

“It’s a matter of individual taste, I guess”: Secondary school English teachers’
and students’ conceptualisations of quality in writing.

Lines, Helen Elizabeth

Submitted for degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education

January 2014

“It’s a matter of individual taste, I guess”: Secondary school English teachers’
and students’ conceptualisations of quality in writing.

Submitted by Helen Elizabeth Lines to the University of Exeter as a thesis for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education in January 2014.

This thesis is available for Library use on the understanding that it is copyright
material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper
acknowledgement.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been
identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for
the award of a degree by this or any other University.

(Signed)..... *Hlines*

ABSTRACT

This thesis presents an investigation into secondary school English teachers' and students' conceptualisations of good writing, and how they might use their understandings of quality in writing for the purpose of improving writing. By focusing on the views and classroom practices of twelve-year-old students and their teachers, the research aims to advance understanding of teachers' and students' conceptual thinking about writing quality, and the underlying constructs.

The research utilises data from an ESRC-funded project titled *Grammar for Writing?: The Impact of Contextualised Grammar Teaching on Pupils' Writing and Pupils' Metalinguistic Understanding* (grant number RES-062-23-0775). This data was gathered from thirty-one teachers and their Year 8 students over three terms. Lesson observations took place once each term, and were followed by interviews with each project teacher and one teacher-chosen student from each class. Interview questions relating to beliefs about good writing were included in the project schedules and were inductively analysed to discern themes in participants' responses. Interviews with students took the form of 'writing conversations' during which students commented on samples of their own and their peers' writing. A small-scale follow-up study with three Year 8 classes in one secondary school was used to confirm initial findings and to provide additional data on students' beliefs about good writing.

The research found that teachers' conceptualisations of writing quality were internally consistent but that variation between teachers was marked. Teachers not only valued different qualities in writing but experienced different degrees of conflict and ambiguity when relating their personal construct of quality to the official, public construct, as embodied in national assessment criteria. The findings support earlier views of teacher judgement as richly textured and complex, drawing on different available indexes, including idiosyncratic conceptualisations of writing quality.

Whilst students' criteria for good writing echoed their teachers' criteria to some extent, there was also evidence of students drawing on their own

conceptualisations of quality, especially in relation to the intended impact of writing on the reader. Many students expressed a strong awareness of writing for an audience and clearly valued writing as a social practice. They especially valued peer judgement of their writing. However, students' strategies for improving writing were often difficult to articulate, formulaic and generalised, or circumscribed by limited linguistic subject knowledge.

The study is significant in offering an insight into teachers' and students' conceptualisations of writing quality and how these might be brought into play in the writing classroom. The findings may have particular resonance since they are reported at a time of radical change to assessment policy and practice in secondary schools in England.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the teachers and students who have shared their time and thoughts with me so generously and enthusiastically, and who have reminded me time and again how lucky I was to choose teaching as a career.

I would like to thank my supervisors, Susan Jones and Debra Myhill, and Annabel Watson, my colleague on the ESRC-funded *Grammar for Writing?* study, all of whom have helped me make the transition from secondary school English teacher to University researcher and who in different ways have given me the confidence to 'just get on with it'. Thanks too to my husband for giving me the space to do so.

LIST OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction.....	14
1.1 The research problem.....	14
1.2 The research study.....	19
2. Defining the Standard.....	21
2.1 National assessment criteria for writing.....	21
2.2 National assessment criteria and constructs of quality.....	22
2.3 National assessment criteria and the writing curriculum.....	23
2.4 Differences in national assessment procedures.....	24
2.5 National assessment and teacher evaluation of writing quality.....	27
2.6 National assessment criteria in the classroom.....	31
2.7 Summary.....	35
3. Literature Review.....	36
3.1 Overview and a note on terms.....	36
3.2 The contested nature of writing quality.....	39
3.2.1 The difficulty of defining good writing.....	39
3.2.2 Examining what good writers do.....	42
3.2.3 Contested views of quality outcomes.....	45
3.2.4 Variation in writing quality.....	48
3.2.5 Competing perspectives on writing quality.....	50
3.3 The complexity of writing and evaluation.....	55
3.3.1 Progression in writing.....	57
3.3.2 Linguistic models of writing development.....	58
3.3.3 Cognitive models of writing development.....	62
3.3.4 Sociocultural theory and writing development.....	65
3.3.5 Investigating judgement processes.....	67
3.4 Tensions in teachers' evaluations of writing quality.....	71
3.5 Tensions in students' evaluations of writing quality.....	76
3.6 Summary.....	79
4. Methodology.....	82
4.1 Research aims.....	82

4.2 Research questions.....	82
4.3 Research paradigm and theoretical assumptions.....	83
4.4 Research design.....	90
4.4.1 Part 1: The <i>Grammar for Writing?</i> study.....	91
4.4.2 Part 2: Independent single case study intervention.....	94
4.4.3 Participants.....	96
4.4.4 Validity.....	100
4.4.5 Reflexivity.....	102
4.4.6 Ethical considerations.....	106
4.5 Data collection.....	108
4.5.1 Interviews with teachers and students.....	109
4.5.2 Classroom observation.....	112
4.5.3 Case study.....	113
4.5.4 Piloting.....	114
4.6 Data analysis.....	115
4.6.1 Analysing interview data.....	118
4.6.2 Analysing lesson observations.....	121
4.6.3 Analysing case study data.....	122
4.7 Limitations.....	122
5. Conceptualisations of quality in writing.....	124
5.1 Teachers' conceptualisations of good writing.....	124
5.1.1 Conflicting opinions about good writing.....	124
5.1.2 Images of good writing.....	126
5.1.3 Definitions of good writing.....	128
5.1.4 Generic and genre-specific views of good writing.....	135
5.1.5 Reading-writing relationship.....	138
5.1.6 A good teacher of writing.....	141
5.1.7 Classroom values.....	144
5.2 Students' conceptualisations of good writing.....	146
5.2.1 Conflicting opinions about good writing.....	146
5.2.2 Images of good writing.....	150
5.2.3 Definitions of good writing.....	151
5.2.4 Generic and genre-specific views of good writing.....	155

5.2.5	Self as writer.....	157
5.2.6	Reading-writing relationship.....	160
5.2.7	Influences on students' judgements of quality.....	161
5.3	Consistency in understandings of quality.....	166
5.3.1	Consistency between teachers.....	166
5.3.2	Consistency between students.....	169
5.3.3	Consistency between teachers and students.....	170
5.4	The match between teachers' criteria and national criteria.....	172
5.4.1	Tensions and conflicts.....	172
5.4.2	Assessing writing at Key Stages 3 and 4.....	177
5.4.3	Summative testing.....	181
5.4.4	Difficulty making judgements.....	183
5.4.5	Summary.....	186
6.	References to quality in the writing classroom.....	188
6.1	Teachers' references to writing quality.....	188
6.1.1	The concept of audience and purpose.....	188
6.1.2	The concept of variety.....	192
6.1.3	The concept of effect on the reader.....	193
6.1.4	References to national assessment criteria.....	197
6.1.5	Feedback on writing.....	198
6.1.6	Peer evaluation of writing.....	200
6.1.7	Linguistic subject knowledge in the classroom.....	202
6.1.8	Pedagogy for improving writing.....	204
6.2	Students' suggestions for improving the quality of writing.....	207
6.2.1	Purpose, audience and effect.....	208
6.2.2	Understanding of genre conventions.....	213
6.2.3	Limited or formulaic responses.....	217
6.2.4	Difficulty explaining effects.....	220
6.2.5	Students' linguistic subject knowledge.....	221
6.2.6	Summary.....	224
7.	Discussion.....	226
7.1	Introduction: restating the research problem.....	226

7.2	Conceptualisations of quality in writing.....	228
7.2.1	Complexity and variation.....	228
7.2.2	Conceptual and evaluative ambiguities.....	232
7.3	Using understandings of quality to improve writing.....	244
7.3.1	Sharing views of quality.....	244
7.3.2	Conceptual and linguistic confusion.....	248
8.	Conclusions and Implications.....	249
8.1	Summary conclusions.....	249
8.1.1	The national context.....	251
8.2	Detailed conclusions and implications.....	252
8.2.1	Conceptualising quality: variety and variation.....	252
8.2.2	Conceptual ambiguity and uncertainty.....	254
8.2.3	The impact of subject knowledge.....	255
8.2.4	Pedagogy for improving writing.....	257
	Glossary.....	260
	References.....	263

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Chapter 2

Table 2.1 Assessment criteria for high-grade writing at GCSE.....	28
Table 2.2 Key Stage 3 high-level attainment descriptors.....	29
Table 2.3 New Zealand progress indicators.....	33

Chapter 4

Figure 4.1 Overview of research design.....	90
Table 4.1 ESRC-funded ' <i>Grammar for Writing?</i> ' project design.....	92
Table 4.2 Research questions matched to methods of data collection.....	95
Table 4.3 Teacher interview questions matched to research questions.....	110
Table 4.4 Student interview questions matched to research questions.....	111
Figure 4.2 The data analysis spiral.....	117
Table 4.5 Examples of coding frame from teacher interviews.....	120
Table 4.6 Examples of coding.....	120

Chapter 5

Table 5.1 In vivo coding: teachers' images of good writing.....	127
Table 5.2 Teachers' frequently-referenced criteria for good writing.....	128
Table 5.3 Responses to 'What makes a good teacher of writing?'.....	142
Figure 5.1 Students' responses to 'good writing' prompt.....	147
Figure 5.2 Students' responses within AF3 and AF4.....	147
Table 5.4 Students' choices in rank ordering exercise.....	149
Table 5.5 In vivo coding: students' images of good writing.....	150
Table 5.6 Students' frequently-referenced criteria for good writing.....	152
Table 5.7 Teachers' personal constructs of quality in writing.....	167-68
Table 5.8 Comparison of teachers' and students' in vivo criteria.....	171
Table 5.9 Personal constructs of quality matched to assessment criteria.....	176

Chapter 6

Table 6.1 Classroom discussion: planning a story.....	191
Table 6.2 Classroom discussion: writing poetry.....	191
Table 6.3 Classroom discussion: describing effects.....	195
Table 6.4 Classroom discussion: explaining effectiveness.....	196

Table 6.5 Classroom discussion: exploring effectiveness..... 197

Table 6.6 Classroom discussion: teacher feedback for improving writing..... 200

Chapter 7

Table 7.1 Variation in teachers' views of assessment criteria..... 241

Table 7.2 KS3 and KS4 assessment criteria relating to creativity..... 242

LIST OF APPENDICES

1. APP Standards File Level 8 narrative writing and commentary.....	284
2. APP in English at KS3: assessment criteria for writing	288
3. <i>Grammar for Writing?</i> project teacher interview schedule.....	289
4. <i>Grammar for Writing?</i> project student interview schedule.....	293
5. <i>Grammar for Writing?</i> project common plans for schemes of work.....	298
6. <i>Grammar for Writing?</i> project training day session on good writing.....	299
7. Independent single case study lesson plan and resources.....	302
a. Pilot lesson plan and resources.....	306
8. <i>Grammar for Writing?</i> project teacher questionnaire.....	309
9. <i>Grammar for Writing?</i> project teacher and student sample data.....	312
10. <i>Grammar for Writing?</i> project: raw data collected from one school.....	313
11. Presentation of research findings at NATE Conference, June 2012.....	388
12. Bracketing own responses about writing quality.....	398
13. Ethical approval forms.....	401
14. <i>Grammar for Writing?</i> project participant consent forms.....	406
15. <i>Grammar for Writing?</i> project report for teachers.....	409
16. <i>Grammar for Writing?</i> project lesson observation schedule.....	411
17. Single case study intervention: student ‘good writing’ prompts.....	412
18. Example of data management and interpretation.....	413
19. Data analysis of <i>Grammar for Writing?</i> project interviews	
a. project team teacher interview initial coding categories.....	417
b. independent analysis of teacher and student interviews initial coding trees.....	418
c. writing quality <i>in vivo</i> coding from interviews with teachers.....	419
d. writing quality <i>in vivo</i> coding from interviews with students.....	423
e. analysis of teacher interviews: final coding frame.....	425
f. analysis of student interviews: final coding frame.....	426
g. analysis of lesson observation notes: coding frame.....	429
20. Single case study intervention data analysis	
a. responses to open-ended prompts and rank order exercise.....	431
b. transcripts of group discussions of writing samples.....	437

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

There were two parts to the research design and data collection for this study.

Most of my data is derived from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)-funded *Grammar for Writing?* project which was conducted between 2008 and 2011 by a team of researchers from the Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter. This project was designed overall by the principal investigators, Professor Debra Myhill and Dr Susan Jones. As Associate Research Fellow for the project, I contributed to the design and piloting of the data collection instruments and wrote one of the three schemes of work which formed the grammar for writing intervention. Together with the principal investigators and the doctoral student, Annabel Watson, I collected data from a share of the 31 project schools. My research has used the teacher and student interview data and classroom observations but the analysis of this data has been carried out entirely independently.

Independently, I designed a small-scale follow-up intervention which was carried out in July 2011.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 The research problem

The concept of quality underpins all learning. In activities as diverse as learning to ski or writing a thesis, we naturally look for models, frameworks or criteria that describe success, so that we can measure our progress towards that goal. Put simply, unless we know what a successful outcome looks like, the best we can aim for, we may not be able to improve performance. Teachers and researchers know that evaluating the quality of writing is both important and difficult. Teaching students to write, sorting students for placement or admission, and research in composition all depend upon the ability to discriminate levels of quality in writing. However, research into teachers' judgements of writing quality reveals a picture of rater variation and discrepancy in marking (Huot 1990), "evaluative ambiguity and conflict" (Broad, 2000:214) and subjectivity (Beck, 2006).

In many countries, writing is a key component of summative, 'high-stakes' testing - national or state-wide assessments such as GCSE examinations in the UK - the results of which may be published in league tables, influence funding and determine students' futures. Summative judgements of writing quality in this context are often problematic, debated in public and highly politicised. For example, research into writing assessment in Australia is positioned in the context of teacher reaction to the imposition of state-wide assessment criteria (Wyatt-Smith, 1999; Wyatt-Smith & Castleton, 2005; Klenowski & Wyatt-Smith, 2008) and, in the US, against the background of state league tables, with federal funding dependent on results (Hillocks, 2002). In England, the pressure of published school league tables contributed to the number of appeals against results of National Curriculum (NC) writing tests at age 14, until their abandonment in 2008. Writing tests at age 11 have drawn consistent criticism, not least for the way they distort the writing curriculum, so that their validity as a measure of quality in writing is brought into question; Lord Bew's independent review of Key Stage 2 testing (DfE, 2011:14) recommended an end to the "perverse incentives of the current system", which resulted in test preparation that focused on a narrow range of genres and writing styles "at the expense of promoting creativity".

Indeed, there are frequent reminders in this country that high-stakes summative writing assessment is contested ground, overlaid with institutional and ideological issues, and often presented as inherently flawed. Year-on-year improvement in General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) results is usually reported as evidence that the exams are too easy, and that standards are falling, not rising. Public faith in high-stakes testing was shaken by the 2012 English GCSE results which resulted in an alliance of schools, councils and professional bodies starting legal action against the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) and the exam boards Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) and Edexcel. This was in response to changes to the grade boundaries for the GCSE English foundation paper which meant that between the January 2012 and June 2012 exams, an additional 10 marks was required to gain a C, a situation recognised as unfair in Wales, where June papers were re-graded. In England, Ofqual resisted a re-mark, claiming that the June results were accurate and issuing a press release stating that January papers were “generously graded” (Ofqual, 2012). Seemingly, the ‘gold standard’ in writing can vary over time and across national borders!

Teachers’ ongoing classroom judgements of writing quality are also contestable, subject to variation and contradiction. Research from Australia shows that the introduction of state-wide standardised assessment criteria does not necessarily lead to standardised evaluations. Wyatt-Smith and Castleton (2004; 2005) report variation of judgement between teachers, and by the same teacher from one time period to another, as well as an expectation that the standard would vary from year to year. Teachers’ ‘global’ judgements of writing quality, drawing on published criteria, often conflicted with their ‘local’ judgements, based on classroom experience and knowledge of individual students. In fact, many teachers found it hard to assess the writing of children they did not teach, confirming that evaluation is an emotional practice for teachers (Steinberg, 2008), influenced by classroom interactions and relationships. Teachers’ judgements of writing quality may also be influenced by gender (Peterson & Kennedy, 2006), personal beliefs and values, classroom experiences, and relationships with students (Edgington, 2005). It seems that

teacher evaluation draws on a complex, diverse range of factors, yet remains “largely uncharted territory in assessment research” (Wyatt-Smith, Castleton, Freebody & Cookson, 2003:13).

Huot and Perry (2009) draw attention to the potential of formative, classroom assessment for writing instruction: assessment criteria illuminate decisions about texts and the process of producing them. However, this field is relatively under-researched. In the US, a study by Juswik et al. (2006) charted the terrain of research on writing during the six-year period from 1999 to 2004, surveying 1,502 refereed journal articles. Writing assessment and evaluation were the least studied areas of inquiry. Huot and Perry (2009:423) and Huot (2002) suggest reasons for this lack of research attention: assessment is still inextricably linked in teachers’ minds with grading and testing, seen as onerous, bureaucratic record-keeping processes which create negative and counterproductive messages for students as learners and which tend to focus narrowly on notions of correctness.

The experience of secondary school students also remains relatively under-researched in the field of writing assessment. The study by Juswick et al. (2006) showed that middle and high school students were the least studied group. In the UK, despite the increased prominence given in secondary schools to self- and peer- assessment, surprisingly little investigation of children’s understandings about writing has taken place, for example to ascertain if students possess the evaluative skills required by current teaching practices (Wray & Medwell, 2006a).

At the same time, in the UK, as in many other Anglophone countries, standards of children’s writing remain a public cause for concern and seem stubbornly hard to shift. Writing standards, as measured in national summative test scores, rose in the decade after the introduction of the Primary and Secondary National Strategies (in 1998 and 2001 respectively) but “writing performance has lagged behind reading at all key stages” (DCSF, 2008:5). A subject summary report from Government inspectors concluded that, despite improvements in teaching writing in the last decade, “many secondary-age students, especially boys, find

writing hard, do not enjoy it, and make limited progress” (Ofsted, 2009). There may also be underachievement by more able pupils: the proportion achieving Level 6+ at Key Stage 3 and grades A and A* at GCSE has consistently failed to reach government targets.

There are grounds for claiming that it is harder to describe or define quality in writing than in other subject areas. The complexity of writing as a social and cultural act makes it difficult to specify the standard being aimed for or to clarify the nature of progression. For one thing, it is almost impossible to delineate the features of ‘good writing’ in a generic sense (Marshall, 2007) because there are so many variables according to genre, or the relative value attached to process and product. But in any case, simply providing students with criteria for a good piece of writing or performance may not be enough to help them progress: the interrelationship between the components is always too complex to be itemised meaningfully and the potential outcomes are too diverse (Sadler, 1989). Development in writing may be better characterised as progress towards a broad horizon than the attainment of clearly-defined goals (Marshall, 2004). The complex and less than tangible nature of writing is an issue for teaching and for assessment, affecting decisions about “what precisely is to be taught and what and how it is to be evaluated” (Parr, 2010a:51). As a consequence, the non-trivial problem for the classroom is “how to draw the concept of excellence out of the heads of teachers, give it some external formulation, and make it available to the learner” (Sadler, 1989:127).

In the light of such findings, my research focuses on how teachers and students in secondary school English classrooms evaluate the quality of writing, for the purpose of improving writing. I am interested in how day-to-day judgements about ‘good writing’ are formed and shared between teachers and their students, and how such judgements might inform writing performance. The research has firm roots in my own professional experience as an English teacher and head of department in secondary state comprehensive schools, and as a Secondary National Strategy English consultant. Personal experience has highlighted some of the paradoxes inherent in teacher evaluation of quality in writing, evidenced, for example, in differences of interpretation and

application of GCSE and Key Stage 3 assessment criteria and in conflicting attitudes towards formative assessment and summative testing. A unique aspect of assessment in English is that teachers must evaluate attainment in three modes (reading, writing, speaking and listening), applying different criteria to each. There can be a conflict for teachers between the need to evaluate a child's attainment holistically and the 'special status' accorded to writing, due to its prominence in summative testing.

At first sight, there may seem little to investigate about writing quality: after all, 'official' published descriptions of good writing and models of progression in writing already exist, for example in the form of national curriculum attainment targets and GCSE examination board grade descriptions. Just as novices might turn to an expert ski instructor or a published thesis to establish the criteria for a quality outcome, national criteria for writing represent benchmark judgements. As one of the research study teachers commented in relation to recognising quality in writing: "I use the criteria given to me by the Government." However, that teacher was commenting ironically, well aware that her own judgements about good writing were often in conflict with the official construct, just as another spoke of having to "cheat my way around the criteria" in order to reward the qualities that she valued. Teachers in the research study specifically drew attention to the subjective nature of evaluation, expecting variation in judgements: "You're going to see 32 teachers and every one of them is going to be different"; "It's a matter of individual taste, I guess"; "What one person loves, another hates about the same piece of writing." Such comments signal that, in practice, evaluating quality in writing is not straightforward and that difficulties are not simply resolved by referring to a set of published criteria.

My professional experience has also highlighted the contradictions for teachers caused by changes to government policy. For example, a twin focus of the National Strategies was improving standards in writing and achieving consistency in the assessment of writing, most recently through the introduction of Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP), a set of standardised assessment criteria for use by Key Stage 3 teachers in making formative and summative judgements. Following a change of government in 2010, the National Strategies

were abandoned, the body that created APP was abolished, and Strategy documents, including APP criteria, have been archived, leaving their status and currency unclear for teachers. The national curriculum is presently under revision, as are GCSE examinations. Curriculum change inevitably brings changes to assessment criteria, and I have seen how this can shake teachers' confidence in their evaluative skills. Teachers need to keep alert to shifts of emphasis in benchmark criteria for high-grade writing, and recognise that these are reflective of centralised ideology: the present government has already announced a 'return to basics', with greater emphasis on assessment of grammar, spelling and punctuation. The concept of quality, applied to writing, is not a fixed entity but subject to political winds of change.

1.2 The research study

This qualitative research study is derived from a large-scale ESRC-funded project (*Grammar for Writing?*) investigating the impact of contextualised grammar teaching on students' writing development at Key Stage 3, which was conducted in 31 secondary schools between 2008 and 2011. My independent research utilises a subset of the data collected during the *Grammar for Writing?* project, as well as data from a small-scale confirmatory study in one secondary school. The investigation is based on the premise that, "In order to understand teaching, teachers' goals, judgements and decisions must be understood, especially in relation to teachers' behaviour and the classroom context" (Shavelson & Stern, 1981:459). It aims to address some of the existing gaps in theoretical understanding by focusing on how teachers evaluate quality in writing, in classroom settings, in the context of improving students' writing. It also intends to give weight to the voices of students, a previously under-researched group, by investigating their understandings of writing quality and how these are realised in the judgements they make about their own and their peers' classroom writing. The research was carried out in UK secondary schools but the results should have resonance for those in the international educational research community who have an interest in classroom assessment of writing.

My principal research questions are:

- How do teachers and students conceptualise quality in writing?
- How do teachers and students use their understandings of writing quality for the purpose of improving writing?

CHAPTER 2: DEFINING THE STANDARD

This chapter presents an overview of national assessment criteria which might be expected to define standards of quality in writing. It compares criteria used for benchmark reference purposes in the United Kingdom with those used in other Anglophone countries, in particular New Zealand and Australia, in order to underline the relationship between assessment criteria and national educational policy.

2.1 National assessment criteria for writing

It would be easy to assume that published national assessment criteria offer a fixed definition of the 'gold standard' for writing to which teachers and students might refer, and that Anglophone countries might share a common view of this standard. However, a comparison of assessment procedures in selected countries shows this not to be the case. Standardised criteria embody constructs of quality that are ideologically determined and culturally contested (Purves, 1992). As illustration of this, and in order to set the national criteria used in the UK in an international context, key national differences in the way that writing is described and assessed are explored here, focusing on those countries that are most comparable in terms of educational policy and practice, and most relevant in terms of my research topic, especially Australia and New Zealand. Comparative information is derived from selected countries' State or Government websites and from an international internet archive, the International Review of Curriculum and Assessment (INCA), which is managed by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER). INCA desk research provides descriptions of government policy relating to curriculum and assessment in 21 countries worldwide.

Not all countries have a statutory national curriculum, and this is true even within the United Kingdom: in Scotland, individual local authorities and head teachers are free to devise an appropriate curriculum within a framework provided by the Scottish Government. In some countries (Canada and the USA), there is no pan-national curriculum: each province or state has its own statutory arrangements. The INCA survey also shows that, at the time of writing, national curriculum and assessment arrangements in several countries are in a

state of flux: they have either undergone significant reform in the last few years (Northern Ireland); are under development (Australia), or subject to review (England). Furthermore, the term 'national' does not necessarily mean that the same arrangements apply to all within the same boundary. In the UK, Wales and Northern Ireland have curriculum aims which are distinct from those in England's national curriculum (including, for example, the study of national linguistic characteristics) while in England, a growing number of state secondary schools that have been granted academy status, together with free schools and private schools, are not statutorily obliged to follow a national curriculum.

2.2 National assessment criteria and constructs of quality

These examples are reminders of an obvious but very important point, which is that constructs of quality – as reflected in the curriculum a nation chooses for its schools and what it deems of sufficient value to assess - are expressions of political ideology, and consequently change over time. Changes of government often result in quite radical adjustments to the curriculum or to assessment methods, which in effect become a public statement of what is newly valued, sometimes literally so as headlines in the press, for example: “New Primary Curriculum to bring higher standards in English, Maths and Science. Plans to restore rigour in the key primary subjects are today set out by Education Secretary Michael Gove” (DfE, 2011).

In England, past decades have seen a number of changes to “the writing paradigms in which pupils, teachers and policy-makers operate” (DCSF, 2008:6). In broad terms, in the 1950s to 1960s value was placed on formal rhetorical grammar and correctness, and the finished product was emphasised more than the writing process. The late 1960s through to the early 1980s placed more emphasis on personal voice and self-expression, foregrounding the imagination and creative writing. The later 1980s to early 2000s saw a widening of the range of written (and spoken) forms, influenced by Australian approaches to teaching genre conventions (see, for example Christie, 2002), with a growing interest in the process of writing. Concomitantly, the mid-1990s to the present have seen an interest in multimodal communication and multiplicity of voices, with writing processes moving from drafting and editing to design (Kress, 1995;

Sharples, 1999). Thus within an average English department, it is likely that teachers of different ages and backgrounds will hold different perspectives on writing quality, shaped by the writing paradigms that have been dominant during their training and practical experience. As a consequence, they may find themselves in agreement or conflict with the most recent 'official' view of quality embodied in national assessment criteria.

2.3 National assessment criteria and the writing curriculum

National curriculum statements relating to writing indicate what is valued in terms of its range and purpose in the curriculum, with consequences for the way writing is taught and the nature of the criteria used for assessment. How the writing curriculum is specified, in terms of learning outcomes, expectations, standards, objectives, competences, exemplification and so on, differs across nations. For example, in Scotland, writing is situated within the broader area of 'Language and Communication'; in Northern Ireland within 'Languages and Literacy'. In New Zealand, writing as a language of communication is situated alongside visual and oral language and studied within two different strands, 'receiving meaning' and 'creating meaning'. The emphasis is on writing proficiency across a range of writing types: consequently, analytical assessment criteria are extensive, describing both 'deep' and 'surface' features of writing in each of seven genres. The new Australian national curriculum foregrounds writing for a range of purposes and audiences across different subject areas, including an explicit emphasis on writing processes, for example planning and drafting, and on writing functions, for example the use of writing to explore ideas and extend explanations.

In England, these fundamental conceptions of the nature and purposes of the writing curriculum are currently contested. The draft Primary curriculum referred to above equates high standards with technical competence and accuracy: "a focus on spelling...a focus on grammar...an expectation that pupils master formal English" (DfE, 2011), which has echoes of values more prevalent in the 1950s-1960s and may illustrate a swing of the pendulum 'back to basics'. There is also an emphasis on knowledge recall of specified content: spelling lists, a glossary of grammatical terminology and poetry for recitation. This is quite

different from the view of writing embodied in the national curriculum introduced by the Labour government in 2008, which outlines the writing 'knowledge, skills and understanding' that should be taught at Key Stages 3 and 4 and situates these within a model of four key concepts which are deemed equally important: competence, creativity, cultural understanding and critical understanding. Whether or not the secondary writing curriculum will be revised in line with the primary curriculum remains to be seen but at the time of writing there are striking cross-phase differences in the national conceptualisation of 'good writing'.

2.4 Differences in national assessment procedures

National statutory assessment procedures also differ, with consequences for the role and status of teacher evaluation of writing. Some nations place greater emphasis on school-based continuous assessment; others on external national testing. Not all countries conduct national tests of writing: some provinces in Canada administer compulsory tests of writing but there are national tests only of reading, which is also true in the USA, where States' federal funding is reliant on their compliance with statutory testing of reading under the 2002 'No Child Left Behind' legislation. The frequency and purpose of external testing also vary. For example in the USA, The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as the 'Nation's Report Card', assesses representative national samples of students every four years, at ages 9-10, 13-14 and 17-18, in order to measure trends of student achievement. In Australia, the National Assessment Programme – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) which was introduced in 2008, administers annual tests in reading, writing, language conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation) and numeracy between the ages of 8-16. The resulting data allows schools to compare student achievements against national standards and with other States and Territories.

In England, testing and reporting arrangements have been through turbulent times in recent years and are currently under review. National tests at Key Stage 3 (age 14), referred to as Standard Assessment Tests (SATs), were abandoned in the academic year 2008-2009, together with the publication of league tables based on them. In its 2008 report into national testing, a House of

Commons Select Committee raised concerns that the professional abilities of teachers were under-used and that the high-stakes nature of the tests led to "phenomena such as teaching to the test, narrowing the curriculum and focusing disproportionate resources on borderline pupils" (*Select Committee Report*, 2008). Dissatisfaction with tests at Key Stage 2 (age 11) led to a 2010 boycott by 26% of primary schools and a subsequent independent review, which suggested that whilst there must be external school-level accountability in the system, more trust should be placed in teachers, with greater weight given to their assessments of pupils, for example by forwarding these to secondary schools in advance of test results. Specific recommendations included replacing the NC writing test with teacher assessment based on a range of writing throughout Year 6, both "to encourage a 'can-do' attitude and greater enjoyment" (DfE, 2011b:61) and to achieve greater reliability, since "there is fundamental challenge with the marking of writing composition because it requires a professional's judgement rather than being empirically 'right' or 'wrong'" (p. 60).

In the decade of the Primary and Secondary National Strategies, from 1998 to 2008, pressure on schools to account for test results was intense. Although non-statutory, there was a clear expectation that all schools would implement Strategy pedagogy, much of which was focused on raising attainment at crucial level and grade boundaries, while local authority league tables of results were used to target school intervention and funding. As a consequence, much greater store was placed on SATs results than on teacher assessments, even though the former were subject to regular appeals and "well-documented" problems with marking (QCA, 2009:17). In Wales, where the National Strategies did not apply, teachers' evaluations of standards have taken centre stage for longer. National tests for 7, 11 and 14 year olds were abolished in 2002, 2005 and 2006 respectively and secondary school league tables were scrapped in 2001. Instead, the Welsh Assembly has boosted teacher assessment and moderation, which is supported by a bank of annotated writing samples showing attainment at different levels. The fact that these are readily accessible online is in itself a statement of intent, making the process of assessment and illustration of standards transparent to teachers and parents.

National differences are also evident in the closeness of the match between what is taught and what is assessed. Curriculum objectives and assessment standards are not always specified or articulated together; indeed they are often decided by two different bodies, which historically has been the case in England: Key Stage 3 national curriculum tests were devised and administered by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) which was also responsible for recruiting markers and reporting results. An independent Commission established by the National Association of Headteachers (NAHT) reported that too great a reliance by government on external tests for school accountability purposes had resulted in a “distortion in curriculum emphasis” and accusations of ‘teaching to the test’” (NAHT, 2014:16). The Commission further concluded that national tests had weakened the links between curriculum, assessment and pedagogy: since national tests were marked externally, the SATs mark scheme criteria for writing were less central to teachers’ practice than comparable criteria at Key Stage 4, where assessing and moderating coursework forces teachers to become familiar with GCSE mark schemes and the criteria for quality that they embody. Indeed, despite there being a national curriculum covering both key stages, there are currently different assessment criteria for each: attainment target descriptors at Key Stage 3 and exam board mark schemes and grade descriptors at Key Stage 4.

Concerns have been raised recently that GCSE examinations can dominate and constrain the secondary school curriculum to a degree that damages students’ motivation and attainment. In reporting a very large increase in schools’ use of early entry to GCSE English, Ofsted (2013:6) suggested “the main negative impact...is on students who should achieve the highest grades”; the percentage of students achieving grades A and A* declined as the percentage of early entry increased, with able students discouraged by results not being as good as they had hoped for and which “restricted future choices post-GCSE” (p.7). In a written ministerial statement to Parliament, the Education Secretary drew attention to “the complex interaction between curriculum and qualifications in secondary schools where evidence shows that what is taught is determined as much if not more by examinations as by the

National Curriculum” (Gove, 2011), concluding that GCSE reform was needed alongside the development of the new curriculum. There can also be lack of parity between exam boards in terms of curriculum content and assessment weighting. A review of standards in GCSE English (Ofqual, 2011) criticised one board, the Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC), for continuing to place an emphasis on creative writing and narrative, concluding that for this reason its question papers were less demanding, even though the overall standard was maintained.

In contrast, in Australia, assessment standards are an integral part of the curriculum and both are being developed together by one body, the Australia Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). National tests of writing relate assessment criteria to a common writing genre, with the same task and criteria used at ages 12-13 and 15-16. For instance, students write a story and are assessed for structuring the narrative, developing ideas and characters, making effective word choices, using the conventions of written language – grammar, spelling and punctuation – and engaging the reader. Existing annual national tests in literacy will also in future be aligned with the national curriculum. In New Zealand, similar attempts are being made to align the national curriculum with national assessment standards. National Standards in literacy came into effect in English-medium schools with pupils in Years 1 to 8 (ages 5 to 13) in 2010, providing key signposts of expected progress and achievement that informs teachers’ continuous assessment.

2.5 National assessment and teacher evaluation of writing quality

The emphasis I have been placing on government-driven changes to curriculum and assessment has important consequences for teacher evaluation of writing quality, and for the sharing of standards with students in order to improve writing. When the centralised construct of writing quality changes, it is easy for teachers to lose confidence in their own judgements; revised versions of a national curriculum bring subtle changes to assessment criteria describing quality in writing and require teachers to adjust expectations and evaluations to match them. This is illustrated in Table 2.1, which compares GCSE descriptors for high-grade performance over a decade. Slight but telling differences have

been highlighted; these either draw attention to shifts of emphasis in aspects of writing that are valued or point out additions to the criteria which have consequences for teachers' assessment of their candidates' work.

Grade A/B Boundary 1999
Candidates showed adaptability of style according to audience and purpose. They wrote clearly and fluently, and were able to engage the interest of the reader. They showed control and design in the organisation of whole texts. They wrote concisely where necessary, and developed ideas methodically and coherently, with sound use of paragraphing to underline and enhance meaning. They used sentence structures confidently. Generally they showed evidence of either stylistic adventurousness or very good technical accuracy at this boundary.
Grade A 2002
Candidates showed adaptability of style according to audience and purpose. They wrote clearly and fluently, using a wide range of appropriate vocabulary to engage the interest of their readers . They showed purposeful control of organisation of whole texts. They wrote concisely where necessary and developed ideas methodically and coherently, with sound use of paragraphing to enhance meaning. They used sentence structures confidently. Generally, they showed some evidence of stylistic adventurousness and good technical accuracy at this boundary.
Grade A 2005
Candidates' writing has shape and assured control of a range of styles . Narratives use structure as well as vocabulary for a range of effects and non-fiction is coherent, logical and persuasive. A wide range of grammatical constructions is used accurately. Punctuation and spelling are correct ; paragraphs are well constructed and linked to clarify the organisation of the writing as a whole.
Grade A 2010
Candidates' writing shows confident, assured control of a range of forms and styles appropriate to task and purpose. Texts engage and hold the reader's interest through logical argument, persuasive force or creative delight . Linguistic and structural features are used skilfully to sequence texts and achieve coherence. A wide range of accurate sentence structures ensures clarity; choices of vocabulary, punctuation and spelling are ambitious, imaginative and correct.

Table 2.1: Assessment criteria for high-grade writing at GCSE (Ofqual, 1999-2010)

Thus in 2002, teachers needed to give extra emphasis to the range and effectiveness of vocabulary choices, and look for evidence of both stylistic experimentation and sound technical accuracy, not one or the other. By 2005, the concept of range had been extended to cover styles, effects and grammatical constructions. The mention of whole text 'design' in the 1999 criteria was extended and made more specific, the idea being that a good writer deliberately shapes and controls the text, not just by organising material into clear paragraphs but by creating effective links between them. By 2010, the requirement for 'range' had been extended to include forms of writing as well as

styles. These recent criteria stress the impact of the text on its audience, with a requirement to both engage and maintain a reader's interest. Interestingly, the descriptor includes a greater number of qualitative terms which are open to subjective interpretation, and these have been highlighted, for example 'confident', 'skilfully', 'ambitious', 'imaginative', 'creative delight'. At the same time it is technically more specific in citing 'linguistic and structural features' and 'sentence structures'.

Similar changes are evident when comparing assessment criteria used at Key Stage 3. The first national curriculum for England and Wales described ten levels of attainment; in 2007, eight levels were described, plus an 'exceptional performance' category. Table 2.2 compares statements of attainment for the highest levels. Whilst there are some repeated criteria (such as an ability to select features from a stylistic repertoire, matched to audience and purpose) differences in tone and content are quite striking; I have highlighted the phrases I find most interesting in this respect; they indicate historical shifts of emphasis or reflect changing sociocultural views of writing.

Level 10 1990
<p>a) Write, selecting an appropriate length, in a wide variety of chosen forms, demonstrating an assured sense of purpose and audience and a commitment to the topic.</p> <p>b) Organise complex, demanding or extended subject matter clearly and effectively; produce well-structured pieces of writing, in which the relationship between successive paragraphs is clear; punctuate writing so that meaning and structure are clear to the reader.</p> <p>c) Sustain a personal style, making an assured, selective and appropriate use of a wide range of grammatical constructions and an extensive vocabulary, choosing to use Standard English (except in contexts where non-standard forms are needed for literary purposes).</p> <p>d) Demonstrate in discussion and in writing, knowledge of criteria by which different types of written language can be judged.</p>
Exceptional performance 2007
<p>Pupils' writing is original, has shape and impact, shows control of a range of styles and maintains the interest of the reader throughout. Narratives use structure as well as vocabulary for a range of imaginative effects, and non-fiction is coherent, reasoned and persuasive, conveying complex perspectives. A variety of grammatical constructions and punctuation is used accurately, appropriately and with sensitivity. Paragraphs are well constructed and linked in order to clarify the organisation of the writing as a whole.</p>

Table 2.2: Key Stage 3 high-level attainment descriptors (DES, 1990; QCA, 2007)

In the 1990 criteria, the emphasis on proficiency in a variety of forms and registers of writing was one that pervaded the first national curriculum; the long list of examples accompanying Level descriptors included: notes, personal letters, formal letters, essays, reviews, biographies, poems, stories, playscripts and editorial columns for broadsheet and tabloid newspapers; Level 10 added a formal written report of students' "chosen investigation into language use". As the highlighting indicates, there is an emphasis on length, clarity and appropriate formality, with progression suggested as increased complexity of content and structure and the application of technical knowledge, including analysis of language itself. Such an emphasis was a product of the times, as *The Cox Report: English for ages 5-16* (DES, 1989) had made clear by stating, "Knowledge about language should be an integral part of work in English" (p.83); thus to achieve a top level in 1990, it was suggested that students in discussion might "...make use of criteria such as clarity, coherence, accuracy, appropriateness, effectiveness, vigour and awareness of audience and purpose" (DES, 1990:16). This emphasis on technical knowledge is much less obvious in the 2007 criteria, which present a more holistic view of text effectiveness and emphasise the reader-writer relationship: the implication is that good writers make genre-related stylistic and authorial choices which are manipulated and fine tuned for impact on the reader.

Overall, I find it very hard to judge which set of criteria gives the clearest, most workable view of writing quality. The 1990 descriptor is ostensibly more detailed – not only is it 45 words longer but the original documentation provided detailed explanatory examples alongside each statement. Thus 'a wide range of grammatical constructions' was exemplified by: "alteration of word order, lexical or structural repetition, passive constructions, adverbial connectives and varied and appropriate vocabulary such as colloquial, formal, technical, poetic or figurative" (p.15), which gives a strong steer to teachers as to which aspects of grammar should be taught before the age of 14! No comparable list accompanies recent criteria. But there are terms in both descriptors that beg questions: does 'a personal style' mean the same as 'original' writing and why should either be valued in a 14 year old student? What does it mean to use a grammatical construction 'with sensitivity' or to show 'commitment to the topic'?

and where do teachers look for clarification or exemplification of these terms? Do the same criteria apply for judging the 'appropriate length' of, say, a poem, compared with a story or essay? The 2007 criteria lay emphasis on reader response, but who are the likely readers of a student's text, and what contextual factors might affect their response? Teachers also need to be alert to subtle changes of context that alter the meaning of the same word: in 1990 'complex' related to the content or subject matter of writing; current criteria relate 'complex' to choice of perspective or viewpoint in writing.

These kind of historical changes to assessment criteria reflect evolving views of text composition, educational strategy and political intent, so that further changes can be expected: the present government has already signalled an emphasis on grammatical and technical accuracy from 2012, with increased weighting given to spelling, grammar and punctuation in GCSE assessment across all subjects, while at Key Stage 2, a new externally-marked test of handwriting, spelling, grammar and punctuation is proposed for 11 year olds, in addition to, and separate from, teacher assessment of 'writing composition'.

2.6 National assessment criteria in the classroom

Overarching smaller differences of practice are more fundamental national differences relating to the wider purposes of assessment. In New Zealand, for example, these are described in an INCA summary as "diagnostic, formative and informative" (Andrews, Brown, Sargent & O'Donnell, 2007:52). The Government's position paper on assessment emphasises that it must be 'low-stakes'; the deliberate focus is on "the use of professional teacher judgement underpinned by 'assessment for learning' principles rather than a narrow testing regime" (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2011:4). The 2007 reform of Northern Ireland's statutory assessment procedures had a stated aim of producing better formative and diagnostic information for teachers and students. In contrast, the INCA summary describes the purpose of assessment in England as 'high-stakes': "summative, to assess children's achievement" and linked to accountability: "to provide information for parents and the public to help them judge the quality of the education being provided" (Andrews et al. 2007:25).

These national differences may well have a bearing on how assessment criteria are viewed and used by teachers. The New Zealand philosophy sees standardised criteria as an essential classroom tool to develop the effectiveness of teachers' and students' formative feedback; indeed, they have been expressly designed for this purpose and are backed by work samples exemplifying how criteria are applied, as well as assessment tools to develop professional practice (Ministry of Education & the University of Auckland, 2004). The National Standards in writing set clear expectations that students need to meet in the first eight years at school, and schools report to parents at least twice a year about their child's progress and achievement in relation to the writing standards. The new Australian national curriculum includes achievement standards from age 5 to 16 which indicate the quality of learning students should typically demonstrate by a particular point in their schooling and thus act as a progression map for teachers. Annotated exemplar responses are readily available for teachers and parents to see how assessment criteria have been applied and a glossary supports consistent understanding of terms used. Student work samples play a key role in communicating expectations described in the achievement standards. Each work sample includes the assessment task, student's response, and annotations identifying the quality of the response in relation to relevant parts of the standard.

In contrast, in England, standardised statutory assessment criteria, in the form of national curriculum attainment targets, are designed for end-of-key-stage summative assessment, reported as a Level rather than as age-related expectations. Separate teacher assessments are required for speaking and listening, reading and writing, which are then aggregated into one level for reporting purposes. Criteria for writing are thus designed as a 'best fit' judgement in relation to a body of student work. The level of detail on how skills are assessed varies considerably from country to country, but in Australia and New Zealand, because they were designed to be used formatively, assessment criteria are relatively detailed, being both task and genre-specific. Table 2.3 shows NZ high-level criteria (progress indicators) for narrative writing.

Progress Indicators for Narrate Purpose Level 6	
The principal question that teachers must ask when assessing their students' writing in any genre is "What impact does this piece of writing have on the reader?"	
Deep features	
Audience/ Purpose	Text entertains, engages, challenges, provokes, etc. audience and sustains reader attention. Sustained, credible world; largely suspends reader's disbelief.
Content/ Ideas	Clear focus on and appropriate development of specific events, characters, and settings. Ending provides completion for both traditional and nontraditional structures. Clear thematic connection between beginning and ending.
Structure/ Organisation	Complex story element arrangement largely sustained (e.g. effective plot or development of events without sacrificing character development). May attempt non-traditional story structures with increasing success. Pacing and proportion largely controlled. Effective linking is evident.
Language Resources/ Choices	Largely controlled use of descriptive or figurative language to show physical, emotional, psychological states rather than just naming them ("show not tell"). Largely appropriate, effective, varied range of sentence choices. Vocabulary and language consistently appropriate to narrative. The writer's style permeates the text and may address reader directly. Largely sustained control of a range of story elements including dialogue, description, tension, emotion, pace, etc.
Surface features	
Grammar	Sustained control of sentence grammar evident throughout piece with only few errors. Control enhances communication.
Punctuation	Accurate sentence indication for all types. Largely accurate use of conventional punctuation within complex sentences (comma, colon, semi-colon, hyphen, dash). Errors or omissions are few and do not impact on meaning.
Spelling	Mostly sustained control of complex multi-syllabic, irregular, or technical words. Errors or omissions are few and do not impact on meaning.

Table 2.3: Progress indicators (Ministry of Education & the University of Auckland, 2004).

In comparison, statutory attainment targets used in this country offer broad-brush, generic descriptions of writing performance that are not really detailed enough to be an effective instructional tool. Generic writing descriptors do exist in New Zealand, in the form of a marking rubric, and these contain qualitative measures which, like those in England's Key Stage 3 attainment target descriptors, are open to subjective interpretation, for example: 'Sentences are deliberately crafted to impact and engage'; 'Ideas show insight, originality and some authority and/or reflection on the wider world.' However, a crucial

difference is that these generic criteria (intended as a 'short cut' marking tool) were introduced only after teachers in New Zealand had been trained to use the detailed rubrics; in other words, the generic criteria were part of a carefully devised professional development programme to support teachers' evaluation of writing quality.

At present, in England, there are no statutory national standardised criteria designed to support day-to-day classroom assessment of writing quality. In 2008, the now defunct Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) introduced a set of standardised criteria which was intended to provide a national system for both summative and formative assessment spanning primary and secondary phases: Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) guidelines. The accompanying Standards Files provided exemplar collections of student work at each Level, annotated to show how judgements were arrived at, and thus providing support for teacher assessment (see Appendix 1 for an example of Level 8 narrative writing and accompanying commentary). However, these have been archived by the current government and the exemplar material is now difficult to access. The National Strategies have been closed down, so that initial training for teachers in the use of APP has not been consolidated. Although some schools may continue to use APP guidelines (Appendix 2), for example to inform teachers' understanding of progression and target setting with students, this is an ad hoc rather than statutory arrangement.

As for the future, the Government has already announced its intention to simplify the national curriculum by reforming how progress is reported. Seemingly, this signals an end to Level descriptors, which are deemed unfit for purpose in the Department for Education's (DfE) consultation document: "We believe that the focus of teaching should be on subject content as set out in the programmes of study, rather than on a series of abstract level descriptions. Parents deserve a clear assessment of what their children have learned rather than a 'level description' which does not convey clear information" (DfE, 2013). With an emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge rather than skills, the proposed curriculum looks set to reduce assessment criteria to a single,

overarching definition of 'national expectation': "Pupils are expected to know, apply and understand the matters, skills and processes specified in the relevant programme of study."

It remains to be seen if teachers view the proposal as a welcome return to professional autonomy or as a bewildering lack of support and direction. Either way, it places considerable responsibility on individuals to make - and account for - judgements about the quality of students' writing. Furthermore, for the last two decades, Level descriptors have been a common classroom currency for describing performance, providing feedback and setting targets. In their absence, presumably teachers and their students will need to find a new 'shared language' for evaluating writing quality. Thus it will be increasingly important to attend to teachers' and students' own descriptions of 'good writing', as intended in this research.

2.7 Summary

National published assessment criteria for writing represent an official construct of quality which can be used as a benchmark by teachers and students. However, the construct is not fixed or absolute; it varies between nations and over time, with historical changes linked to evolving theories of writing and, more prominently, to political intent. In England, criteria in current use have been designed for summative testing rather than formative instructional purposes. The next chapter of this thesis reviews research that might further illuminate these issues.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews research relevant to teachers' and students' evaluation of writing quality for the purpose of improving writing in the secondary English classroom. It considers the difficulty of defining 'good writing', which includes contested views of what constitutes progression in writing. Classroom judgements about quality are positioned as socially-constructed knowledge, crucially influenced by classroom interactions, relationships and dialogue. It also considers some of the inherent difficulties of investigating teacher and student cognition.

3.1 Overview and a note on terms

I have understood 'evaluation' primarily to refer to the process of making a judgement about writing, but in the research literature, and in my use of terms, evaluation and judgement are often used interchangeably. Evaluation is also often used interchangeably with 'assessment', 'grading' or 'testing', particularly in research studies from the USA, but I have tried to be clearer in making distinctions between these, following Huot (2002:163) who suggests that this "slippage" of terms has encouraged a discourse about assessment that disconnects it from the teaching of writing; teachers have come to believe that "assessing student writing somehow interferes with (the) ability to teach it." I have used the terms 'summative assessment' or 'testing' to refer to end-point judgements for the purpose of ranking or grading students. The terms 'classroom assessment' or 'formative assessment' refer to judgements about quality that might inform the day-to-day teaching and learning of writing. Typically, these judgements might come into play when success criteria for writing tasks are established or when feedback is provided to student writers, designed to help them identify aspects of writing they can improve, and it is these formative purposes of evaluation that I have focused on when reviewing scholarship in the field of writing assessment.

Of course there is cross-over between the two types of assessment: 'high-stakes' testing of writing can affect what is valued and taught in the classroom, a phenomenon referred to as 'washback' (Weigle, 2002; Hillocks, 2002). Test results can be used formatively, in the sense of identifying a 'gap' between

actual and desired performance (Sadler, 1989) and working out how to move forward (Black & William, 1998). However, an initial distinction between different types of assessment is important because it highlights a significant gap in the literature: there is relatively little research that considers assessment in relation to the teaching and learning of writing (Huot, 2002; Huot & Perry, 2009; Parr, 2010a). Research has traditionally concentrated on direct writing assessment, judgements made on single pieces of writing in summative 'high-stakes' tests, often in higher education settings. Here, the emphasis has been on reliability between test raters and on the validity of scoring rubrics; investigation has "revolved around the issue of having two different readers arrive at an identical quality rating for the same piece of writing" (Huot, 1990: 237) and has weighed the relative merits of different scoring systems, for example norm or criterion referencing or holistic versus primary trait analysis. Such studies are not revisited here, apart from reference to discrepancies in the quality ratings of different linguistic features of a text that may be indicative of different historical or theoretical perspectives on writing quality.

Research studies relating directly to evaluation of writing quality by teachers and students in secondary school classroom settings are thin on the ground. There are several possible reasons for this. In countries where the political agenda is focused on raising standards in writing and on the accountability of teachers for results, assessment outcomes have become increasingly subject to public scrutiny, and research has been directed towards achieving reliability and objectivity in assessment procedures (Huot, 1990). As a consequence, the private process of judgement, as experienced by assessors, is often placed outside the scope of assessment research (Wyatt-Smith & Castleton, 2005) or viewed as 'insider knowledge' or 'connoisseurship' (Sadler, 1989) and not investigated further. Indeed, research into teacher judgement in classroom settings has been characterised as "largely uncharted territory" (Wyatt-Smith, Castleton, Freebody & Cooksey, 2003:13), another reason for which is that the judgement process does not readily lend itself to examination, even by teachers themselves (Phelps, 1989).

It is not just teachers' private 'ways of knowing' that have been neglected. Formative assessment foregrounds students' active participation in the assessment process, so that debate around questions of quality and judgement should be a core activity in English, since engaging with what work at a particular level or grade looks like helps initiate students into the professional 'guild' knowledge held by their teachers (Marshall & William, 2006). Yet there has been relatively little investigation of children's understandings about writing, for example to ascertain if they have the linguistic knowledge or evaluative skills for effective self or peer evaluation. In reviewing a decade's worth of contributions to the international journal *Assessment in Education*, Broadfoot and Black (2004:18) comment that "the need to attend to the students' perspectives has played too small a part in research on assessment." Hamp-Lyons (1990:78) speaks of the irony of writing research, that in the difficulties and controversies surrounding issues such as inter-rater reliability, there is a real tendency for the writer to be forgotten, so that: "At present we have almost no understanding of who the writers are whose performances we measure."

A focus of my research is classroom interaction between teachers and students that might enhance understanding of writing quality and help 'close the gap' between current and desired performance. Such interaction is often unplanned and verbal (and therefore difficult to study), typically occurring when writing tasks are explained, or when examples of students' writing are praised and shared. In focusing on classroom interactions, I have viewed writing as social practice, where learning is situated and given meaning within a "community of practice" (Wenger, 1998:45), with teachers and students jointly constructing knowledge and identities in specific contexts and in ways that make sense as shared repertoires within those communities, and where subjectivities count, for example in the way that student writing is responded to. However, there is not a substantial body of scholarship to draw on here; indeed, Huot and Perry (2009: 431) speak of the need for research on response "to catch up to contemporary social constructivist theories that inform many classroom practices." Traditionally, research has focused on teachers' summative written feedback and students' reception of it, but response to student writing in classroom settings is still not a central theoretical concern (Phelps, 2000) and

little attention has been paid either to the communicative context of response or to why teachers respond in a particular way (Huot, 2002).

In summary then, while writing has long been used as the dominant medium for examining knowledge, only relatively recently have considerations moved from 'writing-as-testing' to writing as 'knowledge-making' (Yancey, 1999; 2009) and assessment has come to be viewed as integral to teaching and learning, with the potential to improve the quality of both (Sadler, 1989; Black & Wiliam, 1998; Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall & Wiliam, 2003). Consequently, I have needed to draw quite heavily on a relatively narrow body of scholarship, especially studies conducted in Australia and New Zealand which are closest in focus to my own study, and well-established researchers in the field of formative assessment. Major themes that emerge from this scholarship are the contested nature of writing quality; the complexity of both the acts of writing and of judging writing; and the dynamic tension between 'public' and 'private' constructs of quality or 'ways of knowing'. Thus I have used these themes as a way of organising the literature review.

3.2. The contested nature of writing quality

Asking what makes a 'good' piece of writing may seem a redundant question; after all, judgements about quality, orally and in writing, are made frequently in the classroom, whether in informal exchanges in response to students' work or as part of a formal progress report. The common practice of making explicit the 'success criteria' for a writing task assumes a shared notion between teachers and students of the standard being aimed for. Student self- and peer-evaluation depend on an understanding of writing quality, whether or not specific reference is made to published assessment criteria or target statements. However, the research literature shows that writing quality is contested ground: it is difficult to characterise and quantify and is in a state of flux, subject to change over time and in relation to different theories and perspectives.

3.2.1 The difficulty of defining 'good' writing

Defining quality in writing is far from straightforward. In the first place, achievement in writing is difficult to describe objectively in a meaningful way. In

professional literature or commercial publications, where the emphasis is on classroom practice, criteria denoting quality are often vague and indistinct, for instance: “You know it when you see it...you just have to read it” (Peha, 2005, commercial teaching guide). Attempts to describe good writing in a generic way often use overtly subjective criteria, for example: “the well-turned phrase, the beautifully constructed argument, the story that will stay in the mind for ever...the inexplicable charm of rhythmic and memorable language” (Corbett, 2008:1). Criteria are often presented as a generalised, decontextualised checklist of ‘tips’ for success, for example: “good writing makes a definite point”; “sentences are concise, emphatic and correct”; “good writing is the result of much practice and hard work” (Nordquist, website) where criteria relate to writing behaviours and writing processes as much as to the quality of the finished product, and are often presented as a random pick-and-mix. In the classroom, advice originating from GCSE examiners’ reports, such as the use of a one-word sentence fragment or a one-sentence paragraph for dramatic effect, runs the risk of becoming divorced from specific contexts or examples that might make it meaningful.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the only statutory assessment criteria describing the ‘gold standard’ in writing in current use in state secondary schools in England are GCSE grade descriptors and Key Stage 3 attainment target Level descriptors, both of which offer broad-brush, best-fit definitions of good writing, for example: ‘Pupils’ writing is original, has shape and impact...and maintains the interest of the reader throughout...narratives use a range of imaginative effects.’ Sadler (1987) points out that generic quality descriptors for high-level writing draw on a number of indistinct criteria like these which are relative, not absolute judgements, and which are context-dependent; indeed, learning these contextualised meanings and implications, the meta-criteria, is itself an important task for the student. Assessment of English as a subject has been characterised as more difficult than assessment of other subjects (Marshall, 2007), one reason being that many of the criteria contributing to a qualitative judgement are “fuzzy” rather than “sharp” (Sadler, 1989:124). Fuzzy criteria are characterised by a continuous gradation from one state to another rather than an abrupt transition, for instance from ‘correct’ to ‘incorrect’, a distinction that

might easily be applied to a response in mathematics or science. Sadler cites the criterion 'originality' as a case in point since every gradation from wholly unoriginal to wholly original is possible, and because it is an abstract construct which has no absolute and unambiguous meaning independent of its context. It is certainly noticeable that UK published assessment criteria for English become increasingly abstract and less quantifiable as they move upwards; features such as "flair", "sophistication" or "sensitivity" seemingly rely entirely on qualitative, subjective interpretation, supporting Marshall's (2007:3) view that "it is hard to delineate precisely what makes a good piece of writing generically."

At issue here are both the complex nature of writing and the skills required to make qualitative judgements, meaning that the criteria used to evaluate 'good writing' cannot be "reducible to a formula which can be applied by a non-expert" (Sadler, 1989:124). Sadler's scholarship over several decades is worth exploring in some detail, since his insights clearly have relevance beyond the higher education settings in which they originated. Sadler stresses the difficulty of using a fixed set of criteria to describe "complex phenomena", warning it is "potentially limiting" (1989:132). To begin with, any list that exhaustively mapped out all features of good writing would be far too long to be meaningful (he suggests at least 50 criteria, extracted from published sources). Moreover, the features of good writing are not discrete. They overlap and interlock, making it difficult, and inadvisable, to separate them, since "the overall configuration amounts to more than the sum of its parts" (1989:124). Interestingly, there is some evidence to suggest that the inter-relatedness of criteria is more marked in better writing. Elander, Harrington, Norton, Robinson and Reddy (2006), examining the skills exhibited in higher-education academic writing, found that at a basic level of writing it was easier to identify separate aspects of skill-like criteria; the better the writing, the more integrated its components became.

Sadler (1987) also argues that the qualities of a sample of student's writing are rarely either unambiguously present on the one hand, or completely absent on the other; they are almost always matters of degree. Further, he makes an important distinction between "*quality* as an integrative concept which characterises a work as a whole" and "*a quality*, which is synonymous with a

property” (2009:60). The concept of quality characterises complex works holistically, which increases in relation to the complexity of the task and its outcome, for example where evaluation includes the design process as well the product. Teachers may form an overall judgement of the worth of a work which is not referenced to its particular qualities. This could account for why student outcomes that differ considerably from one another in character and structure – in their component properties - may nevertheless be judged to be comparable in quality.

William makes the point that “an anatomy of quality” is needed for effective classroom evaluation; teachers and students “need to understand how quality is built up, what are its components” (William & Marshall, 2002:56). Potentially, fixed or benchmark criteria serve this purpose of ‘anatomising’ quality, since they seek to objectify and describe discrete textual features. However, attempts to anatomise quality, to break it into pieces that can be made visible to students, run the risk of destroying the sense of the value of the complex whole. Given the complexity of both writing and evaluation, Sadler’s view is that simply providing pre-set criteria for a writing outcome or performance is insufficient to help students progress. The interrelationship between components is always too complex to be itemised meaningfully and the potential outcomes are too diverse. We are left with a seeming conundrum, described by Sadler as the non-trivial problem of “How to draw the concept of excellence out of the heads of teachers, give it some external formulation, and make it available to the learner” (Sadler, 1989:127).

3.2.2 Examining what good writers do

An obvious source of descriptors for quality in writing is the work of high-grade writers, which might take the form of annotated exemplars accompanying Level descriptors, as in *Assessing Pupils’ Progress Key Stage 3 Standards Files* (DCSF & QCA, 2008) or writing samples that provide a national corpora (Ministry of Education & the University of Auckland, 2006) which can be “interrogated to determine patterns of performance in writing” (Parr, 2010b:129). One such pattern identified by Parr from the corpora of 20,824 samples of student writing from Years 5 to 12 was that “high progress writers wrote about

twice as many words per sample as struggling writers” (p.8) and there was evidence of this gap widening across the years. In order to identify what good writers do, and the nature of progression in writing, student performance has been interrogated and codified in terms of its grammatical features. In the UK, the Technical Accuracy Project (QCA, 1999) investigated an extensive body of fiction and non-fiction GCSE examination writing tasks composed by students graded A, C and F in order to inform teachers’ understanding of writing development and signal specific language features that could be taught explicitly. A parallel analysis of pupils’ writing in Key Stages 1-3 using the same coding frames on 100-word samples of writing revealed that, at each stage, the profile of best writing was marked by the same linguistic features.

Drawing on the project’s findings in a publication aimed at practising teachers, Myhill (2001a) delineated these features: in addition to increased accuracy of spelling and punctuation, and greater lexical density, the best writers at each key stage used fewer finite verbs, moved away from use of co-ordination towards the use of subordination, and managed the reader-writer relationship more effectively. Using a much smaller sample (76 Year 6 writing test papers), Ray (2001) identified that higher scoring papers had markedly more complex sentences and correctly-used punctuation. Longitudinal studies of features of writing of 16 year olds (Massey & Elliott, 1996; Massey, Elliott & Johnson, 2005) profiled grammatical features at each GCSE grade and provided evidence of trends in performance over time. For example, 2004 candidates used more ambitious vocabulary than in 1980, 1993 and 1994, and there was a trend towards a greater use of more sophisticated sentence structures and more accurate spelling, especially in the lower grades.

However, these studies have limitations in what they can reveal about writing quality. They only measure easily-quantifiable features of writing such as spelling, punctuation or sentence type; indeed this was the point of the atomistic analysis of single sentences carried out in the ‘*Aspects of Writing*’ longitudinal studies. In reviewing these, to consider changes to methodology for future sampling, Green, Elliott and Johnson (2008:4) point out that in order to achieve rater reliability, “with complex features of writing, an analysis either has to be

narrative and descriptive or subject to a very strict coding frame.” But coding for discrete, countable, linguistic features gives a limited view of writing quality since it does not take into consideration the appropriateness of choices or their effect. As stated in Myhill, Fisher, Jones, Lines and Hicks (2008:22): “There is no intrinsic merit in a long sentence or a particular type of subordinate clause: these are simply linguistic possibilities available to the writer as tools for shaping text.” Nor does it give meaningful information about the “design purposes” of good writers (p. 278), that is, the reasoning behind students’ linguistic choices.

Analysis of grammatical features can also give a misleading picture of progression in writing. Marshall (2007:7), referring to the Technical Accuracy Project findings, suggests that “an apparently neat sense of progression begins to unravel” when the syntax of A-grade writers is examined. Not only did high-grade writers use fewer sentences and fewer finite verbs per 100 words, but they also used fewer subordinate and co-ordinate clauses than C or F grade writers. This would suggest that in top-grade writing there were more simple sentences, of one clause only, and more verbless sentences, which would also indicate more variety in sentence length. She concludes that any neat progression from simple to complex sentences is undone by this observation; in varying sentences for impact on the reader, good writers appear to pay heed to elements of prosody, the rhythms and cadences of prose, non-quantifiable elements of “what might loosely be termed aesthetic choices.” Simply providing ‘varies sentences’ as a quality indicator or criterion is not enough, for the writer has to vary sentences appropriately and well and this requires a complexity of judgement and skill not found in the criterion itself.

Similarly, specification of the linguistic features associated with the different genres taught in English classrooms (such as recount, narrative or explanation) does not provide a clear picture of what good writers do. Genre theory stresses explicit identification and teaching of the stages of the target text (Christie, 2005) but good writers know how to subvert and manipulate genre conventions for a deliberate effect such as irony or humour, “often making subtle changes”, so progress may not be as linear as it first seems (Christie & Misson, 1998:11).

Such subtlety and deftness of touch is difficult to quantify or qualify and, in a sense, attempts to do so are counter-productive. There is, after all, something indefinable about quality writing that legitimises the view that ‘you know it when you see it’.

3.2.3 Contested views of quality outcomes

Of course, the point of delineating features of good writing or of detailing what good writers do is to inform teaching and learning, to give a clear picture of what young writers are aiming for and how they might improve current performance: defining ‘success criteria’ is fundamental to formative assessment. In stressing the practical application of analysis of high-grade writing, for example in sharpening the teaching focus and articulating clear targets for improvement, Myhill (2001a:50) suggests that “explicitness helps to give pupils access to metaknowledge about writing, demystifying the process and giving them access to the means by which their writing can be improved.” However, a number of studies suggest there is no neat correlation between this kind of explicitness and the achievement of a quality outcome. In the UK, criticism of national tests at Key Stages 2 and 3 has often centred on their encouragement of ‘formulaic’ writing, with ‘high-tariff’ language features presented as a checklist of success criteria or ‘toolkit’ for successful writing. Corbett (2008) suggests that writing to checklists that have not been internalised may actually interfere with the flow of composition and make the task harder.

Such a view accords with the research findings of Grainger, Gooch and Lambirth (2003). As part of the ‘*We’re Writers*’ project, the researchers collected views about writing preferences and attitudes from 390 pupils in eight schools and analysed 110 writing samples. Teachers from these schools were interviewed to establish their views on criteria for quality writing. Although this research was carried out with primary rather than secondary school children, the size of the data set makes the findings worthy of attention. Teachers’ views of writing quality were almost entirely constructed around discrete features of Level descriptors in end of key stage assessment tests. No awareness of audience, purpose, the engagement of the reader or the writer’s voice was recorded. Key Stage 2 teachers perceived teaching of writing to be focused on

demonstration and practice of sentence and word level features of different genres in line with what they understood were National Literacy Strategy requirements. They over-profiled elements of crafting, particularly syntactical variation, at the expense of creating and composing whole texts.

The response of pupils to such teaching was marked. There was a decline with age in pupils' enthusiasm and confidence as writers with some indifference to writing being evident in Years 5 and 6, and there was a marked desire for more autonomy and choice in writing: pupils preferred not to be constantly directed and controlled. Myhill (2001a:51) warns that although detailed consideration of linguistic features of text can help describe success, it is not intended to provide formulas for successful writing which children are taught to adopt. Instead, "the importance of setting up writing effectively, helping writers to find something to say and valuing what they do write is still of great significance." This emphasises the necessity of establishing a positive classroom ethos for writing, since writing is "a social and cultural activity" where the writer is "a member of a community of practice" (Sharples, 1999:5). Factors such as the value placed on writing by the teacher and the motivation and stamina of the writer will have a crucial bearing on the quality of writing being produced.

Recent research which views writing as a sociocultural activity has stressed that the classroom use of fixed criteria derived from summative assessment can be counter-productive; ironically, familiarising students with 'success criteria' might not empower them as writers so much as control and circumscribe their response, so that "transparency encourages instrumentalism" (Torrance, 2007:282). The meaning of writing becomes dominated by the criteria and divorced from individual and social interpretations (Elwood & Klenowski, 2002). Hillocks (2002) points out that assessments, not standards, influence what happens in classrooms and can promote unintended learning in schools, including a narrow definition of writing by students (Luce-Kepler & Klinger, 2005). Examination criteria become central to the teaching and learning of writing to the extent that they are internalised by students and begin to dominate the way in which writing is conceptualised. Research in higher education settings has suggested that extensive use of coaching and practice to

help learners meet performance criteria is in danger of reducing the quality and validity of outcomes achieved, so that “criteria compliance comes to replace learning” (Torrance, 2007:282), characterised as a move from assessment *for* learning to “assessment as learning” (Earl, 2003). Sadler (2007:5) claims that widespread accountability testing has reduced assessment criteria to “pea-sized bits to be swallowed one at a time, and for each bit, once only”. Teachers’ focus is on recording each microscopic ‘outcome’ rather than on the learning that has taken place, on “a multitude of discrete competencies, rather than on competence” (p.8). In a testing and accountability culture, teachers are likely to reward students with marks for effort, or improvement, which are not true achievement variables. Further, judgements are made on the basis of one-off performances which may have been heavily scaffolded by the teacher; thus quality outcomes may not be reproducible.

Reporting a joint international project focusing on the process and teaching of writing in secondary classrooms, Messenheimer and Packwood (2002) have made a helpful distinction between ‘surface learning’ and ‘deep learning’. They carried out a longitudinal study of two teachers in the US and UK and noted the effects of ‘high-stakes’ testing and performance league tables on classroom practice. The authors concluded that pressure of accountability testing may force teachers to “reduce writing to a formula, stripping it of meaning and purpose” (p.12) and that the kind of surface learning which results focuses on memorization and technical competence. This is motivated extrinsically, as opposed to the deep learning fostered by negotiated learning, taking a problem-solving approach and encouraging explicit reflection. Similar points are made by Hillocks (2002) in a US context when he warns of ‘the testing trap’, the pressure on teachers to prepare students for tests at the expense of providing a broad writing curriculum within which students’ cognitive development and autonomous decision-making are promoted. Hillocks’ view is that good writers are also good thinkers, a point reinforced by Kellogg (2008:2) who stresses that “thinking is so closely linked to writing...that the two are practically twins. Individuals who write well are seen as substantive thinkers.” This would indicate the need for a broader view of quality that takes into account the psychological and cognitive processes of the developing writer as well as writing outcomes.

3.2.4 Variation in writing quality

Several studies point to the variability of students' performance, which again makes it difficult to provide a definitive account of quality in writing or of what good writers do. Hayes, Hatch and Silk (2000) investigated consistency in the quality of 241 college student writers using raters' holistic scoring of 796 essays, with the same scorer evaluating all the work of any one student. The production of different texts by the same writer varied in features and quality and an individual's production of the same genre varied from one context to another. Parr's (2010b) investigation of the corpora of cross-curricular writing samples from primary and secondary students revealed that variability in performance across students was relatively low in the primary phase but much higher in secondary schooling. She offers several possible reasons for this.

Analysis of the samples showed that students did not write equally well for all purposes, which might be linked to a contraction at secondary level of opportunities to practise writing for certain purposes (such as recounts and instructions) and a narrowing of the types of writing that teachers assign, with less emphasis on the social and communicative aspects of writing and more on the use of writing to learn and interact with subject content. Variability in performance might also reflect the linguistic demands of academic writing: students performed less well in the context of writing to analyse and persuade than in narrative writing. Alternatively, it might suggest variability in how explicitly the features of writing are taught across the curriculum. Whilst there was an overall pattern of underachievement in relation to national expectations, Parr also noted variation in patterns of growth of students' writing skills across the years of schooling, including a 'spike' of performance in Year 8 and a levelling off in Years 10-12, with an increasing gap between those who started secondary schooling with high-level writing skills and those who started with a low skill base. Parr concludes that the fact that performance in writing did not develop in a predictable linear fashion underscores the need for practitioners to attend to individual students' rates of growth.

Difference in performance by gender was evident in this New Zealand study and is well-documented internationally, although emerging issues are highly contestable. For example, boys have been viewed as differently literate (Millard, 1997) and preferring non-fiction texts and genre, though this may be overstated (Daly, 2000). There is also evidence that boys' writing is received differently by teachers, so that the way writing achievement is measured may underestimate the performance of boys. For instance, Peterson (1999) has suggested that girls' narrative writing may be privileged in assessments, being more aligned with the approved literary canon and its associated notions of good writing, such as rich descriptive detail; boys often write narratives that draw on visual literacies from television and computer games and the resulting pieces lack detail (Millard, 1997). Higher levels of female performance in writing have been attributed to girls' more positive attitudes towards writing (Graham, Berninger & Fan, 2007) but there may be a range of possible variables in explanation: for instance, McCutchen (1996) indicated that gender differences in the quality of text were attributable to boys' transcription problems more than to their lack of compositional fluency or inability to engage with the curriculum.

Other research has questioned the idea that there are gender differences in the nature and quality of writing. A study by Francis, Read and Melling (2003) showed that raters were unable to identify, at greater than chance, the gender of writers of undergraduate scripts. Large-scale tests of writing both in the UK (DfES, 2006) and the US (National Centre for Educational Statistics, 2007) have shown gender disparities in performance. However, the research of Jones and Myhill (2007), working with a sample of over 700 texts from teenage writers, reported scant evidence to support the notion that boys and girls are 'differently literate' or of boys as weak writers. They found only small differences between the writing of boys and girls in terms of linguistic characteristics and processes and of those differences that were identified, boys' texts more frequently mirrored the patterns of high-performing writers than did the girls. For example, boys' writing was more likely to be paragraphed appropriately with paragraph content organised around strong topic sentences. Rather than trying to determine a generic view of writing quality and performance, practitioners might do better to focus on difference and diversity in the classroom.

3.2.5 Competing perspectives on writing quality

Chapter 2 of this thesis outlined differences in national constructs of writing quality, as embodied in published assessment criteria, and stressed that views of quality are not fixed or absolute but culturally and politically contested. Purves (1992), outlining reasons for the ‘failure’ of a ten-year study of achievement in written composition which involved students, teachers and researchers in fourteen countries, highlights the impossibility of developing agreed-upon definitions of writing quality across different countries and cultures. Hillocks (2002) reminds that perspectives on writing quality have a political dimension: the kinds of writing selected for state-wide tests in the US indicate a theory of writing, what the state regards as important and what it sees as the nature of writing.

Longitudinal research can highlight how theories of writing and pedagogies for writing reflect sociocultural values and thus change over time. The *Aspects of Writing* studies previously referred to (see 3.2.2) demonstrated “changes in the curriculum and shifts in cultural values affecting how children wrote and what examiners valued” (Green, Elliott & Johnson, 2008:3), evident in the changing nature of the GCSE exam papers from which samples were derived, and altered expectations of candidates both in the classroom and in the examination hall. For example, much of the formality of language seen in the 1980 writing samples was no longer present by 2004, and candidates were writing more dialogue and including idiosyncratic phrases. The authors also suggest that what is reported about writing performance (and therefore highlighted as of value) may be circumscribed by media or political interest: specifically, they cite a focus on apostrophe use in the 2004 report as having being stimulated by the popularity of a book about punctuation (Truss, 2003) and they make the point that the inherent simplification within the atomistic method of investigation “should promote good public understanding of the research” (p.4).

The field of writing research has variously emphasised different perspectives on writing quality which are underpinned by competing epistemological values. Hyland (2002:5) provides a conceptual overview by distinguishing three

approaches. The first he describes as “text-oriented”, and focuses on “the products of writing by examining texts in various ways, either through their formal surface elements or their discourse structures”. The second is “writer-oriented” and includes attention to writing as personal expression, writing as a cognitive process and writing as a situated activity. His third distinction is “reader-orientated”, “adding a social dimension to writing research by elaborating how writers engage with an audience in creating coherent texts.” Wray and Medwell’s overview of the history of writing pedagogy over the last 50 years (2006b) emphasises a significant shift of emphasis, from over-valuing the *product* to an interest in the *process* of writing. In the UK and the US, seminal texts by Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod and Rosen (1975) and Dixon (1967) pioneered a focus on personal expression and voice, positing “personal experience as the vital core of English work” (Dixon, 1975:48), foregrounding “the affective (domain) as well as the cognitive” (p.80) and recommending that “pupils should be freed from disabling conceptions of ‘correctness’” (p.77). Children’s writing was valued for what it could “disclose about the student-writer as a person” (Wyatt-Smith & Murphy, 2001), a perspective which led both to the centrality of children’s writing as the literature of the classroom (Barnes, 1976) and to the broadening of notions of text: writing could be informal and creative and appear in various and hybrid genres. The classroom-focused work of Graves (1983) emphasised the importance of attending to the different stages of the writing process – pre-writing or rehearsal, drafting, revising and editing - and encouraged writers’ workshop approaches such as conferencing and peer response, with the teacher in the role of facilitator and the writing voices of children made prominent.

In contrast, the Australian genre theorists contested the centrality of personal expression, in favour of helping writers to access public discourses. Proponents of the genre approach argue that personal voice writing, especially narratives and first person recounts, is likely to have little effect on audiences outside the school classroom, whereas mastery of more publicly important writing forms (such as persuasion) could invest writers with more social power (Martin, 1985; Derewianka, 1996). Genre theorists claim that the teacher-as-facilitator role in the process approach provides insufficient instruction about the expectations of

different writing tasks, leaving children to intuit the teacher's implicit agenda (Hammond & Derewianka, 2001). Thus they advocate explicit teaching of linguistic and generic features and greater attention to 'real-world' written discourses.

The perspectives outlined above have become part of the mainstream culture of English teaching, at least in England, where versions of the national curriculum from 1989 to the present have required that children are taught to plan, draft, revise, proof-read and present their work, a direct reflection of the process approach, and this was sustained in the National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 1998). The alliance of the process approach with personal growth values remains close, seen for example in the promotion of teachers as writers, and the provision of real audiences for students' writing and opportunities for publishing it, principles that underpinned the National Writing Project in the UK between 1985 and 1988 and its current incarnation as a grass-roots professional development initiative supported by the National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE) (Smith & Wrigley, 2012). The influence of genre theory on classroom practice has also been significant. The National Literacy Strategy adopted the notion of text types and embraced some of the pedagogy of genre approaches, including an insistence on direct instruction in a technical metalanguage for talking about texts (Wyatt-Smith & Murphy, 2001). However, Wray and Medwell (2006b) note that cognitive psychological research into children's composing processes has had relatively little impact on classroom practice in the UK, despite its central concern with how children learn to write, probably because it tends to be experimental and non-naturalistic in design which makes its direct classroom application problematic, whereas Graves' work was clearly focused on classroom practice. They further claim that linguistic analysis has generally not informed a conceptualisation of progression and development in writing, perhaps because attention has tended to focus on politicised debates around the value of grammar teaching, rather than intellectual or empirical enquiry into linguistic development.

It is certainly the case that in the research literature, paradigms for writing are often presented as polarised and conflictual. This matters, since theories of

writing do have an impact on educational policy and practice; they are reflected in changes to the curriculum and assessment and may well contribute to pedagogical decision-making, which in turn may be closely linked to teachers' personal subject philosophies (Marshall, 2001). For example, *The Bullock Report* (DES, 1975) noted concerns about creative writing, that it was often artificially generated by the teacher, did not reflect the child's desire to communicate and did not teach the child anything about writing. Others have argued that the emphasis on personal voice fails to evaluate the writing outcome with any rigour, producing uncritical acceptance (Czerniewska, 1992). In turn, the genre approach, with a greater emphasis on competent use of linguistic features and structures, has been criticised for subordinating students' creative abilities to mastery of the norms of text conventions (Kress, 1994). Myhill (2001b:16) suggests that thinking of different perspectives on writing as opposites "leads to unhelpful ideological polarisations: the liberal left-wing creativity camp versus the conservative right-wing grammar camp" as well as missing the fundamental point about good writing, that "to be creative you have to be able to shape, craft and manipulate language for effect". It also leads to polemic in the press. For example, the author Philip Pullman, in an article in the Times Educational Supplement (published on 8th February, 2002) criticised the emphasis on direct instruction about language in the National Literacy Strategies as a denial of the power of unconscious processes, antithetical to the "mystery, chance and silence" of writing.

Different theoretical disciplines can suggest polarised views of what counts as quality, since they foreground different elements of the act of writing. As a summary, cognitive psychology has focused on writing behaviour and processes; sociocultural theory on the social communicative context of text production and evaluation, and linguistics on features of the written text. The research literature reveals an interesting and quite complex synergy between these different theoretical perspectives on writing, methods of analysis and judgements of quality. In his review of assessment research, Huot (1990) points out that the quality ratings of different linguistic features of a text are related to shifts in the type of textual analysis being used. Earlier studies, using analytic approaches to the evaluation of writing, and under the influence of Chomsky's

generative grammar in the 1950s, focused on syntax. The use of holistic evaluation, reported in later studies, has been fostered by developments in text linguistics and discourse analysis; Cameron (1995) argues that a holistic scoring scheme foregrounds text cohesion rather than the narrower concentration on word or sentence level features which is fostered by analytical scoring. Her conclusion is that “evaluation at the full text level makes a more meaningful and relevant unit of analysis with regard to written language development” (p.258). Similarly, Sharples (1999:5) suggests that the influential work of John Hayes and Linda Flower in the 1980s, with its emphasis on writing as a cognitive, problem-solving process, was enabled by the new methods of analysis they adopted, for example by asking writers to speak aloud while writing, and building up a model of the writing process through analysis of these ‘think-aloud protocols’. Subsequent researchers’ methods such as analysis of pauses, directed recall and observations of students engaging in collaborative writing tasks, have built up a detailed account of the processes of writing – planning, idea and text generation and revision – that has been incorporated into theoretical models of writing development.

In a similar way, greater attention to writing as a social and cultural activity is both enabled by, and demands, assessment methods that are broader than analysis of sentence-level features in a single text. The intention of the Crediton Project (Wilkinson, Barnsley, Hanna & Swan, 1980) was to develop models of assessment that would expand the view of writing development to incorporate its “psychological content” and allow teachers to evaluate “the quality of thinking, quality of feeling and the nature of the moral attitude displayed” (p.22). Thus the four models of assessment developed by the project served as systems of analysis in the fields of cognition, affect, morals and style. Wilkinson explicitly makes the point that these can only be assessed by looking in detail at a broad range of students’ writing over time, and his research was influential in promoting the kind of portfolio assessment that is now common practice in UK secondary schools.

More recently, a sociocultural perspective on writing, which views it as a “social communicative act” and “meaning-making activity” (Myhill et al, 2008:21) or “a

social event between the writer and the audience” (McCutchen, 2008) foregrounds a different set of evaluative criteria. Here, factors such as the “authenticity” of the writing and the ability of the writer to “meet a particular communicative need” (Allison, Beard & Willcocks, 2002:109) become the arbiters of its value. At the same time, investigation of the nature of communication in naturalistic settings has been enabled by more sophisticated and unobtrusive recording equipment and by software designed to process large amounts of qualitative data.

What educators and researchers have valued in children’s writing, then, has been in a state of flux, influenced by changes to dominant paradigms, theoretical models and methods of analysis. Constructs of quality in writing, allied to methods of text analysis and assessment, will of necessity continue to evolve. Technology changes not only the way we write but the very nature of writing. Pennington (1996) draws attention to stages of children’s writing development enabled by use of word processors and which he claims results in better quality work: because pupils can write more easily, they write more, compose more fluently and revise text more thoroughly and radically. In a meta-analysis of effective writing instructional practices in US classrooms (Graham & Perin, 2007), word processing emerged as fifth out of eleven approaches that significantly improved writing quality. Nowadays, standard computer technology provides students with the means to compose and publish multimodal texts and to communicate globally, experimenting with new forms of composition. Indeed, ‘text’ itself has been re-defined as “any instance of communication in any mode or in any combination of modes” (Kress, 2003: 48). This would seem to call for broader judgements of writing quality, despite the fact that summative assessment is dominated by monomodal written text (Vincent, 2006), and a greater focus on classroom response to students’ writing, whether by their teachers (Huot & Perry, 2009) or their peers (Rijlaarsdam et al. 2009).

3.3. The complexity of writing and evaluation

Writing has been characterised as perhaps the most complex and effortful activity learners undertake, drawing on cognitive, social and linguistic choices; indeed, Kellogg has argued that writing is as cognitively challenging as playing

chess (2008:2) and requiring a similar amount of practice as learning to play a musical instrument. Torrance and Galbraith (2006) compare writing to an underpowered computer running too many programs, while Hayes and Flower (1980:31) refer to “the act of juggling a number of simultaneous constraints”. Constraints can be external, such as the writing task and the intended audience, or internal, such as knowing what to say and how to say it (Sharpley, 1999). Depending on the writer’s proficiency, the ‘juggling’ might include attending to handwriting and spelling, selecting appropriate vocabulary and syntactical structures, and managing content. At the same time, evaluation of writing has been characterised as opaque, “a somewhat indeterminate process” (Lumley, 2002:10), “fluid”, “tentative” and “entangled” (Wyatt-Smith et al., 2003:11).

Interestingly, in an analysis of the newly-introduced level descriptors in the UK national curriculum, Sainsbury and Sizmur (1998) described their most salient feature as complexity, even though they were intended as a simplification of the statements of attainment that had preceded them. Complexity was evident in the clustering together of non-interdependent features within the description (range, organisation, style, grammar, punctuation, spelling and handwriting); their general nature, covering all types of writing; and the degree of abstraction. The analysis suggested that the statutory level descriptors had little intrinsic coherence, thus making it difficult for teachers to interpret and apply them consistently, and that this was true both within and across subjects. For example, there was variance between the number of abstract and concrete items; the definition of progression was mixed and not always seemingly logical: precise examples of progression in spelling were provided but “in terms of the content and overall quality of the writing, it is not immediately evident that 'confident' writing is three levels higher than 'lively and thoughtful' writing” (p.188).

Complexity of judgement was evident in that the descriptors needed “further interpretation” (p.190) which depended upon understandings external to the descriptors themselves. In making scaled criterion-referenced judgements, teachers must bring with them knowledge and understanding that allows them

to identify the characteristics of the level and of progression from one level to the next. For example, in order to assess the clarity of a piece of writing, teachers must have a working knowledge of what constitutes increasing clarity in writing, which then serves as the yardstick against which points on the scale can be measured. They must also understand the educational constructs behind the descriptors, for example to know why clarity should be considered an important feature of writing. More than that, they must see to it that their teaching of the curriculum is such as to give rise to the patterns of performance in their students that are envisaged in the level descriptions. Sainsbury and Sizmur concluded that assessment based on level descriptors placed a considerable responsibility on teachers which had not been made explicit in the report that instigated them (Dearing, 1993); Dearing simply acknowledged that assessment is not an exact science and that teacher judgement must play a significant part. In practice, teacher judgement includes an understanding of the nature of progression within the subject, as defined by the national curriculum.

3.3.1 Progression in writing

The research and pedagogic literature about writing development highlights a persistent problem, which is that, “development obviously takes place, but does not take place obviously” (Wilkinson et al., 1980:2). In investigating the language development in the writing of 7 to 14 year olds, Wilkinson stressed that although it is obvious that the writing of 14 year olds is likely to show developments from the writing of 11 year olds, which in turn will show developments from that of 7 year olds, the nature of these developments is only imprecisely known. Just as there is lack of common agreement about what constitutes quality in writing, there is a lack of common agreement about just what is meant by ‘development’ in writing, which has in turn led to disagreement about what counts as effective pedagogy in writing. If teachers and researchers disagree about what it means to improve in writing, they might also be expected to disagree about how such improvements can be fostered in classrooms.

A key issue in trying to describe a quality performance in writing is that progression in writing, what ‘getting better’ actually looks like, is hard to delineate. Marshall (2007:5) argues that “the fuzzy nature of English” makes it

difficult to establish clearly defined criteria – or goals – marking the path of progression in English, which is perhaps better characterised as movement towards “a broad horizon” rather than systematic mastery of specific linguistic features or the conventions of a particular genre. Indeed, any attempt to reduce writing development to a simple linear model of growth is bound to fail, given that it is not “a series of skills” that develop in a well-defined cumulative order (Czerniewska, 1992:71). As previously discussed, issues of quality are hard to define and cover both content and style, and outcomes may be received differently by readers. Thus it is perfectly possible to achieve technical perfection yet produce writing that fails to engage the reader. Nor is the end-goal, or ‘broad horizon’ easy to define; Marshall (2001) suggests that English teachers themselves do not always know what they are looking for in terms of writing development.

