and then reflecting on their success in relation to the task. Therefore, it would seem important to encourage young writers to think about both product and process simultaneously.

Hodson and Jones (2001: 15) encourage the use of 'response partners' during or after the writing process to aid reflection on the process elements of writing by asking questions designed to facilitate discussion:

Did you enjoy the writing? Why?

Did you understand everything?

Is it a good beginning? Why? Is it a good ending? Why?

Do you want to change anything? If you do – what and why?

Alternatively, dialogue encouraging reflection on both process and product can take place between adult and child (Hodson and Jones, 2001: 20). Questions to encourage reflection could include:

Where did you get your ideas from?

Did you reject any ideas? Why?

Were any parts difficult to write? Why? Were any parts easy to write? Why?

Did you change your writing at all? If so, what for?

Did you enjoy the writing?

How did you feel about the finished result?

Whilst providing a sound starting point, the questioning strategies developed by Hodson and Jones (2001) need to be adapted to suit both the learner and nature of the writing task. If these types of questions are recommended for classroom practice, teachers must first provide opportunities for children to hear modelled responses to develop an understanding of how their own may be formulated.

The difficulties faced by developing writers, when engaged in both composition and transcription, have been highlighted by Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) previously. They suggest novice writers engage in something they term 'knowledge telling', while more confident writers use a 'knowledge transforming' strategy to enable them to cope with the demands of both process and product. For example, novice writers regurgitate their knowledge of a writing task in a descriptive way while more experienced writers are able to transform their understanding of the task with audience and purpose in mind. I would argue that children's ability to engage in knowledge transformation is heavily reliant upon their understanding of the key concepts (e.g. the transformation of information into note form) and concept vocabulary related to the specific genre writing task as well as their ability to deal with the procedural aspects of the task.

Williams and Fisher define the process of composition as 'the getting of ideas' and transcription as 'how best to show these ideas on paper' (2002: 1). They view assimilation between the two occurring when children are able to critically reflect upon, and think about, the process of writing itself. There is a clear need for children to develop knowledge and understanding of how composition and transcription support one another in the writing process. This requires children to think about how they are learning and develop awareness of their own and others' thought processes. In order for meanings to be made through writing, the process needs to become transparent to the learner. To be able to do this, Williams and Fisher (2006: 104) argue that children need to be:

- motivated in terms of subject material;
- able to use books and stories as the impetus for finding their own voice in their writing;
- taught to write legibly and to use spelling, grammar and punctuation accurately;
- shown how to plan, draft, revise and edit their writing;
- supported in the writing process by a 'response friend', writing group or teacher in order to improve what they have written; and
- encouraged to share, judge and evaluate their writing and the writing of others.

However, a key requirement in the development of composition and transcription skills is the ability to draw upon and employ knowledge gained through engagement with prior writing experiences which is missing from Williams and Fisher's (2006) list of requirements. Year 3 children need to be given opportunities to build on the foundations of their infant learning experiences and encouraged to extend their thinking in order to meet the challenges of new writing tasks.

## 2.13 A summary of research

Some of the literature reviewed has suggested that the ability of pupils to be aware of and to evaluate the strategies they need to use when faced with a writing task may have a direct effect on the success of the completed task. Myhill (2010) suggested that encouraging children to become aware of their

thought processes can support them with the cognitive demands of writing. As a consequence, educational theorists such as Larkin (2010) recognised the significance of encouraging pupils to be more aware of their own and others' thought processes and importance of developing a range of thinking skills within the primary classroom. However, it has been recognised that teachers often lack experience in this approach to teaching and learning. It has been suggested that if teachers and pupils share their thought processes in the form of a 'think aloud' (Mercer, 2000) strategy then children can begin to clarify their own thoughts and ideas when involved in a writing task. In addition, recent research (Fisher et al., 2010; Larkin, 2010; Myhill, 2010) has focused on the benefits of oral rehearsal in the writing process.

Myhill (2010) considered oral rehearsal to be an important strategy for reducing cognitive load. Literature reviewed also recognises how writing tasks challenge learners to both encode and decode meaning through text placing increasing demands on their cognitive abilities as writing is both a mental and physical process (Kress, 1994). As a transition year, it has been reported that Year 3 experience a 'dip' in their writing assessment levels (Ofsted, 1993; 1998). As writing remains an integral part of the Primary National Curriculum (DfE, 2013), it has been of value to review possible reasons for this 'dip' and the implications in relation to policy and practice.

As writing is arguably one of the most cognitively challenging activities in which children engage, it is important to review these links between the development of awareness of cognitive processes and development of writing skills in young children. An increasing body of research focusing on the application of thinking skills in areas of the curriculum such as science (Shayer and Adey, 2002) clearly supports investigation of how this may be developed in the writing process. Levels of thinking become deeper as the learner reflects on their understanding of different tasks. Research by Swartz and Perkins (1989) and Williams and Fisher (2002) described this as levels of awareness in thinking.

Swartz and Perkins' (1989) description of the levels of awareness in thinking, adapted by Williams and Fisher (2002) for use in the primary classroom and

subsequently promoted by Jones (2008) as a tool for the development of metacognitive awareness, seems to go some way in providing a framework for reviewing children's awareness of their own thought processes. It is suggested that levels of thinking become deeper as the child moves from implicit to explicit understanding, acquiring a greater degree of control over the way in which they are learning. The levels of awareness in thinking (Swartz and Perkins, 1989), described as *tacit, aware, strategic* and *reflective*, provide a certain amount of guidance in the sense that the teacher can review how children move from implicit to explicit understanding when assimilating knowledge and understanding during the writing process. In addition, these levels do imply a degree of hierarchy with 'tacit use' viewed as the lowest level of thinking. However, I would argue that children show tacit awareness of their thinking in two ways:

- By displaying an implicit understanding of all or part of the task
- By implying explicitly that all or part of the task was understood and therefore made little demand on their thought processes.

A further critique of Swartz and Perkins' (1989) framework is that each level of awareness in thinking views the learner as an individual with no reference to the fact that learning is often a collaborative process which relies on joint inquiry and the stimulation of prior knowledge within social contexts. Therefore, identification of children's awareness of their own and each other's thought processes needs to be placed within both collaborative and independent learning contexts. This study recognises collaborative thinking as an important part of the learning process and particularly when engaged in school-based genre writing tasks.

Literature reviewed in this chapter has explored research surrounding children's understanding of key concepts and concept vocabulary alongside their ability to integrate new learning into their existing knowledge base. It has been suggested that the development of learning is dependent upon the interaction between what a pupil already knows and what they are in the process of learning (Wray et al., 2006). Further to this, illumination of the learning process can facilitate new learning if the learning process is made

explicit and the learner is able to think about what has been assimilated. Children will not always make connections independently but may require the teacher to facilitate this process. Conceptual understanding is developed through connections being made during dialogues which take place in the classroom. It is the transformation of knowledge during this process which can aid a pupil in his or her understanding of the relationships between different concepts and provide an opportunity for collaborative thinking as deeper conceptual understanding develops.

It has been suggested that dialogic teaching (Alexander, 2004) needs to become the predominant tool to facilitate inquiry in the classroom, nurturing cognitive development and higher levels of thinking (Smith et al., 2004; Williams and Fisher, 2002). Through dialogic teaching children become more conscious of the development of their language skills within meaningful and purposeful contexts. The construction of meaning and engagement in joint inquiry are central to the development of dialogic teaching as language plays an integral part in conceptual development. This, in turn, aids the development of both implicit and explicit understanding of the thought processes used during a writing task.

The role exploratory talk (Barnes, 1976) plays in the development of children's abilities to both compose and transcribe texts simultaneously has also been highlighted. Dawes et al. (2004) developed exploratory talk through extensive classroom research concluding that children need to be given opportunities to develop their understanding of ways in which language can be used as a tool for developing thinking. In addition exploratory talk encourages children to use language for both collaborative thinking and independent learning (Mercer and Hodgkinson, 2008).

Children are required to bring their understanding of the writing process, and knowledge of themselves as part of a larger writing community, to every task (Larkin, 2010). In addition the context within which the writing task is set, the perceptions, concepts and principles underlying each task as well as the knowledge of purpose and audience represent a complex undertaking. Furthermore, research reviewed emphasises how children need to

contextualise their learning and that writing is context dependent (Wray et al., 2006; Sinatra, 2008). Situated learning and research into the development of children's cognitive processes show how children need to orchestrate a range of mental processes during a writing task (Wray et al., 2006). Therefore development of the writing process is inextricably linked to the context within which different writing tasks are set. Not only must learning be contextualised and purposeful, but children need to be supported in order to devise problem solving strategies during the writing process. The transfer of learning also appears to be at the heart of the writing process as children who are aware of strategies which will help them achieve their writing goals become more successful writers.

However, the transfer of learning through cognitive processing alone cannot be attributable for the development of successful writers. The more self-aware a learner becomes, the higher their motivation to develop a range of strategies to complete a writing task (Bandura, 1986). Pupils become increasingly able to monitor and control their own learning as they mature and develop awareness of self and of each other. The more able to monitor and control, the more motivated writers are to complete a task (Bandura, 1986). More successful writers are those who can move between thinking about how they are thinking about the writing task and creating the product itself. Reflection becomes an integral part of the writing task as it facilitates monitoring, questioning and control allowing learners to identify ways forward.

It has been suggested that learners who are able to monitor and evaluate their own cognitive processes during a task are more likely to be independent, motivated and successful learners (Adey and Shayer, 2002). As many writing tasks demand the simultaneous act of composition and transcription they have potential to create cognitive conflict for the learner. It is therefore important that children are given opportunities to rehearse their ideas orally and think collaboratively about the most effective strategies to use to achieve success.

## 2.14 Conclusion

As shown in this literature review there exists a body of research exploring the development of children's writing. However, studies exploring and identifying the levels of thinking displayed by children when engaged in genre writing tasks, as outlined by Swartz and Perkins (1989) and adapted by Williams and Fisher (2002), are few. The small body of available research which highlights children's understanding of key concepts and concept vocabulary related to specific genre writing tasks, does not focus specifically on Year 3.  Thus, there is little evidence to support pedagogy in these areas of learning during Year 3 when children make the transition from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2.

Although models of writing may enhance our understanding of the writing process it can be argued that they are deficient when applied to emergent writers as they can only be effectively applied to individuals who have achieved writing proficiency. Hodson and Jones (2001) are explicit about the inclusion of reflection in any model of writing.  As writing is considered to be one of the most cognitively challenging activities with which pupils are faced (Kellogg, 2008), it has been argued that the act of composition is a task which requires a range of thinking skills at different levels.

Therefore, composition alongside transcription dominates children's resources for mental processing. Children need to be able to compose and transcribe text simultaneously to achieve their writing goals. However, if too much demand is placed on children's working memory, successful completion of a writing task may be too challenging, leading to frustration due to cognitive overload. If younger children have not yet achieved fluency in the transcriptional elements of writing, they may have less available working memory for the compositional elements and experience difficulty in completing a writing task confidently and independently. Consequently, this can result in conflict between the mental processes required for transcription and those for text generation.

This study investigates the interrelationship between children's awareness of their own thought processes alongside their ability to understand key

concepts and to integrate those concepts into their existing knowledge base when involved in specific genre writing tasks. It aims to inform and build upon the small number of studies which have begun to recognise that, at the beginning of Key Stage 2, children are still developing the necessary knowledge and understanding of key concepts and concept vocabulary required for genre writing tasks.

For children to be able to complete a writing task successfully they need to have knowledge and understanding not only of the transcription skills required by the writing process (the *what* and *when*) but also the composition skills (the *why* and *how*). These skills must be used simultaneously in order to convey meaning. This interaction between composition and transcription skills relies on the children's knowledge of key concepts and principles related to the genre writing task and ability to orchestrate their thinking when planning, monitoring and evaluating the completed product. These skills can then be used, when and where appropriate, and adapted to meet the varying conceptual demands of the different writing genres encountered throughout Key Stage 2.

# Chapter 3

## Methodology

### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter examines methodological issues and approaches used in the current study. It aims to locate these approaches theoretically through a critique of existing research literature and place them within the context of the study.

### 3.1 Research timeline

Table 4 below provides an overview of the schedule and different stages of research undertaken during the study.

Table 4: Research timeline

| Autumn 2009 | Spring 2010 | Summer 2010 | Autumn 2010 | Spring 2011 | Summer 2011 | Autumn 2011 | Spring 2012 | Autumn 2013 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Review of literature | Applied for ethical approval | Discussed project with host school | Orientation period | Data Collection Genre 2 | Data Collection Genre 4 | Data analysis | Began writing thesis | Submit |
| | | | Data Collection Genre 1 | Data Collection Genre 3 | Data analysis | Data validation | | |
| | | | | | Data validation | Data analysis | | |

### 3.2 Research aims and methodology

It is important to establish that the methodology chosen for the study helps to illuminate the research aims. The chosen methods of data collection require analysis to ensure their suitability for the research theme. As the study analyses children's levels of awareness in thinking and their responses to specific writing tasks, the data collection methods need to provide

opportunities for children to express their views in a number of different ways, allowing for variations in attitudes and response (Flick, 1998).

A study of cases was considered the most appropriate, for the purposes of this investigation, as the research aims required a rich description of individual responses to be presented (Bassey, 1999). As outlined in Chapter 1, the research aims are:

- To analyse children's levels of awareness in thinking when engaged in specific genre writing tasks.
- To explore children's understanding of the key concepts related to specific writing tasks within four genre contexts
- To investigate ways in which children use their prior knowledge during these tasks
- To explore ways in which children integrate new ideas into their existing knowledge base during genre related writing tasks.


In addition to the philosophical assumptions underpinning this study, Flick (1998: 403) argued that additional factors exist which drive the selection of methodology. He emphasised the significance of each factor in ensuring the methods adopted by the researcher address what he considered to be the following fundamental issues:

- The underlying requirements of the research question
- The area of investigation
- The population of research and their needs
- The opportunity for participants to express their views in meaningful and appropriate ways
- Variations in attitudes and response

The research design aimed to address those factors which Flick considered fundamental to methodology. As far as method was concerned, the study included planned classroom observations, participant interviews and analysis of writing samples, allowing for relevant data to illuminate the research aims

and questions. The research strategy consisted of observations made in sequences, allowing for comparison and analysis to be made of the children's responses (Edward and Mercer, 1987).

Consideration was given to the importance of conferences with children to elicit their understanding of the key concepts for each writing task. Analysis of ways in which the children applied their prior knowledge during a variety of writing tasks was also undertaken. In summary, the research design comprised analysis of the children's oral responses to questioning through transcripts of informal child/teacher interactions, informal discussion between children, semi-structured group interviews and annotation of written work. The research design allowed data to be organised into sections for analysis and the data collection methods were presented in relation to the research questions.

These tools were designed to fulfil the research aims and provide insight into the central theme of the study specifically: the levels of awareness in thinking employed by Year 3 children when engaged in specific genre writing tasks. The processes and tools used for this study have been described as 'interpretive' (Cohen et al., 2005: 40) research; characteristics of which include the scale and nature of the study, and its subjectivity due to my involvement as participant-observer.

### 3.2.1 The study of cases – A qualitative approach

In arguing for the suitability of a 'study of cases' as the central approach to this research, it is helpful to review why it is 'best fit-for-purpose' (Sharp, 2012: 44). Models of educational research dominate qualitative studies such as those of Bassey (1999) who trawled the research literature to illustrate the relationship between educational research and the practice of teaching. Bassey argues that 'research feeds discourse, which aids practice and policy' (1999: 49). However, this is dependent upon the quality of the research produced. More helpfully, Bassey sought to answer three particular

questions through qualitative research and the study of individual cases in education:

- How can teachers learn from research?
- How can policy-makers learn from research?
- How can researchers learn from teachers and policy-makers?

(Bassey, 1999: 49)

As a study of cases, this research focuses on the complexity and the characteristics of each individual case observed within a classroom setting.

Denzin (1989: 83) highlighted how qualitative researchers strive to reach the core of social situations through close observation of the very fabric of behaviour to provide thick descriptions:

> *It goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents detail, context, emotion and the webs of social relationships that join persons to another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts the sequence of events for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions and meanings of interacting individuals are heard.*

Denzin's (1989) portrayal of qualitative research embodies the interpretive approach adopted for this study. Interactions are analysed through drawing on my understanding of the context in which they took place and the influencing factors, such as collaborative writing opportunities and the teaching methods employed that informed analysis. The study benefitted from the role played by the teacher in providing a source of contextual information regarding the established working patterns and classroom routines. She was also able to engage in formal and informal discussion concerning the children's attitudes towards writing and the typicality of their responses to the different writing tasks.

Through a study of cases each case can be analysed separately, yet findings can also raise awareness of general issues. Despite attempts to limit generalizability, it is recognised that findings may have significance for classroom practice or be applicable to educational research in similar

settings. Therefore, a further rationale for this approach is the level of insight that may be gained from the wider implications which can be drawn from each individual case (Denscombe, 2010). This type of illumination may not be achieved through the use of a research strategy which draws on larger samples in less depth. Therefore, the aim remains to illuminate the general by examining the particular.

Bassey (1999) observed that generalizations and uncertainties which emerge from each case become an invitation to others to engage in discourse relating to the discoveries made. On entry into discourse, teachers become researchers seeking to validate findings by applying them to their own classrooms. Bassey (1981: 85) continued to argue how the relatability of findings is superior to its generalizability:

> *An important criterion for judging the merit of a case study is the extent to which the details are sufficient and appropriate for a teacher working in a similar situation to relate his decision-making to that described in the case study. The relatability of a case study is more important than its generalizability.*

Therefore, in a small scale study such as this, which looks at individual cases in an illuminative way, it is appropriate to look carefully at the relatability of findings and consider how they might inform practice in similar settings (Bell, 2009).

As qualitative research can be viewed as a means of understanding social phenomena, it can be instrumental in the illumination of feelings and generate a depth of insight into behaviour and perceived achievement through close analysis of interactions and the contexts in which they take place (Koshy, 2005). As outlined in Chapter 1, my philosophical assumptions relating to the existence of multiple realities are thus adhered to as knowledge is viewed as a personal experience where importance is given not only to social interactions but what is unique to each child. Richness and depth is sought, rather than universal truth and reliability.

The qualitative data collection methods used and subsequent analysis allowed me to gain a naturalistic perspective of what was happening in the

classroom as they were designed to accommodate classroom practice and the collaborative nature of writing facilitated through the dialogic teaching methods used. In addition, establishment of interactions between the children and myself, as participant observer, enabled patterns of discourse with which they were familiar, i.e. teacher/pupil interactions. In the present study, each child exists as a single case and was viewed as an individual unit for analysis and assigned a pseudonym to ensure anonymity. The pseudonym, St Mary's Junior School has been used to describe the school where research took place.

## 3.3 Sample for study

Cohen et al. (2005) discuss the representativeness of the sample in order to obtain data that is considered valid if the purpose of research is to seek representativeness. The sample, for this study, was drawn from a group of pupils considered to be representative of their year group. National Curriculum levels of attainment for writing for these children had been assessed as average when the research took place.

Cohen et al. (2005) describe two main methods of sampling; probability (also known as random) and non-probability (also known as purposive). As this study sought to explore the conceptual understanding and levels of awareness in thinking used by a particular group of individuals, e.g. pupils deemed as performing at age-appropriate level on entry to Year 3, it will be classed as a non-probability sample. Cohen et al. (2005: 102) caution that there is a greater risk of bias in this method of sampling.

> *The selectivity which is built into a non-probability sample derives from the researcher targeting a particular group, in the full knowledge that it does not represent the wider population; it simply represents itself...Each type of sample seeks only to represent itself or instances of itself in a similar population, rather than attempting to represent the whole, undifferentiated population.*

The short-comings of this particular method of sampling will be taken into consideration during the discussion in Chapter 5.

The school selected for this study was chosen because of its willingness to allow access to a group of Year 3 pupils throughout the academic year. In this way it was possible to observe learning responses in a range of contexts related to specific genre writing tasks. This type of sampling is also described as purposive (Newby, 2010). I considered it important to select a school with which a relationship had already been built, through partnership with the host institution in the training of primary education teaching students, as this appeared appropriate for the study of cases that was proposed for the research. As has been previously stated, this type of sampling does have its disadvantages notably that of there being a greater risk of bias. Nevertheless, the advantages, as noted above, include the previous establishment of successful working relationships and my understanding of the nationally 'typical' demographics of the school.

A small sample was chosen (eight children in total) and parental permission sought, due to the nature of research. 'In purposive sampling researchers hand-pick the cases, to be included in the sample, on the basis of a judgement of their typicality' (Cohen et al., 2005: 103). For this study I consulted with the class teacher to ensure that a group of children were chosen representative of average ability in literacy and specifically in writing. Therefore, it can be seen that purposive sampling was used in this study with the sample group being selected for their 'typicality' (Blaxter et al., 2002).

Silverman (2010: 149) suggests that:

> *...sampling is not a simple matter even for quantitative researchers. Indeed, as we have seen, the relative flexibility of qualitative research can improve the generalizability of our findings by allowing us to include new cases after initial findings are established.*

The sample for research was drawn from a mainstream state school in the South East of England. It consisted of a small group of children aged from seven to eight years. The children were of mixed gender and race. On entry, each child in the sample group had been assessed as working at an age-appropriate level in accordance with The National Curriculum level descriptions for attainment target 3: Writing. Therefore, Silverman's (2010)

statement arguing that new cases can be included after initial findings are established will be an important factor to consider when discussing the data in Chapter 5.

Table 5 contains a brief description of the children at St Mary's in relation to how I perceived their approach to writing tasks and general attitudes towards writing as a process.

Table 5: Researcher's perceptions of Year 3 participants

| Participant | |
|---|---|
| Aidan | An enthusiastic and talkative member of the class. This was conveyed by his lively engagement with peers. He displayed a clear enjoyment, when participating in most writing activities, showing that in peer and adult discussion he had some prior knowledge of certain genre formats. |
| Amelia | A quiet and sensitive girl who became anxious when uncertain of the key concepts and concept vocabulary relating to some written tasks. She showed more confidence when working with a literacy partner. As the year progressed she began to show more confidence when working independently. |
| Emma | A thoughtful and confident individual who enjoyed sharing her own experiences related to a task with both peers and adults. She was able to discuss her opinions, give reasons for her choice of strategies and collaborate effectively with a literacy partner. |
| Jack | Jack displayed a confident attitude and thoughtful approach to all written tasks. He enjoyed sharing his wide reading experiences with peers and adults and was able to collaborate effectively with a literacy partner. He used his prior knowledge of genre form and format to inform the choices he made during writing tasks. |
| Joanna | A mature and reflective member of the class who enjoyed working collaboratively with a literacy partner. She displayed a level of self-awareness when working independently, as conveyed in the verbal descriptions of her working preferences. |
| Molly | A positive and happy individual who valued both her own ideas as well as those of others. She worked well collaboratively and was equally confident when sharing thoughts and opinions with a literacy partner or following the direction of an adult. |
| Sophie | Sophie displayed a level of maturity in her approach towards all writing tasks and this was evidenced in the structure and content of her written work. She was an effective literacy partner sharing her prior knowledge of the genres and topics encountered as well as her thoughts on the choice of strategies needed to complete tasks. |
| Zoe | An independent and confident member of the class who was quick to form opinions and share her understanding of the writing task with her literacy partner and other peers. She was able to talk about her thought processes though occasionally sought approval for her ideas from both adults and peers. |

These brief descriptions are based on an extended period of classroom observation in the Year 3 class at St Mary's Junior School. In-depth analysis of the children's levels of awareness in thinking during and after specific writing tasks is recorded in subsequent chapters.

As seen briefly in Table 5 (p. 90), each child within this study was viewed as an individual case to be considered in terms of the unique ways in which he or she was able to respond to different writing tasks, understand key concepts and become aware of the thought processes used when undertaking each task.

It was evident during the initial stages of research that the class teacher had a particular interest in developing children's writing skills in relation to genre. She also had a great deal of experience with this age group and had taught a Year 3 class for several years prior to research. After extensive discussion regarding the nature of the year group and exploration of the teacher's knowledge of the children's assessed levels of achievement on entry, selection was made according to the representativeness of the group in relation to the expected level of achievement in writing for children in Year 3. Therefore the small sample was not arbitrary but carefully considered and well-planned in consultation with both the Head Teacher and class teacher.

The pupils chosen were seated together for all observed sessions as literacy was taught in ability groups for a majority of the writing sessions. This was in response to previous government led initiatives, allowing teachers to plan for 'Assessment for Learning' (DCSF, 2008) opportunities.

### 3.3.1 Year 3 as sample

As a transition year, from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2, the Year 3 age range is a pivotal age group to study. The progress made by children during this academic year should both enhance the learning that has taken place during Key Stage 1 and provide a firm foundation on which learning can develop throughout Key Stage 2. As the new National Curriculum is to be based on the depth of understanding pupils have of key knowledge, skills and

concepts then it is important that children should have a clear understanding of key concepts related to the subject area they are studying. By endeavouring to explore the levels of awareness in thinking displayed by children during specific writing tasks and strategies used to complete those tasks successfully, I aim to identify ways in which children can be supported in developing a deeper conceptual understanding of both their own thought processes as well as the writing process itself.

Throughout the academic year, the children were introduced to a range of genre writing tasks. The relevant features of these genres were introduced and discussed within the context of cross curricular topics. Those included within this study were: playscripts, non-chronological reports, letters of review and narratives. These genres were taken from units of work recommended in the Primary National Strategy (2006) for this age group at the time of research. In this way a wide exploration of the individual children's responses was available for research.

### 3.3.2 Research site – background

Research was carried out at St Mary's Junior School (pseudonym), a school in Surrey, with a two form entry. Pupils were of mixed gender and race though a majority of the pupils were from White British backgrounds and there was a higher than average number of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The Ofsted report stated that the pupils achieve well in Year 6, after their average start on entry in Year 3 (2008: 5).

St Mary's Junior School used National Curriculum level descriptors to guide summative assessments and make judgements to inform pupils' progress. During the time I was at St Mary's Junior School, the Year 3 class teacher planned to cover the units of work specified for that year group, ensuring that all National Curriculum (QCA, 1999) objectives for English were covered. Under EN3: Writing, composition, planning and drafting were to be a focus when gathering data. The school also displayed a particular interest in improving levels of the pupils' writing as they progressed through the school.

Both senior management and staff recognised the national trend for writing being the weaker area of achievement throughout Years 3-6.

In order to monitor pupil progress the school used Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) as a tool. This was developed to support Assessment for Learning (AfL) from a project called Monitoring Pupils' Progress (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2006). The version used currently was published in 2008 and, at the time of research, was being used across all core subjects. The main purposes of APP are that:

> *Every child knows what progress they are making, and understands what they need to do to improve and how to get there... (also that) ... Every teacher is equipped to make well-founded judgements about pupils' attainment, understands the concepts and principles of progression, and knows how to use their assessment judgements to forward plan.* (DCFS, 2008: 3)

The formative assessment used at St Mary's Junior School, alongside APP, was based firmly on the teacher's understanding of how pupils learn and how this could be supported by effective teaching. Formative assessment is based on constructivist models of learning and has been linked directly to Bruner's (1986) ideas on scaffolding originally developed during the 1970s, already alluded to in Chapter 2. This kind of assessment supports teachers when developing their pupils' understanding of key concepts across the curriculum. Chapter 4 utilises the language developed and used under Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) of 'low', 'secure' and 'high' to investigate the children's levels of achievement for each writing task within National Curriculum Level 3.

Sessions observed, during the research period, covered four different literary genres over the duration of two terms (four half terms). As stated previously, the genres were: playscripts, non-chronological reports, letters of review and narratives. Appendices 5-8 contain copies of the medium term plans and objectives for the period of research. Objectives from the Primary National Strategy (DfES, 2006) and National Curriculum (QCA, 1999) were adapted to meet the learning needs of the children and are listed with the corresponding genre below.

**Genre 1 – Playscripts**

- Identify features of a playscript
- Identify what different characters will say
- Write a scene from the legend of Odysseus and the Cyclops in the form of a playscript

**Genre 2 – Non-Chronological Reports**

- Identify the structure and language features of non-chronological reports
- Locate specific information using contents page, index, headings and sub-headings in non-fiction books
- Identify key information in non-fiction texts by highlighting and making notes
- Use notes to organise and write specific information under sub-headings

**Genre 3 – Letters of review**

- Identify the language and key features of formal letters
- Identify the language and key features of informal letters
- Write an informal letter to a friend incorporating a review of a book
- Write a formal letter to an author incorporating a review of one of his/her books

**Genre 4 – Narratives**

- Identify the main features of a quest myth including structure and language
- Plan the different stages of a quest myth using the correct sequences and structure
- Use a plan to write the opening of a story, describing the setting and character
- Describe the problems a hero might face in typical quest myth settings

The objectives above represent those which are typically used during Year 3 in most schools following the National Curriculum (QCA, 1999) and Primary National Strategy (DfES, 2006) at the time of research. At this point it is necessary to consider the validity and reliability of analysis and research design to establish the rigour of the study.

## 3.4 Validity and reliability

Cohen et al. (2005) state that validity has been concerned with ensuring that the instruments used result in a measure of what has been originally intended at the outset of research. Traditional definitions of validity such as this can result in a rather vague understanding of the term being applied. Sapsford and Jupp (1996: 1) offer further clarification when they interpret it as 'the design of research to provide credible conclusions; whether the evidence which the research offers can bear the weight of the interpretation that is put on it'.

A more accurate and precise understanding can be developed by considering this, in addition to critical reflection, regarding whether the data and structure of research influences the conclusions which can be reached and, more importantly, the assumptions which cannot be made from it. In this instance, Cohen et al. (2005: 105) describe validity as being achieved through 'the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness of the researcher'. Blaxter et al. (2002: 221) add that qualitative research must include depth of reflection concerning its own usefulness and relevance through a consideration of the 'four related concepts: significance, generalizability, reliability and validity'. All four concepts will be reviewed in the context of this study with particular attention to the significance of findings for classroom practice alongside the development of the draft National Curriculum for English: Key Stages 1 and 2 (DfE, 2012).

Blaxter et al. (2002) define the concept of 'significance' as how important the research findings are deemed to be. 'Generalizability' is argued to be more

relevant to small-scale research projects and describes the representativeness of the findings and whether they can be applied to any other individuals, groups or institutions.  In this study each concept will inform interpretation of the data after its close analysis in Chapter 5.

Silverman (2010: 276) encouraged qualitative researchers to ensure '...that their findings are genuinely based on critical investigation of all their data and do not depend on a few well-chosen 'examples'?'. He emphasised the cruciality of 'methodological awareness' in order to avoid the problem of 'anecdotalism' which may occur in some qualitative research (ibid: 276). Silverman suggests triangulation and respondent validation as possible strategies but acknowledges the flaws of these methods, including the ability of the researcher to use these methods fluently. Alternatively, Silverman presented several ways to increase validity through critical reflection in data analysis including what he terms; the constant comparative method and comprehensive data treatment (2010: 278).

Charmaz (2006) describes the constant comparative method as being applicable to single cases as it involves the comparison of all data collected for a single case with the constant review and analysis of the dataset. The constant comparative method increased the validity of findings in this study in the sense that eight individual cases were compared and analysed in response to four different genre writing tasks. The constant comparative method can be directly related to 'comprehensive data treatment' which involves the comprehensive analysis of all cases of data.  Silverman (2010: 281) states, '…in qualitative research, working with smaller datasets open to repeated inspection, one should not be satisfied until one's generalization is able to apply to every single gobbet of relevant data you have collected.' It seems that these interrelated methods should develop as a matter of course throughout research design and data analysis. However, it is useful to have considered each when analysing data collection methods at the outset of a study.

It would seem that validity grows in complexity when associated with qualitative research. Moreover, when addressing internal validity in

qualitative research, threats can be perceived if a positivist agenda is followed though ethnographic research which considers change over time to be an integral feature. Cohen et al. (2005: 108) comment on how, in ethnographic research, observer influence is attenuated as the participants become used to the extended presence of the researcher. Newby (2010: 122) considered this to be an issue for concern within qualitative research as he viewed it as researcher influence over participant when relationships move from 'neutral' to 'social'. Newby (2010) neglects to consider that this is transformed in an educational setting where the researcher maintains the role of teacher rather than friend. However, this study is cognisant of the fact that the children's reactions to my presence in the classroom evolved over time.

When considering external validity, Newby (2010) reiterates that a rich and detailed description must be provided for other researchers to glean what might be generalizable from one piece of research to another and in varying contexts and situations. He stated '...we have to believe ultimately in the honesty and integrity of the researcher. With sufficient information on how data was collected and analysed, we can make this judgement and understand the personal framework within which the researcher was objective (Newby, 2010: 121). This introduces the issues of comparability and translatability which will be addressed in subsequent sections.

Despite the term reliability being synonymous with consistency and the assumed possibility of replication in quantitative research, it plays a unique role in qualitative research. Silverman (2010: 290) concludes:

> *Reliability refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions. For reliability to be calculated, it is incumbent on the scientific investigator to document his or her procedure and to demonstrate that categories have been used consistently.*

However, achieving reliability in qualitative research remains a complex process as it concerns itself with deconstructing the idiosyncrasies of a given situation. Given the existence of multiple realities, inconsistencies inevitably remain between interpretations of different researchers viewing the same

event. Kvale (1996) argues that there exists a multitude of interpretations from the same situation when there are different individuals researching it. This is consistent with my philosophical approach to the children as eight individual cases and therefore the existence of multiple realities. However, Cohen et al. (2005) suggest that qualitative research can include an element of replication in the methods of data collection and analysis, suggesting that findings may be generalized in certain situations.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) present several ways in which to achieve reliability and replicability within qualitative research, those pertinent to this study will be discussed in greater detail during the latter part of this chapter. In summary:

> *In qualitative methodologies reliability includes fidelity to real life, context and situation-specificity, authenticity, comprehensiveness, detail, honesty, depth of response and meaningfulness to the respondents.*

(Cohen et al., 2005: 120)

Krefting (1991) highlights the importance of demonstrating rigour in qualitative research arguing that Guba's (1981) model for assessing the trustworthiness of qualitative data acts as a reasonable guide. Guba (1981) presents criteria to aid research design, increase rigour and assess the worth of qualitative research in the form of the four aspects of truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality. Krefting (1991: 215) argues that truth value is '…obtained from the discovery of human experiences as they are lived and perceived by informants,' Truth value was achieved in the present study through the research design as the context in which research took place and the nature of the children's and teacher's involvement was established prior to its commencement. The research design allowed classroom routines, practices and procedures to be maintained throughout the study.

Guba (1981) argues that applicability, that is the degree to which findings can be generalized, is relevant to qualitative research conducted in naturalistic settings if findings can be applied or transferred to a similar setting. It would seem reasonable to suggest that findings from the present

study may concur with similar research carried out in a parallel classroom setting. Guba's (1981) third criterion of trustworthiness, consistency, is more problematic with the existence of multiple realities as it requires findings to be replicated with the same participants when repeated. As this study investigates the children's unique responses to writing tasks, it is more appropriate to consider Guba's (1981) notion of dependability which allows for variability to be ascribed to the participants. This can increase the richness of the data and provide further insight into the research themes. Guba's (1981) fourth criterion, neutrality, is concerned with objectivity and the freedom from bias. This is adjusted for qualitative research as it is recognised prolonged observation periods draw the researcher closer to the participants in some circumstances. Therefore, the neutrality of the data rather than the researcher is considered to be the mark of trustworthiness. Krefting (1991: 217) argues that this is achieved in qualitative research which examines individual cases '…when truth value and applicability are established.'

Yin (2009) analysed the features of qualitative research at length, in particular case studies, focusing on the characteristics of data collection, some of which may be pertinent to this study.

The case study inquiry:

- Copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result
- Relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result
- Benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis                    (Yin, 2009: 18)

Whilst this study draws on 'multiple sources', data did not necessarily 'converge in a triangulating fashion' as each individual case was examined within the classroom context for its uniqueness at that moment in time. Findings were compared and analysed for patterns or emerging trends between the children. However, the uniqueness of each context and my theoretical stance as participant observer has indeed guided data collection and analysis.

## 3.5 An outline of data collection methods

Data was collected using the following methods each of which was assigned a corresponding code:

- Classroom documents: **(D)**
- Semi-structured participant observations: **(O)**
- Open-microphone recordings: **(R)**
- Semi-structured group interviews: **(I)**
- Samples of children's written work: **(S)**

A code was applied to each method of data collection to allow for the location of evidence. Appendix 3 (p. 332) contains the full data log for the management and collection of data used to inform the central theme for research: a study of children's levels of awareness in thinking when engaged in specific genre writing tasks. Only data displayed in bold text in the data log (Appendix 3: 332) is included in the subsequent appendices to allow for fluid reading of the data presented in Chapter 4.

Larkin (2010) along with Myhill (2006) and Williams and Fisher (2006), have gone some way to developing methodologies which engage the researcher in the study of cases, particularly those revealing children's thoughts, opinions and understanding of the nature of specific literacy tasks. According to Larkin (2010) there are several ways to study children's levels of awareness in thinking within the classroom context. From her own research findings, she suggests that the most effective of these are observation, questionnaires, interviews, tests and think-aloud protocols.

Larkin (2010: 145) argues that observations are seemingly the most effective way to collect data regarding what she terms metacognitive awareness in young children:

> *It is easier to observe children working in collaborative group settings on complex tasks, working towards a joint goal, because these situations are more likely to require metacognition and the group nature of the task requires that thinking is revealed, shared and co-constructed.*

Research findings such as these have provided some guidance in the selection and development of data collection methods used for this study.

Data was organised under the headings: task context, task understanding and task awareness to allow for its close analysis in line with the interpretive approach adopted for the study and to illuminate the research questions. Table 6 shows how these headings were aligned to specific research questions and data collection methods.

Table 6: Organisation of data through research questions

| Research question | Data section | Data collection method and code |
|---|---|---|
| How do children show they have used their prior knowledge during these tasks? How do children show that they have integrated new ideas into their existing knowledge base during genre related writing tasks? | Task context | Classroom documents (D) Semi-structured participant observations (O) Open-microphone recordings (R) Samples of written work (S) |
| How do children display their understanding of key concepts and concept vocabulary related to specific writing tasks within four genre contexts? | Task understanding | Open-microphone recordings (R) Semi-structured group interviews (I) Samples of written work (S) |
| What evidence is there to show that children employ different levels of awareness in thinking when engaged in specific genre writing tasks? | Task awareness | Open-microphone recordings (R) Semi-structured group interviews (I) |

The data collection methods outlined below have been designed to contribute to research regarding children's awareness of their own thought processes when involved in specific writing tasks.

### 3.5.1 Semi-structured participant observations

Semi-structured participant observations recorded the different phases of teaching and learning for each writing genre (see Appendix 3, p. 332, for data log). The observations were organised and structured using classroom documents such as the teacher's plans and lesson resources. All data concerning observations was collected and reviewed in depth.

Observations were made which focused on the activation of prior knowledge and integration of new ideas into the children's existing knowledge base in connection with their understanding of key concepts related to the task. Lankshear and Knobel (2004: 219) described this as 'contextualised' data and argue that structured and systematic observations can '...generate richly detailed accounts of practices rarely obtained through interviews alone...'. Cohen et al. (2005: 305) support this view by advocating the use of observational data '...to access personal knowledge', a central theme in this research study and therefore an appropriate method to use.

As shown in Table 6 (p. 101), observational data collected in this study was organised under the headings 'task context' and 'task understanding.' In both these sections children's understanding of the key concepts relating to each task, as well as their ability to integrate new ideas into their existing knowledge base, was observed.

Larkin's (2010) recommendations for gathering data included developing an observation 'check list' as others have done before her. She argues that observations allow the researcher to witness the explicit thought processes, and levels of understanding, displayed by children within the classroom context, thus providing greater validation of research. Larkin (2010) also suggests that children should be encouraged to discuss their thoughts and ideas within this context so that levels of thinking, which she argues may be increasingly metacognitive, are not abstracted from the task.

However, observation is not without its drawbacks. Some research has found that children's levels of thinking change rapidly and off task behaviour is frequently experienced by the observer (Shayer and Adey, 2002). Larkin (2010) points out that it is difficult to record when 'metacognitive' episodes begin and when they end. As this study seeks to identify the levels of awareness in thinking used by children during specific writing tasks, it is relevant to consider the difficulties encountered when collecting observational data.

A well-recognised weakness with observations in qualitative research remains the effect the observer has on the observed (Denscombe, 2010). However, the nature of this study recognises the inevitability of the observer becoming a participant. To assume the possibility of non-participant observation would be almost impossible in today's classrooms because of the presence of additional adults and the nature of their role. Nevertheless 'While observation may be the most relevant way of collecting information about young children's metacognitive behaviour, other methods should be used to produce a more complete picture' (Larkin, 2010: 146).

A general organisational dilemma is often presented when observations are made during stages of whole class teaching. This was overcome by the selection of eight children who were observed specifically when engaging in whole class and paired discussions. This was organised relatively easily as the teacher's plans (Appendices 5-8, pp. 339-381) were shared prior to the stages of teaching to be observed. This allowed me to predict the general pattern of teaching and learning whilst accommodating the teacher's flexibility and sensitivity to each stage of learning. Key questions were highlighted on the lesson plans as well as clear learning objectives including a 'success criteria' which was recorded and shared with the children.

A period of orientation was planned so that I could gain an understanding of how the teacher used the classroom space for learning and how the children moved around the classroom. This took place towards the end of the first half term when children had settled into classroom routines and had a shared understanding of expectations. It was at this point that my role was established and shared with the children. The children were aware that I was a teacher interested in the writing that took place in the classroom. I was accepted as an additional adult who worked in the classroom.

Once my role had been established, a more focused set of observations were possible where the pattern of how prior learning was stimulated and new learning introduced began to emerge. Lankshear and Knobel (2004: 220) suggest that 'This phase concentrates on the ways things are *related, structured* or *organised* within a given context'. In this study, the organisation

of the classroom and structured routine already in place reduced some of the difficulties associated with classroom observations and multiple case studies.

It could be argued that this study follows what Cohen et al. (2005: 305) term a 'semi-structured' pattern as observation '...will have an agenda of issues but will gather data to illuminate these issues in a far less pre-determined or systematic manner' than a highly structured observation. Therefore observations used in this study can be described as semi-structured in the sense that the flexibility and skill of the teacher allowed for any deviation from planned stages of learning to address any misconceptions or expand points of interest for discussion. However, a certain amount of structure was also achieved through the provision of detailed lesson plans which recorded the predicted stages of learning. In addition, structure was provided through the selection of a specific number of children and through the planned observation of four genre writing tasks.

The time periods for observation were set according to the school terms and organisation of the year group topics and writing genres. These were based on the units of work suggested in the Primary National Strategy (DfES, 2006). As already discussed, complete stages of teaching across four writing genres were observed in order to increase the richness of data gathered.

In summary a set of procedures were put in place to manage the data collected through observations. These included detailed analysis of classroom documents in the form of lesson plans to predict sequences of teaching and noting the strategies used to activate prior knowledge. Children's responses, both verbal and non-verbal, and a focus on the children's understanding of key concepts, related to the writing tasks, were described in connection with the stages of learning.

As observations were made of whole sequences of teaching over the period of two school terms where four different writing genres were addressed, as opposed to brief or short classroom observations, it was possible to divide observations into teacher focused, to establish the context for learning, and child focused (where the emphasis of the research was placed). Whilst observing the children, data collection and analysis was made manageable

by creating a systematic observation schedule as recommended by Blaxter et al. (2002). My study also drew upon Denscombe's (2010) recommendations where a different group, or pair in the case of this study, was the subject of focus in turn during paired or independent time.

In relation to the issue of participant observation, this study adopted what Lankshear and Knobel (2004: 225) call 'peripheral participation (which involves a fluid mix of full participation, partial participation and non-participation, depending on the events or activities being observed)'. There are certain risks involved in all these types of participation including acknowledgment of the difficulty of remaining objective. However, it is suggested that negative factors associated with participant observation can be reduced by '...carefully reading through and reflecting upon observations, drawing on multiple sources of data and discussing the ongoing project and preliminary findings with other teachers and teacher researchers (ibid, 2004: 225). This study aimed to collect rich and varied data using observational research techniques which were then analysed and discussed with the teachers concerned and colleagues at the partnership institution.

Lankshear and Knobel (2004) make numerous recommendations on how researchers should conduct themselves during classroom observations including putting teachers at their ease, being completely discrete about the data collected, avoiding interruptions or interjections and making careful note of facial expression so that engagement can be conveyed at all times. Ensuring complete openness about the aims of the research and reasons for being in the classroom are also crucial so that all parties have a thorough understanding of the objectives.

My role as participant observer was clarified with the teacher. In addition the children understood that I would watch whole class teaching as if I were a teaching assistant and then interact with participants of the study during group work. This style of observation is recommended as being good practice for a teacher researcher who is not the class teacher (ibid).

When conducting observations of behaviours, Schensul et al. (1999) recommend the use of verbs rather than adjectives so that behaviour is

described behaviourally rather than supposed motivations being attributed to them. Describing behaviour should be approached in a cautious manner and supported by evidence which clarifies the interpretations made. Lankshear and Knobel (2004: 232) argue that it is impossible to achieve complete objectivity or neutrality when recording observations of behaviour due to the inherent nature of classroom research: 'Researchers, however, still need to pay attention to the effects that their word choices have on representations of people, places and events, and to the personal values laid bare by their word choices'.

Semi-structured classroom observations of four genre writing tasks provided insights into the central research aims.   As previously argued, the processes and tools used for this study have most in common with what Cohen et al. (2002: 40) described as 'interpretive' research as they display characteristics associated with this.  These characteristics include the small-scale nature of the study and its subjectivity due to the nature of participant-observation.

Furthermore, Larkin (2002: 68) points out further disadvantages of classroom observation as a research tool when observing children working in groups:

> *Observations of groups of children in classroom settings are obviously fraught with problems: the impact of the researcher on the participants and subsequent data; the level of background noise rendering some interactions inaudible; the frequent interruptions from other children, teachers and assistants; and the need of the teachers to be aware of the whole class whilst working with a group. The researcher sought as far as possible to be a non-participating observer, but felt obliged to respond when directly addressed by a child...*

While acting as a participant observer in this study it was necessary to 'respond when directly addressed by a child'. The research design took this into account as my experience as a class teacher allowed me to anticipate possible responses and reactions, by the children, to the presence of another adult during the writing activity.

Lankshear and Knobel (2004: 224) argue that 'Observation data gain in explanatory strength when they can be cross referenced to interview data, artefacts and other kinds of data'. This argument is applicable to the current

study as the data collection methods used allowed for cross references to be made to compare and contrast findings.

### 3.5.2 Open-microphone recordings

It was established prior to the commencement of data collection, and observed during the orientation period, that children were encouraged to discuss their work during independent working time as the school recognised the importance of talk in the development of writing. This allowed informal discussions to take place between the children. The purpose of using informal discussion as a research tool was to achieve an insight into the children's conceptual understanding of the writing tasks and their levels of awareness in thinking during this process. The informal discussions which took place between researcher and participants could be termed 'contextualised recording of spoken language' (Lankshear and Knobel, 2004: 194) in one sense as they portrayed part of the action which occurred during collaborative or independent writing time.

Lankshear and Knobel (2004: 195) state that 'Recording contextualised spoken data requires preserving as far as possible the complexity of, and relationships between, interactions, activities and language uses that take place during the course of an event'. As this was an aim of the study and validates the methods implemented, a single digital recorder was used to gain accurate recall of the informal discussions which took place. This recording device was transferred systematically between the pairs of children. Owing to the disadvantages of gathering data in a classroom environment such as background noise and frequent interruptions (Larkin, 2010), a single recording device rather than multiple ones was deemed more suitable. Whilst only part of these recordings can truly be considered contextualised, they informed the informal discussions which took place between pairs of children and allowed as accurate a transcription of conversations as possible.

In further defence of this tool, it was considered too difficult to place a digital recorder in front of every pair due to the interference of other classroom noise as a significant amount of work in literacy took place through paired discussion, rendering it near impossible to transcribe what individual pairs were saying without oneself being physically present. The children were aware that they were taking part in the research and understood their discussions would be recorded. They were encouraged to listen to recordings of their own voices during the orientation period. The purpose of this was to reduce inhibitions and encourage natural rather than guarded speech.

The presence of a digital recorder and the researcher as an additional adult cannot go unobserved due to the nature of classroom research with younger children (Bell, 2009). However, the less intrusive the researcher, the more natural data can be collected. It was decided therefore that a visual recording device would not be used as minimum change to the children's environment was considered the most effective way of obtaining data. A healthy respect for the teacher was also preserved by selecting a recording device which was as discrete and unobtrusive as possible.

Open-microphone recordings took place in a systematic way to discover the levels of awareness in thinking during the writing tasks and to identify understanding of key concepts. As the children often worked collaboratively to begin writing tasks, it was deemed appropriate to talk with them in pairs as their writing progressed. These discussions were transcribed and analysed to investigate the levels of awareness in thinking and conceptual understanding during each writing task. Blaxter et al. (2002: 171) described this method as an unstructured interview, or 'naturalistic', as it records a social event which may include two or more participants in a familiar context which governs the course of interaction. In truth, the informal discussions which took place as open-microphone recordings fell somewhere on the continuum between structured and unstructured due to the nature of literacy sessions and the objectives set by the teacher.

Think-aloud techniques (Barnes, 1976; Branch, 2000; Mercer, 2000) were used during the course of informal discussion to generate spoken data revealing how the children approached the task of planning and producing their written texts and what thinking strategies they were using, e.g.