Some apparent markers of progression, such as complexity in writing, can have both positive and negative connotations. On the one hand, it is associated with maturity and sophistication in writing and the ability to handle complex ideas; on the other hand, it can be viewed as over-complication at the expense of clear and direct communication (Myhill et al., 2008). In their review of the research literature relating to complex expression, these authors make the point that “sentence length or complexity on their own cannot be a sufficient indication of written quality” (p.8) without a consideration of how sentence constructions link to purpose and audience, underscoring the view that evaluation of writing quality, and notions of progression in writing, are crucially dependent on context. There have, though, been attempts within different theoretical disciplines to describe the stages of writing development, and to pinpoint features of ‘quality’, ‘sophistication’ and ‘maturity’, and a brief overview of these follows.

3.3.2 Linguistic models of writing development

Dominant in earlier linguistic studies was the idea that better writers use increasingly complex grammatical constructions and that these develop with age. Hunt’s seminal 1965 study, which analysed the syntactic characteristics of children’s writing at 9, 13 and 17 years, argued that syntactic maturity as

measured by T-units (a dominant clause and its dependent clauses, roughly equivalent to sentences) was a good indication of improved quality of writing. Several studies since Hunt have equated writing quality, sophistication or maturity with the presence or absence of age-related linguistic features. Harpin's (1976) longitudinal UK study, for example, focused on writers aged 7-11, with analysis indicating that the use of personal pronouns decreased with age, whilst clause and sentence length and the use of subordination increased. In the US, Loban's (1976) analysis of speech and writing in children aged 4-18 focused primarily on syntax, with development characterised by longer sentences, more use of dependent clauses and greater embedding of clauses. However, such findings have subsequently been challenged. Crowhurst (1980) specifically investigated the relationship between syntactical complexity and judgements of quality and found that although T-unit length in argument related to writing quality, in narrative it did not. She concluded that effective narrative style is not greatly dependent on complexity of syntax. Similarly, Faigley (1979) in a study looking at the writing of post-16 students, found that clause length had little relationship with readers' judgements of writing quality. Drawing on a number of empirical studies and theoretical arguments, Witte, Daly and Cherry (1986:163) concluded that "researchers are likely to be disappointed in their attempt to show a relationship between syntactic complexity and writing quality".

Some studies have suggested that writing development is characterised by an increase in the number and variety of words that writers use. For example, Stromqvist et al. (2002) found a significant developmental leap in the lexical density and diversity of writing of students between the ages of 13-17. Other research suggests that text-level features may be more influential than sentence-level features on judgements of quality. Witte and Faigley's 1981 study of college students' writing found that high-rated essays were much denser in cohesion than the low-rated essays: good writers were better able to expand and connect their ideas. However, this study also discussed the limitations of judging writing by counting discrete features, in this case, cohesive ties. The researchers concluded that judgements of writing quality were dependent on factors outside the text itself and thus beyond the scope of cohesion analyses: "Writing quality is in part defined as the 'fit' of a particular

text to its context, which includes such factors as the writer's purpose, the discourse medium and the audience's knowledge of and interest in the subject" (p.199).

The assumption in earlier studies that maturity, complexity, sophistication and quality of writing develop on a smooth, age-related trajectory has also been challenged. Instead of grouping writers by age, Myhill (2008) used assessments by class teachers to divide Y8 and Y10 pupils into 'good,' 'average' and 'weak' writers. Qualitative evaluation of the writing samples revealed that the use of complex and compound sentences decreased as writing ability increased. Regardless of age, 'good' writers deliberately varied sentence structures, including use of simple sentences for effect. This suggests that models of writing development need to take into account students' ability to manipulate "syntactical structures already within the writer's repertoire" (p. 286) for particular and deliberate rhetorical effects. A quality performance in writing seemingly demands high levels of linguistic control, since as Janks (2009:131) points out, writers who have this control are able to "realise the meaning potential that language affords us. What is selected from the range of lexical and grammatical options determines how this potential is realised." Trajectories of development might need to include students' growing metalinguistic awareness, including how consciously they can control choices for rhetorical effect.

Indeed, there is a suggestion that expert writers are marked out by a growing ability to analyse language (Almargot & Chanquoy, 2001). However, research in this area is often framed within discussion of the efficacy of grammar instruction, which is subject to contested views. For example, large-scale reviews of research into writing in the US and the UK (Hillocks, 1984; EPPI, 2004) have not found a convincing link between grammar instruction and the quality of students' writing, although the nature of some of the evidence referred to has been called into question (Watson, 2012). An important strand of the 'grammar debate' focuses on the use of linguistic metalanguage to identify and explain how effective expression is achieved. The QCA *Grammar Papers* are clear that "analysis depends on the ability to name linguistic features, structures

and patterns at word, sentence and whole text level” (QCA, 1998:6) which is very much the stand taken in the most recent version of the National Curriculum for England (DfE, 2013), where an ability to use metalanguage is positioned as central to children’s progression and development as writers. The conceptualisation is of development from implicit to explicit knowledge about language. However, there is some research evidence to suggest that younger writers may not possess sufficient metalinguistic understanding to allow for conscious deliberation over writing choices, or they may have the understanding but not the metalanguage with which to express it. In a study by Myhill and Jones (2006), secondary-age students were often able to articulate explicit choices made during text production, but were not always able to describe these in metalinguistic terms. It could also be that proficient writers have automated linguistic decision-making and no longer think explicitly about metalinguistic choices.

Correspondingly, a number of studies point to evidence of teachers at both primary and secondary level struggling “to make knowledge of language explicit” (Beard, 2000:207). Difficulties may arise from lack of professional knowledge; many secondary teachers will have studied English Literature at degree level and may not have been taught grammar at school. Indeed, a QCA survey of teachers in the period immediately following the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy indicated considerable lack of confidence in linguistic knowledge, particularly with sentence grammar, and uncertainty about implicit and explicit knowledge, such that there was a “significant gap...in teachers’ knowledge and confidence in sentence grammar and this has implications for...the teaching of language and style in texts and pupils’ own writing” (QCA, 1998:35). From a pedagogical perspective, linguistic subject knowledge is more than the ability to use appropriate terminology. Beard (2000:123) comments that where teachers “do have a framework for analysing grammatical structures, it may be disproportionately influenced by a ‘naming of parts’ approach” (Beard, 2000:123). Teachers with confident linguistic subject knowledge are more likely to move beyond narrow definitions of correctness to an exploration of rhetorical effects and “be in a better position to help young writers” (Andrews, 2005:75), for example by handling students’ questions or demonstrating how effects in

writing are achieved. In a study of teachers in New Zealand, Gordon (2005) found that those who developed more secure linguistic knowledge were able to see beyond superficial error in children's writing to evidence of growing syntactical maturity. Previously for these teachers, "the 'writing virtues' of their pupils often went unseen and unacknowledged because of their own lack of knowledge about language" (p.63). Thus teachers' and students' evaluations of quality in writing may be circumscribed by the extent of their linguistic knowledge and by their ability to explain their judgements in specific linguistic terms.

3.3.3 Cognitive models of writing development

There is a longstanding and repeated emphasis in cognitive research in writing upon the importance of metacognition in students' progression and development as writers, which encompasses more than the use of linguistic terms. Kellogg maintains that effective pedagogy should explicitly consider metacognition and "teach the student how to think as well as write" (1994:213). Metacognitive knowledge plays a role in planning writing, helping students to consider the strategic goals of the task (Hayes & Flower, 1980); it supports students' reflection both on the content of a piece of writing and how to shape and craft it by providing "a model of their audience" (Kellogg, 1994:213), and it informs the process of revision (Alamargot & Chanquoy, 2001). Bereiter and Scardamalia (1982:57) believe the significance of metacognition is that it makes "normally covert processes overt"; in other words, it makes the writing process transparent and visible to the writer and enables reasoning and reflexive analysis (Hayes, 1996).

However, cognitive models that attempt to describe the composition processes of students are marked by complexity. For example, Flower and Hayes (1981) found in their analysis of think-aloud protocols that writers' verbalisations as they wrote included "stray notions, false starts, and incomplete fragmentary thoughts" (p.368). Writers created a complex "network of goals" which might include high-level goals such as "write an introduction" as well as "local working goals" like "explain things simply" (p.377) and these goals shifted and interacted as the process of composition proceeded. Writers used and re-used a small

number of simple processes, “the basic ones being plan, translate and review” (p.376) but they did not “march through these processes in a simple 1,2,3 order” (p.375) and they used them to produce a whole range of different texts and kinds of writing. Cognitive models suggest that metacognition and writing development are age-related, but there is no absolute agreement about how and when maturation takes place, or how it might link to writing quality; in other words, it is not a foregone conclusion that writers improve as they get older. Berninger and Swanson (1994, as cited in McCutchen, 2011) used a ‘Thinking about Writing’ test to try and ascertain the extent to which text quality is linked to metacognitive knowledge of the writing process (planning, formulation and revision), and from what age. They found that metacognitive knowledge tended not to be related to quality of writing in intermediate grade children (aged 11-13) but began to be so in junior high students (aged 14-15). They concluded that the writer needs to achieve a certain degree of maturity in order to be able to analyse his or her writing processes and modify them. However, they also found that students aged 14-15 were not able to analyse the writing process in great depth; metacognition drew on more general aspects such as general knowledge about writing and sensitivity to audience. It remained unclear how the kind of evolution suggested might be influenced by instructional practices.

Cognitive models of writing development are also complicated by the acknowledgement that reading plays a central role in competent writing (Hayes, 1996). Skilled writers often pause to reread their own texts and such reading during writing has been linked to the quality of the written product (Breetvelt, van den Bergh & Rijlaarsdam, 1996). In fact, given the pervasive role of reading in writing (including for the purpose of student self or peer evaluation), it might be assumed that writing-assessment tasks also measure some aspects of reading. Consequently, in order for children to become competent writers, reading processes must become relatively automatic (Deane et al. 2008).

In the model formulated by Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987:13), children move from “knowledge telling” (where each idea acts as a cue to the next one and writing is continuous) to “knowledge transforming” (where text knowledge is used to reflect on the effectiveness of rhetorical choices and to make

appropriate revisions), with a corresponding maturation of working memory. However, these stages are not necessarily age-restricted or hierarchical; knowledge-telling represents an economical approach, since it enables the writer to operate within the capacities of working memory. In older writers it might prove very adequate for writing straightforward narratives or chronological accounts where production processes are increasingly automatic. In contrast, knowledge transforming is cognitively costly, requiring strategic problem solving. Kellogg (2008:4) has added “knowledge-crafting” to Bereiter and Scardamalia’s model of development. This emphasises revisions to text that are made with the reader clearly in mind, although Kellogg anticipates this stage as applying to adults or professional writers rather than children in school, a somewhat surprising view given that current UK published assessment criteria emphasise conscious crafting of writing for a specified audience and purpose.

In formulating a view of writing as design, Sharples (1999:30) draws attention to the idea of age-related models of writing development in order to highlight an interesting paradox: the more that children begin to consciously manipulate structures for effect, using their growing understanding of the writing process, the worse the outcome as judged by teachers. Possible reasons for the discernible dip in writing quality in the early secondary school years might be that the ability to reflect on performance disrupts the flow of ideas (Karmiloff-Smith, 1992), or that children are only partially successful in incorporating new styles and structures of writing (Sharples, 1985). Sharples also suggests that the breakthrough to more reflective writing, and the ‘trying out’ of new structures and styles, might not be recognised by the child’s teacher. In assessing quality, teachers need to take account of not only what pupils do *better* from day to day and task to task, but also what they do *differently*. In summary, Alamargot and Fayol (in Beard et al., 2009) suggest that a developmental model of written production should predict both the strategies used in the composing process and the quality of the end product, in the light of the writer’s general development, writing expertise and the learning context, but that “a model with this degree of advancement does not yet exist” (p.23).

3.3.4 Sociocultural theory and writing development

Studies of writing in naturalistic classroom settings, as in this thesis, must take into account the fact that the cognitive and linguistic skills deployed by writers occur in social contexts that encourage and support particular types of thinking and expression. In reviewing the history of sociocultural theories of writing, Prior (2006) emphasises that writing is situated within actual contexts of use; mediated by social practices and conventions, and acquired as part of being socialised into particular communities of practice. Learning to write within a classroom community is frequently a process of learning what is expected, “an acquired response to the discourse conventions which arise from the preferred ways of communicating and knowledge within particular communities” (Swales, 1990:4). These communities operate at several, nested, levels, so that constructs of quality in writing might be negotiated and understood differently by particular groups of students within the same classroom; among teachers in the same department and across departments in a school; between schools and the wider community. In short, the cultural practices of these different communities can be expected to influence expectations and evaluations of writing, even though expectations may be implied rather than stated explicitly, and they may have a particular significance at times of transition, when students change teaching groups or move between institutions.

A sociocultural perspective on writing development highlights that standards are not objective measures; they are the subjective judgements or consensus perception of an assessment community (Cresswell, 2000), be that examiners, teachers or students. There is research evidence to suggest that teachers of English enact judgement processes in significantly different ways from teachers of the other core subjects in secondary schools, science and mathematics. Using think-aloud protocols and interviews, Klenowski and Wyatt-Smith (2008) investigated how teachers of different subjects in Queensland, Australia moderated students’ work, with judgements referenced to newly-introduced national standards of achievement. English teachers tended to move from the whole to the part, regarding the work to be assessed in its entirety, before fixing on particular aspects of performance. They valued holistic judgement which

they understood as “inevitably” subjective (p.13). Whereas the science and maths teachers thought the detailed statements in the standards, in conjunction with numeric scores, were important in regulating their judgements and achieving objectivity, for English teachers, the standards only acquired meaning through use, and objectivity was seen as the ‘fairness’ of the match between stated standards and the features that were ‘really there’ in students’ work : “It is as though teachers try on the ‘fit’ of the standards for student work as an evaluative experience, with the terms in which the standards are written acquiring meaning within a marking occasion, and from one occasion to the next” (p.13).

Sociocultural theories of writing emphasise both the subjectivity of response and the negotiated nature of constructs such as quality. The view is of teachers and students forming a “community of interpreters” (William, 1998:6), developing a shared understanding of quality through encounters with authentic texts. William’s observation of teachers conducting trial marking at GCSE moderation meetings led him to conclude that “there is a shared construct amongst the community of practitioners about what it means to be good at English” which is “neither norm-referenced nor based on a set of clear criteria” against which students’ work is judged (William & Marshall, 2002:55). In effect, teachers were making judgements based on an overall impression (some would refer to this as ‘gut instinct’) which included lots of trade-offs to balance out different strengths and weaknesses in students’ writing, but that nevertheless achieved high levels of consistent agreement about what a particular grade looked like, especially in relation to “whether this is worth a C”. Sadler (1989) refers to this collective understanding of standards as ‘guild knowledge’, claiming that English teachers use their engagement with, and practice of their subject, to evaluate what it means to be good at it. The fact that judgements are derived from authentic activity – teachers’ own practice as readers and writers – makes their judgements or ‘impressions’ reliable; lists of pre-set criteria actually interfere with this process. Sadler stresses that students too can develop ‘guild knowledge’ through peer assessment practices. Judging the work of their peers provides pupils with a similar kind of experience to that of their teachers in moderation and standardisation meetings – it apprentices them into the guild.

Nonetheless, sociocultural theory predicts for variation of judgement, beliefs and practices. Just as *The Cox Report - English Ages 5-16* (DES, 1989) drew attention to different philosophies within the subject English, and bearing in mind that the subject has relatively little in the way of fixed content, it might be expected that English teachers' own subject philosophies will have an influence on what is valued in classroom writing and on classroom discourse about quality, including analysis of models and feedback to students' writing. Thus Beck (2006) argues for greater attention being paid to subjective and intersubjective understandings about writing, "the intersection of mind and culture" (p.418), and to dialogic rather than directive classroom responses. Her conclusion is based on research evidence that teachers and students often bring different understanding to conversations about classroom writing, and that these differences can lead to persistently mismatched expectations for what counts as good writing. As one instance of this, Sperling and Freedman (1987) noted how a gifted student revised her writing in ways that did not essentially improve its quality but which she knew would please the teacher who was marking her work. These authors suggested that 'successful' students may be particularly prone to simplistic interpretations of their teacher's advice for writing, to the extent that they perceive the teacher as an expert in this domain and defer to this expertise. Olson (2003:136) has also noted the need to bring to light students' "private beliefs" about successful writing and to explore them in the context of their teachers' classroom, since "even private beliefs take their form from the intersubjective agreements, norms and conventions that constitute a culture." Investigating students' and teachers' subjectivities might allow a glimpse into how beliefs may be formed by the norms established in the classroom, norms which in turn may have been shaped by broader public discourse about standards for writing and the high stakes associated with meeting these standards.

3.3.5 Investigating judgement processes

A fundamental point in relation to assessment, then, is that human judgement is central to the process: any assessment criteria, and especially those loosely framed as in level descriptors, will need to be interpreted by those who use

them. Any domain definition, even such an apparently precise one as the correct spelling of simple monosyllabic words, can be interpreted at different levels of difficulty and it is a basic error to imagine that the words laid down in the written descriptors will be interpreted in the same way by all who use them (William, 1998). They need to be subjected to an ongoing and collective process of shared interpretations such that their meaning is made evident (Hall & Harding, 2002). However, even when work is carefully moderated or cross-marked to achieve reliability, judgements remain implicit and the visibility of the standards to students is still often minimal, so that: “the fundamental judgements teachers make about the quality of student work remain subjective and substantially hidden from the students’ view” (Sadler, 2005:175). Teachers and students are encouraged to be explicit about expectations for writing, as a way of generating knowledge in the classroom, but the beliefs on which these expectations rest may draw on “tacit, taken-for-granted assumptions” (Beck 2006:420) or on ‘latent’, previously-unspecified criteria (Sadler, 1985) which are only brought into operation during the judgement process itself. In the light of such complexities, Beck (2006:420) has called for an expanded conception of subjectivity that might take into account not only the knowledge but also “the values, attitudes and beliefs that affect a teacher’s attempts to forge with students a shared understanding of criteria for good writing.”

This leads to a problem for the researcher of how to investigate subjective and intersubjective understandings. Individuals’ identities as teachers and learners are composed not only of what they know (and can declare) but also of their beliefs about the validity and importance of this knowledge, so that knowledge and beliefs may be “inextricably intertwined” (Pajares, 1992:325). Borg (2003:81) claims that educational research over the last 25 years has led to “the largely uncontested” assumption that “teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalised, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs”, a definition that suggests both the importance of studying teachers’ beliefs and the complexity of the task. There is general recognition that teachers’ beliefs influence their classroom practice; for example, Calderhead (1996:719) points out that beliefs help teachers to “interpret and

simplify” information, acting as a filter through which decisions and judgements can be made. This may be particularly true when concepts - such as quality in writing - are contested, so that in the absence of fixed or absolute criteria, teachers may rely on their “personal practical knowledge” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988:25), on the theories and beliefs which form “a set of conceptual representations” of a reality and which act as “a guide to personal thought and action” (Harvey, 1986:660, as cited in Fang, 1996a:50). In the specific context of writing assessment, Wyatt-Smith and Castleton (2004:61) have called for researchers and teacher educators to enable teachers to “bring to the surface their beliefs about writing achievement” and to legitimate their role in the judgement process. Similarly, Fang (1996b), reporting a close association between teachers’ beliefs and pupils’ perceptions of good writing in an elementary classroom, suggests it would be beneficial for teacher educators “to consider whether pre-service teachers’ beliefs are associated with successful learning and how to help them effectively translate their beliefs into sound instructional practice” (p.256).

However, whilst recognising a relationship between teachers’ beliefs and classroom practices, reviews of research into teacher cognition (for example, Shavelson & Stern, 1981; Fang, 1996a; Calderhead, 1996; Borg, 2003) emphasise the complexity of the construct and its many contradictions and ambiguities. Borg’s model of teacher cognition, applied to the field of second and foreign language teaching, includes beliefs, knowledge, theories, attitudes, images, assumptions, metaphors, conceptions and perspectives and suggests how these are both derived from, and modified by, classroom interactions, including teachers’ own experiences as learners. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) adopted the metaphor of a landscape to capture the complexity and expansiveness of professional knowledge, seen as “both an intellectual and moral landscape” composed of “a wide variety of components and influenced by a wide variety of people, places and things” and having a history with “moral, emotional and aesthetic dimensions” (p.5). Other conceptualisations of belief have emphasised their “context-specific nature” (Pajares, 1992:319), their transient nature (Clandinin, 1985); and the inconsistency between stated beliefs and instructional practice (Pajares, 1992; Basturkemen, Loewen & Ellis, 2004)

which was marked enough in these latter authors' research in ESL classrooms for them to suggest that "investigations of teachers' beliefs, especially unplanned elements of teaching...need to be based on both stated beliefs and observed behaviours" (p.243).

A strong thread in the literature relates to "the consistency thesis" (Fang, 1996a:52). This includes a focus on the internal consistency of an individual's beliefs, for example from one time-point or context to another, as well as the relationship between beliefs and decision-making. Phipps and Borg (2009:381), reporting a study of three EFL teachers, found tensions between their stated beliefs about grammar teaching and their classroom practices. They suggest that such divergences and differences have often been framed negatively, but that investigation into the "deeper tensions among competing beliefs that teachers hold" is a valuable focus for both research and teacher development. One tension revealed by Connelly and Clandinin (1999:2) is that professional knowledge may be derived from, and enacted in, two fundamentally different places: in-classroom and out-of-classroom. In viewing the 'landscape' of professional knowledge as narratively constructed, "a place of story", they describe the out-of-classroom place as "filled with other people's visions of what is right for children", the prescriptions of policy makers and senior administrators. In contrast, teachers' own classrooms are positioned as "safe places" where teachers are free to enact their own practice, their "secret stories".

This tension between 'official' and 'personal' professional knowledge has also been conceptualised as a tension between "the global standard-setting of external assessment" and "the local of teacher judgement" (Wyatt-Smith & Castleton, 2005:131). Research shows that teachers do not only use externally prescribed standards as a basis of their judgement; they also turn to their own implicit knowledge and beliefs, especially when conflicts arise between their personal assessment and standardised criteria (Arkoudis & O'Loughlin, 2004; Davison, 2004). By observing the conflict between ESL teachers' own professional judgements of learner performance and the external standards they were required to meet, Davison (2004) concluded that individual teachers

may interpret rating rubrics differently on the basis of their different assessment beliefs. Thus the complexity of teacher cognition needs to be further investigated in teachers' assessment practice.

3.4 Tensions in teachers' evaluations of writing quality

Given the tensions and contradictions inherent in models of teacher cognition, including between stated beliefs and actual practice, and between public and private 'ways of knowing', it is not surprising that early studies of teachers' evaluations of writing were largely focused on uncovering variations and discrepancies and suggesting reasons for them. For example, in a quantitative study designed to reveal the response patterns of 36 high-school teachers, Harris (1977) found that there was "dramatic disagreement" among English teachers as to what good writing was and was not, and that many English teachers could not be objective in judging student writing or in reporting their judgements. There was a marked discrepancy between what teachers said they thought was important (in this instance, content and organisation) and what they actually stressed as they evaluated student writing (here, mechanics and usage). There were also marked individual inconsistencies in teachers' rank ordering of samples, depending on whether they used their own criteria and preferences or specific criteria provided for them. Connors and Lunsford (1993), in a study that is still often cited, investigated written comments made on 3,000 college student papers (which they had invited teachers to send them) and found that only 11% gave feedback designed to improve the quality of the draft while 59% of comments justified the grade awarded. Interestingly, the researchers noted that 75% of the papers were awarded a final grade but that these took "such an extraordinary variety of forms" (p.209) that no comparison was possible.

Rater discrepancy is not in itself surprising since, as Murphy (2000) has pointed out, the meaning of text will be constructed differently depending on the 'discourses' brought to bear on the text by the reader. Scholes (1985) too has stressed that different readers of a single text are not unified members of a single unified group but will bring different assumptions and expectations to their reading, differences that create the space in which we can exercise a

measure of interpretive freedom. Reading of students' writing is an "evaluative act" (Huot & Perry, 2009: 431) and teachers are not automata. The question is whether or not differences in response matter. If assumptions and expectations of students' writing are limiting, biased or opaque, then clearly they do. For example, Freedman (1984), in an experimental study, mixed the work of professional writers with that of first-year college students. She found that, using holistic rating, teachers awarded lower scores to the professional writing because it violated their expectations for students' work. A study of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum assessment in English found that key aspects of attainment went unrewarded; not only were markers "quite unable to distinguish between different features of writing" but they also "failed to make distinctions between the mechanics of writing and the candidates' capacity to demonstrate understanding and write expressively; they generally failed to reward the latter" (Wilmot, Wood & Murphy 1996:20).

Other studies in a range of disciplines have found that teachers apply their "idiosyncratic values, beliefs and expectations of performance" (Brooks, 2009:7), privileging their own judgement criteria which may be quite different from published criteria that have been shared with students (Hay & Macdonald, 2008). Students' work habits, social behaviour, gender, ethnicity, cultural background and physical attractiveness are amongst the factors which have been found to bias the assessment of academic performance when students are known by their assessors (see for example, Gipps & Murphy, 1994: Harlen, 2005). Drawing on a series of laboratory experiments, Laming (2004) has argued from the perspective of psychology that bias in judgement is "irresistible" (p.153) because it is pre-conscious, coming into operation whenever the available evidence is insufficient to support judgement. In assessments that have a substantial degree of uncertainty built into them - such as judgements of writing that draw on qualitative criteria and prioritise creativity and personal response - "past experience enters like air rushing in to fill a vacuum" (p.164). He argues that it is because we all have different accumulations of past experience that we tend to "make different judgements about the same issue" (p.18).

Nonetheless, judgement “does not take place in a vacuum; it requires some form of comparator” (Brooks, 2009:7). Research that stresses the potential of developmental classroom assessment draws attention to the use of explicit evaluative frameworks, rubrics, guidelines or criteria for illuminating decisions about texts and the process of producing them (Wyatt-Smith, 1999; Wyatt-Smith & Castleton, 2005; Parr, 2011). As outlined in Chapter 2 of this thesis, criteria serve a dual purpose; they provide a description of textual features – the parts that make the whole - whilst ascribing a value to them when they are ranked into levels or grades. In this way, criteria relate to both the qualities of the written work and the system of grading, marking or scoring that is employed to quantify the worth of the work (Greatorex, 2002). Thus teacher evaluation that is criterion-referenced has been cast in terms of objectivity, reliability and accountability (Broad, 2000 and Lumley, 2002 provide summaries of research in this area). Published benchmark criteria are intended to eliminate or minimise personal, subjective aspects of the assessor’s practice and to give a clear account of the standards being aimed for.

However, research from Australia suggests the complex of factors that come into play when teachers evaluate students’ writing using standardised assessment criteria. In a three-year study of 37 teachers’ assessment of ten-year olds’ writing achievement, Wyatt-Smith and Castleton (2004; 2005), focused on the processes teachers used as they read and appraised student writing, as distinct from judgements recorded as numerical or letter grades. They recorded think-aloud judgements in three different contexts – as teachers responded to their own students’ writing (“in-context” judgements); to writing samples from unknown children (“out-of-context” judgements) and “system context” judgements on all the samples with reference to standardised published benchmark criteria. The researchers report the wide range of “child factors” (2004:43) that carried more weight than State standardised assessment criteria. Teachers’ judgements were affected by their knowledge of the child’s socio-economic background; the nature and level of prescribed medication; the perceived level of trust in the teacher; whether the child had poor or high self-esteem, and whether or not the child was confident about taking risks. Their 2005 study compared judgements made by teachers about the writing of

children in their classes and children they did not know. Variability of standard from year to year emerged as a teacher expectation, as did low expectations from teachers in low socio-economic schools. Participants found it difficult to assess the writing of children they did not teach; their judgements were influenced by knowledge of the help given to a child in reaching the identified standard, and by a child's personality and task behaviours, such as motivation and engagement: "It was as if the teachers actively sought to align the writing to be judged with what they had directly observed of the student during class" (2005:141). In their own classrooms, judgements were influenced by teachers' pedagogic experiences and philosophies and by holistic impressions of their students, including how much effort they had applied to the writing.

Wyatt-Smith and Castleton's research has led them to conceptualise teacher evaluation as a process of drawing on a series of "dynamically networked indexes" that "come into (and out of) play in acts of judgement" (2005:135). The weight attributed to different indexes, and how they are combined, is likely to vary "not only from teacher-to-teacher but also from judgement-to-judgement" (p.144). Cooksey, Freebody and Wyatt-Smith (2007) identified 40 different judgement models operating amongst 20 primary school teachers, so that there was a high level of variability in teachers' notions of quality and a wide range of factors that shaped how judgements were formed. Many factors affecting judgements in classroom contexts were extra-textual (Wyatt-Smith et al., 2003). Interestingly, while teachers did use explicitly stated standards, they also actively referred to other tacit understandings based on personal knowledge of students, prior evaluative experience and teaching contexts, and for many teachers these 'in-the-head' standards carried more validity than the official criteria, being used as a reason for discounting or even subverting the stated standards. In a study of moderation practices in high schools in Queensland, Australia, Klenowski et al. (2007) found that teachers were "looking for particular responses that reflect their own ideas as to what constitutes a good or A grade response, which may or may not correspond to the criteria for that product" (p.14).

Thus in the research literature, teacher response is often framed within the tensions arising from conflicting roles as facilitator, evaluator and audience for students' writing (Hyland, 2000; Harlen, 2004). Huot and Perry (2009), for example, have suggested that receptivity to students' writing and evaluation of its worth are qualitatively different once assessment is separated from grading and testing and have called for consideration of the particular context in which response occurs, as part of a web of classroom practices which includes student self-assessment. Similarly, Phelps (2000:93) has stressed that response is essentially about "the teacher's receptivity to the student text (and to what lies beyond it)" indicating that evaluation is a deeply social act, enmeshed in classroom interactions and influenced by classroom relationships. Whilst there is a lack of work that considers the interactive and contextual nature of response (Parr & Timperley, 2010), it does appear that classroom evaluation is an "emotional activity" (Edgington, 2005:14); "an emotional practice for teachers" (Steinberg, 2008). Edgington, reporting research which used think-aloud protocols to capture teachers' evaluations as they read and responded to their students' texts, presents the emotional investment in a positive light: teachers valued the activity, calling on a range of reading strategies and drawing on personal beliefs and values, classroom experiences, relationships with students and other contextual influences to assist them in understanding the student's text, ideas and arguments.

Steinberg, however, outlines the emotional tension resulting from the paradox inherent in the two different functions of assessment. At the same time as feeling accountable for results, many teachers have a deep distrust and even hostility towards summative, 'high-stakes' tests, when "test scores become the basis of predictions about people and their futures" (Hillocks, 2002:14). The paradox generates confusion between the demands of summative and formative assessment, which are governed by conflicting emotional rules. Formative assessment is premised on teachers being co-responsible for student progress, but the more that teachers worry about how their students perform in high-stakes tests, the less inclined they are to invest emotional labour in engaging with students' misunderstandings and finding ways of disrupting them.

3.5 Tensions in students' evaluations of writing quality

Research suggests that children's ability to make successful evaluations is critical to the writing process because neither generation of ideas and text nor revision would occur without evaluation (Flower & Hayes, 1981). Self-regulation requires that the student has internalised an idea of what a good performance is, can compare his or her own writing with that standard, and knows what needs to be done to meet the standard (Sadler, 1989). However, a point that is frequently made is that young writers are reluctant revisers, or are unsure of what to do at the revision stage. Beal (1996) drew attention to the fact that children's revisions "do not always result in an improved product" because "children cannot easily tell exactly which aspects of their text needs to be changed and so respond to adult encouragement to revise by making changes more or less at random" (p.221). There is some evidence from studies of student self assessment that weaker writers have a tendency to overestimate the quality of their writing, whilst stronger students tend to underestimate their achievement (Longhurst & Norton, 1997; Mowl & Pain, 1995) and despite the prevalence of self and peer assessment in secondary school classrooms, students may lack the knowledge needed to revise their writing.

A three-year evaluation of English provision in UK primary and secondary schools (Ofsted, 2009) found that many students were unclear about their strengths and weaknesses in writing or how they might improve. A key problem was that they did not understand their teachers' targets or how to respond, while targets themselves tended to be confined to superficial features of writing, such as spelling and punctuation. Higher-attaining writers in particular received too little feedback. A review of research evidence of the impact on students in secondary schools of self and peer assessment (Sebba et al., 2008) concluded that, whilst there were positive effects on student attainment and self-esteem, it was clear that students need to be taught the skills of assessment, including greater involvement in 'co-designing' the criteria for evaluation. In the context of summative assessment, and with specific reference to GCSE English coursework, Bullock, Bishop, Martin and Reid (2002, as cited in Harlen, 2004) found that students needed more help, in the form of better descriptions and

examples, to understand the assessment criteria and what was expected of them in meeting those criteria.

As Murphy (2000) has pointed out, research on teachers' response to students' writing has too often privileged the teacher's perspective over that of the student, with the consequence that relatively little is known about the nature of students' evaluations, in terms of the standards employed, the conceptual thinking underpinning judgements, or how students make sense of their teachers' assessment criteria. Most of the research here is in relation to written feedback, often in higher education settings, where attention is drawn to students' difficulties in understanding the language of their tutors' comments (Sperling & Freedman, 1987; Duncan, 2007) and to the lack of student engagement when feedback is correctional rather than developmental (Huot, 2002) or focuses on "praise, rewards and punishment" rather than learning goals (Hattie & Timperley, 2007:84). In a longitudinal study in the US involving ninth-grade (14 to 15 years-old) students, Beck (2006) looked at discrepancies between students' understandings of criteria for effective writing and the criteria of their teacher. The teacher's success criteria were misunderstood by all apart from the most able students, and the teacher was not always able to articulate goals for writing in an explicit and consistent way. In discussing these findings, Beck quotes research exploring teachers' and students' perspectives on academic writing, which has a 'high stakes' profile in the US, and suggests that students' reading of teachers' evaluative comments may be guided by the sole purpose of gaining a higher grade rather than improving the quality of the writing. Beck concludes that "ignoring how students take up and interpret messages overlooks an essential step in the activity of teaching" (2006:417).

Younger children especially may be unduly influenced by what they think their teachers value in writing. The aim of the small-scale, teacher-generated study by Kos and Malowski (2001) was to discover how one second-grade (7-8 year old) class of children characterised 'good writing', in order to determine how their perceptions might better inform the teacher's instruction. Analysis of audiotape data collected over a five-month period revealed a notable difference between indicators of quality used by children during interviews with the teacher

and during small-group writing sessions. During the former, pupils focused quite narrowly on the technical conventions of writing, so that handwriting, spelling and correct punctuation were the main indicators of 'good writing'. The children's conversations whilst writing revealed expanded indicators of quality. They placed more emphases on idea generation, planning and organisation of stories, and a growing awareness of ownership and audience needs. The authors conclude that in a scaffolded writing situation and when supported by peers and teachers, the children were able to balance their need to produce conventionally correct writing with their need to make writing interesting to themselves and others.

One of the limitations of this study noted by the authors centres on the use of the word 'good'. It was chosen for interview questions because it was a term they had heard children use frequently as they talked about writing, so that questions were developed based on the teacher's best judgement of what represented clear, understandable language for her students. However, they speculate that 'good' could be ambiguous and that a question such as, "What makes writing interesting?" may have elicited a wider range of responses. In contrast, Samway (1993), working with primary school children for whom English was a second language, did not find the term a problem. She asked them to categorise their own and other pupils' stories as either 'very good' or 'not so good'. In explaining their ratings, young writers expressed extensive knowledge of writing processes and they actively sought to make meaning of the text: "Even when prior experience or linguistic ability made understanding difficult for the children, they persevered as active users and consumers of language" (p.250). They also employed a wide range of evaluative criteria, many of which were highly idiosyncratic. Interestingly, a large-scale online survey of attitudes to writing carried out in the UK involving over 18,000 students aged from 7 to 18 (Clark, 2011) reinforced the importance of writing to young people. Although writing activity outside school decreased with age, students wrote frequently in a wide range of genres. They reported enjoyment of writing and using one's imagination as key indicators of being a good writer. Frequency of writing, enjoyment of writing and the perception that writing is 'cool' all related positively to writing attainment.

Research into writing assessment, especially in a 'high-stakes' summative context, frequently underlines the power differential between assessor and students and takes relatively little notice of the perceptions and values of students themselves. Edstrom (2006), drawing on findings of a small-scale US study of second-language learners' perceptions of writing quality, speaks of the potential as a pedagogical tool of attending to what learners notice: their perceptions can be incorporated into the writing curriculum and used to systematically trace students' progress over time. Similarly, Huot and Perry (2009) cite the need to clarify the instructional value of assessment and its central role "as part of the process of writing in which students learn to assess writing as they become better writers" (p.426). Methods such as joint construction of evaluation criteria for writing tasks and their subsequent use in self review, and the provision of formative peer feedback to enhance a student's reflections on a task and encourage them to think more deeply about the quality of their work (Nicol, 2008), are seen as attempts to "decentre authority away from the teacher to the students so that students have the authority to work as writers" (Huot & Perry, 2009:427). Clearly, such practices focus attention in the writing classroom on the ability to judge a piece of writing and to understand what future revisions that writing might need to succeed.

3.6 Summary

It is clear from the evidence discussed in this chapter that there remains much to discover about the nature of teachers' and students' evaluations of writing quality, both in terms of the criteria that are used to judge writing and how evaluation might be used as an instructional tool, for the purpose of improving writing. Writing quality is a complex construct, difficult to describe and define in any meaningful generic way in order to promote a shared understanding with students. Even when criteria are published as explicit frameworks, rubrics and guidelines, they do not equate directly with standards (Sadler, 1989; 2005) and require interpretation, which is a subjective and intersubjective process (Beck, 2006), with understandings of writing quality crucially shaped by context and by the knowledge and beliefs of interpreters within a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). However, these subjective understandings are complex and

multi-factored (Wyatt-Smith, 1999; Wyatt-Smith & Castleton 2004; 2005); under-researched and under-theorised (Huot, 2002), and cognition is difficult to investigate. The relationship between beliefs and practices has often been investigated in laboratory settings rather than in secondary school classrooms.

Whilst there is recognition that thought processes influence judgements, decisions and instructional practices, relatively little attention has been paid to the knowledge of subject matter upon which these decisions are based (Fang, 1996a:50). In relation to research on teaching, Shulman (1986:6) has referred to the lack of concern for “the organisation of content knowledge in the minds of teachers” as “the missing paradigm” and has called for greater understanding of the sources of teacher knowledge and of how teachers’ concepts of subject matter might influence classroom practice. Again, this gives validity to investigating private ‘ways of knowing’: understanding teachers’ and students’ conceptualisations of ‘good writing’ may throw light on instructional practice, for example how to represent or explain quality in writing, and how to suggest ways of improving writing. Certainly in current writing research, the links between theory, pedagogy and evaluation are not clearly articulated (Parr, 2010a), leading to the claim that research has yet to “create in any substantive way a discourse that links the teaching and assessing of writing” (Huot, 2002:164) whilst “the research community has barely begun to consider formative assessment in writing” (Parr, 2010a:55).

There is recognition that “identifying what constitutes good writing” is crucial but remains “a challenge for teachers and researchers alike” (Graham et al. 2012:8). Hayes (in Alamargot & Chanquoy, 2001:236) calls for a strong connection between research and application; in the field of writing assessment the goal should be “to apply what is learned through research to improve the quality of writing by studying writing in practical settings...a corollary of this idea is that evaluation of writing is critical. If a major research goal is the improvement of writing, then we must be able to evaluate the quality of the written product.” Given that the secondary school classroom is a relatively under-researched setting in the field of writing assessment, my research aims to investigate how teachers and their Year 8 (12-13 year old) students

conceptualise quality in writing, and how they might use that understanding for the practical purpose of improving writing performance.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research aims

This research aims to investigate secondary school English teachers' and students' conceptualisations of good writing, and how these might be drawn on in the writing classroom. Whilst past research has considered the nature and reliability of different systems for evaluating writing, fewer studies have looked at the conceptual thinking underpinning judgements. Research has focused on how judgements are made in the context of formal summative assessment of writing, rather than the context of everyday classroom evaluation. Current classroom assessment practices encourage students to make independent judgements of writing quality, for the purpose of self or peer assessment, yet student cognition is relatively under-researched, and this is particularly true of young adolescent writers. By focusing on the views and classroom practices of twelve-year-old students and their teachers, the research aims to advance understanding of teachers' and students' conceptual thinking about writing quality, and the underlying constructs. The aim is to contribute to theoretical understanding of teacher and student cognition in the domain of writing assessment, which has implications for both examination of writing and for formative feedback in an instructional setting.

4.2 Research questions

Principal Research Question 1: How do teachers and students conceptualise quality in writing?

1a) How do teachers and students describe 'good writing'?

1b) How consistent are teachers' and students' understandings of quality in writing?

1c) What is the match between teachers' criteria for quality in writing and published assessment criteria for high-grade writing?

Principal Research Question 2: How might teachers and students use their understandings of writing quality for the purpose of improving writing?

2a) How do teachers refer to writing quality in lessons that focus on writing?

2b) What suggestions do students make to improve the quality of their own and their peers' writing?

To address the first principal research question, the views of practising English teachers and their Year 8 students have been elicited through self-report methods: semi-structured interviews; written responses to open-ended prompts; annotation, rank ordering and discussion of writing samples. The second principal research question has been addressed through lesson observation and post-hoc reflections in semi-structured interviews. For students, interviews took the form of 'writing conversations' in which they suggested improvements to samples of writing in three different genres: narrative fiction, argument and poetry.

These research questions were investigated in two phases. The first, larger phase utilised data collected from an ESRC-funded project (grant number RES-062-23-0775) entitled *Grammar for Writing?: The Impact of Contextualised Grammar Teaching on Pupils' Writing and Pupils' Metalinguistic Understanding*. The research design for this project, on which I was employed as Associate Research Fellow, was developed by its co-principal investigators, Debra Myhill and Susan Jones from the Graduate School of Education at the University of Exeter. Annabel Watson, an ESRC-funded Doctoral student, was the fourth member of the team. In order to confirm initial findings, and to provide supplementary student data, a small follow-up study was designed independently and carried out with three classes of Year 8 students and their teachers in one secondary school in Devon.

4.3 Research paradigm and theoretical assumptions

The research is informed by an understanding of the complexities of constructing meaning in a sociocultural context. Teaching is a complex, multi-faceted activity which cannot be described simplistically; nor can claims be made for a direct causal relationship between what is taught and what is learned. Writing is also a highly complex activity: for any writing task, students need to draw on their knowledge of the topic and its purpose and audience, and make appropriate structural, presentational and linguistic choices that shape meaning across the whole text, as well as achieving specific rhetorical or aesthetic effects through manipulation of sentences and vocabulary. Crucially, writing is a social and cultural activity, mediated by classroom relationships and

behaviours. In practical terms, this means that writing quality may be dependent on factors such as the student's motivation or stamina for writing, or on the value accorded to writing by the teacher, just as much as on linguistic knowledge.

In order to reflect the complexity of teaching and learning about writing, and to explore the experiences of those engaged in it, this qualitative study is positioned within the interpretive paradigm, which assumes that knowledge is always a human construction: people create and associate their own subjective and intersubjective meanings as they interact with the world around them. Interpretive research therefore attempts to understand phenomena through accessing the meanings participants assign to them and, in line with a constructivist ontology, recognises reality as "a social, and therefore multiple construction" (Guba, 1990:77). Interpretive inquiry does not start with a set of assumptions to be tested out, but instead focuses on "learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or issue, not the meaning that the researchers bring to the research or writers from the literature" (Creswell, 2007:39). One consequence of this theoretical standpoint is that the research process for a qualitative study is emergent rather than tightly prescribed; hence, for example, the choice of semi-structured interviews, where a common core of questions allows for comparison between participants but where additional questions can be used to explore individual perspectives.

It is also important to acknowledge at the outset that, as the researcher, I bring my own subjective interpretations to bear on the problem of evaluating writing quality. These are inevitably shaped by my own background, history and prior understandings and the aim is not to deny their influence but to acknowledge it through reflexive analysis, since "self-reflection contributes to the validation of the work" (Creswell, 2007:206). Issues around reflexivity are discussed in more detail later in this chapter (see 4.4.5).

Howe (1998:13) states that a general implication of "the interpretive turn and the constructivist epistemology that goes with it" is that "subjectivities count" and that "hitherto marginalised or excluded voices" are of particular interest since

human identity is culturally embedded and social arrangements are “irremediably interest-, power- and value-laden”, thus need to be carefully examined in this light. Howe goes on to say that the end result of educational research and practice should be transformation to a more just and democratic system of schooling. Thus it is an important feature of the research that students’ subjective perceptions are considered alongside teachers’ views, with research questions framed to allow for a range of possible student responses.

Critical constructivism recognises that knowledge is always entrenched in a larger process, which is often overtly political, so that personal meanings and experiences need to be appreciated in the larger social contexts and processes of which they are parts, as “things-in-relationship not simply things-in-themselves” (Kincheloe 2008:252). The research investigates the intersection between teachers’ and students’ judgements of quality and the construct of quality embodied in national published assessment criteria, and it does so during a time of political upheaval, with radical changes proposed to the way that a school might organise and evaluate its curriculum. In the final term of the *Grammar for Writing?* project, for instance, national summative testing at age 14 was abolished; at the time of the small-scale follow up study, plans to roll out non-statutory assessment criteria to all secondary schools were in abeyance, following the abandonment of the National Strategies. As a consequence, references made by teachers in the research findings to criteria of quality as described in SAT mark schemes and APP guidelines, are already ‘redundant’, in the sense that what is referred to may no longer be in common use. This is a helpful reminder that judgements are influenced by the social and political context in which they take place, a context that is shifting ground rather than a fixed entity.

Indeed, interpretive research recognises the “situated” nature of the meanings produced (Hammersley, 2007: 291) and the “temporary, time- and place- bound nature of knowledge” (Guba, 1990:77). This means that I cannot claim generalisability of findings beyond the specific contexts in which the data was collected and analysed. However, this was not the aim of the research. What the study can do is spotlight teachers’ and students’ views about writing quality,

as captured at a particular point in time, and invite individual reflection and comparison “because of shared characteristics” (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993:32).

The views of social reality and the nature of meaning, as outlined above, have a profound impact on decisions about research design. Klein and Myers’ (1999) fundamental principle of the hermeneutic circle highlights the importance of a model or framework for looking at social reality that underpins such decisions. The principle states that understanding is achieved by repeatedly moving between consideration of the interdependent meaning of parts and the complex whole that they form, characterised by Guba and Lincoln as, “the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways” (1994:105). The first assumption guiding my research ‘worldview’ is that social reality is constructed by its human actors in different ways in different contexts, therefore there is no single, or simple way of viewing the phenomenon under investigation. Thus a research design that allows for heterogeneity is required, encouraging investigation from a number of different angles and perspectives, using comparison as the main analytical tool.

The second assumption is that the classroom, school environment, and its wider political sphere, comprise a social context that influences individual beliefs and actions. Thus evaluation of writing quality is theorised as a deeply social act, enmeshed in talk and other classroom interactions (Wyatt-Smith & Castleton, 2005), with teachers’ and students’ judgements and decisions arising within “the social processes of shared experiences and discussion which amplify and make thoughts, behaviours and events meaningful” (Lapadat, 2000: 42). This social process includes my interaction with teachers and students, drawing on my professional history as both teacher-educator and university researcher. As a consequence, I deemed it essential to explore teachers’ and students’ evaluations of writing quality in the naturalistic setting of the secondary school classroom in which they took place, using research methods (lesson observation and interviews) which placed me in an ‘insider’ role as

observer and participant, involved in dialogue with teachers and students to explore different perspectives and shared meanings.

A central tenet of the interpretive paradigm is that there is no single interpretive truth: meaning is co-constructed, situated and partial and interpretation cannot be 'objective' or value-free. Since the purpose of the research was to investigate the phenomenon of writing quality through the interpretation of participants' subjective understandings, and to construct multiple 'understandings' of the data, it was important to arrive at meanings inductively, rather than using pre-formed hypotheses, for example by allowing teachers and students to describe 'good writing' in their own words, in answer to open-ended prompts, and by asking participants to rank order writing samples using their own criteria. Such an approach accords with Klein and Myers' (1999) principle of multiple interpretations, whereby it is incumbent upon the researcher to seek out and document a variety of viewpoints and voices and to analyse conflicting interpretations of the participants, in order to revise preconceptions. It is allied to the principle of suspicion, which requires sensitivity to the possible biases and distortions in the narratives collected from participants.

As a consequence of these theoretical assumptions, in analysing data and reporting findings I have tried to strike a balance between identifying common themes and patterns in participants' responses, and maintaining the integrity of multiple, complex and contradictory voices. Thus I have used summary techniques, for example by creating labels for teachers' constructs of writing quality, or listing the imagery used by teachers and students to characterise 'good writing'. But I have also discussed selected individuals' stated views about writing quality in detail, and included lengthy verbatim statements, aiming for the 'thick description' which might allow readers to make decisions regarding transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988). To make this process transparent, I have included as appendices a significant amount of raw data, so that readers can trace how selected teachers' and students' views have been interpreted and presented.

The research recognizes both the importance and difficulty of investigating judgement-making processes in naturalistic settings. Important to the research is the recognition that in order to understand classroom interactions, we need to understand teacher and student cognition and how thoughts and beliefs get carried into actions (Shavelson and Stern, 1981). A basic theoretical assumption is that teachers' behaviour is guided by their individual thoughts, judgements and decisions (Fenstermacher, 1980). Moreover, we can assume that teachers make reasonable judgements and decisions in uncertain and complex environments with the intent of optimising student outcomes (Shavelson, Atwood & Borko, 1977).

However, although the development of judgement is crucial to English teaching and learning (Marshall & Wiliam, 2006), the judgement process itself is not well understood and is difficult to research; Borg (2003:81) refers to what teachers know, believe and think as the "unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching". People are generally unaware of the nature of their judgement policies; teachers and students "may not have access to much of their thinking" (Calderhead, 1996:711), and some thinking may not be "verbalisable" (Calderhead, 1987:185). A particular difficulty in researching twelve-year-old students' evaluation of writing quality is that younger writers might not possess sufficient metalinguistic understanding to allow for conscious deliberation, or they may have the understanding but not the metalanguage with which to express it (Myhill, 2011).

Further difficulties are signalled by reviews of the research into teachers' evaluative processes. Judgement is not a fixed entity, and there seems not to be a simple, linear course that teachers follow to arrive at their evaluations (Fang, 1996a; Calderhead, 1996). Furthermore, while researchers have tried to separate teachers' knowledge and beliefs about subject matter for the purposes of clarity, they have recognised that "the distinction is blurry at best" (Grossman, Wilson & Shulman, 1989:31). Rather than being distinct concepts, beliefs, assumptions, and knowledge are points on a spectrum of meaning (Woods, 1996).

In investigating teachers' and students' evaluations of writing quality, I have accepted conceptualisations of judgement-making as complex, practically-orientated, personalised and context-sensitive (Clandinin, 1985; Pajares, 1992). Following Wyatt-Smith and Castleton (2005:151), I conceptualise evaluation as "a dynamic process of drawing on and variously combining available indexes", and often displaying a tension between 'global'/'external' influences (for example institutional constraints or national policy) and 'local'/'internal' values (for example personal beliefs and attitudes about writing). In this study, I have not attempted to separate beliefs, assumptions and knowledge, apart from references to two discrete aspects of knowledge: factual recall of published assessment criteria for high-grade writing and linguistic subject knowledge (LSK).

As an "available index" on which teachers and students might draw, published criteria represent a standardised national construct of writing quality, and direct references to them (including misquotations) can be recorded. Similarly, linguistic knowledge can be defined and measured; in the *Grammar for Writing?* study from which my interview data is drawn, it was measured quantitatively, by scoring correct answers on a test of identification of grammatical features in a written text, an extract from *Pride and Prejudice* (see Appendix 8), and qualitatively, through teachers' and students' ability to explain linguistic effects using appropriate metalanguage, as recorded through lesson observation and in interview. I have taken linguistic subject knowledge into account in my research because it was such an important variable in the *Grammar for Writing?* research design and outcomes and may well have influenced the data on which I have drawn. For example, the writing intervention had greater impact in the classrooms of teachers with confident LSK, and it most benefited able student writers, who improved their writing scores significantly more than did able students in the comparison group. Thus I can speculate that LSK might be another index on which teachers and student draw in their evaluations of writing quality.

I was mindful of past research into the nature of evaluation when considering the design of my research study. Wyatt Smith and Castleton's Australian

research (1999; 2004; 2005) reported variation in individual teachers' judgements from one time point to another and from one context to another, as well as variation in judgement between teachers, for example when applying standardised criteria to writing samples. This suggested the need for a longitudinal aspect to the study, with analysis of data collected during visits to schools once each term over a complete academic year, and comparison of data both within and across cases. Given the conceptualisation of evaluation as dynamic and complex, and the difficulties of externally representing beliefs, it was also appropriate to make use of different sources of information in order to provide depth to a case (Yin, 2003).

4.4 Research design

Figure 4.1 provides an overview of the two parts to the research design.

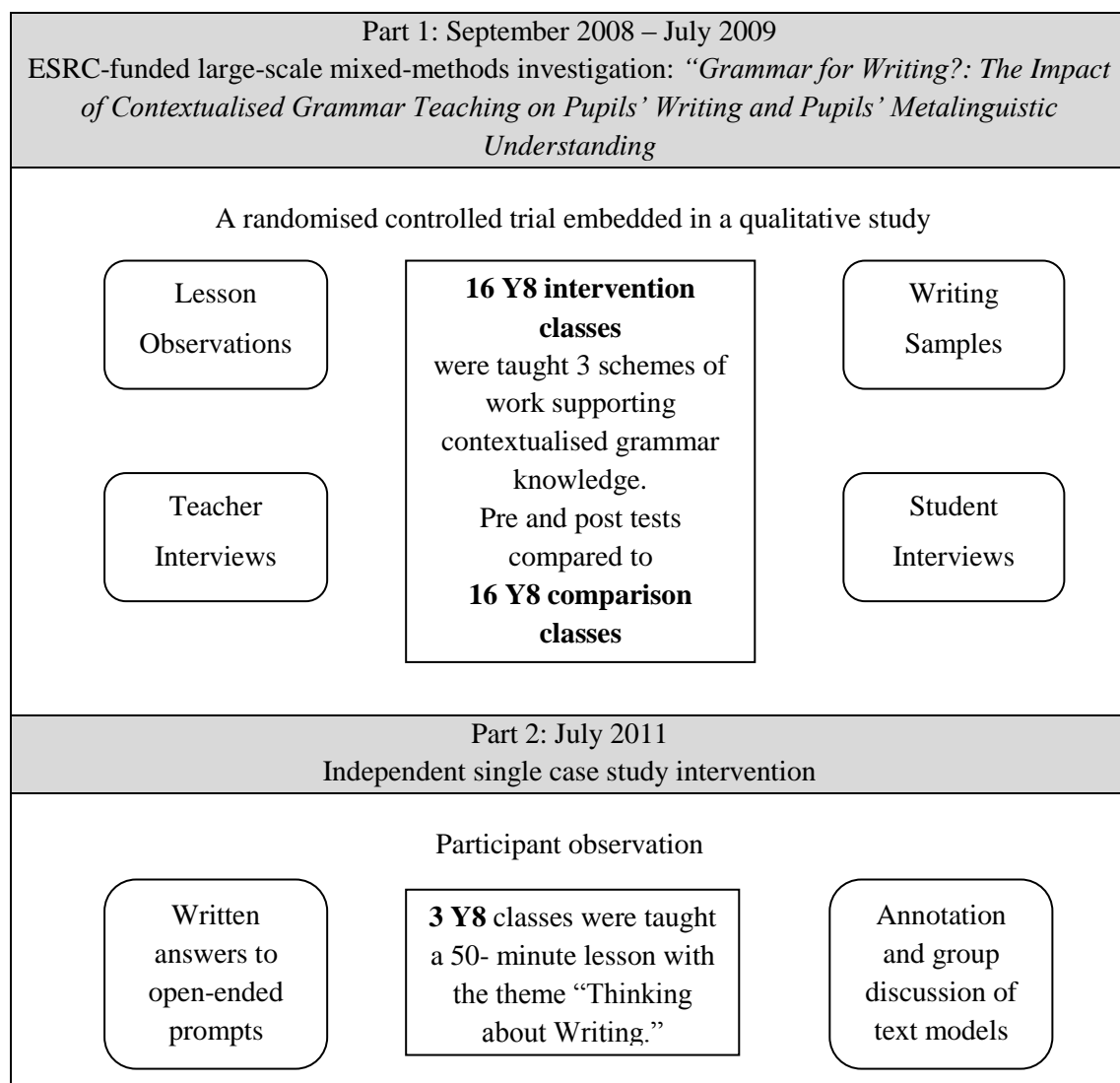


Figure 4.1 Overview of Research Design

4.4.1 Part 1: The ‘Grammar for Writing?’ study

The ESRC-funded project was conducted between 2008 and 2011 by a research team from the University of Exeter, headed by Debra Myhill and Susan Jones. A cluster randomised controlled trial with a complementary qualitative study, it was designed to investigate the research question: “What impact does contextualised grammar teaching have on pupils’ writing and metalinguistic development?” Table 4.1 provides detail of the research design for this project. As Associate Research Fellow, my shared responsibilities were: writing the grammar intervention schemes of work (mine was on narrative fiction); piloting the research instruments; making initial visits to schools to brief teachers about the study and collect pupil and teacher data; designing and delivering the initial project training day and end-of-project feedback conference, and visiting schools once a term over an academic year (September 2008 to July 2009) to collect data. I visited nine of the 31 schools involved in the study. (32 schools were originally recruited, as shown in the research design, but one school was excluded from the study in the first term of the project due to low fidelity with the project aims). I had sole responsibility for analysing pupil interview data and reporting findings in relation to pupils’ metalinguistic understanding, which including writing articles for professional publications.

My research has drawn on the qualitative component of the ESRC-funded *Grammar for Writing?* project, utilising the full data set of 93 lesson observations, 93 teacher and 93 student interviews. I have not referred to the writing outcomes from each scheme. Questions pertinent to my research were included in the teacher and student interview schedules for the project (Appendices 3 and 4). Responses to these questions were analysed and coded entirely independently.

RCT	Qualitative Component
Sample: 31 Year 8 classes in 31 different mixed comprehensive state schools in the South West of England, West Midlands & South Gloucestershire.*	Sample: One teacher and one Y8 student from each of the 31 schools.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial assessment of linguistic subject knowledge of each class teacher to stratify the sample into two groups (stronger or weaker subject knowledge). • Random blind division of each of the teacher groups (determined by subject knowledge) into 16 intervention groups and 16 control groups. • Establish baseline through pre-test writing task. • Teaching intervention: grammar embedded in schemes of work on fiction, argument and poetry, written by project team. Control group teaches same writing genres, objectives and outcomes but from own plans. • Post-test writing task to measure impact of intervention. • Analysis using multi-level modelling. <p>*32 schools originally recruited; data from one omitted due to low fidelity to project</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School visits once per term for three terms during 2008-2009 academic year, whilst schemes of work were being taught. During each visit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom observations of one complete lesson (intervention group using detailed lesson plans and resources provided by team; comparison group using own plans and resources). • Follow up interviews with each teacher, probing for pedagogical decisions and beliefs about writing. • Interviews with a focus child from each class, including ‘writing conversations’ referring to a prompt text and samples of their own writing in each genre. • Full qualitative data set consists of 93 lesson observations; 93 teacher interviews; 93 interviews/writing conversations with students, plus the writing outcomes for each scheme of work from each class.

Table 4.1 ESRC-funded *Grammar for Writing?* project design

Over the course of an academic year, the intervention group taught three schemes of work especially written by the research team, contextualising grammar instruction in three different writing genres: narrative fiction in the autumn term, argument in the spring term and poetry in the summer term. The grammar teaching focused on exploring the language features and structural patterns used in authentic model texts, with the emphasis on constructing meanings and achieving effects, not on ‘correctness’ or grammatical terminology. The goal was to develop students’ own writing repertoire, through imitation of patterns and techniques, discussion of effects, experimentation and language play. Teachers in the intervention group received detailed lesson plans, full resources and detailed teaching notes, while those in the comparison group taught the same genres, but from outline plans that only specified learning objectives and written outcomes. These common outline plans are shown in Appendix 5. Learning objectives were drawn from the *Framework for*

Teaching English (DCSF 2008b), produced by the Secondary National Strategy and in common use in schools at the time. Relevant assessment focuses from *Assessing Pupils' Progress* guidelines (see Appendix 2) were also provided. Those common to all three schemes were:

WAF1: write interesting, imaginative and thoughtful texts

WAF5: vary sentences for clarity, purpose and effect

WAF6: write with technical accuracy of syntax and punctuation

WAF7: select appropriate and effective vocabulary

The impact of the intervention on student writing was determined by a pre- and post-test sample of writing. Both were a first person narrative, drawing on personal experience, and written under controlled conditions. The test design and marking was led by Cambridge Assessment, who were responsible for setting and marking the national writing test at Key Stage 3 and they used the same mark scheme format as in that test, the final mark being made up of three components: sentence structure and punctuation; text structure and organization; and composition and effect. The markers did not know from which treatment group the writing had derived.

Prior to the commencement of data collection, a separate training day was held for each of the two groups. Participants did not know about the experimental design, and so as not to contaminate the trial, the grammar focus of the research was withheld. At both training days, the teaching of writing was discussed and in the case of the intervention group, additional training time was allocated to introducing the detailed teaching materials. The training days gave me an opportunity to pilot the use of open-ended prompts and rank ordering of writing samples, as methods to capture views about good writing. I devised a 45 minute session during the day which promoted discussion about teachers' expectations for students' writing and their responses to it, including a rank ordering exercise using two samples of Year 8 writing that had come from a previous Exeter University project and were both graded as Level 6. Notes and resources for this session are included as Appendix 6 and teachers' responses to the exercise are discussed in Chapter 5.

4.4.2 Part 2: Independent single case study intervention

In July 2011, I conducted a small-scale independent study in one mixed state comprehensive school in Devon. The purpose of this was to confirm findings from the analysis I had already carried out on data from the *Grammar for Writing?* study but also to collect additional student data to answer both principal research questions. When the interview schedules were originally drawn up by the *Grammar for Writing?* project team, I had not at that point decided to focus on students' as well as teachers' evaluations of writing quality. That later decision meant that a direct question, "What do you think makes good writing?" was added as a supplementary interview question for students during visits in Terms 2 and 3. However, this supplementary question was not asked by all interviewers, while some interview responses were quite limited in length and detail. I therefore designed a single intervention to be used with 3 teachers of English and their Year 8 classes (86 students in total).

As participant observer, I wrote a 50-minute lesson, titled 'Thinking about Writing' (Appendix 7) and co-taught it with each Y8 class teacher, fitted into their normal timetabled English lessons. Since this took place in the penultimate week of the summer term, we were able to contextualise the lesson as an opportunity for students to review and reflect on their understanding of writing, drawing on their secondary school experience to date. As part of the lesson, students answered open-ended prompts to elicit their views on 'good writing' and ways of improving writing. They also rank ordered two samples of Year 8 narrative fiction writing (outcomes from the *Grammar for Writing?* intervention) and discussed their decisions in small groups, using post-it notes to summarise. Some groups explained rank order decisions to the whole class, and these explanations were audio-recorded. Written responses and transcripts of group discussions were inductively analysed.

Table 4.2 provides a detailed overview of how my principal research questions were matched to the research instruments and sources of data in each part of the study.

Principal Research Question 1: How do teachers and students conceptualise quality in writing?		
Part one of study: ESRC-funded <i>Grammar for Writing?</i> project		
Research Instruments	Data Collection and Analysis	Sample
Open-ended prompts: <i>Good writing...;</i> <i>A good teacher of writing...</i> Rank order exercise on samples of Y8 writing; discussion and plenary feedback	Analysis by hand of written responses, and summary notes of teachers' discussion, used as initial exploration of theme	32 teachers of English on research study training day
Teacher interview schedule closing questions: Term 1: <i>What do you think makes 'good writing'?</i> <i>What do you think makes a good teacher of writing?</i> Term 2: <i>What criteria would you use to describe 'good writing'? Do the assessment criteria at KS3 and GCSE effectively capture 'good writing'?</i> Term 3: <i>What are you looking for as indicators of quality in writing? Do you think KS3 tests and GCSE reward those qualities?</i>	Inductive coding of 93 interview transcripts using NVIVO 8 software Individual belief profiles created manually and re-coded	31 teachers of English in 31 secondary schools in SW of England and West Midlands
Student interview schedule questions: <i>What do you think makes 'good writing'?</i> <i>Are you a good writer?</i>	Inductive coding of 93 interview transcripts using NVIVO 8 software	31 Y8 students from secondary schools as above
Part two of study: Independent single case study intervention		
Open-ended prompts: <i>Good writing...; A good writer...</i> Rank order exercise on samples of Y8 writing, annotated to show reasons for choices, in context of lesson on 'Thinking about Writing'	Analysis by hand of 86 written responses and annotations on writing samples Transcripts of group discussion	86 Y8 students from one secondary school in Devon
Principal Research Question 2: How might teachers and students use their understandings of writing quality for the purpose of improving writing?		
Part one of study: ESRC-funded <i>Grammar for Writing?</i> project		
Research Instruments	Data Collection and Analysis	Sample
Lesson observation schedule	Inductive coding of 93 lesson observations	31 teachers of English in 31 secondary schools in SW of England and West Midlands
Student interview schedule: texts and prompts to stimulate 'writing conversations'	Inductive coding of 93 interviews	31 Y8 students from secondary schools as above
Part two of study: Independent single case study intervention		
Open-ended prompt: <i>I could improve my writing by....</i> Rank order exercise; suggestions for improving writing samples	Analysis by hand of 86 written responses Transcripts of audio recording of group discussion	86 Y8 students from one secondary school in Devon

Table 4.2 Research questions matched to methods of data collection

I chose a rank ordering exercise as the main activity in the 'Thinking about Writing' lesson in order to provide a context for focusing on the question of what makes a successful piece of writing; in the *Grammar for Writing?* project, the context for writing conversations with students had been provided by prompt texts written by other Y8 students and samples of project students' own writing. Rank ordering is a simple expedient that 'forces' a judgement within a time limit whilst leaving the criteria for that judgement open to the individual. I debated whether to use the writing samples (Appendix 6) that had prompted heated discussion by teachers during the *Grammar for Writing?* project training day, but thought that the more experimental style of one of these pieces, *A Hellish World*, might puzzle Y8 students and inhibit their response. I therefore chose two samples which were outcomes to the narrative fiction *Grammar for Writing?* schemes of work, both of which had used the same image as a stimulus for an adventure story (see Appendix 7). This image was reproduced alongside the samples so that students could quickly understand the context of the writing task and see how each narrative had used the photograph as a starting point. I judged that there were no striking or distracting differences in content or style between the two pieces, which had been assessed at the same Level, so that the question of which was 'better' than the other seemed to me a genuinely open one. Prose narrative was deliberately chosen as the genre that students were most likely to find accessible and of interest and which was most likely to draw out a broad range of 'success criteria', including stylistic features; in the *Grammar for Writing?* interviews several students had found it difficult to comment on sentence-level features in the poetry models, or were distracted by whether or not they agreed with the ideas put forward in the argument text.

4.4.3 Participants

Participants in the first part of the study were one teacher and Year 8 class in 31 state schools in the South West of England and the West Midlands, randomly selected from Local Education Authority lists. In order to create as representative a sample as possible, an initial process de-selected the small number of schools from these lists which were single-sex, selective, or atypical in age range. This left a sample which comprised mixed, comprehensive schools with an age range of 11-18. Using a random number generator, each

school was given a number, creating an ordinal list of the schools. Schools were then contacted in numerical order to invite them to participate in a project with a focus on “the teaching of writing”.

The student sample that provided statistical data in the *Grammar for Writing?* project consisted of 31 Year 8 classes in comprehensive schools with between 24 and 30 students in each class. There was a range and mix of abilities across the whole sample and within each class. The choice of Year 8 was largely pragmatic, designed to encourage schools to take part in the project. It was felt that teachers would be unwilling to disrupt GCSE classes, where curriculum time was already accounted for. A similar argument held true for Year 9, where preparation for national curriculum tests was likely to dominate the spring term. The student baseline data collected from each school during an initial visit in the preceding summer term included students’ KS2 writing Levels, data which at that point was not available for students about to transfer from primary school. Moreover, a number of schools have well-established transition schemes of work for Year 7 that they might be unwilling to set aside in order to teach the project schemes, while some schools reorganise Year 7 teaching groups after the first term. Year 8 was therefore chosen as the year group most likely to result in the lowest rate of attrition.

Importantly, though, the study set out to investigate the role of metalinguistic understanding in writing, and the choice of students aged 12-13 was significant, since relatively little attention has been paid to developing or ‘novice’ writers in the secondary school. Developmentally, students of this age have accumulated an amount of knowledge about language, and attendant terminology, but, unlike expert writers, have not yet automated the writing process. It was therefore important to understand how the young writers in the study thought about their texts and made choices in the composing process, in order to inform writing pedagogies in support of their confident development as writers. In my own small-scale study, which was designed to collect additional student data, participants were drawn from Year 8 for all the above reasons, and because I wanted to investigate the consistency of conceptualisations of writing quality held by students of this age.

In the *Grammar for Writing?* project, each teacher was asked to nominate one focus student from the class who would be interviewed during each school visit. They were told the gender of the student, to ensure an equal mix of boys and girls across the whole sample, but otherwise only instructed to choose someone who would enjoy being interviewed and talking about their writing. Appendix 9 shows selected data for the teachers and students who formed the qualitative sample, and where relevant, this data has been referred to in my Findings chapters. To ensure anonymity of participants, I re-numbered the schools from their original order in the *Grammar for Writing?* project and have used these numbers, as shown in Appendix 9, when quoting at length from interviews with teachers and students.

In the second part of the study, I used purposive convenience sampling in order to provide additional student data. The mixed 11-18 comprehensive school I visited was well known to me through involvement with the English department as a Secondary National Strategy consultant, which had ended only two months prior to the research visit. I had previously worked alongside all three teachers who took part in the study and although this included only one of the participating Year 8 classes, I was a fairly familiar face to students through regular visits. The degree of trust already established with the department meant that staff readily agreed to take part in the research and that students accepted me in the role of participant observer. I did not collect student attainment data because the intention was not to focus on individual responses in depth, rather to gather a large amount of data that might confirm and extend findings from the first phase of the study. However, I knew from Local Authority contextual data, setting arrangements at the school, and access to class lists, that the mixed ability profile of the student sample was similar to that of students in the *Grammar for Writing?* sample (Key Stage 2 attainment ranging from Levels 3-5) and to the Year 8 national population.

Nonetheless, and despite the extent of randomisation in the *Grammar for Writing?* research design, I cannot claim that participants in my study are a fully representative sample from which generalisations can be made. Wellington

(2000) points out that sampling always involves a compromise and that this is true for both probability samples and non-probability samples, while Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:102) stress that in targeting a particular group, the researcher does so in the full knowledge that it does not represent the wider population; “it simply represents itself”. To an extent, teachers in the sample are self-selected, since they chose to take part in the project and although the West Midlands area was deliberately chosen to provide an ethnic diversity that was more representative of the UK as a whole, the geographical area from which the schools were selected is still limited. The teachers in the sample were not stratified for contextual factors such as first degree or years of experience; the fact that 10 of the 31 teachers were in their first year of teaching was accidental but may have skewed the findings. One might speculate, for instance, that teachers with limited experience of assessing writing will evaluate quality differently than might teachers with decades of experience, including work for examination boards.

Similarly, it is not possible to generalise from the experience of Year 8 students to the population of all secondary school students or even students in Key Stage 3. Year 8 is often singled out by educationalists as a ‘problem year’ in which attainment dips and motivation falters (see for example Whitby & Lord, 2006). It would be reasonable to expect that 12-13 year old students’ understanding and conceptualisation of writing quality might be different from that of GCSE students, who are likely to be familiar with grade descriptions and mark scheme criteria through coursework preparation. As a result, this study will produce idiographic understanding rather than generalisable findings, aiming for “descriptions of the orderliness of individuals’ systems” (Freebody, 2003:36) which might be compared to other studies to build a fuller picture. Shenton (2004) points out that this is a sensible position for qualitative researchers to take, since the notion of producing truly transferable results from a single study is not only unrealistic but also threatens to disregard the importance of context: “the particular characteristics of the organisation or organisations and, perhaps, geographical area in which the fieldwork was carried out” (Shenton, 2004:70). For this reason, the findings of the study are framed by contextualising detail wherever possible.

4.4.4 Validity

There is debate as to whether terms such as 'validity' and 'reliability' apply to naturalistic qualitative research, since they are strongly associated with a positivist methodology and its emphasis on the generalisability of results. I am here accepting Hammersley's view (1992:50) that validity in qualitative research "replaces certainty with confidence" in the findings, which are offered as a representation of reality rather than a reproduction of it. Thus, as Freebody (2003:69) argues: "validity is fundamentally about the adequacy of the representation of the social events and practices to which the research project refers". He argues that the basic issue is to do with the "potential for refutation" – the provision of sufficient access to the data and the interpretations such that the reader can offer a principled disagreement. In this respect, terms such as 'transparency' and 'consistency' are applicable to techniques for analysis and interpretation, and Freebody reclaims the term 'rigorous' for qualitative research when stressing the need to attend meticulously to anomalies and contradictions in the findings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) also call for interpretive rigour, suggesting the need for thoroughness in analysing qualitative data, in order to produce the detailed thick description necessary for findings to be 'transferable' and 'confirmable'. In similar vein, Erickson (1986) reminds that a central concern for rigour in qualitative research is evidentiary adequacy, which refers to sufficient time spent in the field and the extensiveness of the body of evidence used as data.

This research draws on an extensive data set, gathered over the course of an academic year (see Table 4.2). However, there is a particular problem for interpretive research of this in-depth access to cases and resulting rich description. Silverman (2005:211) warns of the problem of "anecdotalism", the "special temptation" when reporting findings to depend on a few well-chosen examples at the expense of critical investigation of all the data. Since researchers seldom provide the reasons for including certain instances and not others, it is difficult to determine the representativeness of these utterances, or of findings generated from them. There is a problem of verification too. As the researcher selects data from raw materials (such as interview transcripts) to

produce summarised findings, the original form of the materials is lost. Therefore, it is impossible to entertain alternative interpretations of the same materials. So that readers have access to the raw material from which I have made my interpretations, I have included as Appendix 10 an example of all the teacher and student data collected from one school.

I have tried to ensure rigour in my research, and confidence in my findings, in a number of ways. The use of multiple methods of data collection can act as a form of “methodological triangulation” (Mason, 1996:25) by examining points of intersection in different data. However, in looking for these points of agreement, “the confluence of evidence that breeds credibility” (Eisner, 1991:110), I have tried not to over-simplify complexities or ignore differences in participants’ accounts. Data has been both summarised (for example by categorising responses in terms of personal constructs of writing quality) and presented in detail (for example by considering specific cases at greater length). Measures were taken to strengthen the validity, or ‘trustworthiness’ (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of data derived through interview. Creswell (2007) claims that the closeness of the researcher to participants in the field adds to the value or accuracy of a study; thus the same interviewer carried out all three interviews with teachers and students, which helped to establish trust and openness. Silverman (2006:287) suggests the reliability of the interpretation of interview data is enhanced by transcription of “apparently trivial, but often crucial, pauses and overlaps”: all interviews were transcribed in their entirety by only two transcribers, using agreed conventions. A sample of interview data was coded separately by all four researchers and resulting codes and interpretations discussed and agreed as a team before more extensive individual analysis proceeded. Shenton (2004:66) suggests “iterative questioning” as a method for strengthening credibility and this was a feature of the teacher interview schedules, where essentially the same questions about writing quality and assessment criteria were asked in slightly different ways (see Table 4.2). In reporting interview data, I have been aware of the tendency to rely too heavily on the responses of those teachers whose views accorded with my own or who were very articulate. I have made efforts to use quotations from the whole sample, and to mix the use of short, embedded extracts of reported and direct

speech with longer extracts, making sure that the context of these was explained. I have also reported 'in vivo' coding so that participants' own words are as visible as possible. When collecting supplementary data from students in the second part of the study, I tried not to impose expectations of their responses based on analysis from previous data, but to be open to differences and anomalies.

There have been several opportunities for peer groups to respond to the research findings, and these have served as a credibility check. For example I reported initial findings to the project teachers during the plenary conference in December 2009. Further findings were reported between 2009 and 2012 at two staff-student conferences at the University of Exeter, European SIG Writing Conferences in Heidelberg and Porto and an international conference on writing research in Washington (Writing Research Across Borders II), which resulted in a published book chapter outlining teachers' different personal constructs of writing quality (Lines, 2012). A research presentation at the 2012 annual NATE conference included opportunity for lengthy peer discussion of the issues raised, thus acting as a form of "consensual validation...an agreement among competent others that the description, interpretation and evaluation and thematics of an educational situation are right" (Eisner, 1991:112). The PowerPoint presentation for this conference is included as Appendix 11.

4.4.5 Reflexivity

Of course, any report of research is a representation by its author; the researcher interacts with the subject matter "to co-create the interpretations derived" (Creswell, 2007:206). Given that the researcher is part of the world being researched, the notion of 'objectivity' is not really applicable; indeed, interpretive research accepts that bias and distortion might arise through the subjectivity of participants, their opinions, attitudes and perspectives, including those of the researcher. Thus the degree of interpretive awareness or reflexivity shown by the researcher is a more appropriate criterion for judging the quality of the research than the traditional one of objectivity. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), reflexivity requires that the "biases, motivations, interests or perspectives of the inquirer" are identified and made explicit throughout the

study (p.290); Shenton (2004:72) suggests that the ‘confirmability’ of a study will be strengthened if researchers “take steps to demonstrate that findings emerge from the data and not their own predispositions.”

Phenomenology has suggested epoché, literally the ‘suspension’ of judgement, as a necessary condition for achieving researcher credibility. Prior beliefs about the topic are temporarily put to one side, or bracketed, so as not to interfere with exploration of participants’ experiences (Moustakas, 1994). In a similar vein, Angen (2000) refers to the need for ‘substantive validation’, by which she means understanding one’s own understandings of the research topic. Several possible practical methods or stages of bracketing have been suggested, the aim being to help the researcher understand the impact of personal values and experiences on data interpretation, rather than try to eliminate them, and to make clear the researcher’s own predispositions. Simon (2011) for example, suggests initial exploration of the research topic by mind-mapping key concepts and associated personal beliefs, perceptions, attitudes and feelings; Bednall (2006) promotes the use of a research journal throughout the process of data analysis as a mechanism for separating participants’ accounts and personal reflections triggered by them. Ahern (1999) recommends a clear statement of research interests, personal values and feelings about the project. Methods I used to aid self-critical reflection included “memoing” (Miles and Huberman, 1984:69) during the process of analysis and coding, and making clear my own view of ‘good writing’ by completing the prompt questions I gave to students and teachers and the rank order exercise used during the *Grammar for Writing?* project training day. These are included as Appendix 12, together with the mind-map that I drew up very early in the research process (literally on the back of an envelope, albeit an A4 one!) in order to try out my understanding of the scope of the topic. I found this invaluable in checking my initial perceptions about writing quality and its assessment against the views of teachers and students that were emerging from data analysis. I have mentioned my own interests in the research topic in the introductory chapter and a more detailed explanation follows here.

My research interests and perspectives have been shaped by my career history, which has included three distinct phases: English teaching in secondary schools, including department management; subject advisory work, and educational research. I am aware that these different perspectives have led to some conflict of roles and values. My teaching experience has positioned me as an insider to the profession, in alignment with participants, and 'speaking the same language' as teachers and students. As a former teacher, I am predisposed to view teachers as hard-working professionals who want to do their best for students, and who are often frustrated by the impact of political change in the classroom. I know how it feels to juggle different versions of curriculum and assessment requirements, and to suffer anxiety dreams about teaching the wrong syllabus! It therefore struck a chord with my own experience when teachers spoke of tensions and difficulties in the evaluative process, for example between their own 'instinctive' judgements about writing quality and judgements demanded by the examination system. I recognise that my objectivity as a researcher is threatened by my inclination to 'side with' teachers in reaction against politically-driven curriculum change.

I also know from conducting department standardisation and moderation meetings that teachers can find it hard to apply assessment criteria objectively. The privilege of being an English teacher is being party to students' emotional and social development; indeed, the subject encourages this, for example by making class discussion of ideas and responses to literature so central to everyday practice. Students often write about deeply personal events or issues that matter to them, so that teachers are predisposed to evaluate writing holistically, as an expression of the individual. I know from experience that it is genuinely difficult to keep personal feelings about students, and knowledge of their writing histories, entirely separate from an assessment of the quality of the finished product. For this reason, I welcomed the introduction of standardised assessment criteria at Key Stage 3 and felt that the APP guidelines made evaluation more objective and therefore easier, but I know that not all teachers feel the same. It was important for me to suspend judgement about different assessment methods used by teachers in the study in order to be open and

receptive to their own descriptions of writing quality and their own evaluative criteria.

I am genuinely ambivalent about the qualities I look for in writing. I value creative, original thought and expression to the extent that I can still quote 'gems' from students' writing of twenty years ago. But I also value technical competence and have always taught students the 'nuts and bolts' of how language works, discovering that many students like the fact that English is a 'discipline' with a body of knowledge that can be learnt. As a Secondary National Strategy consultant in Devon, the most successful training I delivered was on 'improving writing' which emphasised the need to teach text and sentence grammar explicitly and to model for students how to write well. Inevitably, I saw a range of teaching styles during lesson observation in the nine schools I visited on the *Grammar for Writing?* project (especially in the comparison group), some of which accorded with my own preferred pedagogy, and some of which ran counter to it. As a Strategy consultant, I was used to making judgements about the quality of teaching and learning; as a researcher I had to lay these aside.

I am aware of specific instances when my own values and feelings were an unhelpful intrusion. One was in reaction to a lesson in which the teacher criticised students in a way I thought very unjust and inappropriate; I found this so upsetting that I had to find an excuse to delay the follow-up interview and physically leave the school for half an hour. I later wrote an extended memo in an effort to locate why I reacted so emotionally. Another was in the final interview with a very able student who spoke of his disappointment with English lessons over the year, that he had not been taught more about how to craft his writing and consequently had given up ideas of becoming a journalist. When analysing interview data, I subsequently found myself distrusting his teacher's espoused beliefs about good writing and good teaching of writing. Freebody (2003:129) calls the domain in which we may feel very much at home "the most analytically dangerous domain in which to conduct research", and I was certainly aware that familiarity with the research topic and settings carried a

weight of responsibility to avoid pre-judgement in order to discover what participants viewed as important in their own worlds.

4.4.6 Ethical considerations

Wellington (2000:54) states that the “main criterion for educational research is that it should be ethical”, hence ethics should be placed foremost in the planning, conduct and presentation of the research. The research design was informed by the University of Exeter research ethics policy and the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2004). The *Grammar for Writing?* study from which most of my data is drawn also conformed to the ESRC Research Ethics Framework. Ethical approval forms are provided as Appendix 13. My research was not funded by an external body, so I did not have responsibilities to sponsors. Ethical considerations relating to participants and to the research community are outlined below.

Responsibilities to Participants

The research has followed published guidelines relating to voluntary informed consent and the right to withdraw. The *Grammar for Writing?* study created a particular ethical problem due to the blind randomisation design, as it was not possible to tell participants which experimental group they were in, or the precise focus of the study. All participants were informed that the study was researching writing, but not that it was investigating the impact of grammar teaching on writing. Thus the ‘informed’ consent was partially compromised. In order to address this, participants were told at the outset that research results and a full outline of the conduct of the research would be communicated to them at the end of the study and that at this stage they could exercise a right to withdraw permission to use collected data.

Several informing strategies were used to ensure that “all participants in the research understand the process in which they are to be engaged, including why their participation is necessary, how it will be used and how and to whom it will be reported’ (BERA 2004:6). The Headteacher of each school signed a Memorandum of Understanding, which explained the ethical issues and sought

consent. A briefing sheet for school use outlined involvement in the project to inform parents and students about the study. In addition, all students in the interview sample were asked to sign a 'child-friendly' consent form. These documents are provided as Appendix 14. In the preliminary phase, the research team sought to establish a relationship of trust with each school, "fostering relationships in which ongoing ethical regard for participants is to be sustained, even after the study itself has been completed" (ESRC REF:24). All schools were encouraged to contact the research team at any stage with queries or concerns. At the end of the project, I prepared a summary of the research findings and their implications. This was sent to all participating teachers, in a form that was easy for project teachers to share with their colleagues (see Appendix 15). All the teachers were invited to a funded one-day dissemination conference, during which the grammar focus was revealed and initial research findings discussed. The intervention schemes of work were also revised and extended and presented to all participants for future use. These measures acted as an incentive for teachers, in line with BERA recommendations, providing an opportunity to reflect on and develop professional practice.

In the follow-up intervention, agreement was first sought from the Head of Department by email, from the Headteacher in person, and then from each participating teacher in a separate email. The 'Thinking about Writing' lesson was emailed to these teachers for comment and discussed face-to-face before being co-taught. Because I was not interviewing individual students or collecting data beyond the lesson, I did not ask for parental consent; the assumption was made that participating teachers would act in students' best interests, concomitant with their professional and legal role. The verbal introduction to the lesson included an explanation to students about the nature and purpose of my research, and how the data would be used.

The research was conducted in line with the principle that the "best interests of the child must be the primary consideration" (BERA 2004:7): the ethics of the research was a standing item at all the ESRC project team meetings. It was important to involve students fully in the consent process. Indeed, the BERA guidelines (2004:7) stress that young people have the right to express their

views freely in all matters affecting them, commensurate with their age and maturity. With all participants, but especially young people, it was important to operate a code of honesty, openness and trust and to ensure that explanations about the study were made in language that was clear, unambiguous and accessible. All data were fully anonymised and kept in compliance with requirements regarding the personal use of data specified by the Data Protection Act.

Responsibilities as a Researcher

Of course, ethics is firmly yoked to judgements of the quality of the research, which in turn is related to its validity or trustworthiness. The main responsibility is to present the perspective of individuals in the study in a fair and honest way, avoiding pre-emptive interpretations so as to discover new phenomena or to “re-see familiar events in a new light” (Freebody, 2003:129). This includes making my own assumptions and subjectivities clear, representing different voices equally, and showing how interpretations have been arrived at from the raw data. Angen (2000) speaks of the importance of ‘ethical validation’, by which she means the need for research agendas to question their underlying moral assumptions and political implications, as well as providing some practical answers to questions. I do want my research to have “generative promise” (p.389) opening up new questions and stimulating new dialogue about writing quality and its assessment, as well as providing non-dogmatic answers to my research questions. It is important to me that the research is shared with teachers as well as academics and that it rings true for them; hence I have made use of opportunities to present findings to audiences of teachers as well as researchers, and to submit articles to professional as well as academic publications.

4.5 Data collection

Wellington (2000) warns of the major consequence of qualitative research, that it produces large amounts of verbose data, a problem multiplied by the tendency to “over-collect and under-analyse” (p.133). However, I wanted to use multiple sources of data to investigate my research questions, both to strengthen the validity of the study but also to provide different kinds of

information about the phenomenon being studied, using comparison as the main analytical tool. Because I was investigating the subjective meanings that participants gave to the concept of 'good writing' (rather than asking them to comment on pre-formed criteria), it was important to elicit open-ended responses and to allow patterns and themes to emerge from the data, rather than starting with a theoretical model. The research questions are designed to investigate aspects of cognition, beliefs and behaviour, but as discussed in 4.3, these are difficult to separate and to study; beliefs may be consciously or unconsciously held; they may be context-dependent, and distorted by circumstance; belief can only be indirectly measured; there may be a tension between what people say (espoused beliefs which are communicated to others) and what people do, beliefs in practice (Phipps & Borg, 2009). Drawing on multiple, and overlapping, data sources is a response to these difficulties.

4.5.1 Interviews with teachers and students

All four researchers on the ESRC *Grammar for Writing?* project conducted interviews with the teacher and a Year 8 focus student once each term, following observation of a lesson from the writing scheme. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by two project assistants, using agreed protocols such as transcription of pauses and hesitations. For my research, the transcripts of the full data set - 93 teacher interviews and 93 student interviews - have been analysed and coded independently.

There are drawbacks to collecting data through interview. Silverman (2006) stresses that people do not always know what they think or may struggle to articulate thoughts; people are naturally contradictory; ideas can be shaped by the interview itself or affected by the hierarchical relationship between researcher and participants; the data are often difficult to categorise. Lewis (1992) charts particular difficulties in interviewing young people, where the researcher may be perceived as an authority figure, influencing some children to say anything rather than feel they do not have 'the answer'. Interviews are co-authored social encounters, the complexity of which is distorted and reduced by transcription. It was considered less obtrusive and more practical to audio-record interviews but this does mean that important contextual factors, such as

non-verbal aspects, tone of voice or emphasis, are filtered out (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). Thus the words in transcripts are not necessarily as stable as they were in the social setting of the interview and are capable of endless re-interpretation. However, the primary advantage of interview data for the interpretive researcher is its rich texture, enhanced by the relative flexibility of semi-structured interviews which allow for exploration and probing of subjects' views, for example through prompts designed to stimulate open-ended discussion.

It is important to stress that interviews are not authentic "reports on reality" (Silverman, 1993:107); at best they can provide insights into individuals' constructed social worlds and participants' accounts of themselves and the topics of talk in the particular interactional setting of the interview. With this in mind, Baker (1997, in Freebody, 2003:137) has suggested treating interviews not so much as a "data gathering" exercise than as a "data generation" method, "an interactional event in which members of a culture draw on and rebuild their shared cultural knowledge." The *Grammar for Writing?* teacher interview schedules (Appendix 3) were designed to elicit 'shared cultural knowledge' in the form of beliefs about writing in general, and about writing pedagogy, including the role of grammar. Although specific questions about 'good writing' were asked only as closing questions, I analysed each interview in its entirety because each had the potential to generate data relating to my research topic. For example, in the first interview, teachers were asked about their own writing practices and preferences, and to reflect on a set of labels and what they meant in terms of their own teaching of writing. In the course of these reflections, teachers made comments about the quality of students' written responses and aspects of writing that they admired, both in terms of classroom writing and published texts. Similarly, in the second interview, teachers were asked to rank a set of belief statements on a five-point Likert scale, and this often led to expanded descriptions and explanations of qualities in writing that teachers valued. The third interview focused specifically on grammar teaching but even here, some of the questions invited comment about 'good writing', for example: "Are there some elements of grammar which you feel help children become better writers?" Nonetheless, the main evidence of teachers' conceptualisations

of writing quality came from the closing questions asked each term. Table 4.3 shows the match between these interview questions and my research questions.

Research Questions	Interview Questions
1a) How do <u>teachers</u> and students describe 'good writing'? and 1b) How consistent are <u>teachers'</u> and students' understandings of quality in writing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think makes 'good writing'? • What do you think makes a good teacher of writing? • What criteria would you use to describe 'good writing'? • What are you looking for as indicators of quality in writing?
1c) What is the match between teachers' criteria for quality in writing and published assessment criteria for high-grade writing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the assessment criteria at KS3 and GCSE effectively capture 'good writing'? • What are you looking for as indicators of quality in writing? Do you think KS3 tests and GCSE reward those qualities?

Table 4.3 Teacher interview questions matched to research questions

Interviews with one teacher-chosen student from each class also took place after the lesson observation. These were informed by a semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix 4). The first section of the interview was principally to facilitate engagement by asking broad questions about writing and students' perceptions of learning about writing, before asking more specific questions relating to their learning in the observed lesson. The second part of each interview was designed to explore students' metalinguistic understanding, defined as their ability to talk about language features and their effects, including the use of metalanguage. These 'writing conversations' were initiated by a sample of writing in each of the genres taught, with prompt questions about the structure and organisation of text, sentence and vocabulary choices and their effectiveness. The prompt texts were written by students of the same age during a previous university study and were not offered as models of high-quality writing but as a starting point for discussion. Students were also prompted to discuss a sample of their own writing produced during the teaching scheme.

Again, it was important to use the whole interview as a data source, rather than to focus solely on responses to direct questions about quality in writing. For

example, in the first part of each interview, which explored the construct of pedagogical thinking, students were asked to comment on classroom practices that helped their writing, and this often led to discussion about influences on their evaluative judgements, such as feedback from peers or the writing targets set by their teacher. Transcripts of the second section of each interview, students' discussion of writing samples, provided the main evidence of 'beliefs in practice' which my second principal research question was investigating, but they also yielded additional information about students' conceptualisations of 'good writing'.

Table 4.4 shows the intended match between my research questions and interview questions; in reality, there was a greater degree of overlap than suggested here.

Research Questions	Interview Questions
1a) How do teachers and <u>students</u> describe 'good writing'? and 1b) How consistent are teachers' and <u>students</u> ' understandings of quality in writing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think makes 'good writing'? • How would you describe 'good writing'? • Tell me about you as a writer...Are you a good writer?
2b) What suggestions do students make to improve the quality of their own and their peers' writing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well is this piece of writing progressing? What are you most pleased with? • Does it have any of the features of a story/argument/poem? • Can you comment on how effective the sentence structure or shaping is? • What about the word choices? Can you comment on the effectiveness of the vocabulary? • What would you like to change or improve?

Table 4.4 Student interview questions matched to research questions

4.5.2 Classroom observation

As discussed in 4.3, there are difficulties and limitations in studying cognition and belief, and the possible relationship between thoughts and actions. Nonetheless, non-participant observation of classroom practice provides some opportunity to study 'beliefs in practice', points where private, tacit understanding might be made public and explicit. I have used records of lesson

observations from the *Grammar for Writing?* project alongside teachers' post-observation reflections in interview as data through which to address the following research questions:

- 2a) How do teachers refer to writing quality in lessons that focus on writing?
- 2b) What suggestions do students make to improve the quality of their own and their peers' writing?

The lesson observation schedule (Appendix 16) was designed to capture a record of how the teachers taught the three writing genres and how students responded. The schedule recorded the sequence of activities and the grammatical, literary and linguistic terminology used by the teacher, and provided prompts for the observer to record examples of classroom discourse, for example the nature of questioning and explanation and evidence of students' learning or misunderstandings. Although practice varied, it was often the case that teachers used particular stages in the lesson sequence to share ideas about writing quality, most notably when the lesson objectives were explained, when the writing activity was introduced, or when students' writing was discussed.

4.5.3 Case study

I used a single instrumental case study (Stake, 1994) in order to collect additional data that would allow me to investigate students' conceptualisations of writing quality beyond my initial analysis. In this instance, the actual case was secondary; it served to "advance understanding of that other interest" (p.237). In the small-scale intervention that formed the second part of the research, I took the role of participant observer, introducing myself as both a researcher and a former English teacher to the Year 8 groups, explaining the purpose of the intervention 'lesson' on the topic of evaluating writing, and managing the classroom activities alongside the class teacher. The lesson was structured to allow time for me to stand back and observe students as neutrally as possible. I listened in to students' group discussions when they rank-ordered writing samples and made notes of the criteria they were using; one group from each class was selected to present their decisions to the rest of the class and I used a digital voice recorder to capture these plenary discussions.

To provide corroboration of insights from the group discussions, and to allow for a wider range of views to emerge, I also captured students' ideas about good writing through individual written responses to open-ended prompts which were completed at different points in the lesson and given a context by the emphasis on 'Thinking about Writing'. These prompts were: 'Good writing...'; 'A good writer...'; 'I could improve my writing by...'. Appendix 17 shows a completed example. In devising these prompts, I was mindful to make the task easy to administer and to complete, accessible to students of different abilities and inviting genuinely open responses, in terms of the number of criteria mentioned, the order in which they were recorded and the language that might be used. Given the relative lack of secondary school students' voices in research studies, it was important for me to know what students' own criteria for good writing might be, and how they might characterise quality in their own terms, rather than, for example, inviting them to comment on published criteria such as APP guidelines. As with the prompts responded to by teachers on the *Grammar for Writing?* project training day, and the questions about good writing asked in each term's interviews, the first two prompts used with students were deliberately similar to each other, so that I could see how consistent individual students' responses might be. The intention of the third prompt was to draw out students' understanding of how to improve the quality of their writing, either in terms of generic or personal strategies, framed in a way that would be familiar to them from the common classroom practice of commenting on their own or their peers' work in terms of "two stars and a wish" or "what works well; even better if" statements.

4.5.4 Piloting

The interview and observation schedules were piloted in one of the project schools in the summer term before the *Grammar for Writing?* study began, and subsequent changes made to the layout of the lesson observation schedule to show interactions between teacher and students in a clearer way. In the second, independently-designed part of the research, I trialled the 'Thinking about Writing' lesson with a Year 8 class, returning to the same school a week later to conduct the lesson with three more Year 8 classes. In the light of the

trial, I simplified the structure of the lesson and made the prompt questions on the writing samples more specific. The original lesson plan and group discussion prompts are shown as Appendix 7a. In the pilot lesson, I asked students to summarise individual responses to the fiction samples on post-it notes on which they wrote their names. My intention was to match these with individual responses to the open-ended writing prompts, which I had also asked to be named, in order to consider the consistency of individual views of quality in writing. In displaying these post-it notes underneath each story choice, the intention was to offer a visual 'count' of students' rank order decisions as feedback on the task, as well as to provide me with students' names so that I could group them for follow-up discussion.

However, the use of post-it notes proved very distracting! Several students were loathe to record their names; some had not written anything; notes became detached, and the re-grouping took too long. I was also unconvinced that students had read both stories in their entirety and that this might be reflected in the numbers who had chosen the first narrative. I therefore revised the lesson plan so that I read both stories aloud with students who then annotated the text itself with reasons for their rank order choice. Discussion groups of between three and four students were organised more quickly in response to a simple show of hands as to which story had been chosen as 'better' than the other. In the pilot lesson, some students had struggled to access the question prompts for group discussion, and I realised that the spaces on the handout provided for responses might have been limiting. I therefore removed the grid and simplified the wording of the prompts. For example, "What about the way the story starts? Can you comment on the effectiveness of the opening?" was simplified and made more direct: "Look at the way the story starts. What works well about the opening?" Finally, I anonymised the process, asking only for gender identification on responses to the open-ended 'good writing' prompts.

4.6 Data analysis

Miles and Huberman (1994) remind that there are many ways of analysing qualitative data and stress that analysis is not off-the-shelf but custom-built and 'choreographed'. They break down the process of analysis into three stages:

data reduction (collating, summarising and coding into categories); data display (organising data and presenting it in a way that encourages the formation of concepts) and conclusion drawing (interpreting themes and patterns). Thus in inductive analysis, themes are built 'from the bottom up', organising the data into increasingly more abstract units of information through "repeated sortings, codings and comparisons that characterise the grounded theory approach" (Creswell, 2007:298). Constant comparison (between emerging themes and the data set and between categories as they are refined and developed) is the main intellectual tool and serves to strengthen the generalisability of findings, as stressed by Silverman (2005). It does so "by demonstrating the similarities and differences across a number of settings" (p. 129) and by leading to comprehensive data treatment, whereby anomalies or deviant cases are actively sought out and addressed, so that "the result is an integrated, precise model that comprehensively describes a specific phenomenon" (p. 215).

The description that is arrived at is, of course, subject to the researcher's own interpretation of the data, since the process of inductive coding is not a standardised one and it is possible to analyse any phenomenon in more than one way. Inductive coding has been likened to an art more than a science, a form of "intellectual craftsmanship" (Wellington, 2000:150) in which intuition and creativity play a part, which might include examining the language itself, such as searching for and examining commonly-used metaphors, or choosing expressive labels for categories of response. The process is not alchemy: Creswell (2007:152) uses the metaphor of "winnowing" data in order to decide which information to use and which to discard, and I like the intimation of effort here. His image of the spiral (adapted in Figure 4.2) also suggests the rigour involved in processing large amounts of raw data since it demands repeated cycles of revisiting, re-reading and re-interpreting text.

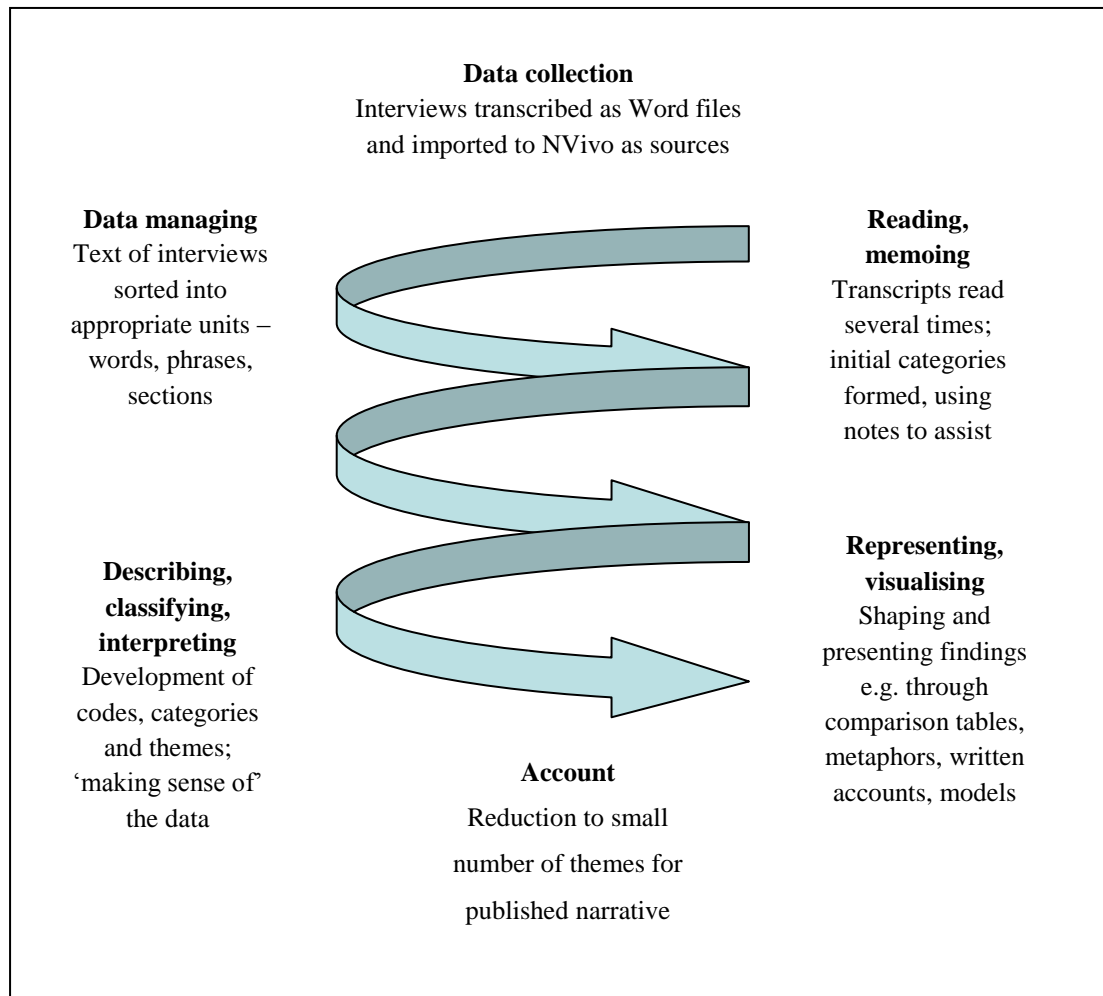


Figure 4.2 The data analysis spiral (adapted from Creswell, 2007: 151)

In describing the main phases of inductive analysis, Wellington (2000) also emphasises its time-consuming, rigorous and systematic nature. The stages he recommends (p.141) move from immersion in order to gain a sense of the whole database, to reflecting critically on the data by standing back from it, to analysing by taking the data apart and sorting it into units of meaning, to recombining and synthesising, for example by redefining codes, before relating and locating, by comparing and contrasting with other research findings. I found this framework very useful, not least because the stage of “recombining and synthesizing” encouraged me to revisit the same data and analyse it in different ways. For example, having coded teacher and student interviews separately, to establish themes and patterns in understandings of ‘good writing’ across the whole sample, I then combined all the available statistical and interview data into separate school profiles and recoded it, looking for similarities and

differences in understandings of writing quality between a particular teacher and his or her student and across the whole sample. This new analysis enabled me to see consistencies and inconsistencies more clearly, as well as to clarify and expand initial codes. An example of one such profile is provided as Appendix 18. This is the same school for which complete raw data was provided (Appendix 10), allowing readers a glimpse into my process of managing and interpreting data.

4.6.1 Analysing interview data

NVivo 8 software was used to code all the interview data. Initially, all four members of the ESRC project team used an agreed set of categories (shown in Appendix 19a) to code four teacher interviews as practice in using NVivo 8 and to compare our interpretations. After that I worked independently with the interview data. I first read the sections of teacher and student interviews where direct questions relating to my research were asked. To begin reducing and sorting the data, I used some *a priori* codes derived from my research questions or from interview schedules. In the coding trees shown in Appendix 19b, these are: 'writing quality', 'evaluating writing', 'good teacher of writing', 'testing' and 'self as writer'. Other concepts emerged during open coding, for example 'difficulty making judgements', 'self/peer evaluation'. I was struck early on by the frequent use of imagery to characterise good writing and therefore made 'images of good writing' a separate code. To capture the variety and individuality of this imagery, I used *in vivo* coding, where words and phrases spoken by participants provide labels for categories, so for example, good writing: "hooks you in"; "gets the heart racing"; "hits a nerve". *In vivo* coding was used again at this early stage of analysis to process the large 'writing quality' category, and this usefully highlighted the sheer variety of definitions of good writing used by teachers and students, whilst revealing patterns and themes, so that I was able to group responses under summary labels and compare them easily (see Table 5.8). I compared teachers' own-worded criteria with the terms used in published assessment criteria (Appendix 19c) and I compared students' own-worded criteria with the terms used by their teachers (Appendix 19d). Opinions differ as to whether qualitative researchers should count codes but I decided at this initial stage to report the number of times each code appeared in

the databases in order to indicate which features of writing were considered most important when judging quality.

As indicated in the project codes shown in Appendix 19a, the teacher interview schedules were designed to capture teachers' general beliefs about writing and writing pedagogy, so it was necessary to read interviews in their entirety in order to see where writing quality and assessment might be referenced, other than in responses to closing questions. This second immersion in the data, and a process of axial coding, crosscutting between data and relating concepts to each other, led to the emergence of additional top-level themes, for example, 'reading-writing relationship'. This captured comments that made a direct link between students as readers and students as writers, and comments that referred to the impact of writing on the reader. 'Knowledge of students' captured comments about learning and writing behaviours of the whole class or specific individuals. The sections of interviews relating to the genre being taught also yielded additional comments about writing quality, applied specifically to narrative fiction, argument and poetry, as well as references to classroom strategies for promoting good writing. Appendix 19e shows the final themes that emerged from analysis of teacher interviews, an 'integrated model' (Silverman, 2005:215) which was used to saturate the data.

Each of these themes was broken down into codes that captured sub-themes and accounted for all individual perspectives. Table 4.5 shows this process for the theme 'testing', which incorporated responses to the closing question in interview 3 and responses to the beliefs label 'testing' made in the first interview. The codes are my own, not *in vivo* statements, and the total number of references is shown against each code.

Table 4.6 indicates how my coding judgements for this theme were made.

Testing		
Positive aspects	Negative aspects	Difficult to say
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testing motivates students (3) • Shows students what to aim for (3) • Shows you what to teach (3) • Shows what they've learned (2) • Exam criteria necessary for objectivity (2) • Criteria helpfully specific (2) • Criteria give room for own judgement (1) • Accuracy should be tested (1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes formulaic writing (16) • Can't/shouldn't assess creative writing (13) • Timed tasks limit quality (8) • Inhibits creativity (8) • Mark scheme too prescriptive (7) • Testing not important (5) • Doesn't differentiate for individuals (3) • Skews teaching (2) • Gives limited view of writing ability (2) • Too focused on accuracy (2) • Effort not rewarded (2) • Damages self-esteem (2) • Culturally biased (1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depends on key stage (3) • Depends on exam board (2) • Too personal to say (2) • Descriptors too subjective (2) • Descriptors too vague (2) • Not experienced enough (3) • Judgement is instinctive (2) • May be impossible to assess accurately (1)

Table 4.5: Example of coding frame for one theme from the teacher interviews

Teacher interview coded extract	Coding
the longer I've been in the job the more I realise how individual teachers' assessment is so dramatically different for the same piece, that some kind of objectivity however it can be found in the testing process is required	Positive aspects Exam criteria necessary for objectivity
if you follow the mark scheme then it's going to inform your teaching, because you know what exactly you're looking for and unless you know what you're looking for you can't teach the kids what the examiner is looking for or what good writing is all about	Positive aspects Shows you what to teach Shows students what to aim for
you get into the trap of, you know, you need to have one short sentence, one long sentence and a posh word here and five bits of grammar or punctuation, five bits of punctuation at GCSE, to get a grade C or above Q: right A: you know you can get into the, it becomes a little bit too much like hurdles that you're jumping over but then I don't think that's the way that we should be teaching	Negative aspects Promotes formulaic writing
I'll hold my hands up and say I've never graded, I've never levelled a poem A: no B: because I don't think that's the right thing to do, because, who says that, that you know, yeah, what is a successful poem	Negative aspects Can't/shouldn't assess creative writing
the descriptors are so subjective, what I think is an imaginative and thoughtful text, other teachers wouldn't, and what I think is a powerful account other teachers wouldn't and those sort of stems are so difficult to define	Difficult to say Descriptors too subjective Descriptors too vague

Table 4.6: Examples of coding

On the *Grammar for Writing?* project, I had sole responsibility for analysing the student interviews. Appendix 19f shows the final coding frame that was presented to the project team, organised in a format that was designed to aid report writing, with a particular emphasis on students' metalinguistic understanding in order to investigate the principal research question of the *Grammar for Writing?* study. To keep the data manageable and visible, and to make it easier to contribute to the final project report, I used Word documents to write reports on each main theme. I have referred back to these reports in order to answer my own research questions, this time focusing on discourse around improving the quality of writing.

4.6.2 Analysing lesson observations

In the *Grammar for Writing?* study, I was responsible for conducting content analysis of lesson observation notes to explore the question of how teachers' and students' linguistic subject knowledge might be enacted in the classroom (this being defined as knowledge and understanding of grammatical metalanguage). To make it easier for the *Grammar for Writing?* research team to cross reference between teachers' reported linguistic subject knowledge and observed practice, I used a set of *a priori* codes that had emerged from the principal investigators' analysis of teacher interviews and expanded them to encompass additional aspects of practice (see Appendix 19g for detail). The top-level themes were:

- Linguistic subject knowledge in the classroom
- Inter-relationship of students' and teachers' linguistic subject knowledge
- Pedagogic practices

For my own research, I have focused analysis on aspects of lessons coded for applied LSK, that are most revealing of teachers' or students' understandings of writing quality for the purpose of improving writing. These are highlighted on Appendix 19g and include:

- Applied LSK: Comments/practice which link a grammar structure to a teaching/learning purpose;
- Success criteria: Examples of defining and sharing success criteria for writing, including guidelines given for peer assessment;

- Models: Examples of use made of teacher modelling of writing or use of text models e.g. for students to imitate.

4.6.3 Analysing case study data

I used student data from the single case study intervention to supplement the interview data collected from the *Grammar for Writing?* project. This additional data is presented in graphical form in the Findings chapter; Appendix 20a shows a sample of the raw data, a manual record of students' responses to open-ended prompts and rank ordering of writing samples. I have reported these verbatim in order to represent student voices as fully as possible and have grouped responses broadly into those relating to text, sentence and word level features of writing, so that they can be compared more readily.

4.7 Limitations

There are clear limitations and difficulties in investigating teachers' and students' subjective understandings of writing quality. Beliefs that might influence classroom practice have been characterised as "covert" (Calderhead, 1987:184), and "unobservable" (Borg, 2003:81); they may be "quite idiosyncratic" (Calderhead, 1996:719) and exist in a form that cannot be verbalised in interview. As Clandinin states (1985:383), "personal practical knowledge need not be clearly articulated and logically definable in order to exert a powerful influence in teachers' lives." Although I have used different methods of data collection in an attempt to elicit teacher and student thinking, there are many obstacles to elucidating judgement which operates on a "continuum from explicit to tacit" (Eraut, 2000:119). As a result, researchers need to be "modest with their aspirations" (p.135).

A clear limitation of my research is that, while it yields information about the criteria teachers and students use to evaluate good writing, it does not cast much light on the sources of these criteria or influences on the judgement process. The research also relies more heavily on stated beliefs than on classroom enactment of beliefs, on what teachers say, rather than on what they do. Consequently, descriptions and definitions of good writing are often generalised and decontextualised. I have attempted to cross-reference between

statements about writing quality made in interview, and observed practice in lessons, but any such links remain suppositional and theoretical. It would have strengthened the validity of my findings if I had been able to present them for member checking, but too long a gap had elapsed since data collection to make this feasible. Utilising the data from the *Grammar for Writing?* research project has enabled me to refer to a much more extensive data set than I could have collected independently, but it has also caused limitations, chiefly, not being able to verify my interpretations with participants. Nonetheless, the research design has enabled me to collect rich data that has provided helpful insights into the question of how teachers and students conceptualise good writing, and these insights are presented in the next two chapters, which address each principal research question on turn.

CHAPTER 5: CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF QUALITY IN WRITING

This chapter presents findings in relation to the principal research question, “How do teachers and students conceptualise quality in writing?” It reports teachers’ and students’ descriptions of good writing and consistencies in understandings of quality, including the match with published assessment criteria.

5.1 Teachers’ conceptualisations of good writing

Findings draw on teachers’ responses during the initial *Grammar for Writing?* project training day to open-ended prompts and to rank ordering of writing samples (Appendix 6). Interview responses to direct questions about writing quality are reported using *in vivo* coding (Appendix 19c). Further themes from coding of complete interviews are also reported (Appendix 19e).

5.1.1 Conflicting opinions about good writing

The two examples of Year 8 students’ writing used on the project training day were chosen because of their contrasts, which I thought would lead to interesting discussion about which one might be judged ‘better’ than the other. Teachers’ views about the qualities of each piece were more polarised than I expected, and the fact that a number of teachers referred back to this activity during project visits suggested that they too were surprised by the strength of feeling. Essentially this focused on a perceived conflict between ‘creativity’ and ‘competence’ (two of the four concepts in the national curriculum current at the time of the research) with two-thirds of teachers championing the originality and “daring” or “risk taking” of *A Hellish World* over the “safe”, “accurate” but “dull” nature of *The Burglary* and the rest appreciating the fact that the latter story “communicates clearly what it has to say”. Different teachers annotated the same features in each piece of writing but came to different conclusions about them. For example, the imagery in: “I sodded my way to Room 5 – no relief from the mouldy day. I plumped, I slopped into a chair and squelched my feet on the flea-ridden floor” was both praised as creative and inventive and criticised for not making sense. Some teachers pointed out as “clever” the use of the capital letter in the sentence, “My thoughts of Her, the happy times I spent last night, having fun with Her”; others thought it “odd”, or weren’t convinced it was

intentional in the light of inaccurate punctuation in the later line: 'Today is House Rugby,' the teacher rings aloud. 'he must do well.' Several noted that they responded differently to *A Hellish World* as readers than they did as teachers, so that while they appreciated its "quirky", "wacky" character, they were unsure how to grade it, or whether to encourage students to be this experimental in an exam situation. The exercise also underlined the fact that judgement about quality in writing involves 'trade-offs' between different features, a point illustrated by the teacher in School 17 who, in the first term interview, reflected on the rank ordering and concluded:

I found that hard to actually say which one I thought was better, because the first one was more creative and written in a stranger way, I liked that, whereas the other one was written in a lot simpler way but it was easier to read and it still made it interesting to the way that the two things can be completely different approaches but they could still both be effective pieces of writing really, and interesting in different ways.

I have not detailed individual teachers' responses to the open-ended prompts as these were intended to generate reflection leading to discussion and to pilot a method of data collection, rather than being a prime source of data. They were completed in very different degrees of detail, sometimes individually and sometimes in conversation with each other. From feedback discussion, however, it was clear that teachers recorded a wide range of criteria for quality and that there were quite marked differences of opinion over the weightings given to originality/creativity and technical accuracy/clarity of communication, with a tendency to see these as mutually exclusive rather than mutually informing. The nature of the tensions apparent in discussion of the prompts and the writing samples was well summed up by the following teacher in interview:

I do think that you have that, that jewel, sort of idea of a, of self expression and being really creative and, and choosing words for effect and varying your sentences and making everything interesting, umm, as much as you can, and really trying to get across a mood or an atmosphere, umm, but at the same time it's got to be really

accurate and it's got to be, umm, that, that punctuation has got to enhance the, the meaning if you like of what is communicated so I think it is two things, it really is two things, that creativity and competence, and I think, err, a lot of pupils have one or the other, and the dream is for them to have both to be honest, so, and that would make successful writing. (School 24)

5.1.2 Images of good writing

When coding interview data for statements relating to writing quality, it quickly became apparent that teachers often used metaphorical language to capture characteristics of good writing. *In vivo* coding demonstrated the range of images or analogies employed, and the mix of commonplace and idiosyncratic conceptualisations. These are shown in Table 5.1.

Through imagery, teachers emphasised the impact that good writing has on the reader, its drama, power and force. Good writing “provokes a reaction”, “must excite you in some way”, “grabs your attention” and “draws you into its world”, with the best writing having both an emotional and physical effect: “it strikes a chord”, “gets the blood pumping”, “makes the hairs at the back of your neck stand up” or “makes you go weak at the knees”. Teachers did not make a distinction between quality writing of published authors (“something that would prize eight quid out of my purse to buy a book”) and quality of school writing in which students used all the “skills” and “ingredients” to “get the mix just right and have the reader licking their fingers to turn the page.” Teachers clearly saw writing as a valued, shared classroom experience and they used images that expressed their sense of responsibility in developing it: “good writing has to be nurtured”; “is like a person”; “a piece of clay that you can mould and sculpt”.

Teachers’ imagery also revealed the value accorded to writing that has an authentic, distinctive, personal voice, writing “that’s completely and totally theirs”, showing evidence of original thought and the student’s “own spin” on a topic: “it’s about you stamping your mark.” Good writing was seen as empowering for students, evident in the metaphor of writing as “tools” and “armoury” to equip them for the future. For one teacher, good writing skills had a

civilizing effect, giving students, “an extra bow and arrow when everyone else is still running around in a bear skin.”

TEACHERS' IMAGES OF GOOD WRITING (expressed through use of metaphor and analogy)
<p>Good writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gets the blood pumping • gets the heart racing • touches your insides • (will) stir the blood • makes the hairs at the back of your neck stand up • makes you go weak at the knees • needs to jump out of the page • knocked my socks off • makes me forget I'm marking • doesn't give me a headache • would prize eight pound out of my purse to buy a book • strikes a chord in you • hooks you in from the beginning • just catches • grabs your attention • holds attention • speaks to the reader • someone's voice that I'm listening to • like a sixth sense • hits the purpose • provokes a reaction, provokes a response • draws the reader into its world • pulls the reader into your world • makes you look at the world in a different way • has the X factor • has some sort of journey within it • drives towards its conclusion right the way through • has to be nurtured • is a piece of clay that you can mould and sculpt • when you get the mix just right that you have the reader licking their fingers to turn the page • it's like cooking, like Jamie Oliver • where you can almost touch that writer's enthusiasm • uses all the tools in their armoury • arms them for the future; gives them an extra bow and arrow when everybody else is still running around in a bear skin • needs to have a personality • needs to have a voice • is like a person • when they've put their own spin on it • it's about you stamping your mark

Table 5.1 *In vivo* coding: teachers' images of good writing

5.1.3 Definitions of good writing

In vivo coding was used as an initial method of sorting themes and locating patterns in teachers' responses to the questions about what makes good writing (see Appendix 19c). The sheer variety of characterisations of good writing was striking: 72 different features emerged from teachers' interview data. Table 5.2 lists the most frequently mentioned criteria (11 or more references). Apart from 'experiments/experimentation', all of these criteria also feature in published Level or Grade descriptors.

<i>In vivo</i> criteria for good writing	No. of references
Variety	29
Original/originality	20
Effect on the reader	20
Wide ranging vocabulary	18
Engaging/engages the reader	18
Creative/creativity	15
Interesting/maintains interest	14
Confident/confidence	14
Crafted/crafting	13
Personal voice	13
Accurate/accuracy	13
Experiments/experimentation	12
Structure	12
Sense of purpose and audience	11

Table 5.2 Teachers' most frequently-referenced criteria for good writing

Given their statutory nature, one might well expect this echoing of national assessment criteria, some of which ('imaginative', 'accurate', 'appropriate') feature at both Key Stages. Teachers also referenced complete phrases from high-grade descriptors, such as "wide ranging vocabulary", "personal voice", "manipulation of sentence structure" and "effect on the reader". However, as the verbatim examples in Appendix 19c indicate, several words and phrases from published criteria were used in different contexts from their original source. "Variety" is applied at KS3 to "grammatical constructions and punctuation" but teachers used it generically (as in, "variety is the thing I always bang on about" School 7); and applied it specifically to sentence structure, punctuation, vocabulary and techniques (for example, "variety of techniques to create effect" School 30). "Confident", as used in GCSE grade A criteria, refers to technical

and stylistic control: “candidates’ writing shows confident and assured control of a range of forms and styles”. The teacher in School 24 may have intended a similar meaning for the term “confidence” when he spoke of good writing having: “Precision, creativity, and confidence”. Asked by the interviewer to explain, he said, “Confidence means accuracy, accuracy” and his emphasis on accuracy was a personal characteristic, as stressed in later interviews. Half the teachers who referred to the concept of confidence envisaged it as a personal quality: students “write well if they’re confident they know the key ingredients” (School 21);

“it’s having the confidence to be imaginative, to be creative, and make up phrases and words...err, experiment, umm, take a chance really. (School 30)

There were further suggestions that teachers might be drawing on published criteria but putting a personal spin on them. For example, the notion of good writing being ‘consciously crafted’ is commonplace for English teachers although the actual phrase does not appear in statutory criteria: GCSE top-band criteria refer to “controlled and sustained crafting”, while national curriculum programmes of study include analysis of “the author’s craft” and the objective “to write imaginatively, creatively and thoughtfully.” There were thirteen references linking good writing to crafting, but the concept was applied by teachers to both the finished product, “something that’s been cleverly crafted” (School 21), and to the writing process: “I want to be able to see the process, that it’s been crafted” (School 10). There were five references linking good writing to students’ “conscious thought” and two references to “deliberate choices”. One teacher (School 3) characterised writing quality in all three interviews as being “justified”, which emerged as his idiosyncratic ‘take’ on the notion of crafting:

where the writer’s choices can be justified by the writer themselves so if they’ve done something for a reason they can tell me why, I think that would be good writing...they can tell me with confidence why they’ve done it...if they’ve said I’ve done this to create this effect, I’ve done this on purpose to do this and I really want the reader to feel this... then I think it’s a good piece of writing.

Over a third of the sample drew attention to the “effort” made by the student, so that the concept of ‘conscious crafting’ was frequently bound up with students’ ability to focus on the task, and the degree of personal care, engagement and involvement they brought to it. Indeed, there were several suggestions that these positive writing behaviours were valued and rewarded above and beyond the quality of the writing, as in these examples:

What I think’s good writing in what we teach is whether or not they’ve followed the instructions as to what they’ve been asked to do, and that’s usually to do with organisation and using particular sentence types so, and I think umm, adventurous writing is good writing as well, when the pupil’s willing to try even if it’s getting it wrong. (School 20)

With any type of writing, it’s, what are the features of it and can they then apply it, even if it’s not perfect but just to show that they can do it. (School 1)

There were several further examples where teachers’ criteria for quality echoed published criteria but were ‘personalised’. Six teachers referred directly to “manipulation of sentences” (which figures in the top-band mark scheme for the AQA exam board as “clear and controlled manipulation of sentence structures for effect”) but the phrase was used with slightly different emphases: for example, one teacher linked ‘manipulation’ to the idea of “playing around” with sentences, and varying the way sentences start “to make it engaging to read”, seemingly focusing on the creative or rhetorical effects of syntactical choices. In contrast, another teacher referred to “control of the sentence” in terms of accurate punctuation, especially at sentence boundaries. Some published assessment criteria do have slightly different meanings according to their source; at Key Stage 3, the term ‘appropriately’ is used in the exceptional performance attainment target in relation to syntax: “a variety of grammatical constructions and punctuation is used accurately, appropriately and with sensitivity”; at Key Stage 4 it is used in relation to genre conventions: “a range of forms and styles appropriate to task and purpose.” The five teachers who referenced the term also used it in slightly different ways. For example, it was related to the need for students’ expression to be “kind of appropriate to

whatever the task is”, as well as to students’ use of “appropriate tone and formality”. In the interviews that I carried out, I did not see teachers refer to copies of published criteria, so that the direct echoes of them were seemingly produced from memory, and there were a few instances of misquoting, as for the teacher who termed the Key Stage 4 phrase “creative delight” as “control and delight”. In the context in which she did so, her rephrasing seemed to better fit her own concept of what she was looking for in good writing:

*“the accuracy, I’d again go back to the accuracy, control and delight, what you write is delightful...I’m marking A*s now and that’s exactly what you’re looking for.”* (School 29)

The range of teachers’ own criteria used to describe good writing was considerably broader than published criteria, partly because they included a number of what might be called ‘child factors’, none of which are evident in national assessment criteria. Teachers were asked “What makes good *writing*?” but several of them answered this by listing attributes of the *writer* that they valued or were looking to reward. Apart from confidence and effort, already mentioned, there were four references to risk-taking as one such attribute, so that the hallmark of good writing for one teacher was “people who take risks and don’t mind getting things wrong” (School 31); for another, it was evidence that the student had been able to “push themselves out of their comfort zone” (School 22). Three teachers looked for evidence of the writer’s “enthusiasm” pervading the text, two characterised good writing as the ability to write independently, and one looked for evidence that students could take “ownership and responsibility and show commitment” (School 30).

In vivo coding of themes showed up both the variety of teachers’ conceptualisations of good writing and the subjective interpretations given to certain concepts; indeed, a few teachers drew attention to the likelihood of this:

That’s a very kind of subjective term, what makes good writing.

(School 10)

It’s subjective because it depends entirely on the reader doesn’t it, and some people would be blown away by one piece of writing, and some people would hate the same piece of writing. (School 13)

Even where a large number of teachers used the same word, such as “originality” and “creativity”, these criteria were defined or illustrated in very different ways. Some teachers found the concepts difficult to pin down: “I think it’s hard to put your finger on exactly what that is, but you know it when you’ve read it” (School 5); “it’s the X factor sometimes” (School 12). Others attempted to do so by providing synonyms, for example: “flair and originality and wit” (School 25); “I quite like the creative side of things, so if there’s a really, really imaginative response to something, that’s really engaging” (School 15); “I think brilliant writing just comes from the individual and it is just originality and a fluent writer” (School 13). For some teachers, “originality” was related to ideas, topics or viewpoints: “a clever original concept which they’d be writing about...really original content” (School 13); “an original perspective” (School 17); “I’m always still surprised at some of the things kids write about and how creative they can be” (School 9). Others related it to the strength of the individual voice: “that personal kind of originality...their own kind of voice coming through” (School 1); “good writing needs to have a personality...an individual voice” (School 15); “a sense of an individual style developing again with maturity” (School 31). Yet others focused on originality of expression, including willingness to experiment: teachers spoke of looking for “imaginative writers who aren’t afraid to try new things” (School 9), or who can “experiment with ambitious vocabulary, ambitious, sophisticated punctuation” (School 5).

In vivo coding was also helpful in indicating common conceptualisations of quality in writing. After “originality”, the most frequently-occurring terms were “effect on the reader” and “wide ranging vocabulary” and several teachers expressly yoked these together. For many, “powerful” or “ambitious” vocabulary, “varied” or “adventurous” vocabulary was the hallmark of effective writing, deemed to be “massively important”, and “often key to make things stand out from other people’s pieces of work” (School 31). There were several different expressions of this view that “it comes down to word choices” (School 20) in determining the quality of a piece of writing and in distinguishing the work of the most able writers. For example, an “extensive vocabulary” was indicative of “a wide knowledge and depth” and also allowed for “originality of style” (School 8). Choosing vocabulary “for a specific effect” was cited as key to able writers’

conscious crafting of text (School 15). A number of teachers saw vocabulary as empowering students. For EAL students, this was a pragmatic reality, since:

they get very frustrated at their lack of vocabulary and they want words all the time, and of course that shows itself in the fact that they get hold of a thesaurus and they find all sorts of unsuitable words because they don't, they can't discern between them. (School 27)

Others spoke of the emotional impact of vocabulary, both for students:

good writing is...how much you enjoy words and putting them together because words are magic and words actually have so much power and if you have the ability to convey that through your writing and then I think it's all about empowerment and you've won the world haven't you? (School 29)

and for themselves as readers:

the excitement I get from words that sometimes they can make the hairs at the back of your neck stand up, um, I mean that's weird I'm getting emotional, um, that's not there is it... all it says is a varied vocabulary. (School 9)

The concept of “effect on the reader” and the separately coded but linked concept “engages the reader” encompassed a broad range of responses, emotional, intellectual and aesthetic. Thus for some teachers, effect was judged using affective terms: they referenced writing that “has a physical effect on you”; “makes me feel something”; “has an emotive connection”, a typical response being:

Something that affects you when you're reading in some way, whether it's, you know, empathy or fear...writing that allows the reader to imagine being there or being that person. (School 20)

A different interpretation of ‘impact’ or ‘effect’ centred on ideas rather than feelings: writing that “makes you reflect as a reader, writing that makes you think about what's been written” (School 26). Here the emphasis was on clarity of communication and ideas, where “the interest of the piece of writing is the key thing” (School 17); “do you convey to your audience what it is you have to say?” (School 14). A third discernible interpretation focused on “writers who can

create effects” in a stylistic sense (School 7). From this perspective, teachers were looking for how well language choices matched the audience, form and purpose of the writing, as explained by this teacher:

I'll start off by saying that good writing is defined by the fact that it engages the reader throughout because it's effective, and it's effective because it obeys the conventions of the particular writing type, text type that it is. (School 7)

Good writers by this definition were those having “all the conventions at your fingertips” (School 8). There were similarly broad interpretations of reader engagement. The concept was characterised by imagery of “hooking” or “grabbing” the reader’s interest and by writing that was “enjoyable”, “entertaining” or “memorable”; it encompassed interest in the topic, identification with ideas or characters, and appreciation of the language used. Engagement also referred to sustaining the reader’s interest throughout the text:

“I think good writing has just got something that makes me want to carry on reading it, after I've read the first paragraph or the first page.” (School 5)

A final usefulness of *in vivo coding* was in highlighting terms that teachers used relatively infrequently. Surprisingly few references were made to whole-text structure. The key assessment term ‘cohesion’ was used only twice, and specifically applied to consistency of verb tenses and viewpoints. The ‘coherence’ of a text was not mentioned at all. Although there were twelve references to good writing being “well structured”, or “structurally sound”, there were no comments relating directly to the control or manipulation of paragraphs. Instead, the structure of writing was discussed in general terms (“the flow and the structure”), qualified with adjectives (“well-shaped”) and adverbs (“clearly structured”) or allied with planning and organisation:

planning beforehand so it feels like they know where they're going.
(School 19)

Teachers’ own evaluative criteria included the ability to design writing:

to be able to produce whole texts that are shaped and formed so that they've really thought and conceived of an idea and taken it through from sort of conception stages right to the end. (School 6)

5.1.4 Generic and genre-specific views of good writing

Each term's interviews explored teachers' general beliefs about writing and their responses to teaching the genre of writing focused on in each scheme; thus comments about good writing were both generic and genre-specific. A few teachers commented on the difficulty of specifying quality in writing and initially provided very generalised definitions, for example: "Good writing? God that's hard; do you know, I think good writing is if you like what you've written, if it pleases you then it's good" (School 5). Four teachers used the phrase "it depends", to draw attention to the difficulty of providing a generic definition of good writing; "it would depend what I was looking for" (School 15), on "what you're writing and who you're writing for" (School 13) and, as already noted, there were several recognitions of the subjectivity of judgements:

It's down to the individual marking so much of the time, isn't it, because what one person thinks is absolutely brilliant someone else doesn't enjoy. (School 8)

For two teachers, this meant that good writing essentially defied description: one teacher commented that it was "too personal to say whether it's good or not" (School 3); another that it was "just a feeling that something tells you, that is great, and nobody can tell you otherwise" (School 23).

It was noticeable that a few teachers had relatively little to say on the subject of writing quality whilst others expressed their views about good writing so strongly and in such detail that it amounted to a personal manifesto. This qualitative difference is difficult to show in a limited space but something of the animation and passion with which one teacher spoke might come across in the snippets below:

Good writing is something that stimulates you, something you can relate to...for me, good writing needs to jump out of a page...good writing needs to be a little bit more imaginative, it needs to be a little bit more, the voice of a person isn't it, it's like you, it needs to be

passionate...it's a person isn't it, it's like a person...good writing is you, and how much you enjoy words and putting them together...(School 29)

Others were much more pragmatic or circumspect in their overall view of good writing:

I think umm, I said that neat writing was good writing, and I, I'm trying to look past that...good writing I think, is organised, and neat, and has some kind of flair to it, and I don't think you can teach that... (School 28)

What makes a good piece of writing? Something that doesn't give me a headache, something that doesn't make me work too hard. Oh, I don't know, that's really....I suppose it has to be something that...what makes good writing...something that's interesting and pleasurable to read and perhaps intellectually stimulating.

(School 16)

Patterns and variations in teachers' generic conceptualisations of good writing were evident enough to allow for them to be grouped and labelled as personal constructs and these are reported in section 5.3.1.

A third of the sample linked quality to the use of conventions of the particular genre in question, and there were several references to good writing needing "techniques" and "devices". One teacher narrowed this to "rhetorical devices", another spoke of "literary devices" and "linguistic techniques" but without exemplification. Specific comments about narrative fiction, argument and poetry were cued in interviews by questions relating to text, sentence and word level features of each genre, so that similar responses might be expected. Nonetheless, it was clear from the way that these were expressed that teachers drew on certain stock understandings of quality outcomes. For fiction writing, most of these related to plot, with a dominant view of the need to include effective narrative hooks; three teachers echoed each other closely in this respect: "You're dropping the clues steadily; you're hooking them on that something is going to happen" (School 29); "I want them to understand that they've got to hook the reader in from the very beginning"; "It's got to hook you

in from the start” (School 25). Three further teachers specifically mentioned the importance of story openings in engaging the reader. Four teachers considered clever or convincing characterisation as key to good fiction writing and stressed the reader’s empathetic response. Common characterisations of good argument writing focused on the use of rhetorical devices for persuasion, the most commonly quoted ones being triads and rhetorical questions, and the use of emotive language. Beyond this, three teachers equated quality with clarity of opinions and balanced arguments, although the emphasis in the intervention scheme on counter arguments may have influenced them. There were several references to the same acronym used as an aide memoire for persuasive devices, indicating that teachers were treading familiar ground.

However, a number of teachers struggled with the notion of conventions applied to the genre of poetry. The focus in the intervention scheme on sentence structure and punctuation, for example the use of caesura and enjambement to shape textual rhythm, was clearly unfamiliar. Conventions were more often understood in terms of poetic forms (haiku, ballad, sonnet and so on) or “literary devices” by which most teachers meant simile, metaphor and alliteration. Thus definitions of good poetry writing usually focused on word choices: “experimenting with words to create something original” (School 30); “putting words together in different ways to come up with a novel idea” (School 28). Although teachers referred to their confidence in analysing poetry, several expressed doubts about their ability to teach and assess poetry writing, as this representative teacher (School 13) explained: “It’s hard to know where to begin because it doesn’t follow normal rules of writing, so you kind of have to think about their imagination, how they structured it and their language and it’s hard...once I find a formula to tell them how to write it I’m OK”. Others found it impossible to judge poetry outcomes, as the teacher in School 28 explained:

Looking at their kennings today I thought, it’s not quite two nouns and, it’s how do you break it to them it’s not quite right but it’s great... how can you stand in judgement of somebody else’s creativity? OK, so he’d slipped up and put in a few verbs and a couple of adjectives but at the end of the day it really worked, so, yeah, it probably didn’t

fit the wonderful mould of a kenning, but I'm going to put it on the wall.

Across the sample there were some interesting differences of opinion about how far to reward writing for its use of genre-specific conventions. The teacher in School 24, for example was clear that evaluation of quality “would depend on the genre or style of writing first of all”, going on to say, “It would have to tick all the boxes for me, to the, features or the characteristics of that particular style.” The teacher in School 28 was more ambivalent, suggesting that although she was looking for use of techniques, there was a danger of students using “a real soup” of them and of using devices such as rhetorical questions “just to tick boxes”, instead of being “engaging, entertaining and creative, because it still needs to be creative”.

Other teachers voiced this concern that over-use or over-dependence on genre-specific techniques or “rules” might weaken rather than enhance the outcome, especially in relation to fiction or poetry. The teacher in School 14 wondered if teaching students to plan in “this very sort of structured way, beginning, middle, end” might “be crushing the genius of some children by limiting them to a structure” whereas having them “sort of organically create something” might “engage more” and have “more of an effect”. Another (School 2) expressed the belief that:

passion for language and a passion for literature or creative writing...is not just something that you can just purely get from a list of things that you can tick off, saying 'well I've got this, that and the other, and therefore it must be good.'

Indeed, several teachers spoke of the need for an holistic approach, focusing on reader engagement: “the effect that a whole text has on the reader...how it makes them feel, because only when you've got that can you then home in on the details which are actually producing that effect” (School 7).

5.1.5 Reading-writing relationship

Several teachers made a direct link between the acts of reading and writing, and suggested how this might impact on teaching, learning and evaluation. One

teacher (School 7) summarised the reading-writing relationship by defining good writing as “something that speaks to the reader, that has been written with the reader in mind to have a particular effect on them,” using the strength of this connection as the basis for evaluating quality. Two teachers referred directly to using their own cumulative experience as readers and writers in order to evaluate students’ writing. One actually defined good writing as “twenty years of teaching and doing a lot of reading”, explaining “if you’ve read a lot then, and if you read a lot of pupils’ writing, you do know what the good writing is” (School 25). Another (School 11) commented: “that judge of effectiveness is me, ultimately, and that only can be based on my experience of having read and written a lot over my lifetime”. Several teachers were aware that their own reading preferences influenced their conceptualisation of good writing. The teacher in School 21 made this explicit in several ways. She commented:

All the novels that have done well are ones that help us to see things and experience things that we wouldn’t do normally

and was clear that she looked for similar affective qualities in students’ writing:

It has to make your reader feel something and see something. Again, depending on the genre it’s going to depend what effect you’re trying to create, but you have to pull your reader into your world, which as a writer should be clear in your head.

Alongside “engaging the reader” she also valued clarity of communication, “making something clear to them”, and applied these twin criteria to all forms of writing:

“whether it’s a formal letter, whether it’s a magazine article, if the point of the writing comes across clearly to the reader, then that’s the main point of writing for me. You shouldn’t try and be like T. S. Eliot and hide your meanings and um, and be elitist and only hope that five percent of the population will understand what you’re on about.

She expressed the view that, “Writing is there to be read, not go in a cupboard”, and spoke of the need to integrate reading and writing, “taking things as a reader and transporting that into the experience of writing”. In observed practice, she frequently positioned students as readers and evaluators of a range of forms of writing, including their own, which was sometimes presented

as models alongside published examples. She encouraged them to be very specific about what the writing communicated, how it did so, and how the writing affected them, and students in her class were clearly well practised in judging their own and their peers' writing, often making elaborated comments.

Not all teachers thought of reading and writing in such an integrated way. Some made a distinction between responding to students' writing "as a reader not as a teacher" (School 31), the distinction depending on whether or not the writing was being graded. The conflict for this teacher centred on a "really imaginative response" that was technically inaccurate, so that judgement differed if she was reading it "just for the enjoyment side" or for formal assessment. Another teacher talked of "overlap with my teaching and reading habits" (School 10) referring to judging students' writing against the qualities she admired from her own reading: "I'd like to be engaged with, I want to care about the characters and be impressed by the quality of the language." One teacher was aware of "genres I don't like and so won't even attempt" in her own reading and how this influenced her response to students' writing, for example in feeling a lack of connection with content or style that did not appeal to her own tastes, concluding, "but I'm sure it influences everyone in the same way" (School 25).

Three teachers directly attributed their motivation as teachers to a desire to make connections for children between the power of reading and the power of writing, which one teacher explained as showing "the attachment between the reader and the writer...I think that's a special skill, hopefully that most English teachers have" (School 2). The teacher in School 14 expressly linked her decision to train as an English teacher with her desire to read and write fiction. Another teacher (School 4) referred to the "very long bridge" joining his own experience of literature to his practice as a teacher of writing. He tried to articulate the inspiration he felt:

that I'm still learning as a reader and as a writer of sorts...how the hell do you get that across...you have to acknowledge that there are those depths within yourself and that's your motivation and sometimes you have these lovely moments in class where they do

see something like that, and you can never really predict when it is, so you've got to try and engineer those I suppose.

5.1.6 A good teacher of writing

Reported here are comments made in direct response to the question, “What do you think makes a good teacher of writing?” and linked comments relating to teachers’ own writing practices, both outside school and in the classroom. Teachers’ beliefs about good teaching of writing were sometimes expressed through imagery: good teachers “open doors”; “unlock the door and unleash it”; “give them the tools and the tricks”; “steer them”. Teaching was seen as “feeding their writing” and “adding in what’s lacking”. Table 5.3 summarises the range of responses by different teachers, exemplified where needed. The highest number of comments related to what one teacher termed “the social and cultural part of the group” (School 26), underlining the importance of motivation and inclusion. Five teachers expressed the view that writing was difficult for children, one using the word “traumatic”; hence the need for encouragement, patience and positive, non-judgemental feedback. There was relatively little emphasis on direct teaching of text conventions or language skills; only one teacher (School 29) specifically detailed the kind of skills she taught and was the only person to use the term “explicitly”, in the context of teaching students how to structure complex sentences.

A third of the teachers in the sample described themselves as active writers of fiction, poetry and non-fiction; several ran writing clubs in school and wrote in their own time, and two referenced previous jobs that entailed writing professionally. One teacher considered it essential to write himself in order to be “someone who understands the process of writing...drafting, editing, evaluation” (School 24) and another recognised that although he didn’t enjoy writing poetry himself, it was something he felt he ought to do “in order to try and improve the students’ poetry writing” (School 19). A third teacher considered it important to be seen as a writer, in order to “demystify” the process for students and to act as encouragement by providing:

a sort of a step between the published work and them; it's just like well, you know I'm the person who you know and I can do this, and I

think most of them realise that they might not be able to have the command of vocabulary that perhaps I do but then they can create equally as unusual and interesting images. (School 11)

A good teacher of writing...	No. of teachers	Verbatim examples
Is enthusiastic, motivated, interested	18	Someone who just loves what they're doing
Encourages students; builds their confidence	10	Understands that writing is traumatic for some children
Understands the process; confident about own subject knowledge	8	Understands what writing is and how it should be taught
Teaches skills for writing	7	Teach things explicitly and don't assume they know
Inspires and motivates students	6	Must make them want to write
Links reading and writing	6	Reads good examples of writing
Responds to individual needs	5	Understand that everyone's got a different starting point
Shows students how they can develop	4	
Gives positive feedback	4	Appreciates what they write
Recognises improvement	2	
Is not too judgemental or prescriptive	2	Recognising what's positive even though it might not live up to expectations
Provides stimulus and ideas	3	
Use a variety of methods and resources	2	
Provides opportunities for sharing writing	2	Collaborating as writers
Is not afraid to make mistakes themselves	2	Teachers aren't born writers too
Has high expectations for students	1	
Plans effectively	1	
Is someone who can be creative	1	
Has patience	1	
Builds trust	1	

Table 5.3 Responses to interview question: "What makes a good teacher of writing?"

However, teachers expressed varying degrees of confidence in their own skills as writers and were aware of how this might impact on practice. Two teachers who classed themselves as good writers thought this made it harder to teach writing: the process was natural and instinctive and difficult "to deconstruct" for students (School 27). Five teachers considered their skills as analytical rather than creative and lacked confidence in modelling writing for students; one of these described teaching fiction writing as "out of my comfort zone really because it's not something I really like" (School 13). A further three were

hesitant about using their own writing as models either because it felt uncomfortably like self-promotion or in case it “inhibited” students’ own ideas and creativity, as explained here:

I’m scared of kind of imposing my own ideas ‘cos who’s to say that my writing skills are brilliant ‘cos they’re probably not, you know, and I don’t want to stifle some quality creativity out there by doing that.

(School 23)

The teacher in School 10 described how she had “lost confidence as an adult” in writing poetry and only felt able to use her own work as a model if she had prepared it at home beforehand. In contrast, another teacher (School 9) felt that she had grown in confidence both in analysing texts and in writing them as she discovered more about the technical aspects of writing. As for several others in the sample, this teacher was not taught grammar at school but had been “forced” to teach herself “since the literacy strategy came in” in order to understand the training materials:

like subordinate clause and main clause, I didn’t know that or how it worked, but I do, and it’s also improved my writing because I understand how it works now, whereas before it was just by instinct.

Interestingly, seven teachers described themselves as poor planners of writing; they either “never” planned or were unsure how to. Several were aware that their students struggled with planning and that “what we should perhaps do is teach more models of planning” (School 4) but lacked confidence in showing students how to plan or, in one case, lacked the motivation to teach it:

This planning is a real dichotomy to me because I don’t do it, but I understand why I should do it, and when I teach things I don’t always agree with I don’t teach them well. (School 3)

There were several other indications that teacher’s classroom practice was influenced by personal inclination, as the following teacher revealed:

if you look at my targets they’ll all be to do with varying sentence structures, increasing punctuation, you know, using a short sentence, that sort of thing, they’ll all be quite technical, um and I think that stems from a belief of, this is what I’m not proud of because I’m

probably wrong, that it's much harder to teach creativity but you can give students the tools to be successful with what they've got, and what I should be doing more is perhaps try to stimulate and to be more creative, but we can't all be parrots and we can't all be writers, you know. We all have to survive in the world; I'm a realist, I'm very practical. (School 7)

5.1.7 Classroom values

Comments coded as 'classroom values' related to specific aspects of learning or writing behaviours that the teacher tried to encourage or which might have contributed to the teacher's evaluation of quality. Teachers' responses to interview questions about good writing often mixed together references to textual features perceived as qualities, and attributes of students as learners, as seen here:

A good piece of writing is probably one that the person has really got into in a way, which is something that's very hard to judge but, you know, you sometimes get that spark that someone has actually just taken it and they've thought about it consciously and they've, I don't know, it's almost that kind of inspiration, that they've been inspired, they've got their own ideas down, they've thought about it, they've gone off and they've had the confidence to experiment with it, they've had the confidence in their own writing and their own writing skills to be able to express their ideas. (School 18)

Of course, this might be accounted for by the fact that teachers did not have time to pre-prepare their answers, and were 'thinking on their feet'. Nonetheless, this kind of response was common enough to suggest that some teachers inextricably linked writing outcomes and writing behaviours; qualities of writing with attributes of learners, and, in several cases, the values they wanted to promote in their classrooms. This holistic view of quality was very marked in the responses from some teachers, so that a clear view emerged of the 'principles' that guided their practice. The teacher in School 18 expressed consistent views over three interviews that what she most valued was "writing where students have thought about what they want to say, and they've used the

best way that they possibly can to express that". She made it clear that this quality of "conscious thought" overrode inaccuracies in students' writing. She was looking to reward writing where "some of it shows active thought, so it might not be the best piece of writing in the world but it's something that has shown kind of progress and kind of conscious thought for them."

The teacher in School 2 also expressed clear guiding principles for evaluation of quality in writing. She explained the progress being made by one of her weakest students:

...he can communicate an effective idea, and that would be given value in my classroom, even if his handwriting, his punctuation and everything else was all over the place, if he's been able to communicate that and I can read it and decipher it, and he's got a strong idea, then that would be given a huge amount of value in my classroom, and then the next steps would be to make sure that he can, that he knows how to, improve it and craft it from then on.

The fact that effective communication of ideas was a core value for this teacher was clearly reflected in her language:

something really fundamental to me anyway is that you have to, whatever a student says, you have to give it credibility and worth in a classroom...

...every contribution in the lesson is incredibly valuable, whether it's about their communication of ideas, or how they've structured it, or whatever.

It was clearly very important for some teachers to see the concept of quality as a relative rather than absolute term, so that individual differences could be taken into account when making judgements, as this teacher explained:

A good piece of writing for one student might look nothing like what a good piece of writing from another student looks like, because obviously they're starting from very different points. (School 5)

It could be that some teachers use their own classroom values to 'personalise' the standard, allowing them to reward qualities that do not feature in published criteria. There were several suggestions that teachers' own priorities were not

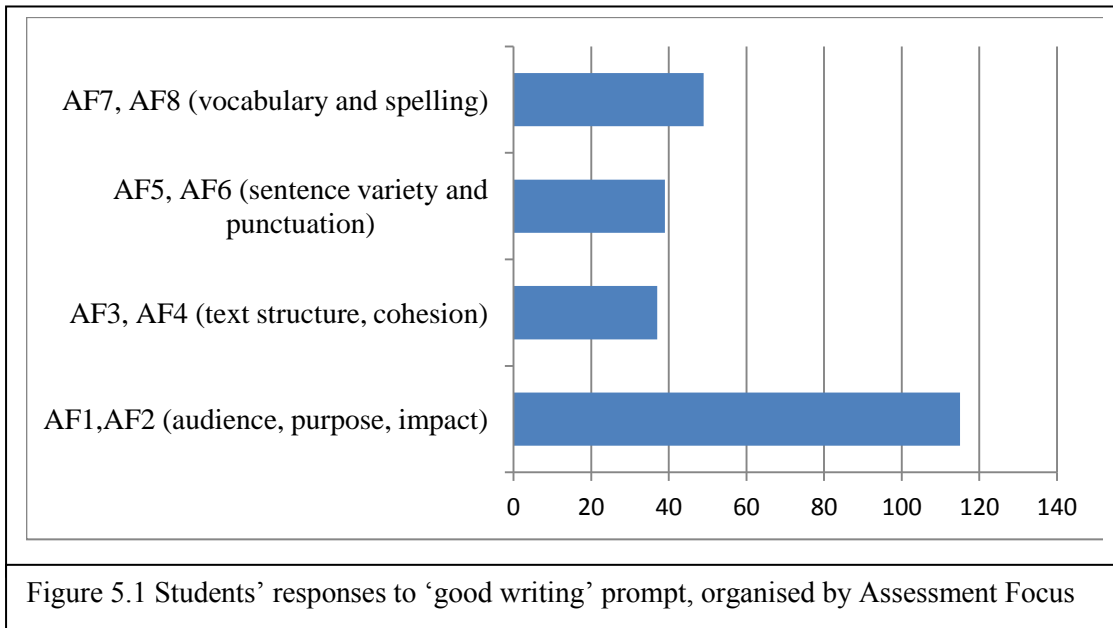
always aligned with national criteria and this finding is reported more fully in section 5.4.

5.2 Students' conceptualisations of good writing

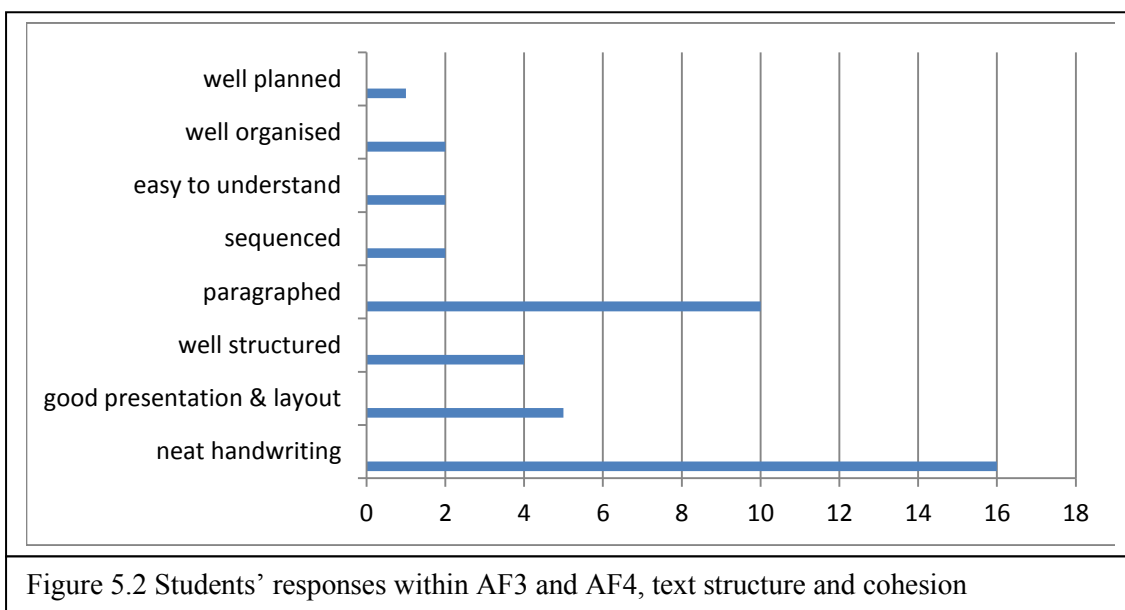
The findings here are organised in a similar way to Section 5.1, to allow for cross-referencing. They report responses from students in the single case study intervention to open-ended prompts and to rank ordering of writing samples (Appendix 7). Images of good writing are reported *in vivo* from the prompts and from interviews in the *Grammar for Writing?* project. Interview responses to direct questions about writing quality are reported using *in vivo* coding (Appendix 19d). Further themes from coding of complete interviews are also reported (Appendix 19f).

5.2.1 Conflicting opinions about good writing

Responses to the good writing prompt are shown in Appendix 20a. They were collected from 86 students and recorded verbatim, sorted into Assessment Focuses used in the APP guidelines, in order to show which aspects of writing students most commonly referred to. Figure 5.1 shows the number of references relating to each AF. There was a range of different responses within each of these areas, so that the variety in students' criteria for good writing was quite striking. For example, within the largest category of comments, relating to AF1 and AF2, the range encompassed various measures of impact on the reader, many of which were phrased as instructions or tips for the writer, for example: "paint a picture"; "needs to fit the subject"; "keep it linked to the genre". There were both generic and genre-specific responses, ranging from the use of "quotes to back up a point" to making stories "exciting, fast paced and action packed".



The highest proportion of comments related to affective impact, for example “dramatic”; “makes you feel you are there”; “hooks you in”, while there was a roughly equal number relating to intellectual impact, such as “lots of information”; “good use of facts” and aesthetic or stylistic impact, including use of “detail”, “description”, “similes and metaphors”. Variety of response was evident even within the category containing the fewest comments, whole text structure and cohesion, as illustrated in Figure 5.2.



The emphasis on neatness and presentation here varied between the different groups, with 11 of the 16 comments coming from the same class. This might indicate an influence from the teacher, whose own responses to the prompt included “fluent and well written” and “as accurate as they can make it”. Variation between classes was suggested in other ways: a high number of comments about punctuation came from students in one class while in another, nearly all the responses related to AF1 and AF2. Many students echoed the same criteria for good writing, such as “the right punctuation in the right places”; “full stops and capital letters”; “connectives”, which may indicate these as whole-class concerns. However, there were also individual idiosyncratic criteria, such as the student who responded with the one word, “iconic”, one who related quality to “how much effort you put into it” and another who related it to length, commenting, “good writing is longer than one sentence”.

Most students completed the open-ended prompt using single words or short phrases but there were two elaborated comments, as shown below:

Depends on whether it keeps the reader interested. Yes you can get all fancy with connectives, colons etc. but as long as it makes sense and the reader's hooked then that's good writing.

Be readable and connect with the one that is reading it if it's a story but most of all I think the writing should express what you feel.

The two samples of writing that students placed in rank order were outcomes from the narrative fiction scheme of work used in the *Grammar for Writing?* study, an adventure story in response to an image. In terms of Level judgements, Story 2 was a sub-level higher than Story 1, based on lexical and syntactical complexity, accuracy of punctuation, and consistency and sophistication of voice and viewpoint. Students were asked to choose the story they thought was better than the other. Table 5.3 shows the results of this exercise with numbers expressed as rounded-up percentages. Students' noted reasons for their rank order choice are listed in Appendix 20a.

% students choosing each story	Story 1	Story 2
Overall (86 students)	78%	22%
Class 1 (31 students)	77%	23%
Class 2 (25 students)	96%	4%
Class 3 (30 students)	63%	37%

Table 5.4 Students' choices in rank ordering exercise

Most striking was the emphasis students put on paragraphing, especially when compared with the relative lack of attention this received when they responded to the open-ended prompt. Story 1 was commended for good paragraph structure and “layout”, while students' suggestions for improving Story 2 focused almost solely on the need for paragraphs. There were eight errors with boundary punctuation in Story 1 compared with four in Story 2, which also had better control over punctuation within sentences, as seen in the final three sentences:

‘His smile turned to a look of horror as a boulder loomed up in front of him. He tried to turn but his limbs wouldn’t obey him. He slammed straight into it and lay on the snow, his vision blurring, until he blacked out.’

However, 13 students cited “better punctuation” as a reason for choosing Story 1 as the better piece of writing and there was additional mention of the use of ellipsis for dramatic effect. Story 1 ended:

‘Nexed thing I new I was lying in bed I scanned my body...phew nothing was wrong, Then I realised what all the alarm and havoc was about, lying next to me was the man I saw skiing...Dead. Later my video would become evidence all over the world.’

In terms of impact on the reader, students cited very similar criteria, only disagreeing as to which story they most applied to. The majority thought that Story 1 “gripped” or “grabbed” them more, but these criteria were also applied to the second story, and both were commended for “detailed description”. Students seemed particularly swayed by the ending of the first story, which they found “unexpected”; “someone dies so it becomes almost a cliff hanger”, but the same criteria were also applied to the ending of Story 2: “it’s left at a cliff hanger which makes you want to read more.” There is a suggestion of formulaic responses here, perhaps not backed by full understanding; ostensibly, the point

of a good ending is to complete the action satisfactorily, rather than “make you want to read on” or “leave you wanting more”.

Apart from paragraphing, factors which seem to have swayed students’ judgement in favour of Story 1 included the perception that it was easier to understand, and the empathetic use of the first person, which was “believable” and “draws you in because the person is late to meet their dad”. Whilst the bulk of comments were related to the overall effect of each story on the reader and used informal ‘student-speak’ to characterise this (“not too much going on”; “has lots of info about the skier”; “grabs you in quicker”), a few comments were more specifically focused on technical aspects and mirrored the wording of published assessment criteria, for example, “varied sentence length”; “sentence structure was better”; “adventurous vocabulary”; “more detailed description”. It might be that students here were echoing the language of formal evaluations made by their teachers, for example when using published Level guidelines for summative assessment or target-setting. It was certainly evident from recording students’ responses verbatim that ‘classroom language’ for evaluating quality varied both in the range of criteria used and in the degree of formality of expression.

5.2.2 Images of good writing

Students used fewer images or analogies than did teachers to characterise good writing, but those who employed them showed a strong awareness of the writer-reader relationship: several referred to the need to “paint a picture for the reader”, “make them feel like they’re there” and write in a way that “really sticks in your head”. More sophisticated expression of the same idea was that good writing “hits a nerve” and “intrigues the reader”. Generic characterisations of good writing as “eye catching” and “something that grabs the eye of the beholder” may refer to presentation and layout; in the rank ordering exercise, reasons for preferring Story 1, which was clearly organised into three paragraphs, included “it was good at drawing my eye in as a reader”, although the comment “it goes straight into it, therefore making it eye-catching and interesting”, suggested that the pace of the action was being valued. It could be that “eye-catching” was synonymous with keeping the reader “hooked”. The

only other imagery used by students related to vocabulary, with good writing characterised as using “good strong words” that hold the reader’s attention. One student spoke of the need for confidence in experimenting with words, “using them big” so that they “made a bigger picture” in the reader’s mind.

STUDENTS’ IMAGES OF GOOD WRITING (expressed through use of metaphor and analogy)
<p>Good writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • makes someone have a picture in their head of what they’re reading • has to paint a picture in their mind • uses the reader’s mind • try and draw an image in someone’s head • makes you/them feel you/they are there • really sticks in your head • finds a way to stay in your head • something that catches the audience • eye catching • something that grabs the eye of the beholder • draws you in • keeps you hooked • has cliffhangers • makes you want to turn the page • intrigues the reader • hits a nerve • uses good strong words that will keep your attention • you can’t hold back on words...use them big to create a bigger image in someone’s head

Table 5.5 *In vivo* coding: students’ images of good writing

5.2.3 Definitions of good writing

As was the case for teachers, the sheer variety of characterisations of good writing was apparent from interviews with students from the *Grammar for Writing?* project, with thirty different *in vivo* codes capturing this range (see Appendix 19d). Table 5.4 lists the most frequently mentioned criteria (6 or more references). All of these terms were also used by teachers, except for “description” and “relates to the person reading it”, a category which was similar to “effect on the reader” referred to by teachers.

Students characterised “good vocabulary” as “exciting”, “unusual”, “powerful”, “persuasive”, “descriptive”, “big words that create an image”, often expressly linked to the aim of keeping writing interesting and exciting, for example by “using really strong words and describing words and words that will make you

think...if you select your words well, it can make it a really good story” (School 8). There was a clear conception of vocabulary as a key tool for strengthening the impact of writing, with one student commenting, “you can’t hold back on words because you’re scared to use them” (School 15), while another explained the transformative power of vocabulary:

Interviewer: What do you think makes good writing?

Lots of vocabulary, like Shakespeare, he put lots of vocabulary in his, and everyone loves his writing, and I think it sounds really good because then if you put in a really good word like the ‘wallow in valley in despair’ then that sort of makes up for the rest of the sentence being rubbish, if it’s got something really good in it, because then you’re just thinking about that all the way through and it really sticks in your head, it’s like, ‘oh that was really good I’m going to think about that all the time now’. I just, I really like vocabulary; I think it adds a lot of effect. (School 17)

<i>In vivo</i> criteria for good writing	No. of references
Vocabulary	22
Variety of sentences	11
Punctuation	9
Description	8
Interesting	8
Relates to the person reading it	7
Exciting	6

Table 5.6 Students’ most frequently-referenced criteria for good writing

There was awareness from two students of language register, of the need to choose the “right kind of language for the right kind of age group” (School 2) but students were rarely specific about the criteria they used for choosing vocabulary, or about the effect of choices from different word classes. One student (School 30) suggested as a general strategy “using metaphors probably helps them read, making it interesting for them”, while another referred to “punctuation to make effect” (School 8). In the context of poetry writing, one student referred to choosing “powerful verbs” and in relation to argument, two others mentioned “modal verbs” and “emotive language”; otherwise the concept of effective word choices was either left vague or explained with examples.

Thus one student recommended a simple test for effectiveness: “Read it; if it sounds good, use it” (School 14) and another defined “good words” as “sort of like instead of saying ‘scared’, it’s like ‘horrified’” (School 12). This might be an indication of the need for more formal language choices, but may well relate to emotive word choices, as suggested by another student, although he found the idea difficult to articulate and exemplify :

You need emotive language to help, ‘cos if it’s not umm, any emotive language, it seems really really dull and boring, so it’s just like, oh, ‘On Saturday I went to the pictures’, but you could write, ‘On Saturday I went to the pictures to watch a movie’, or something, so you could like, make it even more interesting. (School 5)

The prominence of references to sentence variety and punctuation was quite surprising. Students were not specifically asked to comment on published assessment criteria but there were several references that seemed to be echoing views of good writing heard from their teachers, which in turn may have been derived from ‘official’ criteria. It could also be that the emphasis on sentence-level objectives in the grammar intervention may have influenced responses; one clear echo of a teaching focus in the poetry scheme was evident when a student commented on “good punctuation to make it like how you should speak it” (School 6). There were other indications that students were repeating ‘received ideas’ about sentence variety, as the student from School 18 made plain:

Variety of sentences, you get stuck in your head, they repeat it so many times it’s unbelievable, because right when you start primary school in Year 2 they tell it you then, the next year they tell it you again, so when you get here it’s all you learn in the same...so oh God here it is again...

Of the eleven students who referred to sentence variety as an important feature of good writing, seven specifically related it to varying sentence length; only two spoke of variety of sentence types or structures: “not just having simple sentences, like having compound and complex sentences” (School 12); “using all different sorts of sentences like, compound sentences, and like short, simple

ones like, that stick in your head” (School 8). There was a suggestion that sentence structure and sentence length were understood as one and the same thing, as for the student in School 21 who thought good writing had “quite varied structure so you’ve got like short sentences and long sentences”. There were two hints of possible purposes for varying sentence length, from the student in School 26 who advised “try to include exciting, short, snappy sentences” in the context of fiction and from the student in School 6, who seemed to relate variation in length to presentation and layout in poetry: “I like it when you set it out like short ones next to really long sentences”.

There was a clear suggestion that varying sentence length would automatically improve writing: “now I know that like you can do shorter and longer sentences to make it better” (School 6). However, there were several indications that students’ understanding of punctuation might not be sound enough to allow for controlled choices, as here:

good writing you need a structure, punctuation, you don’t, I mean, punctuation and connectives, well, they do kind of the same thing, kind of, not always but, just like commas and full stops, exclamation marks (School 25)

while the student from School 4 recommended good writing as: “not all like one sentence, so some have commas in and some are short and some are long and things like that...punctuation so your pauses are in the right place.”

The fourth most common reference made by students was to “description” which is not a discrete assessment criterion at either key stage. Different students’ references to this feature were similar enough to suggest they were echoing classroom advice, for example: “a lot of description is really good” and “description is really important” (School 2); “you have to obviously be descriptive” (School 3). Description was linked to adding “detail” in writing which in turn was seen as a chief way of making writing more interesting or exciting. *In vivo* coding indicated that the prime test of effectiveness or impact for students was whether or not the writing captured, and maintained, their own interest, as summed up here: “It has to be exciting otherwise you just don’t bother reading it, you just put it down and don’t bother” (School 7). A clear view was expressed

that “good writing’s got to be interesting else you’ll be getting bored” (School 18). Only one student referred to the length of a piece of writing as a factor in whether or not it “drags on” or “drones on”, and there were three comments linked to content or meaning – that good writing is “easy to understand” and “makes you think”. Instead, achieving variety in writing was presented as a general formula for maintaining the reader’s interest, whether this was variety of sentences, vocabulary, techniques or simply “variety overall...whatever you’ve learned, put it all in” (School 24). For one student (School 5), paragraphing too was linked to maintaining interest, since: “if you have really long paragraphs it’s like, seems boring, but if you have short ones it seems like, quick.”

There were several comments on the need for good writing to “relate to the reader” which meant different things to different students. Three saw this criterion primarily in terms of “painting a picture” for the reader, for example by describing scenes clearly enough for the reader to visualise. One cited Jacqueline Wilson’s characters as being “easy to relate to” and tried to emulate this in her own writing. Another wanted to draw readers into the atmosphere of his writing to “hit a nerve of the readers that really makes them feel what you’re writing about” (School 10). Another (School 13) aimed to convince readers to agree with her points “so they might try and go on your side”.

5.2.4 Generic and genre-specific definitions of good writing

During the interviews, several students commented that the question of what characterised good writing was a difficult one to answer, although most went on to define it, in varying degrees of detail. A few students were in agreement that writing quality could not really be defined, either because in their own writing it was “too personal to say”, or because it was an instinctive feeling: “I’ll know when it’s good...like with a book, when you don’t like it you don’t like it...I will know when it’s bad because I wouldn’t want to read it” (School 24). Two students commented: “it actually depends on what kind of writing you’re doing” (School 25); “it depends what it’s like about” (School 4).

Perhaps echoing advice they have heard from their teachers, students’ criteria for good writing were often expressed in the form of generic tips for the writer, in

anticipation of a reader's response, for example: "You have to give clues about what's going to happen later so that they read on to see what actually happens" (School 7); "make them think about what they're reading" (School 15); "If it's a piece of writing that you want them to remember, use lots of repetition" (School 1). Students clearly thought about their writing in terms of tactics to maintain the reader's engagement with the text, ways of "bringing them in, making them read on". Generic advice in this respect included use of varied techniques and devices: "Instead of using it over and over again, the same tactic, change between them" (School 24) and to this end, one student suggested spacing out the use of persuasive devices:

Don't obviously just cram it in as quick as you can but see if you can spread out everything evenly so it keeps them interested the whole way through. (School 3)

Students often gave very practical advice for making writing interesting, such as starting with a question that was answered later in the piece. Several drew on their own experience as readers, noting techniques used by published authors, for example:

I like the ones that in the first line they sort of like pull you in and so you've got to read it, you feel like you've got to read it. (School 5)

Students' genre-specific comments were quite limited, coming mostly from those in Intervention schools and tending to pick up on one or two of the techniques or topics taught in each scheme. There was some suggestion that students were passing on tips from their teachers, as with the comment that good fiction writing "keeps you hooked and kind of suspenseful, or whatever they say" (School 7). Other suggestions for fiction writing included a good opening and a fast pace, where "something exciting happens every say other paragraph or something" (School 5). Story structure was viewed in terms of sustaining reader interest, hence the need for:

a nice hook in the middle, or at the beginning, keep them like interested at the end and then, in the middle, and then try and finish it well. (School 3)

It was very rare for students to link the use of a technique to a specific purpose or effect. In terms of persuasive language, one student made a 'real life' link by referring to Barack Obama's repetition of "Yes we can" in his acceptance speech, but responses such as "use strong facts"; "rhetorical questions, they really help" were more common. Some students answered the question of effectiveness by providing a somewhat random list of techniques and word classes, for example: "different devices and adjectives, nouns, plurals, metaphors, similes, and all these different types of words" (School 29); "all the different techniques like alliteration and stuff because it makes it like better for the reader to understand" (School 6), and in the context of writing poetry: "rhyme and a bit of repetition but not a lot" (School 4).

5.2.5 Self as writer

Comments reported under this code included responses to the question "Are you a good writer?" and references to students' writing likes and dislikes that might be relevant to their understanding of good writing. There were some interesting gender differences that were evident from their responses. More girls than boys said they enjoyed writing, with girls emphasising their enjoyment of writing descriptively and imaginatively: common responses were, "I love using my imagination" (School 22); "I enjoy expressing your feelings and writing with your imagination" (School 2). One student liked the freedom of writing, saying, "You can go as far as you want and not have to stop...there's no limit" (School 17). The one girl who was lukewarm about writing explained that this had only happened at secondary school, where peer pressure had put her off writing:

I used to love writing...adventure stories and little things about me. Since secondary school I sort of drifted away from it and I don't really write that much...my friends in primary used to encourage me to write more. Now they're not really interested in writing...I don't want to write because people will start saying, 'Oh what are you writing for'? (School 27)

Boys were much more pragmatic in the reasons they gave for liking writing, or in some cases, merely tolerating it. Only two boys referred to the pleasure of using the imagination, especially in story writing. One explained that he enjoyed

writing when it was part of group work, since he liked working with his friends and having fun; another said it depended on what he was writing about, making a distinction between “boring things” and “exciting” writing where “I can do things with it that other people might not think of” (School 14). One student (School 7) explained, “I don’t get too excited about writing to be honest” but recognised that it was something “you have to do...because you have to write in almost every job you do.”

More girls than boys said that they wrote regularly outside school, including stories for younger siblings, but primarily for themselves in the form of diaries, poems and stories:

Random stuff...what’s happened in my day or something, or anything that I think sounds interesting. (School 2)

I write at home sometimes if I see something and I think it looks nice then I write about it, or if I’m sitting at home and I’ve got nothing to do something pops in my mind randomly and I think, ‘Ooh, a story or a poem would be good about that. (School 22)

Another girl described her online membership of writing groups, favourite genres being crime fiction and Harry Potter style fantasies. She had started her first novel in 2006 and hoped to finish it by the time she left school! She described peer feedback as the main attraction of writing on the Harry Potter fan club site:

basically you get to write different stories using the Harry Potter base and then you get to go like in different directions and you get reviewed as well by other writers on the internet so it’s really interesting. (School 31)

She also thought that writing at home presented more freedom than writing at school:

At home you can have your own ideas but at school sometimes like it’s more they tell what you’ve got to be writing about and then you have to do it, so you’re a bit more free to write about what you want to write at home.

In contrast, only two boys referred to writing outside school, one to say that he didn't really have time for it as he preferred to "do other stuff" and a second to explain a very practical purpose for writing: as a member of a running club, it was sometimes necessary for him to write official letters of complaint, for example if there had been a problem at a race meeting.

There were some discernible gender differences in how students saw their writing ability. Two boys specifically mentioned the impact of their behaviour on their writing: "I can be a good writer when I want to be and not messing around and being silly" (School 9); "I get distracted quite badly most of the time... when there's like other people around me I can't concentrate" (School 5). More boys than girls answered the question conditionally: a number said it depended what kind of writing they were asked to do, and that they felt they were good at specific things: "I prefer fictional stories"; "I like making funny poems, sporty stories as well"; "answering questions, writing it down in full sentences I think I'm alright, because I just like base it on the question, and like write down the question in the answer" (School 18). Boys were more likely to specify aspects of writing they found easy, and therefore liked.

Girls, in comparison, were more likely to list their strengths as writing descriptively and writing narrative: "I'm quite good at describing things, like tension, exciting and kind of, like descriptive" (School 23); "I think I'm quite good at describing things and writing how people are thinking, if you like, their point of view" (School 17). They expressed more hesitancy about their writing skills, either suggesting that they really didn't know if they were a good writer or that they only knew because their teacher had said so, and tended to be more self-critical, for example: "I haven't got very much of an imagination, like my imagination's just everyday, I don't think of like dramatic things" (School 15).

Boys and girls were in broad agreement when it came to writing preferences. More students preferred writing stories than essays. Several enjoyed writing imaginatively, feeling that, "it's all in your head"; "you can make things up" rather than having to "find all these facts" and preferred to write descriptively and "get into the story", creating suspense, finding "new words" and "adding more details

and more details till it gets better”. For one girl, presenting factual information in poster form, using bullet points, “just sucks the fun out of writing...I prefer just to write descriptively and not, point point point and dot dot dot and whatever” (School 23). Students referred to wanting some freedom of choice when writing stories: “I like having an open mind about stories, I don’t really like being told what to write” (School 10); “I don’t like writing stories that are placed in a particular genre; I like doing my own thing, not being told what to do” (School 6); “I like to be free with what I’m allowed to write, instead of having to follow a guideline” (School 16).

5.2.6 Reading-writing relationship

More girls than boys talked about the influence of their reading on their writing. However, boys were just as detailed and specific in their comments. Several students referred to borrowing ideas (or even words) from television programmes and films as well as from books, for instance:

I watch a lot of Doctor Who and that sort of thing, I like sci-fi and stuff so that probably has some part in it, the crazy ideas I come up with.
(School 14)

I read lots of Harry Potter, and I got the word ‘sluggishly’ from there, and I thought that sounded quite good. (School 17)

Some students talked in general terms about the influence of particular genres on their own preferred writing style. For example, a boy who liked reading adventure stories also preferred the adventure genre when writing; one girl said she liked to use her reading to “find out different types of writing” such as “spooky or suspense or like a cliff-hanger at the end” (School 30); another said, “I normally write in first person because it’s like a diary account and most of the books I read are in diary accounts and I like it like that” (School 4). Two girls used their own experience as readers to inform their understanding of the impact they wanted their writing to have:

What makes a good book for me is I can really imagine like, they describe them walking into their bedroom and like you can really see it, like the way they describe it, so I think to be writing you need to make them think about what they’re reading rather than just see what they’re reading. (School 15)

Another (School 31) very clearly used her reading experience to evaluate her own writing, explaining that she was guided by an internal narrator, the 'voice in her head' to judge if her writing sounded 'true' and convincing:

I always have sort of like reading voices that I can hear someone else telling, or if I can hear myself saying it and believing what I'm saying...after reading quite a lot of books it's one of those things where you stop in the middle of a sentence and you're thinking that doesn't sound right and then you realise the true meaning of it.