> Researcher: *Let's help Zoe with the bit she is finding tricky.*
>
> Zoe: *What shall I say? Shall I say he kills him by burning the stumps of his head?*
>
> Researcher: *How is he going to use the Hydra claws?*
>
> Joanna: *Perhaps they are really sharp and they can dig into people?*
>
> Zoe: *Yes, we have to think of a reason why he does each thing.*
>
> Researcher: *Why is he doing it?*
>
> Zoe: *The first reason was to save a beautiful princess from an evil ogre.*

(Appendix 8)

This process was initially modelled by the teacher in the course of each writing genre and it became evident, during the orientation period, that children were practiced in this type of process.

There are certain problems associated with this method which have been taken into consideration during the analysis of data. Firstly, the children may experience difficulty in trying to articulate their thought processes particularly when asked to relate them to their choice of the most effective strategies to complete any given task successfully. Also:

> *Think-aloud data can never be complete nor give wholly accurate representations of a person's thought processes in completing a given task. Instead, the data stand as an articulation of a process at a given point in time within a particular research-generated context. Hence, the data are always provisional.*

(Lankshear and Knobel, 2004: 215)

A further drawback is the temptation for the researcher to provide prompts in the form of guiding questions when a participant appears to be struggling to

articulate his or her thoughts. This is a particular problem when working with younger children as they are used to the teacher performing this role and may perceive the researcher as the substitute teacher. Therefore, I was careful to avoid playing too heavy a part in the formation of the children's thoughts. However, Lankshear and Knobel (2004) recommend the use of occasional prompts if participants experience difficulty forming their thoughts as long as data is supported with observations in these circumstances.

Bell (2009) warns against the dangers of bias when a single researcher is involved in any form of discussion or interview with participants, advising constant reflection and critical use of triangulation. Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) point out that, as interviews are interpersonal, it is to be expected that the interviewer will have some influence over the interviewee. This is an important issue to consider when researching the actions and reactions of children engaged in writing tasks in the classroom. For example, Kvale (1996) argues that the relationship between interviewer and interviewee is asymmetrical as with the relationship between a teacher and a pupil. However, Cohen et al. (2005: 122) state that 'We need to recognise that the interview is a shared, negotiated and dynamic social moment', whilst being cautious of the potential for distortion due to the asymmetry of power.

Silverman (2010) cautions against the exclusive use of interviews to generate data and deems the sole use of this method to be inappropriate for classroom research. He recommends such research to be carried out in conjunction with extensive analysis of observations and artefacts. Each of these methods were used to inform the data collection processes for this study thus supporting its trustworthiness.

### 3.5.3 Semi-structured group interviews

Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) define the purpose of a semi-structured interview as working on the assumption that the interviewee possesses information that the interviewer wants. One of the central aims of this study was to investigate children's understanding of key concepts and use of levels

of awareness in thinking when undertaking specific genre writing tasks. To explore these aims, I adopted the method of using semi-structured, digitally recorded interviews.

The interview was the tool by which I was able to identify ways in which the children used different levels of thinking during specific writing tasks. This information would have been difficult to obtain by alternative methods such as a questionnaire because the immediacy of individual responses would have been lost. The type of semi-structured interview used in this study allowed richer data to be collected as it provided an opportunity for me to explore and expand upon the children's responses in order to gain greater clarity. Due to the age of the children, certain responses required qualification, or what Mercer identified as the 'reformation' (2000: 52) of utterances. Mercer considered this practice to be an integral part of conducting semi-structured interviews with younger children as it provides further opportunities for them to form their responses.

Kvale (1996) states that a possible advantage of semi-structured interviews is, that the interviewer has greater control over the process of gaining information from the interviewee. This was applicable to the current study as a central aim was to explore ways in which the children were aware of their thought processes when engaged in writing. A richer set of data was therefore obtained from the semi-structured interview as opposed to a questionnaire. Unlike a questionnaire, an interview provides the researcher with an opportunity to explore responses in greater depth and request the clarification or expansion of certain points which are prevalent to the study (Kvale, 1996). Semi-structured interviews are also considered to be a more appropriate method when working with younger children (Mercer, 2000; Lankshear and Knobel, 2004; Larkin, 2010).

However, Larkin (2010) suggests that interviews which require children to reflect on their own cognition can pose further difficulties as they may not be able to recall the mental processes experienced. She points out that it was beneficial to use a concrete stimulus whilst conducting her own interviews such as samples of the children's work to prompt reflections. In the case of

this study, the children were asked to look at and refer to their own writing throughout each interview. This proved successful in the sense that each child was able to recall the context in which the writing took place and the processes undertaken.

'In conducting interviews about declarative metacognitive knowledge of young writers it became clear that not all children had the same conception of writing.' (Larkin, 2010: 147) This is an issue which is pertinent to the discussion of data throughout Chapter 5 as I was not seeking generalizability but searching for unique responses to different writing tasks in the context of the classroom. Larkin (2010) stated that it is very hard to measure the development of metacognition as a way of analysing children's ability to reflect on their own cognitive development through interview alone. Although measurement of the development of metacognition is not a central focus for this study, it seems important to note that it has been connected with the language of cognition and can be used to inform methods of data collection to a certain extent. However, the different levels of awareness in thinking which are claimed to be increasingly metacognitive (Jones, 2008) are recorded and analysed in relation to the research aims central to this study and do not attempt to measure cognition in a hierarchical sense.

Larkin continues to promote the benefits of interviews for research into cognition and metacognition as the interviewer can 'pick up on specific elements of an answer and ask follow up questions' (2010: 147). The nature of the semi-structured group interviews designed for this study sought to illuminate children's thinking surrounding writing. Therefore, questions were designed to be adapted according to the children's responses and to include elements of 'reformation' (Mercer, 2000).

The advantages and disadvantages of group interviews with children have been discussed by a number of researchers (Lankshear and Knobel, 2004; Lewis, 1992). Advantages include the generation of richer responses, enhanced reliability of responses and the stimulation of original ideas. Lewis (1992: 414) argues, 'In a class in which children have learned to respect one another's contribution, a group interview can generate a greater range of

responses than individual interviews'. It was found that the children in this study were able to prompt each other during the semi-structured group interviews, making reference to wider learning contexts such as school plays and class texts in order to qualify each other's emerging thoughts and ideas. However, one disadvantage of the children's reference to the wider life of the school was that they were occasionally distracted from the central themes of the interview. Kvale (1996: 148-9) considers an effective interviewer to be 'knowledgeable', 'structuring', 'clear', 'gentle', 'sensitive', 'open', 'steering', 'critical', 'remembering' and 'interpreting'. Due to my experience of working with children in small groups in similar settings, I was able to elicit information and help them remain focused on the questions for discussion.

A further disadvantage of group interviews, applicable to this study, is that they leave less time for questioning as a greater amount of discussion is initiated. Therefore it was necessary to focus on some, instead of all the interview questions during the semi-structured group interviews. The timing of group interviews was planned very carefully so the children did not miss lesson introductions and did not cause disruption by moving in and out of the classroom.

Lewis (1992) considers group interviews to be more appropriate than individual interviews if research is carried out in a school where collaboration and group work is used frequently and effectively. The ethos at St Mary's Junior School was to encourage collaborative work in order to support and extend learning opportunities. Therefore, group interviews created a more natural context in which to explore the children's engagement in the writing process. It was appropriate to select groups which were already in existence, e.g. two sets of literacy partners, as they had established a relationship within this context facilitating more natural responses (Thacker, 1990). As discussed previously, the children were encouraged to make reference to their own writing samples throughout the interview process as the use of a stimulus can support younger children to form their thoughts and ideas. Analysis of these responses are presented and discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

To emulate the classroom context in which the writing tasks took place and consequently gain a truer picture of the children's levels of awareness in thinking, interviews were conducted in small groups. I selected two pairs of literacy partners at a time as a greater number would have been too much to deal with and a smaller amount may have led to inhibited or stilted answers. This had been evident during the orientation period of the study, when open-microphone recordings had focused on one child only and not mirrored the context in which the children had worked originally. Therefore I felt it necessary to emulate the collaborative nature of writing in the classroom. For example, when developing ideas for writing letters of review, the children worked in groups of four to compare books by the same author. The following extract demonstrates the nature of open-microphone recordings when children worked collaboratively in preparation for writing.

Jack: *It's similar to the first one* (Dr. Xargle's book of Earthlets) *It's got exactly the same pictures.*

Amelia: *Same pictures and aliens.*

Jack: *Yeah and similar describing words.*

Researcher: *What do you think Amelia?*

Amelia: *This book wasn't as good as the first one.*

Zoe: *It's not as funny as the one about babies.*

Researcher: *What did you like about the book?*

Zoe: *I liked the bit when they talked about 'walkies!' that was the funniest bit.*

Researcher: *Why was that the funniest bit?*

Zoe: *Shall I say because...Oh, I've forgotten why.*

Therefore, the informal discussion captured through open-microphone recordings and semi-structured participant observations during the main period of research provided a firm basis on which to develop semi-structured interviews in groups. Initial semi-structured interviews revealed that the children responded well to being in groups of four and with the same partner they had worked with for the writing task. Research suggests that interviewing individuals or pairs of children can limit responses instead of

expanding them (Lewis, 1992). However, it became apparent during open-microphone recordings that being able to listen to the different ways in which another pair had worked on a writing task acted as a stimulus for the others during semi-structured group interviews.

**3.5.4 Semi-structured group interview questions.**

It was important to consider the type of questions to be used during semi-structured interviews carefully in order to illuminate the research aims. Previous research in this area was investigated and reviewed to provide a structure for questions to be used in the study. Therefore, I sought guidance from former research projects which had successfully dealt with similar investigations involving younger children, such as Fisher et al. (2006) 'Talk to Text' and Jacobs' (2004) study into the growth of metacognition in young children through the writing process.

Fisher et al. (2010) developed questions for the 'Talk to Text' project to help children reflect upon the aims of a writing task and the processes of producing a written piece. Similarly, Jacobs (2004) encouraged the language of thought to fulfil the aims of her classroom investigation. Table 7 shows the similarities between the questions asked in both studies.

Table 7: Semi-structured interview questions (Fisher et al., 2010; Jacobs, 2004)

| Fisher et al. (2010) | Jacobs (2004) |
|---|---|
| What was I thinking about when I was writing this? | Tell me what you were thinking about while you were writing. |
| What was I feeling when I wrote this? | Why do you think you thought about that? |
| Where did I get my ideas from? | How do you think that idea came into your mind? How did you decide what to write about? |
| Could I have done it differently? | Is there anything you would like to do differently next time? |
| What did I do when I got stuck? | |

Fisher et al. (2010) found through this style of questioning that children could be encouraged to evaluate their writing in terms of setting goals and developing writing strategies. They suggest that this type of questioning aids the development of self-assessment skills. Providing criteria such as 'Two Ticks and a Wish' (ibid: 111), supports the use of this type of questioning during semi-structured interviews. Putting this type of success criteria in place enables younger children to develop self-assessment skills which allows for self-evaluation on the progress they are making in writing (Williams and Fisher, 2002; Hodson and Jones, 2001). Similarly, Jacobs (2004) found that by modelling the language of thinking and reflection, younger children were more likely to develop their own reflective register when talking about their writing.

Using 'what' and 'why' questions can encourage 'exploratory reasoning' (Littleton et al., 2005: 179) as they are task-related and, within the context of this study, they are related to the writing task under review. Therefore the questions developed for the purpose of this research draw on those which have facilitated exploratory reasoning in younger children such as shown in studies by Fisher et al. (2010).

Graves (1994) argues that children can be encouraged to think carefully about their answers to questions regarding their writing when the questions become predictable and are perceived as non-threatening. From my own experience in the classroom, I have found that children are secure with this style of questioning as they do not feel they are being tested in any way, but are being asked for an opinion where no answer is considered right or wrong and every opinion is valued. When children become used to the repetitive nature of questioning which seeks reflection, they become used to questioning themselves and exploring the opinions of others.

Hodson and Jones (2001) encourage the use of 'response partners' during or after the writing process to aid reflection. Children in this study frequently worked in collaboration with a partner during writing tasks, drawing on each other's prior knowledge and understanding in order to review the task and reflect upon their successes. Alternatively, dialogue encouraging reflection

can take place between adult and child. The questions designed for this study were used between adult and child and acted as a predictable checklist to stimulate reflective responses in the children alongside their literacy partners. This style of questioning was designed to answer one of the central research aims: to identify children's levels of awareness in thinking during specific writing tasks.

From the research literature reviewed, especially that of Fisher et al. (2010) and Jacobs (2004), there developed recurring themes and patterns in semi-structured interview questions which can be adapted to address the initial research question in this study:

- What evidence is there to show that children employ different levels of awareness in thinking when engaged in specific genre writing tasks?

Therefore, a variety of the following questions were developed in the light of existing research:

- Where do you think your ideas came from for your (*state genre*)?
- What do you think you have done well? Why?
- What did you find the most difficult about this piece of writing? Why?
- If you were going to help a friend write a (*state genre*) how do you think you would help them?
- If you could change your (*state genre*) what changes do you think you would make? Why?

The questions were not asked in the same order during each interview but were dependent upon initial responses made by the children. It was important to be flexible in terms of the order in which questions were discussed, allowing time for the children to speak in more depth thus encouraging the most insightful responses from each individual. This type of interview allows for open ended responses, where importance is placed upon the expansion of points of interest (Denscombe, 2010). In my experience, questioning which encourages more open-ended responses leads to the elaboration of answers. Therefore, by adopting a flexible frame this allows a

more illuminative picture to be obtained of the levels of awareness in thinking and more weight can be placed upon the findings.

Furthermore, I considered it important to construct a framework of questioning which did not force the children to respond in any particular way in order to prove a point. Neither did I select from the transcript only those elements that sought to prove a point (see appendices 5-8, pp. 353-382, for all transcripts). In an attempt to achieve free-flowing discourse, I allowed children to respond to the questions at length and did not force a question which did not engage them in discourse naturally. Although sometimes it was necessary to paraphrase or reform what had been said by a particular child, to encourage further discussion, as advocated by Mercer (2000). As a result, not every question designed was asked during every interview. This was necessary in order to maintain flexibility and encourage more natural responses.

Engaging in an interview is a social process and, in the case of this study, allowed for interaction between a small group and an individual interviewer. Having spent time conducting observations and engaging in discussions with children in the classroom, I was no longer a neutral elicitor of information but became a facilitator in the process, taking on the role of 'substitute' teacher. Subsequently, the interviews became a narrative process, emulating dialogue which often takes place between the teacher and pupils in the classroom when informing Assessment for Learning (DCSF, 2008) processes. Denzin (1997) argues that it is at this point that the boundaries become blurred between fact and fiction as the interviewer and interviewees mutually 'narrativise' each other.

A number of researchers regard interviewing as problematic when working with young children (Sharp, 2012; Cohen et al., 2005). Therefore it is relevant to consider how these problems can be reduced. Difficulties include the establishment of trust and understanding between the researcher and participants. Added to this is the issue of children only saying what they think the researcher wants to hear. The latter can pose particular threats to the validity of any classroom based research project. One possible way to

reduce such problems is to develop a shared language with children so that all parties concerned understand where the emphasis for learning is placed. I was able to overcome this through analysis of semi-structured observations and scrutiny of classroom documents, such as lesson plans, during the orientation period. The class teacher used a register familiar to the children as well as particular questioning strategies to develop a shared language. For example, noted on the lesson plans for writing a non-chronological report were the following questions:

- What are the features of a non-chronological report?
- How do they help the reader?
- How is it different from a story?
- Would it make a difference to the report if the paragraphs were presented in a different order?

This is an example of the style of questioning frequently used in the classroom and familiar to the children. I was able to emulate this style of language throughout the research period, increasing the validity of the children's responses to my semi-structured interview questions.

In addition, I have considerable knowledge and experience of teaching the age range studied. This proved helpful in reducing problems such as understanding where the children were in their learning and what they had experienced in previous years. The fact that I had taught this particular year group and had a clear and current understanding of the curriculum requirements was an advantage as I was able to adapt to classroom organisation and structures quickly and easily. This provided greater validity to the study as it helped the children to accept me as both researcher and additional adult within a naturalistic context.

Semi-structured interviews allowed the children to respond more naturally to open-ended questioning within the context of specific learning situations. In this way I was able to explore ways in which individual pupils developed their thinking about the writing tasks both during and after they had taken place. The type of semi-structured interview used in this study allowed for the

gathering of a variety of data which provided an opportunity for me to explore the children's responses in order to gain greater clarity from their thoughts and reflections.

In summary, '...no matter how hard an interviewer may try to be systematic and objective, the constraints of everyday life will be a part of whatever interpersonal transactions she initiates' (Cohen et al., 2005: 268). Therefore the interview tool will be neither objective, nor subjective but 'intersubjective' (ibid: 267) by its very nature.

### 3.5.5 Interview context

The physical context of the interviews was considered to be of great importance in this study. A number of studies emphasise the importance of the situation, environment and context of an interview arguing that they make a huge impact on a participant's sense of ease (Burgess, 1988; Labov, 1969). For the purpose of this study, it was necessary for the context to be familiar to the children, posing no perceived threat. Therefore, the interviews took place in the school library, a place where the children were used to working either independently or in small groups. This was conducive to collecting data that would illuminate all research questions.

Lewis (1992) found that ensuring younger children feel at ease is extremely important as younger children will say anything rather than nothing when faced with a more stressful environment, potentially affecting the quality and honesty of their answers during semi-structured interviews. Therefore I ensured the children were interviewed in a familiar environment to obtain as true a reflection of their thoughts, ideas and feelings as possible. Of course, other associations which the children may have had within the library context could not be avoided. For example, some children displayed excitement when asked to go into the library as this space was often used for activities they enjoyed. The children's enhanced mood or concern at being removed from the classroom space needed to be considered carefully with the interview designed to be an extension of the work currently taking place in the classroom rather than something separate or special.

### 3.5.6 Samples of children's writing

Analysis of writing samples was intended to further illuminate the research questions:

- How do children display their understanding of key concepts and concept vocabulary related to specific writing tasks within four genre contexts?
- How do children show they have used their prior knowledge during these tasks?
- How do children show that they have integrated new ideas into their existing knowledge base during genre related writing tasks?

Lankshear and Knobel (2004) recommend the use of multiple data sources including the analysis of artefacts for qualitative research purposes. The writing produced by the children towards the end of each writing task was collected and cross-referenced with transcripts and reviewed alongside the analysis of data.

The written data collected during this study was classed as a primary source due to the fact that it originated from the participants. Bell (2009) defines a primary source as that which is produced during the research period. The samples of writing can be considered very important as they are a direct result of the teaching input and learning strategies used by the children. 'Of course, as researchers we always (and inescapably) put our own interpretations on other people's texts – including primary sources' (Lankshear and Knobel, 2004: 251). Written data analysis was shared with the class teacher in an attempt to reduce the subjectivity of interpretation. In addition, this acted as an opportunity for moderation to increase validity. An example of this is in the teacher's written comments (Appendix 5, p. 338) regarding the children's writing, e.g.

> *Well done, Aidan – a good try at your playscript. You have included a lot of important features. You need to work on your punctuation, because, even though you are writing in sentences, they aren't correctly punctuated.*

Further teacher comments are displayed within the writing samples in appendices 5-8. Lankshear and Knobel (2004) describe how qualitative educational research uses extant texts that have been written by participants as part of the curriculum coverage. These are then used to explore a particular theory as, in this case, in relation to classroom practice. Relatively small amounts of written data can be collected for such research. 'This raises a key point in relation to data collection within qualitative research: that in qualitative research the inquiry aims to achieve *depth* in the study of a social phenomenon' (Lankshear and Knobel 2004: 261). Therefore the depth of analysis is crucial and the degree to which the data exemplifies sophistication of critique (Blaxter et al., 2002).

## 3.6 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were of extreme importance throughout this study (Warwick, 1982; Patton, 2002). The context and focus of the study, being in an educational setting and involving young children, required a greater amount of sensitivity with every aspect of data collection managed with extreme care.

Ethical approval was sought from the Research Ethics Committee to ensure that research proposed was in accordance with the Brunel University Ethical Framework. This was to guarantee that the research was ethically sound and that all issues regarding safeguarding were adhered. An outline of research was developed for the host school as recommended by Denscombe (2010). Stutchbury and Fox (2009) argue that establishment of trust in educational research is of extreme importance. This can be achieved when participants have a clear and full understanding of what the researcher is trying to achieve. Therefore, the participant consent form (Appendix 1) and research outline (Appendix 2), displaying the research aims and key questions for the study and roles of the participants were developed and shared with the teachers and parents involved.

Pseudonyms were adopted for the children and school to secure anonymity. No name was assigned to the class teacher and no reference made to the specific location of the school. Confidentiality was assured during initial meetings with the Head Teacher and senior management team. This was reinforced during the orientation period. All data was treated with the upmost care and stored appropriately, in-keeping with guidance from the Ethics Committee and the British Educational research Associations (BERA) guidelines (2004).

## 3.7 Analysis of data

There exists a wealth of literature that considers the underlying assumptions and procedures connected with analysing qualitative data. Lankshear and Knobel (2004: 266) describe data analysis as '…the process of *organizing…pieces of information, systematically identifying their key features* or relationships (themes, concepts, beliefs etc.) and *interpreting them'*. This process is always informed by theory and is dependent upon the research question to ensure it is fit for purpose. Many procedures for data analysis are associated with specific approaches or traditions such as discourse analysis (e.g., Potter and Wetherall, 1994), narrative analysis (e.g., Leiblich, 1998), phenomenology (e.g., van Manen, 1990) and grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

For the purpose of this study a more 'generic' analytical approach has been adopted (Silverman, 2010) in keeping with my philosophical belief system. A general thematic approach can be used for the analysis of field notes, transcripts and artefacts. Within qualitative research, Parlett and Hamilton (1976) suggest the researcher engage in 'progressive focusing' as, at a theoretical level, analysis will begin during the early stages of research in order for the researcher to have some way of managing the quantity of data which is collected throughout the study. So a process of funneling can take place with data converging as it is studied, reflected upon and reviewed.

It was necessary to familiarise myself with the data before any formal analysis took place, thus allowing for immersion in the data (Denscombe, 2010). An inductive approach was selected to generate greater depth during analysis as opposed to a deductive approach. Inductive analysis facilitates the emergence of findings from the central or significant themes which occur naturally in the data. This was considered a more appropriate method as interviews and informal discussions aimed to investigate the children's understanding of key concepts related to writing tasks. Both formal and informal discussions with the class teacher, regarding the nature of the children's responses, during the course of research formed an important part of the study, supporting analysis. The nature of these discussions mirrored those which often took place between year-group teams when moderating written work and planning next steps in learning.

Therefore, selecting a deductive approach to data analysis might have hindered an exploration of the children's thinking related to writing tasks owing to any preconceptions which may have been imposed. Further justification of an inductive approach includes the researcher's exploration of findings derived from the data in connection with the aims of the study. A hypothesis did not exist to support or refute, as in deductive analysis, I was simply searching for emerging themes from the data analysed.

### 3.7.1 Levels of awareness in thinking

It was necessary to manage the data by highlighting significant themes emerging from the interview transcriptions and informal discussions. Miles and Huberman (1994) refer to this as data reduction and consider it necessary during the initial stages of analysis in qualitative research. Data is condensed to aid translation and management, allowing for the clarification of emerging themes. Larkin (2010: 17) comments:

> *Measuring or assessing constructs such as metacognition and intelligence is a highly contested practice. It is difficult to know exactly what one is measuring at any given time and there are many other variables to take into account such things as mood, emotion, confidence, and motivation which can all affect how well people of all ages perform on a task.*

The study of children's levels of awareness in thinking when engaged in writing tasks was not presented as a measure of metacognition in this research, but rather as a means of identifying children's awareness of their own thought processes and their understanding of key concepts related to different writing tasks. No attempt has been made to measure or assess metacognition. The work of Swartz and Perkins (1989), defining the levels of awareness in thinking and problem solving was adapted further by Williams and Fisher (2002) to identify children's levels of thinking and task awareness when engaged in writing. The adapted levels are:

- **T** - *Tacit Use:* writers make decisions about their writing without really thinking about them.

- **A** - *Aware Use:* writers become consciously aware *that* and *when* they use a specific strategy during a writing task.

- **S** - *Strategic Use:* writers organise their own thinking by selecting strategies that will help them complete the writing task.

- **R** - *Reflective Use:* writers reflect on their thinking, before, during and after the writing task, pondering on progress and how to improve.

However, when analysing the data both independently and through discussion with the class teacher, it became apparent that not all the children's responses correlated with the four levels of awareness presented by Williams and Fisher (2002). Therefore, after the identification of patterns within the data, there was a continuation of the reduction of data until a new level of awareness in thinking emerged from the original data. Thus it was necessary to extend the levels to accommodate these additional responses. It was noted that some children took advantage of opportunities to share their thinking when collaborating on a writing task. In this way they were able to develop their awareness of a writing task explicitly, making collaborative use of their thought processes. It was decided therefore to add a further category to the list. Although it has been placed between 'aware use' and 'strategic use' this does not indicate that the additional level is viewed as being part of a hierarchical ladder within the context of this study.

The revised levels used in this study are therefore:

- *T - Tacit Use:* writers display an implicit understanding of the task or imply that it makes little demand on their thought processes.
- *A - Aware Use:* writers become consciously aware *that* and *when* they are using specific strategies during a writing task.
- *C – Collaborative Use:* writers use language to share and co-construct their thinking when collaborating on a writing task.
- *S - Strategic Use:* writers organise their own thinking by selecting the most effective strategies to help them complete the writing task.
- *R - Reflective Use:* writers reflect on their thinking, before, during and after the writing task, pondering on progress and how to improve.

Flavell's (1979) presentation of the essential parts which make up cognitive monitoring is also drawn upon to illuminate Williams and Fisher (2002) continuum of awareness. Flavell (1979: 1) suggests that it is the interactions between '...metacognitive knowledge, which is further broken down into person, task and strategy variables; metacognitive experiences; goals/tasks; and actions/strategies that provide for monitoring of cognition'. Flavell argues that there is much overlap between each constituent. Likewise, the same argument may apply to Williams and Fisher's (2002) levels of awareness in thinking. Therefore the limitations of prescribing distinct levels, to analyse children's reflections, needs to be discussed. Limitations are taken into consideration when a descriptive analysis of transcriptions and observations is made in Chapter 5.

### 3.7.2 Management of data

*The process of systematically identifying significant features in data is always informed by theory and is directly related to one's research question. It involves applying categories developed from a particular theory, using concepts identified as important by one's literature review or applying a particular method of analysis to the data set in order to respond to a research question.*

(Lankshear and Knobel, 2004: 266)

After close analysis, it was necessary to develop a manageable method for organising the data as an interpretive approach by its very nature is messy. Therefore, the data collected was analysed under three section headings. The sections are:

- Task context
- Task understanding
- Task awareness

Each section is applied to the four literary genres observed and provides a focus for the aims and key questions relating to this study. The 'task context' section outlines the key concepts for each genre writing task. Links are made between learning objectives and the children's understanding of key concepts related to each genre. This section of data also describes the context for each genre writing task, following the phases of learning. Observations in this section focus on the activation of prior knowledge and integration of new ideas into the children's existing knowledge base. The children's individual responses, to each writing task, is described and explores their understanding of the key concepts as well as their use of prior knowledge.

'Task understanding' explores the relationship between the children's understanding of the learning objective and their understanding of key concepts relating to each specific writing genre. In addition, transcripts are annotated to identify whether the children's understanding of key concepts and levels of awareness in thinking has an effect on the quality of their writing.

The section entitled 'task awareness' contains observation of the children's levels of awareness in thinking during and after each writing task. A level was assigned to each piece of evidence with a corresponding code:

- Tacit use **T**
- Aware use **A**
- Collaborative use **C**
- Strategic use **S**
- Reflective use **R**

Each level was discussed with the teacher and colleagues at the partnership institution to ensure validity of the application of evidence taken from the data. Extracts from my discussions with the teacher can be read in Appendix 9 (p. 387). It became evident that applying a certain code to each level of awareness in thinking was extremely challenging in the sense that a certain amount of overlap between levels was apparent. Therefore the entire context of utterances had to be taken into consideration when analysing the data, alongside discussions with the class teacher and observations of the children and their writing achievements. Using multiple factors such as these to code the data was consistent with my belief that speech is situated and dependent on context.

Lankshear and Knobel (2004: 219) state 'Collecting observed data emphasizes recording 'naturally occurring' or *contextualized* data about what is happening in social settings *as it happens'*. This study required field notes to be made of all observations to set the learning within a context. All observations were carefully planned and systematically followed the sequences of teaching which took place for each of the four writing genres observed. Although many observation methods have been designed (Denscombe, 2010; Bowling, 2002; Spradley, 1980) each research project requires a unique system to be devised to fit the purpose of the task.

> *The kind of observations available to the researcher lie on a continuum from unstructured to structured, responsive to pre-ordinate...a structured observation will already have its hypotheses decided and will use the observational data to conform or refute these*

*hypotheses. On the other hand, a semi-structured and, more particularly, an unstructured observation, will be hypothesis-generating rather than hypothesis-testing.*

(Cohen et al., 2005: 305)

As presented above, this study falls within the domain of semi-structured as the teacher's lesson plans (Appendices 5-8) were used as observation prompts to ensure that observations took place methodically. I was able to reflect on and analyse observed data, noting emerging patterns and themes as observations increased in focus. 'This phase concentrates on the way things are *related, structured* or *organized* within a given context.' (Lankshear and Knobel, 2004: 220) Focused observations were both descriptive and successive due to the structure of teaching and learning at St Mary's Junior School. This aided the organisation and analysis of data throughout the study.

As semi-structured classroom observations were recorded in phases, the schedule was recorded showing the sequence of teaching. What follows is an extract from Chapter 4 illustrating the organisation of data under the three headings related to the research questions. The three headings were subsequently applied to each of the eight children in alphabetical order. Only one of the eight children has been used to illustrate the organisation of data below.

**Task context:**

The writing objectives were explained to the pupils. The teacher recapped on previous writing activities in literacy and activated pupils' prior knowledge by asking them to recall the main features of the playscripts they had experienced. The children shared their experiences with Zoe explaining that '*a playscript tells a story with speech.'* (O1.1)

**Zoe:**

## Task context – individual responses

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| Phase 1 | Showed a clear understanding of the task by making suggestions for characters' speech. Shared ideas with her partner, Jack, before she wrote them down. She asked, *'Shall I do? Shall the narrator say? Then we could say.'* | O1.1 |
| Phase 2 | Made appropriate suggestions for how characters could speak. When Jack suggested that they could use the word *'puzzled'* to explain how the Cyclops was speaking, she overruled this with the word *'confused',* using it in her own writing. | O1.2 |
| Phase 3 | Worked quickly and confidently to produce the completed transcript and was prepared to edit it carefully for form and meaning. | O1.3 |

## Task understanding

| Assessed levels | **Key concept: Understand text transformation from direct and indirect speech in a text into speech in speech bubbles and from that into speech in a playscript.** | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| Secure | Able to transfer the characters' speech used in the speech bubbles to a conversation sequence in the playscript and make appropriate additions to further the story. | O1.2 |
| | *'You have to tell a story with the people speaking like we did for assembly.'* | R1.3 |
| | **Key concept: Understand text transformation from narrative to Narrator.** | |
| Secure | Able to identify the main points in the narrative independently and use these to tell the story through the Narrator.<br><br>*Narrator:     One of Odysseus' soldiers gave Cyclops some wine.*<br>*Soldier:        Here you go, here's your wine (give wine to Cyclops)*<br>*Cyclops:       Why, thank you. What is your name?*<br>*Narrator:     The Cyclops fell asleep.* | S1.8 |
| | **Key concept: Understand text transformation from narrative description of characters' actions/reactions into stage directions.** | |
| Secure | Gave clear stage directions for both the characters' actions and reactions. Weaker use of the Narrator to enhance the narrative for the reader.<br><br>The teacher's written feedback stated:<br>*A good try, Zoe. You have used some of the features of playscripts well.* | S1.8 |

**Task awareness**

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| A | Was aware that sequencing the characters' speech correctly was necessary to the flow of the story throughout the playscript. *'...you have to put the speech in the right order so the play makes sense.'* | R1.3 |
| C | Discussed the collaborative thinking employed by her and her partner when thinking of ideas. *'...me and Jack tried to act it out. I was Odysseus and he was Cyclops. It was really hard because it was really hard thinking what would happen if we were there now.'* | R1.5 |
| A | Was aware of the strategy she used to help generate ideas for her playscript. *'We did a Greek assembly which actually helped me because we did the play of Odysseus and the Cyclops. Then we acted it out so we knew what to write down.'* | I1 |

## 3.8 Transcriptions

The majority of qualitative research requires some element of transcription (Lacey and Luff, 2001). As this study involved recordings of informal discussions and semi-structured group interviews, transcription was necessary. Lacey and Luff (2001) point out that an element of bias may be present if the researcher summarises the transcriptions in note form as certain parts of the transcript may be given greater importance if they appear more relevant to the research aims. In light of this, it was deemed necessary that all digital recordings made during this study were transcribed verbatim (see appendices 5-8). Where the children spoke over each other, (…) was used to represent this. If there was a significant non-verbal signal, such as the nodding of a head by way of agreement, I put this in brackets, e.g. (nods head). Below is an example of an extract of transcript from Appendix 5 where there is a level of overlap in the children's discussions.

Researcher: *How could you explain to them what to do – what to write?*

Emma: *Act it out...*

| Aidan: | …*Then we could, like, because they haven't done this so we could say that you've got to do it like this. We could show them ours so they've got to do the speech bubbles. You write what they could say but first you've got to read what's under the pictures.* |
|---|---|

As recordings were made in a noisy classroom, it was necessary to overcome the problem of which child was speaking at any one time. One way in which I overcame this was to state which children were speaking and use names when questioning (as shown in the above transcript). During the group interviews, I stated names as frequently as possible. Due to the period of orientation and amount of time I had spent with the children, it became easier to recognise their voices. I also left minimal time between recording and transcribing in order to reduce inaccuracies.

Further short comings of transcriptions include their selectivity as they are 'interpretations of social situations' (Cohen et al., 2005: 126). There remains the danger of them becoming unreliable when decontextualised. One way in which I overcame this was to summarise participant responses during the process of the interview so that greater clarity and validity can be achieved. However, if the interviewer commands too much control over the responses made by the interviewees, a degree of bias may be created. It may also lead to delayed responses in interviewees and a stilted flow of discussion.

Mishler (1991) emphasises how the transcriber has the ultimate responsibility of presenting speech and non-verbal communication so that all significant moments are given equal importance. Depending on the focus of research there will be clear boundaries as to which sections of transcription need to be included in the main body of findings (Sapsford and Jupp, 1996). This study includes all transcriptions which are relevant to the research questions. The instances when participants were discussing subjects unrelated to writing tasks were not included.

Honan et al. (2000) argue that transcriptions are a mere representation of the researcher's own stance as decisions regarding presentation and content ultimately lay with the researcher. In this study, I have attempted to avoid

bias during the presentation of transcriptions as all discussion relevant to the writing tasks was included and transcribed verbatim.

Kvale (1996) believes there to be no transcription that is an absolutely true reproduction of the original event. Nevertheless, it is hoped that transcriptions, although abstracted, have informed the research aims and questions adding clarity to the study.

## 3.9 Summary

The methods of data collection investigated in this chapter were in-keeping with the philosophical belief system adopted for the study and considered the most appropriate to illuminate the central themes for research: children's understanding of key concepts, their application of prior knowledge and their levels of awareness in thinking when engaged in genre writing tasks. As has been discussed, methods of data collection were designed to provide greater depth of analysis. The following chapter presents the data in three sections: task context, task understanding and task awareness. The sections will be repeated for all four writing genres observed. Each section provides a focus for the specific aims of the study as illustrated in Table 6 (p. 101).

The research methods have been designed to facilitate a comprehensive analysis of all data resulting in the drawing of 'credible conclusions' (Sapsford and Jupp, 1996: 1) connected to the development of children's writing during Year 3. Validity is addressed largely through what Silverman terms the 'constant comparative method' and through 'comprehensive data treatment' (2010: 278) to ensure depth of critical reflection and the avoidance of anecdotalism. A rich and detailed description, of the eight children studied, is provided in order for practitioners to consider what might be relevant to inform their own practice from the unique responses of the children in this study.

**Chapter 4**

**Analysis of data**

## 4.0 Organisation of data

The data collected for this study has been organised under four main headings.

1) Genre 1: Playscripts
2) Genre 2: Non-chronological reports
3) Genre 3: Letters of review
4) Genre 4: Narratives

Each section, included under these headings, has been designed to answer the key questions that frame the research. Table 6 (p. 101) provides an overview of how the organisation of data was guided by the research questions.

The word 'pupils' has been used to refer to the whole class in this chapter, including the eight participants. The words 'child' or 'children' have been used to refer to all, or one, of the eight cases observed during this study.

The data codes are organised numerically to indicate the location of evidence, e.g. O1.1 indicates the first semi-structured participant observation of the first writing genre, playscripts. A full list of all data codes and sources is provided in Appendix 3 (p. 332). The children's names occur in alphabetical order for each writing task to provide clarity in the organisation of data.

## Task context

For each of the four writing tasks this section describes the learning context through reference to data taken from semi-structured participant observations. Different stages of teaching were observed as well as the stimulus and guidance given to children prior to commencing independent or

collaborative activities. Observations in this section focus on the activation of prior knowledge and support given to aid the understanding of key concepts and concept vocabulary in order that new ideas could be integrated into each child's existing knowledge base.

The data in this section also describes the children's learning responses to each genre writing task. The evidence was collected through semi-structured participant observations and open-microphone recordings of the children's actions, reactions and discussions relating to the given stimuli. This data in addition to the children's written work is used to identify the children's prior knowledge and conceptual understanding as well as their ability to integrate new ideas into their existing knowledge base.


**Task understanding**

The data in this section is used to identify ways in which children show a clear understanding of key concepts and concept vocabulary related to specific genre writing tasks.  Evidence for this section is taken from semi-structured participant observations, open-microphone recordings and samples of writing. The evidence is reviewed with reference to the levels of understanding shown in each task. The following assessment judgements are used to evaluate the children's writing success and are based on the language and criteria used in Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) used nationally and by the host school to track pupil progress. The following language is used to represent each child's assessed level of understanding, at National Curriculum Level 3, of each of the key concepts for the writing tasks after analysis of data:

- **Low:**      Partially understood
- **Secure:**      Mostly understood
- **High:**      Fully understood

**Task awareness**

The children's levels of awareness in thinking across each genre writing task are identified in this section. As stated in the previous chapter, the levels of awareness in thinking have been adapted to accommodate responses made by the children. Evidence obtained through semi-structured participant observations, open-microphone recordings and semi-structured interviews illuminated the use of collaborative thinking by some of the children.

The revised levels used in this study are therefore:

- *T - Tacit Use:* writers display an implicit understanding of the task or imply that it makes little demand on their thought processes.
- *A - Aware Use:* writers become consciously aware *that* and *when* they are using specific strategies during a writing task.
- *C – Collaborative Use:* writers use language to share and co-construct their thinking when collaborating on a writing task.
- *S - Strategic Use:* writers organise their own thinking by selecting the most effective strategies to help them complete the writing task.
- *R - Reflective Use:* writers reflect on their thinking, before, during and after the writing task, pondering on progress and how to improve.

**4.1 Playscripts**

**Description of learning context**

**Phase 1**

The concept of a playscript was shared by the teacher with the pupils and linked to a series of tasks which aimed to develop their understanding of and ability to construct text in the same style and form. The learning objectives were explained to the pupils. The teacher recapped on previous writing activities in literacy and activated pupils' prior knowledge by asking them to recall the main features of the playscripts they had read, listened to or performed in the past. The children shared experiences of playscripts they

had read in Year 2 with Zoe explaining that '*a playscript tells a story with speech.*' (O1.1)

The teacher drew the pupils' attention to the Literacy Learning Wall where the features were displayed for pupil reference. This acted as a contextual resource throughout the sequence of teaching observed and was a strategy that enabled connections to be made between prior knowledge and new ideas.

Pupils were then given a sequence of illustrations from the story of Odysseus and the Cyclops containing empty speech bubbles with the narrative of the story written underneath. They were asked to read the narrative in pairs, consider how the characters might be feeling in each scene and write characters' speech in the speech bubbles.

During independent work, the teacher provided guidance to support pupils in the extraction of information from the narrative. The teacher encouraged pupils to consider whether any meaning could have been lost through the transformation of narrative to speech.

**Phase 2**

The teacher reviewed the learning objectives from the previous session and modelled how some pupils had transformed narrative text into speech. Pupils were asked to look at what they had written in the speech bubbles and transform this speech into a playscript. They were reminded of the genre features displayed in the classroom on the Literacy Learning Wall.

The teacher used the 'think aloud' strategy to model how speech could be transformed into playscript form.  The format was then created as a scaffold on the interactive whiteboard, allowing the teacher to model the construction of speech in sentences. The teacher encouraged discussion regarding character emotions at turning points in the story and showed how this could be conveyed through both the character's speech and through stage directions on how a character should speak. This was extended by pupils being asked to read the script aloud, taking account of these directions.  As a consequence, the story was deconstructed carefully by the teacher with

layout and content modelled thoroughly. This strategy of modelling and re-modelling key features of the genre supported pupils with activating their prior knowledge as well as supporting the understanding of new ideas.

Laminated target cards were placed on each table as a concrete reminder of the procedural aspects of the task. These took the form of layered targets:

| Must: | Place names of characters on the left hand side. |
|---|---|
| Should: | Use stage directions. |
| Could: | Develop emotions by including directions on how a character should speak. (D1) |

The children worked in pairs, as literacy partners, with some pairs collaborating on most aspects of the task whilst others wrote independently, stopping frequently to share their ideas with their partner or others in the group.

**Phase 3**

The teacher revised the format and features of a playscript briefly and individual playscripts were reviewed by literacy partners. The pupils were praised for remembering to include the main features of playscripts but were reminded of the need for correct punctuation in order to ensure meaning for the reader. The teacher also reminded pupils to use the narrator to fill in parts of the story that could not be told through speech as this had been a challenging concept for pupils to understand during the previous session.

Pupils were asked to look at the extended target sheets which had been put into their books and consider checking their work to see if they had been able to include each of the targets stated in connection with their playscripts. These included:

- Names of characters are written on the left hand side.
- A new line starts when a new person speaks.
- The narrator gives some extra information to help the story flow.
- There are directions showing how people speak in brackets.
- There are stage directions telling the actors of any special movements.

Pupils had been asked to work with a partner for support during the previous session but continued writing playscripts independently after initial paired discussion during this session.