Students named specific authors and novels that had influenced their writing, both in terms of ideas and style. In some cases the influence was very conscious: one boy had deliberately mimicked the style of Anthony Horowitz for an English assignment. He was aware of the type of sentences Horowitz used in action sequences, commenting, "if it's talking about action, like if it's talking about a fight, I notice the punchy sentences more" (School 16). Another explained how reading influenced his writing both in a general sense and in specific instances, for example when learning about the impact of using first person narrative:

Reading I find helps as well because you can use their techniques and build up your writing skills. I just think of all the different techniques and how they did it, and try to put it into my own work... I've read a few books where basically the story is told by the person who's had the experience, so say in Dracula it's Jonathan Harker's journal, and so what he's telling from experiences...it's more real because it's actually him writing it so it's as if the main character is the author, that's what I understand about it... I prefer writing in first person. (School 10)

5.2.7 Influences on students' judgements of quality

Students were not asked direct questions about writing assessment, but responses to the question of what makes good writing, and about themselves as writers, included comments about who, or what, influenced their judgements. These were coded under the headings 'teacher evaluation'; 'self evaluation';

'peer evaluation' and 'summative assessment'. There were several references to the influence of teachers' judgement of students' writing, although these were not always very specific: one girl simply commented: "My teacher told me I was a good writer and then I just sort of decided well I like writing so why don't I sort of try and be a better writer" (School 17). Three references related to teacher feedback during the drafting process, two of which were in the context of poetry writing: "Miss sat down next to me and we started like deciding what we could improve", "Sir goes, 'the ending's good'... Sir's marked it with me and if we had to improve it he says to me what can you put there, and some of the punctuation that I've put down is what he told me to put" (School 24). Another student (School 29) referred to teacher judgement as the stage after peer evaluation:

Me and my friend swap over and read through and help each other and then if he says it needs changing I change things with him and I tell him, and then we, I, go ask the teacher. She sees if it's alright and if it is alright I just leave it, if she says look at this in a bit more detail, she doesn't actually tell you what to do, she like tells you give more detail and stuff and you just change it.

He explained his teacher's homework instruction, which was to 'craft' work in progress: "I think she means just making it more like interesting and that, adding extra details and stuff to it."

There was one reference to the influence of teacher modelling: "Miss put up like an example on the board and I suppose it's sort of the way she'd written it, like short sentences, I thought, I'll try it" (School 1) and one student (School 6) referred to teacher judgement made through marking: "I need to vary my sentence variety, she's said that quite a lot on the marking that she does." This was the closest reference made to published assessment criteria (AF5 in the APP guidelines is 'vary sentences for clarity, purpose and effect'). However, in the criteria, variety is expressly linked to sentence structure, and the student's explanation of how she might meet her writing target suggested she had not fully understood this:

Some of them are quite like the sameish and it would be better to do like longer sentences or shorter sentences or like in between and things like that, so I think that's what I need to improve.

Interviewer: And do you know how to do that?

I'm going to try, but I think the best way to do that would be write it and think of ways that um... if I look back on it and it doesn't...if there's loads of long sentences, think of ways to shorten the sentences.

There was some ambivalence about the impact of teacher evaluation on students' writing, which was not always welcome. One boy explained his dislike of English as a subject compared with Maths, where answers were either right or wrong; in contrast, English was "never finished" and writing could be approached in too many different ways. Consequently:

You could write a perfect piece of writing and your teacher still comes over and says you can change it, you can change it, improve it, improve it, improve it, improve it, oh it's annoying. (School 18)

Another student found that teacher comments on her writing were distracting rather than helpful, making her too self-conscious about a process she considered "natural", and "unplanned":

When I actually start thinking about putting in description words like if a teacher says, you're not putting in enough, then I'll start to wonder about it and then it will just become more difficult, whereas if I don't think about it it's fine. (School 4)

Students did not seem very confident about their ability to evaluate their own writing: some simply did not know how to make a judgement or could only see faults, and two students equated self-evaluation with "boasting", which made them loathe to comment on their own work. Others were unsure about how to make improvements:

Normally I write a sentence and if it sounds good then I just leave it but if I know I can do something better it keeps on nagging at me and

then I keep wanting to like go back at it but I can't put my finger on what I have to do. (School 17)

There'll just be something in the back of my mind saying to me you need to change it, but I don't know what to change. (School 2)

Students seemed more confident about peer evaluation, both as a worthwhile process and for the validity of its judgements. One student commented:

I think it's always helpful to compare ideas with other people and we do that quite a lot, because you can always have different ideas from other people, and you can always tell them your ideas, and in the end it would be a better poem than it would be if you'd done it by yourself. (School 21)

Where peer assessment was regularly used, students often showed a mature response to evaluation, which was helpfully specific:

My friend who's marked it said it would be even better if I could have a clearer introduction which I agree with; I could have had a bit of an introduction telling you what it was about. (School 29)

He told me that some of my kennings were a bit confusing, and a bit like a riddle, but I like that, I like the idea of that, and he didn't say that they weren't right so I think it was quite successful. (School 21)

One student described the pleasure he gained from his peers' response to hearing his writing, and clearly used their reaction as the primary test of its quality:

Usually if you've done a really good piece of writing they just all go silent, and just, there's nothing there, and you're just standing, they all sort of just, they're still thinking about what you've written, they're just silent after and that's it, that's how you know if you've, you know... (School 10)

As it turned out, the Year 8 students interviewed on the *Grammar for Writing?* project would not take national curriculum tests in the following year. There were two references made to internal school tests but otherwise, comments about marks or grading referred to continuous assessment, most usually in the form of end-of-scheme assignments, of the kind devised for the intervention

writing schemes of work. There was some evidence that students' views of writing quality were influenced by summative assessment; in Year 8, some were already considering GCSE requirements:

when you're actually writing a poem you think, oh the examiner wants to see this, so I'll put this in. (School 9)

Just say I was doing my GCSE, put in what you've learned. (School 24)

Another student commented:

You get a good grade by doing lots of variety of sentences, good spelling, good punctuation, um, what else was there...we have to do putting evidence and explanation in our last work...that thing. (School 7)

The reference here seems to be to a paragraph structure – point, evidence, explanation (PEE) – that is commonly taught in secondary schools, and there is a sense of the student both ‘ticking off’ items in a list of success criteria and echoing teachers’ classroom advice about what a good piece of writing should include. This was also evident from the student who explained how to tackle descriptive writing:

The way to do an exam is to try your five senses, so, sight sound smell, taste and, touch and each one, write a paragraph about what you can see, and about what you can hear, what you can smell and that really describes, that makes, puts an image in someone's head. (School 22)

Only one student directly referred to summative assessment Levels when evaluating her narrative writing, explaining:

In this thing I did about in here, 'Refugee Boy', we just had to write, um, a beginning of a story in there, and I got 6b slash 6a because I didn't put much punctuation in, but if I had then I would have got a 6a, because I mean I know punctuation but I just don't know how to put it in my writing really. (School 17)

5.3 Consistency of teachers' and students' understandings of writing quality

5.3.1 Consistency in teachers' conceptualisations of good writing

Responses to interview questions showed that teachers' conceptualisations of writing quality were marked by individual consistency over the course of an academic year. There was deliberate repetition in the interview questions, which teachers were aware of, but they did not have access to previous responses to questions and there was no evidence of them attempting to remember what they had said before. When responses from each interview were compiled into individual profiles, it was clear that similar beliefs about writing quality were repeated within and between interviews; in fact, there was only one case of inconsistency, from a teacher (School 24) who gave contradictory responses about the relative importance of technical accuracy, especially spelling, when evaluating writing.

Thus for the teacher in School 7, consistent expression was given to a conceptualisation of good writing as that which engages the reader, achieved through variety of choices of techniques, sentence constructions and vocabulary, so that 'variety' and 'engagement' emerged as the main criteria by which this teacher evaluated quality. The teacher in School 5 presented a consistent view of the importance of individual self-expression and personal growth; she chiefly valued originality, which she judged in relation to each student's starting point and capabilities. The teacher in School 11 frequently referred to clarity of communication, with effectiveness mostly judged by how well the writing matched its intended audience and purpose. There were only four teachers for whom a 'dominant construct' of writing quality was not really in evidence. Two of these teachers (Schools 8 and 13) were in their first year of teaching and expressed a good deal of uncertainty about the process of evaluating writing.

Whilst teachers' personal beliefs about writing quality, as expressed in interview, appeared highly consistent, variation between teachers was very much in evidence. For example, there were some teachers who clearly judged writing by its emotional appeal, so that its powerful effect on the reader was the

chief arbiter of its value; others were much more concerned about technical accuracy, or judged outcomes by the fitness of the match with genre, audience and purpose. Patterns of response in teachers' profiles were evident enough to allow for the formation of six different 'constructs' of writing quality, and these are shown in Table 5.7 where I have devised summary labels for each one, according to their dominant features. Of the 31 teachers, four have been 'counted twice' because there was a definite overlap – for two between 'self-expression' and 'technical accuracy'; a consistent, repeated belief for one of these teachers (School 10) was that "there are two goods...that mix between creativity and accuracy...and I think there's room for both of them...I think effective writing marries the two." The other overlap was between constructs labelled 'deliberately designed' and 'fit for purpose', which are already close.

Researcher's label for construct Good writing is....	Number of teachers	Dominant features of the construct	Verbatim statements typical of the construct
EMOTIONALLY ENGAGING	7	These teachers primarily judge writing by the way it engages, involves or relates to the reader. They value writing that has a memorable impact on the reader and which provokes an emotional reaction or has a physical effect.	<i>Excites and moves you;</i> <i>Engages and delights;</i> <i>If it pleases you then it's good;</i> <i>Makes the hairs on the back of your neck stand up;</i> <i>Good writers really engage with what they are doing;</i> <i>There's a real sort of emotive connection...you can remember where you were when you read that thing.</i>
SELF-EXPRESSIVE	7	These teachers primarily value writing that expresses the child's personal and distinctive individual voice, often drawn from the child's own experience; writing that stands out.	<i>They've put their own spin on it;</i> <i>Personal voice coming through;</i> <i>Imaginative writing that's a bit different;</i> <i>Not just parroting what they've been taught;</i> <i>I know they've all got different personal experiences that they can draw on.</i>
DELIBERATELY DESIGNED	7	These teachers reward writing that has been deliberately designed and crafted and that shows conscious thought and control. The writing process is more important than the product.	<i>They've thought about it and taken pride in it;</i> <i>Has thought and deliberation behind it;</i> <i>Can justify and explain choices;</i> <i>It shows active thought so it might not be the best piece of writing in the world but..has shown progress...and thought.</i>

FIT FOR PURPOSE	6	These teachers reward writing that is well matched to its audience and purpose and which clearly fulfils its stated function. Effective communication is more important than technical accuracy.	<i>It's about clarity of communication and whether or not it hits the purpose;</i> <i>Varied techniques appropriate to task;</i> <i>Meets the targets set for it;</i> <i>First of all it's clarity of communication, do I understand it, then on top of that the layers and how clever they've been</i>
COMPETENT	4	These teachers think that creativity needs to be matched by technical accuracy, and that "the mechanics" are an essential aspect of good writing. Grammar gives students essential tools.	<i>There's two things: creativity and competence;</i> <i>There are two goods there: creativity and accuracy;</i> <i>It's got to be really accurate to enhance the meaning;</i> <i>Students can do incredibly creative, original work but if they're technically not there, they're never going to achieve A and A*.</i>
A MATTER OF INSTINCT	4	These teachers either think that quality in writing is too subjective or difficult to define, or that flair and originality are impossible to teach.	<i>It depends on what you're writing and who you're writing for;</i> <i>It's just an instinct;</i> <i>How can you say one person's poem is better than another's?</i>

Table 5.7: Teachers' personal constructs of quality in writing

These constructs helped to give shape to the observed variation in teachers' judgements of quality, although of course they do not explain how teachers' dominant beliefs about writing quality might have been formed or influenced. Details of gender, length of service and first degree subject were compared for teachers grouped within each of the six constructs but it was difficult to deduce any strong patterns, beyond the fact that a slightly higher proportion of teachers with a literature-based degree related writing quality to self-expression and emotional engagement or considered it to be instinctive. Three of the four teachers in this last category had been teaching for less than three years; the two who were newly-qualified teachers thought that high-grade writing depended on flair and originality and doubted whether these could be taught. However, this view might be a reflection of a lack of confidence and experience in assessing writing more than an expression of philosophy. Of the five male teachers in the sample, one consistently referenced the emotional impact of

good writing; one considered it impossible to define; one considered it an equal match of creativity with accuracy, and two referenced 'fitness for purpose'.

Teachers' dominant personal construct of writing quality seemed to have a bearing on how they viewed statutory assessment criteria and summative testing and this finding is shown in 5.4.1.

5.3.2 Consistency in students' conceptualisations of good writing

There were many similarities in students' stated beliefs about good writing and in the language used to express them. This was clear from interviews with students in the *Grammar for Writing?* project (both in answer to specific questions about good writing and in their comments on models of writing in each of the three genres), from responses of students in the single case study intervention, and from comparison between the two sample groups. These similarities were shown both in the generic criteria students used to define good writing and in the features from writing samples that students singled out as examples. Where judgements appeared to differ, as in rank order choices, students across the sample stated similar criteria for quality, but applied them to different texts. This is illustrated in Appendix 20a, which includes examples of transcripts from group presentations of reasons for rank order decisions. Students in both samples used a wide range of criteria to describe good writing and these included a number of idiosyncratic interpretations, but patterns in responses were pronounced enough to suggest a 'shared understanding' of quality in writing for students aged 12-13. As a summary, students were most in agreement that:

- Good writing has a strong effect on the reader, where key criteria are:
 - it is interesting and exciting to read
 - it helps you imagine what is described
 - it uses powerful vocabulary
- Good writing has variety, where key criteria are:
 - varied sentences, especially different lengths
 - different techniques to match the purpose
- Good writing is accurate, especially
 - punctuation in the right places

The additional data from the single case study school suggests that some criteria used by students are more context-specific; for example, paragraphs, neat handwriting and spelling were emphasised in some classes more than others, or became prominent as criteria for improving writing in response to specific examples of writing.

5.3.3 Consistency between teachers and students

Comparison of *in vivo* codes between teachers and students in the *Grammar for Writing?* project schools showed several aspects of writing quality that seemed mutually agreed and these are shown in Table 5.8. This re-presents previously reported *in vivo* statements in a way that shows similarities and differences between teachers' and students' conceptions of good writing and reminds which characteristics are privileged for each group. Here I have grouped similar *in vivo* statements into six distinct categories and provided my own summary labels for each category. Numbers indicate distinct separate references made across the three interviews conducted with each teacher and student, rather than number of individuals.

Students seemed most clearly in agreement with teachers in the emphasis placed on the effect of writing on the reader, on vocabulary choices and on sentence variety. These priorities are also clearly reflected in published assessment criteria. However, the use of the same terms did not necessarily mean they were understood in the same way. Difficulties in understanding sentence grammar, and hence the concept of sentence variety, were commonplace and are discussed more fully in Chapter 6, as are the concepts of 'effect on the reader' and 'effectiveness'. Teachers' and students' criteria also reflected their own classroom concerns and experiences. For example, teachers were much more likely than students to refer to the distinctiveness or individuality of good writing, praising "writing that's a bit different", and "writers who aren't afraid to try different things". Frequently-recurring criteria were "flair", "creativity", and "originality". Only one student used the term 'creativity', although there were three references to good writing being "imaginative". Students were much more pragmatic in their views and concerns – the litmus test was whether or not they found a text "boring".

In vivo coding: CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD WRITING (figures in brackets show number of references; category titles are researcher's own)		
Good writing:	TEACHERS	STUDENTS
Has an impact on the reader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effect on the reader (20) • engages the reader (18) • wide ranging vocabulary (18) • interesting/maintains interest (14) • clarity (7)/easy to understand (3) • shows writer's enthusiasm (5) • communicates (5) • enjoyable (4) /pleasurable (4) • entertaining (4) • delightful (3) • exciting (3) • memorable (2) • believable (2)/convincing (1) • makes you think (3)/makes sense (2) • subtlety (1) • inspiring (1) • feels complete (1)/detail (1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good vocabulary (22) • description (8) • interesting (8) • relates to the person reading it (7) • exciting (6) • doesn't drag on (3) • good opening (3) • make them think (2) • makes sense (2) • give clues (3) • ask questions (2) • good ideas (1)
Shows deliberate thought and control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • confident (14) • crafted (13) • well structured (12) • sense of audience and purpose (11) • manipulation of sentence structure (11) • shows effort (11)/shows thought (5) • uses conventions (10) • appropriate (5) • choices justified (3)/deliberate(2) • planned (4)/process (4)/organised (1) • controlled (2)/focused (2)/shaped (1) • concise (2)/precision (2)/succinct(1) • done independently (2)/ownership(1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses the right sort of language (2) • paragraphs (2) • putting your mind to it (1) • structure (1) • sentence structure (1)
Is creative and original	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • original (20) • creative (15) • personal voice (13) • experiments (12)/takes risks (4) • imaginative (8) • flair (8)/fluency (5) • natural (5) • spontaneity (2) • adventurous (1)/passionate (1) • technically clever (1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • imaginative (3)
Has variety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • variety of sentence structures (9) • variety of techniques (5) • variety of punctuation (5) • variety overall (5) • variety of vocabulary (3) • range of devices (3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • variety of sentences (11) • different techniques (7)/devices (1) • repetition (3) • variety overall (3) • whatever you've learned (3)

Table 5.8 Comparison of teachers' and students' in vivo characterisations of good writing

Elaborated comments from individuals also revealed variation of emphasis and interpretation within these commonly used key terms and the criteria were used in a range of different combinations. For example, many teachers 'defined' originality by its use of imaginative vocabulary; several students saw vocabulary as an important tool for making writing exciting, and imagination was linked to good ideas. Thus commonly-worded criteria might not equate to commonly-understood conceptualisations of quality in writing.

5.4 The match between teachers' criteria for quality in writing and published assessment criteria for high-grade writing

5.4.1 Tensions and conflicts

Emerging from the analysis of interview data was a clear finding that many teachers experience tensions between their personal view of writing quality and the construct of quality referenced by statutory criteria. Only 3 teachers reported a close match between their own criteria and national criteria for high-grade writing. 14 reported a definite mismatch, while another 14 felt genuinely ambivalent, for a variety of reasons, summarised here:

- Criteria describe essential skills and qualities but are too narrow and prescriptive (5)
- It depends on the Key Stage and the exam board followed (4)
- Criteria guide judgements but there should be more room for professional instinct (2)
- Teachers felt too inexperienced to trust their judgements (2)
- There was uncertainty over how far accuracy should count (1)

Only one teacher expressed negative feelings about criteria-based assessment *per se*, using her own experience of schooling to question the need for it:

When I was a kid, and I was taught English, it was, 'There's a tree, write about it, and they must have assessed us somehow...I think it was more from gut instinct than anything else, and what is wrong with gut instinct, 'cos, usually it's pretty accurate, I think. (School 23)

This teacher's personal touchstone of quality was: "If it pleases you, then it's good", and she also referred to the trust she placed in students as "the best judges" of each other's writing; she used their classroom responses as

evidence of writing quality. She valued originality and creativity in writing above all else and felt that applying specific criteria to children's writing ran counter to the qualities she was trying to foster in her teaching:

Do we really need to take it all apart and, sort of, thrash each little bit out? Can't there be, more...I know I've said it before, but fluidity...We should be looking at how to inspire them through topics and ideas and feelings 'cos those are the things that get people, you know, little anecdotes about stuff or books about real experiences, not bloody 'organising and presenting a whole text effectively'.

The reference here is in relation to Key Stage 3 assessment, and the introduction of Assessing Pupils' Progress, which at the time of the research was being promoted by the National Strategies as a 'default' system that would standardise teacher assessment in primary and secondary schools and encourage student self and peer evaluation. This teacher clearly positioned the assessment methods as anti-creative and antithetical to her own subject philosophy, as her further reference to the APP guidelines showed:

I didn't put down 'Birdsong' and go, oh yes, well Sebastian Faulks organised and presented the whole text effectively there, well done him, yeah; I thought, my god, that is unbelievable.

She clearly felt that the language of the criteria was alien to her values and interests as an English teacher and consequently was ambivalent about using them to respond to students' work. Perhaps more fundamentally, she also doubted that the analytical approach matched children's 'natural' composition processes:

I can see the advantages as a teacher, so if you've got AF3, 'organise and present whole texts effectively, sequencing and structuring information ideas and events', so I focus on structuring, but a kid, you know, seems to craft things in the wrong way - how much are they really going to get out of me writing a whole diatribe about how they want to restructure?

Clearly, for this teacher, there was a genuine conflict between what she personally valued, writing that emotionally engaged her, and the 'official' view of good writing embodied in the APP criteria, which only reinforced her existing

views that “we pigeonhole kids”; “teaching to a test” which did not adequately reward quality in writing but which only provided:

a snapshot, you know...there's plenty of fantastic writers that, failed miserably on their exams, does that mean they're not a great writer? No, of course it doesn't. It means that at that one particular time, somebody judged them to be less than what they are.

There was a broad match between teachers' dominant personal construct of writing quality and their generalised view of the official construct of writing quality embodied in statutory criteria in use at Key Stages 3 and 4. The personal construct that most closely matched national criteria was 'fit for purpose', referring to teachers who primarily valued writing that communicated clearly and appropriately according to task, audience and purpose. The constructs causing the most conflict with national criteria were those labelled 'emotionally engaging', 'self-expressive' and 'a matter of instinct'. Table 5.8 presents this finding in more detail.

Teachers who felt a mismatch expressed it in vehement terms. For example, those who valued individual creativity and personal expression protested strongly against the perceived inflexibility of assessment criteria, which they saw as having very little “leeway”:

It's tick boxes and even in the creative writing bit they can write a fantastic piece of writing but unless they've got, you know, the range of sentences, the this, that and the other, they can't get the grade, and it's, it's horrible. (School 9)

I shouldn't be having to cheat my way round the criteria in order to get them recognition for very original, passionate, Catch-22-esque writing. (School 31)

Both these teachers provided examples of named individuals from their GCSE classes whose skills they felt were not rewarded adequately by summative assessment criteria, and it was noticeable that teachers who primarily valued self-expression and emotionally engaging writing were more likely to comment on assessment in terms of students' individual starting points and individual

differences. For example the teacher from School 5 made the following comments over the course of three interviews:

*I tend to judge it (good writing) against them as an individual;
They are aware of what they need to do individually to progress;
My expectations are different from every child;
Everyone's got a different starting point;
I know not all of them are the same;
Actually your ideas are the most important thing;
They've all got different personal experiences they can draw on.*

She indicated that it was possible to prioritise KS3 assessment criteria that best reflected her own views, although she was clearly aware that this required her to 'bend the rules' somewhat:

You know it's nice that WAF1, is 'writing imaginatively', yeah, that's the, that's the top one to me, that's what I'm looking for, that the text is engaging rather than, you know...Obviously it's always a hard slog when there are all sorts of errors with it, but, actually, you know, I'm probably not supposed to say it, but sometimes the technical accuracy sometimes, kind of, you know...I think, yeah, it's important but actually, for some students who really grasp, because they're quite tight concepts aren't they whereas, to be creative, you can be creative in all manner of ways...

Teachers whose personal construct of quality matched more closely with the official construct clearly did not experience this kind of dissonance or tension. They were much more likely to see the detailed and explicit nature of assessment criteria as practically useful, as did this teacher who felt that good writing combined creativity and competence:

I'm a big fan of APP because it forces us as teachers to address very specific things in the teaching of writing - you can do all these things but there's this one little thing you can't do. (School 7)

This didn't blind her to the concern that APP criteria could be overly-specific and rigid, but she seemed able to balance both views with a degree of measured objectivity:

...the hope is that by addressing those things and perhaps filling those gaps that they can eventually become independent writers who are allowed to break the rules... but I wonder whether there is room for a bit more freedom and creativity as well. I think perhaps we've got the balance a bit wrong, in recent years.

Personal construct of writing quality Good writing is...	Typical responses to assessment criteria (verbatim responses in italics)
FIT FOR PURPOSE (6) These teachers reward writing that is well matched to its audience and purpose and which clearly fulfils its stated function.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criteria adequately describe good writing. • They are flexible enough to encourage creative responses. • Criteria offer structure that may not have been there in the past. • They rightly stress audience and purpose. • There is good continuity between KS3 and KS4.
EMOTIONALLY ENGAGING (7) These teachers primarily judge writing by its impact on the reader and the emotional reaction it provokes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criteria are too <i>'restrictive', 'prescriptive', 'narrow'</i> and <i>'reductive'</i>. • There is too much emphasis on accuracy and formulaic structures, <i>'ticking boxes', 'writing by rote', 'following a recipe'</i>. • Individuality and creativity are insufficiently rewarded. • <i>'Originality'</i> only features at grade A; there's no scope for crediting originality at grade D or E.
SELF-EXPRESSIVE (7) These teachers primarily value writing that expresses the child's personal and distinctive individual voice, often drawn from the child's own experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judgement is subjective, a <i>'matter of personal taste'</i>; <i>'teachers will judge each child's writing differently'</i>. • Teachers should be able to reward individual effort and tailor criteria to the child. • Criteria don't take enough account of individual starting points. • It's difficult to make the language of assessment criteria accessible for students.
A MATTER OF INSTINCT (4) These teachers either think that quality in writing is too subjective or difficult to define, or that flair and originality are impossible to teach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will always be examples of unusual writing that don't fit the criteria. • Relies on <i>professional judgement as an instinct</i> more than published criteria. • <i>'Really good creative writing can't be taught'</i>. • The difference between A and A* is <i>too open to interpretation</i>

Table 5.9: Match between personal constructs of quality and national assessment criteria

A teacher whose personal construct of good writing I characterised as 'fit for purpose' had a similar balanced view, believing that, by and large, assessment at both key stages rewarded the right things:

"There's certainly more continuity now between KS3 and KS4, and certainly the new national curriculum with its focus on purpose and audience, um they certainly do encourage the children to think about what makes a good piece of writing and certainly now that the SATS have gone, you haven't got to worry again about poorly set tasks at the end of three years, that when you know a child can write very well but they might not be able to respond in that particular way, on that particular day, to that particular task. (School 21)

Her only real remaining concern was that the tasks set at GCSE did not always offer sufficient choice or scope for students to show their full ability as writers.

5.4.2 Assessing writing at Key Stages 3 and 4

Teachers seemed equally divided as to whether or not there were differences between assessment at each key stage, and not all felt that there was continuity between them. The teacher in School 1 summed up a fairly common belief that GCSE assessment was "more forgiving" than KS3, although it was not always easy to tell if teachers were referring specifically to criteria or more generally to summative assessment procedures and their effect on the curriculum:

I think KS3 was quite rigid in a way wasn't it, like you had to show certain things to get a certain grade, and they wouldn't necessarily take other things into account, so it would be much more, be like a tick box of, have they done this, have they done that, have they used connectives, have they, umm, used paragraphs and a complex sentence and a compound sentence and stuff, but, I do think at GCSE there is more leeway. I think it's much freer.

Four teachers pinned down the perceived 'freedom' of GCSE to the existence of an original writing coursework option, to which the following teacher alluded:

I think, there is more opportunity, to, kind of, umm, acknowledge creativeness at GCSE rather than at key stage three 'cos it's just a formula at key stage three isn't it, and that's what we're trying to

teach the kids, this formula, and how to apply it to their writing, whereas at GCSE there's, there's more scope for more interesting writing. (School 20)

The perception that GCSE allows more creativity than KS3 is an interesting one, given that teachers have much more freedom to design curriculum content in Years 7-9, and it could be that teachers were responding positively to the existence of coursework which allowed them some measure of freedom in terms of task setting. One teacher (School 10) noted that “creativity has become a word now in the national curriculum for key stage three; it wasn't particularly very evident before”, but this was a minority view.

In relation to APP criteria, which were designed for both formative and summative assessment, there were a number of references to “ticking the boxes”, no doubt provoked by the physical layout of the guidelines, where the number of ticked boxes equates to the Level awarded. But clearly the references were also metaphorical, as for the teacher (School 14) who believed:

...what we've taught them to do is not be free thinkers but to be tick box thinkers...beforehand it was just too loose and unstructured, now we've gone very structured, but it's almost like tick me an adjective...that's not doing it yourself...that's not being a good writer.”

Consequently, a number of teachers looked for a more holistic approach to assessment, not just in balancing the technical aspects of writing with “freedom and creativity” but to take account of the wider picture of a child's development as a writer:

You need to look at the criteria and think, yeah ok, they've used a complex sentence or something, but also you need to think about what kind of child and how much has he improved in this piece.

(School 1)

Interestingly, several teachers did not view published criteria as an ‘absolute’ measure of quality or fixed picture of progression in writing. Like the teacher above, others applied “a degree of discretion” (School 31), bending the criteria to fit individual children, or to reward qualities that might otherwise go

unnoticed. So, for instance, in the context of her mixed ability classroom, the teacher in School 5 stated:

...a delightful piece of work from Joe who's a four minus is obviously completely different from what I would consider a delightful piece of work from Ellie who's a level seven (School 5)

while another commented:

...you've got to know the child a little bit and know what they can do and actually whether they've tried to do it. (School 8)

There was a recognition that the nature of assessment in English allowed for subjective interpretation and a degree of latitude:

"If looking at writing is a science, it probably works. You know, the trouble is of course, it's an art, and so as a teacher you often look for other things, don't you...for something more instinctive." (School 25)

However, there were different responses to this apparent freedom of "using professional judgement as an instinct". The inexperienced teachers in the sample seemed particularly aware that "every marker will be subjective and every marker will read into the criteria differently" (School 13). For this teacher, criteria were too imprecise, especially in discriminating at the highest grade:

I think you could argue for a piece of writing to be, you know, an A or an A grade and that's what I don't like about it, that it's so open to that interpretation.*

Another, referring directly to his experience of using the WJEC exam board's mark scheme, expressed an exactly opposite view:

...the tiny little bit of description of what A was was actually the most liberating thing that you could have. It just said things like, originality and flair...The fact that there was so little to describe what A* was, actually that pleased me more than anything else, that there's something sort of almost intangible. (School 11)*

In contrast, the view that marking criteria "are almost too strict" was voiced as a frustration by several teachers, for example over the narrowness of the marking bands, so that, "you have to weigh up whether they are more of a 'B' or an 'A' grade" (School 15) when ideally they wanted to "add things to the marking

criteria” that would allow an individual’s work to be better rewarded, or finer distinctions to be made. Some teachers explained that charges of rigidity were actually centred on task design and testing arrangements, rather than the nature of assessment criteria, as here:

I just think that we’re stuck in this place where we’re trying to use the same sort of test for someone who can write well as for the person who can’t, and the teaching strategies required under the current system are very different between say your As and your Cs and Ds.
(School 4)

Several teachers drew attention to the fact that although they perceived official criteria to be imperfect, they would not themselves like the task of “coming up with the criteria” to describe good writing. Partly this was due to a fundamental recognition that good writing is more than the sum of its parts, not easily reducible to discrete features or criteria:

You could have a tick list and go yep, they’ve used a rhetorical question, they’ve used this and they’ve used that, and it can be an awful piece of writing but then on the other hand they could not have used any of those rhetorical devices and (it) could be an amazing piece of writing, so, to a certain extent you’ve got to take it with a pinch of salt, I think. (School 8)

But there was a further recognition that writing, especially at the highest grade, essentially defied description, either because there was something intangible about it or because it was too complex to describe meaningfully:

Most people know, if you sit with something which is a high quality piece, a well written piece, then you can tell that it is and you can pick out various features in it but it would be impossible to write a description of it because there are so many ways in which it could be approached. (School 11)

Three teachers expressed concern about future assessment arrangements at KS3 in the absence of SATs, summed up by the teacher in School 22 who said: “most people feel a bit all at sea at the moment in terms of where the assessment lies.”

5.4.3 Summative testing

Most teachers expressed their dislike of formal testing and were consequently delighted that Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests had been abolished (a decision announced by the Education Secretary, Ed Balls, at the start of the third term of the *Grammar for Writing?* study). As one teacher recalled, “Even though it was a Tuesday night, I opened a bottle of wine...I was dancing round the kitchen” (School 30), while another commented, “How liberated do I feel not having the SATs; it’s just heaven” (School 26). One commented that the abolition of Key Stage 3 tests would “probably enable better writing” (School 17): she felt that students had been constrained by the nature of the writing tasks into producing dull, formulaic responses.

Testing was frequently ranked as the least important belief about writing – “the last thing I want to think about” - and the label often prompted vehement responses: “If you put a child in a testing environment, how on earth are you going to encourage creativity and spontaneity?” (School 27). The majority felt that testing was completely at odds with the things they most valued about children’s writing; it was “askew with”, “diametrically opposed to”, “the complete antithesis to” and “totally contradictory” with self expression and creativity. Several were of the opinion that the qualities they valued - “originality” and “imaginative work” - either could not be tested, or should not be tested, as these comments show: “I’ll hold my hands up and say I’ve never graded, I’ve never levelled a poem because I don’t think that’s the right thing to do” (School 25); “I find it very difficult to sort of mark or criticise fiction...it’s too personal and too much of them and their imagination within it to really evaluate it” (School 22); “testing someone’s imaginative work just seems a bit wrong” (School 15). Testing was often seen as a negative experience for students, making them too aware of their shortcomings and “frightened to experiment”. As one teacher explained: “They’ve been tested to such an extent that the only things they can ever see are the things they’ve done wrong, and I think that’s a terrible indictment of our education system” (School 27).

Interestingly, most teachers thought that GCSE exams were a fairer test of students’ writing skills and abilities than were Key Stage 3 tests. There are a

number of possible reasons for this view. Some expressed a lack of faith in SATs marking (which was carried out externally and had an accumulated history of appeals against results); some criticised the lack of choice for students in the two writing tasks. Teachers were more likely to see SATs as “testing for testing’s sake” and linked to accountability for league table performance, so that:

As a teacher you just get completely bogged down by results, and that’s all you care about, whereas if you’re just thinking about writing, and you’re not looking at SATs Levels and AFs, then actually you notice other things in a child’s writing. (School 11)

For some, it was a question of which criteria they were most familiar with: those teachers in the sample who were in their first year of teaching had some experience of applying GCSE criteria through marking or moderating coursework, but were not practised in applying SAT mark schemes. Only one teacher spoke positively about these mark scheme criteria, which her department had used to review its KS3 writing schemes. The specific detail about grammatical features characteristic of higher band writing had helped teachers to diagnose students’ weaknesses and understand progression in writing. Mark scheme criteria had informed planning of new schemes which developed students’ writing skills systematically and explicitly, as she explained:

If you follow the mark scheme then it’s going to inform your teaching, because you know exactly what you’re looking for and unless you know what you’re looking for you can’t teach the kids what the examiner is looking for or what good writing is all about. (School 29)

Assessment criteria at GCSE were characterised as “fairer”, “more logical”, “less bitty” and more easily understood by students (School 30). However, several teachers considered GCSE writing tasks to be flawed and unfair. Some concerns were linked to content; for example, one teacher commented about a ‘typical’ descriptive GCSE writing task: “It’s ridiculous to ask people to write about their day at the beach if they never go to a beach” (School 8). Other teachers believed that “teaching to a test” limited stylistic inventiveness:

It's almost like I'm giving the kids a list, which I am, literally, because as I was doing the mock I was making them a list of when you're in the exam, make sure you use a short sentence for effect, make sure you use a short one sentence paragraph for effect, and that just becomes writing by rote, it's like a recipe. (School 9)

...because the tasks are so open and so dry it's really hard for the children to show themselves off as gifted and crafted writers. (School 21)

There were several echoes of this comment, with one teacher suggesting that the constraints of testing led to reluctance to experiment: "it's almost like they've had the stuffing kicked out of them...there's just a glimmer." (School 14)

Despite lack of enthusiasm for testing, some teachers felt it was necessary, providing objective validation of students' writing. In the absence of SATs, some expressed concern that Key Stage 3 would "just drift along" and thought that "some more formal, generic kind of testing needs to be in place" in order to track progress towards GCSE attainment. Summative assessment was also considered useful in motivating students and focusing their learning, since:

if they know at the end of the unit of work there's going to be an assessment on that unit of work then for some of them that works as discipline because it makes them focus in class and they realise that they're actually going to be accountable for what they've done. (School 28)

This teacher thought the point of marking was to provide "reassurance" to students that their writing was successful, which in turn motivated them to write.

5.4.4 Difficulty making judgements

There were two main strands to the difficulties teachers experienced in judging quality in writing. One was balancing the value placed on the writing process as against the product. In essence, the difficulty for some teachers lay in the fact that published assessment criteria did not reward the effort or skill students had shown in planning, crafting and revising writing. Others felt that the finished piece of writing was often inferior to the writing that had led up to it; the problem

here lay in having to make a judgement on the final learning outcome only. For many teachers though, a bigger problem was judging the creativity of a piece of writing, especially when they had to balance this against problems with technical accuracy, a difficulty which often brought forth an emotional response.

However, the greatest difficulty that emerged from the teacher interview data lay in defining the concept of creativity. The intangible nature of “the whole side of creativity” posed a real problem for some teachers; not just because “everyone’s creative in a different way”. The teacher (School 20) who made these statements also viewed creativity as essentially unteachable, as she explained here:

I think a lot of it is, they’ve either got it or they haven’t, you know, and although you can teach them certain techniques, you just can’t teach creativity, you know, you can umm, you can prompt it, but I don’t know if you can teach it.

There was certainly a recognition that “flair” as a quality of high-grade writing was difficult to describe, teach and evaluate. One teacher (School 23) thought it “an instinctive thing” and another specifically drew attention to its subjective nature:

...that thing, that A star word that is always very umm, objective or, no, what’s the opposite, subjective?

Interviewer: Subjective.

Yeah, that word, flair. You know, it’ll be the one with flair, it’ll be the one with originality, it’ll be the one that does something different from everyone else, the one that really has, you know, gives you that impact. (School 25)

Teachers’ comments often accorded creativity a special status, and there were several manifestations of this idea. Commonly, teachers made a distinction between “all the creative side”, “the creative part” of the curriculum and the more mundane but essential work that had to be done. One teacher clearly visualised the writing classroom as a sanctuary:

There’s few chances in the school day where you could come in and zone yourself out from your whole school day, there’s no Bunsen

burner and there's no musical instruments, you can zone out and just say I'm going to go into dream world and I'm going to create and write and whatever I produce is going to be good...and I think it's excellent. I love creative writing. (School 28)

Although one teacher suggested that good writing was “all about creativity, even when it's essay writing”, the concept of creativity was almost exclusively related to poetry and story writing. Here, a commonly-expressed problem was whether, or how, creativity could be judged, summed up by these views: “how can you stand in judgement of somebody else's creativity?” (School 28); “how can you say one person's poem is better than another's?” (School 27). Five teachers referred to good writing as “natural”, “not overly forced”, with a consequent concern that students' natural creativity might be “stifled” or “crushed” by too much interference, by “imposing my own ideas on them” or by explicit teaching of techniques, as expressed here:

you don't want to umm... kind of... wreck a child that is naturally gifted or has a fluidity, an appreciation of language, by saying, right, you've got these fantastic ideas, now I want you to put it all in this box. (School 17)

One teacher debated whether “there is something qualitatively different” about a student who “writes naturally and has implicit and intuitive understandings of the language” and a student “who has to be taught them” (School 4), a view echoed by the teacher who said: “unless you've got that creativeness, that natural flair, you're not going to get the A star, because I don't know if you can teach it” (School 20).

'Accuracy' and 'creativity' were two of the six labels teachers were asked to comment on in the first interview, so that it is not surprising that they were often yoked together. More surprising was the difference in opinion as to their relative importance and the nature of the connection between them. Some teachers divorced creativity and accuracy, with one explaining:

It's the one time where we can sort of throw neatness out the window and poor spelling and we can fix it later. It's about the creativity and that's what I really, really enjoy...to mark something that just hits the

creativity mark and you don't have to think about technical accuracy and, and sentence length structure and all the rest of it, is freedom for a teacher and, I think, for a student. (School 20)

However, a number of teachers expressly yoked together “precision”, “accuracy”, “competence” and “creativity” in a “balancing act” (School 10). A representative view for these teachers was this one:

*“Students can do incredibly creative original work, which they need to do to get the As and the A*s, but if they're technically not there they're never going to achieve that” (School 7).*

One teacher cited students' ability to “break the rules” as a mark of the good writer and suggested it as a stage of progression from “learning the rules”:

When they start to break them is when their stories really start to have real quality about them, not just a well told story but actually something that is really engaging, and something you really want to read. (School 27)

However, in the context of his school with a high proportion of EAL students, he also recognised that most of his teaching was at a much more fundamental level of ensuring students had sufficient vocabulary and grasp of standard English grammar to be able to communicate clearly.

5.4.5 Summary

Teachers and students used a rich and varied range of terms to describe good writing. There was some similarity between teachers' personal criteria for quality in writing and national assessment criteria for high-grade writing but teachers' own criteria were much broader. Teachers also found ways of personalising standardised assessment criteria by including factors relating to students' individual learning needs and writing behaviours. There was agreement between students and teachers that writing quality should be evaluated chiefly by its impact on the reader, and judgements in this respect seemed highly dependent on effective word choices. However, some criteria which were commonly referenced, such as sentence variety, were not always commonly understood, and teachers also placed more value than did students on some features of writing, in particular, ‘originality’ and ‘creativity’.

While there was a high degree of individual consistency in teachers' conceptualisations of writing quality, there was considerable variation between teachers, evident in the different interpretations and importance that teachers accorded to particular criteria. Teachers not only valued different aspects of writing but experienced different degrees of agreement or conflict between their personal constructs of quality in writing and the construct of quality embodied in national assessment criteria.

CHAPTER 6: REFERENCES TO QUALITY IN THE WRITING CLASSROOM

This chapter presents findings in response to the second principal research question, investigating how teachers and students might use their understandings of quality in writing for the purpose of improving writing. It reports ways in which teachers refer to writing quality in lessons that focus on writing, and suggestions that students make to improve the quality of their own and their peers' writing.

The first part of the chapter reports on the lesson observations carried out each term of the *Grammar for Writing?* project. The second part details findings from 'writing conversations' with students from this project, supplemented by responses from students in the single case study intervention to an open-ended prompt and rank ordering activity.

6.1 Teachers' references to writing quality in the context of teaching writing

This section is organised to pick up main themes that emerged from analysis of interview data, in order to consider the possible relationship between stated beliefs and classroom practice. For the most part I have looked for general trends, rather than attempting to follow through individual cases and thus have reported the origin of statements selectively, especially where comments can be construed as critical of teachers' practice.

6.1.1 The concept of audience and purpose

A number of teachers and students in interview conceptualised good writing as being well matched to its audience and purpose. This concept was firmly evident in lessons observed in the majority of classrooms. The notion of audience and purpose was used to contextualise writing tasks, often at the point in the lesson when the learning objective was introduced (sometimes referred to by teachers as the 'WALT' statement: 'we are learning to...'). For example, the objective, "know how to choose words for impact, especially strong nouns and verbs", was explained in the context of establishing setting in a fictional narrative; the objective "be able to use emotive language" was applied to the

specific context of language used in charity leaflets, with the teacher explaining at the start of the lesson:

“Most charity leaflets work through empathy...so it’s very important to use emotive language...remember it can evoke different emotions, like anger or sorrow.” (School 29)

Useful reminders of purpose and intended effect were provided at the point when students began a writing task, for instance:

“Cram as many emotive words (as you can) into each sentence to really pull on the heart strings of the reader”. (School 5)

Some teachers linked specific writing tasks to the broader context of students’ development as writers. For example, in a lesson on creating tension and suspense in fiction writing, manipulating sentence length and structure was presented as a key skill for better writing: sentences were “the building blocks” and “the foundation” (School 29). This teacher, having observed “I think you’re struggling a bit with complex sentences”, made it clear to students that they would be doing further work on them over time. As part of a consolidation of learning about sentences, some teachers made helpful links between the different schemes of work, for example by reminding students of the different reasons for controlled use of short sentences in fiction (to create tension), argument (to emphasise important points) and poetry (to quicken the pace for dramatic effect). The emphasis in these classrooms was on building a ‘toolkit’ of writing skills, useful across a range of text types and tasks. One teacher used the concept of audience and purpose to admonish students and remind them of examination requirements: “You’ll be assessed on how well you adopt an appropriate tone and voice for the purpose of the task, so that’s why it’s not very helpful for a few of you to always go for comic effect” (School 31).

However, one clear finding from analysis of lesson observation notes was that many of the purposes for students’ writing and the effects they were intended to achieve were expressed in generalised terms, and this was sometimes evident in the non-specific wording of learning objectives, for example: “Punctuation”; “To know how to use language devices to improve writing”. Purposes for writing were often left abstract: the aim was to “improve your writing” for “impact on the

reader”, or to “use the right language to suit what you are writing about”. Such generalisations are understandable given that there are limited ‘real’ purposes and audiences for school writing but they ran the risk of sounding like a ‘formula’ that would achieve a quality outcome irrespective of the context or demands of the task. Comments classed as formulaic included common but imprecise definitions of word classes and reasons for their use. Thus, adjectives “make it more descriptive” or “give more information”. Adverbs make sentences “more interesting” by giving the reader “more info”. The purpose of changing words in an extract was to provide “more variety”. In similar vein, advice given to students to “use more complex and compound sentences” was offered with no explanation of purpose or reason.

References to audience, purpose and genre conventions were often made at the point of writing, to check students’ understanding of the task and to establish, or reconfirm, success criteria. However, this often took the form of a teacher-led exchange about points to consider, which several teachers used as a chance to recap previous work. In some classrooms, these episodes became quick-fire, closed exchanges, so that what was presumably intended as support for students before they moved into individual writing, often became an exercise in memory recall. The result was that students were presented with a ‘check list’ of features they should include in their writing, but without a strong sense of the purpose for using them, or of which might be prioritised for a successful outcome. Subsequently, it was hard to judge how far students were thinking for themselves about crafting writing for an audience and purpose or simply ‘ticking off’ items on a list.

In the first example, shown in Table 6.1, the learning objective was to plan a fictional story based on an image. In another example, shown in Table 6.2, students prepared for writing their own poem by listing tips for effective poetry.

Teacher interaction	Student response
Someone start us off by saying one of the techniques we've been learning about in these lessons.	S1: We could use nouns and adjectives. S2: We could do it in the first or third person. S3: We could use a voiceover to make it more interesting.
<p><i>Begins to annotate image projected onto whiteboard to provide vocabulary bank.</i></p> <p>I want to come up with three examples of nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs.</p> <p>Carefully, that's an adverb.</p> <p>Now we need some adjectives.</p> <p>Now three nouns that we can use...</p> <p>How else can we make it interesting for the reader? We looked at that lighthouse picture, and different viewpoints...</p> <p>Which tenses did we look at?</p> <p>We didn't look at that but what would the second person be?</p> <p>Something we've looked at recently (is) lengthening our sentences. Instead of using full stops what could we use?</p>	<p>S4: Carefully.</p> <p>S5: Rapidly.</p> <p>S6: Cold, white.</p> <p>S7: Freezing.</p> <p>S8: Mountains.</p> <p>S9: Snow.</p> <p>Students give examples of viewpoints they could choose for the story.</p> <p>S10: Past and present tense.</p> <p>S11: What about the second person?</p> <p>S12: Clause with and..but...</p>

Table 6.1 Classroom discussion: planning a story

Teacher interaction	Student response
<p>What ideas or strategies have we explored to make a good poem? To give it the meaning we want it to have?</p> <p>Yes, variety of punctuation - gives us direction as to how the poem is read.</p> <p>Rhythm and rhyme, the way it sounds is important. Poems are designed to be read out loud.</p>	<p>S1: Repetition.</p> <p>S2: Layout.</p> <p>S3: Alliteration.</p> <p>S4: Two words beginning with the same letter.</p> <p>S5: Punctuation.</p> <p>S6: Variety of language.</p> <p>S7: Variety of sentence lengths.</p> <p>S8: Descriptive techniques.</p> <p>S9: Similes and metaphors.</p> <p>S10: Rhythm.</p>

Table 6.2 Classroom discussion: writing poetry

In contrast, there were striking examples of activities that put students in the position of real readers and writers and emphasised the purpose and effect of using text conventions or linguistic techniques. In one such lesson (School 21), students evaluated the effectiveness of persuasive language in a variety of charity leaflets and placed them in rank order according to how well they had been persuaded to support the cause. The teacher deliberately limited the time they looked at each leaflet to four minutes, approximating to the amount of time real households might give them. She very specifically linked the processes of reading and writing by asking students to highlight from their notes, “the most important things that made you want to give money to your charity” and then to use these annotations for the purpose of redrafting their own work, commenting: “See if there is now anything you think you can alter to make your writing more persuasive.”

6.1.2 The concept of variety

The concept that good writing has variety emerged from interview analysis as a shared understanding between teachers and students; ‘variety’ and ‘range’ were applied to vocabulary, techniques, sentences and punctuation. However, in interviews, the notion of variety was not always accompanied by a sense of meaningful crafting of writing; sentence variety in particular was referred to as an end in itself, and rarely exemplified. Analysis of lesson observation notes supports this finding. Comments made by several teachers, usually given as advice before students started their own writing or in the plenary to summarise learning, referred to achieving sentence variety as a general aim, sometimes linked to whole-class or individual targets. Advice was commonly generalised, as in: “You need to make sure you have sentence variety”; “The sentence variety is key”; “When we vary sentences it makes it more interesting”; “Variety is important.” Only two teachers expressly linked variation to different sentence types; it was more commonly related to sentence length, “some short, some long”, and the following example was one of the rare attempts to suggest a purpose and effect of sentence length, in the context of writing persuasively about fox hunting: “so you can have contrasts...a long sentence you can detail the cruelty and a short sentence you can refer to sudden death for impact”

(School 28). Instructions about how to achieve variety were also limited, for instance: “it’s good to vary the start of your lines”.

From interview analysis, teachers and students were in mutual agreement that varied and accurate punctuation was a hallmark of good writing. Of the eleven sources coded for comments about teaching punctuation for meaning, eight were from Intervention schools, with the majority of these reflecting the emphases and activities in the short term plans. Teachers’ notes accompanying the poetry scheme stressed the role of punctuation “as a creative tool to help shape meaning in writing, not just about getting full stops in the right place”, and all three schemes included an activity where students used punctuation to guide the speaker’s tone of voice. These emphases were reflected in teachers’ classroom comments that linked punctuation to a specific purpose and to effective writing, for example:

We use it to bring a speech alive, to give clues to the reader about how to deliver it. (School 6)

Punctuation can be exceptionally powerful in telling someone how to deliver a speech. We can create tension, pauses, drama and provoke thought, emphasising key ideas. (School 24)

More commonly, however, teachers were imprecise in linking punctuation to a specific effect and sometimes may have reinforced confusion about rules for boundary punctuation: “Remember, writers use punctuation to provide an effect; they indicate the pauses”; “Varied punctuation links sentences together”. Observed examples of grammatical misunderstandings about sentence construction and punctuation are considered in more detail in section 6.1.7.

6.1.3 The concept of effect on the reader

Analysis of teacher interview data and student data showed that a key shared criterion for good writing was its “effect on the reader”, which was understood or emphasised in a variety of ways, ranging from maintaining the reader’s interest to stylistic effectiveness. The phrase “effect on the reader” is used in published assessment criteria for high-level writing at Key Stage 3, and the phrase “for effect” is used in APP guidelines (“vary sentences for clarity, purpose and effect”) and GCSE top-band mark schemes, in relation to manipulation of

sentence structures. In the *English Framework* objectives referred to in the *Grammar for Writing?* teaching plans, the concept of 'effect on the reader' figures prominently, often yoked with 'variety', for example:

- draw on the full range of punctuation...to clarify meaning, aid cohesion and create a variety of effects;
- draw on their knowledge of a wide variety of sentence lengths and structures, ...and create a range of effects according to task, purpose and reader;
- create considered and appropriate effects by drawing independently on the range and variety of their own vocabulary.

Unsurprisingly, given such prominence, there were many examples from lesson observations of the use of "for effect", "effects" and "effectiveness". These were used in the context of generic advice for improving writing, but they were rarely linked to, or triggered by, specific examples. Thus teachers spoke of the need to "think about where you put your punctuation for effect" and to "use sentences for effect". Students were advised to "vary vocabulary for effect" and to "remember that some words are more effective than others and you need to find the right ones...just think about what effect it has as well". It could be that the term "effect on the reader" is so commonly used in classrooms that understanding of it is assumed. However, there were several observed occasions when students struggled both with the concept of effectiveness and in finding words with which to explain effects, irrespective of how fluently they used linguistic or literary terminology. In a starter activity where students were asked to choose and share "an interesting and effective sentence" from their fiction books, many clearly did not understand the instruction, and comments were limited to plot rather than rhetorical effect. In a plenary where students were asked to share examples of their animal kennings verbally and provide feedback on "Which line was effective?" students found the examples hard to remember and reflect on with no print copy to refer to.

Explaining effects in poetry seemed particularly problematic, as the examples in Table 6.3 show. Students found it hard to answer direct questions about effects or to expand ideas about effectiveness, especially when the focus was on one particular feature, such as use of rhyme, taken out of the context of the whole

poem. Several teachers clearly struggled to link the reading of poetry (and the more comfortable process of analysis) to writing pedagogy, so that discussions of ‘effectiveness’ often led nowhere, such as this one about *The Highwayman*:

Teacher: Can anyone hazard a guess as to why it rhymes?

Student 1: Because it’s a poem.

Student 2: It helps it flow more.

Student 3: Makes it sound good.

It was rare in these kind of circular conversations for teachers to make any direct link to students’ own writing practice so that the question of ‘effectiveness’ remained either vague or theoretical.

Activity	Teacher Interaction	Student Response
Exploring layout of poems. Students have formatted a prose version of Mick Gowan’s poem <i>Christmas Thank Yous</i> , and then discuss the original layout.	Q: What’s the effect of how each verse starts? R: Clerihews. Q: What about what each verse contains? R: Well, they each tell a whole story of the presents. Q: What does it allow you to have in the verse form? Q. Blue / you? Q. What is the effect of the rhyme?	R: They start with a name – like that thing...? No response. No response. R: Rhyme? R: It sounds better.
Students share own examples of kennings. Teacher asks them to consider what is good about what they hear.	Says focus of kenning poem “is good effective vocabulary that really describes the object” Q. Any phrases that stand out? R. Yes, that’s effective. What about the rhyme? R. It had a nice effective beat.	Volunteer reads their poem about a mirage. R. Hallucination. R.?? (<i>unclear what they meant / were saying; not probing for why/effect</i>)
Students have highlighted examples of alliteration in <i>The Highwayman</i> . Teacher leads whole class feedback from the activity.	Asks for examples of good alliteration.	R: Cobbles clattered and clashed R: Whistled / window R: Ghostly Galleon (etc.... 3 more) Quick fire responses (giving examples and pointing out where it is in the text) – no discussion of effects.

Table 6.3 Classroom discussion: describing effects

Classroom observation highlighted how much support students needed to explain the effects of linguistic choices and move beyond mere identification of features. Teachers used a range of cueing techniques to encourage students to think about how language choices might improve writing. These included:

- Evaluative statements made by the teacher in relation to a specific example, either from a published text or from the student’s own writing, for example:
 - *This is very crafted.* (School 1)
 - *I like the way you’ve kept some short sentences in to build the tension.* (School 24)
 - *Look at what’s happened by changing the word order. As a writer you can withhold information and build a sense of expectation.* (School 16)
 - *‘Freaky’ is quite informal. Can you give me another word, maybe ‘sinister’, ‘threatening’?* (School 31)

- Questions which stated the effect or purpose and asked students to provide examples, as in Table 6.4.

Teacher Interaction	Student Response
<p>Discussion of one student’s fiction writing: How did we get a sense of what Ed’s character was like – what his voice was like?</p> <p>So, writing in a deliberately non-grammatical way in order to get the voice of his character.</p>	<p>He used the first person well. It sounded like a real American.</p>
<p>Politicians and speech makers use different verbs depending on whether they want to suggest what is possible, or if they want to be motivating, or positive – they are important in speeches.</p>	<p>Students find examples of modal verbs in text examples and comment on effect e.g. The modal verbs are all similar – all saying they definitely <i>will</i> do it. All positive.</p>

Table 6.4 Classroom discussion: explaining effects

- Open-ended or evaluative questions which required students to explore and explain effects, exemplified in Table 6.5.

Teacher Interaction	Student Response
Why did they underline...? What does that word suggest?	Because it's quite dramatic. It suggests she wants to get there quickly.
How has this sentence changed? What's the effect of this (moving the adverb to the start) on the reader?	Makes 'desperately' a bigger part of the sentence. It makes you wonder why he's desperate.
Which changes were most effective and why?	Adding adverbials was good because it gave more information. Trim the sentence works well as an opening or ending sentence...a hook or cliffhanger...it's a narrative device to grab your attention.

Table 6.5 Classroom discussion: exploring effectiveness

- Summary or clarification of the learning point (often in the plenary) which included some notion of effect or purpose, for example:
 - *The whole point of that exercise was to look at sentence structure – clarity, add information, effect of changing order. (School 1)*
 - *The key thing is that I wanted you to improve this writing and make it more persuasive. (School 2)*
 - *What type of words were we focusing on to make a powerful description? (School 7)*
 - *What's the most important thing you want to get across in your writing? What do you want your audience to feel? (School 17)*

6.1.4 References to national assessment criteria

As noted in Chapter 5, several of the criteria used by teachers and students to describe good writing, such as 'variety of sentences', echoed national assessment criteria, either using the same wording or close equivalents. The schemes of work used in the *Grammar for Writing?* project did not include Level criteria, although reference was made to APP Assessment Focuses, in acknowledgement of their common use in schools and there was evidence in some schools that students had personal writing targets based on APP guidelines. Teachers specifically linked features of good writing to these targets, either as a statement made to the whole class: "If you are someone whose target was to use punctuation effectively, look at your poem and see if you've used it to enhance meaning" (School 16), or as reminders to individuals during a writing activity.

A number of comments in the teacher interviews had linked the teaching of particular text features to attainment targets or examination demands. There was some overt reference to this in the classroom. One teacher of an able group used her experience as a GCSE marker to give specific advice in the Fiction scheme: “Remember examiners are looking for how you use a semi-colon” and in the Argument scheme:

If you’ve got discourse markers at GCSE you’re straight away looking at a B. It automatically makes your writing more rounded and logical.

(School 29)

Another teacher referred to mark schemes which emphasise the use of connectives, advising students:

What makes it flow and what structures an argument are these connectives. These get you higher levels. (School 10)

There was one instance of sentence variety being linked explicitly to writing attainment: “You need to be able to vary sentences to achieve higher levels” (School 9).

6.1.5 Feedback on writing

Attempts by teachers to link specific features of writing to the overall purpose of improving the quality of writing were often made through feedback on particular linguistic choices. This feedback varied in its effectiveness and explicitness, ranging from the non-specific, “Super”; “That’s perfect”; to more focused and directed comment, for example, “How could you substitute the verb to make it more interesting?” (School 16); “We’ve got a sense of the environment with adverbials in there” (School 17). In classrooms where students were clearly used to discussing texts in a specific, focused way, teachers also used terminology to help sharpen feedback on students’ writing, for instance:

A lot of you are adding adjectives when you could change the noun for a better effect. (School 31)

I want you to be specific about what connectives they used and what the effect was. (School 9)

Plenary summaries of learning were often the most disappointing part of observed lessons. Especially when teachers found themselves pushed for time,

the plenary did not move students beyond somewhat formulaic generalisations about writing, as in this exchange:

Teacher: *Look back at your fire paragraph. How would you improve your sentences?*

Student 1: *I'd add more repetition to make it quicker and quicker.*

Student 2: *I'd make sentences shorter and more dramatic.*

Student 3: *Add similes and metaphors.*

Student 4: *Add speech.*

In such instances, the specific learning objective for the lesson (here, to strengthen description through the use of well-chosen nouns and strong verbs) became obscured rather than clarified. It was sometimes coincidental to timing of visits and the focus of the observed lesson, but feedback on writing was often limited to evaluation of single word choices, rather than referring to paragraph structure or cohesion. Often this reflected the fact that students had not produced extended writing in the observed lesson, but it may also reflect the fact that redrafting at word level is easier to manage for students. In a lesson (School 2) where students used co-ordinating and subordinating connectives to improve the persuasive power of a speech, students worked with the original text on classroom computers, to encourage changes at sentence and paragraph level, but in fact most students made changes at word level, as one pair explained in feedback:

Students: *We changed a connective. We chose 'while'; we changed 'if they're being bullied' to 'while they're being bullied'.*

Teacher: *So it makes it sound as though the bullying is still going on.*

Several students had understood the task to be a question of adding in extra words ("You've got to add more words so it makes sense") or taking out words ("You needed to take some things out so it didn't sound higgledy piggledy") rather than altering sentence structure to connect ideas more convincingly across the whole text. Similarly, the plenary question "What connectives did you use?" ("I used 'because'...'and'...is 'is' one?") may have reinforced the idea of improving writing through single word choices.

An important point to make here is that much teacher feedback on writing takes the form of conversations with individuals or groups of students, which is

something that is not easy to capture in lesson observation schedules. Personalised exchanges with students, using the context of their own writing, gave teachers valuable opportunities to convey their beliefs about good writing and how it might be improved, but these ‘private’ conversations were not always available to the researcher. Where examples of interactions between the teacher and individual students were recorded, it was clear that they focused on specific suggestions for improving writing, often in terms of providing ideas or vocabulary, as shown in the examples from School 23 (Table 6.6).

Context	Teacher interaction
Lesson from narrative fiction scheme focusing on developing plot and character.	Circulates to help / prompt Prompts them to build up to the revelation / reveal it slowly / “create mystery” / “give clues” / not “tell the reader everything”
Lesson on effects of using personification in poetry. Students writing own poems from viewpoint of WW1 object.	Prompts individuals – “run through a list of verbs and see how you can fit them in – not the obvious ones – running, walking, - does it ‘shout’? – I think the bayonet might shout – or scream when it pierces”

Table 6.6 Classroom discussion: teacher feedback for improving writing

Some teachers’ classroom style involved a good deal of personalised exchanges like these, but this was not the case in every classroom and indeed the extent of interaction between the teacher and individual students was another aspect of the observed variation between teachers. While some teachers actively intervened during individual writing time, others made more use of paired or group peer feedback, and in one school, students predominantly worked individually on writing tasks, using laptops, with very little interaction with the teacher. Another teacher had copied resources from the schemes of work, which were originally intended to generate whole-class or group talk, and turned them into individual workbooks. Thus opportunities for talk about improving writing varied across the sample schools.

6.1.6 Peer evaluation of writing

In schools where peer evaluation was evidently common practice, judgements were clearly about improving writing for the immediate audience of a trusted peer reader. Students in these schools took very seriously the responsibility of

providing good-quality, specific feedback, shaped for instance by instructions to find two positive things about their partner's work and one "Even better if", or by evaluating writing against agreed success criteria. That peer assessment was everyday practice in one classroom was evident when the teacher read her own narrative writing and a student commented, "Shall I peer assess you, miss?" (School 29). In another (School 16) the teacher offered her own personification poem for feedback and used it as a practice run for paired peer evaluation, framed by the instruction: "I want you to give feedback about what you think they've done well. Is it the voice, is it the rhythms?" The teacher in School 21 gave very clear instructions to students about the purpose for evaluating each other's fiction writing, linking peer judgement to the bigger picture of writing development:

You need to be really clear about the reasons for going into your group. It's to make a judgement about which viewpoint you think is most effective in response to this image. Not who's the best writer in the group. It's not going to be an easy task. I want you to make your decision and give reasons for your choice. I've asked you to do something difficult but the reason I'm asking you to do this is so you can be better informed about choosing a viewpoint in the writing at the end of the scheme.

In classrooms where collaborative group work and dialogic talk were obviously encouraged, and where peer assessment was routine, students were often very confident when discussing linguistic choices and effects, as in these examples in the context of using subordination in argument:

Teacher: *"What specific changes did you make?"*

Student pair: *"We changed the order of the clauses around and it still made sense. We thought the second way was better."*

Student: *"Kayley was good at joining two sentences together: 'I am a confident speaker who has won prizes for public speaking.'*

In another school, students commented on how their peer partner had created tension at the start of a mystery story:

You can tell that something terrible is going to happen because of the words she used, like 'dark', 'whisperings', 'torment', 'infect'.

Ben made a really good sentence at the start: 'Primeval fear gripped her'.

Students' explorations of language choices did not always use standard terminology. In the lesson on subordinating and co-ordinating conjunctions previously referred to, students initiated a discussion about which was best to use. Observation notes recorded:

"They were struggling to articulate what created different levels of formality. By themselves they made links between speech and writing (speech using more co-ordinating connectives) and decided that subordinating connectives made you sound "posh"; using co-ordinating connectives sounded "rubbish". Some anxiety from students in effort to explain effects, with comments like "Ah, this makes no sense"; "Oh I don't know"; "*But* sounds really bum." However, they were very animated, as if trying to work out a puzzle. Teacher let discussion run for a while."

In less confident classrooms, attempts to 'hand authority' to students did not always work, as noted about the plenary in a fiction lesson: "Definite focus on crafting and experimenting, but not much time allowed for discussion of the explicit effects of the different structures. Students struggle to articulate what they were trying to achieve, so the teacher gives feedback/response, rather than the class."

6.1.7 Linguistic subject knowledge in the classroom

In the teacher interviews, some teachers explicitly recognised gaps in their own linguistic subject knowledge and in observed lessons there was a clear link between teachers' confidence with a grammatical point and the clarity and the economy with which they were able to explain it to students, and thus give clear messages about how to achieve a quality outcome, for example through 'WILF' ('what I'm looking for' statements). In one poetry lesson, the teacher used examples of kennings to explain the pattern of compound nouns, saying: "Compound means put together, like in a compound sentence where you put two clauses together, here it's two nouns together." This definition was used to test students' own examples of kennings and by the time they came to write

independently, all but one were confidently using the compound noun pattern. In another lesson, there was no firm evidence that the teacher had seen the pattern herself. The initial explanation of a kenning as an “idea of collective things being put together to describe an object” was not made any more specific in terms of word class choices so that although models of kennings were provided and some students imitated them independently, many were not aware of the compound noun pattern when describing their chosen animal, leading to kennings such as “a soft-fur” which did not really make sense. The teacher who explained “a kenning is a way of describing something” gave the example “a sly hunter” for students to imitate in their own writing about a fox, with the result that many understood a kenning to follow an adjective-noun pattern and explained their writing purpose as, “You describe something without using its name”. In fact, the poetry scheme drew out several examples of teacher insecurity about linguistic features and patterns; for example, the function of enjambement was described in one school as creating a deliberate pause at the end of the line, whilst in another school it was explained as a technique for running the meaning on from one line to another.

Teachers who lacked confidence in their grammatical knowledge often found it difficult to handle questions and explanations or to extend discussion of choices and effects, and students’ misunderstandings sometimes went unchallenged, for example when the teacher’s question “What’s tense?” was answered “First or third person”. The lack of explicit understanding of how simple and complex sentences are formed was evident from the comments of both students and teachers and, given the importance attributed to sentence variety in creating a quality outcome in writing, this is a significant finding. The terms ‘simple’ and ‘complex’ proved misleading for many students. One defined a simple sentence as having “plain words in it” and ‘complex’ was understood by another as “when it’s complicated”. Most students used ‘simple’ and ‘short’ synonymously and there was evidence that teachers too confused sentence length with sentence type. In a lesson where the teaching focus was on knowing how to deliberately vary the length of a simple sentence, by adding descriptive detail through expanded noun phrases or adverbials, the teacher referred to successively longer examples of simple sentences as “very simple”, “more complex” and

“much longer and more complex”. A simple sentence was often described as a “short snappy sentence”, rather than a one-clause sentence; indeed, explanations of ‘clause’ were both avoided and unclear, especially when students’ questions were unexpected, as in “the bits between the punctuation really”. No teacher referred explicitly to finite and non-finite verbs, which impacted on the clarity of explanations about how to form main and subordinate clauses in complex sentences.

Insecurity over clauses also led to some confusion when modelling semi-colon use, where teachers did not make it clear that a semi-colon joins two linked clauses (each containing a finite verb) not a clause and a phrase. One teacher focused explanation on the length of pause created by a semi-colon, saying that it created a “longer pause than a full stop”. Another teacher displayed her own example of semi-colon use, in which the clauses were not well linked, and students found it hard to imitate the model in their own writing: “We do not need to work this tedious overtime; I say we do not need to work overtime; why work such overtime?” There were also occasions when teachers left a clear rule ambiguous, for instance by suggesting that a comma might substitute for a semi-colon as boundary punctuation joining two separate clauses: “You could use a comma but you’d be on dangerous ground there”.

6.1.8 Pedagogy for improving writing

Models and modelling

The use of text models was a strong feature of observed practice in several schools and for some teachers, it was clearly bedrock practice. Two such teachers used their own fiction, argument and poetry writing as models from which students identified successful features; in another school, the teacher wrote a personification poem alongside students and shared this in the plenary for students to comment on. In two lessons, the teacher’s model was displayed as students wrote independently. One teacher highlighted variation in line lengths in models of personification poems and left these displayed as students redrafted their own poem. Observed practice also included teacher modelling. One teacher demonstrated how to write two versions of persuasive sentences and asked students to articulate the differences in sentence construction. Two

teachers modelled the planning of a fictional narrative triggered by an image, in one case by 'talking through' choices on a plan that had already been annotated, the other by displaying an image and leading a well-paced discussion, during which annotations were made to indicate planning choices and decisions. The resulting plan was interestingly 'messy' and this approach successfully illustrated the thinking process that the teacher wanted students to follow in relation to their own chosen image.

The typical style of another teacher was to encourage students' independent thinking and conscious decision making. In a lesson on dual narrative, for example, she advised:

In terms of your writing, it's not just a case of keep changing. You need to be thinking about why these changes are taking place. What effects does it create? Why has Peter Benchley made these switches? So you know when to change for effect, not just because you've seen a published writer do it. (School 21)

Annotation

Allied to the use of text models was the fairly widespread practice of drawing attention to text features through highlighting and annotation. However, the effectiveness of this practice varied. Some teachers made it interactive, using the interactive whiteboard or coloured pens to annotate features together and discuss effects. One teacher gave very clear instructions to her class about how to use annotation to support the learning focus on effective nouns and verbs:

Look at the text. I want you to have a pen in your hand. Look at the writer's choice of words; look at how nouns and verbs can create atmosphere in this text. Pick out the nouns, then pick out the verbs. I want you to see how effective they are in creating atmosphere.

(School 16)

In another school, the teacher gave clear guidance on how to mark poetic effects of alliteration, repetition and rhythm in the text models, so that they could use their identification of patterns to focus discussion. Students in other schools had clearly been 'trained' to annotate texts independently, so that they could

follow an instruction such as “annotate this for narrative devices” without further question.

Success criteria

In those classrooms where annotation of text models was second nature, this practice often went hand in hand with defining and listing success criteria: the features that students annotated became a checklist of features to use for success in students’ own writing. In one school, this process resulted in the class designing a ‘toolkit’ for good fiction writing, which contained items such as “show not tell”; “short sentences building suspense”; “detailed description”. Success criteria were often used to guide peer assessment, so that students’ feedback to each other used words and phrases from agreed criteria. Sometimes this feedback was formalised: students completed an evaluation sheet for their peer partner. Otherwise, feedback was guided by a formula, typically “Two things that are good about your writing and one thing that could be even better”. Again, in a few schools where these kinds of processes were firmly established, peer assessment based on agreed criteria was precise, thoughtful and detailed.

Talk for writing

There were several observed activities which were designed both to engage students in collaborative discussion but also to rehearse through talk some of the concepts or structures that they would then try out in writing. For example, a ‘verbal boxing’ game gave students a chance to try out the effectiveness of different rhetorical devices. In the observed lessons, there were several striking instances of talk used as preparation for writing. These included:

- Talk used to generate ideas and examples, for example the ‘penny game’ used to illustrate narrative choices by asking a question about plot or character and flipping a coin for a yes/no answer; ‘metaphorical bowling’: using a picture as a stimulus, the teacher ‘bowled’ a sentence focusing on one of the five senses. Before a timer rang, the student had to bowl another back, using a different sense.

- Talk used to identify features of texts and provide a checklist for students' own writing, for example, jigsaw groups analysed texts and generated lists of the rhetorical devices they thought worked the best.
- Talk used to evaluate ideas and techniques, for example pairs improvised an argument between a parent and child and the class gave feedback about which techniques were most successful; students shared their plot outlines in a small group, asking each other questions for clarification, then wrote a fifty-word summary blurb.

It was also clear from lesson observations that some teachers were able to extend students' metalinguistic understanding through talk, giving them a clearer idea of how to improve writing. Tasks that provided a clear context and purpose for discussion about language choices seemed to motivate students to persevere with explanations, even though they sometimes struggled to articulate their thinking. For example, in discussing how to re-punctuate a speech for rhetorical effect in a lesson on writing to argue and persuade, students were task-focused throughout, with a real sense of engaged debate about possible choices and their effects. In another lesson, the teacher deconstructed with students the opening to an argument, probing hard for understanding, and whilst some students struggled with metalanguage, comments firmly linked linguistic features to meaning and effect.

6.2 Students' suggestions for improving the quality of their own and their peers' writing

This section reports common themes that emerged from analysing data from both student populations and which suggested that students' generic conceptualisations of good writing might have an influence on their ideas for improving writing. It also summarises students' understanding of changes that might be made to improve text models. The text models referred to are shown in Appendix 4. Given the extensive nature of the data, I have concentrated examples on fiction writing, **which was the one genre considered by all students in the study.**

6.2.1 Purpose, audience and effect

The purpose of redrafting for improvement seemed to be understood by most students as strengthening the effect of the text on the reader. This 'reader' was sometimes perceived to be the student himself, as in this comment: "I was pleased with the personal sort of feelings I captured in it, it was from my own experiences, my first start at rugby" (School 19), but much more commonly, students referred to readers in the third person, so that what emerged was a strong sense of students writing for others and of them judging writing by how others might receive it:

I think I'd just like try and say a bit more about what actually happened before so they weren't in too much suspense and curiosity. (School 5)

I've used "track" because that sort of makes people think it's remote and away from everything else and sort of a bit isolated so it makes it sort of a bit more scary in a way for people who are reading the story. (School 16)

There was one very surprising reference to reader response, with the student clearly anticipating the audience for her writing as her peers, and feeling self-conscious about their reaction. As a result, she avoided writing in the first person:

I wouldn't want to base myself as a main character 'cos I would be scared to write something and let people reflect it off of you, 'cos like, if you write something that's not in your sort of character and you read it and someone says, that's not like you, and then you get like different people like think different things about you if you do, so I'd rather write in third person. (School 15)

Perhaps there is also some conceptual misunderstanding here, a confusion between the idea of narrator and central character, or a more fundamental misunderstanding that fails to recognise the invented nature of characters in fiction writing; another student criticised the text model on the grounds that its character had the same name as himself.

It was clear that students of this age rarely thought about text effectiveness in terms of its style. There were very few examples of comments that related language choices to aesthetic or stylistic effects, perhaps because this requires a degree of objectivity that they did not have. Where they did occur, such comments came from able students in the sample, for example:

I think sometimes not having adjectives really works, and not having adverbs... just sometimes, sometimes it can make things sound so much better, but sometimes it makes it sound a bit kind of, like you've tried too hard almost, a bit complicated. (School 2)

I was reading it in my head or hearing it in my head and I thought 'dark black' doesn't sound good, so I put in 'bleak', 'cos 'bleak black' just gives it a bit more depth...if it's 'dark bleak black', for some reason it gives a sort of, um, like the dreariness of the scene. (School 31)

I like suspense, and sort of hiding a bit of the plot and umm, not giving them the whole story but edging it forward slightly, the actual dilemma like folding out and not give it away straight away, just sort of be secret about it, and then eventually it all opens up, the plot. (School 10)

Students more readily understood 'impact' or 'effect' in terms of affective response, how they wanted the reader to think or feel. Consequently, many students judged the effectiveness of writing by its emotional appeal, as in these comments on the fiction model, *The Burglary*:

It made you quite sort of tense. (School 8)

You like felt for the boy Callum, like you felt really sorry for him and his family, that they've had such a nice day and it was ruined by the burglar. (School 6)

Where it said, 'that was the first thing that set the alarm bell ringing. I felt a slight pang of fear', it's got the cliffhanger and it makes your heart go woo, and pump a bit. (School 4)

For many students, improving writing was seen in terms of strengthening its emotive impact, and this was applied to both their own writing and to the text model:

I would've wrote more about the, the, how it made you feel. (School 25)

(I'm) trying to get a picture of the fire in the reader's mind so that they could sort of be worried by it and sort of think how will people put it out and what will happen. (School 6)

(It could) describe a bit more about the family, describe what he saw and how he felt... (School 28)

The strongest thread in students' comments about fiction writing related to clarity of meaning, in terms of the credibility or realism of characters and situations. For some, their evaluation consisted of paraphrasing and commenting on the 'literal' meaning of the text, as here:

He like goes in and opens the latched door and he's like what's that and his mum tells him to go to the other side and you see that he's like wow and then they go to the back door and they realise they've been burgled and they're all like upset. I think it's quite clever. (School 19)

'Brutally smashed' must mean that they've hit it with some force so the glass has shattered all the way in... it gives you like precise times precise feelings, like the time and when his mum was shaking as she opened the door. I think that's really effective. (School 3)

In this kind of mental processing of the story, students seemed to be judging it by how well they could understand or relate to events and characters, on how 'real' the text was for them, for example:

I think it's really successful how they started it nice and cheery about the family and their reunion so obviously they've just had like a happy weekend and it's just stopped completely, the happiness just ended in one line. (School 4)

I don't think he would have said 'What a devious chap'. I think he'd have been sort of more shocked and sort of just stuttering and not

being able to speak. I don't think he'd of said that, in that circumstance. (School 10)

Students often suggested improvements to their own writing which aimed to help the reader visualise the setting or better understand characters' motivation or reactions to situations, for example:

'Suddenly there was a jerk from underneath him. His raft went flying up' doesn't really say what made the raft go flying up, and I think I should have added in a little bit more about what actually did happen to the boy. (School 6)

I'd quite like to lengthen it a bit because um...the end bit sounds a bit like he's going to die and that's it, so I'd like to make it seem as if he might not be over and there might be something that could save me, like I saw a plane or something that could save me, but the way I've put it, it makes it seem like I'm going to die and that's it. (School 21)

Another important test of good fiction writing for students was how well it engaged the reader's interest, especially in the opening few sentences, summed up by the student from School 3:

If you have like a poor start then they're going to think well this is going to be a rubbish story and that's it.

Reactions to the text model differed in this respect. Some students found the opening to *The Burglary* "all a bit obvious", "not like an adult would write it"; others were puzzled by the way it started factually with a date and wondered if it was a newspaper report rather than a story. It was perfectly possible for students to hold opposing opinions about the effectiveness of the opening, with one commenting: "There's a mystery to it and also it makes you want to read on" (School 11) and another (School 27) concluding: "It doesn't come to my attention much, I mean, didn't want to read on... you just want it to get to the thing".

Students' suggestions for improving their own fiction writing often reflected their intention to make it more exciting and interesting for the reader, but almost all comments in this respect were centred on word choices. Specific words were

often invested with the power to transform or elevate writing, as in this boy's explanation of his redrafted story:

...the way it's saying it 'raged through the forest' and all the describing words and 'destroying everything in its path', you can just imagine it sort of running along sort of thing, and um the people, also the people in it like fleeing, running in all directions, and the fact that there was no one trying to put water on it because it wouldn't stop it, it wouldn't help it, I think that bit's quite good. (School 9)

This seems to exemplify what one student (School 8) referred to as word choices that "leave a bit of room for your imagination"! Other students were keen to try out what they had recently learnt:

I would describe some of the verbs a bit more with adverbs like we learnt today...'He must have realised this as he began to splash his way forward towards the beach', I could have added in something before splash, like, 'He must have realised this as he began to frantically splash his way towards the beach'; that would make it a bit more interesting, and, yeah, it describes the verb so like instead of just being boring it like adds more interest to it. (School 6)

However, students' suggested changes at word level did not always improve the quality of their writing, as here:

I could use more words to describe what's happening instead of just words that, just plain words like, err, 'I was, umm, kicking my legs back and forth', you can say 'I was hastily moving my legs back and forth'. (School 5)

Although the Intervention scheme of work concentrated on noun and verb choices for precision of meaning, the student's comment here reflects a common apprehension that writing would be improved by adding adjectives and adverbs and this remained one of students' main strategies for engaging reader interest: having suggested the addition of an adverb, the student in School 6 decided:

maybe I should have added something to describe the beach as well, because that would have made it a bit more interesting, like 'towards

the sunny beach'...that would have made it more exciting and the reader would have found it more interesting.

In their focus on “adding in” words, students did not always follow the logic of their own writing. The student above had already described the water as “calm” and commented that she wanted to hint at the danger to come by presenting a contrast with “splashing”. Adding “sunny” seems comparatively heavy-handed.

Prompted to discuss word-level features of the text models, students most often picked out as effective the same individual words, usually adjectives, followed by verbs and adverbs, which might suggest that these word classes are better understood than others, for example, “If you want to describe something, make it worse than it sounds, you use an adverb, like ‘brutally’ smashed” (School 16). Comments suggested that students particularly noticed how these words were used by writers. For example, one student explained:

If you're writing a very action sort of thing I think you need a lot of suspense, so short sentences, quite a few adjectives, um a lot of adverbs, definitely: running quickly, things like that, or if you're doing a very slow story then you need a lot more adjectives, less adverbs and more mystery to it. (School 17)

The phrase ‘sturdy solid gate’ was picked out as effective description in *The Burglary* with the suggestion that the text would be improved with more use of adjectives; another student (School 5) suggested using more adverbs, “words that make it good to start a sentence, like ‘suddenly’.”

6.2.2. Understanding of genre conventions

There was evidence of students using their understanding of genre conventions to form judgements about good writing and to suggest improvements to the text model. Although only two students referred directly to the adventure genre that informed the scheme of work, a number talked about plot features they admired in ‘suspense’ or ‘action’ stories, drawing on their wider reading experience in making judgements. One student for example said, “I like twists and something that you don’t expect to happen” an antidote to the predictability of lots of stories she had read. Another felt that the beginning of stories were the predictable, “always the boring bit”:

because nothing really happens in the beginning. It introduces the story; once you get to the main bit of the story then it gets more interesting and exciting to me personally. (School 6)

The same student thought that a good ending to the story, a “cliff-hanger” was the best part as it made you think about what was going to happen next, while another two students commented that they would rather start a story by getting straight into the action or “doing speech” or starting “at the middle of something”; one recalled the “five stages” plot he evidently knew from previous teaching and another thought a useful device for “putting suspense in stories” was to “ask the readers a question”. Three others referred to plot structure in which the story was gradually built up, “giving the reader clues that something is going to happen but not giving away what’s going to happen”, drawing on experience of stories which “keep it tucked up”.

Several students used their understanding of plot and structure to suggest very detailed improvements to the text, some of which were linked directly to their learning about voice and viewpoint in the fiction scheme. For example, a number suggested using a flashback narrative technique to make the start of the story more interesting and sound less like a diary:

I’d do it flashback... like, mum and dad are at the police station, and it just keeps going on and on in my head. (School 27)

Some thought the story would be improved by telling it from a different viewpoint:

I think I would do it so that it was like, from perhaps, not the actual family’s point of view, so it was like someone else was watching them. (School 15)

Some wanted to add detail to slow down the action: “not just saying it had been burgled, but building up to that”, making the story “more sinister” with the addition of details about “the smashed stuff, maybe with the stuff strewn on the floor” (School 10). A student who had just been writing a suspense story where the action was deliberately slowed, suggested a similar technique for the model: “he could have tried to do more of the offering signposts that something isn’t

well because it just went straight to the, you know, like the climax of it” (School 29).

There were some interesting differences in the way that students viewed the three genres taught in the *Grammar for Writing?* study and to an extent this seemed to impact on suggestions for improving writing. Poetry caused the most difficulty for students, which one summed up by saying: “I haven’t done poetry enough to know if it’s good or bad” (School 7). Students’ evaluation of poetry was much less secure than other genres. One student specifically stated that “there are no rules in poetry” (School 2); another that poetry “lets you run a bit free with it, to read what you want to read basically, to think what you want to think” (School 5). There was an expectation that a poem “doesn’t always make complete sense...it sometimes doesn’t always flow like a story would” (School 8); its meaning was “undercover” (School 27); “sneaky” (School 24); “like a puzzle” (School 28). The fact that poetry played with meanings and word choices was “really creative” (School 2) but made it more difficult to write than other genres, since:

You’ve got to think about the words you’re using because with stories they sort of come out and you don’t use as much of a vocabulary in stories, but in these there’s lots and lots of different words, but they’re words that you wouldn’t usually find in other types of writing.

(School 16)

Since so much depended on word choices, more revision was needed when writing poetry: “some words when you put them together don’t make the right meaning or anything” so that “you have to change lots of words, maybe start again” (School 28). Perhaps as a consequence, evaluation of their own poetry writing and of the text models was very largely focused on word choices and their semantic meanings.

Writing fiction was cited by many students as their favourite kind of writing but it was also seen as less straightforward than writing to argue and persuade, as this student explained:

With a story there’s so many other things you need to think about but with argumentative writing it’s just emotive language and being able

to really believe in what you say and just using the devices to put it on paper in a nice way that sounds good. (School 15)

Argument was evidently a familiar genre for many students, with a number saying that they “already knew” techniques such as repetition, rhetorical questions and rule of three. One student gave a sophisticated explanation of its purpose:

It's not you trying to get them hooked on a book or something, it's you trying to make them believe what you believe and trying to win them over with things like rhetorical questions and like repetition... in a formal argument you're trying to get other people on your side instead of trying to beat the other person down verbally. (School 11)

Some students found argument writing more constraining than fiction writing: “If you're writing a story you can make things up whereas when you're writing arguments you have to find all these facts”. The opinion was expressed that “in a story it's all in your head” whereas “in an argument lots of people know about it so you've got to make it right.” There was also an awareness that style mattered just as much as content, so that not only was there pressure to “see both sides” but also “to think about ways to write.” In order to persuade people, “you've got to think of really strong words and phrases to say it, to make it effective.”

In commenting on the text model, students' strong conception of the purpose of argument may have enabled them to focus more clearly on text structure and organisation; comments here were more confident than for poetry and fiction, for example:

The organisation is good and it doesn't just scatter everything around, it just makes one paragraph about one point that they have. (School 22)

It's saying really awful right at the beginning and we should do something about it, and then right at the end it's saying that we should do something about it, now. (School 5)

They've put the important points at the top and important points at the bottom and in the middle they've kind of tried to persuade you it's bad. They've put a summary of the whole kind of speech in a couple

of sentences at the end which is good, kind of refreshes your memory. (School 8)

Suggested improvements to the argument text model also revealed students' understanding of rhetorical techniques, even if they were not always able to express their ideas completely fluently and perhaps because they were familiar and confident with features of the genre, comments were more clearly focused on stylistic effects at sentence level, with some sophistication. The following student for example, showed at least a partial grasp of the concept of sentence patterning for rhetorical effect:

All they do is sit in an empty room and do nothing except sit and do nothing': they put 'nothing' twice in that sentence and it doesn't sound very good, it doesn't sound like they've got a very wide range of vocabulary, so they could put, 'All they do is sit in an empty room and all they do is sit and do nothing' because then they wouldn't have put 'nothing' twice. (School 17)

The suggested change is not just about avoiding boring words; the student is able to recognise the power of rhetorical repetition, evidenced again in this suggested improvement:

They could expand on that, 'Surely a home is no different from a boarding school?' They could say like, 'Some children are miserable at boarding school so why should the elderly be miserable at a home?' (School 12)

The sophistication here lies in the deliberate repetition of the emotive adjective but also in the balance created by the repeated sentence patterning.

6.2.3 Limited or formulaic responses

Students in the single case study intervention were asked for suggestions of how to improve writing in response to an open-ended prompt and a sample of Year 8 fiction writing. The consistency of their responses was marked, as was their limited nature, both in range and detail. The prompts rarely drew out extended comment; most responses were single words or very short phrases, typical examples being "better punctuation"; "spelling"; "add more paragraphs"; "describe it better". Five students simply recorded, "don't know" and three

related improving writing to personal effort. Suggesting improvements to rank order samples provided a clearer context, but again the range of strategies and their purpose were limited (see Appendix 20a). In discussion, students focused on surface changes, such as substituting one word for another, and on specific aspects of technical accuracy, with the writer of Story 2 criticised for not using paragraphs and the writer of Story 1 advised to improve spelling. Students may have found group discussion and formal feedback inhibiting, but they also seemed to find it hard to expand suggestions beyond comments such as, “it needs a better opening”; “it should have better punctuation”; “connectives would make it more interesting”, so that it was difficult to know what students meant by these comparative terms. They also found it difficult to physically locate examples in the text and it could be that features that drew most comment, such as the use of ellipsis in Story 1, were those that were easier to locate quickly.

The data also suggested that students were drawing on a number of stock understandings about improving writing, without discrimination as to text type or writing purpose. One such ‘formulaic’ response was students’ faith in the transformative power of connectives, with the suggestion that writing could be improved by “adding more connectives” or “using different connectives”, which presumably referred to range and variety. Students’ responses also suggested a preoccupation with certain technical aspects of writing, in this case spelling, which might have prevented them from noticing other, more fundamental, aspects of the writing, such as whether the ideas in Story 1 actually made sense.

There were many examples of similar formulaic responses when students in the *Grammar for Writing?* project detailed ways of improving their own or their peers’ writing. The notion that writing could be improved by ‘adding more’ was commonplace, and often the first or main response made by students, as here, in the context of students’ suggested changes to their own fiction writing:

I could have put some things in, some things like some more shorter sentences, some shorter more powerful sentences with some more powerful words in there. (School 16)

I'd probably put more short sentences in it, and I'd describe the fire more, and I'd describe the wood more, and stuff. (School 30)

I might change it to something like 'rotten old, freezing cold', I don't know, like give it a bit more, describe it a bit more than just saying they were cold. (School 23)

In terms of 'adding more', students commonly did not distinguish between techniques or suggest precise effects, so that a fairly typical 'strategy' for improving writing was presented as a random mix or "Whatever you've learned, put it all in" (School 24):

I've learned how to pad out my story to make it more interesting, and the different sort of works like metaphors...now I know how to sort of, make my story longer and more interesting and all the twists and, umm, similes as well...you can refer back and write the techniques you've learnt, so instead of just like trying to write well, you can add things in as well to make it better. (School 10)

However, by far the most common formula for improving writing was the addition of short sentences, and for the Year 8 writers in the study, this emerged as the magic wand of writing improvement. One student (School 9) had picked up his teacher's advice to use a one-word sentence (advice which his teacher in interview explained was derived from GCSE examiners' reports, which she used as a "recipe" with students). He explained:

One word sentence is just like for a rhetorical question, like if you've got a bit and then you say, 'Why?' it's a quite good effect.

Another student seemed to be echoing similar teacher advice when he commented on the argument text model:

Most of them are quite long, there's not three word sentences or anything like that but some of them are quite short, so there is a little bit of variety...so like a long passage and then you stop with a short ending, it's quite impactful, I think. (School 21)

A third student (School 7) suggested a main revision strategy for his fiction writing: "if I look back on it and there's loads of long sentences, think of ways to shorten the sentences" but he was less confident about explaining the purpose:

Interviewer: *What would be the point of putting more short sentences in?*

Student: *It's kind of like for effect...I can't explain what type of effect it is...I don't have a clue.*

Interestingly, students had different ideas about the impact of short sentences in fiction. The idea that short sentences “create tension” or “create suspense” was commonplace, but opinions differed as to how they did this: two students expressed opposite opinions, one believing that a short sentence increased the pace of the action, making you read faster to find out what might happen, and another thinking that it slowed down the action, so that a series of short sentences made you pause and look back on what had just happened.

6.2.4 Difficulty explaining effects

Each writing conversation typically lasted for around 40 minutes; students were prompted to explore texts in detail and verbalise their understanding of quite challenging concepts, some of which, such as the emphasis on punctuation in the poetry scheme, often represented new learning. Unsurprisingly, there were several examples of students' struggles to explain text effectiveness, especially where this stemmed from conceptual or grammatical misunderstandings, where recent learning was not quite consolidated. For some, this was the case with the concepts of voice and viewpoint in the fiction scheme. Some students confused 'voice' with 'tense'. Another (School 5) gave clear examples of how first and third person voices sounded and his opinion of the advantages of each choice:

If a story's like umm, say a birthday party, it's better to write in third person, because you get everybody's view of it, and umm if say a romantic novel, you can do it from like one person's view of what's happening around them, so you create more, umm, feelings.

But he then seemed to get confused about the whole concept of 'person' when trying to further explain the advantages:

The first person is thinking umm, what's happening, but the other person knows, then there's a bit of err, confrontation between them, so then err, like in the middle of a story they err, have like a fight, and you can actually see what's happening between them but err, the other person knows more than he's letting on.”

'Person' seems to have shifted from grammatical concept to an actual body in the course of the student's explanation! Nor was it easy to gauge the conceptual understanding of the student who explained narrative viewpoint:

how different words can like go through different audiences, so like from one side of the story you can see it, and from the other side you can see the other story but people can see both sides as well.

(School 4)

Perhaps she was trying to explain the idea of an omniscient narrator, as this student seemed to be: "If it's like the narrative viewpoint they know everything, like what's happened before, what's going to happen" (School 6).

One clear finding from analysis of writing conversations with students was their willingness to engage in discussion about language choices despite the fact of finding effects hard to explain. This has important consequences for the classroom, not least in finding time within lessons for students to rehearse and clarify their conceptual understandings. Less clear is the role that terminology might play in helping students explain text effectiveness. There were examples of students forgetting or confusing terms, especially word classes, which distracted them from attempts to explain effects. There were examples of students misapplying terminology, especially in mislabelling sentence types, and there were examples of students demonstrating linguistic understanding without using correct terms, for example the student who identified emotive adjectives and adverbs from his persuasive writing and clearly explained why they were powerful choices in terms of impact on the reader, but referred to them as "verb things". Conversely, there were a number of students who confidently used linguistic and literary terminology but without evident understanding.

6.2.5 Students' linguistic subject knowledge

There were many suggestions that students' understanding of how to improve the quality of writing was constrained by insecure grammatical knowledge. Students were in common agreement that 'good writing' uses a variety of sentences and that to improve as writers they should vary their sentences (and use varied punctuation) but they also showed partial or insecure understanding

of how to achieve this. Poetry proved especially problematic, with a number of students unable to establish patterns in the punctuation of the text models or discuss effects of punctuation choices in their own writing. Since they were fundamentally unsure of how a sentence was structured, line endings in poetry threw them completely. One student explained that a sentence in poetry was marked by “a full stop and a capital letter on a new line...maybe like drop a line or something, half way through” and the concepts of ‘line’ and ‘sentence’ were easily confused:

Interviewer: *Would you say this one’s written in sentences?*

Student *No, just little chunks.*

Interviewer: *What makes a sentence then?*

Student: *A full stop, just the full stop I think.*

Interviewer: *So anything with a full stop at the end of it is a sentence?*

Student: *No, hmm, I didn’t think of that, um, I’m not sure.*

Students’ stock understanding was that a comma marked a smaller pause or “breather” than a full stop but this was again confused by the poetry models, where commas appeared both within and at the end of lines, or as one student put it “used too many commas” with “too many stops and starts...too bitty”.

A number of students demonstrated a lack of grammatical understanding of how sentences are structured, with a consequent lack of control over boundary punctuation. Even when an example of a simple sentence was located in the text model, and there was some explanation of its effect, the extent of students’ grammatical awareness was unclear:

Sometimes when you’ve got really short sentences that can work well, like, ‘We were shocked into silence.’ If you put a comma there it would...I think that’s just a good sentence on its own without having to put anything next to it.

There might be some recognition here that the sentence is effective because of the clarity of its structure (one clause for one idea) and that its emphasis would be lost by expanding it to a complex sentence using a comma followed by subordinate clause. However, such an understanding does not come across convincingly and it sounds as though this student thinks commas and full stops serve essentially the same function, a view held by a number of students, one

of whom (School 2) put the choice down to a matter of personal preference, explaining:

I don't particularly like full stops, I prefer commas. When it's the end of a sentence, it's not like much is going to happen next but when there's a comma you think, oh, something's going to happen next.

Consequently, one of her strategies for improving the excitement and interest of fiction writing was to quicken the pace of the action by using commas rather than full stops.

Although several students knew that a complex sentence included a subordinate clause, their understanding of subordination remained insecure. As with their definitions of a comma, several seemed to be merely repeating what they had heard from teachers:

Most of what I know is that a subordinate clause doesn't make sense on its own.

However, this was not always sufficient information to consolidate understanding. The following student (School 29), discussing the fiction writing he had just completed, correctly picked out an example of a subordinate clause and showed awareness that it could be placed differently in the sentence:

'Ambling towards the lockers, she pulled the bathrobe over her bathing suit': 'ambling towards the lockers' makes it into a complex sentence because you couldn't just have a sentence that was 'ambling towards the lockers'...you can put it anywhere in the sentence: you can sometimes put it in the middle and then you can put it at the end.

However, from other comments made by the same student, it became clear that his understanding of clause grammar was not completely secure:

I think a simple sentence and a short sentence are just the same but some people say it's short and some people say it's simple...It's quite hard to find compound sentences but there's a little one, not a massive one, the last line: 'It's horrible because,' it's like got a comma and then carries on which Miss has taught us that's a sort of

compound sentence, where it's got a comma, then 'but they are' and like put a bit of something after...

His comments suggest a conflation of the concepts of sentence structure and sentence length, a lingering confusion about the difference between a compound and complex sentence and a lack of clarity about differences in their grammatical structure. The student here went on to outline the ways in which he thought he could improve his writing by “playing around with the sentences and playing around with the order, so I've got more different sentence openings and stuff”. However, one might question whether his grammatical knowledge is sound enough for him to make such changes in a controlled and deliberate way.

6.2.6 Summary

In writing lessons, for the purpose of improving writing, some teachers were able to make firm contextual links for students by referring to key concepts for evaluating quality. Chiefly, they framed writing as being effective for its specified audience and purpose, in order to establish clear success criteria for the task and to evaluate outcomes. Less successfully, the concepts of effectiveness and variety were referred to in a generalised and somewhat formulaic way that did not clearly link features to specific purposes and effects and might have left students unsure about how to improve their writing. This was particularly pertinent in relation to advice given at the point of writing and to feedback on writing.

Effective pedagogy observed in writing lessons included well-focused and frequently-practised peer evaluation; use of text models, including annotation of successful features, and teacher modelling of writing. In many classrooms, collaborative talk was made central to the process of improving writing, used for example to generate ideas and rehearse writing decisions. Pair and group talk was also used to extend students' evaluative skills, with the focus on weighing the impact on the reader of different language choices.

Students' strategies for improving writing were closely allied to the concept of strengthening the effect of the text on the reader, although students understood this in a variety of ways and, in this study, seemed more confident about

judging and improving argument and fiction writing than poetry. There were strong indications that students' confidence in explaining text effectiveness and suggesting specific improvements to texts was constrained by weak conceptual and grammatical understanding, especially at sentence level.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION

7.1 Introduction: restating the research problem

The central research problem that this study set out to investigate has been summed up by Sadler (1989:127) as the issue of “how to draw the concept of excellence out of the heads of teachers, give it some external formulation, and make it available to the learner.” Teachers in the study clearly recognised this conundrum, as the following response indicates:

You can check and say you have used full stops because this is the rule, and you have used capital letters because this is the rule; it's a lot harder to say, you know, that's a good story because I enjoyed it, because someone else might say, actually I didn't enjoy that...like Tish said in today's lesson, "cat chases" and Aaron said, "no, cat catches is better" and actually how do you quantify which is better? Because a lot of the focus is on what's assessable and what your targets can be set on, it's very rare to set a target for, you know, to write an enjoyable story, because how do you realise whether you've achieved it...I don't know whether it was like that when I was at school, and we didn't have quantifiable targets, but I don't know whether it's affected these guys because I guess right from being in primary school with having SATs and assessments and stuff, everything is on what can you physically quantify, and that's the easiest thing to set them targets for. We might know in our heads that actually I want them to be being creative and x, y and z, but how do you actually get that across to them? (School 18)

Sadler's “non-trivial problem” has been re-presented here from the perspective of a teacher in the first year of her career, in the context of teaching poetry to her class of twelve and thirteen year olds, and it is an important feature of this research that teachers' and students' own words have been reported as extensively as possible. The study did not aim to test out a pre-existing model of the links between writing theory, pedagogy and evaluation because such a model does not exist; instead, theoretical insights have been generated from participants' subjective accounts and from observations of approaches to “naturally-occurring entangled judgement conditions associated with students'

written work in the teacher's classroom context and the institutional and pedagogical contexts in which the writing was produced" (Wyatt-Smith et al., 2003).

In her own words, the teacher in School 18 is referencing many of the themes that are found in the research literature relating to classroom assessment of writing. She highlights the subjectivity of judgements about quality, her own and her students', and points to how intersubjective understandings are formed and meaning negotiated in the writing classroom, often through unplanned verbal exchanges, as this one about word choices and their effects. She has indicated the difficulty of defining and evaluating 'non-quantifiable' qualities of writing, such as whether a story is 'enjoyable', and suggested a tension between holistic judgement of the overall quality of a piece of writing and a judgement of its discrete qualities, 'countable' properties such as correct spelling or accurately punctuated sentences. She has identified that what she personally values in the context of her own classroom, such as children's creativity, might be at odds with, or compromised by, the emphasis in her department and school on 'assessable' skills and targets, and that this is part of a wider concern about a test-driven curriculum, and the cumulative effects on students' motivation and development as writers. However, she also recognises the difficulty of making tacit 'in-the-head' beliefs about good writing, and imprecise concepts such as 'creativity', explicit to students in a way that they will understand.

The voices of participants in this study have, in many respects, confirmed the findings of previous research or theorisations about evaluating the quality of writing. As a summary, the findings suggest a strong awareness of the difficulty of defining "the concept of excellence" and of determining what constitutes progression in writing, and teachers were conscious of a number of conceptual and evaluative ambiguities here, often experiencing a tension between personal and official constructs of quality. Participants' individual perspectives, and the range and diversity of responses, have provided rich and nuanced detail to these themes. The study has also confirmed the centrality and importance of writing as a social practice in the secondary school classroom, providing a vivid picture of the writing classroom as a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) with

students and teachers attempting to forge a common understanding of what good writing is, and what a good writer does, in the joint enterprise of improving writing. Teachers in this study clearly valued school writing, many of them applying to students' work the same criteria for quality that they applied to the work of published authors. Students clearly positioned themselves as active readers of each other's texts and wrote with a strong conception, and expectation, of how their writing might be received. The fact that writing clearly mattered to teachers and students is in itself an important finding. The state of writing in secondary schools is often constructed negatively in public discourse; writing is bundled with reading into 'literacy standards', which are deemed to be falling, and failing the nation in relation to global achievement; hence the headline in response to findings from a recent OECD study: "England's young adults trail world in literacy and maths" (BBC online news, 9th October 2013). This study is important in giving weight to the voices of young writers in secondary schools and these have provided valuable pointers towards developing an effective pedagogy for improving writing, which includes addressing common areas of misconception or weak understanding.

The rest of this chapter is organised to expand on significant themes in the findings that help answer the principal research questions:

How do teachers and students conceptualise quality in writing?

How might teachers and students use their understandings of writing quality for the purpose of improving writing?

7.2 Conceptualisations of quality in writing

7.2.1 Complexity and variation

Previous conceptualisations of writing and evaluation as complex acts were confirmed from the perspectives of participants in this study. While most teachers had ready answers to the question of what makes good writing, they were clearly aware that descriptions of quality and evaluation of their students' work were subject to a range of complicating factors. The concept that good writing is too complex for features to be itemised meaningfully (Sadler, 1989) or delineated generically (Marshall, 2007) was echoed almost directly by those teachers in the study who spoke of quality in writing as essentially indefinable,

such as the teacher in School 11 who suggested, “If you sit with something which is a high quality piece, a well written piece, then you can tell that it is...but it would be impossible to write a description of it because there are so many ways in which it could be approached.” Sadler’s (1987) view that the qualities of a piece of writing are rarely unambiguously present or absent but almost always matters of degree, were reflected by teachers and students who recognised the inherent variability of the concept of quality. For some, this was evident from the “balancing act” needed to weigh different features or qualities of a text, in order to come to an overall judgement of its worth. For others, judgement depended on which features of the genre or of the task they wanted to prioritise for reward. Students also recognised that judgement depended on text type or task, and factors such as familiarity with genre conventions. For example, several found it hard to judge sentence and punctuation effects in poems because they had never before looked at this aspect of poetry. Thus, “it depends” was a legitimate answer to the question of what makes good writing, with evaluation in this instance dependent on prior knowledge and experience.

There was also recognition that what ‘getting better’ in writing amounts to is difficult to pin down. Progression has been characterised as moving towards a broad horizon rather than achieving discrete goals (Marshall & Wiliam, 2002; Marshall, 2004) with the suggestion that teachers themselves are not always clear about the goals, partly because there are so many different potential purposes of English. Teachers in the study certainly recognised this complexity. Several spoke of the difficulty of weighing the relative merits of the writing process, including the thought and planning that had gone into the work, with the finished product, a judgement of which depended for some on extra-textual features, such as whether the student had taken a risk or how independently the work had been completed. It was noticeable that teachers’ conceptualisations of ‘a good teacher of writing’ included a greater number of ‘child-centred’ references, such as the need to foster self-esteem and confidence, than references to the explicit teaching of writing skills. This may highlight, as does Wiliam (in Marshall & Wiliam, 2002:53) that part of the reason why writing is a “complex integrated activity” is that much of its content is constructed through social interaction in which teachers are concerned with

young people's cognitive and communicative development. Thus a Maths or Science teacher might concentrate on teaching Maths or Science but "English teachers tend to be English teachers of children". A number of teachers in the study expressed the view that "writing is traumatic for some children", one consequence of which was hesitancy in giving specific feedback on errors or suggesting improvements, in case this was received as demotivating criticism. In viewing themselves as writers, students also linked 'good writing' to factors from "the social and cultural part of the group" as one teacher put it. They cited the importance of effort, behaviour, motivation and self-belief, as suggested by the girl who said, "My teacher told me I could be a good writer so I thought, 'I'll try.'"

This study did not investigate teachers' marking or moderation practice, based either on their own criteria or with reference to standardised assessment criteria, as other studies have done (Wyatt-Smith, 1999; Wyatt-Smith & Castleton, 2004; 2005). This Australian research emphasised the complex interplay of textual and extra-textual criteria drawn on in teachers' judgement of writing, and stressed that 'child factors', such as perceptions of individual effort, or growth in confidence, often carried more weight than the presence or absence of features of writing specified in the standards. In the present study, information about 'beliefs in practice' is limited, and beliefs expressed in interview were not always expanded on or exemplified so need to be treated with caution. However, while the study has not indicated how, in practice, teachers might weight or reward the 'child factors' they rated as important, nor how criteria such as "conscious thought" or "willingness to try" might be clarified for students as success criteria, it was clear that for several teachers the value placed on particular extra-textual criteria was central to their professional identity and the culture of their classroom.

Where this was so, these non-standardised, personal 'ways of knowing' achievement were invested with considerable emotional charge, confirming views of evaluation as emotional practice (Steinberg, 2008) and of response to student texts as a contextual act which strikes to the heart of personal values and classroom relationships (Phelps, 2000; Edgington, 2005). Where the

Australian studies showed evidence of variation of judgement from moment-to-moment for individual teachers, the findings of the present study suggest internal consistency in how teachers conceptualised and described good writing over the course of an academic year. Reporting patterns and consistencies in terms of personal constructs has suggested that particular constructs of quality, especially those that privilege students' creativity, self-expression and personal voice are predicated on calling forth, and drawing out, affective responses to texts, so that the espoused 'currency of quality' for these teachers (for example in Schools 2, 5, 9, 23, 29) was palpably different than expressions of quality made by teachers who gave greater value to the clarity of communication and appropriateness for audience and purpose (for example in Schools 7, 11, 16, 21). There is no way of knowing from the present study how conscious teachers might be of these personal constructs nor of determining the nature of the influences that might shape dominant views of quality or the degree to which they might be open to change. The findings offer tentative suggestions that teachers whose construct of quality foregrounds creative self-expression may find it more difficult to match this with the official construct of quality embodied in published assessment criteria, especially high-stakes summative criteria. For some, this means that evaluation of writing quality is an act of compromise and a source of tension in which they seek to "bend the criteria" in order to reward personally-valued qualities in writing or valued aspects of the writer.

There are also tentative suggestions from lesson observations that personal constructs of quality may be influential on classroom discourse around quality. As one example, the teacher in School 9 who primarily valued creative, emotionally-engaging writing, conveyed these values in the classroom by sharing her own writing with students and giving personal examples of how she gathered and crafted her ideas. She adapted Intervention lesson plans to allow more time for discussion of students' work; she motivated through her own enthusiasm for crafting writing, emphasising the power of vocabulary, and she encouraged students to experiment and take risks with language, using peer partners as 'critical friends'. In interview and through annotations on his writing, her student clearly reflected these values, speaking of the power of word choices, the excitement of "trying out" new forms of expression and of judging

the impact of his writing by peer reaction. The teacher was also well aware of conflicts and ambiguities between her personal construct of quality and the model of achievement embodied in high-stakes assessment criteria and examiners' reports, which she used as "a recipe" for writing with her classes, drilling them to use techniques such as varied sentence openings, semi-colons, a one-word sentence fragment or a one-sentence paragraph for impact. Her Year 8 student mentioned these "tricks" and showed examples of attempts to use them in his writing, commenting, for example, that his "magnificent" use of a semi-colon was something a GCSE examiner might look for.

Teachers in other classrooms presented similarly coherent values and goals, though with markedly different emphases. There is no intention in this study to promote one construct above another in terms of effectiveness or to present variation as a problem in itself; several teachers drew attention to the likelihood of different answers to the question of what makes 'good writing'. However, the study found marked variation between teachers' conceptualisations of quality, and presenting this in the form of personal constructs has helped to give some shape to the variation and perhaps begin to account for it. It could be that teachers' own constructs of quality have the potential to be shared with students as an "external formulation" of the concept of quality, an expression of 'local' knowledge which can be made available to the learner and which might be more accessible than the 'global' view of quality presented in published criteria. The model of factors influencing judgement which has been proposed by Wyatt-Smith et al. (2003: 27) stresses the dynamic interplay of various "available indexes" that teachers might draw on in evaluating the worth of a text, and it could be useful to see teachers' personal constructs of quality as an addition to this model, and an influence on classroom negotiated understandings of 'good writing'. In this sense, there is much to be gained in legitimising and bringing to the fore teachers' personal 'ways of knowing'.

7.2.2 Conceptual and evaluative ambiguities

Research has characterised evaluation as subject to ambiguity and disagreement (Broad, 2000; Lumley, 2002; Brooks, 2009) and there was certainly evidence of this in the study. The fact that teachers were asked to

describe their own quality indicators and then to comment on how well they matched statutory criteria may have prompted a focus on conflicting elements or ambiguities. Nonetheless, the findings suggest a number of key areas of difficulty. Whilst teachers and students were well aware of the subjectivity of “personal taste” in terms of reading and writing preferences, and this was mostly presented as a fact of classroom life, part of its diversity, rather than a problem, there were a few indications that subjectivities might inhibit or limit response. Some teachers were aware of an imbalance or bias in their teaching, in terms of neglecting or favouring particular genres, although this was seen as both strength and weakness. For example, the teacher who had chosen English teaching as a career in order to be able to read and write fiction felt that these enthusiasms inspired her teaching; another recognised a strong preference for “creative writing” over factual informative texts but thought this was probably typical of English teachers and part of their essential “passion” for the subject. In contrast, another teacher worried that she lacked creativity compared with others in her department and realised that she shied away from writing poetry with students; this seemed to be borne out by the experience of the student in her class who said he had not done enough poetry to be able to judge it. Others lacked confidence in modelling writing for students or felt that they taught badly genres that they did not like, such as the teacher who forced himself to write poetry in order to explain poetry writing to students.

There was some indication from the study that subjective views of quality in writing directly impacted on the choice of resources and activities which made up the classroom writing curriculum. One important way in which English teachers mediate standards in the classroom is through their choice of texts, which act as models of quality for students. Wiliam (in Marshall & Wiliam, 2002:52) draws attention to the uniqueness of English as a subject in that it has no content other than “doing English”, that is, engaging in authentic activity as readers and writers and sharing that experience with students. That such activity is the heart of English teachers’ “curricular philosophy” (ibid) or “subject philosophies” (Marshall, 2001:42) was made plain by the teacher who said:

Art is something about enriching your life, and poetry and words have enriched my life so much I can't imagine living a life without that, and I want that to be in somebody else's life as well. (School 26)

It was noticeable from interviews and lesson observations that some teachers more than others gave a very clear account of their subject or curricular philosophy and conveyed their “personal tastes” strongly in the classroom, for example the three teachers who offered their own poetry and fiction writing for peer assessment and who gave consistent messages to students about the power of vocabulary. Their teaching style was driven by enthusiasm and excitement for what words can do and references to “empowerment” were common. In a few other classrooms, teachers’ curricular philosophy was much less clear, with some negativities apparent, such as the teacher who expressed an irritation with grammar or the teacher who offered very weak models of poems for imitation.

Given that recent reforms to the national curriculum have been deliberately designed to give more curriculum and assessment freedoms to teachers, the question of how “individual taste” might be related to pedagogy and evaluation is worth further investigation. There were certainly indications in this study that teachers were aware of personal preferences for genres or forms of writing that might influence their judgement of quality and that these “personal tastes” were integral to their identity as teachers: indeed, for English teachers more than other subject teachers, it could be said that they form an essential element to teachers’ “personal practical knowledge” (Clandinin, 1985). For example, it would be surprising to ask a Maths teacher about their personal reading preferences, whereas for English teachers this is a standard interview question. Thus the question of how teaching and learning in the English classroom might be influenced by subjective preferences is worth taking seriously.

However, a much more fundamental ambiguity and conflict arising from the study concerned the ‘trustworthiness’ of judgements referenced to standardised criteria. Much of the research into teacher judgement of writing has been carried out in the context of high-stakes writing assessment where the issue is one of rater reliability in applying a fixed set of criteria to students’ work in order to

determine ability in writing. Thus variation in judgement has been cast in a negative light, as something to be avoided, or at least minimised, for example by explicitly defining the nature of the writing skills to be assessed in scoring rubrics and applying them to standardised writing tasks. An often-cited difficulty lies in reconciling disparity between different elements; Lumley (2002) cites as an example where the writing was clear and coherent but not fully relevant to the task set; in such a case, raters gave different weight to the contradictory judgements they had to deal with and so the marking was inconsistent. Teachers in this study certainly recognised from their own marking experience that the quality of the whole “amounts to more than the sum of its parts” (Sadler, 1989:124) which calls for holistic judgements that cannot always be precisely referenced to specific features or that require tricky decisions about which features to weight above others. In high-stakes testing, of course, where decisions are made on single pieces of writing that contribute to the final grade, teachers may feel considerable pressure to ‘get it right’ for the student.

However, teachers in the study had contrasting views about this aspect of complexity. Positively, one teacher realised that two completely different pieces of writing could still “both be effective...and interesting in different ways”; others welcomed the room for “teacher discretion”; “a little bit of leeway” that allowed them to trade off less successful aspects of the writing against its better features. This study did not directly ask teachers about the process they used to evaluate students’ work but three teachers referred to this in some detail; all judged first by overall impression and then looked for evidence from mark schemes to support their judgement; all highlighted the most positive aspects of the writing and then traded off weaker features against them. They referred to “gut instinct”, “a sort of professionalism”; “a feeling I bring to the work”, which is highly suggestive of what Sadler (1989) refers to as ‘guild knowledge’ and elsewhere has been characterised as ‘construct referencing’ (Marshall & Wiliam, 2006). A teacher with considerable experience characterised evaluation as “an art” not a science, which allowed for “professional judgement as an instinct”, judgement that had been honed by her own extensive reading and writing experience.

A more common picture, though, was of teachers struggling to “make our assessments fit the criteria” and it was clear that for a number of teachers, published assessment criteria complicated rather than simplified these kind of decisions. Progression was not clear enough, especially at the higher levels which were left “too open to interpretation”; “too difficult to say”, compared with Maths where “if you understand this about the topic you get a Level 6 and if you understand this as well you’ll get a Level 7”. One teacher felt she needed exam boards to provide more specific “success criteria” that would spell out for students and herself how to move from one grade to another. Several teachers wanted to “add in” criteria at KS4 that would allow more weighting to the features they wanted to privilege, usually referred to as creativity and originality; many were aware of having to downgrade “really creative work” because of poor paragraphing or punctuation and were clearly frustrated by this, especially in relation to individuals they felt were not duly rewarded by the weightings given to technical accuracy; as one teacher pointed out, “a real writer would have an editor to sort that out”.

Particular problems were mentioned in using assessment criteria at KS3, characterised through imagery of “box ticking”, and described as “bitty”; SAT mark schemes and APP guidelines require teachers to make band or Level judgements on specific assessment focuses such as sentence variety or vocabulary and then to balance these with an overall judgement of the worth of the piece. Teachers found it a difficult and unnatural process to move from the particular to the general, which reverses the more familiar process of impression or holistic marking. Several were simultaneously struggling with their own understanding of the criteria, both in terms of their wording and the concepts they referred to.

Hillocks (2002) in the US and Earl (2003) in the UK have discussed the narrowing of the writing curriculum that results from a testing and accountability culture and how teachers’ practice can be affected by pressure to achieve target levels; one consequence is a narrowing of the construct of writing to focus on test skills and test preparation. Another consequence is suggested by Sadler (1987): published summative criteria, for example examination mark

schemes or grade descriptions, suggest to students the existence of an absolute standard against which their writing will be evaluated so that criteria are confused with standards and in fact are assumed to be one and the same. As a consequence, teachers and students have come to believe that they will achieve a quality outcome by ticking their way through a list of pre-set criteria. Not only does this leave standards unclear, but it also obscures the latent or 'in the head' criteria that contribute to the judgement.

There was evidence in the study that teachers were well aware of this narrowing of the writing curriculum and of the over-focus on discrete 'component parts' of writing, which presented development in writing as 'ticking off' skills on the basis of a single outcome. The one student who expressly mentioned Levels reinforced this view by suggesting she could move her writing up a sub-level by adding better punctuation. There were strong suggestions in the way that students spoke about improving their writing that they saw development in terms of adjustments to surface features, and quick-fix tips, such as "make it neater"; "better spelling"; "add more paragraphs"; "I need to vary my sentences more". Some drew attention to these as targets based on teacher feedback. In terms of improving writing, very few teachers or students spoke of strengthening the overall design or content. There is a central contradiction apparent from the findings that whilst teachers and students conceptualise good writing holistically, in terms of its overall effect on the reader and match with audience and purpose, in terms of assessment, the quality of the whole is not easily 'quantifiable', and therefore not made the focus for improvement. As the teacher quoted at the start of this chapter pointed out; "it's rare to set a target to write an enjoyable story because how do you realise whether you've achieved it?" In terms of their own subject or curricular philosophies, many teachers in this study sought to privilege those assessment objectives and assessment focuses or grade criteria that most closely expressed the values they believed in, but of course these are the "fuzzy" criteria, the qualities that are most difficult to define and 'measure' and the qualities most open to subjective interpretation or "individual taste", for example, "interesting, imaginative, thoughtful texts" (KS3) or "creative delight" (KS4). As Sadler points out, these pre-set criteria are not "an absolute standard" and can

only begin to make sense through students' and teachers' interactive interpretation of texts during which judgement criteria emerge. This gives legitimacy to teachers' and students' subjective criteria; in the present study, *in vivo* coding highlighted the diversity and range of the 'unofficial' criteria used to describe good writing, some of which were highly idiosyncratic and some of which seemed common currency. In the context of engagement with texts, illustrating how the writer "hooks you in" or "knocks your socks off" might be more accessible and understandable than "engage and hold the reader's interest".

McClaskey (2001) takes a deliberately controversial position towards the reductive effect of testing by suggesting that teachers themselves do the narrowing, since they are the ones who decide to 'teach to the test' and give so much lesson time over to test preparation. The findings of this study suggest a central ambiguity, that while teachers presented a clear picture of the damage done by testing, chiefly seen as making students unwilling to experiment or take risks, they also spoke of the "formulas", "recipes" and "ingredients lists" they explicitly taught for exam success. This conception of good writing as "having lots of techniques", or as one student termed it, "whatever you've learned, put it all in" was a common one amongst students; their descriptions of good writing were often composed of a 'tick list' of features, such as "short snappy sentences" or "rhetorical questions for effect" which were applied as generic cure-alls. The study has not related espoused beliefs about good writing to the institutional context in which they were made, so that there is no way of knowing, for instance, how far teachers were under pressure from department or school leaders to report progress of students at KS3 by sub-levels at regular intervals, or to target the progress of borderline GCSE students. Nor is there background information to explain how and why APP guidelines had been introduced into the department, for example to know how much choice or flexibility there was for teachers in how they were used, or how teachers might have been trained to use them.

However, the findings suggest that many teachers were persevering with approaches to teaching and assessing writing that they did not think were

improving students' writing and that for a number of teachers this caused a good deal of anxiety and frustration. One teacher spoke of students having "the stuffing knocked out of them" until there was barely "a glimmer" left, of students who have "been tested so often, all they can see is failure." Even in Year 8, a number of students linked good writing to GCSE exam success or, in one case, improved employment prospects. At the same time, many students spoke about wanting more freedom and choice in school writing, not always being over-directed in terms of genre and task. One girl cited her online writing club activities as allowing more freedom than school writing, including the fact that "you can write things you wouldn't want your teacher to see."

The findings also indicate that there may well be a confusion, and equation, in teachers' minds between criteria and standards. Teachers were asked to comment on the match between their own view of quality in writing and the construct of quality embodied in the criteria; many presented frustrations and feelings about the criteria themselves, including the view that "I don't think it's even written in teacher-speak." It was noticeable that teachers referred to standardised criteria as "very prescriptive" and "restricting" and of "teaching to very, very rigid guidelines" when of course the criteria are an assessment tool, and don't in any sense specify the content of the curriculum. They may be useful in detailing aspects of progression in writing, but there is nothing in the criteria themselves that specify they must be applied to a single piece of writing from which a sub-level showing progress is reported or that this writing must be "like exactly the same pieces of work because they have to meet exactly the same criteria". There was a strong suggestion of teachers fixing their frustrations onto standardised criteria, when really these frustrations related to deeper pedagogical concerns or systems-wide issues; in fact one teacher implied this by saying that she "didn't much mind" the criteria but that her friend hated them, and there was an element of hearsay in reactions to testing and beliefs about assessment. For example, two teachers referred to SATs as "limiting" and "too technical" but had neither taught Year 9 nor accessed SAT mark schemes; another thought assessment criteria at KS4 were "fairer" and "freer" than at KS3 but had not yet taught a GCSE group.

The findings also suggest issues for teacher training and development. Four teachers expressly drew attention to their inexperience as assessors, one of whom felt that published criteria were imprecise enough to be open to personal interpretation, believing that “every marker will be subjective and every marker will read into the criteria differently”. This teacher’s frustration with assessment criteria may well have been related to the practical difficulties she described in her first year of marking GCSE coursework and using APP guidelines with KS3 classes. However, she was not the only teacher to suggest a lack of confidence in using published criteria to make independent judgements of students’ work, particularly in Years 7-9. There were several references to using GCSE criteria within the English department, for instance to standardise or moderate students’ writing; if similar practice had occurred at KS3, it was not mentioned.

It was also noticeable that comments about summative assessment brought forth an emotional response from several teachers, who often placed their own concept of quality and personal values in direct opposition with either the testing regime or the construct of quality embodied in summative criteria, experiencing the two as “askew” or “diametrically opposed”. The study has suggested that viewing degrees of dissonance or accord through the lens of teachers’ personal constructs may help account for the variation in response that was so evident. There were many instances of the kind of oppositional views shown in Table 7.1, such that a department moderation meeting with these eight teachers might well prove lively! McClaskey (2001) suggests another lens through which variation, and possible ensuing conflict, might be viewed, by distinguishing three possible approaches teachers may take within a narrow testing system. They can ‘embrace’ it and teach narrowly with the aim of increasing scores; they can ignore the tests and continue to teach well; or they can ‘embed’ the test, including necessary test preparation but within a well-thought-out and coherent programme of work. Elements of these different attitudes are suggested in teachers’ views below, but essentially the variation shown is suggestive of evaluation being subject to a complex interplay between teachers’ personal knowledge, experience, beliefs and attitudes and a range of institutional factors which might influence or shape them. Of course, these are in turn affected by

the wider political and social context; thus it would be interesting to see what kind of conceptual or evaluative ambiguities might come to the fore if these eight teachers met as a department to plan a writing curriculum with the freedoms intended by recent government reforms.

<i>Do we really need to be so specific? We should be looking at how to inspire them through topics and ideas and feelings, little anecdotes about stuff or books about real experiences, not bloody 'organising and presenting a whole text effectively'.</i> (School 23)	<i>If you follow the mark scheme then it's going to inform your teaching because you know exactly what you are looking for and unless you know what you're looking for you can't teach the kids what the examiner is looking for or what good writing is all about.</i> (School 29)
<i>I think you could argue for a piece of writing to be an A* or an A grade and that's what I don't like about it, that it's so open to that interpretation.</i> (School 13)	<i>The fact that there was so little to describe what A* was, actually that pleased me more than anything else, that there's something sort of almost intangible.</i> (School 11)
<i>I shouldn't be having to cheat my way round the criteria to get them recognition for...very original passionate writing.</i> (School 31)	<i>...accuracy is still obviously there but I think there is a lot more room (in the criteria) for resourcefulness and creativity.</i> (School 10)
<i>...between GCSE and Key Stage 3 there's a massive difference between what we're looking for and I don't think there should be. The criteria don't really match up at all...there's no logical progression.</i> (School 6)	<i>I think there's certainly more continuity now between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 and they (criteria) do encourage the children to think about what makes a good piece of writing.</i> (School 21)

Table 7.1 Variation in teachers' views of assessment criteria

The concept of creativity

Emerging very strongly from the findings is a further irony that the aspects of writing that teachers professed to value the most – originality and creativity – were also those they found hardest to teach, or considered unteachable. Thus the features distinguishing high-quality writing – characterised in published criteria as “creative delight” or “flair” and in teacher-speak as “polish”, “a spark”, “an extra shine”, “the X factor” – were considered by several teachers to be natural or innate, as expressed by the view: “I think unless you've got that creativeness, and that natural flair, you're not going to get the A star, because I don't know if you can teach it.” Of the eight teachers who referred to “flair”, four thought it was difficult, or impossible to foster, being “something that a pupil

either has, or hasn't, in terms of what we teach." There is of course a great deal of objective evidence that creativity can be taught: the National Association of Writers in Education (NAWE) promotes the recognition of creative writing as a distinct discipline and fosters discussion of methods of instruction in secondary schools and higher education; East Anglia's MA in creative writing has run for forty years; in New Zealand schools, progress indicators include "crafted and developed creative writing" and use annotated exemplars to illustrate levels of attainment within the standard; the mark scheme for the AQA Board A Level in Creative Writing includes production of a range of texts in different genres; 'A' grade descriptors give equal emphasis to imaginative content, technical writing skills and critical reflection on writing. Published assessment criteria relating to originality and creativity in writing are shown in Table 7.2.

Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pupils' writing is original • a range of imaginative effects • creative selection and adaptation of a wide range of forms and conventions to meet varied writing challenges with distinctive personal voice and style matched to intended effect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • texts engage and hold the reader's interest through logical argument, persuasive force or creative delight • highly effective and delightful vocabulary choices • strong personal style • inventive structural and/or linguistic devices

Table 7.2 KS3 and KS4 assessment criteria relating to originality and creativity

The concept of originality and creativity drew very strong reactions from teachers, many of them marked by contradictions, not least about defining terms; as one teacher put it, "Creativity, that's a very amorphous word, isn't it?" When teachers related the concepts to texts, comments were very focused on vocabulary choices, which were deemed "massively important" as a discriminator of quality, and for marking out writing that was "unusual", "adventurous" or "a little bit different", which was a common conceptualisation of 'originality'. Only one student from the complete sample of 117 used the term 'creativity' but like their teachers, students conceived of vocabulary as key to "descriptive" and "imaginative" writing, capable of transforming an otherwise "boring" text. This begs a question of the extent to which vocabulary might be explicitly taught in the writing classroom. The most common strategy cited by students for improving vocabulary choices was to redraft using a dictionary or

thesaurus to find more exciting words. However, this did not always succeed in improving the text, and word substitution was often used when changes to sentence or text structure would have been much more effective. There was little evidence in this study of teachers linking originality to the Key Stage 4 criterion “inventive structural devices or linguistic devices”; teachers and students mostly referred to these in terms of rhetorical devices used in persuasive writing and the concept of ‘creative writing’ was linked to non-fiction by only two teachers.

More than any other concept or criteria, creativity and originality were related to extra-textual features, which may be one reason why there was little agreement about the terms, but a good deal of disagreement about whether creative writing could, or should, be taught explicitly. There were several suggestions that “personal voice” was seen not in terms of style but in terms of the child’s self-expression, linked to a personal growth model of English teaching. That this was so for teachers across the age range might suggest its primacy in English teachers’ subject philosophy, although one older teacher referred to her child-centred philosophy as “the hippy part in me”. A strong thread in teachers’ view of themselves as good teachers of writing was the creation of a safe environment in which students could be encouraged to take risks, and build confidence and self-esteem as writers. For several teachers this meant not passing critical judgement on students’ creative writing, especially poetry, which was deemed “too personal” to assess and impossible to rank order in terms of assigning Levels or grades. In observed lessons, this made it hard for teachers to provide meaningful feedback on students’ language choices, or for students to understand the features of a successful outcome.

For some teachers, the notion of whether or not creative writing should be taught explicitly linked to a wider conceptualisation of how children develop writing ability. Some clearly saw this developing naturally from the experience of reading, related by six teachers to their own experience and used as evidence that explicit teaching of grammatical structures was likely to inhibit an “instinctive” or “intuitive” process. This belief was related specifically to able writers, with a strong view expressed that “interfering” might “stifle” or “crush”

creativity. Two students echoed this view, explaining that once they started to think consciously about language choices, they lost confidence in their original ideas and decisions. For three teachers, not intervening was related to their own subject knowledge; they were unsure what to teach in order to move students from grade A to A* and found that, in this case, the lack of specific linguistic detail in the grade descriptors was less than helpful.

Several teachers viewed creativity in opposition to accuracy, with a view expressed that creative writing was “the one time” they could concentrate on ideas and expression and forget about technical aspects. This was not everyone’s view: several recognised that there were “two goods” in the question of what makes good writing, and saw technical competence and creativity working hand in hand, as intended in the version of the national curriculum current at the time of the research. Myhill (2001b) presents writing ability in this way and identifies the two dimensions of creating and crafting as essential and complementary, where students are taught explicitly how to craft language creatively in specific contexts. Nevertheless, there was a strong pull from teachers to set “the mechanics” aside in favour of “free writing” and to accord original or creative writing a special place in the classroom where it was relatively free from critical judgement or “rules”. The fact of having to grade original writing, as in GCSE coursework, created a difficult “balancing act” and it seems to be an area of the curriculum where teachers’ different roles as reader, evaluator and instructor of texts can contradict with one another.

7.3 Using understandings of quality to improve writing

7.3.1 Sharing views of quality

A number of research studies have argued for greater attention to be paid to how teachers’ and students’ beliefs and understandings about quality in writing are shared in the classroom. Beck (2006) and Olson (2003) have suggested that teachers and students often bring different understandings to conversations about classroom writing, which can lead to persistently mismatched expectations, so that a focus is needed on dialogic rather than directive responses. Parr and Timperley (2010) stress the importance of conveying goals for learning and what it is that constitutes successful writing in a way that

students understand and can refer to in feedback. They suggest that when goals highlight the quality expected, and the knowing and thinking skills that are needed, attention is drawn to the more substantive aspects of writing; less helpfully, goals are focused on end products or expressed as a list of items for inclusion in a piece of writing. This encourages students and teachers to adopt a 'fix-it' approach to writing and treat it as little more than a routine activity (Hyland, 2000). Formative assessment practices stress that peer response to writing, during production and using the language of writing, is central to developing students' understandings about how texts work, and to improving their writing (Sadler, 1989; Ward & Dix, 2004).

This study found that teachers varied in how specific and explicit they were in referring to expectations for writing, especially at key points in the lesson when learning objectives were shared, when writing tasks were set up and when examples of students' writing were shared in the plenary. Some teachers were consistently explicit about what they were looking for in students' writing, and often supported this by sharing text models and keeping them displayed as students wrote, and by encouraging students to provide specific examples in feedback comments. In other classrooms it was much less clear, for example when learning objectives were very generalised and not tied to a sense of audience and purpose that would provide a writing context and suggest a measure of success in terms of outcome. Without these, a learning objective such as "know how to use punctuation" or "response to an image" did not provide enough information for students to make judgements about quality.

Providing and receiving feedback requires much skill by teachers and students in terms of developing a receptive classroom climate, the ability to deal with unexpected questions or misconceptions, and sufficient subject knowledge to pinpoint aspects of quality precisely. In observed lessons, lack of clarity about language features or non-specific praise of writing resulted in confusion, for example where students were taught the conventions of kenning poems but then praised for producing poems that did not follow them. There was also an issue of timing when lessons overran and plenary sessions were squeezed, which often resulted in teachers cutting short peer discussion and providing

feedback themselves. It was clearly common practice to end a lesson by sharing examples of students' work but there could be a sense of overworked routine to this practice and it was difficult for students to remember examples without a print copy to refer to, or to comment on each other's writing without a specific aspect to focus on. Assessment for Learning principles are well established in secondary schools but the study did find a variety of practice, and clear differences between those schools where students had obviously been trained to provide focused, detailed feedback for each other and schools in which they struggled to do so. In these instances, it was all too easy for teachers to take over the feedback session and close down discussion.

Sadler (2009) stresses that in the classroom context where evaluation has a formative, instructional purpose, how students receive and take up teachers' judgements is of obvious importance in developing evaluative expertise. One key criterion that was clearly not understood by the majority of students was the phrase "for effect". This figured prominently in classroom discourse, often in the form of advice at the point of writing, where students were encouraged to: "think about where you put your punctuation for effect"; "use sentences for effect"; "vary vocabulary for effect" or include a "short sentence used for effect". To an extent, these reflect the teaching materials used in the *Grammar for Writing?* project which repeatedly encouraged discussion about the effects of grammar features, but many teachers lacked the applied linguistic knowledge which allowed them to move beyond the phrase 'for effect' to a more text- or context-specific discussion of the possible effects created. Given how unhelpful the phrase proved to be in the classroom when used generically, there is real reason to advise its use only when related to a specific feature and where the effect is described, tied to purpose and audience. This has implications for the wording of lesson objectives, as well as for feedback, with the aim being to make both more precise and illustrative of text quality.

This study has also found areas of clear agreement between teachers and students about what constitutes good writing and how it might be improved and the findings suggest there is a good deal of scope for making teachers' and students' own-worded criteria more prominent in the classroom as an

accessible shared language to describe quality. This is particularly pertinent given the number of teachers who thought that official criteria were “impenetrable” for students. The open-ended prompts and the interview question “What makes good writing?” resulted in a strikingly diverse range of criteria from both teachers and students, many of which incorporated personal reading tastes and referenced specific published authors, so that a clear picture emerged of the close relationship between the practices of reading and writing and the powerful influence of both, inside and outside the classroom.

Teachers’ and students’ use of metaphor was particularly interesting in this respect; metaphors were often the first response given to the question, which might suggest they are useful summary ‘labels’ for concepts; they also allowed teachers and students to speak essentially the same language: it would be difficult to tell who is the teacher and who is the student who thought good writing “knocks my socks off” and “hits the nerve”. The usefulness of metaphor in science teaching is well documented; Cameron (2003) for example points out that metaphors are not only linguistic devices to help explain concepts, but actually structure the concepts themselves. There may well be mileage in encouraging classroom discourse around teachers’ and students’ metaphors that reframe ‘fuzzy’ official criteria and concepts such as “flair”.

It may also be useful to probe students’ understanding of metaphors that are perhaps over-used and may need clarification: in the case study intervention and interviews, two of these stood out. The notion that good writing “paints a picture for the reader” was common enough to suggest it may be one that is passed from teacher to student and from primary to secondary school. Students’ main strategy for ‘helping the reader see’ in their writing was to “add more description”, usually in the form of “more adjectives”. It could be helpful to explore students’ conceptualisations within the metaphor of ‘painting a picture’ in order to clarify intentions and broaden the range of success criteria. Similarly, the concept that good writing uses “cliffhangers” might need challenging further; students tended to see this as a panacea for rescuing dull writing but did not show full understanding of how they might be used as a structural device.

7.3.2 Conceptual and linguistic confusion

Myhill (2011) stresses that metalinguistic learning about writing is socially constructed and can therefore be heavily shaped by what teachers value in writing. Many of students' ideas about improving writing mirrored closely what teachers had said in lessons and in some cases, because teachers did not have sufficient linguistic subject knowledge to handle discussion confidently, students' understanding was correspondingly limited. Teachers' lack of clarity about quality outcomes was clearly linked in some cases to insecure linguistic subject knowledge, which led to confusion for students. There were aspects of meaningless grammar, for example in a lesson where students were told "if you use verbs, adverbs or nouns, you will be able to write a very powerful description." This advice was very misleading, since it is almost impossible to write at all without these word classes and perfectly possible to write a weak description using all of them. Another set of less helpful comments related to the idea of variety, which was regularly advocated, as in "variety is important"; "make sure you have sentence variety", but was rarely pinned to a specific purpose or explanation of why this variety was beneficial, so that the implication was that variety, of whatever quality, was a good thing. Students had certainly picked up this notion, and referred to ensuring variety as a generic strategy, including sentences, punctuation, techniques and vocabulary under this heading.

In describing good writing, some students echoed the language of published assessment criteria or their teachers, for example by referring to sentence variety, but showed through the examples they gave that this learning was not secure. Writing conversations often revealed a gap between what students said was important for improving writing and their understanding of how to carry out improvements, which cast doubt as to how far students might be able to act on their targets, since students had not always acquired sufficient understanding to be able to apply it independently.

Many of the teachers were more comfortable teaching about word choices than syntactic variety, which may partly be reflected in the emphasis teachers and students placed on the importance of vocabulary in creating a quality outcome.

In the lessons observed, teachers often chose to focus on sentence variety in terms of sentence length, and the concept of grammatical simplicity was often confused with semantic simplicity, so that simple sentences were short sentences and complex sentences were long sentences. A clear finding of this study was the tenuous nature of students' understanding of what makes a sentence which was evident when it came to discussing ways of improving writing. A major confusion for students was distinguishing between the concepts of varying sentence type and varying sentence length. The two were synonymous for some students and varying sentence length, especially by adding more short sentences, or shortening existing sentences, was a main strategy for improving writing, irrespective of purpose. Teachers often gave simplified instructions about sentence structures, offering partial information which was not enough for students to apply independently, so that although several students knew a complex sentence included a subordinate clause, their understanding of how to form a subordinate clause remained quite superficial. As with their definitions of a sentence, several seemed to be merely repeating what they had heard from teachers, such as "Most of what I know is that a subordinate clause doesn't make sense on its own". Many students had targets to improve sentence variety but it was often questionable whether they had sufficient understanding to make changes to sentences and punctuation in a controlled and deliberate way.

Nearly all the teachers in the study emphasised the importance of teaching students to vary and consciously craft their sentences but weak LSK meant that some struggled to model how to vary sentences and were more likely to offer generalised or formulaic advice, such as "short sentences for impact" or "start with an adverb". Teachers with more confident grammatical understanding were more able to make meaningful links for students between a linguistic feature and its effect or purpose in the text.

The main consequences and implications of these findings are discussed in the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Summary conclusions

This study set out to investigate how teachers of English and their Year 8 students conceptualise quality in writing and how they might use this understanding to improve writing. The research has revealed a number of aspects of beliefs and practices evident from previous studies. In line with research from Australia into primary school teachers' judgement of children's writing (Wyatt-Smith, 1999; Wyatt-Smith & Castleton, 2004; 2005), it has highlighted that teachers draw on rich indexes of personal criteria in order to evaluate writing achievement, some of which match published national criteria, some of which conflict with them, and some of which are idiosyncratic adaptations. Thus this study found aspects of evaluative ambiguity and uncertainty noted in previous research (for example Broad, 2000). Whilst the findings indicated a high degree of consistency in teachers' individual conceptualisations of good writing, they have also confirmed marked variation between teachers, underlining the need for a focus on teachers' subjectivities and for an expanded conception of subjectivity (Beck, 2006) that takes into account teachers' personal practical knowledge, their values, attitudes and beliefs as well as subject knowledge (Clandinin, 1985; Calderhead, 1996).

Importantly, the study has extended understanding of the ways in which good writing might be conceptualised and judged, by considering the views of students in the early years of secondary school, an age group that has not hitherto been well-represented in writing assessment research. Students in this research were strongly aware of the impact of writing on the reader and used reader-response as a key test of effectiveness for their own and their peers' writing. These twelve and thirteen year olds were very focused on how writers and texts shape meaning, showing a strong awareness of how their design choices could influence a reader.

By investigating students' conceptualisations of good writing alongside their teachers' views, the study has identified aspects of shared understanding which have the potential to enhance and clarify existing criteria for achievement and become a powerful classroom language for improving writing. The study has

also clarified aspects of writing pedagogy that are successful in promoting understanding of quality in writing, as well as areas of insecure linguistic subject knowledge for both teachers and students, which may act as constraints.

8.1.1 The national context

The timing of these findings is particularly pertinent. The last major review by school inspectors of practice in secondary English classrooms (Ofsted, 2009) reported that assessment of writing lacked assurance from both teachers and students. At the start of 2014, major changes to the English curriculum and to assessment procedures at both key stages have been initiated. Revisions to GCSE examinations were prompted by concern that “the qualification was particularly vulnerable to the pressures of the accountability measures for schools” and by “evidence of over-marking of controlled assessments” (Ofqual, 2013). This is tantamount to a declaration of mistrust in teachers’ evaluation of writing, particularly at the crucial grade boundary. At the same time, teachers have been given greater freedom to exercise professional judgement in planning the English curriculum and assessing outcomes. The current government view is that “prescribing a single detailed approach to assessment does not fit with the curriculum freedoms we are giving to schools...schools will be able to introduce their own approaches to formative assessment, to support pupil attainment and progression” (DfE, 2013b).

For teaching from September 2014, attainment target Level descriptors have been replaced by a single statement: “By the end of key stage 3, pupils are expected to know, apply and understand the matters, skills and processes specified in the relevant programme of study”. Seemingly, this signals greater interpretive freedom for teachers in deciding the ‘gold standard’ for students’ writing, both in terms of what is valued enough to be taught and in how learning outcomes are evaluated. However, it also places greater pressure on teachers to account for the basis on which their judgements are made, to bring to the surface and make publicly available their private ways of knowing.

8.2 Detailed conclusions and implications for theory, policy and practice

8.2.1 Conceptualising quality: variety and variation

The findings have shown that teachers and students in the early years of secondary school conceptualise quality in writing using a rich and diverse range of both personal and published criteria. For several teachers, the range includes 'unofficial' criteria that relate to extra-textual features, such as the effort or thought shown by the student, which allows teachers to differentiate attainment and to reward qualities that are particularly valued in their own classrooms. Criteria relating to the effect of the text on the reader, often expressed through imagery, and criteria relating to the efficacy of word choices, seem particularly well understood by both teachers and students as hallmarks of good writing. In the context of developing formative assessment practices, Parr (2011:1) stresses the role of "shared repertoires" in the classroom, which include tools and routines as "a resource to create meaning in the joint pursuit of an enterprise" and it might be helpful to see 'unofficial' criteria for good writing as such a resource, perhaps more accessible and inclusive than official published criteria and giving more ownership to student writers.

Wyatt-Smith and Castleton (2004) stress that teachers' own criteria for achievement have the potential to shape teacher-student interactions, and to inform how teachers seek to improve students' writing outcomes. The challenge for teachers, researchers and education policy makers is to "make an opening for teachers' ways of knowing achievement, attending to how they intersect with formal or authorised ways of knowing, as captured in official education guidelines and policy" (p.61). It could be that the new curriculum and assessment freedoms proposed by the UK government will allow just such an opening. A number of teachers in the study indicated the need for change, with a particularly strong feeling that Key Stage 3 assessment encouraged formulaic writing and emphasised functional skills at the expense of creativity. However, it is important to recognise that changes to policy and practice need supporting in ways that encourage teachers to reflect on their beliefs and how these influence their classroom practice, in order to develop their independence and judgement (Calderhead, 1996; Wyatt-Smith, 2004). Larivee (2000:293) argues that "unless teachers develop the practice of critical reflection, they may stay "trapped in

unexamined judgements, interpretations, assumptions and expectations". There is a clear responsibility for initial teacher education programmes to support trainees in critical reflection on the personal beliefs and values that might contribute to their judgement of writing, but it is equally clear that practising teachers will need similar support, given that the role they play in deciding what is taught, and how it will be assessed, is likely to be increased.

The findings indicate considerable variation in the beliefs teachers hold about what is important and valuable in writing, with some polarisation of beliefs about the relative value of creativity and technical accuracy. Given teachers' vital role in mediating standards in the classroom, there is scope for further investigation into the relationship between personal constructs of quality and pedagogical decision-making and practice. Some teachers in the study evinced clear, strongly-held beliefs about quality in writing that seemed an essential part of their professional and personal identity; other teachers seemed much less certain, or were more contradictory in their beliefs. Similarly, some students made specific references to what they had been taught about good writing; others were much less definite about what their teacher was looking for. It was not the intention of the study to make judgements about individual teachers' efficacy as practitioners, but it might be argued that those with a strongly-felt personal construct of quality in writing, and the ability to share it with students, are likely to be effective teachers of writing, at the very least conveying the message that writing matters. In viewing classrooms as communities of practice where meaning and values are co-negotiated, Wenger (1998) indicates that students' understanding is likely to be influenced by their teachers' construction of what is valuable and this has clear implications for policy and for teacher development programmes.

The study has begun to explore some of the ways in which teachers' personal constructs of quality might influence classroom discourse and pedagogy, seen for example in the advice given at the point of writing, the emphasis given to success criteria, and the nature of feedback about how to improve writing. However, findings here remain tentative. A limitation of the present study is that teachers' and students' espoused beliefs, what they say about quality in writing,

have been given more prominence than classroom enactments of these beliefs, such as how understandings are shared and acted upon. The latter has been gauged through analysis of records of lesson observations and some direct observation of classroom discourse and there has been no attempt to check the validity of interpretations with teachers in the study, nor is there any way of knowing how conscious teachers might be of their personal belief systems. There is clear scope for further investigation here, for example through case studies of classroom practice, which might include think-aloud protocols to probe tacit understanding.

8.2.2 Conceptual ambiguity and uncertainty

The study has pointed to areas of conceptual and evaluative ambiguity and tension. For nearly all the teachers in this study, their personal construct of quality in writing conflicted in some measure with the official national construct, as embodied in published assessment criteria, the 'gold standard' of writing performance. For some, the clash of values was very strongly felt, and there were indications that teachers experienced the tension of compromising their personal beliefs in order to prepare students for success in public examinations. Others sought out ambiguities or 'loopholes' in official criteria that might allow a better match with personal constructs of quality or might better reward individual students' attainment. The study has confirmed that many teachers experience difficulty in assessing writing, especially in distinguishing achievement at the highest grades or locating ways of improving the writing of able students, and this was particularly true for teachers in the early years of practice, many of whom expressed a lack of confidence in their judgements. Teachers were aware of the subjective nature of judgement and the difficulties of balancing different aspects of writing to form an overall grade. The difficulty of balancing reward for creative self-expression with the requirements for technical accuracy was particularly sharply felt by some teachers in this study, while for others a more fundamental doubt was whether the qualities they most admired in writing – originality and flair – could actually be taught or assessed.

Whilst many teachers felt that published criteria did not adequately reflect their own view of quality, a number also felt inadequately equipped to decide their

own criteria for judging writing. Recent policy change in New Zealand and Australia has been accompanied by professional development programmes that have exemplified standards and trained teachers to apply assessment rubrics which are central to formative assessment practices. In evaluating the success of these programmes, Parr, Glasswell and Aikman (2007) stress that teacher knowledge of how to improve students' writing was built through discussion about moderating writing samples. Similar support for teachers in UK secondary schools was introduced by the government in 2008, in the form of Standards Files and assessment guidelines but initial training in their use has not been followed through and the materials have been archived. Wiliam and Marshall (2006) and Sadler (1989) draw attention to the way that teachers' 'guild knowledge' about standards in writing is honed through moderation of students' work. They suggest that imitating these moderation procedures with students inculcates them into the guild, building evaluative knowledge and skills. Policy and teacher development programmes need to take into account the difficulties and ambiguities involved in evaluating writing and the need to support teachers through curriculum and assessment innovation and reform. This would usefully include modelling the standards and evaluative skills being sought as well as promoting pedagogy that places debate around questions of quality and judgement at its core.

8.2.3 The impact of linguistic subject knowledge

The findings point to ways in which teachers' and students' understanding of how to improve the quality of writing was constrained by insecure grammatical knowledge. Given the prominence of grammar objectives and terminology in the revised primary national curriculum, and the expectation that Key Stage 3 teaching will build on this body of knowledge, this is a significant finding. The teaching schemes in the *Grammar for Writing?* project drew explicit attention to aspects of syntactic variety and this may have skewed the emphasis teachers placed on it, but it was noticeable that "varying sentences" was promoted by teachers and students alike as key to improving writing, but with limited understanding of the effect that this might have on the text, or of how to achieve sentence variety, leading to formulaic and somewhat meaningless advice to students. For most, sentence variety was conceived as varying sentence

lengths, not structures, and clause grammar was not securely understood, which impacted on students' ability to improve their writing at sentence level. Further, because some of the teachers did not have sufficient LSK to handle students' questions and misunderstandings effectively, students' understanding was correspondingly limited. Myhill et al. (2012) suggest that effective linguistic discussion includes an ability to define and explain metalinguistic terminology appropriately, but note that this is an aspect of grammar teaching which has been "systematically overlooked at both policy level and in research; there is neither understanding nor agreement about how best to explain grammatical terminology" (p.24). This is a significant point in the light of the revised national curriculum for KS3 English which includes a detailed grammar glossary and foregrounds the terminology that students and teachers are expected to use when discussing texts, including students' own. Teachers would benefit from a clear rationale and context for using terminology, firmly linked to the purpose of improving writing.

There have been attempts to support teachers' understanding and teaching of grammar, for example through training materials provided by the National Strategies, including a focus on grammar for reading (DfES, 2003) and for improving writing (DfES, 2004) with a specific emphasis on sentences and ways to teach punctuation for meaning and effect. However, it is difficult to know if these materials are still available to teachers, or the extent to which they might have informed practice. It could also be that while some teachers have adopted some of the language and concepts espoused through the Strategies, they have experienced difficulties in translating them into practice. Indeed, there is a range of factors that might contribute to insecure LSK, so that simply providing resources is not enough: many teachers have never been taught grammar and initial teacher training provides insufficient time to bridge gaps; some teachers perceive grammatical concepts and terminology as too difficult for students or are unconvinced of the benefit of grammar for improving writing. The difficulties teachers and students in the study experienced in describing and explaining "effects" and "effectiveness" are important ones, given the prominence of text analysis in English, particularly at GCSE. This suggests a need for research into effective pedagogical approaches that will support teachers and students in

developing precise discussion about language features and their design purposes.

8.2.4 Pedagogy for improving writing

The study has pointed to a number of pedagogical approaches that encourage students' active involvement in the process of improving writing. Successful practice made firm links between reading and writing, for example through analysis and annotation of effects in authentic text models and modelling of the writing process, especially where teachers offered their own writing for discussion. In interview, students expressed a clear preference for writing tasks and outcomes that provided them with elements of personal choice. Collaborative writing activities and exploratory talk encouraged critical reflection on choices and their effects and, in schools where peer assessment was well-established, students clearly found peer response to their writing valuable and motivating. Some of the research instruments used in the study might also prove useful as instructional tools in the writing classroom. Rank ordering of writing samples, to decide which was better and why, opened up discussion and reflection on writing quality and allowed students to establish their own success criteria. A teacher in the case study school found it useful to 'think aloud' her rank order decision (see Appendix 20b), both in order to clarify her own ideas about 'good writing', but also to model for students how they might discuss a text. 'Writing conversations' with students, applying prompt questions to writing samples, provided invaluable insights into their understandings and misconceptions about particular features of writing. Policy and teacher development programmes could usefully promote pedagogical approaches that encourage students' active participation in the assessment process. A number of these are signalled by Graham and Perin (2007), in a meta-analysis of effective strategies for improving the quality of adolescent writing, and which tune with the effective practice observed in this study. These include the provision of good models for each type of writing that is the focus of instruction and clear and specific goals for what young writers are trying to accomplish with their writing product.

Assessment for Learning (AfL) practices are well established in many secondary schools, and National Strategy training materials promoting them stress key features of effective practice: “learning objectives made explicit and shared with pupils; peer and self-assessment in use; pupils engaged in their learning and given immediate feedback” (DCSF, 2008c:6). In the present study, the efficacy of verbal feedback varied, especially in the plenary, when teachers were often running out of time and students were losing attention. Comments about good writing in these instances could be cursory or formulaic and not firmly tied to future improvements. Most research on feedback has focused on written comments and it would be a useful future direction to consider how verbal feedback, at key points in a lesson sequence, might be used to focus attention on achieving a quality outcome, including how students receive and process such information. Huot (2002:164) points to the “often unexamined and untheorised ideas that inform our current assessment practices.” At a time when schools are being encouraged to develop their own approaches to formative assessment, there is clearly an extensive research agenda, not just for examining the constituents of effective practice in developing self and peer assessment, but, more fundamentally, to create a discourse that firmly links the teaching and assessing of writing.

Huot and Perry (2009:427) stress that “teaching students how to be better evaluators of writing and how to use their skill in assessment to become better writers is not an impossible task” but that it may take some rethinking about the teaching of writing, and the part that assessment plays in it. Widening the criteria for achievement by paying overt attention to teachers’ and students’ personal criteria for quality and validating individual preferences and differences could be an important step in moving assessment from something that is ‘done to’ students to empowering them with “the authority to work as writers”. In carrying out this research, it has been a privilege to work in classrooms where students are clearly being empowered to work in such a way, in the knowledge that, “Writing isn’t there to go in a cupboard; it’s there to be read.” The teacher in this study who described good writing as “a matter of individual taste” concluded:

“It’s all about empowerment...Kids need to know there are many different ways of achieving success in their writing...and so finally I think any good piece of writing is about you stamping your mark, and then you see a voice and you don’t just see mere words on the page, it’s someone’s voice that I’m listening to, leading out of that page...”

GLOSSARY

ACARA: Australia Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, the body responsible for developing Australia's first national curriculum.

APP: Assessing Pupils' Progress. A set of standardised assessment criteria (guidelines) for use by teachers in Key Stages 2 and 3 in making formative and summative judgements of achievement in reading, writing, speaking and listening. Level-related statements are exemplified by Standards Files, annotated exemplars of students' work.

AF: Assessment Focus. The APP guidelines are broken down into different assessment focuses. For example, in writing, there are eight focuses, relating to overall purpose (e.g. AF1: 'write imaginative, interesting and thoughtful texts'); text organisation and cohesion; sentence structure (e.g. AF5 is: 'vary sentences for clarity, purpose and effect'); vocabulary and spelling.

AQA: Assessment and Qualifications Alliance. An awarding body in the UK, providing academic qualifications for 14-19 year olds in secondary schools and colleges in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

BERA: British Educational Research Association.

DfE: Department for Education. UK Government department with responsibility for infant, primary and secondary education. Previously known as DES: Department of Education and Science (1964-1997); DfEE: Department for Education and Employment (1997-2001); DfES: Department for Education and Skills (2001-2007); DCSF: Department for Children, Schools and Families (2007-2010).

Edexcel: An awarding body providing academic and vocational qualifications and testing to schools, colleges, employers and other places of learning in the UK and internationally.

ESRC: Economic and Social Research Council.

GCSE: General Certificate of Education. UK national subject qualification usually awarded at the end of Key Stage 4, for pupils aged 16.

INCA: International Review of Curriculum and Assessment. Internet archive providing descriptions of government policy on education worldwide. It was originally commissioned by the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority in England and funded by its successors: QCA and QCDA. Content is managed and updated by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER).

KS: Key Stage. Age-related curriculum phases. Key Stage 1: ages 5-7; Key Stage 2: ages 7-11; Key Stage 3: ages 11-14; Key Stage 4: ages 14-16; Key Stage 5: ages 16-19.

NATE: National Association for the Teaching of English.

National Curriculum: A nationwide curriculum for all state maintained primary and secondary schools, specifying programmes of study and attainment targets in core and foundation subjects. The first national curriculum for England and Wales was introduced following the Education Reform Act in 1988 and has been periodically revised.

National Strategies: a non-statutory but widely-adopted centrally-funded programme of teacher professional development introduced by the Labour Government in 1998 (Primary phase) and 2001 (Secondary phase) with the aim of raising standards, especially in literacy and numeracy, including literacy across the curriculum. The National Strategies were disbanded by the Coalition Government in 2011.

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development which reports key findings from rankings of student performance by country/economy including those from PISA, the Programme for International Student Assessment; the 2013 PISA report placed England 22nd out of 24 countries.

Ofsted: Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. An independent body reporting directly to Parliament, Ofsted inspects and

regulates services which care for children and young people, and those providing education and skills for learners of all ages.

Ofqual: Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation. The independent regulator of qualifications, examinations and assessments in England (National Curriculum assessments, GCSEs and A Levels) and vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland, providing advice to Government on qualifications and assessment based on their research in these areas.

Primary School: Educates pupils aged 4-11.

QCA: Qualifications and Assessment Authority. A non-departmental public body for England that developed and maintained the national curriculum and associated assessments, tests and examinations from 1997. It was replaced by the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) and Ofqual in 2010. In March 2012, QCDA was replaced by the Standards and Testing Agency (STA) which is now responsible for the development and delivery of all statutory assessments from early years to the end of Key Stage 3. The exams administration function is now performed by the Teaching Agency.

SAT: Standard Assessment Tests. Introduced in all state schools for 7, 11 and 14 year olds and externally assessed. Key Stage 3 tests in English operated from 1998 to 2009.

Secondary school: Educates students aged 11-16, currently the end of compulsory education in the UK.

WJEC: An awarding body in the UK providing assessment, training and educational resources. Previously known as the Welsh Joint Education, Committee.

REFERENCES

- Ahern, K.J. (1999). Pearls, pith and provocation: Ten tips for reflexive bracketing. *Qualitative Health Research*, (3), 407-411.
- Alamargot, D., and Chanquoy, L. (2001). *Through the models of writing*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Alamargot, D., and Fayol, M. (2009). Modelling the development of written composition. In R. Beard, D. Myhill, M.Nystrand, & J. Riley (Eds.), *Handbook of writing development*, 23–47. London: Sage.
- Allison, P., Beard, R., and Willcocks, J. (2002). Subordination in children's writing. *Language and Education*, 16 (2), 97-111.
- Andrews, C., Brown, R., Sargent C., and O'Donnell, S. (2007). Compulsory assessment systems in the INCA countries: Thematic Probe, QCA. Retrieved from <http://www.inca.org.uk> on 3rd March 2011.
- Andrews, R. (2005). Knowledge about the teaching of sentence grammar: The state of play. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 4(3), 69-76.
- Angen, M.J. (2000). Evaluating interpretive inquiry: Reviewing the validity debate and opening the dialogue. *Qualitative Health Research*, 10(3), 378-395.
- Arkoudis, S., and O'Loughlin, K. (2004). Tensions between validity and outcomes: Teacher assessment of written work of recently arrived immigrant ESL students. *Language Testing*, 21 , 284–304.
- Barnes, D. (1976). *From communication to curriculum*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Basturkeman, H., Loewen, S., and Ellis, R. (2004). Teachers' stated beliefs about incidental focus on form and their classroom practices. *Applied Linguistics*, 25(2), 243-272.
- Beard, R. (2000). *Developing writing 3-13*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.
- Beal, C. (1996). The role of comprehension monitoring in children's revision *Educational Psychology Review*, 8 (3), 219-238.
- Beck, S. W. (2006). Subjectivity and intersubjectivity in the teaching and learning of writing. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 40 (4), 48-460.

- Bednall, J. (2006). Epoche and bracketing within the phenomenological paradigm. *Issues in Educational Research*, 16, 123-138.
- BERA (2004). Revised ethical guidelines for educational research. Retrieved on 20th September 2009 from <http://www.bera.ac.uk/system/files/ethical1.pdf>.
- Bereiter, C., and Scardamalia, M. (1987). *The psychology of written composition*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Black, P.; Harrison, C.; Lee, C.; Marshall, B. and Wiliam, D. (2003). *Assessment for learning: Putting it into practice*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.
- Black, P., and Wiliam, D. (1998). Assessment and classroom learning. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice*, 5, 7–73.
- Black, P., and Wiliam, D. (2009). Developing the theory of formative assessment. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 21, 5–31.
- Borg, S. (2003). Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe and do. *Language Teaching*, 36(2), 81-109.
- Breetvelt, I., van den Bergh, H. and Rijlaarsdam, G. (1996). Relations between writing processes and text quality: An application of multi-level analysis on writing process data. In G. Rijlaarsdam, H. van den Bergh & M. Couzijn (Eds.) *Studies in writing: Vol. 1. Theories, models and methodology in writing research*, 10-21. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Britton, J. N., Burgess, T., Martin, N., McLeod, A., and Rosen, H. (1975). *The development of writing abilities (11-18)*. London: MacMillan Educational, for the Schools Council.
- Broad, B. (2000). Pulling your hair out: Crises of standardisation in communal writing assessment. *Research in the teaching of English*, 35(2), 213-260.
- Broadfoot, P., and Black, P. (2004). Redefining assessment? The first ten years of assessment in education. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 11(1), 7-26.
- Brooks, V. (2009). Marking as judgment. *Research papers in Education*, 1-18.
- Calderhead, J. (1987). Developing a framework for the elicitation and analysis of teachers' verbal reports. *Oxford Review of Education*, 13(2), 183-189.

- Calderhead, J. (1996). Teachers: Beliefs and knowledge. In D.C.Berliner & R.C. Calfee (Eds.) *Handbook of Educational Psychology*, 709-725. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Cameron, L. (2003). *Metaphor in educational discourse*. London: Continuum.
- Cameron, D. (1995). *Verbal hygiene*. London: Routledge.
- Christie, F. (2002). *Classroom discourse analysis: A functional perspective*. London: Continuum.
- Christie, F. (2005). Using the functional grammar to understand children's written texts. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics. Series S (19)*, 9-22.
- Christie, F., and Misson, R. (1998). Framing the issues in literacy education. In F.Christie & R. Misson (Eds.) *Literacy and Schooling*, London: Routledge.
- Clandinin, D.J. (1985). Personal practical knowledge: A study of teachers' classroom images. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 15(4), 361-385.
- Clark, C. (2011). *Setting the Baseline: Reading in 2010*. London: National Literacy Trust.
- Connelly, F. M., and Clandinin, D. J. (1988). Teachers as curriculum planners: Narratives of experience. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Clandinin, D.J., and Connelly, F.M. (1995). *Teachers' professional knowledge landscapes*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Clandinin, D.J., and Connelly, F.M. (1999). *Shaping a professional identity: Stories of educational practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., and Morrison, K. (2000). *Research methods in education*. London: Routledge Falmer.
- Connors, R. J., and Lunsford, A. A. (1993). Teachers' rhetorical comments on student papers. *College Composition and Communication*, 44, 200–223.
- Cooksey, R., Freebody, P., and Wyatt-Smith, C. (2007). Assessment as judgement-in-context: Analysing how teachers evaluate students' writing. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 13, 401–34.

- Corbett, P. (2008). 'Good writers'. In National Strategies 'Talk for Writing' Primary School training materials. Retrieved on 20.9.12 from www.foundationyears.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Good_Writers1.pdf.
- Crowhurst, M. (1980). Syntactic complexity and teachers' quality ratings of narrations and arguments. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 14, 223-231.
- Creswell, J.W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cresswell, M. (2000). The role of public examinations in defining and monitoring standards. In H. Goldstein & A. Heath, *Educational Standards* pp.69-120. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Czerniewska, P. (1992). *Learning about writing*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Daly, C. (2000). Gender differences in achievement in English: A sign of the times? In J. Davison & J. Moss (Eds.) *Issues in English Teaching*. London: Routledge.
- Davison, C. (2004). The contradictory culture of teacher-based assessment: ESL assessment practices in Australia and Hong Kong. *Language Testing*, 21 , 305–334.
- DCSF (2008). *Getting going: generating, shaping and developing ideas in writing*. London: DCSF. Report reference 00283-2008.
- DCSF (2008b): The new Secondary curriculum: Renewing the Secondary frameworks. London: DCSF.
- DCSF (2008c): The assessment for learning strategy. London: DCSF.
- DCSF and QCA (2007) The National Curriculum: statutory requirements for Key Stages 3 and 4. London: DCSF & QCA.
- DCSF and QCA (2008). *Assessing Pupils' Progress in English at Key Stage 3: Teachers' Handbook*, Ref: 00643-2008BKT-EN. London: DCSF & QCA.
- Deane, P., Odendahl, N., Quinlan, T., Fowles, M., Welsh, C. and Bivens-Tatum, J. (2008). *Cognitive models of writing: Writing proficiency as a complex integrated skill*. Educational Testing Service Research Report. Retrieved on 3.2.12 from <http://www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/RR-08-55pdf>.

- Dearing, R. (1993). *The National Curriculum and its assessment: Final report*. London: School Curriculum and Assessment Authority.
- Derewianka, B. (1996). *Exploring the writing of genres*. Royston, Hertfordshire: UKRA
- DES (1975). *The Bullock Report, A Language for Life*. London: HMSO.
- DES (1998). *The Cox Report, English for ages 5-16*. London: HMSO.
- DES (1990). *English in the National Curriculum (No. 2)* London: HMSO.
- DfE (2011) Department for Education press release, June 2011, retrieved 6th July 2011 from <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-primary-curriculum-to-bring-higher-standards-in-english-maths-and-science>
- DfE (2011b). *Independent Review of Key Stage 2 testing, assessment and accountability*. Retrieved on 2nd July 2011 from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/176180/Review-KS2-Testing_final-report
- DfE (2013). *Reform of the National Curriculum in England*. Retrieved on 14.2.2013 from <https://www.education.gov.uk/consultations/index.cfm?action>
- DfE (2013b). *Assessing without levels*. Retrieved 30th December 2013 from www.education.gov.uk/school/teachingandlearning/curriculum/nationalcurriculum2014/a00225864/assessing-without-levels
- DfEE (1998). *The National Literacy Strategy: Framework for Teaching*. London: HMSO.
- DfEE (1999). *The National Curriculum for England: English, key stages 1-4*. London: HMSO.
- DfES (2003). *Grammar for reading: Course handbook*. London: DfES.
- DfES (2004). *Improving writing*. London: DfES.
- DfES (2006). *Raising boys' achievement: Key findings*. London: DfES.
- Dixon, J. (1967). *Growth through English*. London: Penguin.
- Dixon, J. (1975). *Growth through English: Set in the perspective of the seventies (third edition)*. Published for the National Association of the Teaching of English by the Oxford University Press.

Duncan, N. (2007). 'Feed-forward': Improving students' use of tutor comments. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 32(3), 271-283.

Earl, L. M. (2003). *Assessment as learning: Using classroom assessment to maximise student learning*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin.

Edgington, A. (2005). What are you thinking? Understanding teacher reader and response through a protocol analysis study. *Journal of Writing Assessment*, 2(2), 125-148.

Edstrom, A. (2006) Students as evaluators of writing: Learning from what they notice. *Language Awareness*, 15(1), 53-57.

Eisner, E.W. (1991). *The enlightened eye: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Elander, J., Harrington, K., Norton, L., Robinson, H., and Reddy, P. (2006). Complex skills and academic writing: A review of evidence about the types of learning required to meet core assessment criteria. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 31(1), 71-90.

Elwood, J., and Klenowski, V. (2002). Creating communities of shared practice: The challenges of assessment use in learning and teaching. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 27(3), 243-256.

EPPI Review Group for English (2004). The effect of grammar teaching (syntax) in English on 5 to 16 year olds' accuracy and quality on written composition. London: EPPI-Centre.

Erault, M. (2000). Non-formal learning and tacit knowledge in professional work. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 70(1), 113-136.

Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In M.C.Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of Research on Teaching*, 3rd ed., New York, Macmillan, 119-161.

Erlandson, D.A., Harris, E.L., Skipper, B.L. and Allen, S.D. (1993). *Doing naturalistic inquiry: A guide to methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Faigley, L. (1979). The influence of generative rhetoric on the syntactic maturity and writing effectiveness of college freshmen. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 13, 197-206.

- Fang, Z. (1996a). A review of research on teacher beliefs and practices. *Educational Research* 38(1), 47-65.
- Fang, Z. (1996b). What counts as good writing? A case study of relationships between teacher beliefs and pupil conceptions. *Reading Horizons*, 36(3), 249-258.
- Fenstermacher, G. D. (1980). What needs to be known about what teachers need to know? In G. E. Hall, S. M. Hord, & G. Brown (Eds.), *Exploring issues in teacher education: Questions for future research*. Austin, Texas: Research and Development Centre for Teacher Education.
- Flower, L., and Hayes, J.R. (1981). A cognitive process theory of writing. *College Composition and Communication*, 32(4), 365-87.
- Francis, B., Read, B., and Melling, L. (2003). University lecturers' perceptions of gender and undergraduate writing. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 24, 357-373.
- Freebody, P. (2003). *Qualitative research in education: Interaction and Practice*. London: Sage Press.
- Gipps, C., and Murphy, P. (1994). *A fair test? Assessment, achievement and equity*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Gordon, E. (2005). Grammar in New Zealand schools: Two case studies. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 4(3), 48-68.
- Gove, M (2011). Review of the National Curriculum in England, written statement to Parliament, 19 Dec 2011. Retrieved on 8.1.2012 from <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/nationalcurriculum2014/nationalcurriculum/a00201093/review-of-the-national-curriculum-in-england>
- Graham, S. et al. (2012). *Teaching elementary school students to be effective writers*. Report for the National Centre for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences. Reference ED-07-CO-0062. Retrieved on 6.10.12 from ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practice_guides/writing_pg_062612pdf.
- Graham, S., Berninger, V., and Fan, W. (2007). The structural relationship between attitude and writing achievement in first and third grade students. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 32(3), 516-536.

- Graham, S., and Perin, D. (2007). A meta-analysis of writing instruction for adolescent students. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 99, 445-476.
- Grainger, T., Gooch, K., and Lambirth, A. (2003). Playing the game called writing. *English in Education*, 37(2), 4-15.
- Graves, D. H. (1983). *Writing: teachers and children at work*. London: Heinemann Educational.
- Greator, J. (2002). Making accounting examiners' tacit knowledge more explicit: Developing grade descriptors for an accounting A-level. *Research Papers in Education*, 17(2), 211-226.
- Green, S., Elliott, G., and Johnson, N. (2008) 'Aspects of writing': Beyond an atomistic approach to evaluate qualities of features of writing. Paper presented at IAEA 2008 conference, Cambridge. Retrieved on 10.2.12 from www.iaea2008.cambridgeassessment.org.uk.
- Grossman, P.L., Wilson, S.M., and Shulman, L.S. (1989). Teachers of substance: Subject matter knowledge for teaching. In M. Reynolds (Ed.), *The Knowledge Base for Beginning Teachers*, 23-36. New York: Pergamon.
- Guba, E.G. (1990). The alternative paradigm dialog. In Guba, E. (ed) *The Paradigm Dialog*. London/New York: Sage, 17-27.
- Guba, E.G., and Lincoln, Y.S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N.K.Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 105-117. London: Sage.
- Hall, K., and Harding, A. (2002). Level descriptions and teacher assessment in England: Towards a community of assessment practice. *Educational Research* 44, 1-15.
- Hammersley, M. (1992). *What's wrong with ethnography?: Methodological explorations*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Hammersley, M. (2007). The issue of quality in qualitative research. *International Journal of Research and Method in Education*, 30 (3), 287-305.
- Hammond, J., and Derewianka, B. (2001). An introduction to genre. In: D. Nunan & R. Carter (Eds.) *The ELT Handbook*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hamp-Lyons, L. (1990). Second language writing: assessment issues. In Kroll, B. (Ed.) *Second language writing: Research insights for the classroom*. Cambridge University Press, 69-88.

Harlen, W. (2004). A systematic review of the evidence of the impact on students, teachers and the curriculum of the process of using assessment by teachers for summative purposes. In *Research Evidence in Education Library*. London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education. Retrieved on 3.1.12 from <http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk>.

Harlen, W. (2005). Trusting teachers' judgement: Research evidence of the reliability and validity of teachers' assessment used for summative purposes. *Research Papers in Education, 20*, 245–70.

Harpin, W. (1976). *The second R: Writing development in the Junior School*. London: Unwin.

Harris, W. (1977). Teacher response to student writing: A study of the response patterns of high school English teachers to determine the basis for teacher judgment of student writing. *Research in the Teaching of English, 11*, 175-185.

Hattie, J., and Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research, 77*, 81-112.

Hay, P., and D. Macdonald. 2008. (Mis)appropriations of criteria and standards-referenced assessment in a performance-based subject. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice, 15*, 153–68.

Hayes, J.R. (1996). A new model of cognition and affect in writing. In M. Levy & S. Ransdell (Eds.), *The science of writing. Theories, methods, individual differences and applications* (pp.1-27). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Hayes, J.R., Hatch, J.A., and Silk, C.M. (2000). Does holistic assessment predict writing? *Written Communication, 17(1)*, 3-26.

Hayes, J.R., and Flower, L.S. (1980). Identifying the organisation of writing processes. In L. Gregg & E. Steinberg (Eds.) *Cognitive processes in writing: An interdisciplinary approach* (pp.3-30). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Hillocks, G. (1984). What works in teaching composition: a meta-analysis of experimental treatment studies. *American Journal of Education, 93*, 133-170.

Hillocks, G. (2002). *The testing trap: How state writing assessments control learning*. New York: Teachers' College Press.

- Howe, K. (1998). The interpretive turn and the new debate in education. *Educational Researcher*, 27(8), 13-21.
- Hunt, K. (1965). *Grammatical structures written at three Grade levels*. Research Report 3. Urbana: NCTE.
- Huot, B. (1990). The literature of direct writing assessment: Major concerns and prevailing trends. *Review of Educational Research*, 60 (2), 237-263.
- Huot, B. (2002). *(Re)articulating writing assessment for teaching and learning*. Logan, UT: Utah State UP.
- Huot, B. and Perry, J. (2009). Toward a new understanding for classroom writing assessment. In R. Beard, D. Myhill, J. Riley, & M. Nystrand (Eds.) *The Sage handbook of writing development*, 423-435. London: Sage Publications.
- Hyland, K. (2002). *Teaching and researching writing*. London: Longman.
- Janks, H. (2009). Writing: a critical literacy perspective. In R. Beard, D. Myhill, M. Nystrand & J. Riley (Eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Writing Development*, pp.126-136. London: Sage Publications.
- Jones, S., and Myhill, D.A. (2007). Discourses of difference? Questioning gender difference in linguistic characteristics of writing. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 30, 456-482.
- Juzwik, M., Curcic, S., Wolbers, K., Moxley, K., Dimling, L. and Shankland, R.K. (2006). Writing into the 21st century: An overview of research on writing 1999–2004. *Written Communication*, 23, 451–76.
- Karmiloff-Smith, A. (1992). *Beyond modularity: A developmental perspective on cognitive science*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Kellogg, R. T. (1994). *The psychology of writing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kellogg, R. T. (2008). Training writing skills: A cognitive developmental perspective. *Journal of Writing Research*, 1(1), 1-26.
- Kincheloe, J. (2008). *Knowledge and critical pedagogy: An introduction*. New York: Springer Publishing.
- Klein, H., and Myers, M. (1999). A set of principles for conducting and evaluating field studies in information systems. *MIS Quarterly*, 23 (1), 67-94.

Klenowski, V., and Wyatt-Smith, C. (2008). *Standards-driven reform Years 1-10: Moderation an optional extra?* Paper for AARE 2008 Conference. Paper WYA081029. Retrieved on 12.2.10 from www.aare.edu.au

Klenowski, V., Adie, L., Gunn, S., Looney, A., Elwood, J., Wyatt-Smith, C., and Colbert, P. (2007) *Standards, teacher judgement and moderation: Education reform with a focus on assessment*. Paper for AARE 2007 International Education Research Conference. Retrieved on 12.2.10 from <http://eprints.qut.edu.au>.

Kos, R., and Malowski, C. (2001) Second graders' perceptions of what is important in writing. *The Elementary School Journal*, 101(5), 567-584.