### 4.1.1 Aidan

## Task context – individual responses

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|-------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Phase 1 | Identified the main features of playscripts by referring to prior reading experiences. *'We did a play in assembly.'* Quick to begin writing in the speech bubbles compared with other children and made suggestions for starting points which he shared with his partner. He made comments such as '*Look! I did this!*' to help his partner and occasionally the whole group. | O1.1 |
|  | Stated his understanding of how to approach the writing task. *'You write what they could say but first you've got to read what's under the pictures.'* | R1.2 |
| Phase 2 | Sought an initial explanation from his partner as to how to approach the writing task as a whole asking, *'What are we supposed to do with the bits that aren't speech?'* | O1.2 |
|  | Wrote at a faster pace than his partner but stopped at certain points to collaborate with his partner Emma and posing 'think aloud' questions such as *'Now what could he* (Odysseus*) be doing?'* | O1.2 |
| Phase 3 | Was quick to check his work against the extended target sheet and spent some time discussing possible revisions with his partner and making further suggestions, e.g. *I just thought of something…Odysseus could say "I tricked you Cyclops, my name is Odysseus".'* Completed the writing task independently. | O1.3 R1.4 |

## Task understanding

| Assessed level | **Key concept: Understand text transformation from direct and indirect speech in a text into speech in speech bubbles and from that into speech in a playscript.** | Data source |
|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Secure | Able to identify both direct and indirect speech in the text to write in speech bubbles. Relied on copying from the speech bubbles for the playscript and consequently the sequence of the story, told mostly through the speech, was disjointed with some parts missing. Used most of the main features of a playscript. | O1.2 S1.1 |
|  | The teacher's written feedback stated: *Well done, Aidan – a good try at your playscript. You have included a lot of the important features.* | S1.1 |
|  | **Key concept: Understand text transformation from narrative to Narrator.** | |
| Low | Told the story mostly through characters' speech and made limited use of the narrative through the Narrator. Consequently he missed | O1.2 |

| | out some of the main points of the story. He sought guidance from his partner Emma with trying to understand the purpose of the narrator. *'What are we supposed to do with the bits that aren't speech?'*<br><br>The teacher's written feedback stated:<br>*What would the Narrator say to fill in the story?* | S1.1 |
|---|---|---|
| | **Key concept: Understand text transformation from narrative description of characters' actions/reactions into stage directions.** | |
| Low | Able to give clear stage directions for characters' actions but did not give directions for their reactions and manner of speech.<br>*'I don't know how they say it.'*<br>Parts of his playscript required further content.<br><br>The teacher's written feedback stated:<br>*You have missed out quite a bit here.* | S1.1 |

## Task awareness

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| A | He was aware that he used his partner or others in the group as useful sources of support when generating ideas for the task.<br>*'I just ask someone who has good ideas about how to do it.'*<br><br>*'The person sitting next to me gives me ideas if they've got past where they know what to write.'* | R1.2 |
| C | Aidan worked collaboratively with Emma. He posed 'think aloud' questions and she responded.<br>Aidan - *Now what could he* (Odysseus) *be doing?' I think he could be making a plan.*<br>Emma – *'If we read the story again I think we can find out.*<br>When Aidan posed the question (*How can we get it in the right order?*) Emma suggested *'If we act it we can see if it fits together.'* | O1.2 |
| | Worked collaboratively with his partner sharing ideas and thinking about possible revisions.<br><br>*'…we had that as four and then that as five but now we've said 'now charge' which is four…because we read through it and think about it together.'* | R1.2 |
| C | Described the collaborative thinking that he employed with his partner while involved in the task.<br><br>*'…we went to our table and me and Emma talked and thought about the things we could write.'*<br><br>*'I would keep it in my head and write it myself …. My partner goes* | I1.2 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | *first and we think about it, then I go after her.'* | R1.4 |
| | | *'I read it back and think with Emma.'* | |
| | A | Was consciously aware of the role that collaborative thinking played in his ability to cope with the task. | I1.2 |
| | | *'I waited for her* (Emma) *because I didn't know what else I could write and then we shared some ideas.'* | |
| | | *'…she* (Emma) *helped me most with thinking of ideas.'* | R1.4 |
| | | *'I read it back and think with Emma.'* | |

### 4.1.2 Amelia

## Task context – individual responses

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|-------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Phase 1 | Listened to others in the group as they read the text and watched them as they began the task. Asked partner what to do first as was uncertain how to begin the task. Needed to have the speech bubble task modelled by the teacher several times before she was confident to begin.<br><br>Her explanation of the writing task was:<br>*'…remember…the words of the story and put it into speech bubbles.'* | O1.1<br><br><br><br><br><br>R1.1 |
| Phase 2 | Looked at her partner's work before writing her own sentences in playscript form. Relied heavily on watching others in the group before beginning the task but was able to explain – *'The characters speak and tell you a story.'* | O1.2<br>O1.1 |
| Phase 3 | Relied on the help of her partner when checking her playscript against the extended target sheet but was prepared to make some relevant secretarial changes, e.g. adding exclamation and question marks.<br><br>She stated, *'…it's also hard to read each other's and sometimes change things.'* | O1.3<br><br><br><br><br>R1.7 |

## Task understanding

| Assessed level | **Key concept: Understand text transformation from direct and indirect speech in a text into speech in speech bubbles and from that into speech in a playscript.** | Data source |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Low | Required adult and peer support in order to identify indirect speech in the text, then in transforming this from speech bubbles into a conversation sequence in the playscript. Needed to have the task modelled several times before she was able to begin. Questions and answers were appropriate for the characters speaking | O1.2<br><br><br>S1.2 |
|  | **Key concept: Understand text transformation from narrative to Narrator.** |  |
| Secure | Able to identify the main points in the narrative, with adult and peer support, and use these to tell the story through the narrator using simple sentences.<br><br>*Narrator:    The Cyclops fell asleep.*<br>*Odysseus: Fetch me the biggest stick you can find.*<br>*Narrator:    They went to get the biggest stick.* | O1.2<br><br><br><br>S1.2 |

| | **Key concept**: **Understand text transformation from narrative description of characters' actions/reactions into stage directions.** | |
|---|---|---|
| Secure | Able to give some stage directions for characters' actions but had difficulty with giving stage directions for their reactions and manner of speech.<br>The teacher's written feedback stated:<br>*Good, Amelia – an impressive playscript. You have included lots of features of playscripts and are telling the story well.* | S1.2 |

## Task awareness

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| T | Followed the model given by the teacher and gave a simple explanation of the writing task implying that the procedural aspects were understood but required no explicit activation of thought processes.<br>*'What we are going to do is do some literacy of Cyclops and remember it, the words of the story and put it into speech bubbles.'* | R1.1 |
| A | Aware of a perceived difficulty with revising and improving playscripts by reading each other's, agreeing on ideas and improving the composition.<br>*'…it's also hard to read each other's and sometimes change things.'* | R1.7 |

### 4.1.3 Emma

## Task context – individual responses

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|-------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Phase 1 | Asked her partner to stop and let her catch up as he had begun the task more quickly. Generated ideas for speech with her partner and shared some of these with the rest of the group. | O1.1 |
| | Strategies to help her complete the writing task included: *'Act it out'* and *'read through what I have already done.'* | R1.2 |
| Phase 2 | Discussed different aspects of the task with her partner, Aidan, in response to his 'think aloud' questions. *'Now what could he (Odysseus) be doing?'* *'I think he could be making a plan.'* *'What are we supposed to do with the bits that aren't speech?'* | O1.2 |
| Phase 3 | Reread playscript with her partner and discussed the content. Checked progress against the targets and thought about revisions in collaboration with her partner. | O1.3 |

## Task understanding

| Assessed level | Key concept: Understand text transformation from direct and indirect speech in a text into speech in speech bubbles and from that into speech in a playscript. | Data source |
|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Secure | Able to identify both direct and indirect speech in the text to write in speech bubbles. Made improvements to sentences written in the speech bubbles and linked characters' speech and the narrative through the Narrator so that it flowed as a sequence. | O1.1 S1.3 |
| | **Key concept: Understand text transformation from narrative to Narrator.** | |
| Secure | Able to retell the correct sequence of the narrative by making good use of the Narrator. Relied on task direction from the interactive whiteboard initially until confident to continue independently. | S1.3 O1.2 |
| | **Key concept: Understand transformation from narrative description of characters' actions/reactions into stage directions.** | |
| Secure | With adult guidance she was able to suggest reasons for character feelings during whole class discussion and think about character emotions during paired discussion to negotiate use of specific stage directions, e.g. *'because he'd* (Odysseus) *be a bit scared!' 'We could put in Shhhhh (quietly).'* | O1.3 |
| | The teacher's written feedback stated: *You have used some of the features of playscripts. Well done.* | S1.3 |

**Task awareness**

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| A | Was aware that the strategy of rereading her written work helped her to decide what to write next. When asked what helped most, she stated *'I think read through what I've done already.'* | R1.2 |
| C | She worked collaboratively with Aidan, at this stage, responding to some of the 'think aloud' questions that he posed. He posed questions aloud, e.g.<br>Aidan - *'Now what could he* (Odysseus) *be doing?'*<br>Emma – *'If we read the story again I think we can find out.*<br>When Aidan posed the question (*How can we get it in the right order*?) Emma suggested *'If we act it we can see if it fits together.'* | O1.2 |

### 4.1.4 Jack

## Task context – individual responses

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| Phase 1 | Applied a methodical approach to the writing task, following the illustrations and text chronologically. Worked independently for the majority of the time and took more time than others to compose his sentences for the speech bubbles. | O1.1 |
| Phase 2 | Jack and Zoe spent some time discussing ideas and vocabulary choices. They both made appropriate suggestions for how characters could speak. When Jack suggested that they could use the word *'puzzled'* to explain how the Cyclops was speaking Zoe overruled his suggestion and insisted on using the word 'confused' instead, *'because it shows how he's feeling.'* | O1.2 |
| Phase 3 | Contributed to whole class discussion and made some original suggestions regarding characterisation, e.g. *'Odysseus is the boss so he needs to speak the most.'* | O1.3 |

## Task understanding

| Assessed level | <u>**Key concept**</u>**: Understand text transformation from direct and indirect speech in a text into speech in speech bubbles and from that into speech in a playscript.** | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| Secure | Made additions to his speech bubble ideas and incorporated these into the playscript so that both speech and narration flowed as a sequence.<br>*Narrator:  Odysseus' soldiers gave him some wine.*<br>*Soldier:  Here you go, some wine.*<br>*Cyclops:  Why thank you. What is your name?*<br>*Odysseus: (Worried) My name is Nobody.* | S1.4 |
|  | <u>**Key concept**</u>**: Understand text transformation from narrative to Narrator.** |  |
| Secure | Followed the illustrations and text chronologically and used a range of connectives in order to sequence the narrative through the Narrator. | O1.1<br>S1.4 |
|  | <u>**Key concept**</u>**: Understand text transformation from narrative description of characters' actions/reactions into stage directions.** |  |
| Secure | Able to give clear stage directions for both the characters' actions and reactions.<br>Understood the purpose of using stage directions, e.g. *'You have to say what the characters are doing in the stage directions.'* | S1.4<br><br>O1.2 |

**Task awareness**

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| A | Was aware that recalling the main points of the narrative could help with sequencing both the speech and the narrator's part in the playscript. He stated, *'It's got to be in the right order like the story.'* | R1.3 |
| A | Was aware of some of the collaborative strategies he used to help him write his playscript and how he might have improved this.<br><br>*'I like the way I came up with ideas and then Zoe came up with ideas… I need to put in a few more stage directions.'* | I1.1 |
| S | When revising and editing the playscript he consciously directed his thinking into finding ways to clarify meaning. He suggested that he and his partner deployed the strategy of acting out the scene in order to make decisions about its effectiveness.<br>**'If we act it we can see if it fits together.'** | O1.3 |

## 4.1.5 Joanna

## Task context – individual responses

| Stage | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|-------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Phase 1 | Displayed prior knowledge of playscripts through reading experiences.<br>*'We had to read and learn our lines for the Christmas play.'*<br>Did not start writing in the speech bubbles until the teacher explained how she could use the text and look for the direct speech to insert. | O1.1 |
| Phase 2 | Explained that she found it difficult to start writing unless she was working with her literacy partner, Sophie, who was absent *'It's difficult when you haven't got anyone to talk to.'* She sought the support of others in the group. | O1.2 |
| Phase 3 | Spent some time rereading and talking to others in the group about the work that she had done in the previous session and used the extended targets to help her think about what to write next. | O1.3 |

## Task understanding

| Assessed level | **Key concept: Understand text transformation from direct and indirect speech in a text into speech in speech bubbles and from that into speech in a playscript.** | Data source |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Low | Relied on the use of sentences written originally in the speech bubbles and made very few additions. Consequently the sequence of the story was limited with the Narrator only used once. | O1.2<br>S1.5 |
| | **Key concept: Understand text transformation from narrative to Narrator.** | |
| Low/Secure | Made little use of the Narrator to tell the story and therefore the sequence of the narrative was limited as most of the playscript relied on the speech of the characters, e.g.<br>*Narrator: Odysseus gave some wine to the Cyclops. (Odysseus gives some wine to the Cyclops)*<br>*Cyclops: What's your name?*<br>*Odysseus: I am called Nobody.*<br><br>Needed some adult and peer support during the task. The teacher's comment read,<br>*You are including some of the features of playscripts, Joanna, but you need to use the narrator more to fill in parts of the story.* | S1.5 |
| | **Key concept: Understand text transformation from narrative description of characters' actions/reactions into stage directions.** | |

| Low/Secure | Required support from the group initially but was able to transform some of the narrative into stage directions.<br><br>Made some use of stage directions but limited to characters' actions, e.g.<br>*Cyclops: Nobody is a funny name! (Cyclops falls asleep)*<br>*Odysseus: Look men he has fallen asleep. (Odysseus points to the Cyclops)* | O1.2<br><br>S1.5 |

## Task awareness

| Level during | Evidence | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| A | Was aware that the absence of her response partner caused her to limit her thinking about the task.<br>*'It's difficult when you haven't got anyone to talk to about the writing. It helps me think.'* | R1.6 |
| A | Was aware that the character's speech could be written in different ways and that she needed to think about the best way to achieve success.<br><br>*'I'm finding it hard to see a way that they can say it. I'm thinking of if they would say it two ways and then I'm thinking of the better way.'* | R1.6 |
| A | Was aware of the difficulties she was experiencing in deciding what the characters should say. In answer to the question (What did you find really difficult?) she replied *'To think about what they are going to say and what words to put in.'*<br>However, after informal discussion with other children in the group she was able to comment.<br>*'I think I've put people in good places now, so like in the right order. We might change it to how they say it and how they feel.'* | I1.1 |

### 4.1.6 Molly

### Task context – individual responses

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|-------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Phase 1 | Relied on teacher support at the beginning of the task to help recall the sequence of the story and identify parts of the narrative that could be used as speech. . Needed to have the task modelled several times before she was confident to begin. | O1.1 |
| Phase 2 | Was able to make some oral suggestions about characters' feelings but was unsure how to show this in a playscript when writing independently and sought adult help at the beginning of the task | O1.2 |
| Phase 3 | Was able to check her work against the extended targets provided by the teacher and encouraged her partner, Amelia, to do the same. | O1.3 |

### Task understanding

| Assessed level | **Key concept: Understand text transformation from direct and indirect speech in a text into speech in speech bubbles and from that into speech in a playscript.** | Data source |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Secure | She needed support initially with understanding how to transform speech in the text to speech bubbles. She made some additions to the speech used in the speech bubbles when she changed this into the playscript format.  She used questions and answers appropriately and was able to tell the story clearly through use of speech.<br>*Narrator:   Odysseus gave the wine to Cyclops.*<br>*Cyclops:    (shouting) What is your name?*<br>*Odysseus: My name is Nobody.* | O1.1<br><br>S1.6 |
|  | **Key concept: Understand text transformation from narrative to Narrator.** |  |
| Secure | Required adult support at the beginning of the task to help her recall the main points of the story but was able to use the Narrator to help move on the action after this support, e.g.<br>*Narrator:   The Cyclops fell asleep.*<br>*Odysseus: Go and fetch me the biggest stick.*<br>*Narrator:   They went to get the biggest stick*<br>*Soldier:      Will this do?* | S1.6 |
|  | **Key concept: Understand text transformation from narrative description of characters' actions/reactions into stage directions.** |  |
| Secure | Made limited use of stage directions, mostly to describe characters' actions but could move the story forward through the development of character dialogue. | S1.6 |

| | The teacher's written feedback stated: *You have included lots of the features of playscripts and you are telling the story well.* | |

## Task awareness

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| T | She followed a given model for writing a playscript and when asked how she would explain the task to a friend suggested that she would say *'We're learning about the Cyclops and going to add the speech in for the characters to say.'* No explicit activation of thought processes but implied understanding of the procedural aspects of the task. | R1.1 |
| A | She was aware that the inclusion of details to move the narrative forward was necessary to achieve sense and meaning in her playscript but was also aware that she found this difficult. *Researcher: What are you finding difficult about this piece of writing? Molly: To remember every detail about the story and about playscripts.* | R1.7 |
| A | Was aware that collaborative thinking was a useful tool for writing. When asked how she could help a friend write a playscript. *'I would discuss it with her* (Amelia) *and then think about it and get it in my head like Aidan said and then do it.'* | I1.2 |

### 4.1.7 Sophie

### Task context – individual responses

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|-------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Phase 1 | Listened to teacher instruction and was able to draw on her prior reading experiences to tell her partner, Joanna, *'…the narrator tells the story.'*<br>Discussed appropriate sentences to write in speech bubbles with her partner. | O1.1 |
| Phase 2 | Absent | |
| Phase 3 | Absent | |

### Task understanding

| Assessed level | **Key concept: Understand text transformation from direct and indirect speech in a text into speech in speech bubbles and from that into speech in a playscript.** | Data source |
|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Secure | Was able to identify both direct and indirect speech in text and transfer it to speech bubbles. | O1.1 |
| | **Key concept: Understand text transformation from narrative to Narrator.** | |
| | Absent | |
| | **Key concept: Understand transformation from narrative description of characters' actions/reactions into stage directions.** | |
| | Absent | |

### Task awareness

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
|-------|----------|-------------|
| | Absent - no evidence | |

### 4.1.8 Zoe

## Task context – individual responses

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| Phase 1 | Made use of prior reading experiences to explain that '*a playscript tells a story with speech.*' Showed a clear understanding of the task by making suggestions for the speech of different characters. Shared ideas with her partner, Jack, before she wrote them down. She used the 'think aloud' strategy posing questions such as *'Shall I do? Shall the narrator say? Then we could say.'* | O1.1 |
| Phase 2 | Made appropriate suggestions for how characters could speak. When Jack suggested that they could use the word *'puzzled'* to explain how the Cyclops was speaking, she overruled this with the word *'confused',* using it in her own writing and explaining that it was a better description of how Cyclops was feeling. | O1.2 |
| Phase 3 | Worked quickly and confidently to produce the completed transcript and was prepared to edit it carefully for form and meaning. | O1.3 |

## Task understanding

| Assessed level | Key concept: Understand text transformation from direct and indirect speech in a text into speech in speech bubbles and from that into speech in a playscript. | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| Secure | Able to transform the characters' speech used in the speech bubbles to a conversation sequence in the playscript and make appropriate additions to further the story. This was evident from her suggestions for character's speech. She was able to describe the format of a playscript clearly. *'You have to tell a story with the people speaking like we did for assembly.'* <br><br> *'You have to write what the characters say on different lines.* | O1.2 <br><br> R1.3 <br><br> O1.1 |
| | Key concept: Understand text transformation from narrative to Narrator. | |
| Secure | Able to identify the main points in the narrative independently and use these to tell the story through the Narrator. <br><br> Narrator:    One of Odysseus' soldiers gave Cyclops some wine. <br> Soldier:      Here you go, here's your wine (gives wine to Cyclops) <br> Cyclops:    Why, thank you. What is your name? <br> Narrator:  The Cyclops fell asleep. | S1.8 |
| | Key concept: Understand text transformation from narrative description of characters' actions/reactions into stage directions. | |

| Secure | Gave clear stage directions for both the characters' actions and reactions. Weaker use of the Narrator to enhance the narrative for the reader.<br><br>The teacher's written feedback stated:<br>*A good try, Zoe. You have used some of the features of playscripts well.* | S1.8 |
|---|---|---|

## Task awareness

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| A | Was aware that sequencing the characters' speech correctly was necessary to the flow of the story throughout the playscript. '*...you have to put the speech in the right order so the play makes sense.*' | R1.3 |
| S | Explained that she and Jack employed the strategy of acting out their thoughts and ideas in order to stimulate new thinking. They both consciously employed this strategy.<br><br>'*...me and Jack tried to act it out. I was Odysseus and he was Cyclops. It was really hard because it was really hard thinking what would happen if we were there now.*' | R1.5 |
| A | Was aware of how a prior experience had helped her generate ideas for the playscript.<br>'*We did a Greek assembly which actually helped me because we did the play of Odysseus and the Cyclops. Then we acted it out so we knew what to write down.*' | I1.1 |

## 4.2 Non-chronological reports

**Description of learning context**

**Phase 1**

During the initial phase of this writing task the linguistic and textual structure of a non-chronological report was deconstructed by the teacher. All pupils were uncertain of the meaning of the term 'non-chronological'. The teacher explained that chronological meant 'in time order' and that non-chronological reports were not written in time order. The teacher illustrated this concept by activating pupils' prior knowledge of non-fiction texts and referring to previous writing experiences from the past academic year, explaining how all previous writing tasks had been produced in chronological order. She made comparisons between information and story texts.

When addressing the term 'language features' the teacher referred pupils to the Literacy Learning Wall, reminding them that the features of each writing genre were recorded in illustrative form for their reference. The teacher drew upon this contextual resource to enhance the connections between prior knowledge and new learning.

The pupils were shown an example of a non-chronological report on the interactive whiteboard, the subject of which was rock pools. The teacher posed a direct question asking pupils how they could find out what was contained in the text without reading it in its entirety. The majority of pupils in the class raised their hands to answer the question. The response was that information could be predicted by looking at the title of the text and at the list of contents.

The teacher made explicit connections between pupils' prior learning and the new task by explaining that using the title as a clue to content was a strategy that could be used when studying a number of literary genres. She emphasised that the title was only one feature of a non-chronological report. She then drew attention to the Literacy Learning Wall showing key features of the specific genre being studied.

The pupils were asked to share their experiences of reading non-fiction texts either at home or in school. Through whole class discussion, direct comparisons were made between fiction and non-fiction. The teacher made reference to key features of the different genres studied during the current academic year in order to make comparisons between chronological and non-chronological texts.

An independent task was set up in which pupils were asked to highlight the features of a non-chronological report using the Literacy Learning Wall for reference. Initially the teacher modelled the task using the interactive whiteboard. Then pupils worked in pairs highlighting the key language features of a report on rock pools which had been displayed on the interactive whiteboard at the outset of the session. After highlighting these features, the pupils came together as a whole class to discuss further features of non-fiction texts. During the course of whole class and group discussion, most pupils displayed an understanding of the purpose of a contents page, index and glossary. To illustrate the purpose of these features the teacher modelled the task of finding information about animal diets using the contents and index pages in a non-fiction text.

After further paired work involving use of the contents pages of a variety of non-fiction texts, the pupils were encouraged to talk about the style of language used in information books and in non-chronological reports. They discussed the fact that some of the technical words were difficult to understand and that the language was direct and factual.

**Phase 2**

Pupils were asked to recall the features of writing genres previously studied. The teacher requested that they compare and contrast the different language features of playscripts with those of non-chronological reports. Pupils were referred to the Literacy Learning Wall, where features of different genres were displayed, in order to support comparison. The pupils were then encouraged to visit the school library during the course of the school day and borrow a variety of non-fiction texts to enable them to compare features independently. The teacher emphasised that the term 'non-fiction' covered a

wide range of books including dictionaries and encyclopaedias. The pupils were able to suggest examples of non-fiction texts which they had read previously.

The teacher explained that she was going to teach the pupils an important skill that would help them when writing non-chronological reports. The skill was that of locating specific information in non-fiction texts, highlighting parts of the text considered to be important and referring to that information in order to make notes as a written response. The teacher emphasised the importance of learning this skill but reassured pupils that, although this was a challenging activity, she would offer guidance and support to those who needed it.

The teacher checked the pupils' understanding of some of the concept vocabulary in the rock pools text used in the previous session such as 'low tide'. It was apparent that a significant number of children had very little prior knowledge of the seashore and were unable to understand a large part of the concept vocabulary in the text. The teacher then provided support by allowing more time for explanation and discussion of unfamiliar vocabulary. The children were given a copy of the rock pools text and asked to read it through in pairs in preparation for locating the information they considered to be the most important.

**Phase 3**

The teacher asked pupils to recall the features of a non-chronological report. The children were then given a short non-fiction text about lions and asked to work in pairs to locate and highlight key words and information that could be used to structure a non-chronological report about the same topic. After a short while the teacher realised that a number of children were struggling with the decision-making process regarding the selection of what would be considered 'important' information. The teacher modelled the process of note-making again using two sentences from the text, checking that all pupils in the class were able to continue with the activity.

The children proceeded to work in pairs to find information about diet using a variety of non-fiction texts from the school library. All eight of the children were able to find the contents page and search for vocabulary relevant to animal diets. The children who had appeared less confident during previous stages were able to identify relevant information to highlight.

During the latter half of this session, the children were asked to make notes about lions from the words and information they had underlined. The teacher noticed that some pupils were struggling to understand the concept of 'note-making' so stopped the whole class to address misconceptions about the task. These misconceptions seemed to centre on the fact that most pupils had very little prior sociocultural experience of note-making and were inclined to resort to the familiarity of writing in sentences or copying large amounts of text.

**Phase 4**

This session was a continuation of the previous session. The teacher asked pupils to recall the writing task of note-making using non-fiction texts. To support the pupils in this, the teacher directed their attention to all the related vocabulary and features of non-chronological reports which had been introduced during previous sessions.

The teacher asked the class to share appropriate sub-headings for each section of their notes about lions. The whole class activity consisted of a shared-write to model the formation of notes into full sentences. The teacher asked pupils to rehearse their sentences orally before writing them down. The pupils were also asked to consider the ways in which they could make their sentences interesting to read. The children were able to check their notes from the previous session and suggest improvements through the editing process undergone during this session.

The teacher asked pupils to begin writing their sentences down after copying a general introduction which had been constructed by the teacher. All the children were able to use their notes to write a report on lions. A homework

activity about cheetahs was subsequently set to support the development of this skill.

**Phase 5**

The teacher praised the pupils for how well they had been able to form their notes into a report about lions and explained that they had now written two reports, one about lions and one about cheetahs which had been set as a homework task. She explained that the next report would be about crocodiles.

By using both whole class and group discussion the teacher explored pupils' prior knowledge. However, as the children read information about crocodiles, and were asked to consider possible sub-headings, it became clear that some children found it more difficult to identify key words and information due to the concept density of the text. The teacher recognised the varied nature of the children's prior knowledge and provided background knowledge to support those children who were overwhelmed by the complexity of the concept vocabulary.

**Phase 6**

The children were encouraged to work in pairs, using their notes from the previous session, in order to write a non-chronological report about crocodiles. Some children in the group continued to comment on the complexity of information about crocodiles and difficulties encountered when making decisions about choice of information. Most of the pairs in the group were able to work independently though the amount of information available made them more discriminating about their choices for sub-headings.

## 4.2.1 Aidan

## Task context – individual responses

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|-------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Phase 1 | Took an active part in both group and class discussion evidenced by the frequency of times he raised his hand and was able to give an answer to questions posed by the teacher.<br><br>Able to identify most features of a non-chronological report using the Literacy Learning Wall for support. This was evident in his ability to answer relevant questions.<br><br>Able to both pose and answer questions relating to non-fiction as he stated he had an interest in information texts and recognised some of the features.<br>*'Some of my books at home have headings like reports.'* | O2.1 |
| Phase 2 | Needed to consult with others in the group before beginning the task. Once started, was confident to make decisions regarding the selection of key information facts about rock pools. This was evident in his ability to highlight text independently.<br><br>Provided some direction for the task, reminding the group about the learning objectives. | O2.1 |
| Phase 3 | Able to begin making notes from the highlighted text independently.<br><br>Worked co-operatively with his literacy partner, Emma and made various suggestions regarding how to find relevant information.<br>*'It could be – African lions live up to 15 years in the grassy plains of Southern and Eastern Africa. (Looks at notes) So we need this because that's about lions and that's about lions. This is about how they live and that is as well. So we could add that up to there.'* | O2.3<br><br>R2.1 |
| Phase 4 | Was able to organise the information into different sections and remained 'on task' when engaged in paired discussion and writing.<br><br>Discussed the similarities and differences in the way he had organised his notes into sections compared with Jack's. He suggested interesting sentences with different openers to the whole group after the teacher had challenged them to begin every sentence in a different way.<br><br>Worked quickly and independently but was willing to share his findings with his partner. *'Well, I just had that* (his notes) *in front of me so it's quite easy because all you've got to do is put those two in but have a couple more words in it. So you could go like – African lions live in the grassy plains of Southern and Eastern Africa.'* | O2.2<br><br>O2.4<br><br><br><br>R2.5 |
| Phase 5 | Expressed his concern that the reading was too hard. He was also concerned that he couldn't find the important information as easily as when he was making notes from the text about lions because he didn't understand some of the words. Stated that he found the length and complexity of the information confusing. *'There's too* | O2.5 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | *much reading and it's hard.'* | |
| | Displayed desire to work at the same pace as Jack through verbal 'checking' of the stage that Jack had reached in his note-making but found it harder to keep up with highlighting important information at the same pace as Jack. | O2.5 |
| | Struggled to make decisions about sub-headings for notes on crocodiles independently compared to the apparent ease when generating sub-heading for notes about lions. He stated *'…I don't really know what the heading would be for this.'* | R2.6 |
| | Generally found it difficult to locate information in different parts of the text, decide on a sub-heading and then synthesise the information at this stage. *'It's difficult to think of sub-headings for crocodiles.'* | R2.6 |
| Phase 6 | Stated that he found the text more difficult to understand and organise and commented that he found it more difficult to make sentences from his notes about crocodiles as, *'the words don't stick together so easily* (as his notes about lions had).' | O2.5 |
| | Participation in the answering of questions during whole class discussion was observed to be less frequent during stages 5 and 6. This suggested that he was not as confident with the concept of note-making when the text was more complex. | O2.6 |

## Task understanding

| Assessed level | **Key concept: Understand the term 'non-chronological'** | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| Secure | Used prior knowledge of information books he had read at home and in school to recall that non-fiction texts often have sub-headings. He could identify the key features of non-chronological reports. *'Some of my books at home have headings like reports.'* | O2.1 |
| | **Key concept: Understand the meaning of key concept vocabulary in non-fiction texts and how to structure them in note form.** | |
| Secure | Identified key words in the simple information texts on lions and cheetahs but needed help with the longer, more complex ones about crocodiles. Found the length and complexity of the information confusing. Expressed his concern at the beginning of the activity saying that the *'reading was too hard'* and that he couldn't find the important information as easily as when he was making notes on lions and cheetahs. | O2.5 |
| Low | Struggled more than some children to consider sub-headings for his notes independently and asked for ideas from Jack. Stated, *'I don't really know what the heading would be for this.'* Found it difficult to locate information in different parts of the text, decide on a sub-heading and then synthesise the information. | R2.6 |

| | **Key concept**: Understand how to synthesise information from notes. | |
|---|---|---|
| Secure | Able to recall information and transfer his notes into a clearly organised report on lions. Used a range of sentence openers which made his sentences more interesting and varied. | S2.1a |
| Low | Found it difficult to locate key information, understand key concept vocabulary in different parts of the more complex text on crocodiles, decide on a sub-heading and then organise the information into a coherent report. His completed report was rather disjointed and some sentences were taken directly from the text. Commented that he was finding it more difficult to make sentences from his notes about crocodiles as *'the words don't stick together so easily'* (as his notes about lions had). | O2.6<br>R2.6<br>S2.1b<br>O2.6 |

## Task awareness

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| T | Implied that the task was understood and could be completed without having to think about it.<br>*'We know all our facts so it will be quite easy because we don't have to keep thinking.'* | R2.2 |
| A | Was aware he found oral construction of sentences from his notes difficult and perceived possible difficulties with recall of information if he could not use the strategy of writing his sentences first before rehearsing them orally. '*If only we could write this down as I might forget.'* | O2.3 |
| C | He and his partner shared their thinking using specific organisational strategies to help them write the report on lions.<br>Aidan: *Do you think we need this because that's about lions and that's about lions. This is about how they live and that is as well. So we could add that up to there.*<br>Emma: *Yes. That's where they live and that is how they live.*<br>Aidan: *No. That's like how many days they live.* (A discussion about life span follows). | R2.1 |
| A | Explained that the last four parts of the writing task were easier because he had employed the strategy of seeking guidance from the teacher.<br>*'When I got to that bit I knew what to write because the teacher said it was good so I did exactly the same on the last four parts but different information. You know it's right when an adult checks it.'*<br><br>Was aware of the sequence of turning notes into text and could explain the transcription process.<br>*'…look at the sheet and underline the bits and then add more words.'* | I2.1<br><br><br><br><br>I2.1 |

## 4.2.2 Amelia

## Task context – individual responses

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|-------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Phase 1 | During whole class discussion was able to suggest that labelled pictures *'…made the information easier to understand.'* | O2.1 |
| Phase 2 | Some vocabulary in the text was unfamiliar to her. Had little prior knowledge of the seashore, and rock pools in particular, as she stated that she didn't know which parts of the text were important to highlight.  Struggled to identify key vocabulary or important information as uncertain what was directly relevant to the topic. | O2.2 |
| Phase 3 | Lacked confidence in her ability to identify key information. Needed to check with her partner, Molly, before highlighting any information.<br><br>Amelia: *What do you think we should highlight there?'*<br>Molly:   *Well, it could be that word cos it's sort of, or it could be this one but I don't know. Let's read the bit about male lions.*<br><br>Reluctant to use the text previously highlighted from which to make notes, evidenced in her questioning of Molly before making notes herself. She asked *'What do you think we should write out there?'* This behaviour was repeated, suggesting that she doubted whether she had highlighted the most important information in the text originally, e.g. *'What are you writing?'*<br><br>Asked her partner *'Shall we do 'males' next?'* when considering the next sub-heading. This indicated that as the task progressed, her understanding grew. | O2.3<br><br><br><br>O2.3<br><br><br><br>O2.3 |
| Phase 4 | Lacked confidence to form notes into text initially displayed through her need to observe Aidan and Emma before commencing the writing task herself.<br><br>Followed the suggested order displayed on the interactive whiteboard initially but subsequently made suggestions regarding how to organise the writing under sub-headings as she discussed it with her partner. Suggested the next sub-heading could be *'Males.'*<br><br>Worked methodically with Molly in forming the notes into full sentences section by section. Orally rehearsed sentences with Molly and was able to correct Molly's sentence as the information was not correct initially. | O2.4<br><br><br>R2.3<br><br><br><br>R2.3 |
| Phase 5 | Worked more slowly than other children to underline key vocabulary and information as the length and complexity of the text caused her to perceive difficulties both before and during the activity.<br><br>Considered her notes on crocodiles to be successful as she had followed the teacher's model for organising information. Suggested an appropriate sub-heading *'Did you know?'* | O2.5<br><br><br>O2.5 |

| Phase 6 | Displayed a methodical approach to writing full sentences from her notes using suggested sub-headings. | O2.6 |
|---|---|---|
| | Commented that it was more difficult to write a report about crocodiles as there was a greater amount of information to form into notes at the outset. | R2.8 |

## Task understanding

| Assessed level | **Key concept: Understand the term 'non-chronological'** | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| Secure | Explained that the labelled pictures in the reports made the information easier to understand and therefore had a purpose in an information text. She could identify the key features of non-chronological reports. | O2.1 |
| | **Key concept: Understand the meaning of key concept vocabulary in non-fiction texts and how to structure them in note form.** | |
| Low | Took more time than other children to decide on key words in all the texts and needed to ask her partner Molly for clarification on how to make notes using these words. Needed to check with her partner before she highlighted any information. Required verbal clarification and assurance from her partner to complete all writing tasks related to non-chronological reports.<br>Amelia: *What do you think we should highlight there?'*<br>Molly: *Well, it could be that word cos it's sort of, or it could be this one but I don't know. Let's read the bit about male lions.*<br><br>Checked with her partner whether they had underlined the important words. She asked *'What do you think we should write out there?'*<br><br>Follow the sub-headings on the board to help organise her notes and was able to explain that she had used this strategy. | O2.3 |
| | **Key concept: Understand how to synthesise information from notes.** | |
| Low | Able to make some basic suggestions on how to organise her note-making saying to her partner when considering the most appropriate sub-heading *'Shall we do 'males' next?'* Relied on her partner Molly for direction when organising the report. Checked frequently to ensure that she was writing similar information by asking *'What are you writing next?'* | O2.3 |
| Low | Working with a partner she was able to transfer her notes into a simple report on lions but needed support with understanding key concept vocabulary when researching information about crocodiles. | S2.2a/b |

**Task awareness**

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| A | Was aware that she needed to use the strategy of asking for adult or peer support because of difficulties with the length and complexity of the text.<br>*'There's a lot to read about crocodiles and I can't find all the bits about where they live so I can't make notes yet and I need some help.'* | R2.8 |
| T | She was inclined to rely on having the task modelled and explained several times. Did not seem to be aware of the thought processes she had employed during the task but implied that she was able to cope with the procedural aspects of the task.<br>*Researcher: If you were going to help a friend write a report what advice would you give them?*<br>*Amelia: I don't know. I think you have to read the sheet and remember bits and then write it.'* | I2.1 |

### 4.2.3 Emma

## Task context – individual responses

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|-------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Phase 1 | Took an active part in whole class discussion explaining the purpose of the contents and index pages in non-fiction texts.<br>*'The contents and index pages can help you find out where different information is in the book.'* | O2.1 |
| Phase 2 | Worked confidently with her partner, Aidan, taking the lead at the beginning of the task by suggesting which vocabulary was important to highlight.<br><br>Sought help from the teacher with finding specific information in more complex parts of the text.<br><br>Paused at intervals during the task in order to clarify the meaning of some of the sub-headings before making decisions about information content in the report. | O2.2 |
| Phase 3 | Displayed a good understanding of the writing task, evidenced in the prompt and confident start made when working independently on making notes.<br><br>Engaged in paired discussion with her partner regarding the content of the writing task. She challenged the organisation of the information.<br>*'No, that's how many days they live.'* | O2.3 |
| Phase 4 | Confident in her choice of sub-headings as reluctant to alter them during paired discussion with her partner.<br><br>Could identify omissions in her writing when reading it aloud and was prepared to edit her text to aid meaning.<br><br>Constructed accurate sentences orally and in writing, e.g. *'Prides are made up of 2 or up to 40 and they are mainly females and only a few males.'* | O2.4<br><br><br><br>S2.3a |
| Phase 5 | Took a greater amount of time than some other children to identify key vocabulary in the longer more complex text compared with previous texts. Was able to find important facts, e.g. *'I've found an interesting fact. (comments on life span)'*<br><br>Listened carefully to discussion between Jack and Aidan regarding Jack's ideas for sub-headings.<br><br>Experienced difficulty locating information in different parts of the text, deciding on sub-headings and synthesising information. Required more teacher guidance to complete the writing task as opposed to the greater amount of independence observed during the previous report written. | O2.5<br>R2.6<br><br><br>O2.5<br><br><br>O2.5 |
| Phase 6 | Edited her notes independently after deciding that some information would be better placed under different sub-headings.<br>*'That sounds better under the 'bodies' section.'* | O2.6 |

## Task understanding

| Assessed level | **Key concept**: <u>Understand the term 'non-chronological'</u> | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| Secure | She recognised the difference between the contents and index pages in non-fiction books explaining, *'The contents and index pages can help you find out where different information is in the book.'* Recognised that the information found in non-fiction books was often used to write non-chronological reports. She could identify the key features of non-chronological reports. | O2.1 |
|  | <u>**Key concept**</u>: **Understand the meaning of key concept vocabulary in non-fiction texts and how to structure them in note form.** |  |
| Secure | Experienced difficulty with identifying key information in the rock pools text where she had little prior knowledge of the subject. | O2.2 |
|  | Was able to identify key words in the simple information texts on lions and cheetahs and made detailed notes. Had some difficulty with the longer more complex text about crocodiles but was able to make simple, clear notes under appropriate headings. <br> <u>*Live*</u>: *Crocodiles are well adapted to water. Some types are endangered. They lived 2000 years ago. They live for 100 years or just under.* | O2.3 <br><br><br><br> S2.3b |
|  | <u>**Key concept**</u>: **Understand how to synthesise information from notes.** |  |
| Secure | Had some difficulty in locating information in different parts of the more complex text about crocodiles, decide on a sub-heading and then organise the information as part of a report. | O2.5 |
|  | Able to edit her notes as she was aware that some of the information would fit into different sections more easily. Commented that it was more difficult to write a report about crocodiles as there was a greater amount of information to form into notes first. With some adult support, she was able to complete reports on both lions and crocodiles using simple, clear sentences based on her notes. The teacher's written feedback read: <br> *'Careful, Emma, make sure your sentences make sense! Good try.* | O2.6 <br><br><br><br><br> S2.3b |

## Task awareness

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| C | Responded to her partner's thoughts by consciously directing her own thinking in order to qualify and improve the written report. <br><br> Aidan: *Do you think we need this because that's about lions and that's about lions. This is about how they live and that is as well. So we could add that up to there.* <br> Emma: *Yes. That's where they live and that is how they live.* <br> *Aidan: No. That's like how many days they live.* (A discussion | R2.1 |

| | about life span follows). | |
|---|---|---|
| A | She was aware that she needed to sift through the information and decide on its suitability for different sections of her report.<br>*That bit doesn't fit in there. That bit sounds better under the bodies heading.'* | O2.6 |
| | She was also aware that the teacher's help sheet activated her thinking and helped her to complete the task successfully.<br>*'…She* (the teacher) *gave us the sheet with information on which helped us with ideas. We kept looking at it.'* | I2.2 |

### 4.2.4 Jack

### Task context – individual responses

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| Phase 1 | Raised his hand to pose and answer questions during whole class discussion regarding non-chronological reports. Recognised that non-chronological reports had sub-headings.<br>Discussed the features of non-fiction texts with other children in the group. | O2.1 |
| Phase 2 | Displayed an understanding of the task and of the organisation of information texts which was evidenced in the words he highlighted independently in the text. | O2.2 |
| Phase 3 | Organised information about lions under different sub-headings. Able to work independently and remain focused despite being questioned frequently about the task by other children in the group, especially Aidan.<br><br>Able to explain the different stages of the writing task and stated that he knew exactly what to do. He had highlighted all important information correctly. | O2.3 |
| Phase 4 | Recalled and described the previous writing task in whole class discussion.<br><br>Used appropriate vocabulary in his description of the task such as *'finding key words,' 'making notes'* and *'sub-headings'.*<br><br>Shared ideas for appropriate sub-headings with the whole class.<br><br>He stated *'It's much easier than I thought it was going to be.'* and *'Well, since I got the important words and I remembered the information on the sheet it was easy to write the sentences.'* | O2.4<br><br><br><br>R2.2<br><br>R2.5 |
| Phase 5 | Identified key words and information quickly and confidently in the crocodile text encountered.<br><br>Stated enthusiastically that he was able to begin the writing task immediately as he had written two reports before, *'Well, we have done lots of reports so we know what to do.'*<br><br>Understood ways in which to approach the task. *'I wrote for the introduction – If you want to find out more about cheetahs, read this.'* | O2.5<br><br>R2.6<br><br><br>R2.5 |
| Phase 6 | Formed sentences from his notes about crocodiles immediately and displayed a keenness to use his notes to this purpose. His text read,<br>*Body: Crocodiles know some tricks to control their body temperature. When they are hot in the day to cool down, they raise their heads and open their mouths and that cools them down or they crawl in the shade or water.*<br><br>Stated that he enjoyed working with information texts and was prepared to help others who were not quite as confident. | O2.6<br><br>S2.4b<br><br><br><br>O2.6 |

## Task understanding

| Assessed level | Key concept: Understand the term 'non-chronological' | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| High | In response to the question, *'What is the purpose of a sub-heading?'* He replied, *'To tell you what that section is about.'*<br>He could identify the key features of non-chronological reports. | O2.1 |
| | **Key concept: Understand the meaning of key concept vocabulary in non-fiction texts and how to structure them in note form.** | |
| High | Able to identify key words and information quickly and confidently in all the texts he encountered.<br>He and his partner were able to explain that the important words told you something while unimportant words did not.<br>*R: Can you tell me why you have underlined the words in each sentence?*<br>*Jack: Because it's part of them and if you don't include it, it's like they don't have that part.*<br>*R: Why have you underlined these words?*<br>*Zoe: Cos, it's part of its body.*<br>*Jack: 'An' and 'and' aren't interesting words. 'A' isn't an interesting word because it doesn't mean anything.'* | O2.3 |
| | Displayed a sound understanding of the task which was evidenced in the words he had highlighted and the notes he made. The teacher wrote, *'Good notes!'* | S2.4a |
| | **Key concept: Understand how to synthesise information from notes.** | |
| High | Made use of his detailed notes and was able to transfer them into well-organised reports on lions and crocodiles. His completed report on crocodiles showed evidence not only of his ability to find key information and transfer this into a report but also the ability to use his individual writer's voice. He began the report with:<br>*Crocodiles: Do you want to find out about the most dangerous animal in Africa?'* | S2.4a/b<br><br>S2.4.b |

## Task awareness

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| S | Able to direct his thinking by using specific strategies consciously when writing his reports on both lions and crocodiles.<br>*'I got the important words and I remembered the information on the sheet so it was easy to write the sentences.'* | R2.5 |
| A | Able to comment on the sections of his report that he felt he had done well and was aware how he achieved this success.<br>*'I looked at my notes and tried to think about all the detail I could put into it.'*<br>Was also aware that rereading his work was a way to improve his writing.<br>'Zoe: …. we always have to read things through to improve it. | I2.2 |

| | (sighs)<br>*'Jack: Yeah, like to see if you have missed something out or add something to make it a better sentence.'* | |
|---|---|---|

### 4.2.5 Joanna

### Task context – individual responses

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|-------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Phase 1 | Took an active part in whole class discussion. Displayed prior knowledge of non-chronological reports, stating that '*Reports are a kind of non-fiction where you tell people interesting information and they have different headings.*' | O2.1 |
| Phase 2 | Initially she was inclined to be dependent on her partner, Sophie to guide her when highlighting text but gradually she gained confidence to work more independently. This was observed when she moved ahead of her partner in the highlighting task. | O2.2 |
| Phase 3 | Lacked confidence at beginning of the task, requiring clarification from her partner, asking *'What do we have to do here?'*<br><br>Continued to use paired discussion throughout the task to negotiate meaning in the text and locate key words and information. She suggested that they use a comma to separate key words under different headings.<br><br>After further clarification from the teacher through the modelling of the writing task to the whole class Joanna shared facts confidently with others in the group. | O2.3 |
| Phase 4 | Began to demonstrate some independent thinking by choosing her own ideas for sub-headings rather than using those modelled by the teacher, e.g. *'Where they live.'* | O2.4 |
| | Initial reliance on her partner to take the lead, at the beginning of each task, gradually lessened as the task progressed. Worked co-operatively, sharing key information facts with her partner.<br>*'Joanna: I've thought of a short sentence – Lions are most active at night because the temperature is cooler.*<br>*Researcher: How did you think of that sentence?*<br>*Joanna: Well, I was just thinking about when lions are most active and then I thought of it's more cooler at night.'*<br>Joanna and Sophie continued to think about and share their ideas orally. | R2.4 |
| Phase 5 | Worked effectively in a pair to underline key words in a more complex text despite commenting that the length and complexity of the text made it more difficult to identify key vocabulary. | R2.7 |
| | Used 'diet' as a sub-heading, differing from the teacher's suggestion of 'eating', expressing the view that she wanted to think of headings that were different from others. | O2.5 |
| | Identified a sub-heading that she wanted to use. *'I have a favourite bit, it's croc courtship.'* She was able to explain to her partner what information would be relevant to include in this section. | R2.7 |
| Phase 6 | Waited to allow her partner to *'catch up'* as she worked at a slower pace. Spent more time than other pairs discussing the content of their notes before forming them into a report. | O2.6 |

## Task understanding

| Assessed level | **Key concept: Understand the term 'non-chronological'** | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| High | She stated that, *'Reports are a kind of non-fiction where you tell people interesting information and they have different headings.'* <br> She could identify the key features of non-chronological reports. | O2.1 |
| | **Key concept: Understand the meaning of key concept vocabulary in non-fiction texts and how to structure them in note form.** | |
| Secure | Could identify information that was both relevant and not relevant to the task when using simple information texts but needed some help when using the longer, more complex text about crocodiles. <br><br> Worked closely with her partner to underline key words in the text, discussing which words were important to underline and which were not. Stated that it was hard just to include the key words in the text. <br><br> Made detailed notes using both key words and phrases. The teacher wrote: <br> *Well done, Joanna. You are writing some interesting sentences and using sections well.* | O2.1-6 <br><br><br><br><br><br> S2.5a |
| | **Key concept: Understand how to synthesise information from notes.** | |
| High | Produced well-organised reports on both lions and crocodiles. They were clearly written using appropriate sub-headings. Her sentences were expanded well from her notes. She wrote: <br> *'Night and day: Lions are most active at night because the temperature is cooler. All lions rest and sleep in the shade at daytime because the temperature is very hot.'* <br><br> Stated that she and her partner had used the word 'diet' as a sub-heading in their report on lions which was different from the teacher's suggestion of 'eating'. When asked about this, they commented that they wanted to think of headings that were different from everyone else. | S2.6a/b <br><br> S2.6a <br><br><br> O2.5 |

## Task awareness

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| C | She and her partner thought about ideas together and rehearsed sentences orally. <br><br> Sophie: *(talks to Joanna) Like if you do male lions first, instead of just putting the key words again you could just put – the male lion protects the pride.* <br> Joanna: *I'm just looking to see what I can make up about that.* <br> Sophie and Joanna continue sharing ideas. <br> Joanna: *I've thought of a short sentence. 'Lions are most active at night because the temperature is cooler.* | R2.4 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Researcher: *How did you think of that sentence?*<br>Joanna: *I was thinking when lions are most active and then I thought it's cooler at night.'* | |
| | C | She and her partner deployed collaborative thinking when editing and revising their reports. She was able to suggest a strategy to her partner that would help them to improve their reports.<br>*'Me and Sophie looked at the sheet and Sophie was like – if we look at a few of the words, then we can add in our own words and think about it.'*<br>*'We could just read through it together and see what we could improve.'*<br>*'…and Sophie said to me – well, if we have our notes and we think that it's gone wrong, then she said if we look at our notes then we can find something that would be a bit better than just the sentences because we are not allowed to copy the sentences from the sheet.'* | I2.2 |
| | T | Shared advice she would give when writing a report, demonstrating that the skill of note-making can be developed outside of the classroom setting.<br>*'Researcher: What advice would you give to a friend who had to write a report?*<br>*Joanna: I would say look in one of my books because I have a lot of books because I enjoy reading. I enjoy reading non-fiction books. They could look in one of my books and see notes because sometimes I write notes when I read books. That's what I do if I'm bored and I know what it means'* (by implication that this was a skill she could use without needing to think about it). | I2.2 |

### 4.2.6 Molly

**Task context – individual responses**

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| Phase 1 | During whole class discussion she was able to explain that *'Reports give you headings so you don't have to look for the information in different places.'* | O2.1 |
| Phase 2 | Struggled to identify key information when working with her partner, Amelia, as both had very little prior knowledge of the seashore, and rock pools. Consequently they were uncertain as to what was directly relevant or irrelevant to the topic. | O2.2 |
| Phase 3 | Observed the strategies used by another pair for note making before making a start on the task independently. Was the first in the pair to highlight text and construct notes. | O2.3 |
| Phase 4 | Shared original ideas orally such as suggestions for sub-headings but was less enthusiastic when involved in the written part of a task, stating *'…it's going to be a little bit hard.'* | O2.4 R2.3 |
| | Asked others for help before attempting to form her notes into a report. As the writing task progressed she became less reliant on asking questions to check task expectations. | O2.4 |
| | During the latter half of the activity she displayed an understanding of the purpose of the task through working in collaboration with her partner, e.g. *'So if we do – males are so big they find it difficult to hunt.'* | R2.3 |
| Phase 5 | Was slow to begin the task compared with other children and spent time looking at previous work and before underlining key words and information. | O2.5 |
| | The length and complexity of the text caused her to perceive difficulties both before and during the activity. She could engage with some of the interesting facts in the text, e.g. *'You know they live for more than 50 years.'* | R2.6 |
| | Predominantly followed the sub-headings suggested by the teacher instead of creating her own although she did suggest one sub-heading could be *'Won't believe!'* | O2.5 R2.6 |
| Phase 6 | Made a confident start with the report about crocodiles, creating a thorough set of notes which had been considered carefully with her response partner. | O2.6 |
| | Her notes read: *Eating: crocodiles, reptiles, meat eater, quick, strong, launch themselves water, straight up air like rocket, snatch their prey.* | S2.6b |

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## Task understanding

| Assessed level | **Key concept: Understand the term 'non-chronological'** | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| Secure | She was able to explain that fiction books were often in time order and non-fiction books *'didn't tell you a story.'*<br>She could identify the key features of non-chronological reports. | O2.1 |
| | **Key concept: Understand the meaning of key concept vocabulary in non-fiction texts and how to structure them in note form.** | |
| Low | Experienced difficulty with identifying key words and information in texts where she had little prior knowledge of the subject. She appeared to have very little prior knowledge of the seashore, and rock pools in particular in the initial activity. Consequently she struggled to identify the important information as she was not sure what was directly relevant or important to the topic, or which key words could be identified. | O2.2 |
| | She worked more slowly than other children and took some time to begin underlining key words and information in both texts (lions and crocodiles). The length and complexity of the text on crocodiles made her limit her thinking and she perceived difficulties both before and during the activity. | O2.5 |
| | *'When you start practising your sentences then it's going to be a little bit hard.'* | R2.3 |
| | **Key concept: Understand how to synthesise information from notes.** | |
| Low | Struggled during the initial stages of the task and relied on Aidan and Emma for direction. She was able to transfer her notes on lions into simple sentences. | O2.4 |
| | She wrote:<br>*Day: The heat is so hot. They sleep in the day. They wake up for a little drink or a play.'* | S2.6a |
| | Had some difficulty with recalling information from the text. Some sentences were muddled. | |
| | The teacher wrote:<br>*Well done, Molly – some really interesting sentences. Just make sure you read your work through to make sure it makes sense.* | S2.6a |

## Task awareness

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| T | Copied the sub-headings on the board, given as examples, to help her organise her notes. Displayed an implicit understanding of the procedural aspects of the task. | O2.5 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | *'Researcher: How did you get your ideas? Where did they come from?*<br>*Molly: It just came to my brain just like that. (points at her head indicating the origins of her ideas.*<br>*Researcher: How do you think your ideas got there in the first place?*<br>*Molly: The teacher gave me some ideas and I made up my own ideas and then it just came to me.'* | I2.1 |
| A | Was aware that she needed to think about how to synthesise her notes. She expressed concern about perceived difficulties with rehearsing sentences orally using notes.<br>*'When you start practising your sentences it's going to be a little bit hard.'* | R2.3 |
| A | Was aware of the strategies that were the most helpful and made the task easier when organising the report from her notes.<br>*'I think the headings helped… When we were writing our proper sentences about crocodiles, that's when it got easier… because you've got the main words and all you have to do is add a couple of little words like 'there', 'it', 'and' to make a sentence.'* | I2.1 |

### 4.2.7 Sophie

### Task context – individual responses

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|-------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Phase 1 | Was able to explain that fiction books were often in time order and non-fiction books *'didn't tell you a story.'* | O2.1 |
| Phase 2 | During independent time, she was uncertain about some of the learning goals and needed to talk with her literacy partner, Joanna, in order to clarify the purpose of the task. Once her understanding was clear, she worked methodically through the rock pool text, highlighting the vocabulary she believed to be important. | O2.2 |
| Phase 3 | Acted as leader in the note-making task and was able to support her partner when locating and highlighting key words. Able to give clear vocabulary explanations. | O2.3 |
| Phase 4 | Took the lead role when working with her partner during the initial stages of writing the report on lions. | O2.4 |
| | Able to rehearse sentences orally with her partner, e.g. *'Like if you've done male lions first, instead of just putting the key words again you could just put – the male lions protect the pride.'* | R2.4 |
| Phase 5 | Worked co-operatively with her partner and was able to give reasons for her choice of key information when making notes about crocodiles. | O2.5 |
| | Explained to her partner how to put facts in each section. Stated that it was difficult to only include the key words in their notes. She commented, *'Well there is a lot of information…'* | R2.7 |
| | Edited her notes and could explain the reasons why, e.g. *'…it's only about salty water. The salty water is not so important.'* | R2.7 |
| Phase 6 | Stated that she enjoyed working with her literacy partner when they were writing and that to work with anybody else would be difficult. She said *'We make a good team cos we think about it and we know how we work.'* | O2.6 |
| | Was slow to start on writing up her notes in this session due to the length of time spent discussing what should be included in the notes with her literacy partner. | S2.7b |