Kress, G. (1994). *Learning to write*. London: Routledge.

Kress, G. (1995). *Writing the future: English and the making of a culture of innovation*. Sheffield: National Association for the Teaching of English.

Kress, G. (2003). *Literacy in the new media age*. London: Routledge.

Laming, D. 2004. *Human judgement: The eye of the beholder*. London: Thomson.

Lapadat, J. C. (2000). Evaluative discourse and achievement motivation: Students' perceptions and theories. *Language and Education*, 4(1), 37-61.

Larivee, B. (2000). Transforming teaching practice: Becoming the critically reflective teacher. *Reflective Practice* 1(3), 293-307.

Lewis, A. (1992). Group child interviews as a research tool. *British Educational Research Journal*, 18, 413-423.

Lincoln, Y.S., and Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills: CA: Sage.

Lines, H. (2012). "A matter of personal taste": Teachers' constructs of writing quality in the secondary school English classroom. In C. Bazerman et al. (Eds.) *International advances in writing research*. Anderson, South Carolina: Parlor Press.

Loban, W. (1976). *Language development: Kindergarten through grade twelve*. Research Report 18. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Longhurst, N., and Norton, L.S. (1997). Self-assessment in coursework essays. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 23, 319-330.

Luce-Kepler, R., and Klinger, D. (2005). Uneasy writing: the defining moments of highstakes literacy testing. *Assessing Writing*, 10, 157–73.

Lumley, T. (2002). Assessment criteria in a large-scale writing test: What do they really mean to the raters? *Language Testing*, 19(3), 246-276.

McClaskey, J. (2001). Who's afraid of the big bad TAAS? Rethinking our response to standardised testing. *English Journal*, 91(1), 88-95.

Marshall, B. (2001). Teachers' subject philosophies related to their assessment practices. *English in Education*, 35(3), 42-57.

Marshall, B. (2004). Goals or horizons – the conundrum of progression in English: Or a possible way of understanding formative assessment in English. *The Curriculum Journal*, 15, 101–113.

Marshall, B. (2007). Assessment in English. First published in *Handbook of Primary English in Initial Teacher Education*, T. Cremin & H. Dombey (Eds.). Retrieved on 10.9.09 from www.ite.org.uk.

Marshall, B., and Wiliam, D. (2006) *English inside the black box: Assessment for learning in the English classroom*. London: King's College.

Martin, J. (1985). *Factual writing: Exploring and challenging social reality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mason, J. (1996). *Qualitative researching*. London: Sage.

Massey, A.J., and Elliott, G.L (1996) *Aspects of Writing in 16+ English examinations between 1980 and 1994*. Occasional Research Paper 1. University of Cambridge local Examination Syndicate.

Massey, A.J., Elliott, G.L., and Johnson, N.K. (2005) Variations in aspects of writing in 16+ English examinations between 1980 and 2004: Vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, non-Standard English. *Research Matters: Special Issue, November, 2005*.

McCutchen, D. (1996). A capacity theory of writing: Working memory in composition. *Educational Psychology Review*, 8, 299-325.

- McCutchen, D. (2008). In G. MacArthur, S. Graham & J. Fitzgerald (Eds.) *Handbook of Writing Research*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- McCutchen, D. (2011). From novice to expert: Implications of language skills and writing-relevant knowledge for memory during the development of writing skill. *Journal of Writing Research*, 3(1), 51-68.
- Merriam, S. (1988). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Messenheimer, T., and Packwood, A. (2002). Writing: The state of the state vs the state of the art in English and American schools. *Literacy*, 36(1), 11-15.
- Miles, M.B., and Huberman, A.M. (1984). *Qualitative data analysis: A sourcebook of new methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Miles, M.B., and Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Sage Publications.
- Millard, E. (1997). *Differently literate: Boys, girls and the schooling of literacy*. London. Falmer.
- Ministry of Education and the University of Auckland (2004). *Assessment tools for teaching and learning: Project asTTle*. Wellington, New Zealand: Learning Media.
- Ministry of Education (2011). Position paper: Assessment. Retrieved on 20.3.2012 from <http://www.minedu.govt.nz>.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mowl, G., and Pain, R. (1995). Using self and peer assessment to improve students' essay writing: a case study from Geography. *Innovations in Education and Training International*, 32, 324-335.
- Murphy, S. (2000). A sociocultural perspective on teacher response: Is there a student in the room? *Assessing Writing*, 7, 79–90.
- Myhill, D. A. (2001a). *Better writers - applying new findings about grammar and technical accuracy*. Courseware Publications.

Myhill, D. A. (2001b). Writing: Crafting and creating. *English in Education*, 35(3), 13-20. Myhill, D. A. (2008). Towards a linguistic model of sentence development in writing. *Language and Education* 22(5), 271-288.

Myhill, D.A. (2011). 'The ordeal of deliberate choice': Metalinguistic development in secondary writers. In V. Berninger (Ed.), *Past, Present and Future Contributions of Cognitive Writing Research to Cognitive Psychology*. Psychology Press/Taylor Francis Group, 247-274.

Myhill, D. A., Fisher, R., Jones, S., Lines, H., and Hicks, A. (2008). *Effective ways of teaching complex expression in writing: A literature review of evidence from the secondary school phase*. London: DCSF. Report reference DCSF-RR032.

Myhill, D. A., and Jones, S. (2006). *Patterns and processes: the linguistic characteristics and composing processes of secondary school writers*. Technical Report RES-000-23-0208 to the Economic and Social Research Council.

Myhill, D. A., Jones, S., Lines, H., and Watson, A. (2012). Rethinking grammar: The impact of embedded grammar teaching on students' writing and students' metalinguistic understanding. *Research Papers in Education*, 2(27), 1-28.

NAHT (2014). *Report of the NAHT Commission on assessment*. Accessed on 6.4.2014 from www.naht.org.uk

National Centre for Educational Statistics (2007). National assessment of educational progress at grades 8 and 12. Nation's report card: Writing. Washington, DC. Retrieved 20.3.12 from <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/main2007/2008468.pdf>.

Nordquist, R. (ND). What are the characteristics of good writing? Retrieved on 20.9.2012 from <http://grammar.about.com/od/yourwriting/a/characteristics>.

Ofsted (2009). *English at the crossroads: An evaluation of English in primary and secondary schools, 2005-08*. London: Ofsted. Report reference: 080247.

Ofsted (2013). *Schools' use of early entry to GCSE examinations*. London: Ofsted. Report reference: 120198

Olson, D. (2003). *Psychological theory and educational reform: How school remakes mind and society*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Ofqual (2011). *Review of standards in GCSE English, 2005 and 2009*. London: Ofqual. Report reference 11/4846.

Ofqual (2013). Press release, retrieved on 30.12.13 from www.ofqual.gov.uk/news/changes-to-gcse-english-and-english-language

Pajares, F. (1992). Teachers' beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct. *Review of Educational Research*, 62(3), 307-332.

Parr, J.M. (2009) Building professional knowledge to teach writing: Teacher pedagogical content knowledge and student achievement in writing. Presented at the 45th UKLA annual conference, Literacy Today and Tomorrow, July 10–12, 2009, in University of Greenwich.

Parr, J.M. (2010a). Writing: A complex act to teach and to evaluate. In C.Rubie-Davies (Ed.). *Thinking of excellence: spotlight on educational psychology* (pp.51-67). Sydney, Australia: Routledge.

Parr, J.M. (2010b). Interrogating a mediated corpus of school student writing data for research and practice. *Journal of Writing Research*, 2, 129-150.

Parr, J.M. (2011). Repertoires to scaffold teacher learning and practice in assessment of writing. *Assessing writing*, 16, 32-48.

Parr, J.M., Glasswell, K. and Aikman, M. (2007). Supporting teacher learning and informed practice in writing through assessment tools for teaching and learning. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 35, 69–87.

Parr, J.M., and Timperley, H. S. (2010). Feedback to writing, assessment for teaching and learning and student progress. *Assessing Writing*, 15, 68–85.

Peha, S. (2005). *What is good writing? Teaching that makes sense*. Retrieved on 6.3.10 from <http://www.ttms.org>.

Pennington, M. (1996). Writing the natural way: On computer. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 9, 125-42.

Peterson, S. (1999). Influence of gender on writing development. In *Handbook of Writing Research* ed. MacArthur, C.A., Graham, S. & Fitzgerald, J. (2006). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Peterson, S., and Kennedy, K. (2006). Sixth-grade teachers' written comments on student writing: genre and gender influences. *Written Communication*, 23, 36-62.

Phelps, L.W. (1989). Images of student writing: The deep structure of student response. In C. Anson (Ed.) *Writing and response: theory, practice and research*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 37-67.

Phelps, L. W. (2000). Cyrano's nose: Variations on the theme of response. *Assessing Writing*, 7, 91–110.

Phipps, S., and Borg, S. (2009). Exploring tensions between teachers' grammar teaching beliefs and practices. *Science Direct, System 37*, 380-390.

Prior, P. (2006). A sociocultural theory of writing. In C.A. MacArthur, S. Graham, J. Fitzgerald (Eds.) *Handbook of Writing Research*, pp. 54-66. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Purves, A. (1992) Reflections on research and assessment in written composition. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 26(1), 108-122.

Pullman, P. (2002). Give them a taste of honey, *Times Educational Supplement* Feb. 8th.

Ray, R. (2001). How can KS2 writing performance be improved? A study of high and low scoring papers. *Education 3-13*, 29(3), 53-57.

QCA (1998). *The grammar papers: Perspectives on the teaching of grammar in the National Curriculum*. London: QCA Publications.

QCA (1999). Technical accuracy in writing in GCSE English: Research findings. London: QCA Publications.

Rijlaarsdam, G. et al. (2009). The role of the readers in writing development: Writing students bringing their texts to the test. In R. Beard, D. Myhill, M. Nystrand & J. Riley (Eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Writing Development*, pp.436-452. London: Sage Publications.

Sadler, D. R. (1985). The origins and functions of evaluative criteria. *Educational Theory*, 35, 285-297.

Sadler, D. R. (1987). Specifying and promulgating achievement standards. *Oxford Review of Education*, 13, 191–209.

Sadler, D. R. (1989). Formative assessment and the design of instructional systems. *Instructional Science*, 18 (2), 119-144.

Sadler, D. R. (2005). Interpretations of criteria-based assessment and grading in higher education. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 30, 175-194.

Sadler, D. R. (2007). Perils in the meticulous specification of goals and assessment criteria. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice*, 14(3), 387-392.

Sadler, D. R. (2009). Indeterminacy in the use of preset criteria for assessment and grading in higher education. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 34, 159-179.

Sainsbury, M., and Sizmur, S. (1998). Level descriptions in the national curriculum: What kind of criterion referencing is this? *Oxford Review of Education*, 24(2), 181-193.

Samway, K. D. (1993) 'This is hard, isn't it?': Children evaluating writing. *TESOL Quarterly*, 27 (2), 233-258.

Sebba, J. et al. (2008). *Systematic review of research evidence of the impact on students in secondary schools of self and peer assessment*. EPPI-Centre, Institute of Education, University of London. Report no. 1614. Retrieved on 10.6.12 from eppi.ioe.ac.uk

Scholes, R. (1985) *Textual power*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

Select Committee Report (2008). *Testing and Assessment*. House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Committee, Third Report. Reference HC 169-1. London: The Stationery Office Limited.

Sharples, M. (1985). *Cognition, computers and creative writing*. Chichester: Ellis Horwood.

Sharples, M. (1999). *How we write: writing as creative design*. London: Routledge.

Shavelson, R. J., Atwood, N., and Borko, H. (1977). Experiments on some factors contributing to teachers' pedagogical decisions. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, (7), 51-70.

Shavelson, R., and Stern, P. (1981). Research on teachers' pedagogical thoughts, judgments, decisions and behaviour. *Review of Educational Research*, 51 (4), 455-498.

- Shenton, A.K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22(2), 63-75.
- Shulman, L. S. (1986). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher*, 15(2), 4-14.
- Silverman, D. (1993). *Interpreting qualitative data: Methods for analysing talk, text and interaction*. London: Sage.
- Silverman, D. (2005). *Doing qualitative research, 2nd edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage.
- Silverman, D. (2006). *Interpreting qualitative data, 3rd edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage.
- Simon, M. (2011). *Dissertation and scholarly research: Recipes for success*. Seattle, WA: Dissertation Success, LLC.
- Smith, J., and Wrigley, S. (2012). What has writing ever done for us? The power of teachers' writing groups. *English in Education*, 46(1), 70-84.
- Sperling, M., and Freedman, S. W. (1987). A good girl writes like a good girl: Written response to student writing. *Written Communication*, 4, 343-369.
- Stake, R.E. (1994). Case studies. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 236-247. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Steinberg, C. (2008). Assessment as an emotional practice. *English Teaching Practice and Critique*, 7 (3), 42-64.
- Stromqvist, S. Johansson, V. Kriz, S. Ragnarsdottir, H. Aisenman, R., and Ravid, D. (2002). Toward a crosslinguistic comparison of lexical quanta in speech and writing. *Written Language and Literacy* 5(1), 45-68.
- Swales, J. (1990). *Genre analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Torrance, H. (2007). Assessment as learning? How the use of explicit learning objectives, assessment criteria and feedback in post-secondary education and training can come to dominate learning. *Assessment in Education*, 14(3), 281-294.

- Torrance, M., and Galbraith, D. (2006). The processing demands of writing. In C. MacArthur, S. Graham & J. Fitzgerald (Eds.) *Handbook of writing research*, 67-82. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Truss, L. (2003). *Eats, shoots and leaves*. London: Profile Books Ltd.
- Vincent, J. (2006). Children writing: Multimodality and assessment in the writing classroom. *Literacy*, 40(1), 51-57.
- Ward, R., and Dix, S. (2004). Highlighting children's awareness of their texts through talk. *Research Information for Teachers*, 1, 7-11.
- Watson, A. (2012). Navigating 'the pit of doom': Affective responses to teaching 'grammar'. *English in Education*, 46(1), 22-37.
- Weigle, S.C. (2002). *Assessing writing*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Wellington, J. (2000). *Educational research: Contemporary issues and practical approaches*. London: Continuum.
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning and identity*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Whitby, K., and Lord, P. (2006). *Dips in performance and motivation: A purely English perception?* London: QCA. Retrieved on 4.4.12 from http://www.inca.org.uk/pdf/Final_Dip_Report.pdf.
- William, D. (1996). Standards in education: A matter of trust. *The Curriculum Journal*, 7(3), 293-306.
- William, D. (1998). *The validity of teachers' assessments*. Paper presented at the 22nd annual conference of the International Group for the Psychology of Mathematics Education, Stellenbosch, South Africa.
- William, D., and Marshall, B. (2002). Thinking through assessment: an interview with Dylan William. *English in Education*, 36(3), 47-60. Sheffield, UK: NATE.
- Wilkinson, A., Barnsley, G., Hanna, P., and Swan, M. (1980). *Assessing Language Development*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wilmot, J., R. Wood, and R. Murphy. 1996. *A review of research into the reliability of examinations*: Discussion paper prepared for the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority. Nottingham: University of Nottingham. Retrieved on

10.10.12 from www.nottingham.ac.uk/shared/shared_cdell/pdf-reports/relexam.pdf.

Witte, S., Daly, J., and Cherry, R. (1986). Syntactic complexity and writing quality. In D. McQuade (Ed.) *The territory of language*, pp.150-164. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Witte, S., and Faigley, L. (1981). Coherence, cohesion, and writing quality. *College Composition and Communication*, 32 (2), 189-204.

Woods, D. (1996). *Teacher cognition in language teaching: Beliefs, decision-making and classroom practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wray, D., and Medwell, J. (2006a). Pupils' perspectives on literacy teaching. *Education 3-13*, 34 (3), 201-210.

Wray, D., and Medwell, J. (2006b). Progression in writing and the Northern Ireland Levels for writing. *Research review commissioned by CCEA, Northern Ireland.*, Coventry: University of Warwick (Research Paper).

Wyatt-Smith, C. (1999). Reading for assessment: how teachers ascribe meaning and value to student writing. *Assessment in Education*, 6 (2), 195-223.

Wyatt-Smith, C., and Castleton, G. (2004). Factors affecting writing achievement: mapping teacher beliefs. *English in Education* 38 (1), 39-63.

Wyatt-Smith, C., and Castleton, G. (2005). Examining how teachers judge student writing: an Australian case study. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 37 (2), 131–154.

Wyatt-Smith, C., Castleton, G., Freebody, P., and Cooksey, R. (2003). The nature of teachers' qualitative judgements: A matter of context and salience. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 26 (2), 11-32.

Wyatt-Smith, C., and Murphy, J. (2001). What English counts as writing assessment: An Australian move to mainstream critical literacy. *English in Education*, 35(1), 12-31.

Yancey, K.B. (1999). Historicizing writing assessment. *College Composition and Communication*, 50, 483–96.

Yancey, K.B. (2009). *Writing in the 21st century*. Urbana IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Yin, R.K. (2003) *Case study research: Design and method (3^d ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

In an area of rough land, the birds soared with the cold winds from the North. Their dark feathers fluttered a hundred feet above a tiny village of small round huts. They had awoken with the sun and five had flown up to greet the new day, arousing the humans below by whistling.

The village woke quickly. The feathered neighbours looked down from their perches high in the blossoming trees at the growing crowd. 'It must be that time once again,' thought the older birds. 'One of the humans will be given back to the earth.'

A ceremony had taken place every spring of every year that the eldest of the birds could remember. On that ceremonial day the land was always disturbed. There were many shouts, some as shrill as the singing of the birds. Many of the furry animals that lurk in the long grasses would scamper away as a small march made its way through. They marched to somewhere different every year and laid a body to rest.

Every human, from the youngest to the very shrivelled oldest, had gathered next to the largest of the mud huts. Out of this hut emerged a tall male with a long spear. The birds recognised the figure as the chief of the humans. They watched with curiosity and wonder as the man looked at the crowd, his head held high with importance.

The priest made a sudden movement, dropping the spear slightly so that it was pointing to his right. Three older women saw the signal and began to pass their bowls of cold soup around. The birds immediately hopped off their branches, darting between heads in an attempt to make the people drop the bowls in shock. Their beaks were eager for the seeds.

Once the two different groups had finished feeding, the priest was brought his own bowl of watery seeds and vegetables. The people bowed their heads in respect, in complete silence. Even the youngest chicks that had only recently managed to escape their nests, knew better than to disturb the powerful human while he ate. He took one last, loud gulp. Then he finally brought the bowl down from his lips and wiped the corner of his mouth with his thumb. All was in order. So far.

The bowl was flung high into the air. The inquisitive birds watched it reach eye level before it fell back down. They were always amused by things that could not stay above the earth. It hit a young man's shoulder before resting at his feet. As it did so the man's eyes widened with horror and his whole body stiffened. Those nearest to him would have noticed the colour drain from his face had they not retreated at least ten paces away from him as soon as they heard the dull thud. He had been chosen.

* * *

Moments later the young man could be seen shuffling away from his home with a rope around his neck. The end of the rope was held firmly by an older man who walked behind him. Two more men were on either side of him and at the front of the parade was the priest. From the position just below the clouds the large flock of birds that were following could tell that the slow pacing humans must be headed for the marsh land. Low, grim notes left the birds' bills. Far below the young man looked up to see the depressing black shapes dance in front of the grey sky. Without himself even realising it, muted tears ran down his cheeks.

Soon the village was out of sight for even the birds. The ground had become wet and muddy. The young man was forced to strip off his warm leather clothes as was tradition. He wore just a belt, a cap and a noose around his neck. All the while the priest stood with his spear and waited for his part. He was smiling. The young man noticed this and became angry. He suddenly jerked the rope out of the hands of the guard and tried to run for safety. But he could not go back to the village. He had started over the marshes and slipped. That was when one of the other men had seized the end of the rope and dragged him back. He choked and splashed about as the rope cut into his throat. The birds squawked with excitement and terror. The priest was yelling too. Eventually the young man was brought to kneel in front of the priest and his sharp staff. No more time was wasted. The strong stick was brought down upon the skull of the sobbing human with tremendous force. There was another dull thud and a slight crack as the blow killed him. The priest stood tall again and flicked his hand telling the other three men to lay him properly to rest.

Some of the birds lost interest in the sacrifice at that point. He was dead and so there was no more to see. They returned to their nests by the village. Others watched as the dead body was carried further into the marshes. He was then positioned so that he was facing towards what used to be his home. His eyes were shut for him and his body placed on its side. At that moment he became lost beneath the water.

A jumble of violent shouts from the priest woke the feathered onlookers from their grave stillness. The march and the flock left the scene.

Back in the humans' village, later that evening, the celebrations of the new spring time were slightly higher spirited. It was sunset and the birds were settling down after their exciting day. Above them the sky had been painted crimson. It was a sign to all the creatures that on that day an unlucky, innocent life had come to an end.

Crimson Spring commentary

Sentence level (AFs 5/6)

The first sentence begins with an adverbial that emphasises an appropriate context – ‘rough land’ – for the narrative. In the second paragraph, short sentences are deployed for effect – ‘The village woke quickly.’ These slightly terse sentence forms are typical of the structures crafted throughout to provide an edgy intensity to the mood and atmosphere as the narrative develops. Additional information is conveyed succinctly and precisely by the use of expanded noun phrases – ‘The feathered neighbours...their perches high in the blossoming trees...’. Where appropriate, a range of sentence forms are used to create impact and emphasis for the reader in accord with the writer’s purpose – ‘Once the two different groups... So far’ (paragraph 6). Sometimes longer sentences, equally effectively crafted for purpose and impact, are developed accurately to move the narrative forward – ‘From the position just below the clouds the large flock of birds that were following could tell that the slow pacing humans must be headed for the marsh land’ (paragraph 8). As the narrative moves to a climax, increasing use is made of short sentences to add to the tension – ‘All the while the priest stood with his spear....No more time was wasted’ (paragraph 9).

Sentence syntax is consistently accurate as too is the demarcation of sentences. However, although there are no significant omissions of punctuation, there is little use of other devices to support clarity and effect, apart from the occasional comma to mark clauses. At sentence level, it is the adaptation of sentence structures to purpose and effect, rather than imaginative use of punctuation, that gives the narrative its impact.

Paragraph level (AFs 3/4)

The opening sentence engages the reader’s attention and establishes an appropriate tone and setting – ‘rough land’ – for the narrative. The reader is also, literally, given a bird’s eye view of the situation and continuing references to the birds – for example, ‘feathered neighbours’ – contributes to coherence and cohesion across the first three paragraphs, indeed, continuing to provide a cohesive motif throughout. Also, words are repeated or echoed – ‘A ceremony....On that ceremonial day...’ or ‘...a small march... They marched...’ (paragraph 3) – to support cohesion within the paragraph.

Paragraphs are structured to give different perspectives on the situation – ‘Every human...’ / ‘The priest...’ / ‘Once the two different groups...’ – deliberately managing the information flow to the reader to generate tension and expectation of dramatic events to come, emphasised by the deliberate pause in the action signalled by the asterisks. This device offers the reader a moment’s

respite – the action continues ‘Moments later...’ – before confronting the intensity of the denouement.

References to the behaviour of the birds continue to support coherence and cohesion throughout the climax to the action. In the longest paragraphs describing the tragic events, cohesion is managed simply but effectively by the repetition of ‘the young man’ and ‘he’ – entirely appropriate to purpose as ‘he’ is the focus of the action.

The final paragraph – ‘later that evening’ – creates an appropriate setting for the conclusion of the narrative, with the reference to the ‘sunset’ harking back to the opening – ‘awoken with the sun’ and the focus on the birds still maintained. However, the actual ending is the least well managed part of the narrative with a somewhat limp final sentence that fails to do justice to the tensely-controlled description of the events that has preceded it.

Text level - including vocabulary (AFs 1/2/7)

The objectivity of the narrator’s stance is established from the beginning – ‘In an area of rough land...’ / ‘The village...’ – lending authenticity to the description of setting, mood, atmosphere and action as it is recounted through a consistent narrative voice/perspective. This sense of detachment and formality in dealing with events in a slightly under-stated way engages and sustains the reader’s interest without the need for further ‘dramatisation’ as the action unfolds.

The dramatic nature of the action is largely conveyed through choice of language. ‘Many of the furry animals that lurk in the long grasses would scamper away as a small march made its way through’ (paragraph 3), for example, is not only a hint of fear overall, but ‘lurk’, ‘grasses’ and ‘scamper’ contribute to the vividness of the scene. Similarly, as the drama increases in paragraph 7: ‘The bowl was flung high into the air’; the birds are ‘inquisitive’ as they watch; ‘the man’s eyes widened with horror and his whole body stiffened’. It is the attention to detail and the preciseness of the words that are chosen to convey that detail which makes the major stylistic contribution to the effectiveness of this piece.

Spelling (AF8)

Correct spelling of a wide range of vocabulary is evident throughout. Words that are often traps for the unwary - such as ‘eventually’, ‘ceremonial’, ‘inquisitive’, ‘excitement’ – are all managed entirely accurately.

Source: Assessing pupils’ progress in English at Key Stage 3: Standards File Pupil 21 Writing. The National Strategies Secondary (DCSF & QCA, 2008)

Appendix 2: Assessing pupils' progress in English at Key Stage 3 Assessment criteria: Writing Levels 7-8

	AF5 – vary sentences for clarity, purpose and effect	AF6 – write with technical accuracy of syntax and punctuation in phrases, clauses and sentences	AF3 – organise and present whole texts effectively, sequencing and structuring information, ideas and events	AF4 – construct paragraphs and use cohesion within and between paragraphs	AF1 – write imaginative, interesting and thoughtful texts	AF2 – produce texts which are appropriate to task, reader and purpose	AF7 – relate texts to their social, cultural and historical traditions	AF8 – use correct spelling
Level 8	Across a range of writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sentence structure is imaginative, precise and accurate, matched to writer's purpose and intended effect on the reader 		Across a range of writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • imaginative, well controlled structuring of subject matter and management of paragraphing provide textual coherence and cohesion to position the reader appropriately in relation to the writer's purpose 		Across a range of writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creative selection and adaptation of a wide range of forms and conventions to meet varied writing challenges with distinctive personal voice and style matched to intended effect 		Across a range of writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wide ranging vocabulary used imaginatively and with precision 	Across a range of writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • correct spelling throughout
Level 7	Across a range of writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • variety of sentence types deployed judiciously across the text to achieve purpose and overall effect, with rare loss of control • a range of features employed to shape/ craft sentences that have individual merit and contribute to overall development of the text, e.g. <i>embedded phrases and clauses that support succinct explanation; secure control of complex verb forms; antithesis, repetition or balance in sentence structure</i> 		Across a range of writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information, ideas and events skilfully managed and shaped to achieve intended purpose and effect, e.g. <i>introduction and development of character, plot, event, or the terms of an argument, are paced across the text</i> • a variety of devices position the reader, e.g. <i>skilful control of information flow to reader; teasing the reader by drawing attention to how the narrative or argument is being handled</i> 	Across a range of writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • paragraphing across the text is integral to meaning and purpose, e.g. <i>paragraph length and complexity varied to match narrative pace or development of argument; varied devices to link or juxtapose paragraphs; paragraph structure repeated for effect</i> • individual paragraphs shaped or crafted for imaginative or rhetorical effect, e.g. <i>last sentence echoing the first; lengthy single sentence paragraph to convey inner monologue</i> 	Across a range of writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • imaginative and generally successful adaptation of wide range of forms and conventions to suit variety of purposes and audiences, e.g. <i>deliberate reference to other texts or textual conventions for effect or emphasis</i> • well judged, distinctive individual voice or point of view established and sustained throughout, e.g. <i>consistent handling of narrator's persona in fiction; well controlled use of original turns of phrase in formal discursive writing</i> • generally successful and consistent control of appropriate level of formality and varied range of stylistic devices to achieve intended effect, e.g. <i>varying the level of formality within a piece for effect; direct address to the reader or taking the reader into their confidence</i> 		Across a range of writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vocabulary consistently, often imaginatively, well matched to purpose and audience • range of vocabulary generally varied and ambitious, often judiciously chosen 	Across a range of writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • correct spelling throughout

Appendix 3: ESRC *Grammar for Writing?* project teacher interview schedule

TEACHER INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

What is the impact of teacher linguistic subject knowledge on the teaching of grammar?
What is the impact of pedagogical support materials on the teaching of grammar?
What are teachers' pedagogical beliefs about teaching grammar in the context of writing?

SECTION 1:

Main construct: Pedagogical Thinking (about support/own teaching materials)

Related Constructs: Planning: Lesson structure/choice of activity/grouping/ terminology

Learning: Learning objective/teacher input/pupil activities

Assessment: Assessment of learning in lesson/pupil response/follow up lessons

1. The lesson observed.
 - Invite the teacher to reflect on the lesson observed, probing each of the three constructs – planning, learning, assessment.
 - Follow up anything which occurred in the lesson which merits further discussion.

2. The scheme of work so far
 - Control group: discuss the choices made in the MTP
 - Intervention group: discuss effectiveness of STP thus far and any changes made

SECTION 2:

Main construct: Linguistic subject knowledge

1. How confident do you feel teaching fictional narrative/argument/poetry?
2. Is there anything you feel you need to know more about?
3. What are the key text level features you want writers to understand about fictional narrative/argument/poetry?
4. What are the key sentence level features you want writers to understand about fictional narrative/argument/poetry?
5. What are the key word level features you want writers to understand about fictional narrative/argument/poetry?

SECTION 3

Main construct: Teachers' beliefs about writing and about grammar teaching

Term 1 Interview:

Introduce the construct we are seeking to explore and display the set of labels for that construct. Invite teachers to talk about and reflect on what those labels mean in terms of their own teaching of writing.

1. The big picture: (red words)

2. Teaching strategies: (blue words)
3. The writing process: (green words)

Closing questions:

- What do you think makes 'good' writing?
- What do you think makes a good teacher of writing?

Term 2 Interview:

Introduce the construct we are seeking to explore and display the set of belief statements. Taking each statement in turn, invite the teacher to Strongly Agree, Agree, Uncertain, Disagree, Strongly Disagree and then explore the reasons for that decision.

Closing questions:

- What criteria would you use to describe 'good' writing?
- Do the assessment criteria at KS3 and GCSE effectively capture 'good' writing?

Term 3 Interview:

Introduce the construct we are seeking to explore – teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching.

1. Can you tell me about how you normally teach or do not teach grammar in the context of writing?
2. What is your personal view about the role of grammar in writing lessons?
3. Are there some elements of grammar which you feel help children become better writers?
4. Are there some elements of grammar which hinder or do not help children become better writers?
5. Is it necessary to teach grammar terminology or can children learn about grammar without the terminology?
6. How confident do you feel in your own subject knowledge of grammar? Probe for confidence in 'naming' and identifying grammatical constructions.
7. How confident do you feel in applying your grammatical knowledge to writing contexts? In what context and why would you, for example, teach about simple and complex sentences or noun phrases?

Closing questions:

- What are you looking for as indicators of quality in writing?
- Do you think KS3 tests and GCSE reward those qualities?

BELIEF STATEMENTS

Learning about the process of writing is more important than the finished piece of writing.

It is crucial to teach children explicitly about how to write well.

Children learn to write by reading and writing.

Teaching grammar does not help children write better.

It is important to teach children how to plan and draft and edit their writing.

Understanding the characteristics of different genres is an important part of teaching writing.

Labels for beliefs

spontaneity

creativity

testing

motivation

self-expression

accuracy

teacher modelling

use of text models

scaffolds

use of talk to support writing

stimulus activities

direct explanation

practising/exercising

planning

drafting

editing

revising

generating ideas

evaluating

STUDENT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

What is the impact of pedagogical support materials on the teaching of grammar?

What is the impact of grammar teaching on pupils' metalinguistic understanding?

Pre-interview: interviewee needs time to read the stimulus text and their own text using prompt reflection card provided.

SECTION 1:

Main construct: Pedagogical Thinking (pupil response to teaching)

Related Constructs:

Planning: Lesson structure/choice of activity/grouping/ terminology

Learning: Learning objective/teacher input/pupil activities

Assessment: Assessment of learning in lesson/pupil response/follow up lessons

1. Tell me about you as a writer? Do you enjoy writing; are you a good writer; what do you find hard etc
2. What do you think the teacher was teaching you about writing today?
3. What have you learnt so far about how to write fictional narrative/argument/poetry?
4. What lesson activities do you find helpful in teaching you to write better?
5. Questions which relate to specific activities in the lesson.

SECTION 2:

Main construct: Metalinguistic Understanding

Relate to concepts taught in SoW;

- ability to use terminology
- understanding of effect/applied
- ability to talk about language choices quite explicitly without grammar terms

Stimulus text 1: Use a model text of fictional narrative/argument/poetry to stimulate discussion on Prompt Card).

Stimulus text 2: Own writing from the SoW currently being taught

- How well is this piece of writing progressing? What are you most pleased with?

- Does it have any of the text features of a story opening: How can you tell this is the opening of a story? Does it do any of the things that other stories you've read do?
- What about the sentences? Can you comment on how effective the sentence structure or shaping is?
- What about the word choices? Can you comment on the effectiveness of the vocabulary?
- What would you like to change or improve?

Supplementary questions:

- What did you enjoy about today's lesson?

What do you think makes good writing?

Prompt Text: Term 1 Fictional Narrative

The Burglary

It was November 12th, 2007. My family and I had just been to a whole family reunion in Reading. We were nearing the end of our journey home, when finally we pulled up at our house feeling happy and contented, having had a great time. We got out of the car, and walked up to our sturdy, solid gate. As I pulled the latch up and attempted to open the gate, it wouldn't budge. It wouldn't move a single inch. My mum said, "Callum, climb up the wall and check the gate from the inside." I clambered up and saw immediately that the gate was now bolted shut. A little voice in the back of my head told me, 'that wasn't bolted when we left this morning.' This was the thing that first set the alarm bells ringing. I felt a slight pang of fear and hastily unbolted the gate, and let my family through.

On approaching the back door, the security light blazed into being. We were shocked into silence. The bathroom window had been brutally smashed, so had the kitchen's windows. My mother's hands were shaking as she unlocked the back door. When my sister had finally traipsed through the door, we all stood stock-still. We had been burgled!! What a devious chap to have bolted the gate from the inside just in case we arrived home early. It would have given him the extra time to make a hasty escape.

This is the start of a story, written by someone of your age. We want to know what you think about it. Read it and then think about your answers to the following questions. We would like you to be as specific as possible in explaining and justifying your answers.

- How well do you think this opening is written?
- What makes it successful or unsuccessful as an opening for you?
- Does it have any of the text features of a story opening?
- What about the sentences? Can you comment on how effectively the sentences are structured or shaped?
- What about the word choices? Can you comment on the effectiveness of the vocabulary?
- How could the story opening be improved?

This isn't a test and there aren't wrong or right answers – we just want to know what you think and how specific you can be in explaining your judgements.

Prompt Text: Term 2 Argument

Fair Treatment for our Elderly People.

It is awful the way elderly people are treated in this day and age. They should not go to homes just because they're old.

Firstly, the younger generation owe the older generation because the older generation looked after the younger ones for at least 16 or more years, ever since they were babies. So the younger generation really should invite their parents in to their house to live with them and not be lonely in an old home or be left in some home to die.

Surely a home is no different from a boarding school. Some people argue that the homes are for caring for the elderly. But in their last years alive wouldn't you want to spend it with your family and not carted to an old home with strangers you've never met.

It is disgraceful to see the younger generation sending their families off to old people's homes. It's not the younger generation's right to control the lives of elders. They ought to make their own decisions on whether they want to go to a home or not. They've made their own decisions until now, what's changed?

To think people ever even consider placing their elderly family in a home is beyond me. All they do is sit in an empty room nothing to do except sit and do nothing. Or the elderly could be having fun at a relative's house. So if they did stay at a home they would get very lonely indeed.

Another important point is that they might only get along with their families because their families are the only ones that understand them and if a nurse or someone they didn't trust or haven't met they might, not take their medicine and die. But if they were around their family they would trust them.

It is horrible to think that people are doing this, but they are. The homes could be very very dangerous, so let's end this madness now.

This is an argument, written by someone of your age. We want to know what you think about it. Read it and then think about your answers to the following questions. We would like you to be as specific as possible in explaining and justifying your answers.

- How well do you think this argument is written?
- What makes it successful or unsuccessful as an argument for you?
- How can you tell this is an argument?
- What about the sentences? Can you comment on how effective the sentence structures or shaping is?
- What about the word choices? Can you comment on the effectiveness of the vocabulary?
- How could the argument be improved?

This isn't a test and there aren't wrong or right answers – we just want to know what you think and how specific you can be in explaining your judgements.

Prompt Text: Term 3 Poetry

Teacher.

Lesson planner, boredom banner

Moral pillar, mayhem stiller

Concept thrower, future-sower,

Power dresser, mug obsessor,

Late night marker, silence-barker,

Blame absorber

Stress bin.

These two poems were written by young people and we want to know what you think about them. Read them both and then think about your answers to the following questions. We would like you to be as specific as possible in explaining and justifying your answers.

- How well do you think each poem is written?
- What makes them successful or unsuccessful for you?
- How can you tell these are both poems?
- What about the sentences or lines? Can you comment on how effective the structure or shaping is?
- What about the word choices? Can you comment on the effectiveness of the vocabulary?
- How could the poems be improved?

This isn't a test and there aren't wrong or right answers – we just want to know what you think and how specific you can be in explaining your judgements.

Teacher's Red Pen

I give merit where it is due

I give responses to your best guess

I give you the benefit of the doubt

I give you a qualified 'no' or a resounding 'yes'

The hand that holds me makes me tick, makes me cross

The hand that holds me is the voice I am given

The hand that holds me sorts the good from the dross

The hand that holds me writes the words that are written

I inspire you to carry on

I urge you to stop dead



I tell you to 'see me'

I force you to see red

Appendix 5: *Grammar for Writing?* project common plans for schemes of work

Title of unit: Writing Fiction	Year: 8	Term: Autumn	Duration: 3 weeks (9 hours)
<p>Overview of unit: Opportunities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Make links between students' reading of fiction and the choices they make as writers <input type="checkbox"/> Understand how writers create settings and develop a character's viewpoint and voice <input type="checkbox"/> Understand how writers vary vocabulary and sentences for impact <input type="checkbox"/> Experiment with linguistic and literary techniques in own writing <input type="checkbox"/> Shape, craft, edit and evaluate own fictional narrative writing 			
<p>Framework Objectives</p> <p>8.1: Developing viewpoint, voice and ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • draw on some techniques and devices used by writers in order to develop distinctive character and voice in their own fiction <p>8.2: Varying sentences and punctuation for clarity and effect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • draw on the full range of punctuation, including colons and semicolons, to clarify meaning, aid cohesion and create a variety of effects • draw on their knowledge of a wide variety of sentence lengths and structures, including complex sentences, and apply it to their own writing to clarify ideas and create a range of effects according to task, purpose and reader <p>8.3: Improving vocabulary for precision and effect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create considered and appropriate effects by drawing independently on the range and variety of their own vocabulary, and by using strategies and resources to extend their available choices <p>8.4: Developing varied linguistic and literary techniques</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • draw on a repertoire of linguistic and literary devices, and select those most appropriate for creating specific effects in their own writing <p>9.2: Using grammar accurately and appropriately</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • draw on their knowledge of grammatical conventions to write grammatically accurate texts that are appropriate to the task, audience and purpose 		<p>Assessment Foci:</p> <p>WAF1: write interesting, imaginative and thoughtful texts</p> <p>WAF5: vary sentences for clarity, purpose and effect</p> <p>WAF6: write with technical accuracy of syntax and punctuation</p> <p>WAF7: select appropriate and effective vocabulary</p>	
		<p>Assessed Outcome:</p> <p><i>Teacher assessment</i></p> <p>Students plan a short story in response to an image (chosen by teacher/students) and write one section of the story.</p> <p><i>Peer and self assessment</i></p> <p>Using the checklist for writing fiction. Evaluation of partner's planning. Students could annotate their own or their partner's writing and comment on the impact of the choices they made as a writer.</p>	

Appendix 6: *Grammar for Writing?* project training day session on good writing





Exeter Writing Project

What are we investigating?

What do students think about writing?

- What writing do they like/dislike?
- What teaching strategies do they find helpful?
- Can they articulate the language choices they make?
- Can they discuss ways to improve their writing?



Exeter Writing Project

What are we investigating?

What do teachers believe about the teaching of writing?

- About what children find easy/difficult?
- About different text types?
- About the writing process?
- About ways of teaching writing?
- About what needs explicit teaching?
- About what makes good writing?

What makes good writing? Session notes

1. Introduce this as a topic I'm interested in for my own research.
5 mins: Individually: complete prompt sheet: Good writing...A good teacher of writing...
10 mins: Individually: Read two examples of Y8 students' fiction writing, 'A Hellish World' and 'The Burglary'. Which one do you think is best and why? Make brief annotations to help account for your choice.
2. 10 mins: Share responses in groups of 4. Summarise points of agreement and disagreement on A3 sheets (collect in at end of session).
3. 10 mins: Whole group discussion of points that have arisen (make notes on flipchart).

A hellish world

Walking through the damp-ridden corridors, climbing up the dark staircase, I headed, wet as an amphibian clambering out of its hidyhole, plopping into a pool of muddy faeces, and I was as cold as an astronaut in space with the dankness. I sodded my way to Room 5 – no relief from the mouldy day. I plumped, I slopped into a chair and squelched my feet on the flea-ridden floor. I lay back in my chair, dripping and melting away into my world of happy dreams. My thoughts of Her, the happy times I spent last night, having fun with Her.

Suddenly I jump into reality, the bell ringing as I rise in my chair. Five minutes of heaven, the rest of the day, of hell. The teacher walks in, we stand in recognition, he sits us down, we sit in anticipation, machines waiting to be programmed for the day. ‘Today is House Rugby,’ the teacher rings aloud. ‘he must do well.’ We nod our heads in synchronised agreement, and re-attach our bags in unison, and head off in single file to start today.

The Burglary

It was November 12th, 2007. My family and I had just been to a whole family reunion in Reading. We were nearing the end of our journey home, when finally we pulled up at our house feeling happy and contented, having had a great time. We got out of the car, and walked up to our sturdy, solid gate. As I pulled the latch up and attempted to open the gate, it wouldn’t budge. It wouldn’t move a single inch. My mum said, “Callum, climb up the wall and check the gate from the inside.” I clambered up and saw immediately that the gate was now bolted shut. A little voice in the back of my head told me; ‘that wasn’t bolted when we left this morning.’ This was the thing that first set the alarm bells ringing. I felt a slight pang of fear and hastily unbolted the gate, and let my family through.

On approaching the back door, the security light blazed into being. We were shocked into silence. The bathroom window had been brutally smashed, so had the kitchen’s windows. My mother’s hands were shaking as she unlocked the back door. When my sister had finally traipsed through the door, we all stood stock-still. We had been burgled!! What a devious chap to have bolted the gate from the inside just in case we arrived home early. It would have given him the extra time to make a hasty escape.

Name:

Good writing....

A good teacher of writing....

Appendix 7: Independent single case study lesson plan and resources

Y8 Thinking about Writing “lesson” (50 minutes)

Objective: to explore the criteria Y8 students use to judge the effectiveness of narrative fiction writing.

Research questions:

- How do students conceptualise good writing?
- How consistent are students' judgements of quality?

10 minutes

Explain main ideas behind my research question: How do teachers and students evaluate quality in writing?

- Writing is important but it's also difficult, as complex as playing chess; most students find writing harder than reading or speaking and listening;
- In order to get better at writing, you need to know what you are aiming for, what a good performance looks like, but it's harder to explain this in English than in Maths where an answer is right or wrong;
- Criteria used to judge a good performance in writing are difficult to define and apply – even when teachers use the same published criteria for assessment they can still argue about the same piece of writing e.g. which criteria should count the most;
- Students might value different things in writing than do their teachers – very little research has been done into how students judge writing; self and peer evaluation of writing is common but what criteria are used to make judgements about good writing and about how to improve it?

INDIVIDUAL TASK: To show what *you* think about writing, complete statements “Good writing...” and “A good writer...” (on back of writing samples).

20 mins

- Explain focus on narrative fiction/story writing and where the writing samples came from.

INDIVIDUAL TASK: Rank ordering: read both stories and decide which you think is best. Annotate with reasons for choice.

- Form groups as a result of this exercise – 3s/4s who chose same story.

GROUP TASK: Use group discussion to explain reasons in more detail. Stress that I'm interested in similarities and differences in the judgements they make, and that there are no right or wrong answers. Give each group a recording chart with prompts and spaces to record answers summarising group discussion.

Use as set of notes for presentation at end.

10 mins

Select two groups to present to class (hear about each story if possible): **TAPE RECORD.**

10 mins

- Reflect as a class – what are some of the variables in deciding what good writing is? What criteria do students think are most important?
- **INDIVIDUAL TASK:** Reflect on own writing e.g. how good a writer are you and how do you know? Which of these writers are you most like? Complete final prompt on back of writing samples: I could improve my writing by...
- Collect in responses and thank students for participating.



TASK: Write a story based on this image.

STORY 1

I had just finished a run down the bordercross, when I noticed a safe route back. I remembered my dad saying that I had to stick to the same routes and be back by 5.05 p.m. but it was already 5.10 so I skied a little closer to examine the route. It was fairly steep but very direct I looked back to go the way I had been instructed to but as I turned something caught my eye a huge cloud of ice and snow streamed down an unsafe area off piste so I decided to watch this person skiing so I turned back round and started down the direct route back.

After about 30 minutes I was level with this dangerous skier I carefully examined him while trying to keep in control myself but I could just make out that he was a boy around my age (15) but he was too blurred and distant to make anything else out. I decided it might be a good idea to video what was happening so I pulled off to the edge of the slope to take out my v. camera. After a few minutes I was skiing again it didn't take long to be level with the skier. Suddenly the skier went onto hard ice and rock he very quickly lost balance, I started to feel faint.

Nexed thing I new I was lying in bed I scanned my body...phew nothing was wrong, Then I realised what all the alarm and havoc was about, lying next to me was the man I saw skiing...Dead. Later my video would become evidence all over the world.

STORY 2

He slipped nearly falling onto a rock. Shuddering, he steadyed himself and zoomed on. Suddenly there was a drop, he went over, arms and legs flailing. Then he saw solid ground and brought his skis together. He landed roughly and for about the 10th time, he nearly fell. He saw a patch of ice and couldn't swerve in time, skidding onto it he slipped, hitting the ice hard, it was like hitting a sheet of metal. He got up. His side was hurting, but he was determined to carry on. He crawled to the edge of the ice and realised it was a water obstacle. He shuddered at the thought of hitting it in the day. Carrying on skiing Henry saw a small group of trees, this time he managed to avoid them. He saw something in the corner of his vision and turned to look. It moved with him. Then he realised that he had cracked his goggles when he hit the ice. Carrying on he saw a dip, then THEBOTTOMOFTHE SLOPE! He looked up and saw the sun begin to rise. It had taken him all night to reach the bottom. He felt a new surge of energy, washing away the tiredness and pain. He smiled and relaxed as he zipped through the slush, that was, until a few hours ago, snow. His smile turned to a look of horror as a boulder loomed up in front of him. He tried to turn but his limbs wouldn't obey him. He slammed straight into it and lay on the snow, his vision blurring, until he blacked out.

THINKING ABOUT WRITING

Story 1 / Story 2 : Circle your group's choice.

The story was written by someone of your age. I want to know what you think about it. Read it again, then answer the questions in as much detail as you can.

What do you think is the best thing about this story?

Look at the way the story starts. What works well about the opening?

Look at the way the story ends. What works well about the ending?

Think about the sentences. How well do they work for the reader? Which are the best sentences?

Think about the vocabulary. How well does it work for the reader? Which are the best word choices?

How could the story be improved?

Boy/Girl (Please circle)

Good writing....

A good writer....

I could improve my writing by....

Appendix 7a Original versions of ‘Thinking about Writing’ lesson plan and group discussion prompt questions, used in pilot and then adapted to simplify

Y8 Good Writing “lesson” (45 minutes)

Objective: to explore the criteria Y8 students use to judge the effectiveness of narrative fiction writing

Research questions:

- How do students conceptualise good writing?
- How consistent are students’ judgements of quality?

8 minutes

- Explain main ideas behind my research question: How do teachers and students evaluate quality in writing?
 - writing is important but writing is difficult, as complex as playing chess; most students find writing harder than reading or speaking and listening
 - like any subject, practical or academic, in order to get better at writing, you need to know what you are aiming for, what a good performance looks like, but judgements about good writing are genuinely subjective, e.g. based on personal preference, unlike maths where an answer is right or wrong
 - criteria used to judge a good performance are difficult to define and apply – even when teachers use the same published criteria for assessment they can still argue about the same piece of writing e.g. which criteria should dominate judgement
 - students might value different things in writing than do their teachers – very little research has been done into how students judge writing; self and peer evaluation of writing is common but what criteria are used to make judgements about good writing and about how to improve it?
- Subjectivities count, so, individually, complete statements “Good writing...” and “A good writer...” (on back of story choices).

20 mins

- Explain focus on narrative fiction/story writing and where the writing samples came from.

- Explain rank ordering task. Individually read and decide which is best. On post-it note, write name and reasons for choice.
- Place post-it note under Story 1 or Story 2 headings on whiteboard. (Note responses/photograph)
- Form groups as a result of this exercise – 3s/4s who voted for same extract. Task is to agree and explain reasons in more detail. Stress that I'm interested in similarities and differences in the judgements they make, and that there are no right or wrong answers
- Give each group a recording chart with prompts and spaces to record answers summarising group discussion. Use as set of notes for presentation at end.

10 mins

- Hear statement from each group that answers: Which is the best piece of writing and why? **TAPE RECORD.**

7 mins

- In light of discussion, have you changed your mind about your original choice? Individuals move original post-it note if necessary.
- Reflect as a class – what are some of the variables in deciding the “gold standard” for writing? What criteria do they think are most important?
- Individual reflection: How good a writer are you and how do you know? Which of these writers are you most like? Add to earlier statements on back of story extracts: I could improve my writing by...
- Collect in responses and thank students for participating.
- If time left over, discuss the Level they would give each story and why.

THINKING ABOUT WRITING

Story 1 / Story 2 : Circle your group's choice.

Who is in your group? Write your names here:

The story was written by someone of your age. I want to know what you think about it. Read it again and then think about your answers to the following questions. I'd like you to be as specific as possible in explaining and justifying your answers. You can use the space next to each question to make notes and give examples. You can highlight/annotate the story if helpful.

How well do you think this story is written? What makes it successful for you?	
What about the way the story starts? Can you comment on the effectiveness of the opening?	
What about the way the story ends? Can you comment on the effectiveness of the ending?	
What about the sentences? Can you comment on how effectively the sentences are structured or shaped? Which are the 'best' sentences?	
What about the word choices? Can you comment on the effectiveness of the vocabulary? Which are the 'best' word choices?	
How could the story be improved?	

Appendix 8: *Grammar for Writing?* project teacher questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE – YOU AS A TEACHER OF WRITING

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Name: _____ Gender: _____
 School: _____ Degree Subject: _____
 How long have you been teaching? _____ Did you train as an English teacher YES/NO _____

YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AS A WRITER	
Do you write for pleasure in your own time?	YES/NO
Do you have a personal blog?	YES/NO
Do you enjoy writing?	YES/NO

YOUR SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE OF LITERATURE:				
<i>How would you rate your subject knowledge of each of the areas below:</i>				
KNOWLEDGE ABOUT LITERATURE	Poor	Adequate	Good	Very Good
Shakespeare				
Poetry before 1914				
Prose before 1914				
Poetry after 1914				
Prose after 1914				
Drama after 1914				
Multicultural literature				
Non-fiction texts				
Children’s literature				

YOUR SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE ABOUT LANGUAGE.	
<i>Read the extract from <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> below and then answer the questions which follow:</i>	
<i>Mr Bingley was good-looking and gentlemanlike; he had a pleasant countenance and easy, unaffected manners. His sisters were fine women, with an air of decided fashion. His brother-in-law, Mr Hurst, merely looked the gentleman; but his friend, Mr Darcy, soon drew the attention of the room by his fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien, and the report which was in general circulation within five minutes of his entrance, of his having ten thousand a year.</i>	
What word class is <i>decided</i> in ‘ <i>air of decided fashion</i> ’ ?	
What word class is <i>merely</i> in ‘ <i>merely looked the gentleman</i> ’?	
What word class is <i>attention</i> in ‘ <i>the attention of the room</i> ’?	

What word class is <i>of</i> in 'of his entrance'?	
What word class is <i>he</i> in 'he had a pleasant countenance'?	
Which of the following are noun phrases?	
'having ten thousand a year'	YES/NO
'a pleasant countenance'	YES/NO
'the report which was in general circulation within five minutes of his entrance of his having ten thousand a year'	YES/NO
'His brother-in-law, Mr Hurst'	YES/NO
merely looked the gentleman'	YES/NO
His sisters were fine women, with an air of decided fashion	Simple/compound/complex sentence
Circle a co-ordinating conjunction in the extract – if you think there is one present	
Underline a relative clause in the extract – if you think there is one present	
Put a dotted line under a non-finite clause in the extract – if you think there is one present	
Cross out a subordinating conjunction – if you think there is one present	

Can you give a subject-specific context or a reason why you might choose to teach the following aspects of writing?

metaphor	
complex sentences	
triple emphasis (patterns of three)	
adjectives	
alliteration	
expanded noun phrases	
the use of the passive	
topic sentences	

YOUR VIEWS ON THE TEACHING OF WRITING	
How important do you think it is for students to be able to write literary critical essays?	Very Important/Moderately Important/Unimportant
How important is it for writers to know metalinguistic terminology (eg metaphor; pronoun)	Very Important/Moderately Important/Unimportant
How valuable do you think knowledge of grammar is for teaching writing?	Very Valuable/Moderately Valuable/Irrelevant
What kinds of writing do your students tend to enjoy?	
Beyond accuracy, is there anything your students find particularly difficult about writing?	
Is there any aspect of writing you find particularly hard to teach?	
<p><u>Open Response:</u> We are interested in any of your thoughts, concerns, enthusiasms, reflections on the teaching of writing.</p>	

Appendix 9: *Grammar for Writing?* project teacher and student sample data

Teacher ID	RCT group	M/F	Years in teaching	First Degree	LSK test score	Focus Student ID	M/F	FSM or EAL	KS2 writing Level	Pre-test score	Post-test score
1	I	F	2	English & History	8	1	F	No	5	N/A	N/A
2	I	F	18	English & Ecological Studies	10	2	F	No	4	18	22
3	C	F	2	Politics	6	3	M	No	4	16	16
4	C	M	1	History & Classics	10	4	F	No	5	17	13
5	C	F	1	English Language & Linguistics	12	5	M	FSM	3	6	14
6	I	F	1	English	5	6	F	No	5	25	20
7	I	F	17	English & American Studies	9	7	M	No	N/A	12	13
8	I	F	3	Social Science & English	6	8	F	No	4	13	14
9	I	F	17	English & American Literature	7	9	M	No	5	15	12
10	C	F	1	English & Drama	12	10	M	No	5	30	30
11	C	M	8	English Literature & Philosophy	12	11	M	No	5	20	20
12	I	F	12	English	9	12	M	No	4	13	24
13	C	F	1	English	11	13	F	FSM	4	7	17
14	I	F	1	American Studies	2	14	M	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
15	C	F	1	English & Film	9	15	F	No	5	17	18
16	I	F	5	English & American Studies	9	16	M	No	4	5	23
17	I	F	9	PE & Education	6	17	F	No	5	24	30
18	C	F	1	English	10	18	M	No	4	8	10
19	I	M	1	Media	7	19	F	No	4	13	12
20	I	F	5	English	8	20	F	No	4	10	13
21	C	F	7	English	9	21	M	No	5	29	24
22	C	F	5	English	9	22	F	No	4	13	16
23	C	F	8	Theatre	7	23	F	No	4	25	26
24	I	M	2	Media	5	24	M	No	4	11	10
25	I	F	19	English Literature	11	25	M	EAL	5	14	17
26	I	F	1	English Literature	7	26	M	No	5	19	18
27	C	M	32	Drama	10	27	F	FSM	4	6	11
28	C	F	2	English	8	28	M	FSM	4	14	18
29	C	F	12	English Language & Literature	13	29	M	No	4	13	15
30	C	F	23	English with History	6	30	F	FSM	5	N/A	N/A
31	I	F	6	American Studies	11	31	F	No	4	14	27

Appendix 10: *Grammar for Writing?* project: raw data collected from School 7

Q: right this is the first interview with (Teacher 7), um doing fictional narrative in October, so to start us off could you tell me a bit about the lesson today, how you, obviously we gave you a scheme of work with the lesson plan in it, but the decisions you made really about how long to spend on things and what you wanted the main focus to be

A: ok, first of all I think the scheme of work is really really good, and I have tried to follow it more or less to the letter because I thought that was what was required of me really to see what works and what doesn't, um the things that I've changed have mostly been to do with timing because some of the lessons um I found I couldn't get through all the material, and so I've often, I mean you saw me today I did the plenary of the previous lesson at the beginning of the next one but I didn't think that was a particularly a problem

Q: no not at all

A: you've got to be flexible, um the thing that I've enjoyed most I think that students have as well I think has been the use of the images because maybe that's something I don't do enough in my own teaching as a stimulus, and they've been really engaged by that, and you know I've found myself, I have used some of the materials, bits of it, um with other classes, um and there's certainly, I'd want to use this again I think it's really good so thank you for the materials first of all, um and I think they make it, you know I think they've really enjoyed it

Q: good, excellent, um other than the timings which I think is something everyone is doing so

A: right ok

Q: have there been any activities you have done so far which you don't think have worked?

A: let me just sorry, recap here a bit, um I think the answer to that is yes but I just need to um re-familiarise myself with some of these bits, the I mean the one that you saw me doing today for example it does actually say in the teachers notes you know don't overlabour it, I wasn't actually clear whether or not the students were expected to do that first exercise themselves, um

Q: this is the changing the sentence PowerPoint?

A: yeah the one where you've got the image of the guy on the street

Q: yeah

A: um it actually says that the second exercise might be overkill, but you saw me, I mean actually what I did was I did that as a shared, the whole thing as a shared exercise and then let them do the other the sheet in pairs as a form of, so I could assess what they were doing

Q: sure

A: and I also um, the other activity that we didn't do the way it said to do either but I used that actually to extend my more able which is why I gave them

Q: and that other activity was the extracts on the board with the blocking out

A: that's right the, and I, I think that would have been too much of the same so I think that's, would be, not in every lesson but there might have been

another lesson like that where it was just a bit too samey and you know it means you get it all breaking up so that's why, and it was also quite a good way I think to extend (Can't hear) the students as well so that's why I did that as well

Q: yes absolutely, could you just, I mean it's, it's almost implied in what you were just saying but just to be completely clear, could you just explain why you did that first part of the PowerPoint as a shared activity?

A: um, because I knew that if I gave them that activity um to do independently or in pairs and the other one that was going to be too much, so it was either one or the other, so as that was very visual and it was kind of already there as a shared activity really on a plate I did that as you know a whole class and left the other for individually um, and I even then I, I don't, I either didn't allow, I mean I didn't allow enough time I don't think they finished that sheet, and I think in retrospect the, the other activity which was suggested which was to go back to the previous work that they've done and maybe just try and redraft some of that might have been better and might have been more comfortable so, um but unless you know whether or not they've actually grasped the varying sentences it's kind of impossible to gauge that, so that, we don't have homework in year eight because they have these independent learning projects but I think that would have made a nice homework for them then to redrafted the fire piece from a previous lesson using more a variety of sentence structures I think, yeah, um so that's, that's all that I changed in today's lesson, um yeah, um right, yeah I mean I found, the Jaws lesson that was looking at the view point, that was quite nice as well but again we kind of finished it off the following lesson really, there was one lesson that took us, did take us two, um, we must have been a bit slow I don't know, I think it was, I think it might have been I mean I think I took two lessons over the developing viewpoints and voices ideas lesson two I think, or actually perhaps it was that one there because that was quite a lot in that one that was quite dense

Q: so that's the third lesson

A: yes because I remember we started, that's right we finished off at this interleaving, we did that and that's all we got through in that lesson that's right we did the second half in the second so that actually took two lessons

Q: that's lesson three

A: yeah lesson three there, we took two lessons over that, nothing wrong with the materials they were fine it just you needed longer to do it, and I didn't I must admit, I didn't really um, do this part of the (can't hear) develop explanations of the effects the way the story is told encourage students to refer to terms to help explanation, um in that I'm not sure that they have the vocabulary I mean you heard them today they're still dodgy about what a verb is what an adverb is, they just don't have that vocabulary I don't think, you know we have to I suppose empower them with it, but it's, it doesn't matter how many times you tell a student what a verb is they still don't in year eleven it's extraordinary

Q: yeah sure, um so going back to today's lesson could you just clarify what you wanted the students to learn?

A: I wanted them to understand that they could manipulate sentences and vary the structures of them for effect in order to have a direct effect on the reader

Q: and how far do you think they um progressed with that would you say?

A: it felt like they had a reasonable understanding by the end of the lesson but I don't have any evidence of that yet because I didn't, I hadn't had time to go round, normally I'd be looking over shoulders but it was pretty busy so I don't know for certain but in terms of the kind of the informal oral feedback and the answers they were giving me, um I think they had a reasonable understanding but then it's you know it's always the ones that are putting their hands up that were volunteering that kind of information

Q: um, is that a focus that you would have um addressed in your teaching otherwise?

A: yes definitely, yeah absolutely

Q: yeah, and why do you think it's important?

A: um because it's the key to everything even up to GCSE if they want the C they have to be able to structure sentences, and I'm well aware that in the APP those are the two first boxes and the most important ones so, I, I focus a lot on varying sentence structures right the way through to GCSE

Q: yeah

A: um, I mean I just say variety variety variety, vary vocab, vary sentences vary punctuation those are the big three and if you can do that that's the key

Q: yeah, and obviously there was a lot of the word class terminology in today's lesson which you've already mentioned. How useful do you think that is?

A: I actually think it's really useful but I don't know how we tool up students to share that vocabulary to make discussion useful because I haven't, I know they do it in the primary schools but they still come to us bewildered, so I think it would be incredibly useful if you could just say you know uses the verb without having to ask somebody what it means and do an explanation

Q: can you say any more about how you think it is useful? Like why it's

A: because it's very precise, it's a very precise term to use and everybody knows what it means, um and it just cuts out a lot of the waffle and a lot of the um, the grey areas I suppose in language, and the misunderstandings that the students have so if you're all clear exactly which, what you're focusing on it's just easier for everybody to understand really

Q: great thank you, um is there anything else that you want to say about the scheme of work so far?

A: no I don't think so, like I say I like it a lot, I'd certainly use it again I like the images, um I think the activities are really good, um I like the fact that actually it's not that paper heavy I needn't have even photocopied that today I could have just put that up on the board, um so it's quite flexible in that and yeah, in its, I think it's, I mean I wouldn't have, I did it wrong as you know because I've actually done my normal teaching unit first which they were writing gothic fairy stories and obviously next time I'd do that differently but I'd used this and I've build it into some of the gothic fairytale stuff

Q: how do those two schemes compare just out of interest what's

A: um, they're quite similar actually because we looked, obviously we looked at vocabulary and how we could create mood and effect using vocabulary in a gothic way and um, it's, viewpoint was important because I insisted it had to be first person narrative and it had to be the point of view of somebody who you wouldn't expect to tell the story so for instance they wrote it from the pea's point of view they wrote it from the beanstalk's point of view, you know brilliant, um so viewpoint came into it as well um, and I didn't do as much work on sentence structure as I might have done because I didn't want to um, cloud it too much, too many focuses so it was really about the gothic effect of vocabulary and viewpoint rather than sentence structures but you could very easily do this first and then get them to use all those skills in that unit and I think that would be a great unit of work actually

Q: brilliant, ok so moving on, um how confident do you feel about teaching fictional narrative?

A: um, I think I'm confident about it, yeah I think I am, and you're going to ask me something now which I don't know

Q: no no, none of that

A: crush my confidence

Q: no, it's not a test so you don't need to worry

A: (can't hear)

Q: um, which aspects of it do you feel confident about?

A: um, I'm actually more confident I think about the word level stuff and the sentence level stuff, I find getting students to structure stories always difficult and I've tried various ways of doing it um, and even when they've got a plan they don't always follow it so I think getting for me as a teacher it's always been getting students to appreciate the value of a plan, and I was interested in what we were talking about when I came to the meeting because um, it, when you were talking about the splurgers, because actually every classroom is full of splurgers, and it's how to convince them that yes there's a place for that but actually under exam conditions, you know I always head to GCSE, you've got forty-five minutes to produce a decent piece of writing and you have to plan it or you haven't got a hope, um thank goodness no more SATS but

Q: yeah

A: but for that too again with shorter (Can't hear) writing task that was always a focus as well, and I think getting students to write well under timed conditions is really difficult actually

Q: so, um that's something that you find difficult, are there any aspects that you think that you should know more about rather than just something that is, that you think yes I know about that but it's hard to get them to understand?

A: um, no I don't think so, um I think I understand enough about how to structure a story, a narrative

Q: yeah

A: um, and I you know I know I've got a various tricks on my knee here, five point planning, six point planning, um but to get them to do that you know I can with year nine I can get them to try and to write a multiple, in fact that must be about viewpoints as well and multiple narrative different viewpoints and I wanted them, to be three hundred words but some of them just can't do that,

you know it has to be, they cannot do it concisely, they cannot write concisely, um so yeah I mean if there was um a technique that I'm not aware of to get them to write well structured but concise narratives, yes please

Q: yes, I'd quite like that

A: but, um no I mean I think

Q: but in, so in your own sort of subject knowledge, subject knowledge you're happy

A: I do think I, I think structure for me is my weak area, I'm thinking perhaps more about the structure of a novel rather than a short story, a short story I can handle, but I'm thinking and even the structure of poetry because they have to talk about structure form language, I think structure because there's a certain overlap I'm never quite sure where sort of structure begins and form ends really um so I don't know if that's relevant or not but I think that's a gap in my knowledge um and I also think um I mean again to be honest it comes up more at A level now because they don't have to talk about structure of novels under exam conditions but where they had to talk about compare the structure of two novels, I think that is a gap in my knowledge actually that I don't pay as much attention to

Q: ok, yeah, ok um anything else you want to say about your subject knowledge in relation to fiction?

A: I, I mean I don't think my grammatical knowledge is great, I know it's not you know because a kid asked me a question today that I couldn't answer so it's, it's ok it's good enough but I certainly don't have the grammatical knowledge of some of the colleagues who could answer much more advanced questions I think, yeah

Q: but when you say it's good enough

A: well maybe it's not, I think, it's, it's good enough I think for me given that these students don't even know what word classes are I don't think anything else that I used would be inappropriate so even if I did know sort of complex grammatical terms for things I don't think it would be particularly helpful in the classroom, personally

Q: yeah, that's fine

A: not at that level

Q: fine, um, sorry I have to clarify everything when you say not at that level

A: I mean in year eight

Q: year eight, yeah

A: yeah I mean I don't, I think with a top set GCSE class maybe year eleven perhaps, particularly those who are going on to do English language A level, you know maybe there's a place for it there but I don't, unless we can solve the issue of them not understanding word classes, basic stuff by the time they come to us I think anything else is um, unrealistic

Q: sure, is there anything else you'd include in basic stuff other than word classes?

A: um, yes I, things like um main clauses subordinate clauses, maybe even adverbials that kind of thing, um and probably anything beyond that I start to get a bit willy-nilly

Q: fine, ok so if we think now about the key features that you'd want writers to understand about writing fiction, probably thinking about this age group as well so, yeah um, what text level features would you want them to learn or understand?

A: I, for me, I want them to understand the effect that a whole text has on the reader, because I think unless and that kind of automatic response, I want them to respond to how it makes them feel because only when you've got that can you then home in on the details which are actually producing that effect so for me um once you've got beyond audience and purpose for me the next big thing effect links to purpose, it's not just writing to argue it's how do you want the reader to feel how should the reader be feeling and then that gives you and hook as to ok so what has this writer done to do that and then they can use that in their own writing so effect is crucial, more so than structure to be honest and I think um structure, usually they have plenty of ideas the content is usually alright, I think you can crack style if you've got the effect you know that you can talk about effect I think then structure probably, and structure when you come and we're talking about fiction text at the moment, I think it's easier with fiction text actually to deal with structure, um I think it gets harder actually when you start to look at different types of text

Q: so could you just say some of the main things about structure you'd want them to

A: for fiction text?

Q: yes

Q: um, I try and make sure that they link beginnings and endings so we look at openings and making them effective and we look at always the endings and what I, I've found very successful in the past is to get the students just to write the beginning and then the ending um, and then if there's time you know they can fit in the middle, but to make sure there's a link between those um and we talk about, well another problem that I think students have is when you get to the climax that, making that somehow bigger than everything else and making that impressive and I think the most common thing for students is sustaining a response right the way through to the end so you might get a brilliant beginning and by the time you're getting to the climax where you really want a woosh, an explosion if they're starting to whimper you sort of, and then by the ending it's poor so um, I think that's a key thing as well, sustaining the quality of a response right the way through to the end, it's tough

Q: great, thank you, um what about sentence level? What sentence level features would you want them to understand?

A: um, I want them to understand about variety of length of sentence, um primarily, even if they don't understand what it is in a complex sentence that they're doing, some of them do it absolutely instinctively they don't need to know what it is they're doing, um so I think you can quite easily get them to vary the length of sentences, um and, and to get them to think about the structure of sentences and starting sentences in different ways so even if it's just tooling them up to you know tell them very systematically to you know start with an adverbial, start with an adverb start with an ing verb to start with an adjective, you know just give them those three things that you've got to do that so I think

maybe, maybe we, I think we have a habit of doing it quite mechanically like that actually so rather than for them thinking about for themselves what effect am I going to have, I think as a teacher and I know I'm not the only one who does this, that we impose that variety on them in order to tick a box, um and we literally say to them ok when you go into that exam you will start with an ing verb you know in order to get variety and, I suppose it works up to an extent doesn't it but perhaps um, maybe they don't transfer those skills across I suspect to other things you don't get that maturity of writing I suspect

Q: great thank you, anything else you want to say about sentence level?

A: um, do you, I mean do you include punctuation in sentence level?

Q: yeah you could do yeah

A: well that's one of those fuzzy areas, yeah I mean I, I do quite a lot of work on that as well and I really like, the next lesson I think that I spotted it, I really like that punctuation pyramid section because I think that's very helpful actually, because, I've nicked that already and used it at GCSE because you know I tell them if you just do the basic that's not a C you know you've got to do that other things, and I teach colons I teach semicolons um, and that's ok I mean the most common mistake is that following a semicolon not writing a complete sentence, that's you know where it should actually have been a comma, yeah um so I certainly encourage writing punctuation as well

Q: great, ok what about word level?

A: word level, um I, I find myself doing more and more of this um, we did some work on improving writing in year nine last year, and we were using the De Bono's thinking hats and talking about effect um, and I think that's focusing quite a lot on, certainly vocabulary um and again just the certain words can have a (Can't hear) um I don't do as much work as I probably should do on metaphor and simile I don't think in writing, I'm not very good at transferring poetic, writing poetic techniques into literature and I should do more of that sort of thing, um but I'm good with vocabulary and I'm good with effect, um I'm not very good at the work that we were doing yesterday from the scheme which is talking more about the power of nouns and the power of verbs yes but I think it's sort of the power of nouns as a descriptive thing, and I think a lot of teachers focus more on you know an adjective is all, and actually adjectives can sound incredibly naff when they're over used in sentences, so I think it's good awareness raising (can't hear)

Q: great, ok, we can move onto our words now, so any of these you want to tell me about, these are the big picture so the sort of big issues in teaching and learning to write

A: yeah, I think I'm terrified of spontaneity because I'm a control freak, and I like these lessons because they are really well planned and I, and my lessons tend to be fairly focused as well and I, I'm not comfortable with spontaneity I don't think and I think I'm also very bad at creativity rather ironically, compared to the rest of my department, I know because we have arguments about it um and I think that I maybe only do um, creative writing maybe at one point in the year and the rest of the year I'm doing more informative writing, argue and persuade, um because I, I suppose I'm exam driven um, and I'm also conscious that those are the types of writing that most of them will use and that are

actually more useful to them most of them will actually deal with non fiction far more than they deal with fiction in their lifetimes and I'm also conscious of appealing to boys and trying um and some boys, I'm wrong on this actually but I think I make assumptions that boys will respond better to non fiction but actually my year eleven I've just had who aren't the most motivated in the world did some brilliant creative writing, better than their other stuff their media pieces so um personally I think my control freak nature makes those things more difficult for me, and I, I'm not particularly proud of it but I think I'm a stickler for accuracy because I know they need it um but this is important

Q: that's motivation

A: motivation, yeah motivation is incredibly important, um and something I'm particularly interested in because we have underachieving boy syndrome of course, um and the older they get the more the gap widens up and we have students we have a lot of students a lot of boys from farming communities who see no point in English what so ever and quite honestly I haven't got the arguments to you know to persuade them otherwise really because I know they are going to be ok, well mind you I don't know anymore but in yeah theory so I'm keen on any methods I can find to motivate students, um and you saw me there with X, if I give, if I write the first sentence for X he's off, he can't start, so to motivate him I know exactly what I've got to do um, I know that you know I obviously try and make the students feel valued and praised and I certainly I hope I never put the down, but I think that's absolutely vital and in this college certainly it's vital because they don't have necessarily self motivation and they don't necessarily have a background where literacy is particularly valued either so it's, it's a huge issue

Q: before we move on can we just jump back to accuracy

A: yeah

Q: you said you're not particularly proud of being a stickler for accuracy

A: well because obviously I should be spontaneous and creative like my, some of my colleagues seem to you know value those things more and I always feel a little bit guilty that I'm labouring you know other things and I do, if you look at my targets in the, we have these best book that's what those things were um where their assessed work goes and where um their targets go if you look at my targets they'll all be to do with varying sentence structures, increasing punctuation you know using a short sentence that sort of thing, they'll all be quite technical, um and I think that stems from a belief of this is what I'm not proud of because I'm probably wrong, that it's much harder to teach creativity but you can give students the tools to be successful with what they've got, and what I should be doing more is perhaps try to stimulate and to be more creative, but we can't all be parrots and we can't all be writers you know we all have to survive in the world, I'm a realist, I'm very practical

Q: yeah, great ok, do you want to say anything about the other two?

A: testing, well gosh how liberated do I feel not having any SATS, it's just heaven so that's great but you know as I've said a lot of what I do lower down the school is driven towards where they're going to be at GCSE so yeah that's always the end point that you know you've got in sight, um and if I'm honest um, I probably care more about that than whether or not they become a poet, um

because it's the revolutionary's dilemma isn't it, the greater good, anyway um and self expression, I applaud self expression, I think where I use it most though it writing in responses to poetry, and I think I don't use it really anywhere else much, I'm certainly very keen on it when we, again GCSE and other, different culture's poems and I try and reinforce that they cannot be wrong that's why I can do English and I can't do chemistry because you can't be wrong just say what you think and back it up and you'll do brilliantly, but that's also something they're frightened of, that's really hard to teach as well actually, maybe it's because I don't do enough of that, that we can't do that

Q: that was spontaneity and creativity

A: yes sorry

Q: no it's fine, I just have to do it for the tape

A: yes, yeah

Q: great thank you very much ok the next lot, the blue words, are um strategies for teaching writing, so what do you feel about any of these? You don't have to talk about all of them if you don't want them

A: ok, well they're all important I don't think there are any there that isn't important, um I think stimulus actives I don't do enough of and that's why I've really appreciated having the images PowerPoints because that's opened up areas that I haven't explored enough, ok, I think that teacher modelling is incredibly powerful and I use that a lot, um and you kind of get that response of 'oh yeah right now I get it' which I don't see how they can know how to do something unless they've seen it done successfully so I think that's, teacher modelling, when that came in with literacy strategy you know I was like oh yeah that's brilliant why didn't I do that before really, um I think scaffolding is something while we're rapidly learning was a mistake, I think we've over scaffolded and we now have students who can't do anything for themselves, um so I think that's something that we need to address as English teachers and you know think more carefully about when we've pulled the scaffold up from under them

Q: yeah

A: and actually it's more about getting them to create their own scaffolds I mean there are, I used to do, in the, before literacy strategy actually, I mean I can remember getting students to create their own individual scaffolds I had a, if you like I had a scaffold to create a scaffold

Q: yeah

A: but that was better you know at least that was more independent, um the rest of them I mean I do them all, direct, I probably do too much teacher talk too much direct explanation that's my control freak nature coming out again, um and I don't do enough use of talk to support writing, um and I'm aware of that um, and it's something that I want to work on because I know that as soon as I begin a speaking and listening task they'll be off task and I can't stand that, so I just you know it's part of my attempt to keep driving them all the time I don't let them do enough of it and I need probably it's something I'm going to actually be working on this year to try and use more discussion work and um, it's different forms of discussion work which appeal to a control freak like the sort of talk type thing

Q: yeah

A: um, and yeah, use of text models they're important too and practising and exercising, yeah so I just picked up stimulus activities and teacher modelling I think as probably one that I knew was powerful the teacher modelling and one which I'm beginning to see has a lot of power, the stimulus activity as well

Q: sure, brilliant thank you very much

A: ok

Q: and finally, these represent the writing process, I haven't put them in order by the way

A: no, is that my test?

Q: no, they don't have a particular order, um

A: ok

Q: anything about any of those

A: right, ok, if I was to put them in order I think, I think evaluation for me is important and particularly self evaluating and you saw me do a bit there with getting them to highlight the bits that they particularly like but I, I'd get them to do that with um any piece of work for assessment where they had specific um objectives to meet I'd get them to highlight where they think they'd used them and perfect if they are, so I think in terms of moving forward and target setting I think that's incredible important

Q: um can I, again I think it's implicit in what you were just saying but can you just make it explicit, um can you say a bit more about why you think it's important for them to

A: because um

Q: you just said it's important for target setting and moving forward I just wondered if you could explain that a bit more

A: I think so, um I think it's important because it's as self assessment I think it's important because I think that students are more likely to understand what they have or they haven't done if they've had a chance to look at their own work first, and I think that as teachers the kind of, the comment on the bottom doesn't necessarily bring about understanding, so I would much rather that they identified what they had or they hadn't done and then I was able to set a target if possible that links to that um, because I think it would be more meaningful for them, um and I just think it's, I'm not sure I can explain why but I think it's an incredibly important stage if you've been asked to do something to actually acknowledge whether or not they've done it or how effectively, so that's why I think it's important, um I think it's, generating ideas, generally reasonably good at, um sometimes what we found here is that they're not very good at developing those ideas but they're good at generating them in the first place, they perhaps don't take them far enough, um and planning as I already said I don't think that, well some of them are very reluctant to plan yeah and I, I've had a continuous trouble trying to convince them otherwise, so much so that I will often start very negatively I know I find it difficult to convince you but

Q: yeah

A: so I've become a bit negative about it as well I think, um editing I always tell them to proof read but what I do, it's a bit, in a way it's a bit daft because we all know that the human brain puts in things that you know we think should

be there anyway so asking a student to proof read their work immediately after they've done it isn't necessarily profitable anyway um, but what I'm more likely to do is to link it to their target so if their target is to make sure that they use a wider variety of punctuation then the editing would be linked to that, have you looked at your target and make sure that you've done that and that I think is a bit more effective than um just proof reading, check it, um yeah

Q: drafting (can't hear)?

A: drafting, drafting is our bread and butter isn't it really, they're fine at drafting it's redrafting they don't do, you know they'll draft, that's absolutely fine that's not a problem um and, sometimes I they've got a plan they'll even follow it, sometimes, but it's, I mean it's, if you'd said redrafting

Q: yeah well you can, you can take that to mean both

A: yeah, um that's incredibly difficult and always has been as you know, and where um, when you're in a classroom you've got no access to word processing, um very difficult to get, and also, quite dull as well I think for a lot of students, not much incentive in it for them to re-do it when they feel they've already done it once, so difficult, difficult to motivate, back to motivation difficult to motivate students to redraft

Q: great, um now there's a couple of questions just to finish off, first one, they're quite similar to what we asked you on the training days actually but we're just getting everyone's individual opinions, first one is what do you think makes a good piece of writing? What is good writing?

A: a good piece of writing I think, is something that speaks to the reader that has been written with the reader in mind to have a particular effect on them, um I think that's important but a good piece of writing also needs to have clarity as well, it needs to be easy on the eye, easy to read so you're not actually being interrupted by too much funny errors I suppose

Q: great, would you want to add anything else or is that

A: no

Q: ok, that's fine, and then what do you think makes a good teacher or writing?

A: hmm, it's got to be somebody who can motivate students to want to write

Q: yeah

A: um, and, I'm not sure if that makes me a good teacher of writing at all, so it's somebody who can inspire and motivate but they also, I mean again you know you're writing for pleasure or you're writing for a purpose, exam purpose because you can be an inspiring and motivating teacher and students who can do incredibly creative original work, which they need to do to get the As and the A*s but if they're technically not there they're never going to achieve that and I think that's really important because you know at the end of the day if these students want to move on, to go on with their English they need to get you know the good grades at GCSEs so I think that motivation and inspiration first, but that has to be tempered with enough awareness of how to get the students to improve technically as well

Q: great, um and finally, this is just something that occurred to me that goes right back to the beginning of our conversation

A: right

Q: but it just pops into my head I may as well ask it, one of the very first things you said thinking about today's lesson was that students if you use like word class terminology with them they don't retain it, do you think there's any difference in the way they respond to or remember that kind of terminology verses the more literary terminology um which you mentioned a bit later on which made me think of it, like metaphor or personification?

A: yeah I think they do, and I think it's they're probably more readily choose, because they readily associate examples with it

Q: right

A: and it's more, it's more visual

Q: right

A: I don't know

Q: yeah

A: but I just wonder, because, I mean obviously there are some students that don't and never will, um it's interesting that isn't it, I also wonder whether it's something to do with the fact that metaphor and simile and onomatopoeia, there's something magical in those words and they sound more exciting, they sound like something worth remembering whereas noun verb, you know they've been hearing those since they were five or something um, but certainly through junior school, I dunno, I mean they do metaphor presumably at junior school as well I don't know but um, I don't know I think um, I think they do, that would be an interesting research project

Q: hmm, it would wouldn't it

A: they do retain it more, finally my year elevens can just about tell me what they are

Q: well just in time isn't it

A: just about

Q: just about

A: yeah

Q: great is there anything else you want to add at all about anything?

A: no I don't think so

Q: no ok, thank you very much that's great, you have just talked for forty-five minutes

(tape ends)

Q: ok this is the second interview with (Teacher 7) doing the argument scheme in the January term, um so to start off with then could you tell me a little bit about the lesson that you taught this morning?

A: um certainly, um do you want me to tell you how I felt about it, how I felt it went?

Q: yeah

A: I actually, I was really pleased I felt good actually at the end of that lesson, I think it went as well as I could have expect it, obviously if I did it again I

might do it slightly differently, and I think one of the things I would do differently, as I realised when X asked that question, that actually that was really important and fundamental to modal verbs and I should have explained that at the beginning probably

Q: that was the question

A: about um, because you'd picked out other verbs, and she didn't understand why they weren't modal, and so I explained to her and then I realised that actually I should have explained that to the rest of the class, so I would put that in you know on the scheme earlier on, um to aid understanding, and it's always interesting isn't I mean, you know X who was sitting in front of me did not have a clue what a modal verbs was, and I made the assumption that having explained it and shown them some examples that actually everybody would have been able to at least understand what it was even if they couldn't explain its effect, and he didn't have a clue, I suspect it was because he wasn't listening, but I'm not sure you know if I explained it clearly enough

Q: yeah, um do you, can you just talk through a bit about, obviously the lesson was given to you, but what you thought were the key things that you wanted them to learn from it and um whether or not you think they, they actually got it

A: just wondering if I need it in front of me, but no I can remember enough I think, um, um I think the objectives say it really, I mean I wanted them to understand what it was, and I'm not sure that, they do actually understand what it is but I think they probably understand its purpose because I think that the, the second exercise where they looked at the speeches, I think that made the purpose very clear, and obviously I wanted them, I think maybe expecting all of them to be able to articulate the subtle difference between shall and will, given that I struggle with it myself was probably asking too much, but I think I wanted them just to go away with the understanding that it does make a difference, and I think that in the plenary, um certainly the students that I asked, I did feel that they had that understanding, because they did seem to choose the verbs quite sensibly with the choice of word and the choice of, you know the wills and the cans again, so I think yes it was, even if the, if they couldn't articulate the effect that they did at least understand that they had an effect and that they would then be able to use those words more effectively in their own writing, yeah

Q: hmm, how do you see that tying in with the work that they might do later in the scheme or in their assessment piece?

A: um, well I'm, the assessment piece for this, I would hope to see that coming through with the speeches at the end, the ones, the aliens, um, I suppose it depends whether they're going to take a, you know whether they're going to take an aggressive stance with the aliens or the more sort of Churchill kind of sort of more encouraging warmer stance with them, so I, you might be, it would be really nice to see that subtlety, the shades of meaning given the choices that they make, and what I'll do, I'll ask them to highlight, probably, although no because you want the copies, but anyway I'll, whatever, but I, I'll probably get them to highlight and possibly talk through which ones they chose

Q: is it something that you've look at anyway, modal verbs?

A: no, I wouldn't have done

Q: so, do you want to reflect on that a bit?

A: um, I think we should do, I think it, again it comes down to that um minutia of word level um understanding that I think we sometimes forget in the bigger picture, I mean, we're so driven perhaps by um the things we know to be important, variety of sentence structure, variety of punctuation, those kind of things, um and I suspect that there are a lot of English teachers that wouldn't know what a modal verb was, quite honestly, in this department there are people trained not in grammar, and others who are trained in grammar and use them instinctively and quite honestly wouldn't even think about, because they use them so instinctively, I think, I think as English teachers sometimes there is um, a side that doesn't, because you know it instinctively you don't actually realise the lack of knowledge I suppose in the students, that they're not as, in terms of their grammar they don't do it automatically, and I think it, I think it's really good that, to be actually forced to do that because I think it is useful, you know and I hope they have understanding in it

Q: great, um anything about this scheme of work so far? Any comments on that, and particularly if you've made any changes?

A: (can't hear) the only change in it was purely because I thought I had them yesterday, um when I was out at subject leaders so I thought well they can do something like, because I couldn't leave that with a supply teacher so, um I did the leaflet thing but it was to consolidate, because we'd done the, the stuff on Smitty

Q: yeah

A: and they had great fun with Smitty actually

Q: good

A: um so what I got them to do was, with the leaflet, they had to have a, we'd talked about logos so they had to have a logo on the front, they had to do a sort of an appeal in the style of Smitty in the middle pages, they had to have an image, I was also, I mean I was really building on paper one skills for GCSEs, I'm always, you know thinking ahead so

Q: absolutely

A: so you know we talked about that and just you know the basis of the, the sort of, the conventions of having all the information on the back page, and then they had to finish it off for homework so I, I possibly wouldn't have, although it was quite a fun thing to do, and I think it consolidated their awareness of persuasive elements, it gave them a chance to use those emotive words that are a bit more

Q: I think they're brilliant, I was having a look through them

A: they were good weren't they? I haven't looked at them properly but yeah

Q: yeah

A: yeah very good, I was pleased with that so

Q: yeah, fine, um so any thoughts about the scheme of work?

A: I want the scheme of work in front of me to trigger my, do you mind if I just, I think it's on the desk in there, no I put it in my tray of resources, right, yes um, the only thing with the um Martin Luther King was that they, they'd kind of all done it before in RS, oh we've done this before, and but I said that really

wasn't an issue because we're not looking at it you know in terms of its context we're looking at it in terms of it, you know its devices and its style and its techniques, so I, I didn't think that was a problem, and they were ok they worked with that, um so that was fine, um one thing I'm not doing is the poster, um I don't know why I'm not, I think I just found that a bit too much but I think what I'd rather do is kind of do it myself, and put the things together and just as a recap really, so I think I shall probably do that in that way and then it will serve as kind of like feedback when they come to their final speech, almost like a list of, you know a quick reminder

Q: I think that was the intention behind it anyway so it's just

A: right, so I need to go back through and check that that's all ok, um, I just need to look at the resources actually to remind me, yeah that was, the I have a dream where they have to find examples from the speech that was, well it was quite difficult actually, the pattern of three they all struggled with because they're actually, we could only find a pattern of four, so we talked about that because in actual fact you could argue it's a pattern of three or a pattern of, do you know which bit I'm talking about?

Q: I can't remember

A: because it's, because they picked out um let it ring from every village, every hamlet, every state and every city, which seemed like a pattern of four, and then I said well actually you could take the whole phrase as a pattern of three so it's like when we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from ever, it's so that, that confused us a little bit but we kind of got there I think we understood what a pattern of three was, um even if we couldn't quite find it in the um speech, that was all straight forward, and that was all straight forward, we had quite, the understanding of metaphor wasn't that great which I was surprised because they should have had prior knowledge of metaphor but I think it's one of those things that you can ask students about again and again and every time they struggle, um but we, but actually they're, when we discussed it again they were really quite incisive, um you know they picked out what was it, yeah they got the wallow in the valley of despair, tale of brotherhood, I can't remember now but yeah they were quite perceptive actually in that, yeah we liked Smitty, that's a nice exercise because it's, it's very straight forward and I think this was the one where they had to look at the role of adjectives and adverbs but then verbs and nouns, and what I really wanted to put across there was the power of verbs and nouns and given that they'd done the prior work one the, the writing fiction um, you know I didn't have to spend perhaps as much time on that um as I might have done and I thought that was really important and that worked quite well, I hope that's come through in the leaflets I haven't looked at them yet, I didn't the, the differentiated version I only used with one student, um even X was there, but X who was also sitting at the front next to X

Q: yeah

A: he's sort of level three ish, um so I, and he was very grateful and I think that was quite successful so I, I don't know who that was aimed at, but I certainly, everybody who's level four and above I think can cope with the exercise no problem, um and then we're up to today so, yeah I thought, I thought I would have time for that

Q: yeah the extension task

A: the extension, I was quite surprised, I wasn't convinced there was enough material and I think it would depend on the class, they do, they do like to discuss and they you know they did spend quite a lot of time so

Q: yes they were actually quite good at going through effects and explaining and I can imagine another class just sort of shutting up at that point, yeah so

A: yeah

Q: that's fair enough

A: so, I would have quite liked to have done that, but then they're not supposed to have homework really because they do these individual learning projects, these big projects so I don't want to set them more as I've just done one

Q: fair enough

A: so, so yeah, and I will, but I will definitely use because um I was doing speeches actually with year nine when Barrack Obama was elected and that, so we've analysed that it's just brilliant, um and we've got it on clip view so um, I shall probably dive from the scheme a bit once we've looked through the Blair speech, and then we'll look through Obama's or at least show them it and then they can pick out the devices, so that would be a good time actually to have that poster ready or that overhead and then get them to pick out from the things that Obama does in his speech, because that is a gift

Q: yeah

A: um

Q: I'm always amazed when I look at them like political speeches how perfectly they conform to the patterns and the techniques

A: yes I am as well

Q: that you expect

A: you're right, because so much contrived I think in English

Q: yeah, yeah

A: you know we're doing comment writing with year eleven and we're trying to do a comment piece and I've shown them, you know we've explored Amy Winehouse, I've shown them examples of comment writing, you know pull one out from the guardian, and it actually, at GCSE we didn't even get a C the amount of conventions that it breaks, um but speech writing is a nice one because it always does the job

Q: yeah, ok

A: ok, so

Q: fab, ok so moving onto talking about argument in general, how confident do you feel about teaching argument?

A: I'm pretty confident about teaching argument actually um, I think because it's, because you do it at GCSE, because you have a scheme in seven eight, you know it's a thread that runs right the way though and it is progressive, I think, I feel confident about it

Q: um is there anything you feel you need to know more about?

A: um, I don't think so, I mean I think you know argument writing has been our bread and butter for years really, I think you know we all the techniques and we know how it's structured and um, the modal verbs thin is kind of an extra

that I'm not sure that probably anybody in this department of ten would have done, I may be wrong, but I think that kind of word level stuff as I said before is something that is ignored, it would be interesting to see how much difference it makes, um you know if um they do any better just from that little bit of extra information I don't know but you know it is an extra thing, something they can carry through the GCSE, I mean I'm pretty confident with arguments, we do, I mean we kind of, we've themed it so we do environmental in year seven, we do animal rights, so that kind of fitted in quite nicely with the existing scheme, um for year eight and then we do human rights in year nine and then obviously up to GCSE for paper ones, you know it's the thread that runs through

Q: um, the next section you might remember from the last interview is um what key features do you want writers to understand about argument, so text level, sentence level and word level

A: hmm ok, um, the starting at text level um I think they need to understand the shape of an argument and everything should be driving towards its conclusion because I think what students will do is if they do a mind map and then they'll give each of those equal weight and it's very hard to get students to you know think about an engaging opening and linking to the ending and building on, linking paragraphs together I think is quite difficult, um so I think that's terribly important, um I mean at sentence level it's a constant battle about getting students to vary their sentences deliberately, um rather than just doing it so you know write a short sentence and the bringing of a paragraph or at the end so um, I want them to understand the power of short sentences, I think certainly the power of punctuation I thought that was brilliant what um young X picked out today about using a lot of punctuation I thought that was very perceptive actually um, and I think at word level I think emotive, I mean emotive language is incredibly important, um we normally when we're doing argumentative writing we teach counter arguing so you know we usually look at um how to squash the opposite argument, um so I would always spend a bit of time on that, although curiously enough on the existing GCSE paper they're never asked to produce a balanced argument but um, never the less obviously even if you're representing one side you need to counter so it's all good, yeah

Q: great, um I think we're onto the statements now, brill

A: we have, we have a mnemonic that I use performer which I've got from someone, but that kind of covers all the persuasion argument skills so things like personal address, emotive language, r's, repetition so they kind of

Q: what's the rest of it? Just out of interest

A: um ok, it's emotive language, repetition, um facts is f so using facts, o is the opening, effective opening, um the other e is the, sorry the e is ending, um where are we

Q: is there an r?

A: there's two r's, repetition, oh rhetorical questions, the use of rhetorical questions, what haven't I said

Q: there's an m

A: m, m always gets me, one of them is really really naff, it's another word for connectives that I never use, which might be, I think it's the m, and I always, because you want, you know it's

Q: meeting word, melding word

A: I don't know it's in here somewhere, if you're interested I'll look it up, I've got it on there

Q: is there another r at the end as well

A: yeah because they do rhetorical questions, repetition, and um I'll look it up for you

Q: sorry, it's just out of interest

A: it's you know, the word level stuff is um, you know I use that pretty much to guide it

Q: hmm

A: it's only because I'm under pressure I can't think, normally I can just run it off, anyway

Q: anyway, never mind, um ok so we've got these statements and you can take them in any order you like, see where you'd place them and why

A: so I've got to order them?

Q: well it's just with each one

A: oh ok

Q: say whether you strongly disagree

A: children learn to write by reading and, I strongly agree with that actually, um do you want me to talk about it as well?

Q: yes please

A: you know I certainly, I think that writing comes from reading, um but I, in terms of looking at text and understanding the conventions of a piece of text and being able to emulate them and I think writing comes from copying to an extent as well and it's sort of like with non independent writers, um I think there's also a place um in terms of raising people's self esteem and their confidence in encouraging them just to write, um but ordinarily most of my lessons would come from a piece of text first, um almost without exception actually, I think, I think they're closely connected and interrelated, um it's crucial to teach explicitly how to write well, I strongly, I strongly agree with that as well, more and more, um it's and to read well as well actually not just to write well but to read well I think as I said before I think we take too much for granted as being instinctive and children are readers, and of course many of them aren't, and the only way we can really bridge some of that gap is to explicitly teach writing

Q: yeah

A: um because we can never make up for the reading that hasn't gone on and might have gone home in the early years

Q: yeah

A: yeah, um learning about the process of writing, is more important than the finished piece of writing, I, I'm going to put, oh I put (can't hear) you know what I meant

Q: it doesn't matter I know what you mean that's just to remind you

A: I'm going to just agree with that one because

Q: they don't really fit anyway on the sheet so

A: no I no but, I think it is incredibly important, but I also think that some of the self esteem and the positive feelings about writing sometimes comes from the finished piece, um if they put a lot of effort into it and if it's well

presentence and if they've got some positive feedback from it, um sometimes you know the process is messy and it's in the exercise book and there isn't always a sense of pride, so I think that some of the, the, for the pride, and the feedback obviously, which they seem to take more notice of, you know I told you before this is the best books that we have, I'm not sure about the future of best books with 8pp excreta but, we might have to rethink that one slightly but nevertheless I think that they have worked so successfully because of the end result of the piece of writing and, and the pride they've taken in that

Q: and, you just started to say something about feedback

A: um

Q: I'm sure you

A: yes I did, I said about, well because the piece of work is marked and you acknowledge what's gone well and you set them their target which I, because we're trying to improve writing my targets are often writing targets even if it's been a reading assessment or it have been recently, um in that you know of the generic kind that they can then pick up on in the next piece, um and I think that the, it has, I think the students perhaps give it more status if it's coming at the end of a formally assessed piece, that maybe although I try whenever I've got time to put targets in a piece of homework as well, to be fair they're probably not as good quality as the assessed pieces anyway, and I think that um they don't want to take so much notice of them quite frankly so I think I, I do think there is a place for the end piece, and let's face it in the real world, most pieces of writing in the work place, well actually maybe that's not true I'm thinking about reports and, if you were doing a report it has to be a finished piece doesn't it, so it has its place, but obviously memos and brain storming would be different, it's all, they're all different forms of writing and I think they all have value. Um, it's important to teach children how to plan and draft and edit their writing, yep, and I've never cracked that one

Q: I'm not sure anyone has

A: so if you've got any top tips on that, that would be, or a nice lesson plan that cracks that one yes absolutely, um yeah I mean I strongly agree, I think it's one of the most difficult things, I think if we could do that a lot I think everything else would fall into place

Q: yeah, do you, would you draw any distinction in value between plan and draft and edit? I know they're all lumped together there

A: I'm, I'm a big fan of, I think my number one is planning, I try to convince them that time spent on planning is um time well spent, I stand there and tell them the essay will write itself if you do the planning properly, it will, and, but you know the um reality of it

Q: yes

A: um, it's very very hard to get students to understand the difference between a plan and a mind map, you know they just, a mind map is a plan as far as most of them are concerned, I think maybe we need to do it, I do do it early on though, so planning would be my number one, um I don't, I think, and then it would be editing, because I think, I don't think you need to teach children how to draft, I think they know what drafting is, and if they've done the other things, um if they've got clear objectives, that's going to drive their editing hopefully

um, so and if their planning is good then the draft shouldn't be a problem, so planning then editing um which again phenomenally difficult, they just don't see their mistakes, they need, it's hard for them to do it themselves, they need a critical friend whether it's a teacher or somebody else to you know to do it with them, it's not, I think independence in editing is really tricky, really tricky um, and then drafting yeah

Q: thank you, brill

A: understanding characteristics of different genres is an important part of teaching writing

Q: you can say how you're interpreting genres there because that's a bit open to

A: ok

Q: interpretation

A: yes, ok I think that genres means um I'm assuming it means that's the convention of a piece of fiction writing, a piece of argument or persuasion or

Q: yeah you can use that, I mean sometimes people talk about those as text types, don't they and genres as fiction genres but

A: yeah

Q: but yeah

A: I'd take that as text types it think, ok

Q: yeah that's fine

A: yeah I mean again I would strongly agree with that, um because, obviously you're not going to introduce a piece of argumentative writing with a piece of comment, you know it's just simply not going to happen, um so it's essential to look at good examples and to identify the conventions I think, um and then practice them and use them in their own piece of writing, and unless they understand, again it's about those, the only child that's going to do it instinctively is the you know the level seven or the A grade student who has for whatever reason, all that prior knowledge you have to teach it to the rest, they're not going to know it otherwise. Um teaching grammar does not help children write better, I don't know because I don't think we do teach grammar, um certainly not at, and maybe we should, certainly not at secondary level I don't know, I don't actually know when they do at keystone one and keystone two but presumably they used do verbs agreeing, I mean the only time you teach grammar I think um is when the child gets it wrong, and then you mark it, and then you either write a comment or you discuss it with them, um I think I can't think of a recent time when I have stood up and done a sort of a whole grammar lesson unless it's kind of implicit in other things that we do, um you know you could argue that the explanation about modal verbs depended on that one that was a bit of grammar, um it won't help them to write better because they'll do that instinctively anyway, most of them um

Q: I mean you can think of, you can think of that in different ways actually because you can think of it as teaching grammar is almost like a separate grammar lessons as you said in subjects or

A: then you do it as a part

Q: sort of integrating it more or

A: yeah I mean you know it would only be a small part and, yes I mean you might just every now and again, if you've had a, just marked a particular set of books where the number of I weres were you know high then you might just stop and you know reinforce um that kind of thing, um you know the child that mixes their tenses, um you just, yeah I mean I, yeah actually teaching grammar on an individual level um obviously does help children, um, though what I find in reality is that the child that mixes their tenses carries on mixes their tenses, I'm not sure I can always move them forward, it may be that you know the logical conclusion that that is what they should do, I can't remember being taught grammar, I'm sure I must have been, but I can't I have no memory of it what so ever, and I'd be fascinated to know, um or has it just come from my reading or my background I don't know, being corrected all the time

Q: being corrected

A: at home

Q: at home

A: yeah

Q: in speech and things?

A: yeah, or you know, particularly my dad is quite hot on grammar

Q: yeah, so where's that one going?

A: well

Q: I'm not convinced that's grammatical in itself, I wonder whether it should be

A: it's not is it, it's quite, it's a bit

Q: teaching children (can't hear)

A: yes because it's got to go down this end, so what we're saying is that I'm saying that it does help them, I'm a bit uncertain, I think I don't know because I don't think I've done enough of it to actually know so I'm going to put it in the middle, there's a good cop out wasn't it

Q: well, uncertain is there for a reason, it's perfectly acceptable to be unsure

A: it is, yes, yeah

Q: of these things

A: my name's not going to be put to any of these things is it?

Q: no, no

A: I'll recognise

Q: yeah, we'll publish a book and it will say, (can't hear) in (School 7) does not know

A: does not know if she's teaching grammar and she's an English teacher

Q: no, um ok so I've just got two closing questions then

A: oh Lord

Q: so, the first one is, God it's huge actually, um what criteria would you use to describe good writing?

A: cor

Q: it's a bit

A: I'll just think about that for a second

Q: yeah do, feel free to write things down as well

A: right, ok, I, I'll start off by saying that good writing is defined by the fact that it engages the reader throughout because it's effective, and it's effective because it obeys the conventions of you know the particular writing type, text type that it is, um so if it is a piece of argumentative writing then you know it's throughout the piece it's, it engages it's audience and it puts across it's point of view, um in a powerful way, that's the whole, you know as a whole but then I suppose if you look at why it's effective that's when you come down to the the nitty gritty that the word and the sentence level work, um, it engages us because, I mean, at the risk of being boring but the things I always bang on about is you know variety because of it's variety of sentence structure and its variety of vocabulary, and to a lesser extent um I think it's variety of punctuation, um it's, you know it delights because it is well written, which is you know w very naff thing to say but it's true, um, you know if a piece of writing is effective if you're able to read it through without being hindered by any of the things that stop you, um and just reading it gives you great pleasure, um also I mean that's obviously at the higher level, these are the students who are almost adult writers I suppose but that's you know that doesn't mean to say that a less able child can't produce an effective piece of writing as well, so it's also when you can see um you know the real effort that's gone into it and that they've really tried to, you know to engage us as readers and to do everything that they know they should be doing, um and ultimately I suppose the most effective is something that's been done independently so you know the child is off, you know we can, they don't actually need you to stand there and give them a checklist of things to do, anything else?

Q: no that's

A: that was alright

Q: I was just giving you a moment to

A: I was trying to sort of visualise that kind of effective piece of writing, that, you know when you have it, you know it's fluent and it's well structured and it just, it just drives towards it's conclusion right the way through

Q: right, yeah, you might, just thinking I'll ask you this next question and then you might always want to go back to your criteria, because this might I don't know, anyway sorry, the final question is um do the assessment criteria, do you think the assessment criteria at keystage three and GCSE effectively capture good writing?

A: that's an interesting question, that's a very interesting question because we're, no, because um, as an example, you tell, no because you teach them what to do to tick the boxes, you teach to the magic C grade at GCSE, um and then you know as I did today you find an example of comment writing and you share it and it doesn't, it wouldn't have ticked the boxes at GCSE, and therefore you will have to fob them off as I did this morning with the fact that professional writers are allowed to break the rules, just as Picasso was, you know could perform as a fine artist but was allowed to break the rules, um so in terms of creativity, one of our important Cs I think it restricts us so that we cannot go down the route of anything goes and valuing individuality, and here we are supposed to be encouraging independence, and actually you know because you say well that's, that's wrong, you've got to do this and you've got to do this,

you've got to tick your boxes, and it's the same at keystage three as well, you know it's very, it's, you're torn aren't you, I, I'm a big fan of APP because I think it, it does the things that we've talked about today and that it does very, it forces us as teachers to address very specific things in the teaching of writing, you can do all these things but there's this one little thing you can't do, um but actually all we're doing is box ticking and the hope is that by addressing those things and perhaps filling those gaps that they, you know they can eventually become independent writers who are allowed to break to rules, but I, I wonder whether there is room for a bit more freedom and creativity as well I think perhaps we, we've got the balance a bit wrong, in recent years

Q: hmm, interesting, um is there anything else you want to add to anything at all that you have said

A: no I don't think so

Q: marvellous, ok thank you very much
(tape ends)

Q: right this is my last interview with (Teacher 7) talking about the poetry scheme, um so to start off then, um could I just invite you to reflect a bit on the lesson this morning, what did you want them to get out of it, what did you want them to learn?

A: um, the main objective was to, to talk about the punctuation, and the use, the power of punctuations, yeah in effecting meaning

Q: and how, how well did you think that came out?

A: um it didn't feel that great to me actually, but they've, but in terms of building on what they've done in previous schemes they should have been able to cope with it, um but I didn't get the feeling that they were coping with it so I think there are implications there for transference of skills form one unit to another because they had done that sort of stuff when we did the speech um unit um and they did seem to be struggling, and I think poetry, I don't think I teach poetry very well, and I think that the poem almost put up a barrier to accessing the punctuation, and I'm not sure that poetry is the best way to teach punctuation either in that, that was a poem that I I, I want, my instinct was to talk about it and what it meant and the feelings and the attitudes in it, and talking about, just the punctuation focusing on that didn't seem right to me

Q: yeah, fair enough, they, it's interesting to hear your response to that because clearly when I was observing some of the students were able to articulate effects, but did you feel the majority of them were

A: yeah I had a strong feeling that I was only talking to a few, there were the same hands going up and when I tried to stop that um, the people that I then asked having given them time to talk about it still were struggling with some of it, and I think part of it was the terminology, I don't think necessarily had the terminology to talk about poetry and talk about effect

Q: what sort of terminology?

A: just, I mean that's why I gave them the word emphasise

Q: yeah yeah that kind of language

A: because it's just such a useful word for them to understand what it is that the, the punctuation, the language is actually doing and why so I think yeah words like stress emphasis, illustrate, reveal, demonstrate I think it's only that kind of vocabulary

Q: yeah

A: um and I don't know maybe I was just, I was conscious it is a tricky poem and perhaps I have barriers in my head because of that as well, you know conscious that I have just been doing it with the sixth form, not that that's a problem for them because they can do it, you know, and I said that not to put them off but to try and encourage them, to make them believe that actually what they were doing was you know to try and encourage them to do something a bit challenging and enjoy it but yeah um I think for me it made it a bit too dry perhaps

Q: ok, um when you were planning for the lesson, I know we gave you the plan essentially, what did you have in mind at that point? Were you anticipating anything?

A: um, I, no I mean it went according to plan, I mean I, you know I put some of the jokes onto a PowerPoint so I can show them those and I did sort of obviously select out the ones that I wanted to use um, I'm not sure, I, I didn't feel, I didn't feel a lot of feedback from them, I didn't feel a lot coming back there either, some of them were getting it I was conscious that some of them were going to get it and they were either going to get it or not, and I don't actually know because I had no way of assessing, whether the majority had understood that concept, I think they probably have, there are a few kind of ah sort of nods of recognition and appreciation but there's, it was first thing in the morning, they were a different group yesterday afternoon, it was just completely different in there, um so, you know I'm just wondering whether I was well enough prepared for it actually

Q: I think that's a fair point about assessment as well with that with those, introductory activities, was that what you meant?

A: yes that was what I was thinking about so I could have done, I could have got more students to feed back but that probably could have got tedious, it was only supposed to be a quick starter anyway, and I was also conscious there was a lot to get through and we didn't get through it all actually you know that it was quite um, and I felt that that extra explanation and discussion we had was necessary to kind of accessing the poem really, um so yeah I mean I don't know, do you think, I don't know if I'm allowed to ask you but I mean you know do you think that the point about the punctuation and the objective of the lesson was put across?

Q: you're allowed to ask me, I'll answer later

A: ok, ok that's fine ok, um yeah

Q: um, but yeah fine, um so moving on to talk about the scheme of work more generally, how has that been going so far?

A: it's been the trickiest one actually, and so I don't know if it's about me as a teacher of poetry um that perhaps I'm not good at making it fun, because the whole point of it is supposed to be fun, and we're supposed to be taking some of the you know the fear out of poetry, the kennings were good, they liked

kennings, that went down well they were doing that, finishing that off yesterday, I did some extra things like got them to think of kennings for teacher

Q: yes

A: so that was good, um they really struggled with the noun phrases, um I don't know whether you've seen any of those lessons but we had another, I actually kind of abandoned it in the end and then we went back to it yesterday, because the kennings was a lot quicker because they got that, that's fine, so we actually took some extra time out and went back to that and I tried to explain it again in fact that was the one X had missed, that's right because I kind of went over it briefly again yesterday, they really struggled with that and the wonderful irony of it was, that in their poems they were writing in sentences, you know get them to write sentences as they work, so no you're not allowed to use noun phrases and they were, they ended up they kept writing sentences, and again it came down to having a technical vocabulary because for me to be able to explain why it was a sentence they had to have quite a high level of understanding, and I did too, and you know, my grammar's not brilliant, um so I just ended up doing quite a few examples with them and I did some more on the board and a few more got it but that, they really struggled with that, which is interesting actually

Q: do you think that it would have been possible to do that lesson without the terminology, like relative clause, as a pattern copying sort of thing?

A: yeah I think it would have been possibly better to have done it without, actually, if you have, I think that may be triggered some kind of fear or an I can't do this and actually if you took the headings off that noun phrase generator and just said, I mean yeah we did it like that to begin with, picking up bits and making the silly phrases and the poetic phrase, they did some lovely poetic phrases actually they were really good at that, better at that than the silly ones, um and then we used that as a model to try and do their own, um and maybe it just needed longer, a bigger chunk of time, but I think I'd like to try it without the headings actually and see if it worked better, because if that's the first time, now if they'd been familiar with those phrases, with those terms then it would have been a different matter wouldn't it but because it was the first time that they'd heard many of them, and they don't stick those phrases, you know they ask them what a noun is, they've heard it a thousand times they still won't be able to tell you, they just don't stick, um so even if it wasn't the first time that they'd heard them it felt like it for many of them, and it was very hard to take that, it was an extra layer wasn't it, taking that on board and have to write a poem and I think that's, the trouble is what we're doing is we're layering up layers of difficulty for the students, and it's how you peel those away and I don't know, I don't have any answers, I think you know if they, if somehow they can understand those terms, and I'd like to talk to people you know a few generations past that seem to, you know my parents seem to, how come they, how do they understand these things, how do they know them, you know my mother left school at fourteen how come her grammar is so good, you know I don't understand it it must be, you know I'd love to go back in time

Q: yeah, wouldn't we, um how does the poetry scheme compare to how you would normally teach poetry to year eight?

A: um it's much bittier than we'd normally teach poetry to year eight, what we do in year seven we usually concentrate on form, and we usually concentrate on ballads and then our current year eight scheme of work starts to bring in an element of comparison because you know we're trying to prepare them for GCSE ultimately, so I mean you have, there is, the scheme of work compares the deserted house with the listeners um and it looks at the similarities and differences between those two poems, it does get them to compare them, but it also has quite a lot of creative stuff generated from those two poems, um so it's, it's much more complete

Q: yeah, I mean it's, it's reading and writing

A: it is reading and writing, yes it is, the dominant assessment objective is EN2 but it also has extension activities which I always do because they're very successful on EN3

Q: ok, great, well moving on to talk more generally about poetry then, how confident do you feel teaching poetry?

A: not, I don't feel teaching poetry, as, compared to other things, um and I think it's because, I know they don't like it, I don't know why they don't like it but they don't and that immediately makes it difficult to me, because I don't feel I can sell it to them, um and I need to find ways of selling poetry and I haven't got there yet

Q: do you find a difference between teaching reading of poetry, analysis and writing of poetry?

A: I think I find them both, for different reasons, equally problematic actually, um at this level

Q: yeah

A: it's absolutely fine with an able GCSE group or and A level that's no problem, I think it's, it's with the younger students or the less able, um and again I think it's all that terminology, I think it puts them off, um you know we tell them you've got to know what onomatopoeia is you've got to know what alliteration is and some of them just never ever, um so I think in terms of deconstructing poetry I find that difficult, unless they have a particular aptitude, and writing poetry I find it impossible to get over the you know it's got to rhyme it's got to you know, um have a nice steady rhythm, um and I, I, I mean I'm a you know lie down and you can kick me sort of person I blame myself for that entirely, and my ability to teach poetry, and to sell it

Q: I could write, I could write my PhD on teachers feeling responsible, honestly I could

A: I'm sure you could

Q: the guilt

A: absolute guilt yes, you know because you've got someone like X who is just passionate about poetry he'd teach nothing but poetry if you let him and he just adores, but I mean having said that, no disrespect but I don't know if they're enjoying it as much as he is

Q: yeah

A: so you know we do, you know we do tend to impose our own passions, and that's not a bad thing always

Q: so is there anything in particular you feel you need to know more about?

A: well, I understand how poems work, you know I'm a good A level teacher, um we need to take the mystery and the fear out of poetry and this scheme it's a really honest and you know attempt to do that so I can't but it's also quite difficult, um some of it's difficult, it's challenging, and it's how we, it's the old challenge and support isn't it, and how you put in that level of challenge because (can't hear) can cope with, with the support, so you know perhaps it needs a bit more differentiation, and that's probably something I could have put in and didn't but, will look at

Q: yeah, that could be a title of a book, we need to take the fear out of poetry, definitely, um

A: when you see, I mean, I don't, you know, done poetry slams when you see the experts do it, it's brilliant, it's absolutely brilliant, um and I don't think there are, you know that's what teachers need to be able to do they need slamming techniques

Q: yes

A: they do, and um training would be, would be really good

Q: cool, um so what are the key text level features you'd want young writers to understand about poetry?

A: um, probably I think that it comes in different forms, and that you know there is no one size fits all for poetry, and there's no right or wrong with poetry, so that would be the main things, that if I could just get across that there are many different forms and nothing is, there is no hierarchy in terms of forms of poetry, that would be the main thing I think, um and I, and also I've changed my emphasis recently, much more to purpose and audience of a poem, I think that's something that perhaps we've, you know we neglect when we're talking about poetry, but I found it easier to talk about the other cultures poetry at GCSE and I sort of transferred that further down the school because you know there is a reason for this, it does have an audience, um and I found that as a starting point because then you can hang techniques onto that

Q: yeah

A: um, so I've also, I mean I've started looking at it more from that point of view as well

Q: hmm, interesting, um how about key sentence level features

A: it's difficult with poetry isn't it

Q: yes it really is

A: I don't, I don't really, I mean obviously the obvious things um, punctuation is important, there's no doubt about that and I do talk about that in poetry, um is that sentence level? It's got to be sentence level

Q: yeah

A: yeah sentence level feature, um has, maybe that's where I go wrong, um, I don't think I deal with things like syntax at all when talking about poetry, unless um it's very very specific, like for example um you know if you're talking about the two scavengers, and I'm always fascinated by grey iron hair instead of iron grey hair so, but that's obviously more of a word level but

Q: well, well no that is, because that is an order isn't it, yeah

A: it is syntactical, yeah um, so um but it will be something very specific in a specific poem that just grabs me, um

Q: how about if they're writing poetry, is there anything you want them to understand about sentences in poetry?

A: I can't, in all honesty I don't think so, if you're trying to get them to, to copy a particular form

Q: yeah

A: then that's different, you know a haiku is a haiku, a sonnet is a sonnet, and you give them the structure

Q: yeah

A: um, so if that's the case then you know there will be a very tight structure to follow, um but if you're just trying to encourage free writing of poetry then that's exactly what it is, um yeah I'm not very good at it, it's really made me think actually, it has really really made me think, I think um, you know we used to teach, when we did the ballads in year seven until the primary schools hijacked it, (can't hear), we used to use the Highwayman um, and it was great for teaching onomatopoeia, metaphor, simile blah blah blah, metaphor, um, and, and we used to do all of that and they used to know exactly what all those things were, and of course two weeks later they've forgotten it all, but we used to try and then you know they all used to write ballads and they used to bring in their newspaper articles and we used to change, you know and do all of that stuff, and they used to enjoy that actually in terms of a learning objective, I wonder, I question what they did learn from it, but if you took away the fear of poetry, that would be enough for me actually, because if they could be taught to enjoy poetry then maybe when you got to, I mean hopefully it's all going to change, but when you got to that raft of GCSE poetry it wouldn't be such a barrier, um I think this is, poetry is the most difficult one you've got here

Q: yeah

A: and I'd be interested, and I think maybe it is a personal thing because other members of the department would speak to you very differently so maybe it is just perhaps for me, problematic

Q: certainly the interviews when people have talked about poetry it's all got really interesting with all sorts of

A: it's such a personal thing isn't it

Q: yeah

A: and how you respond to it, and how there is no correct interpretation, you know um

Q: ok one last question on poetry then, how about word level features you want them to understand, particularly when they're writing their own poetry

A: yeah I mean I think that's easier because it does come down to technique, and um we teach them from quite an early stage about the importance of focusing on key words and their effect on the reader, um so again it comes down to having a technical vocabulary, but yes I mean they, I would expect to teach metaphor, simile, I would expect just you know key words, and to look at why they're effective, so in poetry any word that stands out to you is important isn't it, um but it would, it should, and does hopefully lead to a discussion then of sentence level features and its position in the line, you know we talk about

foregrounding we talk about repetition, and all those things, um you know depending on what the poem throws up really, so yeah that's easier because poem, poetry is about, for me first and foremost it's about words, um and the structure is always a secondary thing, maybe it shouldn't be, but the structure is always a secondary thing with me

Q: great ok, so we're going to move away from poetry now

A: hurrah

Q: to, well, to talk about grammar teaching

A: oh hurrah

Q: and particularly your beliefs, your opinions about it, so first up, what do you understand by the term grammar teaching?

A: um for that's a kind of very formal teaching of um particular grammatical functions and with a very technical vocabulary and it means, you know from my experience a lot of working from books and copying out phrases and changing them and things that can be beautifully marked and easily ticked like a maths lesson, but you know to me I think it's a very traditional view of grammar teaching

Q: yeah

A: yes which I have never

Q: no

A: um, I had experience of, I can remember but I've as a teacher I've never had to do

Q: no, so what sort of subject matter or content would you think in your head oh that's grammar teaching

A: parts of speech, um er, syntax, um ensuring um verbs agreeing that kind of thing, standard English, non standard English which is obviously quite important in this part, in any part of the country, but particularly important here, um and punctuation, yes

Q: ok great, um can you tell me a bit about how you might normally teach or not teach grammar in the context of writing

A: um it would always be from an exemplar, if I was, even if we were doing an EN3 task, I mean I you know the, the strategy has become part of me you know over the last however many years, so and I think it's you know that's one of the, for me the most powerful things I've taken from it is that you start form an exemplar you deconstruct it and you look at how you can actually use those techniques in your own writing, so um, and I've done you know, a lot of sentence combining, I do it regularly with all year groups at you know any given moment um we remind ourselves and we play about with it as starters, so constantly trying because I think it's about a constant drip, you know to try and make them question um the effectiveness of their writing, is it about to do with the GCSE task you know you remind them that you know you're not allowed a dull boring opening and you know you go over all that again so, yeah regularly

Q: so can you give an example of the sort of thing you do in the sentence combining activities?

A: nothing you know at all innovative you know

Q: well it doesn't matter at all

A: I you know I will start off with a dull sentence we will, um we will add adjectives to it, we will add non finite phrases, I wouldn't use those terms, um we'll um start playing around with, we'll create clauses, we'll move them around within a sentence, you know we'll build it up or we'll do something you know where we'll take you know two simple sentences and we'll look at um how they're joined and how that effects the balance of a sentence

Q: and what sort of terminology do you use if any?

A: I do use um main clause and subordinate clause and interestingly most of them, they'll always ask but then it will be like ah you know they remember

Q: yeah

A: so I do use that, I regularly use, obviously adjective adverb, but I know they're sort of like uh? Even though they've heard it one hundred times, I don't know that there's an answer to that

Q: how would you, how do you explain clause, or main clause?

A: um, they understand that a main clause um makes sense on its own, they understand that and a subordinate clause doesn't, they understand it can be moved around, I use the American term dependent clause and I say you know the Americans call it the dependent clause because it depends on the other one to make sense, and that which seems to me quite a sensible definition, um so I do use that and um you know I usually I will set them challenges you know about moving it around, can you put this in the middle of the sentence, can you put it at the beginning which is quite easy, um and see what they can, and then you know often we follow by a discussion of which actually sounds best because the cleverest is often not the best so we often we come down to the fact that there is a place for simplicity as well, so um

Q: so it's very much tied into discussion of impact or effect (can't hear)

A: it is it's, it's varying you know I'm always hammering at varying vocabulary varying punctuation and varying sentence structures so usually comes as part of a discussion of those

Q: so if you use main clause and subordinate clause, do you use simple compound complex sentences as well?

A: yes I do, I do

Q: Ok

A: um, again I'm not sure how much impact that as, you can ask them what a simple, I mean you know you probably have done or will do, but you know you can ask them what a simple sentence is and most of them will probably say short sentence

Q: yeah

A: um, but, I don't know, I don't know

Q: no that's fine, um so what's your personal view of the role of grammar in writing lessons?

A: this might sound very contradictory, I actually think it's very important, because I think that if you did give them the vocabulary, if they did understand it, it would actually make teaching, and varying vocabulary and grammar and all the rest of it, easier, um the problem is I don't have an answer to teaching them those things, I mean it's curious because they do it, I know they do it in the

junior school, I know my daughter can embed a clause, and use the vocabulary and the terminology

Q: so she would say that's a clause

A: she would say that's an embedded clause

Q: right

A: she will, yes she will, I mean now, I mean she's quite bright

Q: yeah

A: well in terms of literacy so maybe that's not so surprising I don't know about the rest of her class could but I don't know the answer to that, I'd like to know though, yeah

Q: um, are there some elements of grammar that you think particularly help children become better writers?

A: I think um, yeah I think the stuff to do with varying sentence structures does help to become better writers, I mean it can be quite mechanical

Q: yeah

A: so maybe it's more a method of getting them through exams but that's no bad thing, um, but I think that for the more able ones, um they still, they do need to be taught varying sentence structures and the, because otherwise they just don't know, you know even if you, and some of them do stop reading, you know you can tell, even the able ones do stop reading, um and so they're not getting um modelling from their reading material, so I think it's incredibly important

Q: are there some elements you think hinder or don't help?

A: um, only what I've said before how you know terminology can be off putting

Q: yeah

A: um, but it's, I think it's a necessary evil as well

Q: well that leads perfectly into the next question, which is is it necessary to teach using the terminology, or can children learn about grammar without the terminology

A: see I don't think they can, because I don't, because, if you're trying to describe a subordinate clause, I don't have the vocabulary to do that clearly I don't think, um and I, I mean to some extent they do that anyway because you know if you ask them what an adjective is they'll just say it's a describing word, if you're lucky they'll say it describes a noun, so um, I think parts of speech, they'll see a verb is a doing word still, um, and that's not a problem I don't think, to be honest, um trouble is you know they're taught that very clumsy it's good to use describing words, you know it's good to use adverbs, and actually it's not always which I think is what the other scheme did very well sort of made that point that actually, you're a better writer if you can do powerful things with verbs and nouns, um, but in order to say that you need terms like verb and nouns, so it's, I, my personal view is that unless you are an instinctive writer, and a reader, I suppose actually they go hand in hand don't they, you do need to be taught things quite mechanically if you're going to pass exams

Q: and do you think that does anything more than pass the exams or do you think that's where it ends? Do you think that it sort of, it has any lasting

A: no I don't think it does, I mean I, I think, you see if you, it just occurs to me that if you get an able writer, they instinctively vary and they don't have the vocabulary necessarily, they're probably readers, and they do, and they instinctively write beautifully, and they couldn't deconstruct it or analyse it they just do it, um and the only way you're going to get less able writers to vary is by teaching it very very explicitly and to give them, to give them a formula, you know teach, I've heard teachers say you know start in the exam start one sentence with as start another one with an ing verb blah blah blah, um and you know giving them a formula to do it, and actually if you look at the mark scheme that will, that will do the job

Q: yeah

A: so we are about teaching to pass the exams, and that's not necessarily a bad thing

Q: so just sticking with the terminology for just one more sort of sub question, do you think that grammatical terminology is any different from literary terminology in the way the students respond to it or do you think it's kind of similar?

A: that's a good question, I think it's the same in the way students respond to it actually, I think that probably a more able group will understand, or more able students will understand literary terminology better, particularly because they've heard it more

Q: right yeah

A: but I think if they'd heard other terms just as much, grammatical terms they would be able to understand it as well, and I think it, it's, almost differentiates between the able and less able it's not right but I think it does

Q: yeah, ok

A: yeah

Q: just two more questions about grammar um, firstly how confident do you feel in your own subject knowledge of grammar?

A: it wouldn't be good enough to teach English A level language, it's good enough up to GCSE and to discuss texts for literature A level, but when I heard X and X (colleagues) talking about English language I realise that it's not, I don't have their knowledge

Q: so in terms of what you are confident with, you've talked about clauses, types of sentence and parts of speech, I'm just trying to think, I mean you might, it might be the case that the terminology doesn't come to you for the other bits, is it, is it when you get into things like, what about non finite clauses or

A: um I can tell you, I can now tell you what a non finite clause is, I probably couldn't have done you know a year ago

Q: so that schemes had an impact?

A: so the schemes, yeah it has had an impact in that, yeah those kind of things, see they tie me in knots as well, so I have a lot of sympathy actually, I have to hear something a lot of times before it goes in, I do, um and then it will stick eventually, um, but um no

Q: and the noun phrase, noun phrases is that

A: yeah I know no that wasn't new, I mean I've, but only as part of the strategy really

Q: yeah

A: I mean I've been doing the strategy a long time, sort of decade, um but certainly that wasn't part of my education, things like verb phrases noun phrases, so yeah

Q: can I just ask you how, how would you define a sentence?

A: um

Q: asked you about clauses earlier on but how would you

A: well, I just think a sentence, you know there's a capital letter at the beginning and a full stop at the end and it makes sense

Q: if, if a student asked you

A: and it has a main verb

Q: so you talk about, if a student sort of wanted more detail than that you could talk about main verb and

A: yeah

Q: yeah

A: I mean they know, I mean I have done the, yes, actually they won't tell you a sentence has a verb actually most of them I'd love to know, do a survey, I should do a survey actually, because they, yeah

Q: what is a sentence, yeah, ok um and how confident do you feel in applying the grammatical knowledge that you have to teaching writing?

A: if it's something that I'm very familiar with, absolutely fine, if it's something I'm a bit wobbly with like finite and non finite clauses etcetera, um I wouldn't do it without looking it up beforehand and making sure I was absolutely clear

Q: yeah, and you've given examples of how you would teach sentence, different types of sentence haven't you, um would you teach noun phrases, would you use the term noun phrase?

A: I never have done

Q: yeah

A: um, and would I now, that's a question as well, I think I could make room for that actually, I'm thinking about original writing coursework that sort of things that maybe it would actually enrich my teaching and their writing to use that actually

Q: right, I wish we'd put down a question now that says how has teaching this scheme had an

A: yeah had an effect

Q: had an effect on

A: well absolutely because everything you do do you know if you don't learn something from it then you know I wouldn't do it, um so I think I mean, yes, that is something different that I probably would make part of my teaching actually

Q: hmm, ok um, so to finish up then, we've asked you about your opinions about writing before, but we're going to ask you again, um what are you looking for as indicators of quality in writing?

A: I am, variety is the main word for me, I mean I am, I am looking first and foremost I think for imaginative writers who aren't, and who aren't afraid to try different things but I am looking for a wide vocabulary I am looking for variety of

sentence structure and um whether I've just been too strategy, you know strategy-ied, I don't know strategy-fied whatever is there such a word?

Q: you could stay stratified

A: stratified, yes, (can't hear) um yeah variety of punctuation too, um I'm looking, what it comes down to is I'm looking for writers who can create effects through their writing who know what their purpose is, what their audience is and can use all their tool in their armoury to have the desired effect on that given audience for that purpose, um and I think if you look at writing tasks in that way you've at least got a fighting chance, because then you can you know talk with students about ok what's, which vocabulary is going to be effective and then how are you going to structure this etcetera

Q: um and finally, do you think that key stage three and GCSE reward those qualities?

A: I think they do, I think they do actually because the assessments are all geared towards those things so yes, um yeah emphatically yes really

Q: great, thank you very much

(tape ends)

Q: ok this is the first interview with (Student 7) at (School 7) doing the fictional narrative scheme of work in October, right ok just before we look at these pieces of writing I'm just going to ask you a few questions about your opinions really, so to begin on, to being with tell me a bit about yourself as a writer, do you enjoy writing?

A: well writing is ok it's not the best thing in the world, I don't enjoy it too much but you have to do it really to get on with like because you have to write in almost every job you do so, it's the kind of thing you have to do

Q: sure, is there anything, are there any aspects of it that you do enjoy?

A: like when you have to like write really wired stories and creepy stories that's fun

Q: so you like story writing?

A: yeah

Q: ok, um anything else you enjoy?

A: well not to do with English really, like outside of school?

Q: yeah what do you like outside of school?

A: do like lots of sports for schools and that and running

Q: ok great, what do you, is there anything you find difficult about writing?

A: spelling, I cannot spell, I find that hard I don't know why I just can't do that

Q: ok anything else?

A: no not really

Q: no, ok so you enjoy creating weird stories

A: yeah

Q: don't like spelling, do you think you're good at writing?

A: I don't really, I'm not bad at it, but I wouldn't say I'm brilliant

Q: what things do you think you're best at?

A: best at, probably writing short and simple sentences and things like that, and developing and that, I'm quite good at that but

Q: could you explain a bit more about that?

A: well, like writing stories I like doing that but I dunno what else to explain

Q: what about the sentences you just said you're good at doing short and simple sentences and then developing them

A: yeah

Q: what do you mean by developing them

A: like making them bigger, putting adverbs, verbs and stuff in them, like that and adjectives

Q: so you think you find that quite

A: yeah that's quite easy

Q: cool, ok um which leads nicely to the next question really because that is what do you think your teacher was trying to teach you about writing today?

A: like to add adverbs verbs and nouns into simple sentences, develop them

Q: and why do you think it's useful to know how to do that?

A: because instead of just having a short sentence you can have a variety of lengths of sentences

Q: so why is it good to have a variety of lengths?

A: um, because then it's like not as boring as having 'he went home, he got dressed' it's like that, it's like how he got dressed you could put in, things like that

Q: great so um, so any other reasons why the sort of thing you were doing today, adding things into your sentence can help make your writing better?

A: (can't hear) variety of sentences like because it gives it more detail, that's about it I would have thought

Q: that's fine, yeah that's fine, um ok so this is all part of this scheme of work on writing fiction, what have you learnt about writing fiction so far?

A: writing fiction?

Q: stories

A: oh yeah stories, yeah, like how to develop, how to make sentences different varies, different like variety of sentences, like where to put in short sentences when you need it, and things like that like how to put punctuation we learnt ages ago

Q: ok, let me just ask you about a couple of those things, firstly, you just said something about where to put short sentences, can you say anything more about that? where would you put them can you think of an example?

A: well like after you've had like a long sentence, and you need something to add something like really short and effective, then you can just put a short sentence there

Q: sure, ok, um and what about punctuation?

A: punctuation, like commas, speech marks, full stops, capitol letters, things like that

Q: and what have you learnt about using those?

A: I learnt a lot in primary but like where to put them after or before when she said, you can put them, she said afterwards or before it, and like put them at the end and beginning of speech, speech marks, and like capitol letters at the beginning of sentences and full stops

Q: yeah, so when you say you can put them after or before, what do you mean by that?

A: well like, there, can't think why I've done that

Q: so the speech marks

A: there's speech marks there

Q: yeah

A: and then put she said

Q: oh so how you can, yeah put who spoke before or after

A: yeah

Q: yeah and how you put speech marks round them so, yeah just looking at an example of your writing, um have you learnt anything else in the past few weeks

A: past few weeks we've been doing this mostly and we've been doing oh, other stuff in the book, it's like we did this writing thing which I think went to you

Q: oh the first

A: yeah and we did, and like you had to write these stories about like what was it, um like little red riding hood and things like that and develop them and make them our own version of it

Q: oh right so

A: doing that

Q: so you re-wrote versions of

A: of like little red riding hood and like to do it to our own

Q: and what do you think you learnt from doing that?

A: learnt mostly how to write a story and like make it your own

Q: what sort of things can you do to make it your own?

A: change names, change what happens in it, change how it ends, change the beginning, where it's set things like that

Q: cool ok, I was just wondering if you'd done anything else really recently because we're going to look at Jaws, I mean do you feel like you learnt anything

A: we did the setting the character and the action thing

Q: and what did you learn from that

A: well like, we learnt how to pick out like who it was and where it was and what happens in the story

Q: hmm

A: and we made it into like paragraphs I think like that, but that's the same as Jaws kind of thing

Q: right, so what were you learning when you were doing Jaws

A: Jaws we were, I think it was to do with um doing different points of view from like the mum, the shark and the guy who was out in the water, things like that doing different points of view and how they would feel

Q: yeah

A: about it

Q: so would you, is it a, how might you use that in your story writing in the future?

A: well you could do like if you were a detective you'd have to do it from someone's point of view and then a different point of view, like from one guy's point of view and then like say a murderer's point of view

Q: oh I see, yeah so, so can you say anything about why that would be effective or

A: because you have to hear both sides of the story before you can get the real judgement and what happened

Q: yeah, yeah great, ok um is there anything else not just from recently that you think you've learnt about writing stories?

A: um, like commas and how to do like commas and and, and but and things like that and so, we did that

Q: what did you learn about those?

A: did like what we should put in different sentences to where to put, oh what's the name for all of them? They've got like a, they're in like a group and I can't remember the name, oh we learnt them anyway, yeah but like which one to put and whether you should put comma or and, and things like that

Q: oh right ok, cool anything else?

A: no not that I can think of right now

Q: no that's fine, that's fine, ok um, thinking about the sort of activities you do in class, are there any sorts of activity that you think help you um learn to write better? What sorts of activities do you think are useful?

A: useful for writing? Activities, like sometimes it's kind of useful it's not that useful but like when she makes us do plays about this writing it makes us like look at writing and she makes us write our own version and then we have to like act it out so it's easier so we know what we're doing then, you have to write it so you know how the actor will feel and what to put it there

Q: right ok, so do you think that helps improve you writing?

A: well no but, well kind of not really, well, like spelling will improve your writing and like punctuation and things and paragraphs

Q: can you think of anything you've done in class at all in the past that has meant that you've ended up with a piece of writing that you're really pleased with?

A: yeah the thing we did today that when you've got a simple, a short simple sentence and developed it until you've got a big one, which was quite good, yeah

Q: so you were really pleased with that, so that, so do you, does that mean that you thought that was helpful

A: yeah, that was helpful

Q: ok, is there anything else you can think of like that from the past even from your primary school where you've come out with something you're really pleased with

A: ah, there's one thing, I can't remember what it was, one thing we did in primary school when we did, and we had to write it he like, my headmaster because he taught us English he was saying like he was putting like a load of adjectives out on the board and verbs and that and we had to put them all in like a paragraph and sentence which was quite good

Q: ah, so he, did he give you the list of words?

A: yeah and we had to use them all in a sentence

Q: in one sentence, right

A: not in one sentence in paragraphs

Q: yeah, so you liked that as well, yeah brill, um is there anything else um, you can think about other types of writing like have you done any activity that has meant that you've written what you think is a really good poem or a really good article or

A: we did that last year, poems with a different teacher not the same one, we did poems, I didn't find that too interesting to be honest, don't think hardly any people in that did, poems isn't really I don't find that that useful

Q: ok, well we're going to talk more about poetry in particular in the summer term we're going to do poetry, so we won't dwell on that for now, that's fine, ok so you've already talked a bit about today's lesson, um what did you think of it overall the activities you were asked to do?

A: today?

Q: yeah

A: yeah they were quite good actually, I liked them because it helped you a lot, like I like adding like weird bits onto stories if that makes sense

Q: no, I know you might have, we have talked about this before but um, how do you think it's helpful what you learnt today? In terms of in your writing in the future

A: you can add it into stories, in the future like developing sentences, if you become a book, like writing a book like an author and you can do that like people like that like J K Rowling and people like that, you can (can't hear)

Q: yeah, ok um, so what, and you also while learning to develop sentences, you were using all those names for different types of words which you've been using now like you've already said adjective

A: adjectives, verbs, nouns

Q: yeah, why do you think your teacher wants you to know all of those words? Those names for words

A: is it, it's kind of helpful though cos you know what, if it, oh I don't know how to explain it it's like, oh it gives you like a whatever it is, you've got put, you know which one it is so like you put a word before it to explain it more, like a, oh I can't

Q: it is, it is tricky, just have a go, have a think

A: if you've got, the verb, like a doing word and you can put something like how he did it before it and things like that if you know what you're doing

Q: so do you think you could do that without knowing all of those words?

A: I suppose you could, yeah I suppose you could, it might be a bit harder

Q: right, hmm interesting, anything else you want to say about today's lesson?

A: not really no

Q: no, ok, um let's have a look at these pieces of writing then, ok so the burglary is the first one, um how well do you think it's written?

A: it's quite good, I reckon it's quite good because it uses like a variety of sentences like short sentences long sentences and thing like that

Q: excellent well we'll get to the sentences in a minute is there anything else that you think makes it just overall successful or unsuccessful?

A: it's written in the first person that's quite good

Q: why do you think that's good?

A: I dunno I just it's easier to read if there's somebody else telling the story, it's like the character writing it, I think it's easier to understand

Q: cool anything else?

A: no not really

Q: is there anything you think is not so good about it?

A: wouldn't say so but, no it's quite good overall

Q: ok, well let's look at some bits in more detail then, how can you tell it's the opening of a story?

A: because it's like 'it was November the 12th 2007' it wouldn't say that in the middle of a story

Q: ok so we've got the date anything else?

A: it's like that bit 'my family and I had just been to a whole family reunion in Reading oh that's Reading that is, that's a place

Q: oh

A: yeah, but um that was kind of like saying where it was how it's set what day it was

Q: yeah, is there anything that tells you it's a story?

A: yeah like 'we were nearing the end of the journey home and we finally pulled up feeling happy and content' like the ending, the beginning as well 'it was November the whatever, 12th 2007, my family and I' like that, you can tell it's going to go on to being like a good story about what happened

Q: yeah, sure thing, anything else?

A: not that I can think of

Q: not that's fine, um ok what about sentences, you said already that you think it has

A: short and like simple sentences and long sentence and that

Q: yeah, any example that you think are pretty good?

A: yeah 'it was November the 12th 2007' that's quite cool, I like that cos it shows you the date and then just stops there, so it makes you want to read on kind of thing, want to find out why they said that, what happened on the day

Q: sure, great anything else?

A: there was like a big sentence around here somewhere which was quite good, oh where is it

Q: take your time, have a little read

A: yeah, there's one there 'as I pulled up, as I pulled up the latch I attempted to open the gate it wouldn't budge' and then full stop, and then there's, (can't hear) here somewhere which was quite good

Q: let's see

A: I don't know where it is

Q: why did you like that sentence?

A: that one? because it like it wouldn't budge and it could have gone on from there without putting the full stop and said like the latch may have been stuck but they just stopped there which is kind of good, I dunno why I just like that bit

Q: anything else?

A: um, oh yeah it's saying like how the burglar, the burglar may have got away

Q: now let me just read that out so we've got it on the tape, is it this one, the what a devious?

A: yeah

Q: so that's 'what a devious chap to have bolted the gate from the inside just in case we arrived home early' what do you think about that sentence, and the words?

A: it's like, yeah well, devious chap that's quite, devious is quite a cool word it's like, they could have put what a clever chap but they put like, they explained it more, devious

Q: yeah, and anything about that as a sentence? The length of it, or the patterns in it?

A: no

Q: ok, any other sort of, because you said it's got good variety so are there any combinations of short and long that you like?

A: it's kind of like a short, like a sentence here and it's longer than that it's not too long but it's like fairly long

Q: that's the first two sentences

A: yeah

Q: yeah, yeah

A: and there's a fairly good one there, I couldn't remember what like put like that bit in the middle and they've got the two commas round it, can't remember what they call that now, we did that in primary

Q: right so how, yeah I'll read that out as well, 'we were nearing the end of our journey home' comma 'when finally we pulled up at our house feeling happy and contented' comma 'having had a great time' so yes so what's, even if you don't know what it's called what has, can you just explain what the writer has done in that sentence?

A: he's added a bit of text that didn't have to be there really and he's put it in commas and added it there to give you more information

Q: great, and what's the effect of that extra information?

A: it's telling you how they feel

Q: hmm, great, brill anything else about any sentences?

A: no

Q: ok, now we talked about the word devious but anything else, any other words that you think are effective or less effective?

A: blazed is quite good, they could have just said the security light shone, yeah blazed is like, well cos it's like more detail

Q: sure, any others

A: and he added immediately there which is quite good

Q: 'clambered up and saw immediately that the gate' yes they, yeah they added that, so what, why is it good to put that in there?

A: it's kind of like a time thing, they could have just put I clambered up and saw the gate was now bolted shut, 'I clambered up and saw immediately that the gate was now bolted shut' it kind of gives it more effect

Q: can you say anything more about the effect?

A: how, it's

Q: I know it's really hard isn't it, I want to see you know the best you can do so I'm pushing you a bit but, why, what is the effect of putting immediately in there, 'I clambered up and saw immediately that the gate was now bolted shut'

A: I dunno it's, I dunno how to explain it

Q: you said before it's to do with time didn't you

A: yeah

Q: do you want to say anything more about that?

A: it's to do like with timing like normally, it's kind of like normally that the gate wasn't shut but he climbed up and saw immediately the gate was shut, the gate was bolted

Q: were there any words that you thought weren't so good?

A: he could have added something in there, he got out the car, he could have like added a bit more there, got out of the red car or something like that

Q: hmm, anything else?
A: um, no, I didn't get 'pang of fear' 'I felt a pang of fear' I don't get that bit
Q: is it just the word pang?
A: yeah, pang I don't get that
Q: a pang, you can have it a pain as well it's like a sort of sudden, like almost like a stabbing feeling or a sudden feeling, so a pang of fear is like a stab of fear
A: oh, I get it
Q: yeah, that's fine, um any improvement you would make?
A: could have had a bit on about what's been taken
Q: yeah
A: like what had been taken like priceless special whatever antique things
Q: right
A: things like that
Q: yeah, anything else, you said you could put in a little bit more about the car are there any other bits that you would added in or changed or cut out?
A: not that I can think of, no not that I can think of
Q: that's fine, brill think you very much, right let's have a look at your one, we'll think about the same questions
A: I think it's the wrong page, it was that page wasn't it, it's the one like
Q: oh yeah this is a different Jaws one, ok I'm just going to read it out first so that we've got it recorded, ok, 'she was just laid there on' actually why don't you read it?
A: yeah, 'she was just laid there on the floor on a towel sunbathing, she glanced up to see where her boy was, that's a bit too far out she said, but none the less she carried on sunbathing, about five minutes later there was a series of screams coming from the sea and everyone was swimming to shore, her head popped up and she was looking for her boy but where was he? She looked terrified and then she saw it, the blood covered lilo which her son was on'
Q: oh chilling, blood covered lilo, brilliant, brilliant brilliant, ok now you have to evaluate and think about this one so, how well do you think that was written
A: I wouldn't say it was amazing, I'd say that one was better
Q: well they're very different aren't they, different point of view, yeah it's hard to say exactly how good you think yours is but it is, were you pleased with it?
A: yeah I was pleased with it
Q: um, what do you think are the successful or unsuccessful?
A: I like this bit 'the blood covered lilo which her son was on'
Q: why did you like that?
A: it's kind of gory isn't it
Q: yeah, anything else?
A: um, yeah, where is it, 'her head popped up' I think that's quite good, I don't know why, popped up out of nowhere
Q: can you say any more about why you think that's good?
A: I don't know it's just like, instead of like she looked up, her head popped up, it's kind of more developed

Q: yeah, ok um what about let's look at the sentences and words again, what about the sentences? What do you think of your sentences?

A: there is some, there is a variety of them there is some short sentences and there is, there isn't many short sentences but mostly they're long sentences

Q: and what do you think about that?

A: there's some questions in there as well

Q: yeah, what do you think about that?

A: I don't know, it's kind of good that you've got a variety of sentences in there but there's too many long sentences in there I reckon, there could be a couple more short ones

Q: so where would you, where could you add some short ones or change things to short ones if you think there could be some more short ones?

A: could put in there between that you could put what was happening, full stop, her head popped up and she saw

Q: so that's between 'everyone was swimming to shore'?

A: yeah

Q: so that was 'about five minutes later there was a series of screams coming from the sea and everyone was swimming to shore' that is on the long side isn't it, and then 'her head popped up and she was looking for her boy but where was he?'

A: yeah

Q: um so you could add something in there

A: yes

Q: what, could you think of something now? What you would put in there?

A: yeah you could have put like, 'what was happening?'

Q: oh as a question I see, yeah

A: yeah

Q: yeah that, yeah I see what you mean, um anything else about sentences, or actually, what about punctuation?

A: I'm not too good on punctuation to be honest but there is a couple of commas and speech marks and full stops capital letters

Q: yeah, I think you're doing fine but, what about, because there's a difference between punctuation that you have to use to be right and punctuation that you choose to use

A: yeah

Q: so have you chosen deliberately to use punctuation anywhere?

A: yeah you, um the, 'that's a bit far out she said', you don't have to use that because you don't have to have speech

Q: right yeah, so you had that choice to put speech in there

A: yeah

Q: why did you choose that to put speech rather than have her just thinking that?

A: because it's like she's saying it out loud, it kind of has more effect, it's kind of better, like one place I did have to have a comma was in there

Q: what about these exclamation marks, can you say why you chose to use those? Because those you could have just had a full stop

A: 'she looked terrified' is kind of, didn't have to have them there but there 'she looked terrified' is like she like really white, I don't know how you would explain it

Q: oh I know it's really hard

A: it's more effect

Q: what effect does it give it putting that exclamation mark there?

A: like a troubled effect kind of thing, like dramatic

Q: yeah, great, ok, brill anything else about sentences?

A: no not that I can think of

Q: no yeah that's absolutely fine, now what about the words? Do you think you've got any particularly effective words, or any that you would change there?

A: could have added a word in there, on her something like spotty towel sunbathing or whatever, could have added something in there

Q: hmm

A: or she scanned the see instead of glanced

Q: why, what would be, why would you change that to scanned the sea?

A: I don't know really

Q: can you say what the effect might be?

A: it's just like, the effect is like different, see she glanced up and looked so she liked scanned to see where her boy was to see where everyone else was and where the boy was

Q: why, what effect does scanned give?

A: scanned gives like, oh, can't explain it it's just, like they scanned the playground for trouble like the teachers do like every day and at break times they scan the playgrounds like they look everywhere, if they just glanced up they just look in one place but if they scan they look everywhere

Q: yeah, brill, brill any other, um what about good words, because you've said where you could add one or change one

A: terrified

Q: yeah, why did you, what do you think that terrified

A: it's dramatic, if that makes any sense

Q: hmm

A: she was kind of (can't hear) could have just put she was scared, but she's terrified

Q: anything else?

A: no not that I can see

Q: now earlier on when we were talking about what you liked in general you liked 'her head popped up'

A: yeah

Q: I just wonder about the word popped because you did say you liked that so, I think, what do you think the effect of the word popped is there?

A: it's like her head suddenly like shot up instead of just like looked up really slowly

Q: yeah

A: so just looked up really quick to see where her son was

Q: yes, that works well as well

A: brill, ok any general improvements, now we have talked about improvements like adding the shorter sentences and a couple of words, is there anything else that you think would be an improvement?

Q: shouldn't have put really 'and' at the beginning of a sentence, could have changed it to something else

Q: why should you have not put and there?

A: I dunno you don't normally start sentences with and really, I can't remember what it was, we got taught you shouldn't do it in primary, I can't remember why, oh no something like and should always be somewhere in the middle of a sentence

Q: ok, I can't say yes or no I'm afraid but yeah no that's fine, that's fine, um, anything else you would improve?

A: um, could have put it was like a hot sunny day at the beginning of there, at the beginning of the thing

Q: hmm, why would you want to do that?

A: it tells you about the weather and what was happening and where she was

Q: yeah, cool anything else?

A: no

Q: no, brill, I think it's fantastic, um right that's great I just want to ask you one more thing now, um in the start of our conversation

A: yeah

Q: the first half, you were using words like adjective and adverb and noun and verb and stuff, and then you didn't use them at all when talking about these

A: yeah

Q: which doesn't matter, that's not wrong, if you know what I mean, it's just interesting, um if, if I were to say right can you talk about either of these using those sort of words to talk about the words in here, what would you do?

A: not particularly good at naming adverbs and verbs in like in there, work, but like when the teacher says this is a verb this is an adverb what are you going to do to change it and things, I'm quite good at that

Q: right, ok so how about can you pick out any interesting adjectives or adverbs in either of them?

A: I don't know it is an adjective or an adverb or whatever but contented is quite good I like that I don't know why, happy and contented like

Q: yeah, or, or any effective nouns or verbs or any words that you know what type of word they are

A: I clambered

Q: what's that?

A: oh is that, it's a doing word which ones that? oh

Q: it is a doing word yeah

A: it's a doing word I can't remember what, it's probably and adverb or something like that isn't it, or something, I dunno

Q: that's fine, look it really doesn't matter it's just, I'm just interested to see and I wouldn't expect you to know then that easily so that's cool, do you like the word clambered there?

A: yeah

Q: what's good about it?
A: it's like you could have just said I climbed but clambered is like more explained, explained it more, like how he climbed
Q: yeah, yeah, pick out anything else that you think you can recognise? Is there anything that you, even if you don't think it's good, is there anything you can recognise as ok well that's a verb, that's a noun, that's an adverb
A: which one is the doing word because I can pick out loads of them but I just don't know which one it is
Q: ok
A: like stood there is what they did like stood
Q: yeah you're right, ok so you can get the doing words and we can call them doing words that's fine
A: yeah
Q: anything else?
A: hastily is quite a cool word, I dunno which one that is, it might not even be any of them, it's like how they unbolted the gate, it's a ding word kind of thing
Q: ok, fabulous, is there anything else you want to say on the record?
A: no
Q: brill thank you so much, ok I'll stop this now
(tape ends)

Q: right, this is the second interview with (Student 7), um doing the argument scheme of work in January, so did you enjoy the lesson this morning?
A: yeah
Q: yeah, did it, how did you find it?
A: um it's quite good to know how to persuade people more
Q: right
A: bit random
Q: right, it's a bit interesting, um ok what do you think that your teacher was teaching you about writing today?
A: how to make people part with their money and spend, how to teach to to, not teach you but how to make you write persuasively, persuasively,
Q: ok and what particular things about how to be persuasive?
A: the words, um words nouns or, I think it's them, I'm not sure, it's one of them anyway, but yeah
Q: yeah, it was a type of word wasn't it
A: yeah type of word
Q: yeah that's fine, um what were you learning about those, that particular type of word?
A: um what, which, where you should put it to see like well where you should put the word, see if you'd bribed them you'd put different words for different types of situations
Q: yeah can you, do you want to give some examples? That might be an easier way to talk about it

A: um, I've got it in my book
Q: yeah, have your book, can you think of any examples before you look in your book?
A: er
Q: just wondering if you can remember any
A: there's one where in the writing it say we shall, which is, to persuade you, I don't know which president it was by, but they wrote it to, it's kind of a comforting word, and um yeah, that's all I can remember without my book
Q: that's fine, have a look at your book
A: yeah
Q: ok so what has that reminded you of? What else have you been doing?
A: um seeing which um, which of them words you put in which situation kind of thing
Q: ok, um fine, so going beyond today's lesson what have, I know you said you haven't been doing it for very long but what have you learnt about persuading people or writing arguments so far?
A: um, you got when you're persuading people you've got to be more formal
Q: yeah
A: yeah, I think
Q: ok anything else?
A: no, we've only done it for two or three lessons
Q: yeah, have a, what about the lesson you did when you had the charity and the animals, do you remember what that was all about?
A: that was um, how to make people feel sorry for the animals to give money
Q: right, and did you learn any particular ways to make people feel sorry?
A: um put, instead of using just like one name you could put like poor or something else in front of it to make them feel sorry for them
Q: yeah, cool, ok um and did you do, did you look at that Martin Luther King speech right at the start? The I have a dream? I have a dream
A: yeah
Q: can you remember anything from that lesson about persuading people?
A: no
Q: no, it's January, no one can cope with anything at the moment, fair enough, ok um have you, have you done any work on arguments or persuasive writing before?
A: no
Q: no, so you don't remember doing it in yeah seven or primary schools at all?
A: no
Q: gosh so it's very new to you then, wow you're doing a good job then, um so you'll probably find this questions very difficult to answer, if you haven't done any work I'm so surprised so, I was going to ask you, see if you can answer it, um if there are any activities that you've done that you think have helped you learn about persuasive writing effectively?
A: well this one has kind of helped
Q: that's the looking at different words to put in different sentences
A: yeah

Q: the modal verbs they are, yeah, can you say how you thought that helped or why you thought that helped?

A: it helped, yeah, oh, I can't think at the moment, um no I can't think, oh

Q: can you um, looking at this sheet which you did in today's lesson just at the end, um you didn't have a lot of time for it actually, can you tell me, it's kind of what you were doing in the lesson, why you chose these different words?

A: because

Q: so the first one, for a threat we've got you blank give that back to me or I will scream, and you've put must, why did you choose must?

A: because it's something that they have to do otherwise they will, she will scream or whoever it is will scream and they'll get in trouble or whatever, having, so they must do it

Q: yeah, which other ones do you think might work?

A: you will give it back

Q: yeah what would be the difference with using will?

A: you will give it back is telling you you have to give it back kind of thing, you have to give it back or there's punishment

Q: do you think one is, hmm yeah, one is, do you think one is stronger than the other or do you think they're about the same?

A: they're about the same

Q: yeah, there's a bit of a difference in the way that will is saying, that it's definitely

A: yeah

Q: but anyway, what about this next one, the bribe, if you take me to the cinema then I blank tidy my room, why did you choose will for that one?

A: because um, it's something that I will do, if they said may then they um might not have done it but it's telling you that if they take you to the cinema they definitely will do it

Q: cool so you could use may there

A: yeah

Q: as well couldn't you, like you said but it's not as definite, ok victory, if we work together then we

A: shall win

Q: blank win, ok you've put shall, why did you choose shall?

A: because it's kind of confident, it kind of makes you say that you will, can win the game and you shall win the game

Q: what did you think about that difference between will and shall that they were talking about in the lesson?

A: I couldn't see the difference to be honest, shall is kind of more like so I shall is kind of not as harsh as I, saying you will do this, you shall do this is kind of like not as strong word as will

Q: is there any difference between being a strong word and a harsh word? I'm only saying that because you just said it's not as harsh and then you said it's not as strong, do you think there's a difference between those two things?

A: not that I can think of

Q: no fine, fine, ok so (can't hear) we've got things can get difficult but we could make it out alive, just think what we may achieve if we work together,

why did you choose can?

A: I could have put could make, get difficult

Q: you could

A: but can get difficult, can get difficult means it could, it can get difficult but then again it might not

Q: yes, ok anyway I'm not going to carry on with that, because that was, I just got really interested in your own thoughts but that's not really what I'm meant to be talking about so, thank you for that thought it's interesting to see what you thought, um so you said that you found that activity helpful

A: yeah

Q: can you, I wonder if you could say anymore now about how that might have been helpful doing that? no?

A: no

Q: no, um what about when you were looking at um the politicians speeches did you think there was anything helpful in that?

A: well they're all kind of the same

Q: they were? So does that help you in your writing at all?

A: well looking at something that's not your own writing isn't really going to help me, that's what I think anyway

Q: tell me more about why you think that

A: it's like what they said it's not what you're about to, it's not what you think it's what they think, so it's kind of not what you would say

Q: might there be anything helpful from looking at someone else's writing that might help you in your own writing

A: yeah to see how they do it but

Q: how might seeing how someone else does it help you?

A: um, so you could like, if it's good you could use it in your own piece of writing

Q: right ok, is there anything from those speeches that you might use in your writing?

A: the speeches? Yeah the shall, or the shall, the verb thing the shall one, dunno which one it's from

Q: that doesn't matter, but yeah, ok um, now in general what do you think makes good writing? That's a massive question to land on you suddenly isn't it, let's come back to that at the end, let's do that right at the very end, ok let's talk about this first, so this is the fair treatment for our elderly people um, speech written by someone your age, how well do you think it's written?

A: it's written quite well

Q: what do you think is good about it?

A: um the way they use like, it's like arguing that you shouldn't put people in homes because otherwise they could get, they could die, and things like different medicine and they might get worse in homes because they might not trust the person, people there

Q: yeah, absolutely, anything about how it's written or, that you think makes it good?

A: no

Q: anything that you think's not so good about it?

A: no not really but they haven't used, well kind of because they haven't used a range of sentences, most of the sentences in here are quite long, they haven't used any really short sentences

Q: that's true, I can't spot any really short ones, anything else?

A: no

Q: anything, ok um what features of argument can you see in it? How can you tell that that is an argument?

A: because it has like firstly, surely, another like at the start of every paragraph, so

Q: what's that doing?

A: oh, um it's like listing what is wrong with the, sending people to elderly homes

Q: hmm, absolutely, anything else that shows it's an argument?

A: no, it kind of asks questions to see what you think

Q: hmm that's right, hmm can you spot any other persuasive features?

A: no, oh they're using the noun things, they ought to there

Q: yeah that's true, now I wonder if you, have a look at that paragraph, it's only a couple of sentences, um think what the effect of that is, that ought to, you could remind yourself of what else they could have used with that, we've got ought to there haven't we

A: yeah, they could have put they should be able to make their own decisions

Q: yeah

A: but I can't think why

Q: what, what else could they have used from there?

A: they can make their own decisions

Q: yeah, anything else?

A: they would

Q: yeah, I was thinking about what the difference would be if it was they must make their own decisions rather than they ought to, I don't know, what, why do you think, can you say anything about the choice of ought to rather than can or must?

A: I reckon they should have used can, because they can make their own decision, if it used can it's saying what they could do, and it's, you don't have to make their own decisions for them

Q: hmm, yeah I see what you mean, that they're able to, that you don't have to make decisions for the, yeah, ok anyway, um any other persuasive features?

A: no

Q: ok, um what about the sentences now you said there aren't any really short sentences

A: no

Q: um, is there anything else you can say about the sentence structure or anything like that?

A: use or a lot for some reason

Q: show me some of those

A: or, or, there's like one there somewhere

Q: oh yeah, or the elderly

A: and there
Q: yeah, anything to say about the use of or?
A: no I just noticed they say it quite a lot
Q: just something you spotted
A: no
Q: ok, um what about the words now we talked about that ought to, um any other words that you'd comment on? Anything that you think words well or doesn't work so well?
A: instead of using very very they could have put terrible dangerous or something like that, instead of repeating the same word twice
Q: yeah, yeah absolutely, anything else? Have a, take your time we've got ages so you can have a little read through again, see if there are any words you think work well or
A: they use because a lot, because that way they can say why they think that
Q: yeah, I'm just going to repeat what you've just said because I'm not sure that picked it up because you said it quite quietly
A: yeah
Q: you said they use because a lot so that they can show why, I can't remember what the end of it was now, why they think that was it? Or
A: yeah
Q: yeah, so well it's giving, it's showing why anyway
A: yeah
Q: yeah, anything else? Any other words?
A: no
Q: no, ok, ok um any improvements you would make?
A: yeah I wouldn't have done the terribly bit
Q: yeah
A: (Can't hear) and changed the ought to bit and put more short sentences in
Q: cool
A: that's about it
Q: ok, great ok let's have a look at your little, save our squirrels, that's genius, which was your charity, um can you just read it out, so
A: will you give £2 a month to a neglected squirrel? Take the example of bob the downhearted squirrel, for only months was inhumanly tossed out of his own oak tree by the reckless grey squirrel, he was found in a tin can under the back gate, the unkind grey squirrel with no, the unkind grey squirrely, oh that doesn't make sense, it should be left him but I missed that out
Q: yeah
A: the unkind grey squirrel left him with no food or water, these are just a few reasons why we should kill the savage grey squirrel and save the defenceless red squirrel, go on, save a red squirrel today
Q: exclamation mark, exclamation mark
A: yeah
Q: brilliant, ok let's have a look at this one, um how well do you think that is written and what do you think makes it successful or less successful?
A: don't know

Q: what are, what's some good things about it?
A: um ask a lot of questions
Q: yeah
A: I just realised there aren't that many short sentences either, I could put in more short sentences
Q: yeah, what about the words?
A: I used a lot of the, um the verb things to make people feel sorry for him
Q: hmm, give me some examples
A: downhearted, um inhumane, defenceless, neglected
Q: yeah
A: um
Q: yeah they're really good, there's a couple more but that was, yeah, so how did you choose those words?
A: miss had a list of words we could put into the gaps because she wrote out a load of um the basic structure of this, and she put, was, and we had to make it into our own and put words in the gaps that she left, and she had words on the board that we could have used
Q: but you had to choose the ones that you thought worked
A: yeah
Q: which I think you've done really well, any other, anything else you can say about the words?
A: no
Q: what made you choose that word because I think that's brilliant, in only two months he was inhumanely tossed out of his oak tree, you talked about inhumanely being an emotive word you got from the board but tossed is just, rather than thrown out, I think that's really good so can you say why you chose tossed?
A: because thrown out is a bit boring, like everybody uses that, nobody is, not many people are going to use tossed out, so
Q: yeah, any reasons why it's effective?
A: because it makes you feel sorry for him is he's tossed, if he's just thrown out, he's thrown out, but if he's tossed out he's thrown out like harshly
Q: yeah, I think it's great, because you toss, when you toss something out, it's like
A: throw it (can't hear) out
Q: you just chuck it without caring about it
A: yeah
Q: so it's like someone's just gone pop, and, yeah I think that's brilliant, and this, he was found in a tin can under the back gate
A: yeah
Q: it's just really sort of pathetic but quite funny as well, brilliant, um oh why, how did you choose where to put the exclamation marks? Because you've got one after no food or water and then two at the end, save the red squirrel today
A: yeah save the red squirrel today I put in capitols because like you've got to do it today like now
Q: yeah

A: or it isn't going to make a difference
Q: yeah, why did you put an exclamation mark there, after
A: no food or water, because he could die form no food or water
Q: hmm
A: you can starve and all that
Q: so if you were going to change or improve this, what would you do to it
A: put more short sentences in
Q: what would be the point of putting more short sentences in?
A: it's kind of like for effect
Q: what sort of effect?
A: it's like, um, I can't explain what type of effect it is
Q: just have a little think and have a go, or tell me to get lost
A: I don't have a clue
Q: ok
A: I can't remember why, we did it like, before Christmas or a while ago
Q: but, don't necessarily try to remember, don't try to remember what you were told about it, just think yourself about why short sentences might be
A: because they give effect to the reader, I don't know why they give effect that's just what I can remember
Q: ok, no worries, um anything else that you would improve or change?
A: not that I can think of right now
Q: ok, um so I'm going to go back to that big question again
A: yeah
Q: what do you think makes writing, a piece of writing good? Any piece of writing
A: um, piece of writing good, well they, use a variety of sentences and different vocabulary, instead of keeping it the same and boring and interesting words so it's not boring, and ask questions so it, so if people read on the find out the answers
Q: yeah, anything else?
A: no
Q: think about why, I mean do you read much?
A: I do, I used to but I don't when I get into secondary now, because in primary they used to make you read a book every week or something would happen to you
Q: something would, something terrible would happen to you
A: yeah they'd give you a detention or something or they call your parents or whatever but here they don't make you read books very often
Q: right
A: Miss does, she reads a book with us in class, yeah but not many of the other teachers make us read books, our tutors do but that's about it
Q: do you read, would you read at home? Not in lessons
A: I do a fair bit at home (can't hear) um I don't normally read at home, mum sometimes makes me when I'm not doing anything, just to annoy me she makes me do it, but I sometimes do but most of the time I'm not reading at home, I mostly read in school

Q: so, when you do read a book, whether it's because you choose to or because you have to

A: yeah

Q: what do you think makes something good for you? What makes you enjoy?

A: um, I don't really know, um

Q: for you to enjoy a piece of writing, a book or a short story or whatever what does it have to be like?

A: I don't have a clue I don't read that much, well as often as I should anyway

Q: I think most people probably feel like that

A: yeah

Q: is there anything about what, the sort of things it should be about or the sort of language it should use or ?

A: oh I'm not really sure, I don't know, no I don't know

Q: ok

A: I often read adventure books though, I don't know why, just kind of makes you want to, you read on because you want to know what happens next

Q: hmm, yeah, so when you're doing a piece of writing in class or in an exam or whatever, what are you thinking about to try and, do you have any sort of ideas in your head about what you need to do to make it good?

A: yeah you have to like um something, you have to give clues about what's going to happen later so that they read on to see what actually happens

Q: yeah, anything else?

A: use interesting like words instead of boring words, but that's all I can think of

Q: ok, that's fine, ok great I think we shall leave it there, well done (tape ends)

Q: right so this is my last interview with (Student 7) talking about the poetry scheme, did you enjoy the lesson this morning?

A: yeah it was ok, I found it a bit hard because I'm not that into poetry I don't really like it if I'm honest

Q: ok there's two things I want to ask you about there then so what did you, what did you think you found hard about this lesson?

A: most of the words in the poem I didn't have a clue what they meant

Q: yeah that's a fair point, it's not an easy poem is it, how did you find the questions on, um when you had to think about the punctuation?

A: oh I've got them in my book, but I found them quite hard I didn't get some of them because I, I haven't spent that long on punctuation, well I have, it's just last time I did it was ages ago and I've kind of forgotten about it

Q: yeah fair enough, and I think they were quite hard I think that semicolons one was really hard

A: yeah

Q: so, um but we can talk more about that in a bit anyway, so why, what is it about poetry that you think sort of turns you off?

A: I don't know, I just find it kind of boring, I don't know why I don't have a

clue why I just find it kind of boring, just sitting there listening to people read out words all day just, no

Q: how is that different to reading a story?

A: poems, I have no idea, I don't, I do read but I don't exactly like reading either

Q: yeah fair enough

A: yeah, yeah because mum makes me read every night and it's kind of boring

Q: it's good for you

A: yeah that's what she says

Q: I'm sure she does, um, ok um, what do you think your teacher was teaching you about today, teaching you about writing?

A: punctuation

Q: what about punctuation?

A: where, what effect it has on sentences and different things

Q: and can you say a bit about the effect that punctuation has on sentences?

A: yeah like if you have a question you say it in a different tone of voice whereas an exclamation mark or a full stop

Q: yeah, so what sort of thing do exclamation marks do?

A: they give it more excitement kind of more energy, different things like that

Q: energy is a good way to think about it

A: yeah

Q: yeah, um and there's a bit more to it than just thinking about the kind of punctuation you put at the end of the sentence as well wasn't there, can you say anything about

A: um, more the like in the middle like where you put a comma will change how you say it as well

Q: hmm, did you get that the woman without her man is nothing?

A: yeah, I did get that one, I thought it was quite funny

Q: how did you punctuate that to begin with?

A: I've got it in my book

Q: yeah

A: um, I put um

Q: oh you did loads

A: comma, exclamation mark, and I put like three dots before nothing

Q: ah that's clever, that would have been a good one to have in class, a woman without her man is (pauses) nothing, yeah

A: and then I put three dots afterwards

Q: hmm, so can you explain the effect that you were going for with the three dots?

A: well it's like kind of having a pause for like dramatic effect, so it makes them think of it

Q: this is a very hard question, but can you say anything about the difference between putting the dots in front of nothing and after nothing?

A: after nothing it's kind of like holding suspense um, if you put it before it, I honestly have no idea, trying to think of something um

Q: like I'll tell you what, let me ask you a different question, when you first put them in between is and nothing, why did you choose to put them there and not put them like for example after woman, so a woman dot dot dot without her man is nothing or, do you see what I mean, why did you put them there? Because like a lot of people will just put them at the end, but that to me looks a bit more deliberate, so why did you put them there?

A: yeah because some people say a woman without a man could be, it could be anything if you put dot dot dot it means, it like makes you wait for a while and then nothing, and then you put nothing it kind of

Q: yeah, yeah that makes sense, excellent, um, cool, so what else I mean I know you missed one of the lessons and you're only on lesson four but what else have you learnt about writing poetry in the last couple of lessons?

A: we started poetry on the day I was off, so I think we've only had one lesson, well I've only had one lesson

Q: oh right

A: and (can't hear) I think I missed another lesson as well because of maths challenge or something

Q: oh right, yeah you always get the same people taken out for all sorts of different things

A: yeah

Q: well what about in the kennings lesson, what did you learn about in that lesson?

A: that the kennings are like two nouns for like what something is, I think

Q: yeah, so how do you use them?

A: honestly I have no idea

Q: um what is, what's a noun? Because you just said that they're two nouns, which they are

A: isn't it like something to describe, isn't it to describe it or

Q: they're certainly used to describe something aren't they, so you did a squirrel

A: yeah

Q: nut storer, tree climber nut eater, I wrote one yesterday about a lizard but it wasn't very good, um, yeah so the things that the kennings describe something

A: yeah

Q: and what about, what do you know about poetry, what have you learnt about poetry in previous years?

A: previous years, some of it rhymes, we didn't do poetry much in primary but I know poetry sometimes rhymes and sometimes doesn't, it describes something that happens sometimes, not all the time

Q: yeah

A: and that's about as much as I know

Q: no worries, um so you might like to think back to year seven or primary for this as well, but have you done any lesson activities that you think have helped you be a better poet?

A: we did some with one of the English teachers but it didn't really help me, because he's a rubbish teacher if I'm honest

Q: um, have you ever written a poem that you think yeah that's pretty good?

A: I have, not that I can remember, I haven't written many poems, not that I can remember any being decent

Q: so thinking more generally about just writing then, have you done any activities in lessons that you think have been helpful?

A: what for poems?

Q: well yes if you can think of any, but if not for any type of writing

A: the kennings thing was like helping with nouns because I didn't really know what that meant and Miss explained it, and yeah, once you start kennings and like practice on them it gets kind of easier

Q: yeah, I think that's definitely true it's really had to begin with isn't it and then they start, they start flowing, cool, ok um, let's have a look at these poems then, right so starting off with the teacher poem, what did you think about that one?

A: um all of it rhymes and they're all kenning words

Q: you spotted that right off didn't you, the moment I gave it to you, um and what do you think about the kennings, do you think they're good ones?

A: well yeah, they're not bad, they explain what a teacher is

Q: is there anything about the poem that you think is effective or successful or anything you think is not so good?

A: the boredom banner that's kind of, it would have been better if it was a boredom planner

Q: cunning, what you think that the meaning of that is just not

A: yeah I just don't get that, that's probably the one I don't get

Q: so how can, oh go on

A: I don't get that one as well

Q: mayhem stiller, what, is it the language of that that's

A: I just don't know what, I just don't um, I know what it means I just don't know what they want it to mean because um, I just don't get it

Q: when you say you don't know what they want it to mean

A: yeah because like mayhem means something like really bad and everything, but like mayhem stiller, I don't know what the stiller bit after is meant to make it mean

Q: yeah I see what you mean, yeah mayhem is like chaos so people running around shouting that sort of thing so stiller I think the idea that it's someone who, who quietens it all down and shuts everyone up and makes everyone be still

A: yeah

Q: but yes, I get, I take your point that's not immediately obvious is it at all, how can you tell that's a poem?

A: because most of it rhymes

Q: yeah

A: and it's all in lines instead of, it like goes down like that instead of going straight along in sentences

Q: yeah so it's written in lines

A: yeah and they're not sentences either

Q: yeah absolutely, what is a sentence by the way?

A: doesn't it, has to make sense or something, oh, Miss told us this the other

day, I know, I kind of know what it is I just don't know how to explain it, it something that the, learnt this is primary it's something like noun clause and something else, I can't really remember

Q: you're drudging that up from primary did you say?

A: yeah

Q: no but you're on to something aren't you, you said it has to make sense

A: yeah

Q: which I'd say is a definite part of it

A: yeah, yeah I think that's all I can think of, a sentence has to make sense because like them two in just, with a full stop and it had nothing in between it wouldn't make sense

Q: yeah, yeah absolutely, and the whole noun, clause, did you say clause?

A: yeah, and there was something else as well, I can't remember what the other one was

Q: have you done stuff on types of sentence, like complex compound and simple sentences

A: yeah did that in primary, didn't do that here though

Q: right ok, because sometimes it helps to think ok well, because that can help with working out what a sentence is if you think, if you can remember like what a simple sentence is

A: I haven't done that in a long time though

Q: ok no worries, no worries, um but yeah, to be fair very few people have looked at that poem and said that's not written in sentences, so that's a good thing to have spotted really, um so given that you've already said it's not written end sentences, is there anything about the layout of it or the lines or the structure that you could comment on?

A: it's only got two like in every line

Q: yeah

A: I don't see why it can't have more, I don't get why it's only two and then goes to the next line, I don't get that bit

Q: yeah well I mean it's kind of up to you in a poem how you do it, so do you, can you think about why the poet might have done it like this? I mean I don't know

A: is it kind of a list?

Q: yeah

A: that's why he's done it like that

Q: can you just explain that a bit more?

A: list because like list probably has one thing on the next line it has another thing, kind of like what they've done there except they've got two on each line

Q: yeah, so why do you think they put two on each line rather than just one on each line?

A: I honestly have no idea

Q: do you know what I don't have any idea either

A: no, and I don't, I don't see why they've got a comma after them three and not after them two either

Q: yeah, yeah absolutely, um what do you think about the end thought because it does change at the end?

A: it goes to one
Q: hmm, so do you think that's, can you see that
A: more effective kind of thing it's like, it like makes you, it's like a pause in between them
Q: oh so it makes you pause because it's just one on a line
A: yeah
Q: so what does that do to how you read the poem do you think, or?
A: makes you slow down a bit I suppose
Q: yeah, so you slow down as you get towards the end?
A: yeah
Q: do you know what, I think that, I think that's true, that does happen when you read it, ok anything you'd say about the words or the vocabulary of it?
A: some of them are quite hard to get, but yeah some of them are quite hard to get like concept not most people know what that means, a lot of them don't, some of them I don't know what they mean but most of them I do but that's about it
Q: yeah, you're right they are tricky, do you get concept?
A: yeah, um, oh I know what it means
Q: basically means like idea
A: yeah
Q: so if you're throwing ideas
A: kind of like telling them what, what's what and different things
Q: yeah I suppose so, but yeah I'm not, I mean you can interpret that in different ways can't you actually
A: yeah
Q: concept thrower, what do you think about blame absorber and stress bin at the end?
A: it, because they get really stressed when people talk, stress bin is because they get really stressed like, sometimes planning everything, blame absorber is because they get, hmm, is it because they get blamed when the, like when the kids don't get good grades the teachers get blamed for
Q: yeah, yeah that might be part of it yeah
A: and they just take it and carry on
Q: yeah, cool, so is there anything you would do to improve that poem?
A: could have made it a little bit more like easier like words to understand but apart from that I wouldn't say anything else
Q: fine, ok teacher's red pen
A: yeah
Q: what do you think of that one?
A: well it's about a pen, pen saying it all and that's pretty much all I know because I missed the lesson on it
Q: well you won't have, your class won't have done this yet this is called a personification poem
A: oh
Q: have you come across the word personification?
A: no

Q: it's um, you can use it in all types of writing but it's where you take an object or sometimes an animal and give it human or animal characteristics, so you might, so in this one it's the pen like pretending the pen can talk

A: yeah talking

Q: yeah exactly so it's like person - ifying or something, you're turning it into a person, so that's pretty much what there is to it so the fact that you said oh I get that it's the pen, then you've got it essentially, is there anything about I mean if you, if it doesn't work for you can you say anything about why you think that is?