### Task understanding

| Assessed level | <u>Key concept</u>: Understand the term 'non-chronological' | Data source |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Secure | She was able to explain that fiction books were often in time order and non-fiction books *'didn't tell you a story.'* She could identify the key features of non-chronological reports. | O2.1 |

| | **Key concept**: Understand the meaning of key concept vocabulary in non-fiction texts and how to structure them in note form. | |
|---|---|---|
| Secure | Could identify information that was both relevant and not relevant to the task and was able to discuss the reasons for her choices with her partner. Able to explain to her partner how to put the facts into each section. Commented on how hard it was just to include all the key words in her notes. In conjunction with her partner, had used the word 'diet' as a sub-heading which was different from the teacher's suggestion of 'eating'. When asked about this, they commented that they wanted to think of headings that were different from everyone else.<br>*'Sophie: You think of the sentences and you want to write it all down.*<br>*Joanna: Not just the words.'*<br><br>Produced a detailed set of notes for both the non-chronological report about lions and about crocodiles. A section of her notes about crocodiles read:<br>*Courtship: crocodiles heads bellow noise helps warn off rival males blow bubbles water win attention females.* | O2.5<br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>S2.7a/b |
| | **Key concept**: Understand how to synthesise information from notes. | |
| High | Was able to organise her notes into clearly written sentences under appropriate sub-headings. She wrote:<br>*Love: Male crocodiles raise their heads and bellow and the noise helps to warn off rival males. They blow bubbles to win attention of female crocodiles.*<br><br>Acted as a response partner for Joanna and together they shared ideas. Able to use her own ideas for sub-headings with only minimal guidance from the teacher. | S2.7b<br><br><br><br>O2.1-6 |

## Task awareness

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| A | Aware of the need for collaborative thinking at the beginning of each task discussing different aspects in order to clarify the strategies used.<br><br>*'It was pretty easy but at the start you need to help each other because there was quite a bit of information to look at and you had to decide what to do.'*<br>*'We make a good team cos we think about it and we know how we work.'* | I2.1<br><br><br>O2.6 |
| A | Aware that she needed to think about ways of synthesising her notes so that the finished report was not just a copy of the information in the text.<br>*'We looked at our notes to find something that would be a bit better than just the sentences because we're not allowed to copy the sentences from the sheet.'* | I2.1 |

| | C | She collaborated with her partner Joanna on editing and revising their reports. She thought about ways to make improvement and discussed these with her partner. Joanna described the process of collaborative thinking that they employed. | I2.2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | *'Me and Sophie looked at the sheet and Sophie was like – if we look at a few of the words, then we can add in our own words and think about it.'* | |
| | | *'We could just read through it together and see what we could improve.'* | |
| | | *'…and Sophie said to me – well, if we have our notes and we think that it's gone wrong, then she said if we look at our notes then we can find something that would be a bit better than just the sentences because we are not allowed to copy the sentences from the sheet.'* | |
| | C | She and her partner thought about ideas together and rehearsed sentences orally. | R2.4 |
| | | Sophie: *(talks to Joanna) Like if you do male lions first, instead of just putting the key words again you could just put – the male lion protects the pride.* | |
| | | Joanna: *I'm just looking to see what I can make up about that.* | |
| | | Sophie and Joanna continue sharing ideas. | |
| | | Joanna: *I've thought of a short sentence. 'Lions are most active at night because the temperature is cooler.* | |
| | | Researcher: *How did you think of that sentence?* | |
| | | Joanna: *I was thinking when lions are most active and then I thought it's cooler at night.'* | |

### 4.2.8 Zoe

### Task context – individual responses

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| Phase 1 | Took an active part in class discussion giving a clear explanation of the purpose of a contents and index page in non-fiction books. Able to explain why labelled pictures and diagrams were sometimes used in information texts. | O2.1 |
| Phase 2 | Began the task quickly once she had checked the different aspects of the task with her literacy partner, Jack. | O2.2 |
| | Displayed a desire to work independently as she did not check with her partner before highlighting key vocabulary. Stated that this was because she wished to work at her own pace. *'I like working quickly sometimes.'* | O2.2 |
| Phase 3 | Made a quick start on the writing task using the teacher's model on the interactive whiteboard as a guideline and gave reasons for her selection of text to highlight, e.g. *'Because it's part of its* (the lion's) *body.'* | O2.3 |
| | Checked that she had similar information as her partner, Jack, in order to confirm that she had been successful in her own note-making. | O2.3 |
| Phase 4 | Made an immediate start making notes from the highlighted text. When asked whether she had finished rehearsing sentences orally with her partner she replied, *'Yes, we've already finished.'* | R2.2 |
| | Could construct a series of sentences from her notes, e.g. *'The next one would be – females protect the group, they feed cubs too and they look after cubs too at the same time. The females are the ones that hunt for food.'* | R2.2 |
| Phase 5 | Zoe and Jack had displayed confidence with note-making in previous sessions and were able to start identifying key words in the text quickly. They commented that because they had written two reports before they understood how to approach the task. *'For our homework we had to do a cheetah report. Now we have done that … we can remember what we have to do for the lion's report.'* | O2.5 |
| | Could explain her working strategy when constructing her sentences. *'I'm going on so he* (Jack) *can do it as well. I might forget my ideas and I wouldn't know what to write so I'm writing first and he can copy it.'* | R2.6 |
| Phase 6 | Stated that she felt confident that her notes provided her with sufficient information from which to construct her own sentences. | O2.6 |

## Task understanding

| Assessed level | Key concept: Understand the term 'non-chronological' | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| Secure | Provided a clear explanation of the reasons for using labelled pictures, diagrams and headings in information texts and recognised these as features of non-chronological reports.<br>She could identify the key features of non-chronological reports. | O2.1 |
| | **Key concept: Understand the meaning of key concept vocabulary in non-fiction texts and how to structure them in note form.** | |
| Secure | Identified key words quickly and was able to explain why they were important and needed to be highlighted. Displayed confidence with note-making during the construction of the report about lions and was able to start identifying key words in the text about crocodiles more quickly than other children in the group. | O2.5 |
| | Able to comment that she and Jack had made a quick start as they had written two reports before so understood how to approach the task. | R2.5 |
| | **Key concept: Understand how to synthesise information from notes.** | |
| High | Stated that her detailed notes provided her with sufficient information from which to construct her own sentences. Both her report on lions and her report about crocodiles were clearly written using all the key information from her notes. She also used her own style of writing which differed from her partner's. | S2.8a/b |
| | *General: Female crocs lay between 10 and 90 eggs at a time…Adult crocs swallow rocks to digest their food in the tummy. Crocodiles live up to 100 years.* | S2.8b |

## Task awareness

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| A | Aware that having completed one report she could use this as a pattern for others.<br>*'For our homework we had to do a cheetah report. Now we have done that…we can remember what we have to do for the lions report.'* | R2.5 |
| A | Aware of ways in which she could improve her report and explain ways in which she could do this.<br>*'You could try again. Next time I would use describing words a bit more to make my sentences interesting.'* | I2.2 |
| S | Was able to organise her thought processes consciously and identify the specific strategies she used to improve her writing.<br>*'I looked through the sheet again and then I put some more notes down and then I thought I would put some more interesting stuff into it.'* | I2.2 |

**4.3 Letters of review**

**Description of learning context**

**Phase 1**

The teacher explained that the pupils would be writing a series of letters for a specific purpose and audience. It was explained that letters could be formal or informal. Pupils were questioned regarding their understanding of the term 'formal'. There appeared to be a degree of uncertainty surrounding the term which led the teacher to explain that formal referred to a more polite and official style of speech or writing as opposed to the informal and relaxed way in which pupils might speak or write to a friend or family member.

Pupils were referred to the Literacy Learning Wall to view key features found in a formal letter. The features included the correct use of grammar, the layout, style and choice of vocabulary. The pupils displayed little prior knowledge of the information sequencing and contextual details required when writing letters and therefore the linguistic and textual structure of this genre was deconstructed by the teacher.

Pupils were asked to discuss possible recipients of a formal letter with the teacher explaining that the purpose of a formal letter can be to complain, to thank, to enquire or apply. She explained further that such letters could be written to well-known people, companies or places. The teacher was able to sign-post the learning by explaining that pupils would be writing a letter to an author, reviewing one of their books. The pupils conveyed enthusiasm for this writing task as they had been engaging in reviewing books during previous literacy sessions.

Pupils were given an example of a formal letter regarding a visit to a zoo. This was discussed and annotated as a whole class in order to identify examples of formal language. The children proceeded to work in pairs looking at an example of a formal letter during independent time. They were asked to identify the phrases which were better examples of formal language, such as 'furthermore', 'in addition', 'in conclusion', 'I believe' and 'it

is my opinion' and 'yours sincerely.' Their examples were added to the Literacy Learning Wall documenting the features of formal letters.

**Phase 2**

Pupils were asked to recall the language and key features of formal letters in pairs. The majority of pupils were able to discuss which language features had been identified during the previous session. The teacher then explained that they would be looking at informal letter writing during this stage before they tried writing formal letters. Pupils revised the term 'informal' and discussed possible recipients of an informal letter.

The teacher shared an example of an informal letter with the pupils and asked them to compare and contrast it with a formal letter. Pupils considered how some features remained the same such as the layout: address, date, use of 'dear', indents and paragraphs. However, the style of language altered significantly adopting a more personal or 'chatty' manner.

The pupils worked in pairs to identify which were good examples of informal language in an example letter. These ideas were added to the Literacy Learning Wall. As an independent task pupils were asked to write an informal letter to a friend recommending a book they had reviewed during the previous unit of work. This task demanded use of prior knowledge as it was necessary for the pupils to make reference to books they had reviewed during previous stages of learning.

Pupils were referred to layered targets displayed on their tables and encouraged to consider personal targets in literacy. The layered targets consisted of:

Must: Show evidence of simple structure in non-narrative writing

Could: Group ideas into sections by content

Should: Show structure within writing by using basic paragraphs (D3)

**Phase 3**

The teacher explained that, during this session, the pupils would be writing a formal letter. The teacher also introduced pupils to the objectives of the writing task via a 'child friendly' format:

- By the end of the lesson I will be able to:
    1. Write a formal letter
- I need to remember:
    1. The language I need to use in a formal letter
    2. The features of a formal letter

Pupils worked in pairs to make a list of the features of formal letters on their mini whiteboards. The children were engaged with the task and could identify appropriate features with varying levels of accuracy.

After further discussion the teacher listed the features on the interactive whiteboard as well as some of the phrases that had been considered in previous sessions such as: 'furthermore', 'I am writing to', 'in addition' and 'to express my thanks'. The teacher proceeded to model the layout of a formal letter on the board and commented that some pupils had found it difficult to achieve an accurate layout when producing an informal letter. The teacher praised pupils for the content of their informal letters, emphasising how they had achieved some of the layered targets set.

Pupils were asked to address their formal letter to the author of the book they had reviewed in a previous unit of work. These activities were well linked and the teacher was able to support the pupils with integrating new ideas into their existing knowledge base. She modelled the organisation of the letter using four separate paragraphs. A list of prompts was displayed as a scaffold on the interactive whiteboard to support pupils with letter structure:

Paragraph 1:     Why you are writing the letter?

Paragraph 2:     Share your favourite part/character and explain why.

Paragraph 3:     Include recommendations and a star rating.

Paragraph 4:     Compose a concluding remark.

### 4.3.1 Aidan

### Task context – individual responses

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| Phase 1 | Was able to discuss features of formal letters confidently with his partner and suggest language to be used, such as *'yours sincerely'* and '*I wish to complain about....'* | O3.1 |
| Phase 2 | Displayed excitement at the idea of writing to a friend as he wished to recommend a humorous book which he had read recently.<br><br>Struggled with the secretarial aspects of the task as he spent the majority of time laying out the address and date, leaving little time to focus on content. | O3.2 |
| Phase 3 | Confident that he understood the learning objectives for the task and shared this understanding with his partner.<br><br>Was able to separate ideas into paragraphs independently but was reluctant to write more than one sentence in each paragraph. He needed adult encouragement to extend his ideas within each paragraph. For his final paragraph he wrote:<br>*My stars would be 5/5 because it is excellent. I would recommend your books to my sister.* | O3.3<br><br>S3.1b |

### Task understanding

| Assessed level | **Key concept: Understand the concept of review and the use of formal language in a letter.** | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| Secure | Separated different aspects of the review into paragraphs independently but required some intervention by the teacher to extend his ideas within each paragraph. His completed letter showed a good understanding of formal letter writing and the ability to express his review ideas clearly.<br><br>He wrote:<br>*My favourite part was when Dr. Xargle says the winter white earthlets invade with orange noses and black eyes. They are snowmen. My stars would be 5/5 because it is excellent. I would recommend your books to my sister.* | O3.3<br><br>S3.1b |

**Task awareness**

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
|-------|----------|-------------|
| A | Was aware that thinking and talking as part of a group helped him to develop his ideas. *'If you weren't thinking and talking about it on the carpet and you went to your chair and you had to think of it on your own it would get harder and harder because you might change your mind but I just talk about it and think of it on the carpet and I am like, I'm fine with that.'* | R3.4 |
| A | Was aware that he used his prior experience of writing a letter of review to a friend as a strategy to help him with writing a more formal letter of review. *'All I did was make some of it better and use it in my letter to the author. I'm going to use more of it and think of more fantastic words and make sentences into paragraphs.'* | I3.2 |

### 4.3.2 Amelia

### Task context – individual responses

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| Phase 1 | Slower than others to generate ideas and displayed some confusion initially when trying to identify features of formal letter writing. Identified *'Dear Mr or Mrs'* as a possible start to a formal letter | O3.1 |
| Phase 2 | Expressed confidence to begin informal letter independently, evidenced in the prompt start made with letter layout as she had some experience of writing to a friend. She commented, *'I like writing to a friend because it's fun.'* | O3.2 I3.2 |
| | Was able to give reasons for the selection of her favourite part of a book, e.g. *'My favourite character is George because he is very kind.'* | S3.2a |
| Phase 3 | Slow to identify the features of formal letters when working with her partner compared with other pairs due to a lack of prior knowledge of the genre. | O3.3 |
| | Made an immediate start during independent writing of the letter to the author as she was able to use the example of how formal letters begin and end displayed on interactive whiteboard. She checked the layout against guidance on the interactive whiteboard methodically, leading to a laboured attempt at developing the letter content | O3.3 |
| | Was able to organise letter content into sections but did not extend her paragraphs with some consisting of just one sentence. E.g. *I would recommend this book to 100 and under because it will suit anyone!* | S3.2b |

### Task understanding

| Assessed level | **Key concept: Understand the concept of review and the use of formal language in a letter.** | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| Secure | Able to begin the task immediately because she copied the example of the letter layout from the interactive whiteboard. Consequently the secretarial aspects of the task were supported. She did not remember to organise the review content into paragraphs independently and needed some adult intervention to organise her ideas. Her completed letter showed evidence of an ability to express her ideas clearly when given support with the organisational aspects of letter writing, e.g. | O3.3 |
| | *Dear Julia Donaldson,*<br>*I am writing to tell you that I really enjoy your books. In the Gruffalo my favourite character is the mouse because it is very intelligent.* | S3.2b |

**Task awareness**

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
|-------|----------|-------------|
| A | Aware that identifying reasons why she liked a specific character in a story was an important strategy to use when writing a letter of review. *'You have to think about why you like your favourite character. My favourite character is the mouse because it is intelligent and when it eats the nut it's really calm.'* | O3.3 S3.2b |
| A | Was aware that that thinking and talking as part of a group helped her to develop ideas for a letter of review. *'It helped reading the book first. We reviewed it in a group and that really helped because we thought about it and talked about it together.'* | I3.2 |

### 4.3.3 Emma

### Task context – individual responses

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|-------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Phase 1 | Was able to identify and discuss a number of features of formal letter writing with response partner including the use of *'yours sincerely'* and *I wish to complain about.'* | O3.1 |
| Phase 2 | Fairly confident start to writing an informal letter but spent a long time on the secretarial aspects of the task (address, date, etc.)<br><br>Able to review her favourite part of the story and give reasons for her views:<br> *I like the part where he gets new clothes because it makes him happy. My favourite character is the dog because his feet get stuck in the mud which is very sticky.* | O3.2<br><br><br><br>S3.3a |
| Phase 3 | Did not follow the model for letter content but worked independently extending her ideas in one paragraph. Needed to be reminded to organise these ideas into separate paragraphs but used the correct layout for a formal letter. | O3.3<br>S3.3b |

### Task understanding

| Assessed level | <u>Key concept</u>: Understand the concept of review and the use of formal language in a letter. | Data source |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Secure | Able to express her ideas succinctly and give reasons for them in her letter of review:<br>*I would give it 5/5 because I love the way you write.*<br>She needed to be reminded that her ideas should be organised into paragraphs as she tended to merge the different aspects of her review into one paragraph.<br><br>Her completed letter showed evidence of a good understanding of how to review a book. However, she continued to need support with the organisational skills of writing a formal letter. She stated, *'I found starting the letter a bit hard because you forget that you need to leave a line between the address and name.'* | S3.3b<br><br><br><br><br><br>I3.1 |

### Task awareness

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
|-------|----------|-------------|
| A | Was aware that collaborative thinking and group discussion helped her to develop her ideas for a letter of review.<br>*'Talking on the carpet helped me think about what to put in my letter.'* | R3.4 |

| A | Aware that her thinking about the task was based on her prior knowledge of book reviews and her enjoyment of reading. *'I know about book reviews and so it's easy. I like most of the books I read.'* | I3.1 |

### 4.3.4 Jack

### Task context – individual responses

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|-------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Phase 1 | Slower as an individual to record features of formal letter writing but displayed confidence and understanding of the features when questioned. He described the letter of thanks that had been written to the Education Officer at the National Gallery after a school trip. | O3.1 |
| Phase 2 | Expressed his interest in the task and was able to describe the exciting parts of a book within the format of an informal letter, writing:<br><br>*'I like them* (the mice) *because they are bright and if the reader is sad it will cheer them up.'* | O3.2<br><br>S3.4a |
| Phase 3 | Was able to extend ideas within each paragraph independently using his previous book review to inform content. He successfully combined his new knowledge of formal letter writing with his existing ideas for writing book reviews:<br>*Dear Julia Donaldson,*<br>*I am writing to tell you that your books are amazing but my favourite book is 'The Smartest Giant in Town' because I like the bit when the giant's trousers fall down and you see his giant spotty pants...I think my brother should read it so it shows how kind we need to be to each other. Keep up the good work and being funny.* | S3.4b |

### Task understanding

| Assessed level | **Key concept: Understand the concept of review and the use of formal language in a letter.** | Data source |
|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| High | Able to organise his ideas into paragraphs independently and express his ideas clearly giving good reasons for his views. Used his previous book review as a model and was able to adapt his ideas to suit the more formal nature of the task. His completed letter showed evidence of an understanding of the concept of review in the form of a formal letter.<br>*Dear Julia Donaldson, I am writing to tell you that your books are amazing…*<br><br>He commented that he found it easy *'…because I use really descriptive adjectives and when I do that I don't find it that hard.'* | S3.4b<br><br><br><br><br>R3.4 |

**Task awareness**

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
|-------|----------|-------------|
| A | Aware of the fact that he used the strategy of drawing on his prior reading experiences to develop his use of descriptive vocabulary. *'I use really descriptive adjectives and when I do that I don't find it too hard. I do read a lot and I read them in books.'* | R3.4 |
| S | He consciously deployed the strategy of using ideas from a previously written book review and then extended these ideas. *'I remember my ideas when I did a book review and I can add bits.'* | O3.3 |
| A | Was aware that when he was thinking about the task he used his prior knowledge and enjoyment of books as well as the skill of recalling the main points to write a review. *'I know lots of books and I can remember all my favourite bits. It's easy when you like a book because you can think of lots of things to say.'* | I3.1 |

### 4.3.5 Joanna

## Task context – individual responses

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|-------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Phase 1 | Confident to identify features of formal letters and worked quickly with her partner to create a list of features on her mini whiteboard. | O3.1 |
| Phase 2 | Confident to write an informal letter independently without discussing the content with her partner. She stated that she had prior experience of writing to a friend and was able to incorporate book review ideas into this format. For example, she wrote: *The dog is my favourite character because he gets to a big bog but the giant has to give his belt away so the dog can get across so he is the whole reason his trousers fall down.* | O3.2<br><br>S3.6a |
| Phase 3 | She read the positive comments written by the teacher regarding her informal letter stating that she had clearly understood the features of letter writing and had used paragraphs to group her ideas. She was keen to achieve the same success with a more formal letter.<br><br>The teacher's comments for her formal letter were - *Fabulous formal letter. You have included all the correct features and language.* | O3.3<br><br><br><br>S3.6b |

## Task understanding

| Assessed level | **Key concept: Understand the concept of review and the use of formal language in a letter.** | Data source |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| High | Able to use the correct layout when writing her formal letter as well as incorporating the language features of a review:<br><br>*Dear Jeanne Willis and Tony Ross,*<br>*I love your books, especially the book of earthlets. My favourite part is when the baby is in the bath and you describe the rubber duck as a floating bird. I give this book five out of five because Dr. Xargle keeps getting things wrong like the colour! I'd recommend this book to my whole family whatever age.* | S3.6b |
| | Discussed reasons for her successful completion of the informal letter.<br><br>*'Well, my brother was in this class and I remember when he did this. I looked at the letter he had written to me and I remembered how he had done it in paragraphs. I know what my friend is interested in so I knew she would like this book. She likes the same things as me.'* | O3.3 |

**Task awareness**

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| S | She consciously deployed the strategy of adapting and transferring her ideas from one context to another and was able to give a clear explanation of her thinking. <br> *'Well, when we were writing our letter to a friend to recommend a book, I thought if my friend likes what I have written, I can probably use what I have done in that and put different sentences in for that one because it is a different book.'* | I3.1 |
| C | She and Sophie deployed collaborative thinking when they discussed the different elements of a book review that could be incorporated into letters of review. <br> *Joanna: We have to think about the story and if we like it and give it a star rating.* <br> *Sophie: And tell the author the characters are good.* <br> *You have to tell people about the funny parts and the bits you enjoy because then they'll want to read it.* | O3.3 |
| A | She was aware of the strategies she had used to write a letter of review and was able to encourage others by suggesting the most useful and effective strategies they could use. <br> *'I tell my friend to think about all the parts of the book that she enjoyed and then sort of pick out the best bits to write about.'* | I3.1 |

### 4.3.6 Molly

## Task context – individual responses

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| Phase 1 | Slower than other children to generate ideas. Both she and her partner, Amelia, had difficulty identifying some features of formal letters. Both Molly and Amelia were able to suggest that a formal letter could begin with *'Dear Mr or Mrs.'* | O3.1 |
| Phase 2 | Shared her book review ideas orally with a friend and was able to combine these ideas within the form of an informal letter. She wrote:<br>*My favourite part was when George's trousers fell down because he gave his belt to the dog. You then see his big red spotty pants.*<br><br>The secretarial aspects of writing a letter (date, address, etc.) took her some time to complete correctly. She stated, *'…it took a long time to do the address…'* | S3.6a<br><br><br><br>O3.2<br>I3.2 |
| Phase 3 | Appeared to have a sound understanding of some of the reasons for writing a formal letter to an author.<br><br>*Teacher:      Why are we writing these letters?*<br>*Molly:         We are going to tell them how great their books are and what we like best.'*<br><br>Was unsure how to adapt her book review ideas within the format of a formal letter and needed the support of the teacher's model on the interactive whiteboard before beginning. | O3.3 |

## Task understanding

| Assessed level | Key concept: Understand the concept of review and the use of formal language in a letter. | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| Secure | Able to show that she had a sound understanding of the reasons for writing a formal letter to an author. *'We are going to tell them how great their books are and what we liked best.'* | O3.3 |
| | Required some adult intervention when organising her ideas into paragraphs. Her completed letter consisted of one paragraph only. | O3.3<br>S3.6b |
| | Her completed letter showed evidence of an ability to express her ideas clearly, e.g.<br>*Dear Julia Donaldson,*<br>*I am writing to tell you your books are great. My favourite part in The Gruffalo is the part when the mouse said "My favourite food is Gruffalo crumble."* | S3.6b |

**Task awareness**

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| T | She used an example provided by the teacher to structure her review letter and used preconceived ideas about the book she chose to review.<br>*'I had my ideas about the book already. They were in my head.'* | R3.4 |
| A | Aware that to make her review letter interesting to the reader she needed to give reasons for her opinions.<br>*My favourite character is the sneaky mouse because he tricked the other animals.* | S3.7b |
|  | When editing her work she was aware that 'because' was a key word in helping to generate reasons for opinions.<br>'(begins to read her writing aloud and recognises that she needs to give a reason for her opinion). *I should put in because.'* | R3.4 |

### 4.3.7 Sophie

### Task context – individual responses

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|-------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Phase 1 | Quick to record features of formal letters with her partner on a mini whiteboard and read them aloud.<br>Identified *'posh language'* as a feature of formal letter writing. When asked to give an example of this, she replied *'Dear Madam, I would like to complain about...'* | O3.1 |
| Phase 2 | Spent equal amounts of time, during independent work, considering layout and content of an informal letter.<br><br>Worked independently and was able to adapt her book review ideas within the format of an informal letter. She wrote:<br>*My favourite characters are the mice because they were funny when they squeaked "Our house is on fire!"* | O3.2<br><br>S3.7a |
| Phase 3 | Responded to the teacher's suggestion of extending paragraphs to include more details of her book review. She was able to adapt her ideas within the format of a formal letter.<br>Her final paragraph read:<br>*Last of all I loved your pictures and your writing. I really loved both of them because they match.* | S3.7b |

### Task understanding

| Assessed level | **Key concept: Understand the concept of review and the use of formal language in a letter.** | Data source |
|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| High | Able to express her ideas within the format of a formal letter. The beginning of her letter showed evidence of this.<br>*I am writing to tell you that I am a huge fan of your books, especially Dr. Xargles book of Eartlets.*<br><br>Her completed letter also showed evidence of an ability to organise her ideas into clearly defined paragraphs after asking for a little adult guidance. | S3.7b<br><br><br><br>O3.3<br>S3.7b |

### Task awareness

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
|-------|----------|-------------|
| A | Aware that the strategy of identifying the humorous parts of a story was an effective way of writing a review letter and encouraging others to take notice of her recommendations.<br>*'You have to tell people about the funny parts and the bits you enjoy because then they'll want to read it.'* | O3.3 |

| | C | She and Joanna deployed collaborative thinking when they discussed the different features of a book review that needed to be incorporated into letters of review.<br>*Joanna: We have to think about the story and if we like it and give it a star rating.*<br>*Sophie: And tell the author if the characters are good.*<br>*You have to tell people about the funny parts and the bits you enjoy because then they'll want to read it.* | O3.3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| | A | Was aware of possible changes that she could make to her review letter both during and after the writing task.<br>*'Maybe I would change the star rating if I changed my mind about the book. I think I like it more now because the pictures and writing match really well.'* | I3.2 |

### 4.3.8 Zoe

## Task context – individual responses

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| Phase 1 | Displayed some prior knowledge of letter writing by commenting that the address needed to go in the top right hand corner of the letter. | O3.1 |
| Phase 2 | Spent more time completing the secretarial aspects of writing the letter than with the content of the review.<br><br>Zoe was confident that her friend would enjoy the same book and was eager to share ideas with her. She wrote,<br>*I like the part when he gives his clothes to the animals because he just bought new clothes and he's helping the animals by giving his clothes to them.* | O3.2<br><br>R3.4<br>S3.8a |
| Phase 3 | Appeared extremely excited by the idea of writing a formal letter to an author and asked *'Are we really going to send it to her (Julia Donaldson), really?'* This gave her a real purpose for writing the letter.<br><br>Expressed satisfaction with content of her letter and was reluctant to extend her ideas further. However, she was able to combine her review ideas confidently within the format of a formal letter. She stated, *'...I listen to my friends and I have really good ideas when we are reading the story so I just rush back here and just do it.'* | O3.3 |

## Task understanding

| Assessed level | Key concept: Understand the concept of review and the use of formal language in a letter. | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| Secure/High | Able to use a range of descriptive vocabulary to review the book of her choice but was content with only one or two sentences for each paragraph. The beginning and ending of her letter showed evidence of a clear understanding of the features of formal letter writing.<br>*Dear Jeanne Willis and Tony Ross,*<br>*I am writing to tell you that I am a big fan of your book Dr. Xargle's Book of Earthlets...I am really impressed with the illustrations because they are colourful and detailed, Yours sincerely.* | S3.7b |

**Task awareness**

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| S | She consciously deployed a range of strategies in order to complete the task. <br> *'I need to read the book first because it gives you more ideas.'* <br> *'I listen to my friends and I have really good ideas when we're reading the story.'* <br> *'I'll tell her (the author) about the good bits and why I like the story.'* | R3.4 |
| A | Was aware that the ability to read a book with understanding was an essential skill to enable her to write a review letter. <br> *'I understood what the author was on about because when you don't understand a book, you can't really write a review about it.'* | I3.1 |

**4.4 Narratives**

**Description of learning context**

**Phase 1**

As 'The Ancient Greeks' had been an on-going topic for study throughout the academic year the teacher explained that pupils would write a narrative in the style of a Greek myth. The teacher supported pupils in recalling the characteristics of heroes in Greek mythology, a subject which had been addressed during work across the curriculum. Pupils recalled characteristics of different gods and heroes, including details of special weaponry which had been used to overcome the dilemmas faced. The pupils' thoughts and ideas were recorded to develop links between new learning and prior knowledge from cross-curricular work.

Having listened to a variety of Greek myths such as 'Theseus and the Minotaur' and 'The Labours of Hercules' previously, a certain amount of prior knowledge was assumed. Pupils were able to recall events from Greek mythology in response to a question from the teacher regarding what the first stage of a quest myth might be. The teacher revealed a template on the interactive whiteboard showing the stages of the story:

1. The problem
2. The journey – first setting
3. The journey – second setting
4. The journey – third setting
5. Resolution of the quest

Whilst revealing each stage, the teacher emphasised that the quest would represent a journey and therefore the setting would change to allow the plot to develop. She used each setting from Theseus and the Minotaur to illustrate how a quest myth often took the form of a journey and that the setting would need to reflect this journey.

The teacher initiated discussion regarding the pupils' prior knowledge of 'setting' in Greek mythology. Pupils proceeded to work in pairs to describe a

setting they would like to develop in their own narrative. It was evident that pupils experienced difficulty viewing setting as an independent feature of narrative. Most paired discussion was focused on character and plot in conjunction with setting.

Having recognised this, the teacher asked pupils to discuss a set of questions designed to focus their attention on setting as a central element in the development of a narrative. The prompts enabled pupils to consider the element of setting carefully when gathering ideas for writing their own myth:

1. My setting is...
2. Where can my hero hide?
3. What are the dangers?
4. What monsters might live there?
5. How does your hero find safety?

The children worked independently to develop ideas for their narratives in note form, encouraged by the teacher to consider the use of the senses to extend descriptions and effective adjectives to describe settings. It was observed how many of the children were drawing on their knowledge of Greek mythology to create the description of their setting, e.g. Theseus and the Minotaur, Jason and the Golden Fleece and The Labours of Hercules were alluded to in the children's individual plans.

**Phase 2**

New learning was introduced through a focused study of the structure and language of a quest narrative. This involved exploring the hero's progression on a journey through different settings. Whole class discussion involved the identification of challenges that might be faced throughout the journey.

The children engaged in paired discussion describing the settings they had developed during the previous writing task to allow for the extension of their ideas. The teacher encouraged them to consider whether their settings were similar to those which might be found in a Greek myth. It was evident that a number of misconceptions were held regarding appropriate settings in keeping with that of a Greek myth.

The inclusion of special weaponry was discussed, as the hero's success would be dependent upon his/her acquisition of these objects. The teacher also reminded pupils to consider how the hero would travel from one setting to another and how long this might take. The task demands were supported by a visual representation of the story structure using the interactive whiteboard. This resource was used to create a pictorial story map including the following labels:

- Introductory setting
- Problem
- Journey through different settings
- Defeat a monster at final setting
- Journey home

The teacher modelled ideas to include those appropriate to a Greek myth. Pupils were asked for suggestions to improve upon the teacher's ideas. The children made a number of suggestions in keeping with the genre. Some children had a tendency to merge modern ideas with their developing knowledge of Greek myths. When asked to describe an ogre in a cave some pupils alluded to the image of The Gruffalo, a fantasy creature from a well-known picture book. Many proceeded to recite by heart part of the text written by Julia Donaldson in order to provide a full description; '...he has purple prickles all over his back.'

The teacher was able to return the focus of learning to knowledge pupils already had of Greek myths. She reminded them of the story of Perseus and his quest for the head of Medusa and Jason's quest for the Golden Fleece, including the challenge faced in the form of a skeleton army. The children conveyed considerable interest in these myths and proceeded to consider alternative ideas which were more in keeping with this genre.

Pupils were asked to consider the passing of time in their story plans as this appeared to be a challenging concept for inclusion in a narrative. The children experienced difficulty when considering how long it might take the hero to travel between different settings. The teacher supported the

development of this concept by asking pupils to record journey times on their story maps.

During independent work, the children completed their own story maps in preparation for writing a narrative in the form of a quest myth.

**Phase 3**

The teacher began by asking pupils to share what they understood by the term 'setting' in story writing. The teacher reminded children of the concept of a story taking the abstract form of a mountain with an opening, a dilemma, a climax and a resolution. The interactive whiteboard was used to illustrate this.

The teacher set the task of writing an interesting opening to their Greek myth describing the setting and characters so that an audience would wish to continue reading. The pupils were asked to discuss in pairs how they might achieve this objective. Most children were able to suggest the use of interesting adjectives.

To model an effective opening, and how the structure of a narrative can develop, the teacher read a quest myth which had been written by a pupil during the previous year. The myth was extremely well-written and engaging for the pupils to listen to. Pupils were impressed that such an exciting narrative had been produced by a Year 3 child. The story had been produced and bound like a real book.

The pupils continued by engaging in a shared write to construct an exciting opening to a quest myth. The majority of children were engaged with the task conveying enthusiasm to share their ideas, debating which ones were the most effective and why. The teacher encouraged the use of effective descriptions to maintain reader interest. Throughout this process the children became increasingly engaged with the task. Each child was able to suggest appropriate ideas.

A word bank of Greek names was jointly constructed to support pupils in their writing as the consideration of authentic names had proved more

challenging for some. The teacher encouraged them to keep their story structure simple, adding more description in each section rather than increasing the number of settings used.

The teacher referred pupils to a check list displayed on the interactive whiteboard. This was produced as a guide for pupils, supporting the structure of their narratives. The teacher reminded pupils to include a special object such as a weapon at a significant point in their narrative to facilitate the resolution of the problem introduced in the narrative.

Independent work involved writing the opening of a quest myth, using ideas from story maps and shared writing.

**Phase 4**

The teacher explained that the class would be continuing their quest myth, focusing on the journey, the quest and resolution of the problem. For a majority of the class, this would involve the hero's defeat of a monster. To illustrate how there is often a climax before resolution is achieved, the teacher showed pupils a section of animation. The animation dramatized Hercules defeat of the Hydra. Pupils were asked to comment on how tension was built up throughout the scene.

The construction of this section of the narrative was modelled by the teacher. The pupils were reminded to consider using the senses to enhance their descriptions. During independent time children continued to write the concluding sections of their quest myths. It was explained that, when finished, the myths would be bound as individual books.

### 4.4.1 Aidan

### Task context – individual responses

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|-------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Phase 1 | Aidan followed Jack's idea to use settings from a series of books entitled 'Beast Quest' to create his own settings but focused on characters and mythical beasts instead of the setting initially. | O4.1 |
| Phase 2 | Shared his ideas for settings during class discussion. Was inclined to use modern ideas such as electric gates and laser swords in his story planning but was willing to consider other settings and weapons more appropriate to the genre. Suggested some original ideas as to how monsters could be defeated. | O4.2 |
| Phase 3 | Reluctant to revise any of his story plan ideas, in particular some of those taken from the 'Beast Quest' series and preferred to use modern settings and weapons. Wanted to begin writing immediately rather than spend time discussing and planning. | O4.3 |
| Phase 4 | Engaged with writing the story immediately and began writing the battle section in his narrative. Did not discuss his ideas with other children or adults at the beginning but talked animatedly with jack during the writing process and collaborated on ideas. | O4.4 |

### Task understanding

| Assessed level | **Key concept: Understand the concept of a quest myth.** | Data source |
|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Secure | Originally chose to set his quest myth in Bristol. When asked why he had chosen Bristol, he replied *'Because it's close to the sea. So they* (the main characters) *could go near the sea.'* | R4.1 |
|  | Used his prior knowledge of settings in Greek myths, e.g. cities by the sea and combined this with his own experience of visiting a city with a channel leading to the sea.  He also used prior knowledge of characters from adventure stories to develop his ideas about monsters for the hero to defeat.  *'I have baddies as well. I have fire men...when I was reading Beast Quest there was a fire man!'* | O4.1 |
|  | Was able to make a story map using notes which showed that he understood that a quest myth involved a journey with problems. village, crumbling castle, Odysseus, dark clouds, baddies, forest, monster, save princess. | R4.1 |
|  | **Key concept: Understand the concept of setting and characterisation.** |  |
| Secure | Used his notes to construct the opening of his story, including effective use of adjectives for the setting and the introduction of the main character. | O4.1 |
|  | *On a horrible dark day in a village called Nation there was a crumbling castle. In the castle lived a hero called Odysseus and* | S4.1b |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | *his Uncle.* | |
| | <u>**Key concept**</u>: **Understand the concept of a dilemma and use this feature in a narrative.** | |
| Secure | Was able to use direct speech to develop ideas for problems and dilemmas.<br>*When Odysseus entered the forest a shiny light was up in the trees.*<br>*'What is that?' asked Odysseus.*<br>*'It's me, Athena, I've come to help you through your quest.'*<br>*Athena gave Odysseus a bow and arrow.*<br>*'What's this for?' asked Odysseus.*<br>*'You will have to defeat a monster to get the princess,' said Athena.* | S4.1b |

## Task awareness

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| A | Was aware that he needed to adapt his story plan to fit the narrative genre of a Greek myth.<br>*'I didn't know it was going to be a Greek myth, so it's* (set) *in Bristol. Now I am going to change it to Brystol. These guards will be called Oddie.'* | R4.5 |
| A | Was aware that working collaboratively with Jack in developing ideas was an effective strategy as they had a shared interest in the 'Beast Quest' stories.<br>*'I wrote a couple of sentences. Then Jack started talking to me and gave me some really good ideas about other things I could do. I wrote those down and then we were talking and thinking again and I got some more good things in my head.'* | I4.1 |
| A | He was aware of why his ideas were exciting as he had drawn upon other media for stimulation.<br>*'I think all my characters are really good because my ideas are good like from the film.'* | I4.1 |

### 4.4.2 Amelia

## Task context – individual responses

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| Phase 1 | Spoke confidently during both class and group discussion recalling settings in a variety of Greek myths with accuracy and adding appropriate description.<br>*Researcher:  You've decided to have a water setting.*<br>*Amelia:          With a sea serpent.* | O4.1<br><br>R4.1 |
| Phase 2 | Used a number of heroes, settings and monsters, in her story planning, that she had encountered already in her reading of Greek myths and legends, e.g. A water setting and a swamp monster. | O4.2 |
| Phase 3 | Able to empathise with how the main character was feeling in the shared write by suggesting that he might say *'Oh, I wish my father was here.'* She also enhanced the teacher's sentence by adding *'...whispered a quiet voice from the clouds'* when considering how to describe the voice of Zeus. | O4.3 |
| Phase 4 | Was motivated by teacher's comments regarding the opening of her quest myth. The teacher had written,<br>*Fantastic, Amelia. You just need to describe the journey some more.*<br>She continued to develop her narrative during independent writing time. She wrote *…as he carefully went down Mount Olympus.* | O4.4<br>S4.2a |

## Task understanding

| Assessed level | **Key concept: Understand the concept of a quest myth.** | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| Secure | Was able to make notes to create a story sequence.<br>*'evil king, kidnapped sister, swamp monster, shark guards, very fierce, water very cold, hero hides behind seaweed.'*<br><br>Showed an understanding of a quest by using story map to show hero's journey. | O4.1<br><br><br>R4.1 |
| | **Key concept: Understand the concept of setting and characterisation.** | |
| Secure | Made an immediate impact with her story opening by introducing the main character, establishing a dilemma with a brief description of the setting in just the first few sentences.<br>*One bright and cheerful day Jason was just going to have his dinner when the messenger burst open the door. "I have got very bad news. Your sister has been kidnapped by an evil king."* | S4.2a |
| | **Key concept: Understand the concept of a dilemma and use this feature in a narrative.** | |

| Secure | She was able to develop her narrative as the hero travelled between different settings while, at the same time, building tension and introducing a dilemma.<br>*Jason went down Mount Olympus. It took a day's walk to get to the disgusting swamp. When Jason was at the swamp, he almost fell to the ground. Then he heard a rustling sound. "Who's there?" he said as he took out his sword. Then out of nowhere, he saw the swamp monster!* | S4.2a |
| --- | --- | --- |

## Task awareness

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
| --- | --- | --- |
| A | Aware that she had used her prior knowledge of Greek myths to use appropriate settings in her narrative.<br>*'I can remember the places in the Greek stories and some of them were scary.'* | O4.2 |
| A | She was aware of how she had thought about and developed her ideas.<br>*'I got all my ideas from...when we did it as a class* (shared write), *I got a bit of ideas from then* (whole class discussion) *and then I got lots of ideas from my imagination too.'* | I4.1 |

### 4.4.3 Emma

## Task context – individual responses

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|-------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Phase 1 | Needed some teacher support with the organisation of ideas for characters and settings in her story planning. She was uncertain as to how to make notes about appropriate settings for a quest myth without writing in full sentences on her whiteboard. | O4.1 |
| Phase 2 | Was able to express her ideas confidently but was reluctant to make any revisions to her planning after paired and group discussion. She stated that she was happy with the structure of her narrative. | R4.3 R4.2 |
| Phase 3 | During the shared write she suggested that a feature of a quest myth would be to *'Make it sound magical'*. She could not qualify her thoughts and explain how this could be done. After teacher questioning she concluded that the appearance of the setting would make it seem magical. | O4.3 |
| Phase 4 | The teacher's comments regarding the opening of her myth read, *A super start to your myth.* | S4.3a |
| | She was quick to continue writing about the journey compared to the other children. She included the use of senses to enhance the description as suggested by the teacher. *It took him two hours to get to the maze. He was amazed how foggy it was. Perseus could smell the damp. Perseus could taste the bitter air. Perseus could smell a horrible smell.* | S4.3a |
| | Her writing demonstrated that she understood how to use setting to develop atmosphere. She wrote, *In a dark, gloomy cave Perseus sees a pairs of Tercoy's eyes like a ball (but small).* | S4.3a |

## Task understanding

| Assessed level | **Key concept: Understand the concept of a quest myth.** | Data source |
|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Secure | Able to make a story plan using notes and appropriate adjectives. *'Glimmering water, underwater palace, precious Greek mask, crystal sword, foggy maze.'* | O4.1 |
| | Was able to show the hero's journey on her story map and could explain that a quest was a journey to find something. | R4.3 |
| | **Key concept: Understand the concept of setting and characterisation.** | |
| Secure | The opening of her story showed that she was able to make use of her notes to help her describe both setting and main character succinctly. *One beautiful day Perseus looked up at the glimmering water from his underwater palace. Everyone called him Mr. Powerful because* | S4.3b |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | *he was so powerful.* | |
| | **Key concept: Understand the concept of a dilemma and use this feature in a narrative.** | |
| Secure | Able to combine setting and dilemma using the senses to develop her descriptions. *Perseus could smell the damp. Perseus could taste the bitter air. Perseus could smell a horrible smell.* | S4.3b |
| | Able to build tension through the hero's conflict with the monster. *In a dark, gloomy cave Perseus saw dark pair of Tercoys eyes. He had found the evil Loknas monster. He drew his sword ready to fight.* | S4.3b |

## Task awareness

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| A | Recognised that it was a useful strategy to use her prior knowledge of character names, from reading Greek myths, to develop names for her own characters. *'I tried to make the names like in the Greek myths.'* | R4.3 O4.2 |
| T | Emma indicated that generating ideas for her quest myth did not require any conscious thinking that she could explain. *Researcher: Emma, how did you come up with all your ideas? Emma: I don't know. They just came into my head.'* | R4.7 |
| A | Was aware that she could use prior knowledge of using her senses to enhance description as she had used her senses in play situations. *'I found it quite easy to add in describing sentences using my senses because I play a game with my friends at home and we have to use our senses to describe things quite a lot…(this helps) because you have to use your senses to describe things in your writing.'* | I4.2 |

### 4.4.4 Jack

## Task context – individual responses

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| Phase 1 | Took an active part in class discussion and was able to describe the first stage of a quest myth. He explained *'You meet the hero first of all who sees a problem and works out how to solve it...'* | O4.1 |
| | Used a number of ideas from a series of books called 'Beast Quest' to make notes and discussed how these ideas could be adapted into a quest myth. | R4.1 |
| | Introduced the idea of a 'cliff hanger' to build suspense into the narrative in his notes. *'The whirlpool is nerve-wracking, quick and very big. He (the hero) thinks – well done – to himself and then he has to face the whirlpool.'* | R4.1 |
| Phase 2 | Discussed ideas for his story plan confidently and fluently during group discussion and was able to give reasons for each event in his quest myth. He suggested that the hero could be *'…entangled in ferns that wound around your limbs to trap you.* | O4.2 |
| Phase 3 | Suggested beginning the narrative with an exciting event such as a royal wedding which an evil king wished to ruin. Began writing immediately during independent time and stated that he had borrowed many ideas from the 'Beast Quest' series. | O4.3 |
| Phase 4 | Made revisions to his story and altered the series of events after rereading his writing. He was able to make improvements using descriptive vocabulary to *'make it more interesting.'* | O4.4 |
| | He achieved more than the other children in the time given and was able to build tension in his writing. His first draft of the battle scene read, *Suddenly it began to rain. The colour in the sky was dull. Taladon was shaking like mad. He gripped his sword and marched forward trying to be brave. Suddenly he felt slimy tentacles behind him. He did not bother to turn around. He just ran.* | S4.4a |

## Task understanding

| Assessed level | **Key concept: Understand the concept of a quest myth.** | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| High | Could use notes to plan his story structure and was able to include the key elements. Could discuss each stage of the story in detail and was aware how he wanted his story to develop. | R4.1 |
| | Used prior knowledge of similar adventure stories involving journeys to help him develop his story plan. He suggested that the hero could be entangled in ferns that *'wound around your limbs to trap you,'* and that the hero would have to go into *'death valley'* to defeat a *'shape-shifting monster,'* save a *'beautiful princess'* and *'defeat an ogre in an underground cave with poisonous fangs.'* He explained that a quest myth was when the hero goes on a | O4.2 |

| | journey to search for something. | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Key concept: Understand the concept of setting and characterisation.** | |
| High | Wrote the opening section of his story independently introducing the hero and the setting succinctly. *"Taladon, if you want to go and save your father, the evil king has stolen him and put him in a cave where a shape-shifting monster lives!" Zeus told him. "I will help you on your quest because the evil king is a big, fat selfish liar."* | O4.1 S4.4b |
| | When asked how he managed to work so quickly he stated, *'I just copied it* (my ideas) *from Beast Quest because I like it.'* | R4.3 |
| | He included description such as, *'the cave smelt old and it was hard to breath'* to engage reader interest. | R4.6 |
| | Able to introduce setting, problems and a well-developed action scene in just a few sentences using descriptive language and character's feelings. *Suddenly it began to rain and the colour in the sky was dull. Taladon was shaking like mad. He gripped his sword and marched forward trying to be brave.* | S4.4b |
| | **Key concept: Understand the concept of a dilemma and use this feature in a narrative.** | |
| High | Could discuss each stage of the story in detail and was able to show that he understood the concept of a dilemma by building up atmospheric settings and then introducing suspense. *'My first setting is land. The people are poor but good. The cave is creepy, scary and dangerous. The whirlpool is nerve-wracking, quick and very big. That is at the end. He (the hero) thinks 'well done' to himself and then he has to face the whirlpool!'* | R4.1 |

## Task awareness

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| A | Aware that he used prior knowledge of the Beast Quest series to help plan his narrative. *'...I read Beast Quest books and I am just copying it* (my ideas) *from there. I'm only on Chapter 3 so I have to make it* (the rest of his narrative) *up.'* | R4.1 |
| S | He consciously deployed the strategy of revising and redrafting as he was writing improving his descriptive vocabulary in order to 'make it more interesting.' He rewrote the beginning section and the battle scene several times. *Suddenly it began to rain. The colour in the sky was dull. Taladon was shaking like mad. He gripped his sword and marched forward trying to be brave. Suddenly he felt a slimy tentacle behind him. He did not bother to turn around. He just ran.* | O4.4 S4.4a |

| A | Aware that discussing ideas and constructing a narrative as a whole class helped with independent writing.<br>*'...and it makes you feel more comfortable* (that your own ideas are appropriate*) because if you had never done it before and you were really nervous and on the carpet you just got the idea, it would mean that you would be more brave to do it* (use that idea in your own writing).' | I4.2 |
|---|---|---|

### 4.4.5 Joanna

### Task context – individual responses

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| Phase 1 | Discussed original ideas for a setting with Sophie for the first stage of her quest myth. Was able to link her ideas to her prior knowledge of Greek myths and appropriate settings, e.g. *'I have two settings. The first setting is a rocky shore…There is a monster under the rocky shore…so the hero is really poor and he lives in a sticks and seaweed house and he has to go underwater which is the sea weedy water.'* | R4.1 |
| Phase 2 | Developed her ideas more quickly than other children. She understood that the hero could be quite ordinary at the beginning of the story, e.g. *'… they* (the hero and his family) *live on an island in the middle of a rocky shore and they have a house but can't afford much so they make their house out of sticks.'* Was able to discuss possible reasons for character motivation and produce a story plan with a strong structure including a number of original ideas appropriate to the genre. | O4.2 R4.1 |
| Phase 3 | Expressed confidence in her own ideas and stated that they were different from everyone else's. She was able to give reasons for the events in her story when discussing them with an adult. | O4.3 |
| Phase 4 | Was able to incorporate ideas into the format of a quest myth drawing on prior reading experiences. She used speech to move the action forward in each scene and included multiple references to the main character's feelings. | O4.4 |

### Task understanding

| Assessed level | **Key concept: Understand the concept of a quest myth.** | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| High | Had clear ideas regarding the story setting and could describe the progression of events. *'I have two settings. The first setting is a rocky shore and they live on an island in the middle of a rocky shore and they have a house but they can't afford much so they make their house out of sticks. There is a monster under the rocky shore and he* (the hero) *needs to…kill him* (the monster).' Understood that a quest was a journey with adventures and problems and showed this through her story map. | R4.1 |
| | **Key concept: Understand the concept of setting and characterisation.** | |
| High | Used her story plan to begin writing the opening paragraph of her narrative. Used the word *'malicious'* to describe the monster as she had heard it used to describe an evil cat in one of the school's drama productions. Used the description that the monster *'fell to the ground with a thud'* as she liked the sound of that description. | O4.3 O4.4 |

| | Able to develop character feelings and emotions. She could also build the tension for the hero's meeting with the monster. *Maomy was scared but brave. "I have a shield and sword, now I just need to swim." Maomy stepped into the water trying not to be scared. "It's a little bit cold but it will soon warm up."* | S4.5b |
|---|---|---|
| | **Key concept: Understand the concept of a dilemma and use this feature in a narrative.** | |
| High | She showed an understanding of the concept of a dilemma by developing characterisation and conflict. *"Oh no!" screamed Maomy, "The monster wants my island for himself." "Yes and you need to stop him," said Zeus in a bold voice. "Me? Why me?"* | S4.5b |

## Task awareness

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| A | Aware that class discussion and shared writing activities had helped with generating ideas for writing a quest myth. *'It feels better because if you are doing it* (whole class discussion) *on the carpet and everyone puts their ideas together, it makes one big idea.'* | I4.2 |
| S | She consciously chose the strategy of using direct speech in her story to help the reader understand the character's thoughts and feelings. *'Well, I was thinking, what could he (the hero) say because he is facing a terrifying monster? How would he feel?'* | I4.2 |

### 4.4.6 Molly

## Task context – individual responses

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| Phase 1 | Contributed to paired and whole class discussion and was able to share her ideas regarding setting, including the introduction of an *'invisible cottage'* as a hiding place for her hero.<br>*'Mine's going to start in a big, big castle!'* | R4.2<br>R4.3 |
| Phase 2 | Able to discuss different settings for her quest myth but stated that she wished to write the story rather than make a plan. Could explain that a setting was *'the place where your story is put'* as she had heard about settings before. She suggested ideas for problems for the hero to overcome such as '*a huge snake in the forest'* and *'sea monster in a waterfall.'* | O4.2 |
| Phase 3 | Took an active part in the shared writing activity making several suggestions including a descriptive opening *'One sunny day when the clouds were drifting through the sky...'* She also suggested that the hero might be *'daydreaming'* at the beginning of the story. After completing one section in the shared write, Molly said to the teacher *'I gave you that idea!'* | O4.3 |
| Phase 4 | The teacher had praised her ideas during whole class shared discussion. Molly considered possible resolutions to the problems faced by her hero through discussion with her partner. | O4.4 |

## Task understanding

| Assessed level | **Key concept: Understand the concept of a quest myth.** | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| Secure | Showed an understanding of how the structure of the story, including the introduction of the hero, description of the setting and the problems faced by the hero were all part of a quest to find something.<br>*'Well, this man turns into a hero and saves the forest because an animal comes and destroys it … there is a cave where the animal lives.'*<br>She stated that she preferred writing the story rather than making planning notes on a story map – *'I just want write the story now.'* | R4.1 |
|  | **Key concept: Understand the concept of setting and characterisation.** | |
| Secure | Began her story with a clear description of the first setting and main character.<br>*One rainy day Perseus was in the castle eating his dinner. A letter came like always. There was a missing princess. She had been kidnapped by an evil goblin. Perseus was brave and he wanted to save the princess but his father would never let him out of the castle.* | S4.6b |

| | **Key concept**: Understand the concept of a dilemma and use this feature in a narrative. | |
|---|---|---|
| Secure | Able to use the senses to help the reader identify with the problems and dilemmas the hero was facing. *Perseus went in to the forest. Perseus touched a tree and it was all damp. Perseus saw a ladybird on the tree. Perseus smelt rotten bones and tasted something bitter.* | S4.6b |

## Task awareness

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| A | Was aware of her thinking when involved in revision and editing. *'I didn't want that because I did a couple of parts wrong but I did some really good bits …… So I've put a couple of good ideas in here because it makes the story better.'* | I4.1 |
| A | Was aware of the difficulties experienced during the writing process when ideas are discussed as a whole class but are difficult to retain when it comes to independent writing. Was also aware that writing ideas down helped to activate her memory. *'… as soon as you write something, it gets back to your brain.'* *'It's not until you start writing that it all comes together.'* | I4.1 |

## 4.4.7 Sophie

**Task context – individual responses**

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|-------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Phase 1 | Was able to make notes regarding the description of settings rather than character and plot like some of the other children. Used adjectives to describe her settings, e.g. *'clear water', 'huge cliff'* and *gloomy cave.'* | R4.2 |
| Phase 2 | Took an active part in the shared write. Suggested the hero could meet a goblin in a cave setting and was able to consider ways in which the goblin could be defeated. Found it difficult to transfer ideas into a plan initially. | O4.2 |
| Phase 3 | Began writing the opening of the story confidently using some of the descriptive language from her notes. She wrote, *It was a dark and cloudy day as the foggy grey castle stood on the ruined grass.* | S4.7a |
| Phase 4 | Drew upon her prior knowledge of monsters in Greek myths to create the monsters in her story but put them in her own settings. She was able to create her own settings and use descriptive vocabulary to enhance reader interest. The teacher's written feedback read, *Wow! What a great journey, Sophie. You used the senses to set the mood! Well done.'* | O4.4<br><br>S4.7a |

## Task understanding

| Assessed level | Key concept: Understand the concept of a quest myth. | Data source |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| High | Could plan elements of her narrative to include detail of setting, character and dilemma. She could also include adjectives to describe characters and settings. *'There's clear water and there is a huge cliff and he (the hero) has to jump off it in to the water and there's fierce guards, a man-eating shark, a wise man and an island it is all on.'* Explained that a quest was an exciting journey with adventures for the hero to find something important. Used her prior knowledge of Greek myths to develop her own ideas *'There was an evil king and he kept asking Hercules to do quests…'* | R4.2 |
| | **Key concept: Understand the concept of setting and characterisation.** | |
| High | Began writing the opening of the story confidently using some of the descriptive language from her notes. She wrote, *It was a dark and cloudy day as the foggy grey castle stood on the ruined grass.* | R4.3 |
| | Able to develop the story plot by including detailed description of the setting and the character's feelings. *When he found the forest he took a deep breath and entered it.* | S4.7a |

| | *When his feet touched the ground he smelt the damp on the tree bark from the rain slithering down from the leaves at the top.* | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Key concept: Understand the concept of a dilemma and use this feature in a narrative.** | |
| High | Was able to describe the main problem in her quest myth showing that she understood the concept of a dilemma. *'Mine is a really nice castle but an evil king lives there and he doesn't like his daughter so she's got sent away to a dungeon.'* | R4.3 |

## Task awareness

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| A | Aware that she used prior knowledge of Greek myths to develop her own ideas. *'There was an evil king and he kept asking Hercules to do quests (goes on to recall the labours of Hercules).'* | R4.3 |
| S | She worked methodically considering interesting settings and thought about how she could develop her ideas to include more detail. She consciously employed the strategy of using more effective adjectives to improve her descriptions. *'I can use some good adjectives for my settings like clear water, huge cliff and gloomy cave.'* | O4.2 |
| A | When reviewing the task she was aware of how she had experienced difficulties at the independent planning stage. *'Once you listen to the teacher* (during whole class discussion) *it is a bit easy* (to get ideas) *but when you get to the table you forget everything* (then as soon as you write something it gets back into your brain) *it sort of clicks.'* | I4.1 |

### 4.4.8 Zoe

## Task context – individual responses

| Phase | Task context – learning response | Data source |
|-------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Phase 1 | Suggested ideas for settings, in her notes, involving the use of the senses *'gloomy forest, yellow, ruined grass, smelly swamp.'* | S4.8a |
| Phase 2 | Pleased with her story map but commented *'I'm still thinking about the names.'* She understood that this did not impact the story structure and could therefore be left out at this stage. | O4.2 |
| Phase 3 | Engaged in both partner and group discussions to help her develop her ideas for a story opening. She was frustrated when she still couldn't think of names for her characters. Sophie commented *'She* (Zoe's writing) *has to be perfect!'* | R4.3 |
| Phase 4 | After stating that she didn't know what to write and asking for help she began to think of ideas and was then able to write independently. | O4.4 |
|  | *'What shall I say? Shall I say he kills him by burning the stumps of his head?'* | R4.4 |
|  | She liked to work without interruption because she was worried she would forget what she wanted to write. | O4.4 |

## Task understanding

| Assessed level | **Key concept: Understand the concept of a Greek myth.** | Data source |
|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Secure | Was aware that the story plan needed to include details of the hero, the setting and the monster. Also aware that a dilemma needed to be introduced as part of the quest sequence.<br>*'I am doing this underground water part where the hero has to go under water and kill this monster because it keeps eating animals and people that go for a swim.'* | R4.1 |
|  | Needed some support to consider appropriate adjectives to describe setting but otherwise worked independently. Showed the hero's journey with dilemmas on her story map. | O4.1 |
|  | **Key concept: Understand the concept of setting and characterisation.** |  |
| Secure | Asked for help to develop her narrative at certain points, engaging in response partner and group discussions. She was able to create a descriptive opening for her narrative, introducing the setting and main character through his thoughts and actions using indirect characterisation. | R4.3 |
|  | *One gloomy, foggy day a dark, lonely castle stood on yellow grass. Ceracles was sitting on a big rock outside, throwing stones at the castle. Ceracles sighed, "Oh I wish my mother was still alive. Father was always happy when mother was alive."* | S4.8b |

| | **Key concept: Understand the concept of a dilemma and use this feature in a narrative.** | |
|---|---|---|
| High | Able to introduce problems and dilemmas by building up tension and atmosphere with her use of descriptive language. *Ceracles was shivering with fright but there was no turning back. The trees were moving slowly, waving like ghosts...* | S4.8b |

## Task awareness

| Level | Evidence | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| A | Was aware that she was using prior knowledge of Greek myths to develop her narrative, thinking aloud as she wrote. *'What can he get from the monster? He could get a thorn! What shall I do next? The cave? Shall I write a swamp? I know about Greek monsters.'* | R4.3 |
| S | She consciously employed the strategy of revising and redrafting as she was writing using appropriate adjectives. She was not prepared to spend time thinking about descriptive vocabulary for the story plan. *'I was going to do that* (add description) *in the plan but then I thought it was better to do it when I was writing the story.'* | R4.5 |
| A | She was aware of some perceived difficulties in describing different characters' thoughts and feelings and ensuring that the descriptions were appropriate to their personalities. *'Using describing words about the characters' feelings is really hard because you are trying to imagine what it's going to be like if you were in that world.'* | I4.2 |
| A | Was aware that she worked collaboratively with her partner thinking about and selecting appropriate strategies to help them complete the writing task. She also collaborated with others in the group and shared ideas. *'...when I get stuck and I can't remember what I wanted to say, then I check with the teacher or I talk about it to my partner and the others. Then we read it again.'* | I4.2 |

## 4.5 Summary

Data collected for this study of cases reflects the individual learning responses made by a small group of Year 3 children when engaged in specific genre writing tasks. These responses identify some of the difficulties experienced by young writers when faced with unfamiliar concepts and concept vocabulary. In addition, the data explores different ways in which children use their prior knowledge to help them understand new ideas. Evidence of the children's levels of awareness in thinking can be seen in the table below showing that children employ different levels of awareness across all four genres. Furthermore, observations suggest that most Year 3 children are consciously aware of their thought processes both with and without adult prompting but are less able to make strategic or reflective use of their thinking without some adult intervention. However, some Year 3 children used collaborative thinking in order to help them develop their ideas and understand the writing task. These findings are discussed further in Chapter 5. Table 8 (p. 226) shows the levels of awareness in thinking for each child under the four genre headings and the frequency of each level.

Table 8:  Levels of awareness in thinking frequency table

|  | Playscript | Report | Letter | Narrative | Totals for each level |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Aidan** | Aware 2<br>Collaborative 2 | Tacit 1<br>Aware 2<br>Collaborative 1 | Aware 2 | Aware 3 | Tacit: **1**<br>Aware: **9**<br>Strategic: **0**<br>Collaborative: **3**<br>Reflective: **0** |
| **Amelia** | Tacit 1<br>Aware 1 | Tacit 1<br>Aware 1 | Aware 2 | Aware 2 | Tacit: **2**<br>Aware: **6**<br>Strategic: **0**<br>Collaborative: **0**<br>Reflective: **0** |
| **Emma** | Aware 1<br>Collaborative 1 | Aware 1<br>Collaborative 1 | Aware 2 | Tacit 1<br>Aware 2 | Tacit: **1**<br>Aware: **6**<br>Strategic: **0**<br>Collaborative: **2**<br>Reflective: **0** |
| **Jack** | Aware 2<br>Strategic 1 | Aware 1<br>Strategic 1 | Aware 2<br>Strategic 1 | Aware 2<br>Strategic 1 | Tacit: **0**<br>Aware: **7**<br>Strategic: **4**<br>Collaborative: **0**<br>Reflective: **0** |
| **Joanna** | Aware 3 | Tacit 1<br>Aware 2 | Aware 1<br>Strategic 1<br>Collaborative 1 | Aware 1<br>Strategic 1 | Tacit: **1**<br>Aware: **7**<br>Strategic: **2**<br>Collaborative: **1**<br>Reflective: **0** |
| **Molly** | Tacit 1<br>Aware 2 | Tacit 1<br>Aware 2 | Tacit 1<br>Aware1 | Aware 2 | Tacit: **3**<br>Aware: **7**<br>Strategic: **0**<br>Collaborative: **0**<br>Reflective: **0** |
| **Sophie** | Aware 2 | Aware 2<br>Strategic 1 | Aware 1<br>Strategic 1 | Aware 2<br>Strategic 1 | Tacit: **0**<br>Aware: **7**<br>Strategic: **3**<br>Collaborative: **0**<br>Reflective: **0** |
| **Zoe** | Aware 2 | Aware 2<br>Strategic 1 | Aware 1<br>Strategic 1 | Aware 2<br>Strategic 1 | Tacit: **0**<br>Aware: **7**<br>Strategic: **3**<br>Collaborative: **0**<br>Reflective: **0** |

Table 9 (p. 227) shows the children's National Curriculum Level 3 assessment levels for writing across all four genres. It must be noted that those children who experienced some difficulties with conceptual understanding of a task were assessed as Low/Secure, whereas those who were assessed as Secure/High had a good conceptual understanding of all the tasks.

Table 9:  Assessed level of understanding of key concepts

|  | Playscript | Report | Letter | Narrative |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Aidan** | Secure<br>Low<br>Secure | Secure<br>Secure/Low<br>Secure/Low | Secure | Secure<br>Secure<br>Secure |
| **Amelia** | Low<br>Secure<br>Secure | Secure<br>Low<br>Low | Secure | Secure<br>Secure<br>Secure |
| **Emma** | Secure<br>Secure<br>Secure | Secure<br>Secure<br>Secure | Secure | Secure<br>Secure<br>Secure |
| **Jack** | Secure<br>Secure<br>Secure | High<br>High<br>High | High | High<br>High<br>High |
| **Joanna** | Low<br>Secure/Low<br>Secure/Low | High<br>Secure<br>High | High | High<br>High<br>High |
| **Molly** | Secure<br>Secure<br>Secure | Secure<br>Low<br>Low | Secure | Secure<br>Secure<br>Secure |
| **Sophie** | Secure<br>Absent<br>Absent | Secure<br>Secure<br>High | High | High<br>High<br>High |
| **Zoe** | Secure<br>Secure<br>Secure | Secure<br>Secure<br>High | Secure/High | Secure<br>Secure<br>High |

The following table shows the key concept against the APP assessed level assigned through close analysis of semi-structured participant observations, open-microphone recordings and samples of written work.

Table 10: Key concepts and APP assessed levels frequency table

| Genre | Key concept | Low | Low/ Secure | Secure | Secure/ High | High |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Playscript | Text transformation from direct and indirect speech in a text into speech in speech bubbles and from that into speech in a playscript | 2 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| | Text transformation from narrative to Narrator | 1 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| | Text transformation from narrative description of characters' actions/reactions into stage directions | 0 | 1 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| Report | Understand the term 'non-chronological' | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 2 |
| | Understand the meaning of key concept vocabulary in non-fiction texts and how to structure them in note form | 2 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 1 |
| | Synthesise information from notes | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| Letter | Understand the concept of review and the use of formal language in a letter | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 3 |
| Narrative | Understand the concept of a quest myth | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 3 |
| | Understand the concept of setting and characterisation | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 3 |
| | Understand the concept of dilemma and use this feature in a narrative | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 4 |

The discussion of data in Chapter 5 highlights the interrelationship between the children's levels of awareness in thinking, their understanding of key concepts and concept vocabulary and ability to use prior knowledge and

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integrate new ideas into their existing knowledge base. Learning contexts where children were provided with opportunities to recognise this interrelationship were found to be the most successful with secure and /high assessment levels for all the children.

**Chapter 5**

**Discussion**

## 5.0 Introduction

The following discussion, for purposes of clarity, will be structured in four sections. An initial discussion on the validity of the children's responses will be followed by discussion of the four main research questions:

- What evidence is there to show that children employ different levels of awareness in thinking when engaged in specific genre writing tasks?
- How do children display their understanding of key concepts and concept vocabulary related to specific writing tasks within four genre contexts?
- How do children show they have used their prior knowledge during these tasks?
- How do children show that they have integrated new ideas into their existing knowledge base during genre related writing tasks?

In each of these sections I will relate the literature review findings in Chapter 2 with the data findings in Chapter 4, offering a critique of these including the limitations of the research.

## 5.1 Validity in qualitative research

Issues surrounding validity in qualitative research have been discussed in Chapter 3 with particular consideration given to the concept of validity and the existence of multiple realities.  For the purposes of this discussion I explore response validity within the context of a naturalistic classroom-based study of cases and critically reflect on the accuracy of what happened, what was observed and the strengths and limitations of the study.

The sample group, chosen by the teacher, as typical of Year 3 (average ability using National Curriculum levels and formative assessment, mixed

gender and race) highlighted the shared experiences of the teacher and myself as well as our awareness of the reported 'dip' in pupil performance in Year 3 (Ofsted, 1993). By analysing children's responses within a classroom setting I was able to focus on how each child approached specific genre writing tasks in this pivotal year of learning.

The choice of school was particularly important because of its commitment to improving the levels of pupils' writing as they progressed through the school. Both senior management and staff recognised the national trend for writing as being the weaker area of achievement throughout Years 3-6. The formative assessment used at St Mary's Junior School was based firmly on the teacher's understanding of how pupils learn and how this can be supported by interactive responses between pupil/pupil and pupil/teacher. Formative assessment is based on constructivist models of learning and has been linked directly to the importance of the social construction of knowledge through dialogical engagement, as discussed in Chapter 2. This kind of assessment allows teachers a clear role in developing pupils' understanding of key concepts through dialogic teaching methods developed by researchers such as Berninger et al. (2002) and Alexander (2004).

The children's oral and written responses were analysed through the organisation of data which was collected and reviewed under specific headings (see table 6, p. 101). Each heading provided a focus for the research aims and questions. It was impossible for the teacher to verify the factual accuracy of the account in its entirety as she was not present during all the group data collection sessions. Nevertheless, she was able to validate the authenticity of the children's responses during class sessions and for group sessions from her knowledge of them as individuals providing feedback such as 'There is some thinking behind some of the strategies she (Joanna) is using. I can see why that is *aware*'. Time constraints did not allow for the involvement of support staff and therefore descriptive validity, within the context of this study, did rely mainly on the integrity of the researcher and my ability to relate children's responses as accurately as possible.

### 5.1.1 Interpretive validity

Interpretive validity, that is the accuracy of the interpretation of the children's responses and the extent to which I represented these responses accurately, is more difficult to analyse. Data collection methods used in this study very much relied upon my own role as a participant observer. A well-recognised weakness of participant observation is the effect the observer has on the observed in qualitative research (Sharp, 2012). One of the limitations of this study was that, at times, the children were inclined to use me as a substitute teacher when seeking clarification and support for writing tasks. During these incidents I was inclined to respond in a similar way to the class teacher. At times this resulted in a conflict between my role as a participant and a researcher. To minimise the effect on the data, I adopted a register similar to the teacher to encourage the children to draw on each other's ideas or to explore their own ideas further e.g.

| | |
|---|---|
| Zoe: | *What shall I say? Shall I say he kills him by burning the stumps of his head?* |
| Researcher: | *How is he going to use the Hydra claws?* |
| Joanna: | *Perhaps they are really sharp and they can dig into people?* |
| Zoe: | *Yes, we have to think of a reason why he does each thing.* |
| Researcher: | *Why is he doing it?* |
| Zoe: | *The first reason was to save a beautiful princess from an evil ogre.* (R4.4) |

However, the nature of this study recognises the inevitability of the observer sometimes becoming a participant. As a participant observer I was able to establish myself in the classroom as an additional adult who was interested in the children's writing in order to be able to:

- observe natural interaction and collaboration between children
- observe details of reactions to teaching stimuli
- observe verbal and non-verbal responses and behaviour.

This enabled the collection of a range of data during each genre writing task which was then organised under specific headings to aid validation and ensure as much authenticity of children's responses as possible.

### 5.1.2 Response validity

It was established prior to the commencement of data collection, and observed during the orientation period, that children were encouraged to discuss their work during independent time as the school recognised the importance of talk in the development of writing. This enabled comparisons to be made between responses across different genre writing tasks by each individual child as discussed later in this chapter.

Semi-structured interviews revealed that the children responded well to being in groups of four and with the same partner they had worked with for writing tasks. Research reviewed suggests that interviewing individuals or pairs of children can limit responses instead of expanding them (Lewis, 1992). However, it became apparent during interviews that being able to listen to the different ways in which another pair had worked on a writing task acted as a stimulus for the others and helped them to express their own individual ideas. For example,

Researcher: *What did you find the most difficult about this piece of writing?*

Aidan: *I think sometimes getting all the ideas on your own.*

Sophie: *And you have to remember what the teacher wants you to put in.*

Molly: *But when she stops you and says something, it reminds you and you add it in* (refers to when the teacher stops the class to support and re-focus learning giving them further prompts for what they should include in their narratives, e.g. what can the character smell, see, hear, etc.)

Amelia: *Sometimes if you forget what you were going to write, that is difficult.*

> Aidan:     *Yeah because then you have to think the next day 'What was I going to write?'* (I4.1)

Although the flexibility of this method did provide opportunities for peer interaction there were a few times when the children became over familiar with my role as participant observer and began to wander from the subject, sharing thoughts and feelings about other aspects of school life such as how the library functions.  Nevertheless, because the children were able to make reference to their own writing samples throughout each interview this provided a focus for their responses.

Written data analysis of the children's responses under the heading 'Task awareness', using my revised framework for levels of awareness in thinking, was shared with the teacher and acted as an opportunity for moderation to enhance validity (Appendix 9, p. 386). The following is a short extract from this discussion, illustrating its usefulness in arriving at the levels of awareness in thinking for each child.

> Researcher:  *He* (Aidan) *isn't organising his thinking or selecting strategies is he.*
>
> Teacher:     *He is just simply using the best bits from previous work.*
>
> Researcher:  *I don't think that is strategic.* (Teacher shakes her head)
>
> Researcher:  *Amelia is just aware that by talking you can then produce a text. I would be interested to read her finished one.*
>
> Researcher:  *Let's go to Joanna as she showed collaborative use* (Quotes Joanna).
>
> Teacher:     *Oh, that's definitely collaborative isn't it.*
>
> Researcher:  *She's sharing that strategy.*
>
> Teacher:     *That's really nice because she is thinking about if she were the teacher and was going to guide someone through the process.*

<div align="right">(Appendix 9)</div>

Whilst this is a valuable form of validation it is evident that I used discussion with the teacher to engage my own thinking. Appendix 9 reveals a certain lack of symmetry between the two parties engaged in discussion. However, I

was able to engage the teacher as a 'critical friend' to comment on my findings throughout the research period.

### 5.1.3 Validation of writing samples

The writing samples provided a small but varied amount of data which highlighted the different levels of success achieved by the children at the end of each genre writing task. In order for consistency to be achieved there was an agreed set of criteria for assessment in addition to agreed learning objectives and success criteria that were understood clearly by all children. To reduce subjectivity of interpretation the criteria for assessment was based on the 'Assessing Pupils' Progress' guidelines at National Curriculum Level 3.

The teacher's general comments recorded in the children's literacy books provided a certain amount of validity in that she stated the degree to which each child had met the success criteria for the piece of writing. For example, the teacher's written feedback for Amelia's playscript stated, *'Good, Amelia – an impressive playscript. You have included lots of features of playscripts and are telling the story well'* (S1.2). However, it would have been beneficial to compare writing samples with pupils working at similar levels in a parallel class and engaged in discussion with the relevant class teacher. This would have allowed for a greater degree of comparison to be made when analysing the writing samples.

### 5.1.4 Summary

Data collection for this study involved using participant observations, informal discussions (both pupil/pupil and adult/pupil) and a detailed examination of completed writing samples.  In relation to the issue of participant observation, this study adopts what Lankshear and Knobel call 'peripheral participation (which involves a fluid mix of full participation, partial participation and non-participation, depending on the events or activities being observed)' (2004:

225). The risks involved in all these types of participant observation mean that it is difficult to remain objective.

However, I believe that by reading carefully and critically reflecting on the observations, then drawing on a range of data sources in line with the interpretive approach adopted for the study based on the idea that knowledge is socially constructed, the possibility of subjectivity was reduced (Denzin, 1994; Denscombe, 2010). As referred to in Chapter 3, research methods allowed for comprehensive analysis of all data with greater validity being achieved through a 'constant comparative' method (Silverman, 2010) as can be seen in the subsequent analysis. I believe the strength of this study lies in the interpretation and exploration of the interrelationship between children's understanding of key concepts, levels of awareness in thinking employed by them when undertaking genre writing tasks and ability to integrate new ideas into their existing knowledge base.

## 5.2 Levels of awareness in thinking

As discussed in previous chapters the framework devised by Swartz and Perkins (1989) and adapted by Williams and Fisher (2002) for writing has been further developed for this study in order to identify the levels of thinking displayed by a group of Year 3 children when engaged in specific genre writing tasks. The addition of 'collaborative use' to this framework highlights the role that collaborative thinking plays in the development of the knowledge, understanding and skills of children (Mercer, 2000; Littleton et al. 2005; Jones 2008). Collaborative use of thinking as a tool to '…co-construct – through dyadic discussion…' (Berninger et al., 2002: 293), was used by certain children to develop their conceptual understanding of certain genre writing tasks. As can be seen, in general observations of the children's responses below, there is evidence that Year 3 children do use different levels of awareness in thinking when engaged in specific genre writing tasks both with and without adult intervention.

**5.2.1 Tacit use**

Observations during this study found very little evidence of children making tacit use of their thought processes. This was not surprising as the word 'tacit' describes something 'not openly expressed or stated, but implied; understood, inferred' (Oxford English Dictionary, 2012). The few examples identified show that the children made tacit use of their thinking in two ways:

- By displaying an implicit understanding of all or part of the task
- By implying explicitly that all or part of the task was understood and therefore made little demand on their thought processes.

For example, when Molly was asked how she thought of her ideas she pointed to her head, indicating their origin, and replied *'They just came to my brain, just like that.'* Similarly, Emma indicated that ideas for her narrative did not require any conscious thinking she could explain.

> Researcher: *How did you come up with all your ideas?*
>
> Emma: *I don't know. They just came into my head.* (R4.7)

In addition, Aidan implied that part of the task was understood and therefore made no demand on his thought processes when writing a non-chronological report on lions*.*

> *We know all our facts so it will be quite easy because we don't have to keep thinking.* (R2.2)

Tacit use of thinking, by children in the group, was observed on eight separate occasions across all four genres. However, tacit responses, by their very nature, being something 'not openly expressed or stated, but implied,' are not easily observed. Tacit knowledge, knowing how to do something implicitly, relies a great deal on the relationship between children's prior knowledge and conceptual understanding and would benefit from further study within the context of this year group.

## 5.2.2 Aware use

Evidence showing that all the children in the group were consciously aware of their own thought processes was obtained in two ways:

- By observing and recording the 'think aloud' strategies being used
- By encouraging children to describe their thinking both during and after a writing task.

By using the 'think aloud' strategy some children were able to make their thinking accessible to others with immediate effect. Whilst writing his playscript Aidan posed questions aloud.

> *Now what could he* (Odysseus) *be doing? I think he could be making a plan.* (O1.2)

Emma was able to 'think aloud' as she edited her notes and organised her report on crocodiles.

> *That bit doesn't fit in there. That sounds better under the bodies section.* (O2.6)

Joanna was aware that she needed to improve reader interest in her quest myth.

> *I think if I write the monster fell to the ground with a thud it will be more fun for everyone to read.* (O4.4)

However, a few children experienced difficulties with articulating their thinking which, in turn, disrupted the flow of their thought processes. In response to a question about note-making, from Amelia, Molly tried to explain her thinking but had difficulty in finding the vocabulary to articulate her ideas.

> Amelia:    *What do you think we should highlight there?*
>
> Molly:    *Well, it could be that word cos it's sort of, or it could be this one but I don't know. Let's read the bit about male lions.* (O2.3)

Aidan was aware that thinking and talking as part of a group helped him to develop his ideas when writing a letter of review.

> *If you weren't thinking and talking about it on the carpet and you went to your chair and you had to think of it on your own it would get harder and harder because you might change your mind but I just talk about it and think of it on the carpet and I am like, I'm fine with that.* (R3.4)

When revising and editing her quest myth Zoe was aware of some perceived difficulties with the use of appropriate adjectives when describing different characters' thoughts and feelings.

> *Using describing words, about the characters' feelings, is really hard because you are trying to imagine what it's going to be like if you were in that world.* (I4.2)

Jack explained that he was aware that recalling the main points of the narrative could help with sequencing both the speech and the narrator's part in the playscript. He stated, *'It's got to be in the right order like the story.'* (R1.3)

The majority of the evidence of 'aware use' of thinking was gathered from children's descriptions of their thought processes both during and after the writing tasks. Asking children to articulate their thinking in retrospect can sometimes result in inaccuracies due to difficulty in recalling a train of thought. Nevertheless, adult/children and peer group interaction during group discussion and semi-structured interviews did encourage children to verbalise their thinking providing evidence that Year 3 children are frequently consciously aware of their thought processes both with and without adult prompting. Aware use of thinking was observed on fifty three occasions and used by all the children across all four genres.


### 5.2.3 Collaborative use

During this study it was noted that the teacher encouraged the children to work together both with a response partner and as a group. As can be seen from the data presented in Chapter 4 some children were able to use the 'think aloud' strategy and explain their thought processes within the context of

a shared learning environment. Opportunities were provided for them to collaborate during each of the different genre writing tasks. During lesson introductions the teacher used elicitation to assess the children's prior knowledge and to encourage interactive discussion.

Teacher: *What can you tell me about reports?*

Joanna: *Reports are a kind of non-fiction where you tell people interesting information and they have different headings.*

Teacher: *I wonder why they have different headings.*

Molly: *Reports give you headings so you don't have to look for the information in different places.* (O2.1)

During this exchange Aidan explained that some of the non-fiction books he read at home had headings and sub-headings and that reports were similar.

Aidan: *Some of my books at home have headings and sub-headings like reports.*

Teacher: *What is the purpose of a sub-heading?*

Jack: *To tell you what that section is about.*

Teacher: *So reports have different sections.*

Jack: *Yeah.* (O2.1)

Whilst the children were engaged in group and paired activities, opportunities were provided for them to discuss problems and listen to ideas and explanations from their partners or others in the group. This kind of 'exploratory talk,' described by Mercer (2002: 16) as *'a way of using language for reasoning, engaging critically but constructively with each other's ideas'*, was observed on eleven occasions. Four children in the sample group displayed this level of awareness of their thought processes. The ability to engage critically and constructively with others, that is, to use language in order to think together and share ideas, has been well documented through research in this area by Mercer (2000) and Alexander (2004). Observations made in this study of cases concur with the findings of both Mercer (2000) and Alexander (2004) and prompted the additional level of 'collaborative use' to be included in the adapted framework as evidence of this important element of observed classroom practice.

Most of the talk observed and documented was clearly focused on each writing task with the children making just a few digressions, particularly when they experienced difficulties. Although some children were aware that thinking and talking as part of a group or as a pair helped them to develop ideas this did not extend into a critical engagement with each other's views. It served mostly as an exchange of ideas with the less confident using this as a support.

> Amelia: *It helped reading the book first. We reviewed it in a group and that really helped because we thought about it and talked about it together.* (I3.2)

However, evidence of collaborative thinking, where partners employed the kind of exploratory talk described by Mercer was displayed by Aidan/Emma and Joanna/Sophie. These pairings employed interactive discussion during most of the writing tasks with Joanna experiencing difficulties when her partner Sophie was absent. Aidan worked collaboratively with Emma on a playscript scene posing 'think aloud' questions to which she made thoughtful and constructive responses.

> Aidan: *Now what could he* (Odysseus) *be doing?' I think he could be making a plan.*
>
> Emma: *If we read the story again I think we can find out.* (O1.2)

Emma also collaborated with Aidan when writing a non-chronological report. She responded to her partner's thoughts by consciously directing her own thinking in order to qualify and improve the written report on lions.

> Aidan: *Do you think we need this because that's about lions and that's about lions. This is about how they live and that is as well. So we could add that up to there.*
>
> Emma: *Yes. That's where they live and that is how they live.*
>
> Aidan: *No. That's like how many days they live.* (A discussion about life span follows). (R2.1)

Joanna and Sophie also used language to generate and develop their ideas, rehearse sentences orally and reach a shared understanding of the task.

| Sophie: | *Like if you do male lions first, instead of just putting the key words again you could just put – the male lion protects the pride.* |
|---|---|
| Joanna: (R2.4) | *I'm just looking to see what I can make up about that.* |

They continued sharing ideas with prompting from an open-ended question posed by the researcher.

| Joanna: | *I've thought of a short sentence. 'Lions are most active at night because the temperature is cooler.* |
|---|---|
| Researcher: | *How did you think of that sentence?* |
| Joanna: | *I was thinking when lions are most active and then I thought it's cooler at night.* (R2.4) |

Although most of the talk employed by the children was symmetrical, in that they all enjoyed equal status when expressing their views and ideas, there were a few occasions when this became asymmetrical with one child taking control of the discussion. For example Jack and Zoe spent some time discussing ideas and vocabulary choices for the playscript. They both made appropriate suggestions for how characters might speak for the stage directions. When Jack suggested they could use the word *'puzzled'* to explain how the Cyclops was speaking Zoe overruled his suggestion and insisted on using the word '*confused*' instead, '*because it shows how he's feeling.'* (O1.2)

It was interesting to note that none of the children made collaborative use of thinking when engaged in writing the narrative. Although they all talked about their ideas, and Jack and Aidan shared their interest in the book series 'Beast Quest' as a stimulus, the children completed this piece of narrative writing independently. It was also evident that certain children, notably Jack and Zoe, worked independently more frequently than other pairs. Neither child showed evidence of collaborative use of thinking throughout the research period.

### 5.2.4 Strategic use

There was evidence of Jack, Joanna, Sophie and Zoe making strategic use of their thinking on eleven occasions. Observations show that Jack and Zoe organised their thinking by making conscious use of strategies at least once during each genre writing task whereas Joanna did so when engaged in writing letters of review and the narrative and Sophie only when writing the narrative. When revising and editing the playscript Jack consciously directed his thinking into finding ways to clarify meaning. He suggested that he and his partner employed the strategy of acting out the scene in order to make decisions about its effectiveness.

> Jack: *If we act it we can see if it fits together.* (O1.3)

Zoe explained that she and Jack employed the strategy of acting out their thoughts and ideas to stimulate new thinking. They both consciously employed this strategy a number of times.

> *…me and Jack tried to act it out. I was Odysseus and he was Cyclops. It was really hard because it was really hard thinking what would happen if we were there now.* (R1.5)

Jack was able to direct his thinking by using specific strategies consciously when writing his reports on both lions and crocodiles.

> *I got the important words and I remembered the information on the sheet so it was easy to write the sentences.* (R2.5)

*Zoe* was also able to organise her thought processes consciously and identify the specific strategies she used to improve her writing.

> *I looked through the sheet again and then I put some more notes down and then I thought I would put some more interesting stuff into it.* (I2.2)

Jack consciously deployed the strategy of using ideas from a previously written book review and then extended these ideas.

> *I remember my ideas when I did a book review and I can add bits.* (O3.3)

Joanna consciously chose the strategy of using direct speech in her story to help the reader understand the character's thoughts and feelings.

> *Well, I was thinking, what could he (the hero) say because he is facing a terrifying monster? How would he feel?* (I4.2)

Sophie consciously employed the strategy of using more effective adjectives in order to improve her descriptions when writing the quest myth.

> *I can use some good adjectives for my settings like clear water, huge cliff and gloomy cave.* (O4.2)

Strategic use of thinking was observed in those children who were assessed as Secure/High, at National Curriculum Level 3, using APP levels, across all four genres though an exception to this was Joanna. She was assessed as Low/Secure for the playscript and explained that she found it difficult to start writing unless she was working with her literacy partner Sophie, who was absent, *'It's difficult when you haven't got anyone to talk to'* (O1.2). This may have affected her confidence which, in turn, was reflected in her level of achievement. She achieved Secure/High and High in subsequent genre writing tasks when she was able to work collaboratively with her partner discussing and sharing ideas.

## 5.2.5 Reflective use

There was no observed evidence of the children reflecting upon their thinking independently or pondering on strategies that could help them make improvements to their writing. Sophie was aware that changes could be made to her review letter both during and after the writing task but did not express these thoughts until prompted.

> Researcher: *If you could change your letter what changes do you think you would make?*
>
> Sophie: *Maybe I would change the star rating if I changed my mind about the book. I think I like it more now because the pictures and writing match really well.* (I3.2)

To make reflective use of their thinking the children needed to ask themselves questions before, during and after each task.

- How do I feel about the task?

- How can I overcome that problem?

- Which strategy will work best?

- What went well?

- What might I do differently next time?

- How can I improve?

Although all the children were able to give appropriate answers to these questions after adult prompting there was no evidence to show that they undertook reflective thinking independently.


## 5.3 Levels of awareness in action

In both the framework and their 'ladder of metacognition' Swartz and Perkins (1989) distinguish between four levels of thought they view as hierarchical and 'increasingly metacognitive.' However, there is little evidence in this study to show that levels of awareness in thinking are increasingly progressive as children move towards successful completion of writing tasks. The table below is an inversion of Table 8 (p. 226) and shows that the children used different levels of awareness across all four genres. Furthermore, observations suggest that most Year 3 children are consciously aware of their thought processes both with and without adult prompting but are less able to make strategic or reflective use of their thinking without some adult intervention. These findings are supported by Alexander's (2004) research surrounding dialogic teaching where an emphasis is placed on the development of high quality interactions and the creation of environments where reflection plays a central role in the learning process.

Table 11: Levels of awareness in thinking: Frequency table

| | Tacit | Aware | Collaborative | Strategic | Reflective |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Aidan** | Reports 1 | Playscripts 2 Reports 2 Letters 2 Narratives 3 | Playscripts 2 Reports 1 | | |
| **Amelia** | Playscripts 1 Reports 1 | Playscripts 1 Reports 1 Letters 2 Narratives 2 | | | |
| **Emma** | Narratives 1 | Playscripts 1 Reports 1 Letters 2 Narratives 2 | Playscripts 1 Reports 1 | | |
| **Jack** | | Playscripts 2 Reports 1 Letters 2 Narratives 2 | | Playscripts 1 Reports 1 Letters 1 Narratives 1 | |
| **Joanna** | Reports 1 | Playscripts 3 Letters 1 Narratives 1 | Reports 2 Letters 1 | Letters 1 Narratives 1 | |
| **Molly** | Playscripts 1 Reports 1 Letters 1 | Playscripts 2 Reports 2 Letters 1 Narratives 2 | | | |
| **Sophie** | | Reports 2 Letters 2 Narratives 2 | Reports 2 Letters 1 | Narratives 1 | |
| **Zoe** | | Playscripts 2 Reports 2 Letters 1 Narratives 2 | | Playscript 1 Reports 1 Letters 1 Narratives 1 | |
| **Total** | 8 | 53 | 11 | 11 | 0 |

Observations made during this study suggest that young writers move in and out of the suggested levels of thinking depending on the complexity of the task, their prior knowledge of key concepts and concept vocabulary related to each genre and ability to verbalise their thought processes, as can be seen in the discussion of individual cases that follows.

### 5.3.1 Aidan

Aidan made tacit use of thinking just once during a think, pair, share session when organising his notes for a report on lions implying that the task was understood and could be completed without having to think consciously about it. He displayed aware levels of thinking across all four genres on nine occasions and was able to explain this conscious awareness of his thought processes both during and after the tasks.

He was also consciously aware of the role collaborative thinking played in his ability to cope with the task of text transformation when writing the playscript.

> *'I waited for her* (Emma) *because I didn't know what else I could write and then we shared some ideas.'*

> *'…she* (Emma) *helped me most with thinking of ideas.'*

> *'I read it back and think with Emma.'* (I1.2)

Aidan displayed collaborative use of thinking on three occasions when engaged in playscript and non-chronological report tasks. The teacher commented on how well he worked with his literacy partner using collaborative thinking strategies to enable them to discuss problems and uncertainties and complete the tasks independently.

### 5.3.2 Amelia

Amelia made use of tacit thinking twice by displaying an implicit understanding of the procedural aspects of the writing tasks after a simple explanation. She seemed to be unaware of the thought processes she had employed during a task.

> Researcher: *If you were going to help a friend write a report what advice would you give them?*
>
> Amelia: *I don't know. I think you have to read the sheet and remember bits and then write it.'* (I2.1)

She displayed aware use of thinking across all four genres on six occasions and was able to explain this conscious awareness of her thought processes both during and after the tasks.

She was aware that she had used her prior knowledge of Greek myths to describe appropriate settings in her narrative.

> *I can remember the places in the Greek stories and some of them were scary.* (O4.2)

Amelia needed encouragement through open-ended questioning in order to help her verbalise her thinking. In addition she needed both adult and peer support with the procedural aspects of all the genre writing tasks.


### 5.3.3 Emma

Emma displayed tacit use of thinking just once by indicating that generating ideas for her quest myth did not require any conscious thinking she could explain.

> Researcher: *Emma, how did you come up with all your ideas?*
>
> Emma: *I don't know. They just came into my head.* (R4.7)

She displayed aware use of thinking across all genres on six occasions particularly when writing a letter of review and the narrative. In both of these tasks she drew on her prior reading and learning experiences.

She worked collaboratively with Aidan on the playscript scene responding thoughtfully to some of the 'think aloud' questions he posed.

> Aidan: *Now what could he* (Odysseus) *be doing?*
>
> Emma: *If we read the story again I think we can find out.*

When Aidan posed the question (*How can we get it in the right order?*) Emma suggested *'If we act it we can see if it fits together.'* (O1.2)

Although Aidan and Emma made collaborative use of their thinking, when engaged in writing both playscripts and reports, they worked independently on

the letters of review and the narrative sharing ideas occasionally with other members of the group.

### 3.4 Jack

Jack displayed both aware and strategic levels of thinking across all four genres and was able to explain this conscious awareness of his thought processes both during and after the tasks. He was able to comment on the sections of his report that he felt he had done well and was aware of how he had achieved this success.

> *I looked at my notes and tried to think about all the detail I could put into it.*

He was aware that discussing ideas and constructing a narrative as a whole class helped with independent writing and that his prior knowledge of the 'Beast Quest' series was a help in planning his narrative.

He consciously deployed the strategy of revising and redrafting as he was writing, improving his descriptive vocabulary in order to '*make it more interesting.*

> *Suddenly it began to rain. The colour in the sky was dull. Taladon was shaking like mad. He gripped his sword and marched forward trying to be brave. Suddenly he felt a slimy tentacle behind him. He did not bother to turn around. He just ran.* (S4.4a)

Jack was able to complete the report about crocodiles displaying both strategic and aware levels in his thinking. The class teacher noted his ability to organise his thinking when selecting strategies to complete the task. He was able to engage the reader by developing an individual writer's voice in both reports.

> *Lions*
>
> *Lions are known as the king of the jungle. Read the following information to learn more.* (S2.4b)

**5.3.5 Joanna**

Joanna displayed tacit, aware, collaborative and strategic levels of thinking when involved in genre writing activities. She was able to describe making tacit use of her thought processes when she implied that she engaged in note-making activities without any need for conscious thinking.

> Researcher: *What advice would you give to a friend who had to write a report?*
>
> Joanna: *I would say look in one of my books because I have a lot of books because I enjoy reading. I enjoy reading non-fiction books. They could look in one of my books and see notes because sometimes I write notes when I read books and I know what it means. That's what I do if I'm bored.'* (by implication that this was a skill she could use implicitly). (I2.2)

She made aware use of her thinking on five occasions recognising that class discussion and shared writing activities helped with generating ideas for writing a narrative.

> *It feels better because if you are doing it* (whole class discussion) *on the carpet and everyone puts their ideas together, it makes one big idea.* (I4.2)

She was also aware that prior knowledge of the procedural aspects of a genre writing task had helped her complete the letter writing task successfully.

> *Well my brother was in this class and I remember when he did this. I looked at the letter he had written to me and I remembered how he had done it in paragraphs.* (O3.3)

She consciously chose the strategy of using direct speech in her story to help the reader understand the character's thoughts and feelings.

> *Well, I was thinking, what could he* (the hero) *say because he is facing a terrifying monster? How would he feel?* (I4.2)

Both Joanna and her partner were able to respond to each other's thought processes when editing and revising their reports.

Joanna consciously employed the strategy of adapting and transferring her ideas from one context to another and was able to give a clear explanation of her thinking.

> *Well, when we were writing our letter to a friend to recommend a book, I thought if my friend likes what I have written, I can probably use what I have done in that and put different sentences in for that one because it is a different book.* (I3.1)

As can be seen in Table 11 (p. 246), Joanna employed different levels of thinking across all four genre writing tasks with no evidence that these were increasingly progressive. Nevertheless, data shows that she achieved the most success in the two tasks where she deployed strategic thinking (see tables 8 and 9, pp. 226-227).

### 5.3.6 Molly

Molly employed tacit levels of thinking on three occasions and aware levels on seven occasions when involved in genre writing tasks. She used an example provided by the teacher to structure her review letter and used preconceived ideas about the book she chose to review implying that she did not have to consciously think about the review part of her letter.

> *I had my ideas about the book already. They were in my head.* (R3.4)

She was aware that collaborative thinking was a useful tool for writing but there was no evidence to show that she was able to co-construct ideas with her partner. When asked how she could help a friend write a playscript.

> *I would discuss it with her* (Amelia) *and then think about it and get it in my head like Aidan said and then do it.* (I1.2)

She was also aware of the strategies that were the most helpful when organising a report from her notes.

> *I think the headings helped… When we were writing our proper sentences about crocodiles, that's when it got easier… because you've got the main words and all you have to do is add a couple of little words like 'there', 'it', 'and' to make a sentence.* (I2.1)

**5.3.7 Sophie**

Sophie displayed aware use of thinking on six occasions, collaborative use on three occasions and strategic thinking once. After being absent for a large proportion of the first unit of work, which was the playscript, she worked collaboratively with Joanna across the next two genres and was aware that collaborative thinking, at the beginning of each task, helped both her and her partner to clarify different aspects of the task.

> *It was pretty easy but at the start you need to help each other because there was quite a bit of information to look at and you had to decide what to do.*
>
> *We make a good team cos we think about it and we know how we work.*
>
> (I2.1, O2.6)

She collaborated with her partner Joanna on editing and revising their reports, thinking about ways to make improvements and discussed these with her partner.

Sophie was a thoughtful writer who was able to organise her thinking by making conscious use of specific strategies to improve her writing.

> *I can use some good adjectives for my settings like clear water, huge cliff and gloomy cave.* (O4.2)

She displayed predominantly High levels of understanding of key concepts when employing strategic use of thinking across the writing genres.

**5.3.8 Zoe**

Zoe displayed aware use of thinking on seven occasions and strategic use of thinking on four occasions across all four genres. She consciously employed a range of strategies to complete each task. She was aware that she drew upon prior knowledge of Greek myths to develop her narrative, thinking aloud as she wrote.

> *What can he get from the monster? He could get a thorn! What shall I do next? The cave? Shall I write a swamp? I know about Greek monsters.* (R4.3)

She was also aware that prior reading experiences helped her to generate ideas for the playscript.

> *We did a Greek assembly which actually helped me because we did the play of Odysseus and the Cyclops. Then we acted it out so we knew what to write down.* (I1.1)

She explained that both she and Jack employed the strategy of acting out their thoughts and ideas to stimulate new thinking. They both consciously employed this strategy.

> *…me and Jack tried to act it out. I was Odysseus and he was Cyclops. It was really hard because it was really hard thinking what would happen if we were there now.* (R1.5)

### 5.3.9 Summary

Observations suggest that children working at age appropriate level, based on National Curriculum Level 3 and APP level descriptors for Year 3, predominantly convey aware levels of thinking when engaged in specific genre writing. Evidence also suggests that those children who employed strategic use of their thinking, that is Jack, Joanna, Sophie and Zoe, did achieve higher levels of success in these writing tasks (see Table 9, p. 227) as a result of their understanding of the key concepts related to each task. Furthermore it was evident that the cognitive demands of specific tasks may also have had an effect on the levels of awareness in thinking, for some children, particularly when the factual and procedural aspects of the task, the key concepts and concept vocabulary were unfamiliar.

In conclusion, it would appear that levels of awareness in thinking do have some effect on the quality of the finished transcripts but that the more aware children are of strategies they can use, developed from prior experiences and collaborative use of their thought processes the more equipped they are to develop an understanding of key concepts related to each genre writing task. At present current forms of assessment for writing are over-reliant on

the completed transcript. This study highlights areas where formative assessments can be made when children are given opportunities to make their thinking explicit.

## 5.4 Prior knowledge

As can be seen from data in Chapter 4, children's prior knowledge and understanding of the different genres varies greatly. It develops through individual and sociocultural experiences resulting in some children having a deeper and wider knowledge and understanding than others. Each time a topic or genre is revisited the learner brings to it the prior knowledge and understanding gained from previous encounters. These sociocultural experiences of text types, both at home and at school, act as a foundation upon which new ideas can be constructed. As learners gradually refine and restructure prior knowledge they integrate new ideas into their existing knowledge base.

Research literature reviewed in Chapter 2 argues that prior knowledge influences learning, and children construct and reconstruct their understanding of key concepts and concept vocabulary through drawing on both prior and current experiences (Williams and Fisher, 2002; Myhill and Brackley, 2004; Wray et al., 2006). This study identifies ways in which Year 3 children show that they have used prior knowledge and integrated new ideas into their existing knowledge base whilst, at the same time, acknowledging the interrelationship between children's prior knowledge, their understanding of key concepts and the levels of awareness in thinking they employ when involved in specific genre writing tasks.

Evidence in the study concurs with the findings of Myhill et al. (2006) and Jones (2008) that elicitation of the children's understanding of objectives was frequently used by the teacher to activate prior knowledge during lesson introductions across all four genres. Some direct instruction on background knowledge and key genre features was also observed. In addition the teacher used the strategy of modelling and remodelling the key concepts and

features of each genre in order to address any perceived difficulties and support pupils with integrating new ideas into their existing knowledge base. Although paired discussion, as suggested by Mercer (2000) and Myhill et al (2006), was encouraged, the focus for discussion was not specifically aimed at supporting the exploration of common or prior knowledge. Nevertheless, there was some evidence of children discussing prior experiences of the genre in both paired and group discussion as can be seen later.

During the initial stages of each writing task the linguistic and textual structure of the genre was deconstructed by the class teacher and open-ended questioning used to activate prior knowledge. The strategies of using the Literacy Learning Wall as a contextual resource in addition to modelling and re-modelling key features of each genre enabled pupils to activate their prior knowledge. In this way pupils were taught explicitly how to develop the procedural skills and sub-skills required for different genre writing tasks in order to achieve success in relation to the learning objectives. However, activating prior knowledge for each child was a more personal process and did involve some teacher/pupil and pupil/pupil interaction particularly when writing non-chronological reports.

Each child's sociocultural experiences, oral discourse patterns and cognitive maturity varied greatly despite the group being chosen as fairly homogeneous. Nevertheless some general patterns did emerge from the data of different ways in which pupils display prior knowledge. Evidence revealed that children in the sample group displayed prior knowledge of specific genre writing by:

- drawing upon prior reading experiences
- drawing upon prior writing experiences
- drawing upon prior knowledge of text form and format
- making connections between text types.

### 5.4.1 Prior reading experiences

As part of the curriculum, all pupils had experienced reading playscripts during Year 2 and Year 3 as well as engaging in role play activities. Joanna, Aidan and Zoe made explicit reference to reading scripts for class assemblies and the Christmas play with Zoe explaining how this prior knowledge helped her with the writing task.

> Joanna: *We had to read and learn our lines for the Christmas play.*
>
> Aidan: *We did a play in assembly.*
>
> Zoe: *We did a Greek assembly which actually helped me because we did the play of Odysseus and the Cyclops. Then we acted it out so we knew what to write down.* (I1.1)

In addition all children in the group made reference to a range of playscripts they had read during guided reading sessions and expressed enjoyment of this genre. Zoe, Sophie and Jack showed that they were familiar with the oral discourse patterns for playscripts as well as the conventions for organisation, meaning and formal features.

> Zoe: *A playscript tells a story with speech.*
>
> Sophie: *The narrator tells the story.*
>
> Jack: *You have to say what the characters are doing in the stage directions.* (O1.1)

Although the children had prior experience of non-fiction texts, through shared, guided and independent reading, they displayed very little experience of the oral or written discourse patterns required for non-chronological reports. Consequently, during the initial stage of the writing task, the linguistic and textual structure of the genre was deconstructed carefully by the class teacher. Furthermore, some pupils were unfamiliar with the subject matter in some of the non-fiction texts that were used for information retrieval and were overwhelmed by the complexity of language used in these texts.

> Aidan: *There's too much reading and it's hard.* (O2.5)

Nevertheless, Jack and Zoe were able to read and highlight key words independently, in most texts, and showed some prior knowledge of the different topics. Most of the children were able to draw on prior experiences of reading non-fiction books to identify some of the key features of non-chronological reports once these features had been introduced and modelled by the teacher. Aidan explained that some of the non-fiction books he read at home had headings and sub-headings and that reports had sub-headings. Joanna and Molly also used their prior reading experiences to identify and describe some features of non-chronological reports.

> Joanna: *Reports are a kind of non-fiction where you tell people interesting information and they have different headings.*
>
> Molly: *Reports give you headings so you don't have to look for the information in different places.* (O2.1)

However, it was evident from the children's initial responses to the task that a number of them had some difficulty with the prior understanding of key concepts and concept vocabulary encountered when reading non-fiction texts highlighting the interrelationship between prior knowledge and conceptual understanding. Teacher/pupil interactions were evident during each session allowing for explanation, discussion, remodelling and addressing any difficulties experienced during each writing task. These findings concur with those of Myhill (2005) who found that young writers draw on their prior knowledge of the narrative genre, based on broad cultural experiences of narrative but struggle with genres for which they have little prior sociocultural knowledge.

The children had little prior experience of reading both informal and formal letters but were familiar with the concept of 'review'. They were able to discuss book reviews encountered in school and could share their prior experiences of reading reviews written by other pupils.

> Amelia: *It helped reading and talking about the book first. We reviewed it in a group and that really helped because we talked about it together.* (I3.2)
>
> Emma: *I know about book reviews and I like most of the books I read so it's easy.* (I3.1)

Jack:      *I know lots of books and I can remember all my favourite bits. It's easy when you like a book cos you can think of lots of things to say.* (I3.1)

Despite their lack of prior experience in reading formal letters children in the group were able to read, discuss and annotate an example of a formal letter regarding a visit to a zoo in order to identify examples of formal language. They were all able to identify the phrases which were examples of formal language, such as 'furthermore', 'in addition', 'in conclusion', 'I believe' and 'it is my opinion' and 'yours sincerely.'

As the narrative unit was completed near the end of the academic year, pupils were able to draw on prior knowledge through the range of reading experiences that had been linked to the topic of Ancient Greece. The pupils were also familiar with the concept of a quest as they had read some of the stories taken from 'The Odyssey.'

Jack:      *You meet the hero first of all who sees a problem and works out how to solve it* (continues to explain the events of Theseus and the Minotaur) (O4.1)

Evidence of prior reading experiences featured strongly in the children's written work with everyone being able to integrate new ideas into their existing knowledge base in the form of a narrative. Aidan and Jack conveyed an understanding of fantasy, quest and adventure by incorporating ideas from the popular commercial book series 'Beast Quest.' They both used prior knowledge of similar adventure stories involving journeys to help them develop story plans. Jack suggested the hero could be entangled in ferns that *'wound around your limbs to trap you,'* and that the hero would have to go into *'death valley'* to defeat a *'shape-shifting monster,'* save a *'beautiful princess'* and *'defeat an ogre in an underground cave with poisonous fangs.'* (O4.2)

Joanna and Sophie were able to make links between their own ideas of mythical settings and the settings they had experienced through reading Greek myths. Joanna described her own original idea for settings and linked these to her prior knowledge of Greek myths.

*I have two settings. The first setting is a rocky shore…There is a monster under the rocky shore…so the hero is really poor and he lives in a sticks and seaweed house and he has to go underwater which is the sea weedy water.* (R4.1)

Amelia, Emma and Molly were able to develop characterisation by using some personality traits of Greek heroes in their own characters. In addition prior reading experiences of adventure and fantasy narratives strongly influenced the children's use of language and grammatical structures as can be seen in an extract from Amelia's quest myth.

*Jason went down Mount Olympus. It took a day's walk to get to the disgusting swamp. When Jason was at the swamp, he almost fell to the ground. Then he heard a rustling sound. "Who's there?" he said as he took out his sword. Then out of nowhere, he saw the swamp monster!* (S4.2a)

### 5.4.2 Prior writing experiences

Although all children had some prior experience of writing playscripts, generated from role play situations, and were aware of the linguistic and textual structures of the genre, they were unfamiliar with the concept of text transformation. Difficulties were encountered, by some children, with identifying which part of the narrative could be transformed into speech in speech bubbles and then into speech in a playscript. Aidan sought an explanation from his partner as to how to approach this problem asking, *'What are we supposed to do with the bits that aren't speech?'* (O1.2). Consequently some of the conversation sequences in the completed transcripts were disjointed with parts of the story missing. In addition Aidan, Amelia and Joanna made limited use of the narrator at key points in the story to help move on the action. The teacher's comment on Joanna's completed playscript read

*You are including some of the features of playscripts Joanna but you need to use the Narrator more to fill in parts of the story.* (S1.5)

Emma, Jack, Molly and Zoe were more successful in integrating the three areas of text transformation and consequently produced playscripts where speech, narration and stage directions flowed as a sequence. Jack wrote

| | |
|---|---|
| *Narrator:* | *Odysseus' soldiers gave Cyclops some wine.* |
| *Soldier:* | *Here you go, some wine.* |
| *Cyclops:* | *Why, thank you. What is your name?* |
| *Odysseus:* | *(worried) My name is Nobody.* (S1.4) |

The teacher was aware that the children had no prior experience of writing reports though they had written simple information texts during Key Stage 1. In addition most of the Year 3 children had not yet developed the more complex linguistic, information signalling skills needed for writing non-chronological reports. Consequently, the teacher modelled and re-modelled the linguistic and textual structures explicitly to support the children in developing their knowledge and understanding of the genre. The children were then given a number of opportunities to develop their skills in note-making and report writing and were able to use each prior experience to construct new ideas in subsequent writing tasks.

As literacy partners, Joanna and Sophie used their understanding of writing sub-headings in the report about lions to develop sub-headings independently for the report about crocodiles. Jack explained that prior writing experiences gave him confidence to write a report on crocodiles.

> *Well, we have done lots of reports so we know what to do.* (R2.6)

Zoe also stated explicitly that their prior writing experiences would enable them to complete a report about crocodiles successfully.

> *For our homework we had to do a cheetah report. Now that we've done that for our homework we can remember what we have to do for the lion's report.* (R2.5)

Prior experience of writing a formal letter was limited to a shared letter of thanks written to the Education Officer at the National Gallery. Nevertheless, the combination of writing a book review within the structure of a formal letter to an author provided children with a focus for the information sequencing and contextual details required for letter writing. It also acted as a motivating factor and gave the children a 'real' purpose for writing.

> Zoe: *Are we really going to send it to her* (Julia Donaldson), *really?* (O3.3)

Book reviews had been written for others to read in the library and for friends and family members in a previous unit of work. All children in the group endeavoured to integrate their prior experience of writing book reviews within the structure of a formal letter with varying degrees of success. However, although formal language was used in parts of the letter, elements of informality were evident particularly where children were expressing their personal enjoyment of the story.

> Sophie: *When they say babies come in pink, black, brown and yellow it's really funny and silly.* (S3.7b)
>
> Zoe: *It's funny because Dr. Xargle keeps on getting muddled up about babies.* (S3.8b)
>
> Jack: *I like the bit when the giant's trousers fall down and you see his giant spotty pants. Keep being funny and good work.* (S3.4b)

Pupils' prior writing experiences at Key Stage 1 are often dominated by the narrative genre. This enables teachers to contextualise the teaching and learning of grammatical structures and introduce new vocabulary. As pupils move into Key Stage 2 school-based narrative writing relies on children developing a range of skills and sub-skills which they may not have had opportunities to experience before. One of these skills is planning.

Planning is a highly complex skill, which relies upon a child's ability to think about their own knowledge and understanding of a writing task. Planning is the skill that helps an individual begin to develop strategies to accomplish goals, as illustrated in the process approach to writing discussed in Chapter 2. It helps a child to think about how to complete a task before attempting to begin it. Children who are good planners are able to draw on their knowledge of previous tasks in order to develop new ideas. Year 3 pupils have often just begun to develop the essential skill of planning as data in this study shows. Joanna and Molly needed some support with using notes for planning and were inclined to plan using full sentences.

Children in the sample group drew upon their prior experience of engaging with Greek myths for example, writing the labours of Hercules in their literacy books. They were able to list the key elements of a Greek myth, with a particular focus on settings and characters as they had begun to develop these key ideas previously. It was evident from the completed quest myths that most of the children had used themes and characters similar to those already encountered in shared and guided reading and writing experiences. For example, Zoe was able to create a descriptive opening for her narrative, introducing the main character and his thoughts.

> *One gloomy, foggy day a dark, lonely castle stood on yellow grass. Ceracles was sitting on a big rock outside, throwing stones at the castle. Ceracles sighed, "Oh I wish my mother was still alive. Father was always happy when mother was alive.* (S4.8b)

Aidan used his prior knowledge of Greek myths to develop ideas for problems and dilemmas.

> *When Odysseus entered the forest a shiny light was up in the trees.*
>
> *'What is that?' asked Odysseus.*
>
> *'It's me, Athena, I've come to help you through your quest.' Athena gave Odysseus a bow and arrow.*
>
> *'What's this for?' asked Odysseus.*
>
> *'You will have to defeat a monster to get the princess,' said Athena.*
>
> (S4 1b)

### 5.4.3 Prior knowledge of text form and format

Pupils' prior knowledge of the text form and format of both playscripts and narratives was evident during class sessions of shared writing and teacher/pupil questioning. Prior experience of the language structure and format of playscripts had been integrated into the children's existing knowledge base during Key Stage 1 alongside the inclusion of drama and performance across the curriculum.

> Aidan: *We wrote some plays last year. You have to put the names of the characters on the left hand side.* (O1.1)

Pupils were encouraged to share their prior knowledge of the use of headings and subheadings in information texts through careful questioning by the teacher. After the shared reading session of a non-chronological report, Molly stated,

> *Reports give you headings so you don't have to look for the information in different places.* (O2.1)

All children were able to offer appropriate reasons for the form and format of non-fiction texts. Zoe gave a clear explanation of the reasons for using labelled pictures and diagrams in information texts while Amelia was able to suggest that labelled pictures and diagrams *'made the information easier to understand'* (O2.1). All children in the group displayed a clear understanding of how pictures and photographs were used to present and interpret information in non-fiction texts. It was evident that all the children drew upon their prior experience of writing the non-chronological report about lions when constructing the layout of the report about crocodiles. However, despite drawing upon their prior knowledge of text form and format Aidan, Amelia and Molly struggled with the content of their reports.

> Aidan: *I don't really know what the heading would be for this…It's difficult to think of sub-headings for crocodiles…the words don't stick together so easily* (as his notes about lions had). (O2.6)

The children had little prior knowledge of the layout of a formal letter although the class teacher reminded them of the letter of thanks they had written to the Education Officer at The National Gallery after a class trip. Zoe could recall where the address and date should be written and understood that this was essential to the format of a letter. Sophie offered suggestions for the opening and closing remarks which are typically made in a letter, e.g. *'Dear Sir/Madam'* and *'yours sincerely.'* However, it was lack of experience of the form and format of a letter which caused children the greatest difficulty. Consequently a great deal of time was focused on the secretarial aspects of the writing and not as much on the content of the letter for less confident members of the group.

The planning stage of the quest myth required prior knowledge of planning a narrative using different techniques and a variety of layouts including flow charts, notes and story maps. The children had previous experience of using notes and visual diagrams to plan their writing but some still struggled to understand the concept of note-making and wrote full sentences in their story plans. All children in the sample group were able to write the narrative in paragraphs, using previous experience of organising their ideas in sections.

### 5.4.4 Connections between text types

As highlighted in Chapter 2, confident writers draw on prior knowledge and experience to enable them to make connections between text types. Evidence in this study showed that some children made text-to-text connections independently enabling them to transfer ideas across genres, whilst others needed support from direct instruction and questioning.

The teacher encouraged children to make connections between previous experiences with narrative texts and playscripts.  Zoe, Sophie and Joanna discussed similarities and differences between the two genres.

| Zoe: | *A playscript tells a story with speech.* |
|---|---|
| Sophie: | *The narrator tells the story.* |
| Joanna: | *You have to say what the characters are doing in a play and in a story.* (O1.1) |

The teacher used direct instruction and the 'think aloud' strategy to encourage pupils to make connections between the use of speech in speech bubbles in comic strip stories and direct speech used in narrative texts. However, despite direct, explicit instruction both Molly and Amelia experienced difficulty in identifying parts of the story that could be transformed into speech both in the speech bubbles and then into playscript form. Jack recognised that using speech from the original narrative was essential to the sequence of speech in the playscript.

Jack:         *It's got to be in the right order like the story.* (O1.1)

Direct comparisons were made, by the teacher, between features of playscripts and the features of non-fiction texts. This allowed children to reflect on the form, structure and language of different genres already encountered within the classroom context. It was observed that although the children had prior knowledge of non-fiction texts, their ability to make connections between information texts and non-chronological reports was directly affected by their prior knowledge of the subject matter. For example, most children in the sample group found it difficult to understand key concept vocabulary in the text about rock pools as they had very little prior knowledge of the seashore. It was evident the children experienced difficulty in making connections between text types if the subject matter and key concept vocabulary was unfamiliar to them. Aidan expressed the frustration felt by Amelia, Molly and Emma when he stated that he found the length and complexity of the information on crocodiles confusing.

Aidan:         *There's too much reading and it's hard.* (O2.5)

Letters of review allowed the class teacher to elicit the children's understanding of the term 'formal' and 'informal.' The children were asked to provide examples of formal language used in both speech and writing. Their prior knowledge of formal language was limited with some connections being made only after teacher intervention and questioning. Jack was able to explain that a letter of thanks, written to the education officer at the National Gallery, was an example of a formal letter.

The teacher made explicit connections between formal letter writing and the concept of a review. Although children were unfamiliar with the linguistic and textual structures of formal letters, they were able to understand the natural connection that could be made between the two text types within the context of writing to an author. Molly did experience difficulty incorporating her ideas for review into a letter format but her completed letter showed evidence of an ability to express her ideas clearly.

*Dear Julia Donaldson,*
*I am writing to tell you your books are great. My favourite part in The*
*Gruffalo is the part when the mouse said "My favourite food is Gruffalo*
*crumble."*
(S3 6b)

The children's familiarity with the narrative genre enabled them to make connections between different kinds of narrative in order to develop their own quest myth. Aidan made a number of connections with the modern fantasy stories he had been reading.  Jack was able to take ideas from the series 'Beast Quest' and adapt them to fit the genre.  Other children also drew on their prior experience of monsters in other popular narratives such as 'The Gruffalo' when describing the monster in their own myth. Most children made connections between both Greek myths and modern fantasy stories with the result that their own quest myths displayed aspects of these influences.  For example Jack wrote

*"Taladon, if you want to go and save your father, the evil king has*
*stolen him and put him in a cave where a shape-shifting monster*
*lives!"*

*Zeus told him. "I will help you on your quest because the evil king is a*
*big, fat selfish liar."* (S4.4b)

### 5.4.5 Summary

During this study it was evident that children used prior knowledge and integrated new ideas into their existing knowledge base through prior reading and writing experiences, prior knowledge of text form and format and by making connections between different text types.

A clear understanding of key concept vocabulary related to each genre allowed children to draw on prior knowledge more successfully when engaging with new learning. This was particularly evident during the writing of non-chronological reports. If a child has little prior knowledge of the topic, it is difficult for them to construct a report, on that topic, if the key concept vocabulary is too complex.

Most of the observations made, regarding the use of prior knowledge and integration of new ideas into the children's existing knowledge base, related to the children's experiences of procedural rather than the creative aspects of the genres. This was the case for all genres except the quest myth. This suggests that the children's prior knowledge of narrative and the Ancient Greeks (which had been a class topic) was well developed. Therefore the cognitive demands placed on them when transcribing did not obstruct the compositional elements of the writing task.

## 5.5 Conceptual Understanding

If the new National Curriculum is to be based more on the depth of understanding that children have of key knowledge, skills and concepts, as outlined in the review 'Could do better: Using international comparisons to refine the National Curriculum in England' (Oates, 2010), then it is important that children should have a clear understanding of key concepts related to the subject area they are studying. The review states that

> *A well-defined and enhanced National Curriculum – based on concepts, principles, fundamental operations and key knowledge - can lead to learning processes which are more focused on deep learning…and to assessment processes of greater validity and which have beneficial wash back into learning.*

(Oates, 2010)

As discussed in Chapter 2 'deep learning' requires an ability to accumulate and retain knowledge and understanding of a topic and transfer this knowledge and understanding into other areas of learning. By ensuring that children recognise and understand the concepts, principles, fundamental operations and key knowledge in one genre teachers can build upon this understanding and help children make connections as they introduce them to new genres.

The acquisition and understanding of language and ability to manipulate vocabulary fluently is central to achieving success as a writer. Sinatra (2008) found that writing strategies, when engaging in topic-based work, allowed

children to experience and use language in creative ways across the curriculum. In this way they were able to build connections between a range of key concept words thus developing their own taxonomy or classification system. As can be seen in this study the knowledge of relationships between words and the ability to understand key concept vocabulary within different genre contexts was an important aspect of each writing task.

In seeking to explore how children display their conceptual understanding of specific genre writing tasks two aspects were examined. These were

- the children's understanding of the learning objectives set for each task
- the children's understanding of the key concepts and concept vocabulary related to each task.

### 5.5.1 Genre 1: Playscripts

The learning objectives for this task were explained clearly with the teacher activating the children's prior knowledge and experience of playscripts. All children in the group displayed a clear understanding of the learning objectives which were:

- to identify the key features of a playscript
- to identify what the different characters will say
- to write a scene from the legend of Odysseus and the Cyclops in the form of a playscript.

Aidan, Joanna, Sophie and Zoe were able to identify the main features of playscripts using the literacy learning wall prompts.

Aidan: *We wrote some plays last year. You have to put the names of the characters on the left hand side then write what they say.*

Joanna: *You have to say what the characters are doing in the stage directions in brackets.*

Sophie**:** *The Narrator tells the story.*

> Zoe: *A playscript tells a story with speech. You have to write what the characters say on different lines.* (O1.1)

Molly and Amelia were hesitant at the beginning of the task and needed some adult support before making a start. However, they were able to explain that playscripts told a story through speech.

> Molly: *We're going to add the speech in and the narrator tells the story.*
>
> Amelia: *The characters speak and they tell you a story.* (O1.1)

Jack, Emma, Zoe and Sophie were all aware of the need to ensure correct narrative sequence in a playscript.

> Jack: *It's got to be in the right order like the story.*
>
> Emma: *We've got to write it like a story but with speaking.*
>
> Sophie: *You write what each person is going to say like in the story.*
>
> Zoe: *You have to put the speech in the right order so the play makes sense.* (O1.1)

They worked methodically to complete the task ensuring that they had the correct sequence by checking and re-checking their scripts against the original text.

All children were familiar with the written form of playscripts and able to identify key features of this genre. However, it soon became clear, when examining the data, that the learning objectives placed an emphasis on the procedural aspects of the task assuming that a conceptual understanding of the writing task as a whole would follow. The ability to transform one genre into another, as in transforming narrative into playscript, relies on an ability to understand the underlying concept of text transformation. Without prior sociocultural knowledge of some key concepts and linguistic structures of genres young writers often struggle to make complete sense of a writing task.

In this specific task children needed to understand the concept of text transformation in three main areas of the task. Children needed to show:

- The ability to understand the concept of text transformation from direct and indirect speech in a text into speech in speech bubbles and from that into speech in a playscript
- The ability to understand the concept of text transformation from narrative to Narrator
- The ability to understand the concept of text transformation from narrative description of characters' actions/reactions into stage directions.

Aidan told the story mostly through the character's speech making limited use of the narrator. Consequently he missed out some of the main points of the story. He was able to identify direct speech in the narrative to write in speech bubbles but relied on copying this directly from speech bubbles to playscript resulting in the sequence of the story being a little disjointed. He was unsure of how to transform parts of the narrative into text for the narrator asking his partner *'What are we supposed to do with the bits that aren't speech?'* Although he was able to give clear stage directions for character's actions he experienced difficulty with thinking of ways to describe their reactions and manner of speech exclaiming *'I don't know how they'd say it!'*

Amelia required adult and peer support to identify both direct and indirect speech in the text to use in the speech bubbles. Nevertheless, she was able to transfer the characters' speech written in the speech bubbles to a conversation sequence in the playscript with some support. She needed to have the task modelled several times before she was able to identify the main points in the narrative and use these to tell the story using simple sentences.

> *Narrator:     The Cyclops fell asleep.*
>
> *Odysseus:   Fetch me the biggest stick you can find.*
>
> *Narrator:     They went to get the biggest stick.* (S1.2)

She was able to give some stage directions for characters' actions but had difficulty with giving stage directions for their reactions and manner of speech.

Emma was able to identify both direct and indirect speech in the text to write in the speech bubbles. She made improvements to sentences written in the speech bubbles and linked characters' speech and the narrative through the Narrator so that it flowed as a sequence. She was also able to retell the correct sequence of the narrative by making good use of the narrator. With adult guidance she was able to suggest reasons for character feelings during whole class discussion and reflect on character emotions during paired discussion to negotiate use of specific stage directions, e.g. *'because he'd* (Odysseus) *be a bit scared!' 'We could put in Shhhhh (quietly).'* (O1.3)

Jack made additions to his speech bubble ideas and incorporated these into the playscript so that both speech and narration flowed as a sequence. He followed the illustrations and text chronologically and used a range of connectives to sequence the narrative through the narrator. He also understood the purpose of using stage directions for characters' actions and reactions, e.g. *'You have to say what the characters are doing in the stage directions.'* (O1.2)

Joanna relied on the sentences she had written originally in the speech bubbles and made very few additions in her playscript. She made little use of the narrator to tell the story and therefore the sequence of the narrative was limited as most of the playscript relied on the speech of the characters, e.g.

| | |
|---|---|
| *Narrator:* | *Odysseus gave some wine to the Cyclops. (Odysseus gives some wine to the Cyclops)* |
| *Cyclops:* | *(Puzzled) What's your name?* |
| *Odysseus:* | *I am called Nobody.* (S1.5) |

She made some use of stage directions but these were limited to characters' actions.

| | |
|---|---|
| *Cyclops:* | *Nobody is a funny name! (Cyclops falls asleep)* |
| *Odysseus:* | *Look men he has fallen asleep. (Odysseus points to the Cyclops)* (S1.5) |

Molly needed support initially with understanding how to transform speech in the text to speech bubbles. She made some additions to the speech used in the speech bubbles when she transferred this into the playscript format. She

used questions and answers appropriately and was able to tell the story clearly through use of speech. She required adult support at the beginning of the task to help her recall the main points of the story but was able to use the Narrator to help move on the action after this support, e.g.

> Narrator: The Cyclops fell asleep.
>
> Odysseus: Go and fetch me the biggest stick.
>
> Narrator: They went to get the biggest stick
>
> Soldier: Will this do? (S1.6)

She made limited use of stage directions, mostly to describe characters' actions but could move the story forward through the development of character dialogue.

Zoe was able to transfer the characters' speech used in the speech bubbles to a conversation sequence in the playscript and make appropriate additions to further the story.

> You have to tell a story with the people speaking like we did for assembly. (R1.3)

She was also able to identify the main points in the narrative independently and use these to tell the story through the Narrator.

> Narrator: One of Odysseus' soldiers gave Cyclops some wine.
>
> Soldier: Here you go, here's your wine (give wine to Cyclops)
>
> Cyclops: Why, thank you. What is your name?
>
> Narrator: The Cyclops fell asleep. (S1.8)

She gave clear stage directions for both the characters' actions and reactions but made weaker use of the Narrator to enhance the narrative for the reader.

Evidence from some research projects has concluded that more experienced writers are able to engage in 'knowledge transformation' to achieve their writing goal (Bereiter and Scardemalia, 1987). By asking pupils to transform text from one form to another as well as from one genre to another we

introduce a level of conceptual understanding that may be unfamiliar to some children at Year 3.

We can see from the data in Table 12 (p. 274) that children in the group had varying degrees of understanding of the concept of text transformation. Although this did not deter them from completing the task it did highlight differences between children's understanding of the procedural and conceptual aspects of the task.

Table 12:  Understanding of key concepts

|  | Understand the concept of text transformation from narrative to Narrator | Understand the concept of text transformation from direct and indirect speech in a text into speech in speech bubbles and from that into speech in a playscript | Understand the concept of text transformation from narrative description of characters' actions/reactions into stage directions. |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Aidan** | Told the story mostly through characters' speech making limited use of the narrative through the Narrator. Consequently he missed out some of the main points of this part of the story.<br>S1,1 | Relied on copying from the speech bubbles and consequently the sequence of the story, through the speech, was disjointed with some parts missing.<br>S1.1 | Was able to give clear stage directions for characters' actions but did not give directions for their reactions and manner of speech.<br>S1.1 |
| **Amelia** | Was able to identify the main points in the narrative and use these to tell the story through limited use of the Narrator.<br>S1.2 | Needed support with identifying indirect speech in the text then transforming this from speech bubbles into playscript.<br>S1.2 | Was able to give some stage directions for character's actions but had difficulty with giving stage directions for their reactions and manner of speech.<br>S1.2 |
| **Emma** | Was able to retell the correct sequence of the narrative by making good use of the Narrator.<br>S1.3 | Made improvements to sentences written in the speech bubbles and linked characters' speech and the narrative through the Narrator so that it flowed as a sequence.<br>S1.3 | Was able to suggest reasons for character feelings during whole class discussion and think about character emotions during paired discussion to negotiate use of specific stage directions, e.g. *'because he'd (Odysseus) be a bit scared!' 'We could put in shhh (quietly).'* S1.3 |
| **Jack** | Used a range of connectives to sequence the narrative through the Narrator.<br>S1.4 | Made additions to his speech bubble ideas and incorporated these into the play script so that both speech and narration flowed as a sequence.<br>S1.4 | Was able to give clear stage directions for both the characters' actions and reactions.<br>S1.4 |
| **Joanna** | Made little use of the Narrator to tell the story and therefore the sequence of the narrative was limited as most of the play script relied on the speech of the characters.<br>S1.5 | Relied on using the sentences written originally in the speech bubbles and made very few additions. Consequently the sequence of the story was limited with the Narrator only used once.<br>S1.5 | Made some use of stage directions but limited to characters' actions.<br>S1.5 |

| Molly | Was able to use the Narrator at key points in the story to help move on the action. S1,6 | Made some additions to the speech used in the speech bubbles, used questions and answers appropriately and was able to tell the story clearly. S1.6 | Made limited use of stage directions, mostly to describe characters' actions. S1.6 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sophie | Contributed orally to discussion with response partner and showed an understanding of the role of the Narrator – *'The narrator tells the story.'* O1.1 | Absent | Absent |
| Zoe | Was able to identify the main points in the narrative and use these to tell the story through the Narrator. S1.8 | Able to transform the characters' speech used in the speech bubbles to a conversation sequence in the playscript and make appropriate additions to further the story. S1.8 | Gave clear stage directions for both the characters' actions and reactions. Insisted on using the word 'confused' S1.8 |

The procedural aspects of the task were clearly highlighted by the teacher and used by the children when checking their work. They were:

- Names of characters are written on the left hand side.
- A new line starts when a new person speaks.
- The narrator gives some extra information to help the story flow.
- There are directions showing how people speak in brackets.
- There are stage directions telling the actors of any special movements.

However, understanding the key concept of text transformation relied on the children's ability to adapt the teacher's model to the given task. Although the task, as a whole, had been broken down into manageable parts some children had difficulty in synthesising the parts to the whole. Therefore the difference between the children's understanding of the procedural and conceptual aspects of the task became more evident after completion of the playscripts.

Children need to experience writing tasks within a context which allows them to negotiate meanings together and which challenge their existing concepts of the writing process. For effective learning to take place they need to be

given the opportunity to apply their knowledge and understanding of writing in various contexts and in collaboration with others. These types of experiences will allow them to adapt to different writing tasks and aid the transfer of learning across the curriculum and into other areas of life. However, it is more cognitively challenging for children to transfer knowledge gained and accessed in a certain context and apply it to another if they have not been given opportunities to develop strategies to achieve this skill.

### 5.5.2 Genre 2: Non-chronological reports

Research reviewed in Chapter 2 argues that children who have a greater conceptual knowledge of literacy at school entry make more rapid progress in the acquisition of procedural knowledge than those with less conceptual knowledge (Purcell-Gates, 1996). From this research we can also see that children's conceptual knowledge is often related to the development of their oral discourse patterns and their understanding of key concept vocabulary. Furthermore the more complex linguistic structures experienced when organising information in non-chronological reports may not have been encountered before by some Year 3 children.

The learning objectives, shared with the children, were linked to a series of activities related to this genre. During each session the linguistic and textual structure of the genre was deconstructed clearly by the class teacher with explicit connections made between children's prior experiences of non-fiction and narrative texts and the new task. Consequently all children in the sample group were able to explain some elements of the form and function of non-chronological reports and able to show an understanding of the term 'non-chronological.' The teacher spent some time modelling each writing task thus enabling children to gain a clearer understanding of the key concepts of note-making and synthesising information from these notes. In this way the teacher was able to develop children's conceptual understanding of the task whilst, at the same time, incorporating the procedural aspects of the task within the learning objectives.  The relationship between learning objectives and key concepts can be seen clearly below.

Learning objective:

- *To identify key information in non-fiction texts by highlighting and making notes.*

Key concept:

- *Understand the concept of note-making and the meaning of key concept vocabulary in non-fiction texts.*


Learning objective:

- *To use notes to organise and write specific information under sub-headings.*

Key concept:

- *Understand how to synthesise information from notes*

The concept and skill of note-making was gradually developed during each writing activity with the teacher explaining the concept and teaching the skill explicitly at each stage. As this skill had not been encountered by any of the children prior to the task it was important for them to be given opportunities to become familiar with it. Although the children in the research group displayed an understanding of this concept and skill, evidenced by their choice of highlighted words, some experienced difficulty with understanding key concept vocabulary in some of the information texts.

Although Aidan, Amelia and Molly were able to highlight key words and make notes, with some adult support they struggled to synthesise this information independently. They made continual reference to the guidelines provided on the interactive whiteboard as well as seeking help from adults and other members of the group. Emma, Jack, Joanna, Sophie and Zoe displayed a good understanding of concept vocabulary in the information texts and were able to highlight key words, make notes and then transform those notes into clear sentences, organised under appropriate headings. The inter-relationship between prior knowledge of key concept vocabulary and a conceptual understanding of this genre writing task as a whole was evident in the level of understanding displayed by the children as can be seen in Table 13 (p. 278).

Table 13: Learning objectives and key concepts (A)

| Name | **Learning objective: To identify key information in non-fiction texts by highlighting and making notes.**<br><br>**Key concept: Understand the concept of note-making and the meaning of key concept vocabulary in non-fiction texts.** |
|---|---|
| Aidan | Aidan could identify key words in the simple information texts on lions and cheetahs but needed help with the longer, more complex ones about crocodiles. He found the length and complexity of the information confusing. Aidan also appeared to be de-motivated at the start of the activity and expressed his concern that the *'reading was too hard'* and that he couldn't find the important information so easily as when he was making notes on lions and cheetahs. |
| Amelia | Amelia took some time to decide on key words in all the texts and needed to ask her partner Molly for clarification on how to make notes using these words. Amelia needed to check with her partner Molly before she highlighted any information. She was continually asking *'What do you think we should highlight there?'* |
| Emma | Emma had some difficulty with identifying key information in the rock pool text where she had little prior knowledge of the subject. She was able to identify key words in the simple information texts on lions and cheetahs and made detailed notes. She had some difficulty with the longer more complex text about crocodiles but was able to make simple, clear notes under appropriate headings. |
| Jack | Jack was able to identify key words and information quickly and confidently in all the texts he encountered. He and Zoe were able to explain that the important words told you something while unimportant words did not.<br><br>*R: Can you tell me why you have underlined the words in each sentence?*<br><br>*Jack: Because it's part of them and if you don't include it, it's like they don't have that part.*<br><br>*R: Why have you underlined these words?*<br><br>*Zoe: Cos, it's part of its body.*<br><br>*Jack: 'An' and 'and' aren't interesting words. 'A' isn't an interesting word because it doesn't mean anything.'*<br><br>Appeared to have a good understanding of the task which was evidenced in the words he had highlighted. |
| Joanna | Joanna could identify information that was both relevant and not relevant to the task when using simple information texts but needed some help when using the longer, more complex text about crocodiles. Sophie and Joanna worked well together to underline key words in the text, discussing which words were important to underline and which were not though Joanna had some difficulty with the length and complexity of the text. |
| Molly | Molly had difficulty with identifying key words and information in texts where she had little prior knowledge of the subject. She appeared to have very little prior knowledge of the seashore, and rock pools in particular in the initial activity. Consequently she struggled to identify the important information as she was not sure what was directly relevant or important to the topic, or which key words could be identified. She worked slowly and took some time to begin |

| | underlining key words and information in both texts (lions and crocodiles). The length and complexity of the text on crocodiles made her limit her thinking and she perceived difficulties both before and during the activity. |
|---|---|
| Sophie | Sophie could identify information that was both relevant and not relevant to the task and was able to discuss the reasons for her choices with Joanna. |
| Zoe | Zoe identified key words quickly and was able to explain why they were important and needed to be highlighted. Zoe and Jack had displayed confidence with note-making in previous sessions and were able to start identifying key words in the text very quickly. |

Much of this study has focused on the idea that writing is a complex activity requiring a range of different cognitive processes to be coordinated and that problems with cognitive overload are more often experienced by immature writers than mature writers (Berninger et al., 2002). In younger children, this can manifest itself in their reaction to written tasks. In the classroom, this can lead to pupils using low-risk strategies to complete writing tasks such as copying written models provided by the teacher or a peer or seeking adult or peer support before attempting a written task independently. For example, Molly and Amelia commented that it was more difficult to write a report about crocodiles as there was a greater amount of information to form into notes at the outset. Amelia was aware that she needed to ask for adult or peer support because of difficulties with the length and complexity of the text on crocodiles.

> *There's a lot to read about crocodiles and I can't find all the bits about where they live so I can't make notes yet and I need some help.* (R2.8)

Both Amelia and Molly followed guidelines provided by the teacher on the interactive whiteboard to complete the task.

The difficulties encountered, by some of the children, with understanding key concept vocabulary in information texts, highlights the need for teachers to consider concept density when constructing initial encounters with certain genre writing tasks. Concept density can be measured by the breadth of knowledge and understanding an individual must draw on to interpret or bring meaning to an unfamiliar concept (Sinatra, 2008). Although the teacher recognised the varied nature of the children's conceptual understanding of the task, and provided some background knowledge to support those

children who were overwhelmed by the complexity of the concept vocabulary in some texts, difficulties with concept density did affect some children's ability to locate information, highlight relevant vocabulary and make notes. Aidan, Amelia, Emma and Molly all needed adult and peer support to produce reports using the more complex information text on crocodiles whereas Jack, Joanna, Sophie and Zoe were able to draw on a wider vocabulary knowledge and more varied prior experiences of non-fiction books, exemplified in Table 14 (p. 281).

Table 14: Learning objectives and key concepts (B)

| Name | **Learning objective: To use notes to organise and write specific information under sub-headings.** <br><br> **Key concept: understand how to synthesise information from notes.** |
|---|---|
| Aidan | Aidan was able to recall information and transfer his notes into a clearly organised report on lions. He used a range of sentence openers which made his sentences more interesting and varied. However, he found it difficult to locate key information, understand key concept vocabulary in different parts of the more complex text on crocodiles, decide on a sub-heading and then organise the information into a coherent report. His completed report was rather disjointed and some sentences were taken directly from the text. Aidan commented that he was finding it more difficult to make sentences from his notes about crocodiles as *'the words don't stick together so easily'* (as his notes about lions had). |
| Amelia | Amelia was able to make some basic suggestions on how to organise her note-making saying to her partner when considering the most appropriate sub-heading *'Shall we do 'males' next?'* Amelia relied on her partner Molly for direction when organising the report. She checked frequently to ensure that she was writing similar information by asking *'What are you writing next?'* Working with a partner she was able to transfer her notes into a simple report on lions but needed support with understanding key concept vocabulary when researching information about crocodiles. |
| Emma | Emma had some difficulty in locating information in different parts of the more complex text about crocodiles, decide on a sub-heading and then organise the information as part of a report. Emma was able to edit her notes as she was aware that some of the information would fit into other sections more easily. She commented that it was more difficult to write a report about crocodiles as there was a greater amount of information to form into notes first. However, with some adult support, she was able to complete reports on both lions and crocodiles using simple, clear sentences based on her notes |
| Jack | Jack made use of his detailed notes and was able to transfer them into well-organised reports on lions and crocodiles. His completed report on crocodiles showed evidence not only of his ability to find key information and transfer this into a report but also the ability to use his individual writer's voice. He began the report with: <br><br> *Crocodiles: Do you want to find out about the most dangerous animal in Africa?'* |
| Joanna | Joanna produced well-organised reports on both lions and crocodiles. They were clearly written using appropriate sub-headings. Her sentences were expanded well from her notes. She wrote: <br><br> *'Night and day: Lions are most active at night because the temperature is cooler. All lions rest and sleep in the shade at daytime because the temperature is very hot.'* |
| Molly | Molly struggled in the initial stages of the task and relied on Aidan and Emma for direction. She was able to transfer her notes on lions into simple sentences but had difficulty in using her notes on crocodiles with some muddled sentences and recall of information from the text. |
| Sophie | Sophie was able to organise her notes into clearly written sentences under appropriate sub-headings. She wrote: |

| | |
|---|---|
| | *Love: Male crocodiles raise their heads and bellow and the noise helps to warn off rival males. They blow bubbles to win attention of female crocodiles.*<br><br>Acted as a response partner for Joanna and together they shared ideas. Able to use her own ideas for sub-headings with only minimal guidance from the teacher. |
| Zoe | Zoe stated that her detailed notes provided her with sufficient information from which to construct her own sentences. Both her report on lions and her report about crocodiles were clearly written using all the key information from her notes. She also used her own style of writing which differed from her partner's.<br><br>*General: Female crocs lay between 10 and 90 eggs at a time…Adult crocs swallow rocks to digest their food in the tummy. Crocodiles live up to 100 years.* |

### 5.5.3 Genre 3: Letters of review

The role of interest, as an intrinsic motivation factor for writing, refers to the affective and cognitive interaction of a pupil with a particular topic or subject (Ryan and Deci, 2000). If a young writer is engaged in a task with interest then motivation for text production can be enhanced. Although children in the sample group had no previous experience of writing formal letters they had experienced writing book reviews and expressed confidence and intrinsic motivation in being able to transfer these ideas into letter form.

> Emma: *I know about book reviews and I like most of the books I read so it's easy.*
>
> Jack: *I know lots of books and I can remember all my favourite bits. It's easy when you like a book cause you can think of lots of things to say.*
>
> Zoe: *I understood what the author was on about because when you don't understand a book, you can't really write a review about it.* (I3.1)

Zoe expressed the group's enthusiasm when the audience and purpose of the task was explained. *'Are we really going to send it to her* (Julia Donaldson), *really?'* (O3.3)

This enthusiasm and engagement with the task, coupled with prior knowledge of writing book reviews, supported children with their understanding of the learning objectives and key concepts related to the

task. Children were asked to address their formal letter to the author of the book they had reviewed in the previous unit of work. Connections were made, by the teacher, between the learning objective and key concepts for this task.

*Learning objective:*

- *Write a book review in the form of a formal letter to the author.*

*Key concepts:*

- *Understand the concept of review and the use of formal language in a letter.*

However, as can be seen from the examples below the ability to understand how the use of formal language can change the register of written communication was variable. Some children were able to sustain the formal register throughout the letter whilst others adopted their own speech patterns in parts of the letter.

*Dear Julia Donaldson*

*I am writing to tell you that your books are amazing but my favourite book is the Smartest Giant in Town because I like the bit when the giant's trousers fall down and you see his spotty pants.*

*I like George when he gives his clothes to the animals. I give this book 5 stars because it is a kind story.*

*I think my brother should read it so it shows how kind we need to be to each other.*

*Keep being funny and good work.*

*Sincerely, Jack* (S3.4b)

This letter begins with the formal register *'I am writing to tell you,'* as modelled by the teacher, but quickly reverts to elements of informality. The writer adopts his own speech patterns using phrases such as *'I like the bit when…' 'Keep being funny…'* He conveys interest in, and enthusiasm for, the task within the confines of his understanding of the term 'formal.'

Conversely, Zoe is able to sustain a degree of formality in her letter through her use of formal sentence openers at the beginning of each paragraph.

*I am writing to tell you…*

*I would recommend …*

*I am really impressed …*

These openers help to convey the formal nature of the letter.

*Dear Jeanne Wills and Tony Ross,*

*I am writing to tell you that I'm a big fan of your book Dr Xargle's book of Earthlets.*

*My favourite part of the story is when Dr Xargle says that babies come in different colours such as yellow, pink, brown and black.*

*I would recommend this book to my whole family because it's hilarious. I give it five out of five stars because it's funny because Dr Xargle keeps on getting muddled up about babies.*

*I am really impressed about the illustrations because they are really colourful and detailed.*

*Yours sincerely*

*Zoe*  (S3.7b)

### 5.5.4 Genre 4: Narrative

Children's sociocultural experiences of the narrative genre vary greatly, nevertheless, it is the genre with which they are most familiar. The stories that are read or told to children from an early age introduce them to the conventional linguistic and structural discourse patterns representative of this genre.

When asked to plan and write a quest myth the children were able to draw upon prior reading and writing experiences. They expressed a keen interest in the writing task explaining that they enjoyed reading and writing fantasy stories and were able to recall stories from Greek mythology from on-going topic work. Findings in the research document 'Concepts of difficulty – a child's eye view' (Johnson, 2003) also show that the narrative themes, most popular with young writers, were the active, imaginative ones.

The following objectives were linked to a series of tasks which aimed to develop the pupils' understanding of and ability to construct text in the style and form of a Greek myth.

- Identify the main features of a quest myth including structure and language
- Plan the different stages of a quest myth using the correct sequence and structure
- Use a plan to write the opening of a story, describing setting and character
- Describe the problems a hero might face in typical quest myth settings.

In order to complete this task effectively the children needed to understand the following key concepts.

- Understand the concept of a quest myth
- Understand the concepts of setting and characterisation
- Understand the concept of a dilemma and use this in a narrative.

The children had listened to a variety of Greek myths including 'Theseus and the Minotaur,' 'The Labours of Hercules' and 'Jason and the Golden Fleece' and were aware that the stages of a quest myth involved – the problem, the journey, the dilemma and the resolution. Story maps were created by the children during planning and these provided not only a visual prompt for the children but a useful way of assessing each child's understanding of the different stages of a 'quest myth.'

All children were able to show the sequence of a quest on their story maps with some making clear planning notes. For example Emma wrote *'glimmering water, underwater palace, precious Greek mask, crystal sword, foggy maze.'* Amelia wrote *'evil king, kidnapped sister, swamp monster, shark guards, very fierce, water very cold, hero hides behind seaweed'* while Sophie suggested ideas for settings, in her notes, involving the use of the senses *'gloomy forest, yellow, ruined grass, smelly swamp.'*

Aidan and Jack employed prior knowledge of similar fantasy adventure stories to help them develop their story maps. Jack explained that a quest myth was when the hero goes on a journey to search for something. He suggested the hero could be entangled in ferns that *'wound around your limbs to trap you,'* and that the hero would have to go into *'death valley'* to defeat a *'shape-shifting monster,'* save a *'beautiful princess'* and *'defeat an ogre in an underground cave with poisonous fangs.'*

Joanna and Molly were both able to show the hero's journey visually on story maps but needed to explain the journey sequence orally.  Joanna explained that a quest was a journey with adventures and problems and showed this through her story map. She had clear ideas regarding the story setting and could describe the progression of events.

> *I have two settings. The first setting is a rocky shore and they live on an island in the middle of a rocky shore and they have a house but they can't afford much so they make their house out of sticks. There is a monster under the rocky shore and he* (the hero) *needs to…kill him* (the monster). (R4.1)

Molly stated that she preferred writing the story rather than making notes on a story map. *'I just want write the story now.'* (R4.1) Nevertheless she displayed an understanding of the concept of a quest myth by giving an oral description of the settings and problems faced by the hero during his journey

> *Well, this man turns into a hero and saves the forest because an animal comes and destroys it … there is a cave where the animal lives.* (R4.1)

The literary device of characterisation is a concept that requires young writers to understand ways in which authors define the attributes of their characters both directly and indirectly. Direct characterisation is when the writer uses descriptive language to introduce character traits. Jack, Emma and Molly were able to introduce setting, problems and a well-developed action scene in just a few sentences using descriptive language and inclusion of characters' feelings.

> Jack:  *Suddenly it began to rain and the colour in the sky was dull. Taladon was shaking like mad. He gripped his sword and marched forward trying to be brave.* (S4.4b)

> Emma: *One beautiful day Perseus looked up at the glimmering water from his underwater palace. Everyone called him Mr. Powerful because he was so powerful.* (S4.3b)

> Molly: *One rainy day Perseus was in the castle eating his dinner. A letter came like always. There was a missing princess. She had been kidnapped by an evil goblin. Perseus was brave and he wanted to save the princess but his father would never let him out of the castle.* (S4.6b)

Indirect characterisation is when the writer describes the character's personality through his/her thoughts, speech and actions. Zoe composed a descriptive opening for her narrative, introducing the main character and his thoughts.

> *One gloomy, foggy day a dark, lonely castle stood on yellow grass. Ceracles was sitting on a big rock outside, throwing stones at the castle. Ceracles sighed, "Oh I wish my mother was still alive. Father was always happy when mother was alive."* (S4.8b)

Joanna was also able to develop indirect characterisation using the character's thoughts and feelings.

> *Maomy was scared but brave. "I have a shield and sword, now I just need to swim." Maomy stepped into the water trying not to be scared. "It's a little bit cold but it will soon warm up."* (S4.5b)

Setting in narrative writing is a key concept because it helps to determine the social contexts within which the characters experience their problems, conflicts and resolutions. Setting often reflects the thoughts and feelings of the characters with the writer using the character's senses in order to create mood, atmosphere and suspense. Sophie was able to create atmosphere by using this device.

> *When he found the forest he took a deep breath and entered it. When his feet touched the ground he smelt the damp on the tree bark from the rain slithering down from the leaves at the top.* (S4.7b)

Emma and Molly were able to introduce both setting and dilemma using the character's senses to develop their descriptions.

> Emma: *Perseus could smell the damp. Perseus could taste the bitter air. Perseus could smell a horrible smell.* (S4.3b)

> Molly: *Perseus went in to the forest. Perseus touched a tree and it was all damp. Perseus saw a ladybird on the tree. Perseus smelt rotten bones and tasted something bitter.* (S4.6b)

The concept of dilemma, in narrative, requires the writer to present the character or characters with problems where they have to make choices in order to overcome these. Evidence taken from extracts of the children's writing shows that they all displayed a clear understanding of this concept. Aidan was able to develop ideas for problems and dilemmas using direct speech.

> *When Odysseus entered the forest a shiny light was up in the trees.*
>
> *"What is that?" asked Odysseus.*
>
> *"It's me, Athena. I've come to help you through your quest." Athena gave Odysseus a bow and arrow.*
>
> *"What's this for?" asked Odysseus.*
>
> *"You will have to defeat a monster to get the princess," said Athena.* (S4.1b)

Amelia and Zoe both used their understanding of the concept of dilemma to build tension and suspense.

> Amelia: *Jason went down Mount Olympus. It took a day's walk to get to the disgusting swamp. When Jason was at the swamp, he almost fell to the ground. Then he heard a rustling sound. "Who's there?" he said as he took out his sword. Then out of nowhere, he saw the swamp monster!* (S4.2a)
>
> Zoe: *Ceracles was shivering with fright but there was no turning back. The trees were moving slowly, waving like ghosts.* (S4.8b)

## 5.6 Summary

The ability to understand the meanings of words in different contexts as well as the understanding of relationships between words and concepts supports children when engaged in the integration of new ideas into their existing knowledge base. During the course of this study observations were made of children being given opportunities to make connections between the vocabulary contained in learning objectives and the underlying concepts

through practical learning experiences and explicit teaching. Clear learning sequences were directed by the teacher with writing tasks placed within realistic contexts. Nevertheless, most of the children did need some additional support with understanding the concept of text transformation when writing playscripts. It was noted that the verbs used in the learning objectives for this genre, 'identify' and 'write,' reflect the cognitive process of remembering in the factual and procedural knowledge dimensions (Anderson et al., 2001).  No reference was made, in the learning objectives, of the need to understand conceptually how to transform one genre into another. However, the verbs used in the learning objectives  for the report genre –' identify, make notes, organise,' and the narrative genre – ' identify, plan, write, describe,' highlight the wider range of cognitive processes and knowledge dimensions required of the pupils when interacting with those genres.

Tables 9 and 10 (pp. 227-228) show that none of the children were assessed as 'high' in their understanding of this genre compared with the other genres. This may have been because the unit of work was undertaken at the beginning of the year when the children were less mature. Nevertheless, difficulties with some aspects of conceptual understanding of this task may also have played a part.

Assessment levels show Aidan, Amelia and Molly as achieving Low/Secure when writing reports.  Data in Chapter 4 shows that these three children experienced difficulties with understanding key concept vocabulary in some non-fiction texts and consequently needed support with note-making. The higher levels of achievement recorded for both letters of review and the narrative reflect the children's understanding of both the key concepts and concept vocabulary related to these genres.

In conclusion, discussion of the data from Chapter 4 highlights the interrelationship between children's understanding of key the concepts and levels of awareness in thinking employed by them when engaged in genre writing tasks. Evidence also shows the conceptual demands of different genres vary greatly and that the children's responses not only reflect their

prior learning experiences but also their ability to transfer their knowledge, skills and understanding from one context to another. In addition, when learning objectives incorporate both conceptual and procedural aspects of the writing task children are encouraged to make active and collaborative use of their thought processes to enhance their understanding and integrate new ideas into their existing knowledge base. Furthermore, those children who made strategic use of their thinking were the most successful achieving Secure and High levels of assessment for writing at National Curriculum Level 3.

# Chapter 6

## Conclusions

### 6.0 Overview of research

The knowledge, skills and understanding required when transforming oral discourse patterns from composition into transcription are highly complex, presenting enormous cognitive challenges for young writers who often struggle with understanding the key concepts and vocabulary related to the writing task. As previously discussed, this study is not concerned with debates surrounding the nature of concepts but uses the term in its broadest sense, in keeping with current educational documents to present a richer discussion of children's interactions with the compositional and transcriptional elements of writing.

Key research in education has emphasised the importance of creating interactive learning environments through engagement with high-quality texts and exploratory talk contextualised within a broad and balanced curriculum (Mercer, 2000; Alexander, 2004; Rose, 2006; 2009). Many teachers have responded to this research by presenting pupils with a range of genre writing tasks linked to the reading genres they have already encountered. Nevertheless, some of the writing genres introduced during Year 3 may be unfamiliar to many pupils. As writing is both an expressive and receptive language activity, it presents an even greater challenge for those young writers whose skills in transcription are not yet fully developed often resulting in a deficit between their reading and writing abilities at this stage in their development. The discrepancy between the levels of achievement for reading and writing has been well documented by research (Williams and Fisher, 2006; Medwell, 2009; Myhill, 2010) and displayed in national statistics (Ofsted, 1993). Curriculum initiatives in primary schools such as 'The Big Write' (Wilson, 2003) have been developed to help address this issue but often fall short of their intended target (Brundrett and Duncan, 2011). Furthermore, as Year 3 pupils engage with a wider range of literary

forms and formats in Key Stage 2, and explore different ways of coping with the increasing demands of the curriculum, there is a need for pedagogy to support the development of conceptual understanding as learners restructure their prior knowledge to support the integration of new ideas. Therefore, the purposes of this study have been fourfold:

- To analyse children's levels of awareness in thinking when engaged in specific genre writing tasks.
- To explore children's understanding of the key concepts related to specific writing tasks within four genre contexts
- To investigate ways in which children use their prior knowledge during these tasks
- To explore ways in which children integrate new ideas into their existing knowledge base during genre related writing tasks.

This naturalistic study of cases provides a rich description of the context within which Year 3 children engage when composing and transcribing text in a variety of forms. Therefore, my philosophical stance has been adhered to throughout and analysis of data has offered multiple opportunities to analyse the distinctiveness of children's responses. My belief in the existence of multiple realities has allowed for the exploration of findings which illuminate children's unique experiences of writing.

Children's approaches to the process of writing and their development of knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to purpose, reader and form has been central to the investigation. To summarise, this study represents an exploration of the interrelationship between children's awareness of their own thought processes, their ability to understand key concepts and concept vocabulary and to integrate new ideas into their existing knowledge base.

## 6.1 Summary of outcomes

Data collected for this study of cases reflects the individual learning responses made by a small group of Year 3 children when engaged in

specific genre writing tasks. These responses identify some of the difficulties experienced by young writers when faced with unfamiliar concepts and concept vocabulary. The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 highlights the complex nature of the writing process and cognitive demands placed on young writers when encountering unfamiliar literary genres (Kress, 1994; Kellogg, 2008; Myhill, 2010). This study recognises that Year 3, as a transition year from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2, places a large number of demands on children, particularly in the area of writing where the composition and transcription skills required often exceed the cognitive maturity of the child.

It was clear from the data, presented in Chapter 4 and discussed in Chapter 5, that playscripts and non-chronological reports required children to have a clearer understanding of key concepts and concept vocabulary, related to that genre, in order to cope with the complexity of the task. Observations in this study showed that, in these instances, some children were inclined to focus more on the factual and procedural aspects of the task, following teacher guidelines and frameworks explicitly. However, those children who had a clearer conceptual understanding showed greater confidence, particularly at the initial stages of the task, and were able to complete it more successfully as evidenced through formative assessments. Jack developed a clear understanding of the concepts and procedures involved in the construction of non-chronological reports. He could recall and describe previous non-fiction writing tasks and stated, *'Well, since I got the important words and I remembered the information on the sheet it was easy to write the sentences.'* (R2.5) His completed reports demonstrated a clear understanding of how to structure information from notes taken to capture reader interest (S2.4b).

Current pedagogy emphasises the need for teachers to share the learning objectives for each task with their pupils (Alexander, 2004). Findings in this study reveal the importance of ensuring that key concepts and concept vocabulary are made explicit as an integral part of each learning objective in order for teachers to be able to support the development of children's conceptual understanding of each writing task. In this way children can be

given opportunities to restructure prior knowledge and integrate new ideas into their existing knowledge base. For example, as the children had engaged in topic based work related to the Ancient Greeks, the teacher was able to develop learning objectives that incorporated the familiar concepts of quest, myth and dilemma with the literary concepts of setting and characterisation. The lesson plans for this unit of work clearly stated the success criteria for each stage of the writing processes (D4). For example, *'I can describe the problems a hero might face in a typical Greek myth setting'* (D4). Joanna was able to display a clear understanding of the concept of dilemma by developing characterisation and conflict in her quest myth (S4.5b). In addition, when the children made collaborative use of their thought processes conceptual understanding was enhanced with children being able to make explicit their prior knowledge and understanding of the writing task which, in turn, enabled them to engage critically with each other's views. Joanna displayed an awareness of how class discussion and shared writing activities helped with the generation of ideas, *'It feels better because if you are doing it* (whole class discussion) *on the carpet and everyone puts their ideas together, it makes one big idea'* (I4.2). Similarly, Aidan and Emma made collaborative use of their thought processes to structure their playscripts successfully (O1.2).

The children's levels of awareness in thinking manifest during and after writing tasks, revealed how they perceived each task and how they were able to draw on prior knowledge to develop an understanding of key concepts related to a specific genre. In summary, this study has identified the following key outcomes:

- The interrelationship between children's awareness of their own thought processes, their ability to understand key concepts and the integration of new ideas into an existing knowledge base.
- The need for this interrelationship to be recognised and incorporated within learning objectives in order to encourage children to focus as much on the concepts as on the skills of genre writing.

- The use of collaborative thinking as an integral part of the development of children's knowledge and understanding of key concepts and concept vocabulary.
- The range of factual, procedural and conceptual difficulties faced by Year 3 children when engaged in genre writing and the varying levels of conceptual understanding required to complete these genre writing tasks.

## 6.2 Conceptual understanding

Torrance and Galbraith (2006) argue that components of the writing process that are well-practised make limited demands on the cognitive capacity of the writer while other components, where the writer needs to use elements of problem solving, may make higher demands. This study concludes that where writers are familiar with the concepts and skills required for either all, or even part, of a genre writing task then they achieve more success. All children in the group were assessed as having 'secure' or 'high' levels of understanding for narrative writing, the genre with which they were most familiar. They were also assessed as 'secure' or 'high' for letters of review despite the fact that most children were unfamiliar with the format and language of formal letters. However, part of the task was to incorporate a book review into the letter and they had all experienced writing book reviews on a number of occasions. Furthermore, when the key concepts, relating to the task, were made explicit through the learning objectives, using verbs that highlighted the cognitive processes and knowledge dimensions required, the children were more confident during the initial stages of the task. The teacher used the verbs 'identify', 'make notes' and 'organise' in the learning objectives and spent some time modelling each part of the non-chronological report writing task, thus enabling pupils to gain a clearer understanding of the key concepts of note-making and synthesising information. In this way the teacher was able to develop the children's conceptual understanding of the task as defined by the learning objective. In addition, those children who displayed collaborative use of thinking were able to develop their conceptual

understanding of the letter writing task through engagement with each other's ideas. Joanna and Sophie displayed collaborative use of thinking when they discussed the different elements of their letters of review (O3.3).

> Joanna: *We have to think about the story and if we like it and give it a star rating.*
>
> Sophie: *And tell the author the characters are good. You have to tell people about the funny parts and the bits you enjoy because then they'll want to read it.*

Conversely, all children were familiar with the written form and format of playscripts and able to identify key features of this genre. However, the learning objectives, for the different aspects of the task, placed an emphasis on the factual and procedural elements assuming that a conceptual understanding of the writing task would follow. The ability to transform one genre into another, as in transforming narrative into playscript, relies on an ability to understand the underlying concept of text transformation. Most children did need some support in understanding this concept with all children in the group being assessed as 'low' or 'secure' in this genre. These assessments may have reflected the stage of the children's writing development as the unit of work was undertaken at the beginning of the year when the children were less mature as writers. Nevertheless, difficulties with some aspects of conceptual understanding underlying this task may have played a part. The concept frequency table (Table 10, p. 228) shows that, despite initial difficulties with understanding the concept of text transformation, most children were able to transfer their understanding of narrative to the playscript format with only two children in the group being assessed as low when transforming direct and indirect speech from the narrative to the playscript genre.

As noted in Chapter 5, children who have a greater conceptual knowledge of literacy at school entry make more rapid progress in the acquisition of procedural knowledge than those with less conceptual knowledge (Purcell-Gates, 1996). In addition, the children's responses in this study, when engaged in writing non-chronological reports, highlighted the need for a sound understanding of key vocabulary related to non-fiction texts in order

for children to make sense of the concept of note-making. Children who demonstrated a wider vocabulary knowledge and understood key concept words across different genre contexts, were more able to transfer their learning to other areas of the curriculum. For example, Aidan, Amelia, Emma and Molly all had difficulty with understanding the more complex vocabulary, found in some information texts, and were unable to make connections between vocabulary they had encountered in previous tasks and the concept vocabulary in new tasks. Conversely, Jack, Joanna, Sophie and Zoe were able to make connections between the vocabulary knowledge gained from previous information writing experiences and relate these to new writing tasks.

It can be concluded therefore, that the development of conceptual understanding was a collaborative process dependent upon the interaction between what a child already knows and what they are in the process of learning within shared learning contexts. These findings concur with research which argues that effective learning is not just about putting new knowledge on top of what is already understood, but about illuminating the process of learning itself through the types of interaction nurtured through dialogic teaching (Williams and Fisher, 2002; Alexander, 2004; Wray et al., 2006). Findings in this study show the importance of encouraging children to make their thought processes explicit within shared learning contexts and to critically engage with each other's views in order to develop a clear conceptual understanding of a writing task.

## 6.3 Prior knowledge

The decisions children make, whilst involved in genre writing tasks, depend a great deal on their ability to engage with others in order to make use of shared prior knowledge. This collaborative process acts as a support to young writers when integrating new ideas into their existing knowledge base. Nevertheless, this is also very much a personal process with children experiencing a wide range of sociocultural oral and written discourse patterns both within home and school contexts. Children's knowledge of

themselves as writers also has a direct impact on their ability to meet new writing challenges. Both Jack and Zoe had clear views of themselves as writers and consequently embarked upon each new genre task with confidence and interest whilst Amelia and Molly, who were uncertain of their ability to cope with some aspects of each new genre task, required both adult and peer support.

Learning experiences which do not make any connection with what is already understood can be described as 'rote' resulting in children retaining these experiences for a brief period of time only (Wray et al., 2006). The findings from this study show that if children are not required to modify their existing knowledge and understanding they may have difficulty in reformulating their ideas and adapting them to the challenges of new or less familiar writing genres. Molly was familiar with the format of non-fiction books but experienced difficulty with identifying key words in these texts to reformulate the information in the form of a non-chronological report.

This study also concludes that a firm grasp of key concept vocabulary allows children to draw on their prior knowledge of a topic more successfully when engaging with a variety of literary genres. It was evident, from the children's initial responses to the report writing task, that a number of them had some difficulty with the prior knowledge and understanding of key concept vocabulary encountered during the task. This demonstrates the interrelationship between prior knowledge and conceptual understanding and emphasises the need for children to be given opportunities to make collaborative use of their thinking in order to share knowledge, co-construct ideas and develop a deeper level of conceptual understanding in relation to the learning objectives. Teacher/pupil interactions were evident during each session of the report writing task allowing for explanation, discussion, remodelling and addressing any perceived difficulties. This was in marked contrast to the children's responses when engaged in writing the quest myth where, after initial class and paired discussion, the children worked independently. These findings concur with those of Myhill (2005) who found that young writers draw on their prior knowledge of the narrative genre,

based on broad cultural experiences of narrative, but struggle with genres for which they have little prior sociocultural knowledge.

This study found that the children's prior knowledge was manifest in four key areas: prior reading experiences, prior writing experiences, prior knowledge of text form and format and by making connections between different text types. The children's prior knowledge and understanding in these areas varied in both depth and breadth, resulting in some children having a deeper and wider knowledge and understanding of one literary genre than another. Each child's sociocultural experiences of literary genres developed both at home and at school acted as a foundation upon which new learning could be built.

Research has also shown that prior knowledge influences learning, and children construct and reconstruct concepts from prior knowledge (Edwards and Mercer, 1987). The findings from this study show how conceptual development occurs during a gradual and often complex restructuring of prior knowledge in association with an individual's sociocultural experiences, oral discourse patterns and cognitive maturity. For example, during the initial stages of the playscript genre task Aidan had difficulty in understanding the key concept of text transformation. After reading the narrative text he asked *'What are we supposed to do with the bits that aren't speech?'* However, by posing 'think aloud' questions and working collaboratively with his partner Emma, he was able to develop a clearer understanding of text transformation. Findings in this study conclude that the construction of meaning through participation in joint inquiry is integral to the development of writing in young children.

## 6.4 Levels of awareness in thinking

My development of the framework, distinguishing four levels of awareness of thinking, originally devised by Swartz and Perkins (1989), was used to identify the levels of awareness in thinking displayed by a group of Year 3

children, when engaged in specific genre writing tasks. The addition of 'collaborative use' to this framework identifies the role that collaborative thinking can play in the development of the knowledge, understanding and skills of children in literacy (Mercer, 2000; Littleton et al. 2005; Jones 2008). Evidence of collaborative use of thinking was displayed by four children in the group who used language to share and co-construct their ideas. Opportunities were provided for all the children to take part in group and paired activities where they were encouraged to discuss problems and listen to ideas and explanations with their partners or others in the group. The ability to engage critically and constructively with each other was observed on eleven occasions. Most of the talk observed and documented was clearly focused on the factual and procedural aspects of each writing task with the less confident children using discussion and peer review as a support. Although some of the children were aware that thinking and talking as part of a group or as a pair helped them to develop ideas this did not extend into a critical exchange of views.

> Amelia: *It helped reading the book first. We reviewed it in a group and that really helped because we thought about it and talked about it together.* (I3.2)

Evidence of collaborative thinking, where partners employ the kind of exploratory talk described by Mercer (2000) was displayed by Aidan/Emma and Joanna/Sophie. These pairings were able to exchange ideas in a supportive way with each valuing the other's point of view. The 'exploratory talk' employed by these children was symmetrical in that they enjoyed equal status when expressing their thoughts. By way of contrast, although Jack and Zoe discussed some ideas together they did not 'engage critically but constructively with each other's ideas' (Mercer and Littleton, 2007: 16). The ability to engage critically and constructively with others, that is, to use language in order to think together and co-construct ideas, requires an element of trust and co-operation. Sophie expressed this succinctly when she explained, *'We make a good team because we think about it and we know how we work.'* (O2.6)

As can be seen, from the observations of children's responses in Chapter 4, Year 3 children use different levels of awareness in thinking when engaged in specific genre writing tasks both with and without adult intervention. However, there is no evidence in this study to show that levels of awareness in thinking are increasingly progressive as children engage in specific genre writing tasks. Rather observations show that young writers move in and out of levels of awareness in thinking depending on the complexity of the task, their prior knowledge of key concepts and concept vocabulary related to each genre and awareness of their own thought processes and working strategies. Furthermore, data collected demonstrates that Year 3 children are consciously aware of their thought processes both with and without adult prompting but are less able to make strategic or reflective use of their thinking to complete a writing task without some adult intervention.

## 6.5 Conclusion of outcomes

An important element of this study is the recognition that children do not formulate their thoughts and ideas about writing in isolation but within a shared learning environment. The development of their conceptual understanding is part of a collaborative process where prior knowledge and experiences can be explored together as part of a community of inquiry as illustrated by research discussed in Chapter 2. However, this study provides a unique perspective in that it concludes young writers need to be given stimulating and thought provoking learning objectives which encapsulate the underlying concepts, knowledge and skills required for the successful completion of a writing task. When learning objectives relate not only to the factual and procedural knowledge dimensions but also to the conceptual understanding of the task children are able to build upon prior knowledge and experiences, make active use of their thought processes and integrate new ideas into their existing knowledge base independently.

Evidence shows that children working at an age appropriate level based on National Curriculum and Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) level descriptors for Year 3, predominantly convey 'aware' levels of thinking when composing

and transcribing different genre text types. Furthermore, those children who made strategic use of their thinking were the most successful, achieving 'secure' and 'high' assessments at National Curriculum level 3, for their writing.

These findings highlight that current forms of assessment are over-reliant on the completed transcript, instead of being informed by the thinking and oral discourse patterns generated by specific genre writing tasks. As young children convey much of their conceptual understanding of literary genres through collaborative discussion during the process of writing, it is this that should inform assessment procedures to a greater degree. By ensuring that key concepts are made explicit through task learning objectives, encouraging children to share their prior knowledge and experiences and providing opportunities for them to develop collaborative thinking skills, a more flexible form of assessment would be possible.

This study not only contributes to current research on genre writing within school-based contexts but makes a unique contribution in that it highlights the need for pedagogical strategies to focus on the way young writers think about and understand the underlying concepts and principles related to genre writing tasks. Findings in the study also show that key concepts need to be shared with pupils as part of the learning objectives and success criteria associated with the task. This enables pupils to develop their own creative responses within the linguistic and textual structures of the given genre without being confined by them. In addition, as conceptual understanding develops, young writers are able to incorporate new ideas into their existing knowledge base with increasing confidence.

## 6.6 Limitations of the study

Issues surrounding validity in qualitative research have provoked much debate. Within the context of this study, validity was sought through the representativeness of the sample. As the main purpose of research was to explore the conceptual understanding and levels of awareness in thinking

used by children when engaged in writing tasks across a range of genres, it was decided that Year 3, as a transitional year, would provide a range of data that would inform policy and practice in relation to the reported Year 3 dip. Although representative, each child within this study was viewed as an individual case to be considered in terms of the unique ways in which he or she was able to respond to the specific genre writing tasks.

Contextual validity was sought from research design throughout each stage of data analysis. This was achieved through the design of an orientation period when I was able to establish patterns of practice in the classroom context. It was essential to work within these patterns to provide contextual validity. This was strengthened through engagement in informal discussion with the teacher regarding her perceptions of the children's writing achievements. Four literary genres were observed across two terms (four half terms), allowing data to be produced which was generated within the same classroom context. It would have been interesting to repeat the study with the subsequent year group, addressing the same four literary genres in order to gain further validity. However, this was not possible within the time-frame of the study.

A further limitation of the study was that children reacted to my presence in the classroom as they would have with any other adult in the school. It was observed that the Year 3 class in which the children were situated was frequently exposed to other teachers in the classroom who led or supported learning in different areas of the curriculum. This included teaching assistants in their supportive roles as well as other classroom teachers leading different subject areas. The children were made aware of my role but there was a certain degree of subjectivity noted. In manner and appearance, I resembled the class teacher with children addressing me as they did the class teacher at times.

A possible solution to this may have been to conduct research as a non-participant observer, with all responses from children digitally recorded. However, this would have been difficult to validate in the sense that background noise in the classroom may have made the recorded responses

difficult to transcribe. Semi-structured interviews were designed to be flexible according to the children's responses so that a greater degree of reflection could be achieved. In this sense, discussion was researcher led which also reduced objectivity. Despite this limitation, it is evident that research design gave each child an opportunity to express his or her views in a number of ways, allowing for variations in attitudes and responses. These responses were shared with the class teacher to aid critical reflection and support validity.

The original framework presented by Swartz and Perkins (1989), and subsequently developed to aid exploration of the research questions central to this study, was designed to explore ways in which children's learning experiences allow them to consider their own and other's thought processes within shared learning contexts.

The class teacher acted as 'critical friend' and practitioner expert throughout the data collection period, supporting response validity and validation of the criteria developed in the framework of levels of awareness in thinking. As 'practitioner expert', the class teacher was able to discuss the children's oral contributions and address the typicality of both their behaviour and oral responses made during informal discussion and semi-structured interviews. During the analysis of data the class teacher was able to engage in discourse regarding the levels of awareness in thinking assigned to each child in each writing genre.

Using the framework to code the children's responses to the written tasks was extremely challenging as the exact nature of classroom interaction is difficult to capture due to it being socially situated. However, this type of challenge is to be expected in a study of this nature which adopts a social constructivist belief system. Decisions regarding assigned codes were not easily made but deliberated at length between the teacher and myself. This offered greater validity to the framework developed and the subsequent discussion of findings. However, it would provide further validity had the study been replicated in a parallel class, with children working at age-appropriate levels in writing in addition to criteria validated by a different

class teacher as well. This could have acted as a process of moderation, allowing for comparison of findings.

Practitioners engaging with the results of this study can use the framework to examine the ways in which children are able to employ awareness of their own and others' thought processes to construct and co-construct strategies for genre writing. It will also initiate some analysis of ways in which practitioners can encourage children to be more aware of their thought processes as they engage in a variety of writing tasks.  In a broader sense, this study is unique in that it can support pedagogy in recognising the interrelationship between children's levels of thinking, their ability to understand key concepts and concept vocabulary and integrate new ideas into their existing knowledge base.

## 6.7 Implications for policy and practice

This study highlights the importance of designing a curriculum for Year 3 pupils which will nurture their understanding of familiar and unfamiliar writing experiences in a way that facilitates conceptual development and an awareness of individual working strategies. It also reveals how learning objectives set by practitioners, relating to the present curriculum, often ignore the importance of the underlying conceptual understanding that children need to develop to ensure their engagement with the cognitive demands of unfamiliar genre writing tasks.

When using the new National Curriculum (DfE, 2013), it is necessary for teachers to recognise the importance of ensuring its suitability for lower Key Stage 2.  In this way continuity and progression of both knowledge and understanding will enable children to make a successful transition from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2.  Greater emphasis needs to be given to providing opportunities for children to reflect on the strategies they use when assimilating new learning into their existing knowledge base.

If the new National Curriculum (DfE, 2013) is to provide 'deep learning' opportunities for children in Key Stage 2, a firm model to critique the development of their conceptual understanding needs to be disseminated.

## 6.8 Contribution to new knowledge

The findings from this study are unique in that they highlight the interrelationship between children's awareness of their own and others' thought processes, their understanding of key concepts and ability to integrate new ideas into their existing knowledge base. Findings also highlight the need for this interrelationship to be recognised and incorporated within meaningful and thought provoking learning objectives to encourage children to focus as much on the concepts as on the skills of genre writing. Furthermore, my revised framework of the levels of awareness in thinking, originally devised by Swartz and Perkins (1989), emphasises the importance of 'collaborative use' of thinking. When children begin to co-construct ideas they are able to make their thinking explicit which enables teachers to assess their level of conceptual understanding whilst children are engaged in the writing task.

This study reveals the need for a curriculum which recognises the importance of developing learning opportunities that consider the sociocultural experiences of children at each stage in their development. Building on children's prior learning experiences with a gradual introduction of new challenges set in meaningful learning contexts is crucial.

Findings allow practitioners to reflect critically on the depth of conceptual understanding required when younger children are engaged in new learning. Recognition of the key concepts embedded within learning objectives can be achieved and can inform planning for writing. Children's levels of cognitive maturity also have a direct impact on their ability to apply prior learning experiences to new learning and this is particularly crucial for children in a transition year where they are expected to engage with new ways of thinking and learning.

The target of developing a new curriculum which cultivates 'deep learning' and raises standards in writing can only be achieved if policy recognises the challenges of developing thinking and levels of awareness within the context of cognitively challenging tasks. Previously, the content of the literacy curriculum for writing in lower Key Stage 2 emphasised both breadth and depth with the expectation that children, on entry to Key Stage 2, would automatically be able to cope with such breadth and depth despite little prior experience. However curriculum content for this age group needs to offer the opportunity for interaction, collaboration and knowledge building at a level which is commensurate with the cognitive maturity of each child. Children will continue to learn at surface level, resulting in a continued deficit between their reading and writing achievements if this is not recognised. It will also result in a lack of motivation to meet the new learning challenges and result in children following the factual and procedural aspects of a task to the detriment of their creativity.

The discrepancy between levels of achievement in reading and writing at Key Stage 2 seems to result from a situation in which policy and practice ignores current demands of the literacy curriculum for seven to eight-year-olds. Therefore the development of new policy needs to take account of the conceptual demands of a task and ways in which shared prior learning experiences can support children in addressing difficulties faced when meeting new writing challenges.

The creation of writing opportunities where collaborative thinking and writing takes place and meanings are jointly constructed is essential if the transfer of learning is to be facilitated. Encouraging children to think about and co-construct new working strategies should be a priority for policy and practice.

> *Thinking skills were seen to be based on theories of constructivist learning which foreground the learner as an active participant in creating knowledge and understanding. Their effect on learning was to give children the skills of inquiry enabling them to go beyond the given; to cope with new and complex tasks; to take a critical stance towards material; and to communicate ideas.*
>
> (Larkin, 2010: 143)

## 6.9 Recommendations for further research and concluding remarks

As expected, the processes and outcomes of researching children's conceptual understanding and levels of awareness in thinking when engaged in genre writing tasks has raised many questions. These questions introduce new areas for research. Some of the key avenues could include:

- Development of a longitudinal study to evaluate how children's conceptual understanding of genre writing tasks develops during the course of Year 3 and into Year 4 (lower Key Stage 2).

- Continued investigation of children's levels of awareness in thinking when engaged in and reflecting on different genre writing tasks. However, it is not clear at what point the levels of awareness in thinking directly affect the quality of completed transcripts though 'think aloud' techniques did highlight the contribution this awareness made to children's oral contributions during collaborative writing tasks.

- Exploring the pedagogical implications of teaching for conceptual development within the context of National Curriculum requirements. This would involve looking at parallel years and tracking development throughout an entire academic year.

- The development of children's knowledge and understanding of concept vocabulary related to different literary forms. It was clear, especially when looking at non-fiction texts, that children's prior experience had an effect on their ability to identify key information within a non-fiction text. Knowledge of concept vocabulary was particularly important when investigating the features of different writing genres and could also be explored further.

- A broader investigation of how the revised framework of levels of awareness in thinking can be applied to other areas of the curriculum. This would be particularly relevant in areas of the curriculum where tasks are conceptually demanding.

Practitioners using the new National Curriculum (DfE, 2013) therefore need to take into account the conceptual understanding displayed by individual

children and their ability to be aware of their own thought processes when engaged in new genre writing tasks.

Pedagogical practices need to support the development of conceptual understanding in young writers alongside their ability to be aware of the thought processes and strategies they use to achieve their goals. Teachers need to provide learning contexts where a community of inquiry can be developed and children's prior knowledge and understanding of a writing task is revealed. As Myhill argues, '…addressing what developing writers "don't know," the sociocultural silences, should be a pedagogical priority' (2005: 135).

This study concludes that for many Year 3 children genre writing at Key Stage 2, involving the simultaneous interaction between composition and transcription, places a range of unfamiliar and often challenging demands on them. Evidence from this study shows that learning objectives presented to this age group often focus on procedural aspects of the writing task. For example, although the children were familiar with playscripts, and could identify key features of this genre, they were unfamiliar with the concept of text transformation when asked to change a narrative scene from a Greek myth into a playscript. The learning objectives for this task did not refer to the fundamental concept of text transformation but focused on procedural aspects of the task. Consequently, the children spent more time considering form and format and were less successful in this genre than in letters of review and narrative writing where both procedural and conceptual elements of the tasks were incorporated into the learning objectives.

Observations made during this study show that most Year 3 children are consciously aware of their own and others' thought processes both with and without adult prompting but are less able to make strategic or reflective use of their thinking without some adult intervention. Evidence also concludes that young writers move in and out of the suggested levels of thinking depending on the complexity of the task, their prior knowledge of key concepts and concept vocabulary related to each genre and awareness of their thought processes and working strategies. Furthermore, when children were able to

make collaborative use of their own and others' thought processes they were able to construct and co-construct new ideas and integrate them into their existing knowledge base.

In conclusion, if Year 3 children are to develop as writers both procedural and conceptual aspects of a genre writing task need to be incorporated into the learning objectives in ways that stimulate children's thinking. As they become more aware of their own and others' thought processes they can be given opportunities to develop an understanding of the relationship between knowledge, concepts and skills in a genre writing task thus enabling them to appreciate how composition and transcription support one another in the writing process.

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**Appendix 1**

**Participant consent form**

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am a qualified teacher and lecturer currently working at Brunel University training primary school teachers. I am also researching the development of children's writing in primary schools for my PhD doctoral study.

St Mary's Junior School have kindly agreed to let me observe the teaching of writing in Year 3 for my research. I will be working in Mrs X's classroom during the Autumn and Spring Terms and would like to talk to the children about their writing.

I request your permission to audio record and transcribe their thoughts and ideas for my research. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the project.

If you have any further queries or questions, please do not hesitate to contact me via email: alison.silby@brunel.ac.uk

Kindest regards,

Alison Silby
Lecturer in Education/PhD research student
........................................................................................................................................

**The development of children's writing – PhD research by Alison Silby**

I consent to my child _____ taking part in this research and agree to the audio recording and transcribing of their discussions about writing.

Parent/ Carer's Signature:_____

Parent/ Carer's Name (Print in capitals):_____

**Appendix 2**

**An extract from the research outline**

Dear Staff,

I hope to provide you with all the information you require and thank you for the support you have shown in allowing your school to act as the research site for my PhD study. I address this information to all members of staff by way of introduction and to provide an explanation of the nature of my research.

My PhD is a study seeking to investigate the levels of awareness in thinking used by pupils during writing tasks. It will be a classroom-based study exploring the interface between levels of awareness in thinking and the writing process for a small group of Year 3 pupils, including their conceptual understanding of each task.

My role will be to observe the children throughout the writing process and to engage them in discussion regarding the outcomes. I will also be asking the children to review and evaluate their own progress linked to the purpose of each writing task observed.

At present, I am completing a PhD study which will investigate the development of young children's writing. This is an area of learning which, in theory, is acknowledged to be of importance and relevant to current education policy goals, but is presently under-researched.

As I work with trainee teachers in primary schools currently, I am required to hold a full CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) clearance form. This form proves that I have no criminal records. My CRB clearance form will be available to view at all times.

**Researcher's role and observation format**

It is hoped that observations will commence during the second half of the Autumn Term. This will give the children an opportunity to settle in and the parents/carers to return consent forms. I would like to observe literacy sessions which have a writing focus during the course of the Autumn and Spring terms.

During lesson introductions I would like to listen and make notes in order to set the context for the writing task observed. During group work I would like to have permission to audio record the responses of a small group of children using a dictaphone. I will be hoping to observe and identify:

- Initial conceptual understanding of the task
- Peer group interaction when clarifying the task
- The connections made between new information and previous knowledge

- The selection and use of different learning strategies for dealing with the task
- Levels of awareness in thinking during writing tasks.

During the plenary I would like to have permission to audio record pupil responses using a dictaphone. I would like to be able to:

- Ask the children questions in order to identify their levels of awareness in thinking and encourage them to consider the different kinds of strategies they have or could have used during the task
- Encourage peer review of written work linked to the purpose for the task
- Ask children to review and evaluate their own progress linked to the purpose of the task.

After each session I would like to photocopy a sample of the children's written work.

## Confidentiality and ethical considerations

The Research Ethics Committee has reviewed my PhD study to ensure that the proposed research is in accordance with the Brunel University Ethical Framework. This is to guarantee that the research is ethically sound and that all issues regarding safeguarding are adhered.

The data collected will be kept securely and only available for review by the researcher. All data will be stored at Brunel University for up to 5 years. Any electronic data will be made secure using a password lock, only known by the researcher.

Confidentiality will be maintained through the use of fictional names for both participants and school. Identities will be protected in all circumstances.

I will require signed consent from all parents and carers as I would like to audio record and transcribe the children's discussions. The consent form is located at the end of this pack for your approval.

The findings from my research will be produced in the form of a PhD thesis which will be held at Brunel University. I am also required to publish parts of my research in academic research journals and present at educational conferences if relevant.

My work will be monitored by two PhD supervisors at Brunel University. Each supervisor will review the progress I have made at regular intervals.

If you have any concerns regarding the ethic of this study, please contact:

The Chair of Research Ethics Committee, via Julie Bradshaw (Research Administrator), School of Sport and Education, Brunel University, Kingston Lane, Uxbridge, UB8 3PH. Tel: 01895 274000.

**Appendix 3**

**Data Log**

**Data codes:**

D      Classroom documents

O      Semi-structured participant observations

R      Open-microphone recordings

I      Semi-structured group interviews

S      Samples of children's written work


Data displayed in bold text is included in subsequent appendices


**O.0    Orientation data - extracts**

**D1    Medium term plan: Playscripts**

**O1.1  Playscripts: Phase 1**

**O1.2  Playscripts: Phase 2**

**O1.3  Playscripts: Phase 3**

**R1.1  Playscripts: Amelia and Molly**

**R1.2  Playscripts: Aidan and Emma**

**R1.3  Playscripts: Jack and Zoe**

**R1.4  Playscripts: Aidan and Emma**

**R1.5  Playscripts: Zoe (Jack absent)**

**R1.6  Playscripts: Joanna (Sophie absent)**

**R1.7  Playscripts: Amelia and Molly**

**I1.1    Playscripts: Jack, Joanna, Zoe (Sophie absent)**

**I1.2    Playscripts: Aidan, Emma, Molly (Amelia absent)**

**S1.1  Playscript: Aidan**

**S1.2  Playscript: Amelia**

**S1.3  Playscript: Emma**

**S1.4  Playscript: Jack**

**S1.5  Playscript: Joanna**

**S1.6  Playscript: Molly**

**S1.8  Playscript: Zoe**


**D2     Medium term plan: Non-chronological reports**

O2.1   Reports: Phase 1

O2.2   Reports: Phase 2

O2.3   Reports: Phase 3

O2.4   Reports: Phase 4

O2.5   Reports: Phase 5

O2.6   Reports: Phase 6

R2.1   Reports: Aidan and Emma

R2.2   Reports: Jack and Zoe

R2.3   Reports: Amelia and Molly

R2.4   Reports: Joanna and Sophie

R2.5   Reports: Jack and Zoe/Aidan and Emma/ Amelia (Molly reading)

R2.6   Reports: Group discussion

R2.7   Reports: Joanna and Sophie

R2.8   Reports: Amelia and Molly

I2.1    Reports: Aidan, Amelia, Molly and Sophie

I2.2    Reports: Emma, Jack, Joanna and Zoe

**S2.1a Lion report: Aidan**

**S2.1b Crocodile report: Aidan**

**S2.2a Lion report: Amelia**

**S2.2b Crocodile report: Amelia**

S2.3a Lion report: Emma

S2.3b Crocodile report: Emma

S2.4a Lion report: Jack

S2.4b Crocodile report: Jack

S2.5a Lion report: Joanna

S2.5b Crocodile report: Joanna

S2.6a Lion report: Molly

S2.6b Crocodile report: Molly

S2.7a Lion report: Sophie

S2.7b Crocodile report: Sophie

S2.8a Lion report: Zoe

S2.8b Crocodile report: Zoe


**D3      Medium term plan: Letters of review**

O3.1  Letters: Phase 1

O3.2  Letters: Phase 2

O3.3  Letters: Phase 3

R3.1  Letters: Amelia, Jack, Joanna, Zoe

R3.2  Letters: Emma

R3.3  Letters: Aidan, Amelia, Emma, Molly and Zoe

R3.4  Letters: Aidan, Emma, Jack, Joanna, Zoe

I3.1    Letters: Emma, Jack, Joanna, Zoe

I3.2    Letters: Aidan, Amelia, Molly, Sophie

S3.1a Review: Aidan

S3.1b Letter: Aidan

S3.2a Review: Amelia

S3.2b Letter: Amelia

**S3.3a Review: Emma**

**S3.3b Letter: Emma**

S3.4a Review: Jack

S3.4b Letter: Jack

S3.5a Review: Joanna

S3.5b Letter: Joanna

**S4.5b Narrative: Joanna**

S4.6a Narrative draft: Molly

**S4.6b Narrative: Molly**

S4.7a Narrative draft: Sophie

**S4.7b Narrative: Sophie**

S4.8a Narrative draft: Zoe

**S4.8b Narrative: Zoe**

**Appendix 4**

**O.0: Orientation data**

The Year 3 class observed is one of the classes in a two form entry school. The teacher has been established at the school for a number of years and has taught different year groups. She has taught Year 3 for several years and is keen to develop their writing skills.

The pupils have table groups which are of mixed ability. During every literacy session they move tables so that they are seated in ability groups. The teacher begins most lessons with a focus on word or sentence level work; that is grammar or spelling. The children have a clear enjoyment of the interactive games and use of mini whiteboards in this part of the lesson.

After the pupils have finished the initial spelling/grammar activity, they are asked to move to the carpet. They do not have a set space in which to sit and are free to sit next to their friends, or wherever they can find a space. On occasion, the teacher will move a pupil if any 'off task' behaviour is observed.

The teacher introduces the learning objective and draws on the pupils' prior knowledge particularly in connection to concept vocabulary. She refers to a concrete resource which is a display entitled 'The Literacy Learning Wall'. The function of which is to record key vocabulary and features of different literary genres.

The pupils participate in a shared read or write to model the main activity. The pupils work in ability groups, frequently in collaboration with their literacy partner. The teacher addresses difficulties throughout this time and often uses the plenary to reinforce the key concepts met.

Written work is mostly completed in phases where each part of the task is broken down so that different concepts and principles can be introduced and then practised. The teacher shares the purpose of each writing task and often provides an example of a finished piece so the pupils have a clear model of the writing genre.

**Appendix 5**

**D1: Medium term plan: Playscripts**

| Literacy Planning: Playscripts | | |
|---|---|---|
| Key Objectives:<br>• Identify features of a playscript<br>• Identify what different characters will say<br>• Write a scene from the legend of Odysseus and the Cyclops in the form of a playscript | | |
| Compose sentences using adjectives, verbs and nouns<br>**Must:** To use simple words and phrases.<br>**Should:** To write mainly simple sentences using a capital letter and a full stop.<br>**Could:** To use descriptive words and phrases to extend simple sentences. | | To use correct layout and format when writing a playscript<br>**Must:** To put the character's name at the beginning of a new line.<br>**Should:** To use stage directions to show the actions made by the actors.<br>**Could:** To develop the emotions of the characters by including directions showing how they should speak. |
| We are reading and finding out about the features of playscripts | We are practising the skills for playscript writing | We are writing our own scene from Odysseus and the Cyclops |
| **Success criteria** | | **Focus of Guided teaching** |
| To identify the characters in the story and what they are saying.<br>To identify the features of written dialogue in a story. | | Identify the features of written dialogue. |
| To compare the story of Puss in Boots with a playscript.<br>To practise and perform a playscript. | | Help perform a playscript. |
| To identify the features of a playscript. | | Help to draw out examples of the features from the playscripts used. |
| To identify what different characters will say. | | Work out what each character will be saying based on the story. |
| To write a playscript based on a familiar story. | | Write simple sentences showing what each character will be saying. |
| To be able to infer characters' feelings in fictional texts. | | NA |
| To identify what different characters will say.<br>To identify how different characters will speak depending on their emotions. | | Encourage children to think about how the characters will be feeling and express this as ways of speaking. |
| To write a playscript based on a familiar story. | | Develop the notes into a playscript that shows the emotions of characters and use of descriptive language. |

**O1.1**

**Semi-structured observations**

**Genre 1: Playscripts**

**Phase 1**

The concept of a playscript was shared with the pupils by the teacher and linked to a series of tasks which aimed to develop their understanding of and their ability to construct text in the same style and form. The learning objectives were explained to the pupils. They were:

- To identify features of a playscript
- To identify what different characters will say

The teacher recapped on previous writing activities in literacy and activated pupils' prior knowledge by asking them to recall the main features of the playscripts they had experienced. The children shared their experiences with **Zoe** explaining that '*a playscript tells a story with speech.'*

The teacher drew the pupils' attention to the Literacy Learning Wall where the features were displayed for pupil reference. This acted as a contextual resource throughout the sequences of teaching observed and was a strategy that enabled connections to be made between prior knowledge and new ideas. **Aidan, Joanna, Sophie** and **Zoe** were able to identify the main features of playscripts using the literacy learning wall prompts.

Aidan:     *You have to put the names of the characters.*

Joanna:     *You have to say what they characters are doing in the stage directions.*

Sophie:     *The Narrator tells the story.*

Zoe:     *You have to write what the characters say.*

Pupils were then given a sequence of illustrations from the story of Odysseus and the Cyclops containing empty speech bubbles with the narrative of the story written underneath. They were asked to read the narrative in pairs,

consider how the characters might be feeling in each scene and write some speech for them in the speech bubbles.

The children had difficulty initially in transforming the speech in the narrative into speech in speech bubbles linked to illustrations. During independent work, the teacher provided guidance to support pupils in the extraction of information from the narrative. She encouraged pupils to consider whether any meaning could have been lost through the transformation of narrative to speech. The teacher did this through the deconstruction of the story using the layout and features of a playscript. The pupils shared experiences of playscripts they had read throughout Year 2 and at the beginning of the current academic year.

Aidan:      *We did a play in assembly.*

Joanna:      *We had to learn our lines for the Christmas play.*

During the writing tasks **Amelia** and **Molly** struggled with understanding how to transform narrative into speech in speech bubbles and needed to have the task modelled several times before they felt confident to begin. **Sophie** was able to tell **Joanna** that *'The narrator tells the story.'*

**Zoe** and **Jack** were focused on the order of their playscript and believed this to be the main objective of the task. **Aidan** and **Emma** considered some strategies for helping other children with their writing and were good at generating ideas together. They were thinking carefully about what would help them with their writing.

The children were then asked to look at their speech bubbles and form them into a playscript, using the features modelled and displayed in the classroom. They also had additional targets printed on laminates on their tables. These included:

- Names of characters are written on the left hand side.
- A new line starts when a new person speaks.
- The narrator gives some extra information to help the story flow.
- There are directions showing how people speak in brackets.

- There are stage directions telling the actors of any special movements.

The teacher used the 'think aloud' strategy to model the speech bubbles being transformed into a playscript. The children were to work in pairs in order to complete this task. The children took some time to get started and expressed their concerns about transforming narrative into playscript. **Zoe** began by asking a question to gain approval *'Shall I do?' 'Shall the narrator say? Then we could say.'*

**Molly** and **Amelia** took some time at the beginning of the task, fussing over the date and title. They needed some adult support before making a start.

**Aidan** was another quick starter and suggested what they could do first. He also reminded the whole group that they had to indicate which scene that they were writing and that they had to write what each character would say in the story. He made comments such as *'Look! I did this!'* to help his partner and occasionally the whole group. He whizzed ahead, only stopping when **Emma** asked him to stop to allow her to catch up with him in order to check that they have written the same.

Although this was not organised as a collaborative piece of writing, it is clear that one child's dominance in a pair can have an effect on some of the vocabulary that is used. It was noted that **Jack** took his time and reread what he had done as he worked through the task. **Zoe** was quicker to produce text before checking that she was happy with what had been produced. **Jack** was more methodical in the way he wrote and, though happy with his ideas, he liked to ponder and double check for meaning as he read and reread his work.

**Jack** applied a methodical approach to the writing task, following the illustrations and text chronologically. He used a range of connectives to sequence the narrative through the Narrator. He was not easily influenced by his literacy partner, Zoe and had his own ideas in order to tell the story through speech in speech bubbles. He expressed his ideas confidently yet liked to ponder and double check for meaning by reading his work through

several times. He considered the ways in which the characters might speak which was one of the targets the teacher had set. He made appropriate suggestions for this. Jack contributed during whole class discussions and made suggestions regarding characterisation.

**Molly** took some time to begin the first writing task, transforming narrative into speech using speech bubbles. Both she and her partner, Amelia, relied on adult support at the beginning of the task to help them recall the sequence of the narrative and identify parts that could be used as speech.

**Sophie** was able to contribute to whole class discussion and told her partner, Joanna, that *'the narrator tells the story.'* She was able to tell her partner what they could write in the speech bubbles. Sophie was absent for the rest of the playscript writing tasks.

**Zoe** showed a clear understanding of how to transform narrative into speech using speech bubbles. This was evident through her suggestions for characters' speech. She asked her partner, Jack, whether he agreed with her suggestions before she wrote them down.


**O1.2**

**Phase 2**

Learning objective:

- To write a scene from the legend of Odysseus and the Cyclops in the form of a playscript.

The teacher reviewed the learning objectives from the previous session and re-modelled how the pupils had transformed narrative text into speech. Pupils were then asked to look at what they had written in the speech bubbles and form the speech into a playscript, including literary features displayed in the classroom on the Literacy Learning Wall.

The teacher used the 'think aloud' strategy to model how speech could be transformed into playscript form.  The format, created as a scaffold on the

interactive whiteboard, allowed the teacher to model the construction of speech in sentences. The teacher encouraged discussion regarding character emotions at turning points in the story. This was extended by pupils being asked to read the script aloud, taking account of directions guiding how emotions could be conveyed. As a consequence, the story was unpicked carefully by the teacher with layout and content modelled thoroughly. This strategy of modelling and remodelling key features of the genre supported pupils with integrating new ideas into their existing knowledge base.

Laminated target cards were placed on each table as a concrete reminder of the writing objectives. These took the form of layered targets:

| Must: | Place names of characters on the left hand side. |
|---|---|
| Should: | Use stage directions. |
| Could: | Develop emotions by including direction on how a character should speak. |

The children worked in pairs, as literacy partners, with some collaboration on most aspects of the task while others wrote independently, stopping frequently to share their ideas with their partner or others in the group.

**Jack** stated *'You have to say what the characters are doing in the stage directions'.* **Jack** suggested using the word 'puzzled' to described how a character could speak. However, **Zoe** said they should use 'confused' instead. **Zoe** was quite forceful and so 'confused' was used to describe how the Cyclops was speaking.

**Aidan** was confident to identify the main features of playscripts through his prior reading experiences. He was quick to begin most writing tasks and make suggestions about speech to include both in speech bubbles and in playscript format. He sought guidance from his partner, Emma, when he did not understand certain concepts such as the purpose of the narrator, e.g. *'What are we supposed to do with the bits that aren't speech?'* He often wrote independently and at a faster pace than his partner but was prepared to stop and check what they had written. He checked his writing against the

list of targets set by the teacher for his group and completed the task independently.

**Emma** worked collaboratively with Aidan, at this stage, responding to some of the 'think aloud' questions that he posed. He posed questions aloud, e.g.

Aidan: *Now what could he* (Odysseus) *be doing?*

Emma: *If we read the story again I think we can find out.*

When Aidan posed the question '*How can we get it in the right order*?' Emma suggested *'If we act it we can see if it fits together.'*

**Amelia** had some difficulty understanding the concept putting speech in speech bubbles at the outset of the writing task. She listened to other children in the group reading the text and observed how they went about beginning the task. She was uncertain how to begin the task and what was important information in the text. She asked her partner Molly what to put in the speech bubbles. She waited for her partner, Molly, to add speech and then copied what she had done. After doing this several times, she was able to make some decisions about the speech to be added independently. She was able to check her own playscript and make some relevant secretarial changes.

**Joanna** had difficulty understanding the concept of putting speech from a narrative into speech bubbles at the outset of the writing task. She required support from the teacher initially and then could identify what different characters might say. Joanna explained that she found it difficult to begin her writing without the support of her literacy partner. As **Sophie** was absent, **Joanna** commented *'It's difficult when you haven't got anyone to talk to.'* **Joanna** struggled to make a start with the work independently. She was able to ask for help from other members of the group to help her start her playscript using the narrative of Odysseus and the Cyclops. She was able to reread her work and use the targets set by the teacher to improve her work.

**Molly** was able to make some oral suggestions about a character's feelings but did not know how to show this in a playscript when writing independently.

She was able to check her work against the targets provided by the teacher which supported her in her understanding of the features of a playscript.

**Zoe** was confident to transform the narrative of Odysseus and the Cyclops into playscript form with stage directions. She disagreed with Jack's suggestion to use the word 'puzzled' to described the speech and used her own idea of 'confused' instead. She worked quickly and confidently to produce the completed playscript and was prepared to edit if carefully for form and meaning.

**O1.3**

**Phase 3**

The teacher revised the format and features of a playscript briefly. The playscripts were reviewed so far. The pupils were praised for remembering to include many of the main features of playscripts but were reminded of the need to include correct punctuation for sense and meaning.

The teacher also reminded the children of the role of narrator. She modelled how the narrator is used to fill in the parts of the story which cannot be told through character speech. This had been an aspect of the task that the children had found more difficult during the previous session. She asked the children to use the target sheets, which had been stuck into their books, as a checklist when editing their work. The targets included:

- Character names written in the left hand margin
- Narrator providing extra information to tell the story
- Include a new line for each speaker
- Include directions as to how the characters should speak in brackets
- Include stage directions to show how the characters will move

**Aidan** opened his book almost immediately and began to read through what had been written and the teacher's comments. He then proceeded to check

the corrections the teacher had made to his partner's work and made comparisons.

**Emma** was responsible for giving out books so started after the others. After comparing the teacher's comments with Aidan she asked *'What shall we do next?'* **Emma** was able to reread her work to check on progress and discuss possible ideas with her partner as to how the narrative should continue within the playscript. **Emma** was slower to begin each writing task than her partner, Aidan. She asked Aidan to slow down so that she could catch up with him. She followed the directions provided by the teacher on the interactive whiteboard to construct her playscript. She was able to reread her work and consider ways in which it could be improved for sense and meaning. She was also able to look at the writing targets set by the teacher and evaluate the success of her own playscript against these. She was able to suggest reasons for character feelings during whole class discussion and reflect on character emotions during paired discussion to negotiate use of specific stage directions, e.g. *'because he'd* (Odysseus) *be a bit scared!' 'We could put in Shhhhh (quietly).'*

**Zoe** was quick to start and began writing almost immediately. She did not need to check her work through and was confident that she was able to remember what had been written in the previous session. She was pleased with her writing so far but did display some confusion as to the necessity of speech marks within a playscript. **Jack** commented *'Odysseus is the boss so he needs to speak the most.'*

**Joanna** spent time rereading the work that she had done in the previous session and thought carefully about what to write next.

**Molly** displayed a few delaying tactics before getting started, as did **Amelia. Molly** sharpened pencils and Amelia looked through her book at previous work. **Molly** was the first in the pair to start checking her work through and this encouraged **Amelia** to do the same. **Amelia** relied on **Molly** for direction in their written work.

**R1.1**         **Amelia and Molly**

**Phase 1**

Researcher: How would you explain to a friend what to do for this piece of writing? (Pause)

What would you say if you were helping them? (Pause)

Amelia: (Speaks slowly) You would say (Pause)

Researcher: What do you think, Amelia? How could you really help them?

Amelia: What we are going to do is (pause) do some literacy of Cyclops and remember it...the words of the story and put it into speech bubbles.

Researcher: Molly, what would you say to help your friend?

Molly: Oh, that's hard um (pause). We're learning about the Cyclops and going to add the speech in for the characters to say.


**R1.2**         **Aidan and Emma**

Researcher: (To Emma and Aidan) I'd like to get some of your ideas as well. If you had a friend who had missed the beginning of the lesson, how could you explain to them what to do - what to write?

Emma: Act it out to them…

Aidan: …Then we could, like, because they haven't done this so we could say that you've got to do like this. We could show them ours so they've got to do the speech bubbles. You write what they could say but first you've got to read what's under the pictures.

Researcher: Oh I see. So the writing under the pictures would help them work out what to put in the speech bubbles.

Researcher: So when you get a bit stuck with your writing and you are not sure what to write, what helps you? What do you do when you get stuck?

Aidan: Umm. Get some help. I just ask someone who has good ideas about how to do it.

Researcher: Who do ask for help?

Aidan: The person sitting next to me if they've got past where they know what to write, or the teacher.

Researcher: Oh I see. So if the person next to you is ahead of you, they would be a good person to help? (Aidan nods) That's a good idea. Emma, who helps you most when you get stuck with writing? What helps you most?

Emma: (Pause) I think, read through what I have already done.

Researcher: So if you have read through what you have already done, that helps you think about what to do next.

Aidan: Yeah, because we had that as four and then that as five but now we've said 'now charge' which is four (goes on to explain the changes they have made) because we read it through and think about it together.


**R1.3      Jack and Zoe**

Researcher: What are you finding difficult about this piece of writing?

Zoe: When there is like someone speaking, you don't know what one to put in order because you have to put the speech in the right order so the play makes sense.

Researcher: So is it putting it in order which is a bit tricky?

Zoe: Yes.

Researcher: How have you two decided which order to put the speech bubbles in?

Zoe: Well we thought if Odysseus speaks first (Jack says something inaudible) that's in the right order to the other people, the soldiers. (Jack tries to contribute but cannot be heard over Zoe).

Zoe: You have to tell a story with the people speaking like we did for assembly.

Jack: It's got to be in the right order like the story.


**R1.4 Aidan and Emma**

Researcher: So far, is there anything you are finding hard about this piece of writing?

Aidan: Putting the stage directions in. I forget about it.

Researcher: When you remember do you have an idea about what the characters are going to do?

Aidan: I read it back and think with Emma.

Researcher: So how are you thinking of your ideas to carry on with this?

Aidan: (Pause)

Researcher: Where are your ideas coming from?

Aidan: I just thought of something. (Rereading his work and crosses out part of it)

Researcher: What had you forgotten?

Aidan: Like, Odysseus could say 'I tricked you Cyclops, my name is Odysseus.'

**R1.5**          **Zoe (Jack absent)**

Researcher: Is there anything you are finding difficult about this piece of writing.

Zoe:          Well, like, when you do the speech marks, um, you don't know where to put them and in the writing.

Researcher: Do you need speech marks in this piece of writing?

Zoe:          No.

Researcher: What about thinking of ideas. Do you ever find it difficult to think of ideas?

Zoe:          Yeah because me and Jack tried to act it out.  I was Odysseus and he was Cyclops. It was really hard because it was really hard thinking what would happen if we were there now.

Researcher: Is there anything you find easy about writing this playscript?

Zoe:          Well a bit, because when I was sitting down on the carpet, I had loads of ideas already and when I was reading the story.

Researcher: So do you think of your ideas quite quickly?

Zoe:          (Nods)


**R1.6**          **Joanna (Sophie absent)**

Joanna:      It's difficult when you haven't got anyone to talk to about the writing. It helps me think.

Researcher: Is there anything else that you are finding hard about this piece of writing?

Joanna:      I'm finding it hard to see a way that they can say it. I am thinking of if they would say it two ways and then I'm thinking of the better way.

Researcher: That's a good way to do it.

Researcher: Is there anything you're finding easier about writing this playscript?

Joanna: Well, I'm finding it a bit easier and I'm getting used to writing down like all the things that they are doing in the stage directions.

Researcher: So the more you do, the easier it's getting?

Joanna: Yeah.


**R1.7      Amelia and Molly**

Researcher: What are you finding difficult about this piece of writing?

Molly: To remember every detail about the story and about playscripts.

Researcher: Tell me a bit more. (Pause) Do you mean all the targets that you have got to include?

Molly: Yeah, like exclamation marks and question marks because I forget to do a capital letter there.

Amelia: And it's like (inaudible)

Researcher: So it's getting a bit complicated because it's getting longer.

Amelia: And it's also hard to read each other's and sometimes change things.

Molly: Yeah.

Researcher: Is it hard to agree on ideas? You've got to try to work out which one to use.

Both: Yeah.

**I1.1** **Jack, Joanna and Zoe (Sophie absent)**

Researcher: Where do you think all your ideas came from for your playscript?

(Long pause)

Researcher: How did you get started?

Zoe: We did a Greek assembly which actually helped me because we did the play of Odysseus and the Cyclops. Then we acted it out so we knew what to write down.

Researcher: That's a really good idea. Did you do that before you started writing?

All: Yeah.

Researcher: So what are you happy with in your playscript? What do you think you've done well?

Joanna: I think I've put people in the good places now, so like in the right order. We might change it to put in how they say it and how they feel.

Researcher: So you've put people in the right order and what they would say in the right order?

Joanna: (Nods)

Researcher: Zoe, what about you? What have you done well? What do you like about your playscript?

Zoe: I don't know.

Researcher: What are you really pleased with? (No answer given)

Jack: I like the way I came up with the ideas and then Zoe came up with ideas.

Researcher: So what would you change or do differently next time if you had the chance to write it again?

Jack: I need to put in a few more stage directions.

Researcher: So, Jack. You'd add in a few more stage directions. Joanna, any ideas what you might change?

Joanna: I might change to put in how they would say it.

Researcher: Oh, so more description of how they characters are supposed to speak.

Joanna: Yeah.

Researcher: Zoe, what would you change about yours?

Zoe: The directions and showing people how to speak because it's hard.

Researcher: What did you find most difficult about this piece of writing?

Zoe: Pretending that we're in the cave right now.

Researcher: So trying to imagine what it's like? What did you find most difficult, Jack?

Jack: (Pause) Doing the stage directions.

Researcher: Joanna, what about you? What did you find really difficult?

Joanna: To think about what they are going to say and what words to put in.

Researcher: If you were going to help your friend write a playscript what advice would you give them?

Jack: Don't do speech marks.

Joanna: Put stage directions in brackets.

Zoe: The stage directions.

**I1.2          Aidan, Emma and Molly (Amelia absent)**

Researcher: Where do you think your ideas came from for your writing? How did you know what to start writing?

Aidan:      Well the teacher explained it and then we went to our table and me and Emma talked and thought about things we could write.

Researcher: So the teacher really helped first of all?

Emma:       Yeah.

Aidan:      Then we looked at the script that we did but we added some more.

Molly:      Then we added the little details.

Researcher: When you work together you help each other with ideas. What did you find the hardest thing about writing this?

Aidan:      Like the sentences, putting full stops, question marks, capital letters because when you do a sentence, because um capital letters are a bit hard to remember and you leave them out. But if you check back through, you put them back in.

Molly:      I missed the capital letters mostly. I didn't know it had a capital letter on Odysseus. (Children are looking at their books which have been marked by the teacher with corrections made to punctuation) I've never heard of the word Odysseus before.

Researcher: So Emma, what did you find the most difficult?

Emma:       Catching up with Aidan was hard because he was quick.

Researcher: I wonder why Aidan worked more quickly.

Aidan:      I wanted to help Emma, but because we didn't have a lot of time, I quickly did some more then um looked where Emma was and she was a bit far away but I think she got up to like

over here. I waited for her because I didn't know what else I could write and then we shared some ideas.

(Children discuss whether they got a team point for their writing)

Researcher: So the hardest thing was keeping up with your partner. You had some lovely ideas didn't you. I remember you talking about your ideas.

Aidan: Yeah, she helped me most with thinking of ideas.

Researcher: If you could change your playscript or add anything in what would you do?

Molly: More concentration.

Aidan: I would cut this and this off and do it a bit longer (indicates the parts he would change).

Researcher: Why would you cut those two parts off?

Aidan: Because I would put them right at the end.

Researcher: Molly, you didn't finish, would you like to continue the story if you had more time?

Molly: Yeah, it was getting a bit fun.

Researcher: If you helped your friend to write a playscript, how would you help them start?

Aidan: Well, I would tell my partner what to write, then I would keep it in my head and write it myself so my partner goes first and we think about it, then I'd go after her.

Emma: I would (pause) I'm not sure what I would do.

Molly: I would discuss it with her and then think about it and get it in my head like Aidan said and then do it.

Researcher: So you would discuss it first, talk about it, then try and put it in your head, remember it. Then think about the writing.

Aidan: I wanted to get it all done before Emma because, if Emma's in front of me and she's thinking of what to do and I'm trying to concentrate, I wouldn't be able to help her but if I do it quicker, I can look where she is and help her with what she's got to write.

## S1.1 Playscript: Aidan

Tuesday 30th November

. To be able to write a scene from a play

### Playscript Checklist

| Feature | I think | Teacher |
|---|---|---|
| Names are written on the left hand side | ✓ | ✓ |
| A new line starts when a new person speaks | ✓ | ✓ |
| The narrator gives some extra information to help the story flow. | ✓ | ✓ |
| There are directions showing how people speak in brackets | ✓ | ◯ |
| There are stage directions telling the actors of any special movements they need to make. | ✓ | ✓ |

Scene 3
In the cave

Narrator: ~~Soldier~~ Odysseus gave the Cyclops some wine.
odysseus (handing over some wine) ✓
~~Soldier~~ : Here you go. ✓

Cyclops: Thank you and what is your name?

Odysseus: My name is Odysseus my name is No-one. ✓

Cyclops: No-one is a funny name. ✓
(~~Lathing~~) laughing
Cyclops: More wine please.
Narrator: →? What would the narrator say to fill in
cyclops: Z Z Z Z Z.            the story?

Narrator: So Odysseus planed his escape.    ✓

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**Odysseus:** Find me the biggest stik [stick] men.

**Soldier 1:** Will this do?
(holding the stik).

**Odysseus:** Yes We now need to stab the cyclops

**Narrator:** So odysseus and his men used the pole and charged at the cyclops.

**Odysseus:** Charge! ✓

**Cyclops:** Aaaah my eye. ✓
(holding his eye) * This doesn't ✓ come here

**Odysseus:** I kriked you Cyclops my name is odysseus remember my name.

**Narrator:** So that was the story Of how odysseus kriked the cyclops.

* You have missed quite a bit out here.

Well done — a good try at your playscript.
(tp) You have included a lot of the important features.

You need to work on your punctuation, because eventhough you are writing in full sentences, they aren't correctly punctuated.

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**S1.2 Playscript: Amelia**

Tuesday 30th November

To be able to write a Scene from a playskript

Playscript Checklist

| Feature | I think | Teacher |
|---|---|---|
| Names are written on the left hand side | ✓ | ✓ |
| A new line starts when a new person speaks | ✓ | ✓ |
| The narrator gives some extra information to help the story flow. | ✓ | ✓ |
| There are directions showing how people speak in brackets | ✓ | ◯ |
| There are stage directions telling the actors of any special movements they need to make. | ✓ | ✓ |

Scene 3 - on the island Cyclops

Cyclops: What is

Narrator: Odyesses gave the wine to the Cyclops.
(Odysseurs gives wine to cyclops.) ✓

Cyclops: What

Cyclops: What is your name?

Odysseus: My name is nobody.

Cyclops: Nobody is a funny name!
(Cyclops falls asleep.) ✓

Odysseus: Find me the biggest stick [stik] men.

Soldier 1: Will this do?
(holding the stik).

Odysseus: Yes We now need to stab the cyclops

Narrator: So odysseus and his men used the pole and charged at the cyclops.

Odysseus: Charge! ✓

Cyclops: Aaaath my eye. ✓
(holding his eye) *                    This doesn't ✓ come here

Odysseus: I killed you cyclops my name is odysseus remember my name.

Narrator: So that was the story of how odysseus killed the cyclops.

* You have missed quite a bit out here.

Well done  — a good try at your playscript.
(tp) You have included a lot of the important features.

You need to work on your punctuation, because eventhough you are writing in full sentences, they aren't correctly punctuated .

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## S1.3 Playscript: Emma

Tuesday 30th November

To be able to write a scene from
a playscript

### Playscript Checklist

| Feature | I think | Teacher |
|---|---|---|
| Names are written on the left hand side | ✓ | ✓ |
| A new line starts when a new person speaks | ✓ | ✓ |
| The narrator gives some extra information to help the story flow. | ✓ | ✓ |
| There are directions showing how people speak in brackets | ✓ | ✓ |
| There are stage directions telling the actors of any special movements they need to make. | ✓ | ✓ |

Scene 3 — where? the cave

Odysseus: ~~there you go some lovley wine~~
~~Give cyclops wine~~

Narrator: ~~Solb~~ Odysseus gave some wine to th
cyclops.

~~(Odysseus give lovely clops wine~~

Odysseus: there you go some lov~~elely~~ely wine ⊙

Cyclops: Thank you ~~whats~~ is your name! ✓
(laughing)

Odysseus: ⓜMy name is Odys my name is No-one
(laughing)

Cyclops ⓝo—one is a funny ~~a~~ name⊙
more wine please. Z... Z... Remember your
Z. Z .. Z .                    punctuation.

Narrator: So Odysseus planed his escape ⊙

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You are _still_ forgetting punctuation!

Odysseus: Find me the biggest stik men

Soldir 1: Will this do

( holding a stick?

Odysseus: Yes! = Now we need to stab the
cyclops.

Narrator: So Odysseus and hiss men
lifted the pole and charged at
the cyclops ✓

Odysseus: Charge! ✓

✓ You have used some of the features of
playscripts 😊 - well done.

Now, use some punctuation. Eventhough
you are ~~working~~ writing in sentences, you
are missing CL and FS!

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## S1.4 Playscript: Jack

Playscript Checklist

| Feature | I think | Teacher |
|---|---|---|
| Names are written on the left hand side | | |
| A new line starts when a new person speaks | | |
| The narrator gives some extra information to help the story flow. | | |
| There are directions showing how people speak in brackets | | |
| There are stage directions telling the actors of any special movements they need to make. | | |

Scene 3.
In the cave ✓

Narrator: ~~Soldier Odysseus gave a glass of wine of X~~
Odysseus' soldiers gave the Cyclopes some wine. ✓

Soldier1: Here you go, some wine. ✓
(Soldier gave wine to the Cyclops). ✓

Cyclops: Why thank you, ~~not~~ what is your name? ✓

Odysseus (Worried) my name is Nobody. ✓

Cyclops: ~~Nobody is a~~ (Confused) Nobody is a funny name. ✓

Absent Thursday 2nd December - so playscript not finished

## S1.5 Playscript: Joanna

Tuesday 30th November

To be able to write a scene from a play script

Playscript Checklist

| Feature | I think | Teacher |
|---|---|---|
| Names are written on the left hand side | ✓ | ✓ |
| A new line starts when a new person speaks | ✓ | ✓ |
| The narrator gives some extra information to help the story flow. | ✓ | ◯ |
| There are directions showing how people speak in brackets | ✓ | ◯ |
| There are stage directions telling the actors of any special movements they need to make. | ✓ | ✓ |

Scene 3 at the cave.

Narrator: Odysseus gave some wine to the Cyclops.

Cyclops: (Odysseus gives wine to cyclops) ✓ what would Odysseus say?

Cyclops: (puzzled) What's your name? ✓

Odysseus: I am called Nobody. ✓

Cyclops: Nobody is a funny name! ✓
(Cyclops falls asleep) why?

Odysseus: Look men, he has fallen asleep. ✓
(Odysseus points to the Cyclops)

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Odyessus: get me the pole men! ✓
(Solder gets pole).

Solder 3: Yes sir.

Solder 2: come one lets get this over with!
(Solder 2 Wabbels)

You are including some of the features of
playscripts , but you need to
use the narrator more to fill in parts
of the story.

A good try though ☺

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## S1.6 Playscript: Molly

Tuesday 30th November

To be able to write a scene from a playsc

### Playscript Checklist

| Feature | I think | Teacher |
|---|---|---|
| Names are written on the left hand side | ✓ | ✓ |
| A new line starts when a new person speaks | ✓ | ✓ |
| The narrator gives some extra information to help the story flow. | ✓ | ✓ |
| There are directions showing how people speak in brackets | ✓ | ◯ |
| There are stage directions telling the actors of any special movements they need to make. | ✓ | ✓ |

Scene 3 - In the cave

~~Cyclops: What is your Nam~~

Narrator: Odysseus gave the wine to ~~the~~ cyclops. ✓

~~Cyclops: (Shouting) What is your Name~~

Od. [Odysseus gave the wine to cyclops] — would he say something.
~~Cyclops.~~ Wear

Cyclops: (Shouting) What is your Name?
                           Nobody.
Odysseus: My Name is Nobody. ✓

M. Cyclops: ~~(Sleepe)~~ ~~Nobody is~~ (laughing) Nobody is a. Sorry ✓
                                                  asleep
Narrator: The cyclops fell a Sleep.

Odysseus: (Said) Go and fetch me the ~~biggest~~ *pigger* stick.

Soldier 1: ~~I will this~~ search the cave to
Narrator: ~~M~~ They went to get the ~~bigsse~~ stick.

Soldier 1: (W)ill this do? ✓

Odysseus: (Y)es I ~~am~~ am going to ~~shapin~~ *sharpen* it.

Soldier 1: What are we going to do with it? ✓

Odysseus: We are going to ~~pock~~ *poke* the Cyclops in the eye! ... ✓

(16p) ✓ Good      —you have included lots of
the features of playscripts and you are
telling the story well.

**S1.8 Playscript: Zoe**

Tuesday 30th November

To be able to Write a scene from a play script

Playscript Checklist

| Feature | I think | Teacher |
|---|---|---|
| Names are written on the left hand side | ✓ | ✓ |
| A new line starts when a new person speaks | ✓ | ✓ |
| The narrator gives some extra information to help the story flow. | ✓ | ✓ |
| There are directions showing how people speak in brackets | ✓ | ✓ |
| There are stage directions telling the actors of any special movements they need to make. | ✓ | Some. |

Scene 3 in the cave

Narrator: ~~God Soldier One of the soldiers gave Ody~~ One of oy Odyseaus soldiers gave Cyclo some wine. ✓

Soldier1: Here you go, heres your wine. ✓
        (give wine to cyclops) ✓

Cyclops: Why thank you, what is your name? ✓
        (worried)

~~Odysseus~~ Odyseaus: My ~~for~~ name My name is Nobody. ✓
        ^(Woired?)

Narrator: ^The Cyclops fell asleep.

Cyclops: (confused) Nobody is a funny name, — he wouldn't speak in
        ^(confused)         his sleep.

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Odysseus: Men get a sharp pole so that I can poke Cyclops In his eye. ✓

Soldier 1: Yes right away on Charge! Sir. ✓
Soldier 3: Will this Do.                          bravest
Narrator: Odysseus needed the Braths Men he had. ✓

Soldier 2: Come on lets get this over with. (bossily)

              (Hands on hips) who?

Odysseus: 1 2 3 Charge! ✓

Cyclops: Ow! My eye. (Shouting)
        covering    his
    (Coving)    Cyclops eye

    Remember, how people speak needs to g
    before the words.
    eg.

Cyclops: (shouting) Ow! My eye!

    * A good try  —you have used some
    of the features of playscripts well ☺

**Appendix 6**

**D2: Medium term plan: Non-chronological reports**

| Literacy Planning: Non-chronological reports | | |
|---|---|---|
| Key Objectives:<br>• Identify the structure and language features of non-chronological reports<br>• Locate specific information using contents page, index, headings and sub-headings in non-fiction books<br>• Identify key information in non-fiction texts by highlighting and making notes<br>• Use notes to organise and write specific information under sub-headings | | |
| <u>Compose sentences using adjectives, verbs and nouns for clarity and effect</u><br>**Must:** To write mainly simple sentences using a capital letter and a full stop.<br>**Should:** To use descriptive words and phrases to extend simple sentences.<br>**Could:** To compose simple and compound sentences, choosing interesting vocabulary for effect including using adverbs to modify verbs. | <u>Group related material into paragraphs</u><br><br>**Must:** To be able to link two ideas with 'and'.<br>**Should:** To be able to develop ideas in short sentences.<br>**Could:** To be able to group ideas in sections by content. | |
| We are reading and finding out about non-chronological reports | We are practising the skills for non-fiction report writing | We are writing our own African animals report |
| **Success criteria** | **Focus of Guided teaching** | |
| To identify the structure and features of a non-chronological report.<br>To be able to locate specific information using contents, index, headings, subheadings, page numbers. | Using the features of non-chronological reports/information books (index/contents, etc.) | |
| To identify the main points in passages by underlining and then making a list. | Ensure children are picking out key points from the text. | |
| To turn notes into sentences. | Use paragraphs and sentence structure (full stops and capital letters) | |
| To identify the main points in passages by underlining and then making a list. | Organise notes into sections. Identify main points and think about sections. | |

## S2.1a Lion report: Aidan

Wednesday 14th January

### LIONS

Lions are known as the 'king of the Jungle'. read on ~~Lions~~ for more Infomation.

### Live

African lions live in the grassy plains of southern and Eastern Africa. They live up to 15 years.

### Females

Females go hunting for the food aswell as looking after cubs.

### Males

Males protect the prides ~~from~~ territory from other males. A prides roar can be heard from about 8km away.

### Day

In the day Lions dont go and hunt because it is very hot and they only wake up for a quik drink or play.

### Night

In the night Lions are most active because the tempiture is much cooler.

### Prides

Prides can have up to five or forty lions in them

## S2.1b Crocodile report: Aidan

Monday 21st January

Crocodiles

Crocodiles live up to 100 years and are the biggest reptile in Africa. ✓

croddiles live up to 100 years in the water and they have very sharp teeth.

Mothers and Babies

The mothers carry newly hatched babies. The mother holds water in her mouth for survival. Because they have 15 in their mouth.
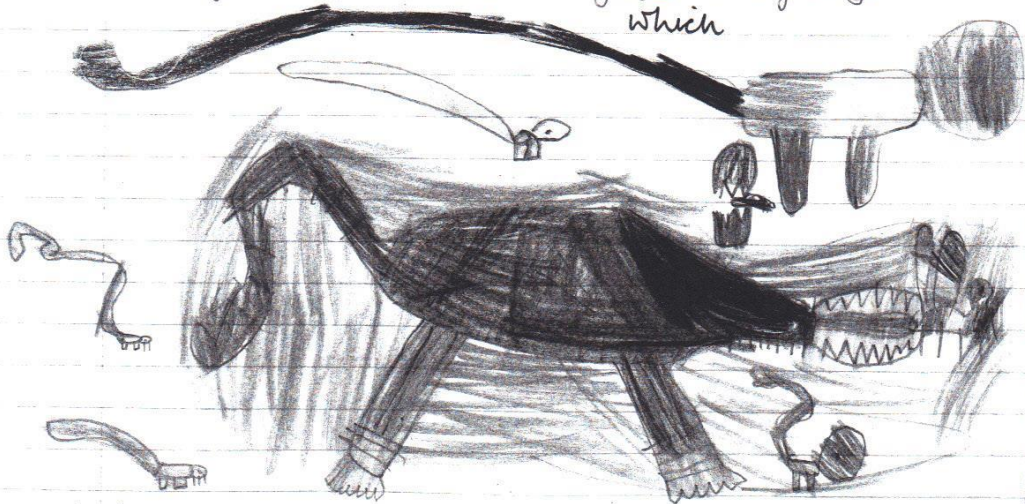
Eating

crocodiles Croddils eat rocks to grined down their food. Ecspeshally as they are meat eaters.

Live

crocodiles The croddiels are well adapted to the water.

Babies

Dwarf Dwar croddiles can grow up to 2m long. Large crocodil can grow up to 7m long. (which is very long!)
which

## S2.2a Lion report: Amelia

Teusday 18th January

Key words on Lions

Live- African Lions = found grassy plians Southern, easter ✓ eastern

Prides( groups )- 5 up to 40 ~~females~~ ~~but~~ mainly females few ~~males~~ ✓ males

males & females

males- so big difficult to hunt looks after, ~~looks~~ his pride.
each dawn roars loudly, his kingdom intruders
beware! Lions roar heared 8 KM away. ✓

Quite
detailed
notes

females- hunt feed group, looking after cubs.

~~Night and day~~

Night and day most active at night, sun set
temperature much cooler.

& males and females live up to 15 years.

## S2.2b Crocodile report: Amelia

Monday 13st January

Crocodiles

Crocodiles
Crocodiles have about 50 the teeth or more.
Read the following information to find out more. ✓

Mothers and Babies hatched. She puts
Femiles carry their newly hatched young. the water inside her mouth
so she can carry as many 15 babies at a time in one go. It is
impotent for the babies sivible. survival.

Eating                                    (Carnivores) They
Crocodilean reptiles are meat eaters (convivial) They are ajude and
strong enoph to launch up and snoch its prey.
      enough                    snatch ✓

Body                                        A
It is easy to recognies a gharial shape. the crocdiets
head has a long snout called a scissors like a
jaws, they eath contian more than 50 the teeth this kind
of head is exetent exedent for fishing.

Facts about crocodlias

**Appendix 7**

**D3: Medium term plan: Letters of review**

| Literacy Planning: Letters of review |
| --- |

| Key Objectives: |
| --- |
| <ul><li>Identify the language and key features of formal letters</li><li>Identify the language and key features of informal letters</li><li>Write an informal letter to a friend incorporating a review of a book</li><li>Write a formal letter to an author incorporating a review of one of his/her books</li></ul> |

| Compose sentences using adjectives, verbs and nouns for precision, clarity and effect | To group related material into paragraphs |
| --- | --- |
| **Must:** To be able to correctly punctuate at least half of their writing with capital letters and full stops.<br>**Should:** To use capital letters, full stops, question marks and exclamation marks in their writing.<br>**Could:** To accurately use commas in lists and understand the use of commas to break up longer sentences. | **Must:** To be able to show evidence of a simple structure in non-narrative writing.<br>**Should:** To be able to group ideas in sections by content.<br><br>**Could:** To show structure within writing by using basic paragraphs. |

| We are reading and finding out about reviews and letters | We are practising the skills for letter-writing | We are writing our own letter of review |
| --- | --- | --- |

| Success criteria | Focus of Guided teaching |
| --- | --- |
| I can explain what a story is about and give reasons for my opinions. | Share texts, children reading, discussing storylines and opinions. |
| I can pick out the main points from a story. | Reread one text. Demonstrate how to pick out the key points from a story. |
| I can use the main points from a story to write a summary with ideas developed into short sections. | Use connectives to link ideas and write a summary of a story. |
| I can choose a favourite part/ character and write about my choices. | Demonstrate how to pick out favourite part/character and review, using connectives. |
| I can write a review of a book including the summary of the story, give and explain my opinions about my favourite part/character and recommend who the book is suitable for. | Use a familiar text and write a book review. |
| I can identify the language and key features of formal letters. I can write a letter for a specific purpose and audience. | Letters – analysing, sharing examples (formal)<br>Modelling letter-writing, features.<br>Writing letters (informal) |

Tuesday 15th February

My favourite bit part or character

I like the part were he gets new clotes because it maks him happy. my favourite character is the dog because his feet got stuck in the mud wich is very sticky I also like the graf because he was spoty and very tall and I liked the tie and the scaf

## S3.3b Letter: Emma

St
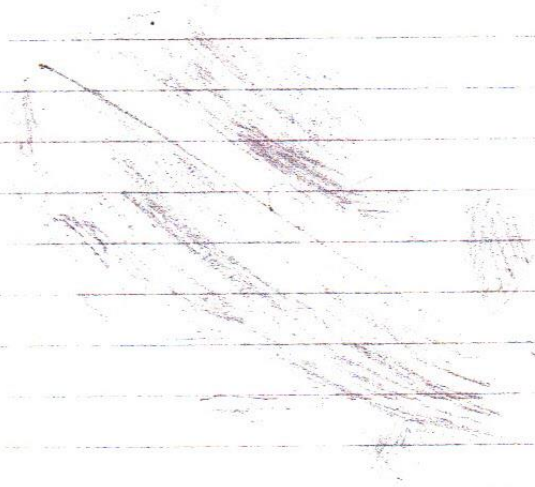
The macmillan Building
4 crinan street
London
N1 9XW ✓

8th March 2011

Dear Julia Donaldson, ✗ Start under the comma!
I am writing to you because I _absolutely_
adore the Gruffalo child. I love the part
where the Gruffalo ~~and~~ tells hes child about
the mouse. M my ~~fauo~~ _favourite_ ~~part~~ ~~is~~ _character_ is
the Gruffalo because he is very ― discriptied
I would give it 5/5 because I love
to the way you ― ~~~~ _write_.

✓ Well done a good start to formal letter
writing.

You are beginning to layout the letter
correctly and use formal language.

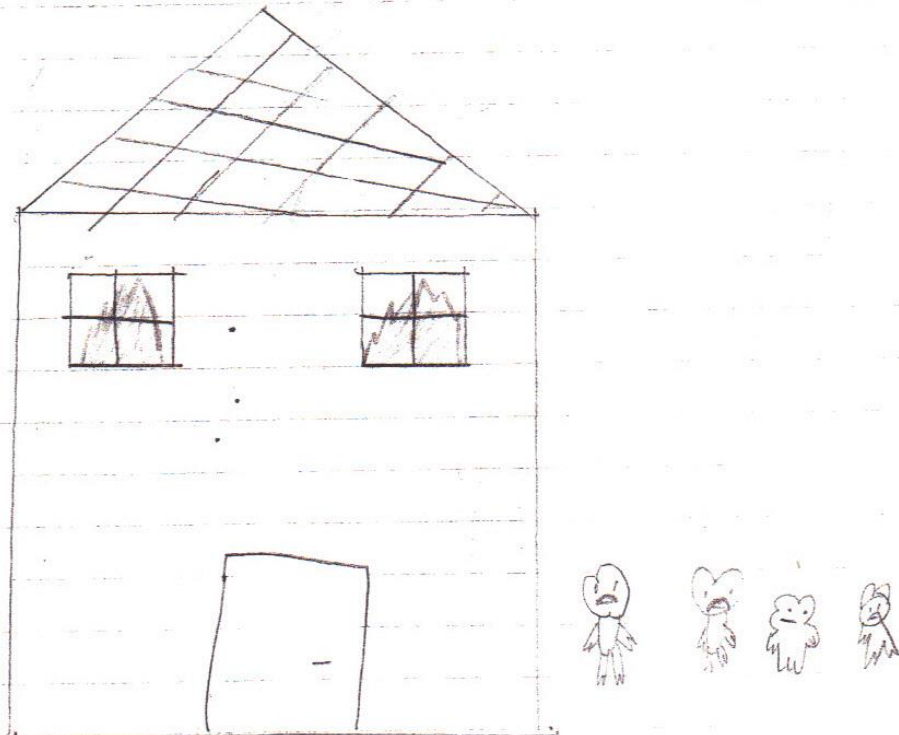Tuesday 15th February 2011

"My favourite part or character

My favourite characters are the mice because they b
funny when they squeaked "Are house is on fire".

My favourite part is when Georges trousers fall
and you can see his big red spoty pants and it
really funny and you dont normaly see that
a book.

## S3.7b Letter: Sophie

Anderson Press
Anderson Press Ltd,
20 Vauxhall Bridge Road
London

Tuesday 8th March 2011

Dear Jeanne Willis and Tony Ross.
                                    I am writing to tell
you that I'm am huge fan of your books
especially DR Xargles book of Earthlets

My favourite part is when they say babies come in
pink, black, brown and yellow its really funny and
silly

recommend
I would _____ this book to my little sister and
I would rate it 5/5, its great

Last of all I loved your _____ pictures and
writing. I really loved the part both of them because
they much match

+Fabulous formal
letter. 1tp.
You can write the correct layout and language.

Yours sincerely, S

**Appendix 8**

**D4: Medium term plan: Narratives**

| Literacy Planning: Narratives | | |
|---|---|---|
| Key Objectives: <br> • Identify the main features of a quest myth including structure and language <br> • Plan the different stages of a quest myth using the correct sequences and structure <br> • Use a plan to write the opening of a story, describing the setting and character <br> • Describe the problems a hero might face in typical quest myth settings | | |
| <u>Compose sentences using adjectives, verbs and nouns for precision, clarity and effect</u> <br> **Must:** To be able to correctly punctuate at least half of their writing with capital letters and full stops. <br> **Should:** To use capital letters, full stops, question marks and exclamation marks in their writing. <br> **Could:** To accurately use speech marks. | <u>To group related material into paragraphs</u> <br> **Must:** To be able to show evidence of a simple structure in narrative writing. <br> **Should:** To be able to group ideas in sections. <br> **Could:** To show structure within writing by using basic paragraphs. | |
| We are reading and finding out about the features and structure of a story | We are practising the skills for story writing | We are writing our own Ancient Greek quest myth |
| **Success criteria** | **Focus of Guided teaching** | |
| I can identify the main features of a quest myth including structure and language used. | Summarising the story. <br> Ensuring understanding of events in story. | |
| I can identify both good and bad characters from a myth and describe their typical characteristics. | Introducing use of thesaurus. <br> Encourage use of interesting adjectives. | |
| I can identify the main features of a quest myth including structure and language use. | Encourage use of more interesting adjectives. | |
| I can describe the problems a hero might face in a typical Greek myth setting. | Developing character/monster/setting ideas. | |
| I can plan the different stages of my Greek myth using the correct structure. | Developing character/monster/setting ideas. | |
| I can tell the story of my Greek myth orally. <br> I can suggest improvements to another person's Greek myth. | Encouraging wide vocabulary. | |

**R4.4**     **Emma, Joanna, Sophie and Zoe**

Researcher: Let's have a look at what you have been doing. Let's help Zoe with the bit she is finding tricky.

Zoe: What shall I say? Shall I say he kills him by burning the stumps of his head?

Researcher: How is he going to use the Hydra claws?

Joanna: Perhaps they are really sharp and they can dig into people?

Zoe: Yes, we have to think of a reason why he does each thing.

Researcher: Why is he doing it?

Zoe: The first reason was to save a beautiful princess from an evil ogre. (Discussion about the details of her story)

Researcher: Sophie, talk me through yours.

Sophie: Well the evil king lives here and his name is King Hydran. He (the hero) has to save a beautiful princess from an evil goblin who lives in a cave so he (the king) can rule the castle and then the hero kills some wolves and he or she gets an invisible cloak. He saves the princess and kills the goblin by wearing the invisible cloak. Then the evil king leaves the castle

Emma: I have written, glimmering water, underwater palace, precious Greek mask, crystal sword, foggy maze. (Describes her story showing that she has followed the structure provided by the teacher)

## S4.3a Narrative draft: Emma

Tuesday 29th March 2011

A Greek myth

beautiful Perseus

Glimmering

One *butifull* day *persie's* looked up at the *glimring* water *frorm* his underwater *palace.* Everyone called him

Powerful Mr *Pawfull* because he is so *pawfull.* He went in for a glass of water but *Just* that minute he *heard* a deep voice. It said "*Persies* you have to save the the very precious *famly* Greek mask. To

Cystral help you I will give you a crestal *sord* sword. You will have to go through the foggy *mask* maze, then across the swamp, then you can get the mask come back and show me. This will take you accept? 4 years 6mins and 3 seconds. Do But you *except*" whispered Zeus. "Yes" answered *persies.* *Persies* was a bit *waried.*

worried

A super start to your myth! ☺

1.4.11. (Because) the did not know if he could do

look
it. It *took* him *two* hours to get *tere* to the foggy maze where he *fited* *had* a fite with any *toklas* monster did he *say*

Persius *put* packed his bag for his *advench*

he was amazed how foggy it was. Perseus could *sém* smell the damp ____. Perseus *coud* taste the bitter air. Perseus can smell a *horible* smell
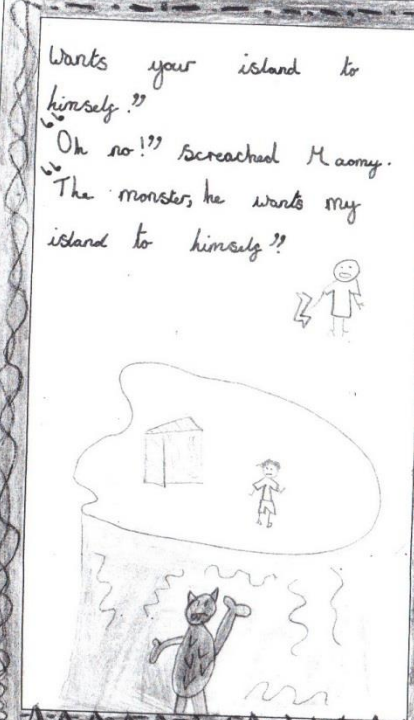
**S4.4a Narrative draft: Jack**

Tuesday 5th April 2011

The monster

Suddenly as it began to rain the colour in the
sky was dull. aladon was saking like mad.
He gripped his sowed and muched sowed tring
to be brave. Suddanly he felt a slimy
tentical behind him he did not bother to ter
around, he gust run. When he now he could
turn round he so sore of his father hung
to a post "father" aladon shouted. Now he
was so determand he terned round and look
at the horible beast, he looked slumy
as a slug and twice as hug. he was
as huge as a lorry. He wiped his
tentical right at him but luckaly he
ducked and with the sowed of brighten
he choped his two longe off he was
defeted and Taladon untied his father.

## S4.5b Narrative: Joanna

One roasting hot day Naomy stepped out of his stick and seaweed house "Wow" he said to himself. "Its a really hot day." Just as he was going to get a glass of water he felt a thud from underneath then herd a voice it said, "Naomy my name is Zeus did you just feel a thud". "Yes" shouted Naomy. "Well there is a massive malicious monster and he

wants your island to himself."
"Oh no!" screached Naomy.
"The monster, he wants my island to himself."

## S4.7b Narrative: Sophie

It was a dark and cloudy as the soggy grey castle stood on the wind grass. Hercules was inside but all of a sudden he heard a knock at the door. so he went and answered it. "Hello Sir im a green messenger. I would like to report a missing princess. there is a reward for the person who finds her. Here is a picture of her, good bye."
"Wow." he exclaimed. "I bet I could find her it would be easy!"

### The Journey

Hercules decided to set off and save the princess. He knew it would take a lot of bravery to save her. It took seven long hours to reach the gloomy forest. When he found the forest he took a deep breath and entered it. When his feet touched the ground all the leaves scwelched. He smellt the damp on the tree bark from the rain slivering down from the leaves at the top. He kept on walking but half way Hercules stopped. He heard heavy breathing

## S4.6b Narrative: Molly

One rainy day Perseus was in the castle eating his dinner. A letter came like always. There was a missing princess. She had got kidnapped by a evil goblin. Perseus was brave and he waned to Save the princess but his father would never let him out of the castle. Perseus thought he would never go out in his life. Suddenly his father fel asleep. Perseus new he could get away now.

Perseus got away. Then peseus found a forest. Perseus began to take a big breath Then he heard a noise behind him it was Zeus. Zeus said "I won't hurt you, I Just want to give you this". Zeus passed a sword and shield to Perseus. Suddenly Zeus was gone and Perseus went in the forest. He touched a tree and it was all damp. He carryed on and he saw a twisted tree. Perseus smellt rotten bones near by and he tasted something bitter. The sun was going down, Perseus fel asleep

## S4.8b Narrative: Zoe

One Gloomy groggy day a dark lonely Castle stood on the yellow ruined grass. Cerecales was sitting on a big rock outside throwing stones at the castle. Cerecales sighed "Oh I wish Mother was still alive."

"Father was always happy when Mother was still alive. But now Father is angry and sad."

Suddenly clouds came creeping behighed Cerecales. Cerecales was gripped with fear.

"Do not fear Cerecales its Zeus

your Father has kidnapped the princess."

Zeus whisperd.

**Appendix 9**

**An extract from the teacher's critical reflections**

R:     Researcher

T:     Teacher

(Looking at data transcripts)

R:     He (Aidan) was able to explain how thinking and talking as part of a group helped him develop his ideas 'If you weren't thinking and talking about it on the carpet and you had to think of it on your own it might get harder and harder because you might change your mind and I just talk about it and I think of it on the carpet and I'm fine with that.'

T:     That's a very 'Aidan' comment. He would say that.

R:     I've labelled it as 'aware' use.

T:     I agree. That's very 'Aidan' thinking.

R:     Amelia.

T:     That's quite hard to put a label on. I suppose that probably is 'aware' because she's got one idea. She's very quiet and reserved and there are quite big characters in the group who are keen to put their ideas forward. Perhaps she doesn't want to say too much just in case she isn't right. I think that is aware use.

R:     Emma was confident at the beginning with playscripts but lost confidence with non-chronological reports as she found it harder.

T:     It was Emma who, when we were doing the book reviews, was saying that she didn't agree with what others might be saying. She was able to put her opinion across.

R:     What about with the narratives?

T: She found it very difficult when I said well you haven't really described this section yet. Why did Perseus go there? She found it very difficult to tell me why. She found it very difficult to give an interesting reason.

R: I put 'aware' for her strategies for developing her letter of review as she talked about whole class discussion time helping her form her ideas.

T: That is definitely 'aware'.

R: Jack. Some of his answers were 'aware' instead of 'strategic'. I was boarder line with his statement about using adjectives to help develop his letter of review.

T: It's just adjectives isn't it? He's not taking anything else on. So I think maybe that is 'aware'…

R: …I was not certain whether Aidan showed 'strategic' use when he was discussing how he constructed his letter of review. He isn't organising his thinking or selecting strategies is he.

T: He is just simply using the best bits from previous work.

R: I don't think that is 'strategic'. (Teacher shakes her head)

R: Amelia is just aware that by talking you can then produce a text. I would be interested to read her finished one.

R: Let's go to Joanna as she showed 'collaborative' use. (Quotes Joanna)

T: Oh, that's definitely 'collaborative' isn't it.

R: She's sharing that strategy.

T: That's really nice because she is thinking about if she were the teacher and was going to guide someone through the process.