A: it doesn't rhyme that much

Q: it's got a bit of rhyme

A: yeah like some of them and not all of them

Q: so do you prefer things to rhyme?

A: yeah kind of makes me get it more I don't know why just understand it more

Q: ok, they're quite, each verse is quite different, do you prefer any verses to any others or are there, or is there one that you think is more confusing, because you could just have that, that bottom one on its own, or you could have just the middle one on its own

A: I know what they all mean and everything like that, I get what all of them are trying to say and everything but, I don't get that bit I tell you to see me

Q: that's probably because you've never had a teacher do that because teachers don't really do it anymore, um have you ever had a teacher write see me in your book?

A: no I've (can't hear) to one of my friends though

Q: I used to get that in maths constantly, I'd have see me and I'd always get the fear, um it's, it might be that you've done, like you didn't understand something or you've done something wrong and the teacher would always write see me

A: go over it, yeah

Q: to go over it, um so I guess that's what that's about and that's probably why it's in um inverted commas to show it's what it's written down but yeah, um, well how can you tell that's a poem?

A: because each one is on a different line where it starts and they're not all sentences

Q: yeah, now that one wasn't written in sentences because it was just a list

A: some of these are, well I don't know actually, that could be a sentence, I urge you to stop dead

Q: yeah, what about the others?

A: most of them could be sentences

Q: yeah

A: and that one

Q: yeah

A: yeah they could all have a full stop after them

Q: they could yeah, so what do you think about the punctuation then because it hasn't put in and um full stops, and in fact it's just got one comma

A: yeah

Q: so what do you think about that?
A: I don't know
Q: do you think it matters?
A: it doesn't in this case because you kind of get it without, some of them don't need punctuation in, I mean they could all have full stops at the end
Q: they could, they could yeah I mean it is written in sentences but they haven't worried about the punctuation
A: no
Q: so, I wonder if that changes the way you read it I don't know
A: does it make you stop a little bit after each one? because they're not in sentences you just go straight on and say it and then you get to that end and then you wait a little bit and then you say the next one
Q: yeah, can you just explain that a bit more clearly because you said does it, you started off my saying does it make you stop, does what make
A: it makes you like pause, at the end of each
Q: but does what makes you stop what makes you pause?
A: not having a full stop at the end one makes you pause a little more before you read the next one than it does when you have a full stop
Q: now, yeah, now hmm, because normally you'd think you'd pause at a full stop
A: yeah
Q: but I don't necessarily, I'm not saying you're wrong at all but I wonder if you could say a bit more about that because like, why might you pause more if there isn't a full stop, which is what you just said, than if there was?
A: I don't know it might just be how I read it but I if think there's a full stop I just go straight on and see the next one but with poems you just go, it take me a little bit longer to go onto the next one, could be just me
Q: I don't think it is but yeah I think, I think you're probably onto something there but I can't, I don't want to like prompt you to say something that I'm thinking not what you're thinking if you know what I mean, anyway um, yeah how else, how else can you tell it's a poem, you've talked about the fact that it's, well it is written in sentences but
A: each one is on a different line
Q: yeah, each sentence essentially is on a different line, is there anything else that shows it's a poem?
A: not that I can point out no
Q: that's fine, um so we have talked a bit about sentences, thinking about it in terms of lines now in terms of sentences is there anything you can say about the sort of layout of it or the structure of the lines?
A: why is there only four paragraphs like space in between ever four which I don't get why
Q: ok, what about the lengths because they vary quite a lot?
A: yeah length of them gets, honestly I don't have a clue with the lengths
Q: yeah I mean because also, you know I said you could have any one of these verses on their own
A: yeah
Q: you could also change the order of them

A: yeah

Q: do you think that's the best order?

A: could be in any order really could it

Q: do you think it's good to have the short one at the end or, or do you think it's good to have the long one in the middle, or do you think that you could go a different way I mean I'm just wondering about?

A: I honestly don't know

Q: that's fine, um ok what about the words?

A: I mean I understand all of them but dross some people might not get that word and where's the other one, resounding

Q: are there any that you think are effective?

A: not that I can see

Q: is there any, I mean you've said that some of them might, um some people might not understand is there anything that you think, any, aspects of vocabulary you think is not effective other than the fact that some people might not understand some of them?

A: that one, I inspire carry on, I don't see how that's got anything to do with the red pen

Q: ok, anything else to say about the vocabulary at all?

A: nope

Q: ok that's fine, so is there anything you'd do to improve that poem?

A: put maybe some more punctuation in I don't know where but could do a bit more or maybe put full stops I don't know

Q: ok, why would you put more punctuation in?

A: because it's like a bit blank

Q: yeah, is there anywhere that you can say oh I'd put this bit of punctuation there for a certain effect?

A: put an exclamation mark on the end of I urge you to stop dead, because it makes you say it a bit um, makes you say it a bit differently, oh how do you say it, makes you say it like almost a bit louder, more energy you say it

Q: yeah so why would you put that there?

A: I honestly don't know I just think you need it there, it's kind of like a command

Q: hmm yeah, yeah it is yeah, do you know what's funny you keep saying I honestly don't know and then give me a really good answer

A: yeah

Q: cool, right brilliant, let's just have a look at um your poem, your kenning poem, to begin with so

A: it's not really a poem, Miss just wanted us to write down a load of words that rhymed, it's not supposed to be a poem it's just (can't hear)

Q: well it is a poem

A: is it?

Q: this version of it is yeah

A: she just told us to write them all out around a picture of whatever you're going to, whatever animal you did, she didn't tell us to write it in a set order or anything

Q: did you think about the order you wrote in?
A: no I just wrote it down in the order I saw it on there
Q: oh right ok, so to you it was just the list that you put in a shape
A: yeah just a list of things about squirrels and well, whatever the thing was
Q: so what would it take to make it into a poem?
A: um put it in a specific order, like see which ones rhyme and then which ones don't
Q: yeah, I think that's very (can't hear)
A: so all the ones which go together and like (can't hear) together with them
Q: so you, so you'd want for a poem to group
A: the ones that like rhyme together, put them together, then put the other ones in a different paragraph
Q: um, but you've also said about putting the tree ones together and nut ones together so that's grouping it differently
A: yeah
Q: as well, I think that's a very fair point, um so if you think about this as a work in progress then, as kind of ideas that you've got down but you haven't yet put it in the order you want, um, how, if so that's like a beginning of a poem, beginnings of making a poem out of it, um what do you think is good that you've got there in your ideas?
A: I don't know, they've all got, they're all two nouns, they're all kenning words and that's all I can think of
Q: are there any that you think work well? So are there, is there any vocabulary in that that you think yeah that works?
A: like, it's just all about squirrels really
Q: so there are not any you prefer more than others?
A: well branch breaker because it's funny, because this is a fat squirrel and he sits on the end of a branch and it breaks
Q: yeah, any others?
A: no not really
Q: I like nut nicker personally
A: yeah because it steal other people's, other squirrels nuts that they've sorted up for themselves
Q: yeah, there's something about the word nicker that I quite like though, rather than just like nu thief or nut stealer, I quite like nut nicker
A: it kind of rhymes
Q: well it's got, it's not rhyming but it has got the n n
A: yeah
Q: um do you know what that's called?
A: alliteration
Q: yeah
A: oh yeah
Q: oh yes, um yeah I like that one because I like the alliteration but I also just like the word nick because it's like a slang word, so I like, rather than just stealer
A: yeah, a boring word
Q: exactly

A: yeah

Q: so I think that's a pretty good one, um now, you've written it in the shape of the squirrel

A: yeah we all had to do that, Miss said we had to, then we had to copy it up into our best books

Q: hmm, so if I, if you hadn't had that instruction and it was just take that list and turn it into a poem

A: yeah

Q: how would you lay it out?

A: I would have just done it like it is there except without the bullet points, put the things that rhyme with each other, put them together

Q: right, sort of in pairs?

A: yeah

Q: ok, so why would you write them all in a list down rather than for example putting two to a line like the teacher one did?

A: I don't know it's just how I would set it out really I suppose

Q: do you think that would have a, do you think it would have a different effect having them all running down in a line then having them written out two or three to a line?

A: I don't know

Q: let me, let me write it out and see what you think because it's very hard to think about without, if you can't see it, let's do a bit of having a go, right ok, tell me the order, have a go at putting them in a preferred order now

A: I don't know what the order would be, I'd probably put the nut ones and the tree ones together but that wouldn't make any difference

Q: have a pen, have a go

A: um

Q: and you don't have to do it instantly, or you could just, you could just number them, just number them

A: don't like that one

Q: ok

A: I honestly have no idea what order to put them in, I'd probably just put them in that order

Q: you don't have no idea what order you'd put them in because you've just done it

A: kind of

Q: can you just keep going, it's fine what you're doing

A: I'll put them in a random order

Q: no don't make it random, you've got up to number five, you've only got three more

A: that's all I was doing in the first place I don't have a clue

Q: you weren't doing it randomly because they all start with tree the first ones. Does that say storer?

A: yeah

Q: (can't hear), right I'm going to read this out, because I think it's wicked, ok so we've got, squirrel

A: yeah

Q: branch breaker, tree climber, tree creeper, tree jumper, tree storer, nut storer, nut eater, nut nicker

A: yeah

Q: pretty cool, so I've written it out in a long list

A: yeah

Q: and two to a line

A: yeah

Q: do you think it makes any difference?

A: well not to me

Q: I forgot my commas at the end, ok that's fine, why did you put branch breaker first?

A: because it's kind of the odd one out, it doesn't begin with tree or nut

Q: why did you put nut nicker last?

A: it's kind of the best one, save it till last

Q: but you liked branch breaker as well didn't you

A: yeah, because then I have a picture of a fat squirrel sitting on the end of a branch and it breaking

Q: yeah, so I think it's nice to have the one, like two that we both think are really good at the beginning and the end, that makes sense, how about, how did you move from tree into nut?

A: well them two are kind of the same so I put them together

Q: see because I thought that worked really well, because you have the little transition of tree storer then it moves to nut storer and then goes into the nut ones, so you say you were doing it randomly, it's clearly not true, there was a bit of thought behind it, fine, ok so we're not sure about the effect or anything of the layout, that's fine, um would you do anything, so if you took that one

A: yeah

Q: in a long line as your, as your poem, rather, other than just turning it into the shape of a squirrel, is there anything you'd do to improve it?

A: comma after (can't hear) exclamation mark at the bottom

Q: ok why would you do that?

A: I don't know I just probably would

Q: why put the exclamation mark at the end?

A: gives it more um, energy kind of thing, like I said before, makes it kind of louder at the end

Q: fine, I think that's brilliant, do you want to hang on to that because you might I think be re-drafting your kenning poems

A: could do

Q: and that's, that's just to remind out of the order you put them in, um, I've just got one last question I think

A: yeah

Q: I'll just double check, yeah so what do you think makes good writing?

A: variety of sentences, um, good punctuation and not bad spelling and that's about it for me

Q: what about good poetry?

A: um, I haven't done much about poetry, I don't really know about it, so I don't really know what makes it good or bad

Q: just from what you, you have seen and what you do know
A: it all goes on different lines, sometimes it has to rhyme and sometimes it doesn't, and they can, some of them can be but can't be sentences
Q: so, when I ask you what makes good writing you came up with a very definite list, which was sentences
A: yeah
Q: punctuation and spelling I think
A: yeah
Q: what about writing that you enjoy reading? What makes that good? What makes you know, what
A: it has to be exciting, otherwise you just don't bother reading it you just put it down and don't bother
Q: if you're, if you write something, what do you tend to be most proud of or most pleased about in your own writing?
A: don't know I don't get too excited about writing to be honest
Q: but but pleased, do you ever feel sort of satisfied, with a bit of writing, do you go yeah that's no bad?
A: well yeah, well sometimes, you have to do like um things that are going to be marked
Q: yeah, what, can you, it's a hard question but can you think what sort of makes you feel pleased with it, what gives you that feeling, that you, that makes you, or what makes you think it's good when you hand in something you're pleased with?
A: well if I know like I've done it properly and it's all right and everything else that makes me feel alright with it, just hand it in and know I'm going to get a good grade
Q: how do you get a good grade with a piece of writing?
A: by doing lot of variety of sentences, good spelling, good punctuation, um what else was there, we have to do putting evidence and explanation in our last work
Q: yeah
A: that thing
Q: that's in essays and things isn't it
A: yeah
Q: what about creative writing?
A: I haven't done any of that
Q: like story writing
A: oh um, as long as it's exciting and like keeps you hooked and kind of suspensfull or whatever they say, I don't know
Q: ok, brilliant thank you so much
A: it's alright
Q: that was great, that went on for ages as well
(tape ends)

LESSON OBSERVATION SCHEDULE			
SCHOOL: 7		OBSERVATION	1 22/10/08 2 3
Scheme of Work	Fictional Narrative	Argument	Poetry
Learning Focus	'Sentence Structure / Making Sentences Interesting' (on ppt)		
Grammatical Term Used:	Noun, Verb, Adjective, Simple Sentence		
Activity	Teacher Interaction	Student Responses	Comment
<p>8.55 Recap last lesson – plenary from last lesson</p> <p>Read partners' description & underline e.g.s of good nouns and verbs.</p> <p>9 Read out descriptions</p> <p>9.02 PPT – Making sentences interesting</p> <p>Whole class discussion</p>	<p>Instructions</p> <p>Q – What types of words were we focusing on to make a powerful description</p> <p>Selects volunteers. Short positive feedback.</p> <p>Q – What's a simple sentence?</p> <p>R (to same student)-Yes – how many verbs?</p> <p>Gives an e.g. sentence and uses it to briefly explain subject and verb.</p> <p>Discusses change on ppt – What is added by...?</p> <p>Shows can add info by thinking 'where, when, why, how, what?' Uses these to prompt students to explain what extra info each change to the sentence gives (e.g. what's that telling us? Where it happened, yes).</p> <p>Q – What type of word is 'desperately'?</p> <p>Q – What type of word is "iron" in "iron hard"?</p> <p>Q – What is the effect of adding "iron hard" & "icy"?</p> <p>R – Explains how this is helping to begin to build a 'story'</p> <p>Q – How does moving 'desperately' affect how we read the sentence?</p> <p>Q / Prompt – 'What's the first word the reader notices?'</p>	<p>Swap books & read descriptions of fire.</p> <p>R – Adjectives and nouns?</p> <p>R – Verbs.</p> <p>Reading and underlining.</p> <p>Volunteers read a few eggs.</p> <p>c. 5 hands up.</p> <p>R – When it's got no interesting words in it?</p> <p>R – When it has a subject and a verb?</p> <p>R – (Can't answer)</p> <p>Range of responses – not confident but having a go: e.g.</p> <p>R- "Where he's running?"</p> <p>R – "Adjective?"</p> <p>R – "Adverb?"</p> <p>R – "Adjective?"</p> <p>R – "Adds to the sense of desperation" "harder to run"</p> <p>R – "We wonder what could happen, will he slip over?"</p> <p>-no volunteers to answer</p> <p>R – "It's like an 'action word" (teacher clarifies verb and adverb). "It's a really exciting word"</p> <p>R – "The reader knows his situation – that he's</p>	<p>Students seem to be beginning to use terminology – still getting used to it.</p> <p>Lots of terminology used quickly with the students. They don't find it easy (lots of guessing with a questioning tone) but have a go.</p> <p>Students are happy to discuss this idea of 'effect'</p>

<p>9.12 'Try it yourself' ppt</p>	<p>Explains that we can “craft sentences for impact on the reader.”</p> <p>Talks through slide, giving instructions. -Find 3 alternatives for “went” – picks students to feedback their alternatives Q – Which nouns are in the sentence? Asks for alternative nouns / added adjectives Shows how adverbs e.g. “anxiously” can create “story” Q – Is this a simple sentence? Q – How many verbs has it got? Q – “So it’s a simple sentence. But is it boring?” Shows which is the verb. Shows different sentence lengths, making it clear that simple sentences aren’t all short sentences Explains: says variety is important, we need short sentences too. Explains “adverbial phrase” as - does the job of an adverb but with more than 1 word; here it shows “how” something is happening – “with his hands deep in his pockets.” Explains – both short and long sentences are needed; long can “slow down the plot” and give the reader “more info”</p>	<p>desperate – before we see what he’s doing.”</p> <p>Selected students (not volunteers) give alternative verbs Rs – Man, Road Lots of hands up & suggestions</p> <p>R – No. R – “Umm, 1?” R – No.</p> <p>Pairs – write sentence / do game. Degrees of focus! Help each other, e.g. Q - “what’s an adjective?” R – “It describes a noun.” The selected pair discuss their task quite earnestly</p>	<p>but seem to find it difficult – they have a good go!</p> <p>Ignores the term ‘adverbial’ on ppt – just uses ‘adverb’</p> <p>Teacher needs to lead them strongly through this, but they seem to follow!</p>
<p>9.24 Simple Sentence Game (show elephant pic)</p>	<p>Instructions – talks through instructions on sheet. -Asks 1 pair (girl & boy) to do a different task – look at extract from RPFence & highlight sentences to comment on – they do this on the board -Circulates to help.</p> <p>Explains what she asked student pair to do: underline interesting sentences, where the detail or order of words is interesting, and to underline interesting verbs. Asks the rest of the class to think about why they think the pair underlined the phrases they did.</p>	<p>1 student reads out the passage.</p>	<p>Quick explanation of ‘adverbial phrase’ seems clear & confident</p>

<p>9.32 Whole class discussion of RPF passage.</p> <p>9.40 Redraft 1 or 2 sentence from description of the fire</p> <p>9.46 Feedback</p>	<p>Q – Why did they underline...(each bit) Tries to prompt / probe deeper explanations – “what does that word suggest?” Q – “Wooden with fright’ – what’s that?” Explains metaphor. Picks out ‘scarlet monster’ too.</p> <p>Instructions – think about word order, length of sentences Circulates, prompting and clarifying word classes</p> <p>Instructions – choose your favourite sentence from the fire passage & read out Very quick positive feedback to each e.g.</p>	<p>Some range of responses: R – “Because it’s quite dramatic.” R – “It suggests she wants to get there quickly” R- Metaphor?</p> <p>Individuals redrafting</p> <p>Volunteers read out egs.</p>	<p>Constantly clarifies terminology. E.g. ‘If you add ‘African’ you’re adding an adjective that describes the elephant, not changing the noun ‘elephant’.”</p> <p>(At 9.30 5 girls leave for an injection)</p> <p>Some students struggle to explain effects. “Dramatic” comes up a lot. Discussion focuses on individual words / metaphors rather than sentence structure. Teacher points out a couple of sentence points at the end – some powerful nouns & verbs, and short “sharp” sentences</p>
--	--	--	---

LESSON OBSERVATION SCHEDULE			
SCHOOL: 7		OBSERVATION	1 2 3
Scheme of Work	Fictional Narrative	Argument	Poetry
Learning Focus of Lesson:	(On board) To understand the term 'modal verb' and the effects they can create		
Grammatical Term. Used:	Modal verb, verb, simple sentence, pronoun		
Activity	Teacher Interaction	Student Responses	Comment
Look out homework (emotive language animal charity leaflets)	Recaps emotive language. Explains 'modal verbs' – "you won't know the term, but you will use them every day, so don't be worried about it." Read out modal verbs – gives examples and says that different ones change the effects of sentences.	Listening – attentive	No actual definition of modal verbs (my fault?!)
Intro: On board, 'We Win' Taking the register task – choose a modal verb to fill the gap.	Uses the term 'simple sentence for 'we ... win' Instructs: "Just think about which one to use and why – what might be the effect of the best one"	Responses: - "Must puts more pressure on.... can suggests they've got it in them" - "can' says they've got a chance – if you say 'will' and they don't, they'll feel they've let you down" - "Can makes you think you 'can' do it but you've got to put the effort in" - "It can be used really strongly – the short sentence will make you feel more motivated." "The harder sound"	Assumes understanding of simple sentence
Feedback	R/Q. "What do you mean? What's strong about 'can'?" suggests the sound of the word? C vs W? Extends discussion – look at other words – what's different about 'should' or 'ought to'? Using guilt?	- "Those sound downbeat" - "Ought to' sounds like 'but' is coming..."	Most vote for 'can'- some say why, with interesting reasons
Whole class discussion	Politicians and speech makers use different verbs depending on whether they want to suggest what is possible, or if they want to be motivating, or positive – they are important in speeches. Contextualises speeches – about Churchill as a		Quick, thoughtful responses, but only from a

<p>Political speeches sheet – whole class read</p>	<p>motivational speaker, asks what they know about Kennedy, mentions Barak Obama and says they will look at one of his speeches later in the unit.</p> <p>Draws attention to how this is fulfilling the aims of the lesson. Supports a particular student. In discussion with one pair, adds to definition of modal verbs – Modal verbs “go with another verb” in front of them to change the meaning slightly.</p>	<p>Volunteers read speeches</p> <p>Write answers in exercise books</p>	<p>handful of the class</p> <p>Clear explanation, focused on the fact they will be writing speeches</p>
<p>Pairs answer questions on sheet</p>	<p>Underlines modal verbs Explains to the whole class that they ‘need another verb with it’ -uses examples from the text – links to tense, showing how they change something to future tense.</p>	<p>Feedback – volunteers name the modal verbs in the speeches</p>	<p>First reader emphasises ‘shall’ beautifully</p>
<p>Feedback / discussion – whole class</p>	<p>Discussion of ‘shall’ vs ‘will’ “Will puts people under more pressure?” links to “you will do your homework” – nothing friendly or warm – less motivating? ‘Does it give you belief that you can do it?’ Links to Cinderella – “you shall go to the ball.” “Shall makes you feel good, makes you feel you <u>can</u> do something” Q. Other similarities between speeches? R. Yes – says will look at punctuation – how to create pauses and thinking spaces in speeches R. Yes – even when used with a negative ‘Not’ R. Yes, “when we vary sentences it makes it more interesting” Picks out “short sentence used for effect” at the start of the Churchill. R/Q. “Yes, which word?” “Yes, the pronoun” -Looks at long sentences – picks out pauses created by semicolons and commas as important</p>	<p>Students find this difficult- limited responses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Shall” is more “threatening” - “Will puts more pressure on you” - “Repetition” to “build confidence” - “Slow” with “commas and breaks” -The “modal verbs are all similar – all saying they definitely ‘will’ do it.” “positive” -“All trying to motivate the people listening” -“Short sentences” and “breaks” “keep you listening” - “‘We shall’ makes it feel unified, together” -“We” 	<p>Misses the ‘would’ in Churchill speech – only looks for 1 per speech – until a student points this out This occurs as teacher looks at examples – ‘modal verbs change to the future tense’</p>

<p>Choosing modal verbs for different sentences (sheet)</p> <p>Feedback</p>	<p>Introduces. Reads out examples – what would you use to ‘threaten someone’ ‘bribe someone’ etc. Prompts to think about effect, and says “there can be more than one right answer”.</p> <p>Selects students</p>	<p>Individuals write answers</p> <p>Give answers with reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ‘will’ is “more threatening” - ‘must’ is “saying that you have to do it” - I put ‘I will’ to create repetition - ‘Will’ is “more persuasive” - ‘shall’ “doesn’t seem so harsh” - ‘might’ says “it still might not happen” 	<p>Lots of to and fro discussion – very confident responses from students picked on, not just volunteers.</p> <p>Feedback is a bit rushed, but there is lots of evidence of deliberate thinking / crafting, even if students find it hard to articulate.</p>
---	--	---	--

LESSON OBSERVATION SCHEDULE			
SCHOOL: 7		OBSERVATION	1 2 3
Scheme of Work	Fictional Narrative	Argument	Poetry
Learning Focus of Lesson:	'How punctuation can affect the meaning'		
Grammatical Term. Used:			
Activity	Teacher Interaction	Student Responses	Comment
<p>Starter – in back of books write down 'A woman without her man is nothing' and add punctuation (PPT- 'Punctuation Jokes')</p> <p>Feedback</p> <p>Shows slide of the 'joke'</p> <p>Shows 'dear John' letters</p>	<p>Instructions. "You think that punctuation is just something for me to moan about" "it's more important than that. It's purpose is to make sense of what you write." Asks them to think of different ways to punctuate the sentence. Links to punctuation in the speech writing in the argument scheme.</p> <p>Selects volunteers. Q to each one – How would you say it? What's the effect?</p> <p>Q. Can you see the difference? (Questions and clarifies what each version is saying)</p> <p>Tells them the words on each letter are the same. Reads each one aloud with expression. Explains – "punctuation gives us choices"</p>	<p>Individuals write in silence.</p> <p>V. Add exclamation mark at the end V. Adds ellipsis / Makes you think "there's something more to come" V. (reads with expression) "A woman, without her man is nothing?"</p>	<p>They focus on using punctuation from the argument scheme to begin with.</p> <p>Students seem to get this and enjoy it.</p>
Introduces poem	<p>"Quite a change of tack now" Introduces Dulce et Decorum. Q – What language might that be? Explains meaning of the title.</p>	R. Latin?	

	Hands round the poem. When we read the poem, think about whether you think the poet believes that it really is a sweet and honourable thing to die for your country”		
Shows ppt of pictures	Questions about what’s happening in the pictures	Students respond to pictures, explain what they know about mustard gas / chlorine etc	
Read Poem Class discussion	Reads poem. Q. Hands up – do you think he thinks it’s sweet and noble to die for your country? Q. Why does he think this? Q. What’s happening in the first stanza? Prompts them – gets lots of discussion going. Q. Look at the punctuation in the 2 nd stanza. What do the exclamation marks show? Discusses 3 rd stanza.	Vast majority say no. R. Because it’s so horrible what they have to do. It’s not worth it? R. Going through mud and the gas is surrounding them. R. Losing their boots. R. The first paragraph is setting the scene. R. Lots of discussion. R. Emphasis, excitement, the alarm in his voice	Not all secure on poetic terms (e.g. paragraph instead of stanza) but lots of discussion about the content of the poem.
Pair discussion	Asks them to discuss the first sentence and how punctuation is used. Reads the sentence saying the “commas” out loud. What’s the purpose of the commas / lack of commas.	Pairs discuss- Find it difficult – tend to talk about the words / meaning of words rather than the punctuation	
Feedback and class discussion	Selects students to feedback. Has to do a lot of prompting. Q. What do we use commas for? What’s a comma use? Like when you say, for breakfast I had... Q. So this is a list. What’s it a list of? Q. So how are the commas used? Q. What emotion? Q. So what are the commas doing?	R. Making a list R. What’s happened to them? R. Create emotion? R. They’re struggling. R. Shorter phrases give a better picture of	Feedback takes a long time to get going, but responses start to flow

	<p>Q. What about the next 2 lines? When we lose the commas?</p> <p>Draws attention to the contrast at the start of stanza 2.</p>	<p>what's happening. R. Lots of little images put together to make a big image of what's happening. R. Makes what they're experiencing seem worse. R. More dramatic. R. "The story it's telling... suddenly changes when they're turning back – it portrays the change from fighting to walking back from the lines." R. "The next one 'men marched asleep' is a short sharp sentence." R. "shows their relief – they're off the field." R. "When they're on their way back it sort of slows down – everything slows down."</p>	<p>Responses build on each other – all different students.</p> <p>All responses from different students – show an impressive grasp of effects</p>
<p>Feedback</p> <p>Pack away</p>	<p>Discusses with individuals- "Is a semicolon stronger or weaker than a comma?" "Which is a more definite stop – a full stop of a comma?" "What about a comma or semicolon?" "Semicolon is stronger – it's a longer pause. So what is the effect of longer pauses? Which words does it emphasise?" "So what's the effect of the semicolons?" "Yes – and these words all show how they're suffering"</p> <p>Q. Feedback – effect of the exclamations?</p> <p>Q. Why use semicolons?</p>	<p>?</p> <p>Full stop</p> <p>??</p> <p>Lame, blind, fatigue</p> <p>They emphasise the last word before</p> <p>R. To show a sudden rush of panic as they haven't got much time?</p> <p>Repeats the discussion had with the individual student.</p>	<p>NB – Students saying "That went really quickly' as they pack away!"</p>

HELEN LINES

PhD student

A MATTER OF JUDGEMENT:

SECONDARY ENGLISH
TEACHERS' CONSTRUCTS OF
QUALITY IN WRITING
NATE Conference 2012



Outline of presentation

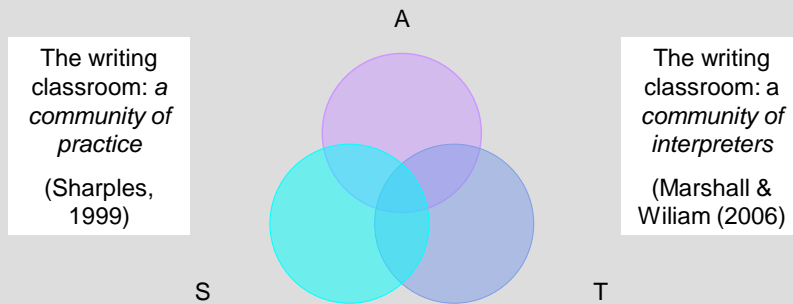


- The research problem
- Analysis of data:
 - teachers' definitions of writing quality – agreement and variation
 - teachers' different constructs of quality and their relationship with published assessment criteria
 - teachers' constructs of quality enacted in the writing classroom
- Implications and questions

The research problem



“How to draw the concept of excellence out of the heads of teachers, give it some external formulation, and make it available to the learner, is a non-trivial problem.”
(Sadler, 1989:127)



National assessment criteria: the gold standard for writing?



“It is hard to delineate precisely what makes a piece of writing good generically” (Marshall, 2007:3)

Exceptional performance

Pupils' writing is original, has shape and impact, shows control of a range of styles and maintains the interest of the reader throughout. Narratives use structure as well as vocabulary for a range of imaginative effects, and non-fiction is coherent, reasoned and persuasive, conveying complex perspectives. A variety of grammatical constructions and punctuation is used accurately, appropriately and with sensitivity. Paragraphs are well constructed and linked in order to clarify the organisation of the writing as a whole.

A qualitative study



Sub-set of data drawn from a large-scale investigation into the impact of contextualised grammar teaching on students' writing. Over the course of an academic year, 32 teachers of 12-13 year olds in two UK regions were observed teaching three writing genres: narrative fiction, argument and poetry.

Follow-up interviews focused on pedagogic decisions and beliefs about teaching and assessing writing.

Sample interview questions:

What do you think makes 'good' writing?

What are you looking for as indicators of quality in writing?

Do you think assessment criteria at Key Stage 3 and GCSE reward those qualities?

Teachers' definitions of writing quality (*in vivo* coding)



Teachers' definitions of good writing "echo" national criteria.

Has impact/maintains interest of the reader

effective word choices (24)
affects the reader (20)
engaging (18)
interesting (14)
grabs your attention (9)
shows writer's enthusiasm (7)
enjoyable (6)
memorable (3)
believable (2)
convincing (1)
has immediacy (1)
inspirational (1)
exciting (1)
pleases you (1)

Is original

shows originality (20)
experiments (16)
all about creativity (15)
own voice comes through (13)
shows imagination (8)
shows flair (7)
natural (5)
spontaneous (2)
adventurous (1)

Teachers' definitions of writing quality (*in vivo* coding)



Teachers' definitions of good writing "echo" national criteria.

Shows control

confident (14)
consciously crafted (13)
sense of purpose and audience (11)
sustained structure (11)
control of sentence structure (11)
shows effort (11)
uses appropriate conventions (10)
use of techniques (7)
shows precision and control (4)
choices can be justified (4)
planned (3)
done independently (1)

Variety

varied sentence structures (7)
variety of techniques (6)
variety of punctuation (3)
varied vocabulary (3)

Accurate

technical accuracy (13)
communicates clearly (10)
fluent (5)
competent (4)

Teachers' judgements of writing quality

"A somewhat indeterminate process" (Lumley, 2002:10)

A dynamic process of drawing on and variously combining available indexes" (Wyatt-Smith & Castleton, 2005:151)



Teachers expect variation in judgement of writing quality.

"You're going to see thirty-two teachers and everyone is going to be completely different." (School 29)

"It's down to the individual marking so much of the time isn't it because what one person thinks is absolutely brilliant, someone else doesn't enjoy." (School 8)

"The longer I've been in the job the more I realise how individual teachers' assessment is so dramatically different for the same piece." (School 11)

"My expectations are different for every child, so a delightful piece from Joe who's a four minus is obviously completely different from what I would consider a delightful piece of work from Ellie who's a Level 7." (School 5)

Teachers' judgements of writing quality



Teachers have conflicting views about the nature and application of national assessment criteria.

"If you follow the mark scheme then it's going to inform your teaching because you know exactly what you are looking for and unless you know what you're looking for you can't teach the kids what the examiner is looking for or what good writing is all about." (School 29)

"I think you could argue for a piece of writing to be, you know, an A* or an A grade and that's what I don't like about it, that it's so open to that interpretation." (School 13)

"The fact that there was so little to describe what A* was, actually that pleased me more than anything else, that there's something sort of almost intangible." (School 11)

"I shouldn't be having to cheat my way round the criteria in order to get them recognition for very original, passionate, Catch-22-esque writing." (School 31)

Individual teachers have different dominant constructs of writing quality.



"It's a matter of personal taste" (School 4)

Good writing is:

EMOTIONALLY ENGAGING (7)

SELF-EXPRESSIVE (7)

CONSCIOUSLY CRAFTED (7)

FIT FOR PURPOSE (6)

TECHNICALLY ACCURATE (4)

INSTINCTIVE (4)



Summary of teachers' constructs of quality

- **Good writing is emotionally engaging**

These teachers primarily judge writing by its impact on the reader and the reaction it provokes

- **Good writing is self-expressive**

These teachers primarily value writing that expresses the child's personal individual voice

- **Good writing is consciously crafted**

These teachers reward writing that has been deliberately designed and that shows thought and effort

- **Good writing is fit for purpose**

These teachers reward writing that is well matched to its audience and purpose and fulfils its function

- **Good writing is technically accurate**

These teachers think accuracy, or "the mechanics" are an essential aspect of good writing

- **Good writing is instinctive**

These teachers either think that quality in writing is too subjective or difficult to define, or that flair and originality can't be taught



Teachers' different constructs of writing quality

Good writing is: SELF-EXPRESSIVE (7)

These teachers valued writing that showed the individual student's distinctive personal voice, often drawn from the child's personal experience. They valued writing that was unusual and different. They rewarded individual effort and judged progress against the individual's starting point.

"Good writing is the voice of a person isn't it, it's like you, it needs to be passionate, it's a person isn't it, it's like a person, good writing is you, and how much you enjoy words and putting them together because words are magic and words actually have so much power and if you have the ability to convey that through your writing and then I think it's all about empowerment and you've won the world haven't you?" (School 29)

Teachers' different constructs of writing quality



Good writing is: FIT FOR PURPOSE (6)

These teachers valued writing that communicated its intentions clearly to the reader and used conventions appropriate to its form, audience and purpose. They rewarded students who tried out techniques they'd been taught and who met specific targets. They valued writing that was assured and controlled but thought effective communication was more important than technical accuracy.

“Good writers think about the reader first...it fulfils the purpose that it's there for, so if the purpose is to entertain or to inform or to persuade, it does that in a way that a reader understands fairly quickly...it's about clarity of communication and whether or not it hits its purpose.” (School 22)

For many teachers, there is a tension between their personal construct of writing quality and what they see as being rewarded by national assessment criteria.



CLOSE MATCH	3	FIT FOR PURPOSE (2) SELF-EXPRESSIVE/TECHNICALLY ACCURATE (1)
DEFINITE MISMATCH	14	EMOTIONALLY ENGAGING (5) SELF-EXPRESSIVE (5) INSTINCTIVE (2) CONSCIOUSLY CRAFTED (2)
AMBIVALENT	14	Criteria describe essential skills and qualities but are too prescriptive (5) Depends on key stage and exam board (4) Criteria guide judgements but there should be more room for professional instinct (2) Too inexperienced to trust judgements (2) Unsure how far accuracy should count (1)

For many teachers, there is a tension between their personal construct of writing quality and what they see as being rewarded by national assessment criteria.



Construct: Good writing is emotionally engaging	Typical responses to national assessment criteria
<p>These teachers valued writing that had an emotional impact on the reader and to which they could relate strongly, often expressing this through metaphor and analogy, e.g: <i>it excites and moves you; it knocks your socks off; makes the hairs on the back of your neck stand up</i>. They valued writing that was engaging and entertaining, imaginative and creative.</p>	<p>Criteria encourage explicit teaching and give students tools for improving writing but can be too rigid, prescriptive and reductive: <i>too much emphasis on accuracy and tick boxes; writing by rote; following a recipe</i>. Writing should be judged holistically. Assessment drives teaching too much. Tasks can <i>restrict and deaden</i> writers and are <i>unnatural</i>.</p>

For many teachers, there is a tension between their personal construct of writing quality and what they see as being rewarded by national assessment criteria.



Construct: Good writing is consciously crafted	Typical responses to national assessment criteria
<p>These teachers valued writing that had been deliberately designed and crafted and that demonstrated conscious control and effort: <i>writing has thought and deliberation behind it</i>. The process of writing was often more important than the product. They rewarded students who took risks and experimented <i>even if they don't quite get it right</i>. They thought it was important for students to explain and justify writing choices, seeing this as <i>a life skill</i>.</p>	<p>Criteria don't always encourage or reward inventiveness and experimentation but force teaching of <i>formulaic structures</i>. Pressure of exams leads to <i>spoonfeeding</i>. At both key stages, there needs to be more attention to explicit teaching of techniques not just getting through content. Qualities of <i>originality</i> and <i>flair</i> should not just apply to the highest grades. Teachers should be able to <i>reward individual effort</i> and <i>tailor criteria to match the child</i>.</p>

Constructs in the classroom

Teachers' personal constructs of writing quality may influence classroom discourse about writing



School 9

Teacher values:

- writing that provokes a strong emotional reaction in the reader
- personal creativity (writes herself)
- powerful choice of words and ideas that move and excite the reader

Responses to assessment criteria:

- recognises subjectivity of different readers' responses
- thinks too much weighting given to accuracy over creativity (real writers have editors and proofreaders)
- explicitly teaches to exam criteria (e.g. sentence variety) but is ambivalent about providing a formula

In the writing classroom:

- clear expectation of student participation - emphasis on trying things out
- motivates through own enthusiasm; shares own writing and personal examples
- adapts project lesson plans to suit own teaching style - building in time for discussion and reflection of students' own writing; encourages them to be *critical friends*
- strong emphasis on evaluating effects of word choices on the reader - actively promotes thinking about choices and meaning

Constructs in the classroom

Teachers' personal constructs of writing quality may influence classroom discourse about writing



School 21

Teacher values:

- writing that communicates clearly to the reader
- clever use of techniques
- reader-writer relationship – thinks writing should be viewed from perspective of how well it fulfils its purpose for the reader

Responses to assessment criteria:

- they encourage students to focus on audience and purpose and on what makes a good piece of writing
- there is a strong continuity between the key stages in terms of what is valued
- exam tasks don't always allow students to show what they can do

In the writing classroom:

- explicitly positions students as 'real' readers of texts, both published and their own: *what matters is how you respond to the writing; I'm interested in your reactions to these charity adverts*
- gives very clear explanations of the purpose of reading and writing tasks: *to help you see what persuasive techniques are used to get you to part with your money; to make a judgement about which viewpoint is most effective*
- doesn't over-direct their responses – they often feed back to each other and redraft in light of peer response

Implications and questions



- Does variation matter? Not advocating that every classroom should be the same, nor that one construct is 'better' than another. But what are the implications for practice of:
 - differences between teachers in how they view quality and share those views with students?
 - tensions between teachers' personal constructs of quality and national assessment criteria?
- How conscious are teachers of their own constructs? How can this be investigated?

A hellish world

Great start - straight into action; reader not quite sure what's happening!

-ing structures to suggest action

Walking through the damp-ridden corridors, climbing up the dark staircase, I headed, wet as an amphibian clambering out of its ^{niche} hidyhole, plopping into a pool of muddy faeces, ugh! and I was as cold as an astronaut in space with the dankness. I sodded my way to Room 5 - no relief from the mouldy day. I plumped, I slopped into a chair and squelched my feet ^{deliberate} on the flea-ridden floor. I lay back in my chair, dripping and ^{clever use of sound} melting away into my world of happy dreams. My thoughts of Her, the happy times I spent last night, having fun with Her. ^{capital}

Strong imagery

Suddenly I jump into reality, the bell ringing as I rise in my chair. Five minutes of heaven, the rest of the day, of hell. The teacher walks in, we stand in recognition, he sits us down, ^{good contrasts} we sit in anticipation, machines waiting to be programmed for the day. 'Today is House Rugby,' the teacher rings aloud. 'he' must do well.' We nod our heads in ^{sophisticated sentence structures - good balancing of ideas} synchronised agreement, and re-attach our bags in unison, and head off in single file to start today. ^{strong image - robotic} ^{impressive - student not afraid to experiment}

even tho' not always clear what's going on

The Burglary

factual, clear, sets opening scene v. well

It was November 12th, 2007. My family and I had just been to a whole family reunion in Reading. We were nearing the end of our journey home, when finally we pulled up at our house feeling happy and contented, having had a great time. We got out of the car, and walked up to our ^{a bit clunky} sturdy, solid gate. As I pulled the latch up and attempted to open the gate, it wouldn't budge. ^{deliberate sentence control for pace} It wouldn't move a single inch. My mum said, "Callum, climb up the wall and check the gate from the inside." I clambered up and saw immediately that the gate was now bolted shut. ^{viewpoint really well maintained} A little voice in the back of my head told me; 'that wasn't bolted when when we left this morning.' This was the thing that first set the alarm bells ringing. I felt a slight pang of fear and hastily unbolted the gate, and let my family through. ^{really good sentence control}

On ^{odd sounding - too formal} approaching the back door, the security light ^{clunky} blazed into being. We were shocked into silence. The bathroom window had been brutally smashed, so had the kitchen's windows. My mother's hands were shaking as she unlocked the back door. When my sister had finally ^{odd choice} traipsed through the door, we all stood stock-still. We had been burgled!! What a devious chap to have bolted the gate from the inside just in case we arrived home early. It would have given him the extra time to make a hasty escape. ^{clearly imagined.}

Technically, must + admire. Can manipulate sentence structures for pace + balance. Viewpoint really strong. A bit stodgy in parts but very competent + clear.

Overall: I prefer 'The Burglary', even tho' it's a 'safer' piece of writing. It communicates clearly to the reader + is really well imagined + sustained. Not sure how 'A Hellish World' would carry on + not all of the inventiveness works.

Good writing.....

- makes you remember it
- is easy to picture - has powerful images
- has a connection to the reader - makes you see things in a new way or reminds you of things you know/have experienced
- has strong characters who must be believable
- is a little bit different - stands out from the rest eg by using humour
- tells a good story or presents a strong message / suits ^{its} purpose
- it does need to be accurate! If you can't understand it, what's the point?

A good teacher of writing.....

- lets kids know ^{that} writing really matters - i.e. makes tasks relevant & real as much as possible + gives examples of good writing from the real world
- teaches vocabulary - the power of words
- shows how to achieve effects e.g. you can assume that students know how to vary sentences when actually they need to be taught how to do that.
- Helpful to look at patterns/features of style + be explicit about how language works (or maybe I'm just bossy + a control freak!) There is a body of technical knowledge about writing that can really empower youngsters to know.



School of Education and Lifelong Learning

**Academic Staff Research
CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL RESEARCH APPROVAL**

To obtain a Certificate of Approval, you need to fill out this form and have it signed by the Chair of the School's Research Ethics Committee (see below).

COMPLETE THE FORM ON COMPUTER (it will expand to contain the text you enter).

DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND.

Name of principal investigator:

Debra Myhill

Names of collaborating investigators:

Susan Jones

Trevor Bailey (School of Engineering, Mathematics and Computer Science)

Title of Project:

Grammar for Writing? The impact of contextualised grammar teaching on pupils' writing and pupils' metalinguistic understanding.

Brief Description of Project:

The aim of this study is to investigate whether explicit teaching of grammar in the context of writing impacts upon the quality of pupils' writing. Previous studies have focused upon the impact of de-contextualised grammar teaching, but no study to date has systematically investigated whether making connections between particular linguistic structures and particular writing tasks supports the development of pupils' writing. Teaching is a complex, multi-faceted and situated endeavour which resists simplistic causal explanations between pedagogical activity and learning outcome; equally, writing is perhaps the most complex activity learners undertake, drawing on cognitive, social and linguistic resources. The research design proposed here seeks to address this complexity: it adopts a mixed method approach located within a multi-disciplinary conceptual framework, combining a cluster randomised controlled trial (RCT) with multi-level modelling and a complementary qualitative study to answer the question: *What impact do teacher subject knowledge and contextualised grammar teaching have upon pupils' writing and pupils' metalinguistic understanding?*

The EPPI review of the effect of grammar teaching concludes by calling for a conclusive, large scale randomised controlled trial. We would argue that no such RCT could be conclusive because of the complexity of both the empirical question and the educational context. Instead this study proposes to use a cluster RCT to investigate specifically the inter-relationship between pedagogical support for teaching grammar, teacher subject knowledge, and improvement in writing. To complement the statistical data derived from the experimental study, and to provide in-depth understanding of the theoretical, pedagogical and contextual implications of the statistical data, a qualitative data set will also be collated alongside the experimental design data. This will comprise classroom observations, interviews with teachers and interview conversations about writing with pupils.

The study will investigate the relationship between grammar teaching and writing by designing a set of teaching resources which provide pedagogical support for teaching linguistic constructions relevant to the development

Dr Jocey Quinn
October 2005

of writing, drawing on the outcomes of our previous ESRC study. In addition, it will investigate whether teachers' linguistic subject knowledge influences either how the pedagogical support materials are used or the quality of children's writing. Multi-level modelling will be used to explore the complex relationships between variables. The qualitative data will provide contextual information about how the pedagogical support materials were used, about teachers' pedagogical understanding, and about children's metalinguistic understanding of the linguistic features taught and their effect in writing.

Project Contact Point (incl. Email/telephone nos.)

Debra Myhill (d.a.myhill@ex.ac.uk; Ext:4767)

Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):

Sample: one year 8 class in 32 schools
Children: approximately 960 children (aged 12-13)
Teachers: 32 English teachers

Give details regarding the ethical issues of informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) a blank consent form can be downloaded from the SELL student access on-line documents:

The study will seek voluntary informed consent which ensures that 'all participants in the research understand the process in which they are to be engaged, including why their participation is necessary, how it will be used and how and to whom it will be reported' (BERA 2004:6) and their right to withdraw at any stage. To achieve this, several informing strategies will be used, 'giving as much information as possible about the research so that prospective participants can make an informed decision on their possible involvement' (ESRC REF:24). The headteacher of each school will be asked to sign a Memorandum of Understanding, which explains the ethical issues and seeks consent. A briefing sheet for school use will outline involvement in the project to inform parents and pupils about the study. In addition, all teachers, and all children in the interview sample, will be asked to sign a consent form, adapted for children to ensure it is 'child-friendly'. In the preliminary phase, the research team will seek to establish a relationship of trust with each school, 'fostering relationships in which ongoing ethical regard for participants is to be sustained, even after the study itself has been completed' (ESRC REF:24) and encouraging all schools to contact the research team at any stage with queries or concerns.

All data will be fully anonymised, at school, teacher and pupil level.

Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:

The collection of pre and post test writing samples will be undertaken by the teacher as a controlled conditions lesson activity, an accepted element of secondary English classroom practice. During the classroom observations, the researchers will adopt as inobtrusive a presence as possible, following procedures used during school visits to PGCE student placements. Before each pupil interview, pupils will be reminded of their right to withdraw from the study and the interview will take place in relaxed, informal setting, such as the school library or resource base. Likewise, the teacher interviews will be conducted in an informal setting.

All members of the research team involved in interviewing children will be required to undergo a CRB Disclosure in line with national safeguarding guidelines (DiES 2007).

Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.):

All data will be fully anonymised, kept in compliance with requirements regarding the personal use of data specified by the Data Protection Act, filed securely in a project office, and destroyed three years after completion of the study.

Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):

The blind randomisation component of the study creates a particular ethical problem as it will not be possible to tell teachers or pupils which experimental group they are in, or to inform them of the precise focus of the study, as this would create a validity threat. All schools, teachers and pupils will be informed that the study is

researching writing, but not that it is investigating the impact of grammar teaching on writing. In order to address the ethical issue this raises, all participants will be informed at the outset that all research results and a full outline of the conduct of the research will be communicated to them at the end of the study

A further ethical problem specific to this study is the need to 'minimise the effects of designs that advantage ... one group of participants over another' (BERA 2004:8): half the teachers will be receiving pedagogical support which could give their classes an educational advantage/disadvantage. However, the pedagogical support is wholly geared towards the production of grammar teaching materials, rather than teaching in general, so its impact, either beneficial or otherwise, is likely to be restricted to writing, rather than general attainment in English. It should be noted, also, that the study does not withdraw anything from the no pedagogical support group, and these groups will be receiving what would have been their normal classroom teaching. Nonetheless, this is a serious ethical issue and it will be addressed in two ways. Firstly, the period of trialling the support materials will attempt to remove any threat of negative impacts upon pupil learning during the main study. Secondly, the outcomes of the study will be disseminated directly to participating schools and teachers so that any beneficial impacts can be adopted more widely.

The research team will conduct the research mindful that 'an important principle that no trial participant should be disadvantaged by taking part in the trial' (Moore, Graham and Diamond 2003:681) and that the 'best interests of the child must be the primary consideration' (BERA 2004:7): the ethical aspects of the research will be a standing item at all project team meetings.

This form should now be printed out, signed by you below and sent to your mentor to sign. Your Mentor will forward this document to the School's Research Support Office for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you

Approval is requested for the period:

From: ~~DEC~~ NOV 2007 to: OCT 2010 (SUBJECT TO FUNDING)

by (name of principle investigator): DEBRA MTHILU

Signature Debra Mthilu Date 01-01-07
(principle investigator)

Name of Mentor: ROS FISHER

Mentor declaration. I am satisfied that the planned research procedures as described to me are ethical.

Signed (mentor).....R.F. Date 08.10.10 2007.

School Ethics Committee approval reference:.....S.T.F./06/07/1...

Signature [Signature] Date 31.1.07
(Chair of School Ethics Committee)

Certificate of ethical research approval

DISSERTATION/THESIS

Your student no: 580035743

Title of your project: How do teachers and students evaluate quality in writing?

Brief description of your research project: An investigation into secondary school teachers' and Y8 students' evaluations of quality in writing and how they use their understanding for the purpose of improving writing. The project draws on data collected from an ESRC-funded investigation into the impact of contextualised grammar teaching on students' writing and metalinguistic understanding, and a small-scale follow up intervention in one school.

Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved): 3 teachers from one comprehensive school in Devon and their Y8 classes

Give details (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) regarding the ethical issues of:

- a) **informed consent:** Where children in schools are involved this includes both headteachers and parents). Copy(ies) of your consent form(s) you will be using must accompany this document. a blank consent form can be downloaded from the GSE student access on-line documents:

Informed consent sought from headteacher, head of English department and participating teachers. Parental consent not sought because no student interviews taking place and no disruption to ordinary lesson times; class teachers are co-teaching a lesson with me, in the context of an end-of-year review of writing skills and strategies for improvement.

- b) **anonymity and confidentiality**

Students are expressly asked not to record their names on the prompt sheets. No identifying data e.g. class lists or attainment data on individuals will be collected.

Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:

I am co-teaching a specially-written lesson about evaluating and improving writing, during which data will be collected in the form of written responses to open-ended prompt questions, annotations on model texts, and tape recorded group discussions. I have worked at the school in a Secondary National Strategies consultant role for a number of years, including with all three participating teachers and one of the Y8 classes, so have built trust with the participants.

Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.):

Completed prompt sheets will be stored securely at home and shredded when analysis complete. Audio recordings of group discussion will be transcribed and then erased.

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
updated: April 2011

Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):

This form should now be printed out, signed by you on the first page and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's **Research Support Office** for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.

N.B. You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor

This project has been approved for the period: 9 / 2009 until: 1 / 2014

By (above mentioned supervisor's signature): ... *Susan Jones* ... date:6th June 2013.....

N.B. To Supervisor: Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occur a further form is completed.

GSE unique approval reference:..... *D / 12 / 13 / 26*

Signed:..... *N.R. Jones* date: *14/6/13*
Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

This form is available from <http://education.exeter.ac.uk/students/>

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
updated: April 2011

Appendix 14: *Grammar for Writing?* participant consent forms



THE EXETER WRITING PROJECT



WHAT IS IT:

This is a major national study, funded by the ESRC to the tune of £1/4 million, looking at the teaching of writing in secondary schools. We are interested in what teachers and students think about writing, and what teachers and writers do in the classroom. In order not to bias the outcomes of the project, you will not be told the precise focus until the end of the project, but attitudes to and practices in writing are the broad focus.

What will the project do?

The project will focus on one year 8 class for a whole year. Before the project starts, we would like you to complete a questionnaire about your views on writing and once in each term you will be asked to teach a 2-3 week Scheme of Work on a specific theme addressing specified objectives from the National Strategy. You will also need to be prepared to be observed teaching a lesson, followed by an interview discussing your teaching decisions; and to allow one student to be interviewed about their writing. In addition, we will need you to set aside one lesson in September 2008 so that the class can complete a baseline piece of writing, set by the project team, and to devote a further lesson in July 2009 to another piece of writing. We will also need performance data at the start about the students in your class.

September 2008	Provide performance data about the year 8 class Allocate one lesson so that students can complete a baseline writing task
Autumn Term	Attend a project training day (16 th or 18 th September) Teach a 2-3 week SoW on Fictional Narrative addressing specified objectives Allow us to observe one lesson and be interviewed about this lesson Allow us to interview a child about their writing Provide us with copies of the final piece of writing from this SoW
Spring Term	Teach a 2-3 week SoW on Argument Writing addressing specified objectives Allow us to observe one lesson and be interviewed about this lesson Allow us to interview a child about their writing Provide us with copies of the final piece of writing from this SoW
Summer Term	Teach a 2-3 week SoW on Writing Poetry addressing specified objectives Allow us to observe one lesson and be interviewed about this lesson Allow us to interview a child about their writing Provide us with copies of the final piece of writing from this SoW
July 2009	Allocate one lesson so that students can complete a post-project writing task.

We will pay supply cover and travel costs for attendance at the project training day (plus overnight accommodation for the Midlands teachers). In addition, you will receive a nominal £100 fee to acknowledge the additional burden of giving up time to be interviewed and providing us with student data.

What's in it for me?

We hope you will enjoy being involved in a high-profile national project and we know that many English teachers enjoy the chance to be interviewed and talk about their professional views. As a 'thank you' for your commitment to the project, all participant teachers will be invited to a day conference in 2010, with

supply cover paid, where the practical implications of the project will be disseminated and any resources from the project distributed.

We need full commitment for the whole year of the project.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

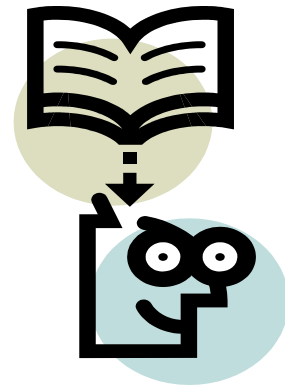
About the Project

This a major national study, funded by the ESRC to the tune of £1/4 million, looking at the teaching of writing in secondary schools. We are interested in what teachers and students think about writing, and what teachers and writers do in the classroom. It is likely that the findings of this research will be of high significance at a policy and practice level and we hope that participation will be of direct benefit to our project schools. We know from experience that to be successful research partnerships like this require not only the enthusiasm of the participating teacher but the full support of the headteacher. Thus we have written this Memorandum of Understanding to clarify and cement this partnership.

- 1 This Memorandum of Understanding is between
School and the University of Exeter in respect of the Exeter Writing Project.
- 2 The Memorandum is designed to ensure clear understanding of the commitment involved in participation in this research project and to clarify the responsibilities of each party involved.
- 3 **The University's responsibilities in the research partnership with schools.**
The University will:
 - guarantee that all research is conducted with full ethical consideration, complying with the highest expectations of the British Educational Research Association Ethical guidelines. This will ensure confidentiality and anonymity of all schools, teachers and students involved in the project. It will also seek informed consent for participation from teachers and students.
 - ensure that all university staff visiting schools have been subject to an enhanced CRB check.
 - pay supply cover for attendance at the Project Day in 2008 and the Project Dissemination Conference in 2010.
 - guarantee that all participating schools benefit from the outcomes of the research through a specifically written 'Good Practice' document provided at the end of the study.
- 4 **The School's responsibilities in the research partnership with the university.**
The school will:
 - support the year 8 teacher in fulfilling the requirements of the project as outlined on the Project Briefing Sheet
 - release the year 8 teacher for the Project Training Day in 2008 and the Project Dissemination Conference in 2010
 - encourage the teacher involved to share project outcomes within the English department to inform subsequent departmental policy and practice
 - assure commitment to the project for the duration of the research – from September 2008 until July 2009.

I understand the commitment involved in this research partnership and I am happy to support it.

Signed.....(Headteacher) Date.....



Dear student,

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed by us for our project. We are interested to find out what you think about your writing and how you write. All the information you give us will be used to write reports and articles, perhaps a book, about secondary students' writing. All that you say will remain anonymous and no-one will be able to identify you or your school from the articles or reports. In this letter, we ask you to confirm that you are happy to be involved. You remain free to withdraw at any point.

I agree that I am happy to be interviewed for this project.

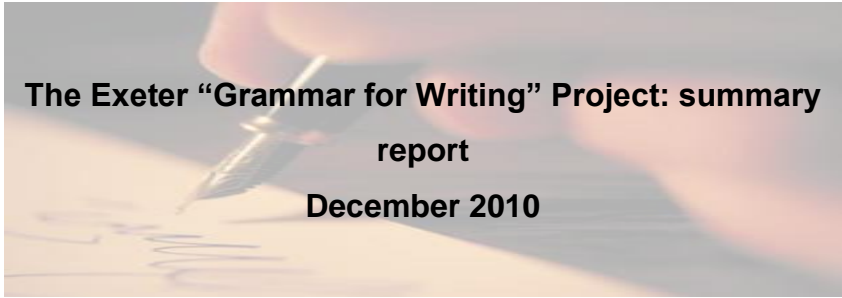
Signed:

Date:

Appendix 15: *Grammar for Writing?* project report for teachers



UNIVERSITY OF
EXETER



The Exeter “Grammar for Writing” Project: summary report December 2010

This research project involved 32 teachers and 855 Year 8 pupils from schools in the South West of England and the Midlands in the academic year 2008-09. Teachers were randomly allocated to intervention and comparison groups and all taught three short schemes of work, written by the project team, on fictional narrative, argument and poetry. Those in **the comparison group** followed a general outline, making their own lesson-by-lesson teaching decisions, while the **intervention teachers** followed detailed lesson plans and resources which embedded explicit attention to grammar, relevant to the writing being taught. For example, when teaching argument, one focus was the use of modal verbs to create different levels of assertion; the poetry scheme included specific attention to how punctuation creates meaning and emphasis.

What has the research told us? The headline finding from the **quantitative data** is that effectively embedded grammar teaching can have a significant impact on student writing performance. **The intervention group improved their writing scores by 20% over the year, while the comparison group improved by 11%.** Improvement was measured through analysis of the writing samples produced by pupils under controlled conditions at the beginning and end of the year, scored by a specially-trained team of markers from Cambridge Assessment. However, the benefit was experienced differentially: the most able writers benefited most, with evidence of some negative effects for weaker writers.

The **qualitative data** (analysis of pupils’ within-year writing samples; lesson observation notes and transcripts of interviews with teachers and pupils) indicates:

- **The significance of teacher subject knowledge** of grammar on the effect of the teaching. The relationship is complex, but one finding is that teachers in the study who felt insecure about their knowledge of grammar were more likely to adapt the plans they were given, for example to minimize or generalise the teaching of grammar and its associated terminology.
- **The beneficial effect of the explicitness of the teaching schemes**, manifested in different ways: for example, intervention pupils’ writing showed more examples of explicitly-taught language features being used independently and effectively; intervention teachers commented on ways in which their teaching of sentence grammar had become more focused.
- **The benefits of opportunities for discussion and experimentation with effect** which were provided in the schemes where the emphasis was on ‘playing’ with language and grammatical structures and on evaluating their effect on the reader, rather than on ‘correct’ use of rules.
- **The development of metalinguistic awareness in the intervention group** which was evident above and beyond the use of terminology. In interviews, intervention pupils used more terminology, more accurately, but even when they struggled with definitions, they spoke at greater length and with more precise detail about how to improve writing.

The Exeter “Grammar for Writing” Project: summary report December 2010

What are the implications of the research findings for the classroom?

The research provides evidence for the first time of a positive benefit of teaching grammar when the **grammar is contextualised** - linked meaningfully to the writing being taught. In the project schemes of work, the grammar point taught was always introduced in a way which was relevant and meaningful to the learning of writing. So for example, in the narrative fiction scheme, first and third person were taught in the context of manipulating narrative voice and viewpoint; in the argument scheme, subordinating connectives (while, despite, although) were taught in the context of developing a counter argument.

- The research suggests that teachers should **embed grammar in the teaching of writing**, making connections for writers between a particular grammar feature and its possible effect in writing. Attention to grammar should be explicit, clearly explained and linked to meaning and effect, not the naming or identification of grammatical features. Interestingly, able students in the comparison group barely improved their writing scores over the year, whereas able students in the intervention group made significant gains; attention to grammar may have provided the stretch these able writers needed.

Underpinning the teaching approaches in each scheme was the concept of **writing as design**: students were encouraged to **experiment with language** and to craft their writing for a specific purpose and effect. Evidence from interviews and lesson observations suggests that many students are strongly motivated by language play and by feedback from peers on the effectiveness of their writing choices. When talking about improving writing, they showed a high degree of understanding about language choices and effects, irrespective of whether they used grammatical terminology to express it.

What are the implications of the research findings for teachers' CPD?

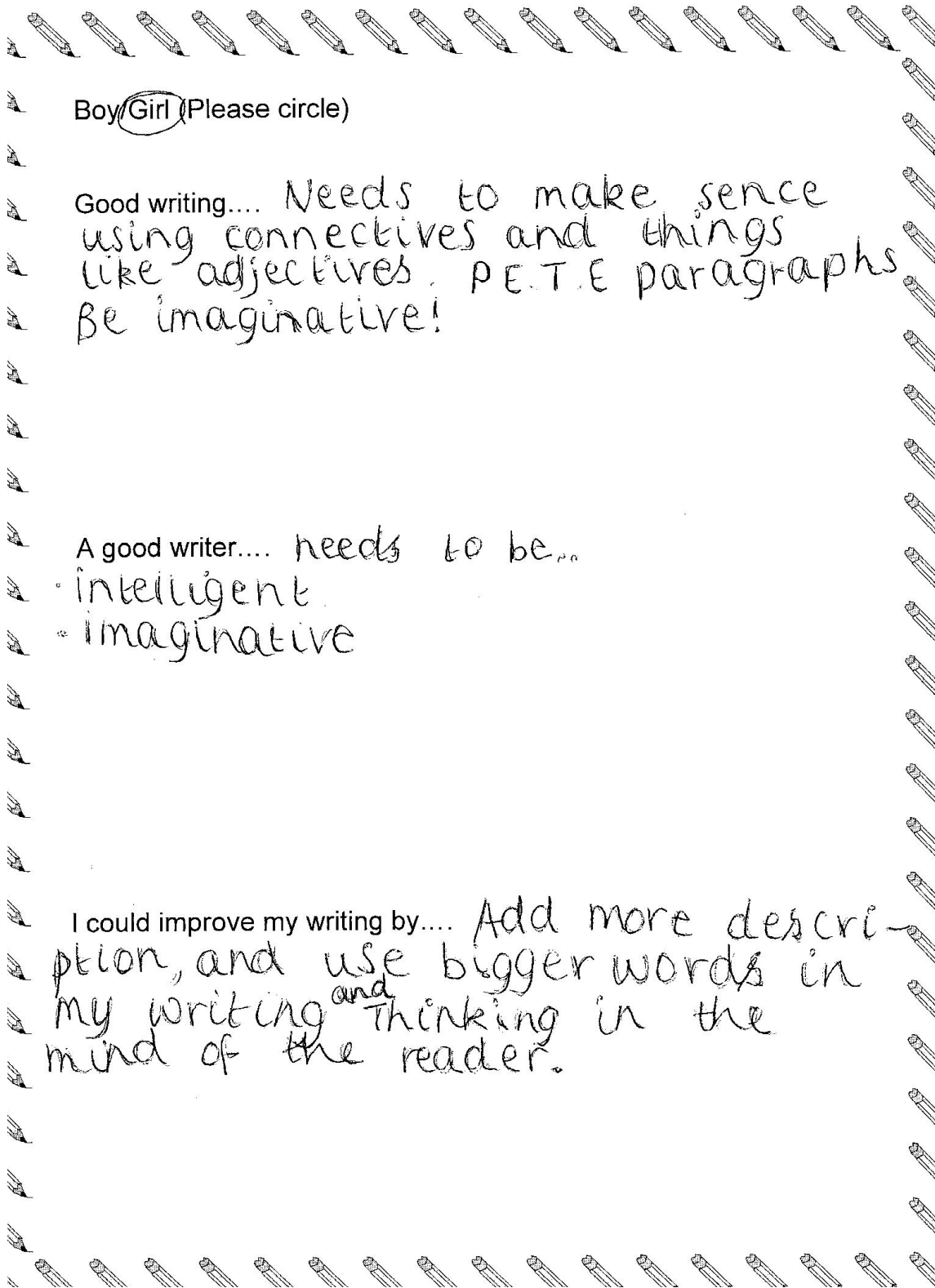
This research is important in acknowledging the multi-faceted nature of learning about writing: the teacher's **beliefs about grammar**, the teacher's **pedagogic practices** and the teacher's **linguistic subject knowledge** are important variables which have not been considered in previous research. The data we are analysing suggests a complex relationship between these variables which might account for the intervention working more effectively for some classes than for others. All the intervention teachers were provided with detailed notes and resources to support their teaching of grammar for writing, but evidence from interviews and lesson observations shows variance in how these were used. Sometimes, teachers' lack of confidence in a grammar point meant they glossed over it or avoided teaching it.

- The research suggests that **teacher subject knowledge of grammar** is fundamental to the successful use of contextualized grammar. The teachers in the study differed in the extent of their own understanding of grammar for writing, in their experience of teaching it and in their evaluation of its importance. Support to enhance teachers' subject knowledge of grammar is indicated.
- The research also suggests that support for teachers' **applied linguistic knowledge** is equally important. More resources and CPD provision are needed to develop teachers' confidence in studying language in context.

Appendix 16: *Grammar for Writing?* project lesson observation schedule

LESSON OBSERVATION SCHEDULE					
SCHOOL:		OBSERVATION	1	2	3
Scheme of Work	Fictional Narrative	Argument	Poetry		
Learning Focus of lesson:					
Grammatical terminology used:					
Activity	Teacher Interaction <i>Note what the teacher says and does; examples provided; nature of questioning and explanation etc</i>	Student Responses <i>Note student responses and non-responses; evidence of understanding. misunderstanding, confusion; evidence of learning etc</i>	Comment <i>Contextualised grammar teaching; metalinguistic understanding; teacher practices (which might indicate teacher beliefs); use of pedagogical support materials, if appropriate etc</i>		

Appendix 17: Single case study intervention: student 'good writing' prompts



Boy/Girl (Please circle)

Good writing.... Needs to make sense using connectives and things like adjectives. P.E.T.E paragraphs
Be imaginative!

A good writer.... needs to be...

- intelligent
- imaginative

I could improve my writing by.... Add more description, and use bigger words in my writing ^{and} thinking in the mind of the reader.

Appendix 18: Data management and interpretation: teachers' and students' conceptualisations of good writing: profile for School 7

Research question 1: How do teachers and students conceptualise good writing?

<p>Contextual information: teacher Female Number of years teaching 17 First degree English & American Studies LSK score (mean 60%) 72% Roles/responsibilities Subject Leader</p> <p>Contextual information: student Male FSM/EAL: No KS2 writing level: N/A Pre-/post test score: 12/13</p>	<p>Contextual information: school Type and size of school 11-19; 950 % Free School Meals: below average % Special Educational Needs: below average Ethnic diversity: well below average % A* - C inc. English and Maths (last 3 years) 55% above average Ofsted rating: 2</p>
<p>Teacher's constructs of writing quality ("What is good writing?")</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A good piece of writing I think, is something that speaks to the reader that has been written with the reader in mind to have a particular effect on them, um I think that's important but a good piece of writing also needs to have clarity as well, it needs to be easy on the eye, easy to read so you're not actually being interrupted by too much funny errors I suppose • I'll start off by saying that good writing is defined by the fact that it engages the reader throughout because it's effective, and it's effective because it obeys the conventions of you know the particular writing type, text type that it is, um so if it is a piece of argumentative writing then you know it's throughout the piece it's, it engages its audience and it puts across its point of view, um in a powerful way, that's the whole, you know as a whole but then I suppose if you look at why it's effective that's when you come down to the nitty gritty that the word and the sentence level work, um, it engages us because, I mean, at the risk of being boring but the things I always bang on about is you know variety because of it's variety of sentence structure and its variety of vocabulary, and to a lesser extent um I think it's variety of punctuation, um it's, you know it delights because it is well written, which is you know a very naff thing to say but it's true, um, you know if a piece of writing is effective if you're able to read it through without being hindered by any of the things that stop you, um and just reading it gives you great pleasure, um also I mean that's obviously at the higher level, these are the students who are almost adult writers I suppose but that's you know that doesn't mean to say that a less able child can't produce an effective piece of writing as well, so it's also when you can see um you know the real effort that's gone into it and that they've really tried to, you know to engage us as readers and to do everything that they know they should be doing, um and ultimately I suppose the most effective is something that's been done independently so you know the child is off, you know we can, they don't actually need you to stand there and give them a checklist of things to do, 	

anything else?

Q: no that's

A: that was alright

Q: I was just giving you a moment to

A: I was trying to sort of visualise that kind of effective piece of writing, that, you know when you have it, you know it's **fluent** and it's **well structured** and it just, it just **drives towards its conclusion right the way through**

- **variety** is the main word for me, I mean I am, I am looking first and foremost I think for imaginative writers who aren't, and who **aren't afraid to try different things** but I am looking for a **wide vocabulary** I am looking for **variety of sentence structure** and um whether I've just been too strategy, you know strategy-ied, I don't know strategy-fied whatever is there such a word? Yeah **variety of punctuation** too. What it comes down to is I'm looking for writers who can **create effects** through their writing who **know what their purpose is, what their audience is** and **can use all their tool in their armoury** to have the desired **effect** on that given audience for that purpose, um and I think if you look at writing tasks in that way you've at least got a fighting chance, because then you can you know talk with students about ok what's, which vocabulary is going to be **effective** and then how are you going to structure this etcetera.

Constructs of good teaching of writing ("What makes a good teacher of writing?")

- it's got to be somebody who can **motivate** students to want to write...um, and, I'm not sure if that makes me a good teacher of writing at all, so it's somebody who can **inspire and motivate** but they also, I mean again you know you're writing for pleasure or you're writing for a purpose, exam purpose because you can be an inspiring and **motivating** teacher and students who can do incredibly creative original work, which they need to do to get the As and the A*s but **if they're technically not there they're never going to achieve that** and I think **that's really important** because you know at the end of the day if these students want to move on, to go on with their English they need to get you know the good grades at GCSEs so I think that **motivation and inspiration first, but that has to be tempered with enough awareness of how to get the students to improve technically as well.**

Beliefs about assessment of writing ("Do assessment criteria at KS3 and KS4 capture/reward good writing?")

- That's an interesting question, that's a very interesting question because we're, no, because um, as an example, you tell, no because **you teach them what to do to tick the boxes**, you **teach to the magic C grade at GCSE**, um and then you know as I did today you find an example of comment writing and you share it and it doesn't, it wouldn't have **ticked the boxes** at GCSE, and therefore you will have to fob them off as I did this morning with the fact that professional writers are allowed to break the rules, just as Picasso was, you know could perform as a fine artist but was allowed to break the rules, um so in terms of creativity, one of our important Cs I think it **restricts us** so that **we cannot go down the route of anything goes and valuing individuality**, and here we are supposed to be encouraging independence, and actually you know because you say well that's, that's wrong, you've got to do this and you've got to do this, **you've got to tick your boxes**, and it's the **same at keystone three** as well, you know it's very, it's, **you're torn aren't you**, I, I'm a big fan of APP because I think it, it does the things that we've talked about today and that it does very, it forces us as teachers to address very specific things in the teaching of writing, you can do all these things but there's this one

little thing you can't do, um but actually **all we're doing is box ticking** and the hope is that by addressing those things and perhaps filling those gaps that they, you know they can eventually become **independent writers who are allowed to break to rules**, but I, **I wonder whether there is room for a bit more freedom and creativity** as well I think perhaps we, **we've got the balance a bit wrong**, in recent years.

• do you think that key stage three and GCSE reward those qualities?

A: I think they do, I think they do actually because the assessments are all geared towards those things so yes, um yeah **emphatically yes really**

Summary of consistencies:

- Values writing that engages and speaks to the reader, that gives pleasure and *delights*
- Values deliberate crafting and structuring for effect
- Values writing that suits its audience and purpose
- Values variety in vocabulary, punctuation and sentences: allies variety to students knowing how to use all the *tools in their armoury*

Summary of inconsistencies/tensions:

- Wants students to be independent writers who can experiment and be creative but thinks teaching can be too prescriptive and narrow, driven by assessment criteria that merely tick boxes
- Recognises that good writers break rules but aware that students have to follow rules and conventions to get good grades
- Thinks inspiration and motivation are vital in teaching writing but it's also necessary to teach accuracy - it's more important that they get good GCSE grades
- **NB** Very aware of assessment criteria at KS3 and KS4: has absorbed their language into own view of good writing but also sees them as overly-prescriptive and anti-creative

Student's construct of good writing

- use a **variety of sentences** and **different vocabulary**, instead of keeping it the same and boring and **interesting words so it's not boring**, and **ask questions** so it, so if people read on they find out the answers
- you have to like um something, you have to **give clues** about what's going to happen later so that they read on to see what actually happens... **interesting words** instead of boring words, but that's all I can think of
- **variety of sentences**, um, **good punctuation** and **not bad spelling** and that's about it for me
- um, I haven't done much about poetry, I don't really know about it, so I don't really know what makes it good or bad
- it has to be **exciting**, otherwise you just don't bother reading it you just put it down and don't bother
- as long as it's **exciting** and like **keeps you hooked** and kind of **suspenseful** or whatever they say, I don't know

Summative assessment

- sometimes, you have to do like um things that are going to be marked well if I know like I've done it properly and it's all right and everything else that makes me feel alright with it, just **hand it in and know I'm going to get a good grade** how do you get a good grade with a piece of writing?

A: by doing lot of **variety of sentences**, **good spelling**, **good punctuation**, um **what**

else was there, we have to do putting evidence and explanation in our last work

Summary:

- Good writing uses variety of sentences
- Interesting and varied vocabulary is important
- Good writing is interesting and keeps you hooked e.g. by using clues in story writing about what will happen later
- Aware of need for technical accuracy in punctuation and spelling
- Aware that some pieces are formally assessed/graded and therefore need extra effort to get them right/accurate
- Variety of sentences and accurate punctuation and spelling will get you a good grade

NB Some echoes of teacher's values here.

"what else was there" sounds like a checklist from teacher; ironic in view of teacher's ambivalence about "ticking boxes"

Appendix 19a: Data analysis of teacher interviews: *Grammar for Writing?* project initial coding categories decided by whole team

PARENT NODES	CHILD NODES	DEFINITIONS
Writing quality		Comments which refer to judgements about good writing, about writing assessment, and about testing
Writing Pedagogy		Comments which refer to teachers' classroom practices, strategies for teaching writing, and reflections on their teaching
	Teaching Strategies	Comments which refer to direct classroom practice in teaching writing
	Metalanguage	Comments in which teachers use metalanguage in talking about their teaching: <i>exclude use of word, sentence, text – only need to code first occurrence in an interview – code last in one sweep</i>
	Intervention	Comments from the intervention group teachers on how they used the Schemes of Work or their own resources or strategies and how the children responded
	Control	Comments from the control group on how they used the Schemes of Work or their own resources or strategies and how the children responded
	Teacher as writer	Comments which refer to teachers' own confidence in and experience of writing
	Children as writers	Comments which refer to teachers' professional observations of children's abilities, difficulties, likes etc in writing. <i>This excludes comments about specific children in lessons observed but includes stories about other specific children eg 'I taught this boy, Dan. He...' or generalised comments 'Girls like'; 'They find it hard to'</i>
Subject Knowledge		Comments which relate to teachers' academic subject knowledge
	Genre	Comments which reveal teachers' content knowledge about genres and texts
	Linguistic	Comments which reveal teachers' linguistic subject knowledge or concern about lack of it. <i>This includes comments about poor knowledge eg I'm ashamed that I don't know this stuff; or they didn't teach it when I was at school. It also includes comments where they talk knowledgeably about grammar eg I try to help them see that inverting subject-verb order can create suspense. It would also include an error in grammatical understanding such as classifying a word incorrectly.</i>
Teacher Beliefs		Comments which reveal teachers' beliefs about teaching writing
	Writing beliefs	Comments which reveal teachers' beliefs about writing
	Grammar beliefs	Comments which refer to teachers' beliefs about grammar and grammar teaching
	General beliefs	Comments which refer to teachers' general beliefs about teaching, rather than specifically about writing

Appendix 19b: Independent analysis of teacher and student interviews: initial coding trees

Principal Research Question 1: How do teachers and students evaluate quality in writing?			
PARENT NODE	CHILD NODES	DEFINITIONS	No. of sources/ No. of references
'Sources' refers to the number of interviews in which comments relating to the code were made; 'references' refers to the number of distinctly separate and different comments made about the code			
Teacher Interviews			
Writing quality	Descriptions or definitions of good writing, in direct response to the interview questions: "What do you think makes good writing? What criteria would you use to describe 'good' writing? What are you looking for as indicators of quality in writing?"		86/145
	Images of good writing	Descriptions or definitions of good writing expressed in the form of analogy, simile or metaphor	36/54
	Good teacher of writing	Comments in direct response to interview question: "What do you think makes a good teacher of writing?"	27/45
	Self as writer	Comments relating to own writing practice, both outside school and in the classroom	38/74
Evaluating writing	Comments about judging quality in writing, in response to interview questions: Do the assessment criteria at KS3 and GCSE effectively capture 'good' writing? Do you think KS3 tests and GCSE reward those qualities?		62/126
	Testing	Comments relating specifically to formal testing of writing and summative criteria	54/105
	Difficulty making judgements	Comments relating to difficulties in judging students' work	18/21
	Students' understanding of criteria	Comments relating to students' understanding and use of assessment criteria	14/15
Student Interviews			
Writing quality	Descriptions or definitions of good writing in direct response to interview question: "What do you think makes good writing?"		41/56
	Images of good writing	Descriptions or definitions of good writing expressed in the form of analogy, simile or metaphor	7/10
	Self as writer	Comments in response to interview question: "Are you a good writer?"	20/21
Evaluating writing	Self-evaluation	Comments about judging own writing	7/7
	Peer evaluation	Comments about peer judgement of writing	12/13
	Teacher evaluation	Comments about the influence of teacher judgement of writing	6/7
	Summative assessment	Comments relating to judgements of writing through use of marks, grades and tests	7/7

Appendix 19c: Writing quality *in vivo* coding from interviews with teachers

Terms used in published national assessment criteria from high-grade writing at Key Stages 3 and 4 (included after grid)

TEACHERS Writing Quality in vivo codes	No. of sources	No. of Refs.	In vivo examples
accurate/accuracy	12	13	good writing has to be accurate; accuracy in terms of punctuation; technical accuracy; confidence means accuracy, accuracy; grammar and syntax is correct so it doesn't trouble me when I'm reading it
adventurous	1	1	
appropriate	5	5	people who express themselves whatever the task is in a way which is kind of appropriate to it; appropriate tone and formality
believable	1	2	
clear/clarity	7	7	the clarity of communication; the point of the writing comes across clearly to the reader; it's really clear throughout, not going off on a tangent
cohesion	2	2	has cohesion; is consistent in some way, you know, the tenses don't jump and the viewpoints don't jump around
communicates	5	5	whether a text communicates effectively; communicates to the reader; has something to say
competence	2	4	with confidence comes competence; creativity and competence and I think they are linked
(feels) complete	1	1	
concise	2	2	concise writing; concise paragraphing
confident/confidence	10	14	I want them have the confidence to write what they want; if they're confident they know the key ingredients; confidence to explore and experiment
controlled	2	2	controlled, not randomly written; control over punctuation
conventions	9	10	you need to have conventions at your fingertips don't you? I expect them to use the conventions of that particular genre
convincing	1	1	
correct spelling	1	1	
crafted/crafting	10	13	I want to be able to see the process, that it's been crafted; they've crafted it to make it more imaginative; something that's cleverly crafted
creative/creativity	11	15	I'd hope that it's all about creativity, even when it's essay writing, it's about creativity; all the creative side; it's that mix between creativity and accuracy
deliberate	2	2	deliberate choices; done what it set out to achieve
delight/delightful	2	3	It delights because it's well written; "control and delight"(sic); what you write is delightful
detail	1	1	
devices	3	3	range of devices; rhetorical devices; literary devices
done independently	2	2	
easy to understand	3	3	not struggling with the writer in some way; not too obscure; not elitist

effect on the reader	16	20	has been written with the reader in mind to have an effect on them; having an effect on the reader, making them feel a certain way; has a physical effect on you; makes me feel something; is emotional; writers who can create effects; I'm looking for the overall effect
effort	10	11	when the pupil's willing to try; when you can see the real effort that's gone into it; shows effort even if it's not perfect; has the student done their best?
engaging/engages the reader	16	18	good writing is defined by the fact that it engages the reader throughout; sustains my interest; I want them to understand they've got to hook the reader in from the very beginning
enjoyable	3	4	
entertaining	3	4	it's always got to have an entertainment value
enthusiasm	3	5	shows the writer's enthusiasm; when you can almost touch that author's enthusiasm
exciting/excitement	2	3	
experiments	9	12	experimentation is a fantastic thing; confidence to explore and experiment; try different things; experimental
flair	6	8	a good piece of writing will have originality and flair which is difficult to teach; unless you've got that natural flair you're not going to get the A*
fluency	3	5	just fluent writers and that's difficult to teach; fluency; writing that flows well
focused	2	3	focused and really clear on the question
grammatically secure	1	1	
imaginative/imagination	8	8	writing that allows the reader to imagine being there or being that person; I am looking first and foremost for imaginative writers; a really imaginative response
inspiring	1	1	
interesting/maintains interest	11	14	It has to be interesting; something that's interesting, either to the reader or the writer; the interest of the piece of writing is the key thing
it depends	4	4	it depends what you're writing for; it depends on style and genre; no definitive answer; depends on what criteria I've set
just a feeling	5	6	It's just a feeling that something tells you, that is great, and nobody can tell you otherwise; it's an instinctive thing; you know it when you've read it; they know when it's good
justified	1	3	choices are justified; they can tell me why they've done it
makes sense	2	2	
manipulation of sentence structure	6	6	manipulation of sentence structures; control of the sentence; have you been able to manipulate your sentences; they've played around with the sentences to make it engaging to read
memorable	2	2	
natural	5	5	It needs to feel unforced, sort of natural; not overly forced; someone who is a natural born writer
neat	1	1	
original/originality	16	20	originality of style; a clever original concept; really original content; an original perspective on things; original and different; brilliant writing will have really original content

organised/organisation	1	1	well-organised writing that's easy to follow
passionate	1	1	
personal voice	9	13	own voice coming through; something that's completely and totally theirs; needs to have a personality; individual voice; individuality
planning	3	4	planning beforehand so it feels like they know where they're going from the start
pleases you/pleasurable	3	4	if it pleases you, then it's good; has to be pleasurable to read; just reading it gives you great pleasure
precision	2	2	precision in paragraphing; precise vocabulary
process	3	4	you can see the process; admire something in the process that makes it a good piece of writing; that transparency of the process
punctuation for effect	4	5	punctuation for effect; advanced punctuation; effective use of punctuation; ambitious and sophisticated punctuation
purpose and audience	10	11	quality of writing is, do you convey to your audience what it is you have to say? fulfils its purpose; has awareness of the reader
spontaneity	1	1	
structure	12	12	It's clearly structured; well-shaped; the flow and the structure; sustaining the quality of the response right through to the end; someone who has thought how to structure their work, link it all together
subjective	4	4	It's subjective because it depends entirely on the reader, doesn't it? I think it's too personal to say if it's good or not; it's a matter of individual taste
subtlety	1	1	
succinct	1	1	
take risks	4	4	people who take risks and don't mind getting things wrong; a writer has to take risks, push themselves out of their comfort zone
take ownership	1	1	take ownership and responsibility and commit themselves to it
technically clever	1	1	
techniques	6	7	to be interesting it has to have techniques; linguistic techniques; uses all the techniques they've been taught
they've thought about it	3	5	really thought about it; thought about it consciously; shows conscious thought; I want to see that thought has really gone into it
variety overall	4	5	variety is the main word for me; the thing I always bang on about is variety; variety within it and not becoming kind of monotonous
variety of sentence structures	8	9	good sentence variety to keep you engaged; varying sentence structure for effect; confident writers will play with sentence structure
variety of punctuation	5	5	wide variety of punctuation; to a lesser extent I think it's variety of punctuation
variety of vocabulary	5	5	using varied vocabulary; variety of vocabulary is a big thing I think
variety of techniques	4	5	varied number of techniques to create effect
wide ranging vocabulary	16	18	it comes down to word choices; vocabulary is massively important; the power of words; ambitious vocabulary; vocabulary shows a wide knowledge and depth; vocabulary is often key to make things stand out from other people's pieces of work; vocabulary for a specific effect

KS3 Published assessment criteria

Pupils' writing is original, has shape and impact, shows control of a range of styles and maintains the interest of the reader throughout. Narratives use structure as well as vocabulary for a range of imaginative effects, and non-fiction is coherent, reasoned and persuasive, conveying complex perspectives. A variety of grammatical constructions and punctuation is used accurately, appropriately and with sensitivity. Paragraphs are well constructed and linked in order to clarify the organisation of the writing as a whole.

(National Curriculum attainment target for writing: exceptional performance)

sentence structure is imaginative, precise and accurate, matched to writer's purpose and intended effect on the reader

- imaginative, well controlled structuring of subject matter and management of paragraphing provide textual coherence and cohesion to position the reader appropriately in relation to the writer's purpose
- creative selection and adaptation of a wide range of forms and conventions to meet varied writing challenges with distinctive personal voice and style matched to intended effect
- wide ranging vocabulary used imaginatively and with precision
- correct spelling throughout

(Assessing Pupils' Progress guidelines for Level 8)

KS4 Published assessment criteria

Candidates' writing shows confident, assured control of a range of forms and styles appropriate to task and purpose. Texts engage and hold the reader's interest through logical argument, persuasive force or creative delight. Linguistic and structural features are used skilfully to sequence texts and achieve coherence. A wide range of accurate sentence structures ensures clarity; choices of vocabulary, punctuation and spelling are ambitious, imaginative and correct.

(GCSE grade A descriptor, Ofqual)

Form, content and style are assuredly matched to purpose and audience; distinctive and consistently effective

- controlled and sustained crafting with highly effective and delightful vocabulary choices
- strong personal style
- some inventive structural and/or linguistic devices
- clear and controlled manipulation of sentence structures for effect
- accurate spelling
- range of punctuation used in sophisticated manner

(AQA exam board mark scheme for English top-band criteria)

Appendix 19d: Writing quality *in vivo* coding from interviews with students

Criteria that were also used by teachers

STUDENTS Writing Quality in vivo codes	No. of sources	No. of Refs.	In vivo examples
ask questions	2	2	ask questions so if people read on they find out the answers; people think about the answer a bit, I think that makes a good piece of writing
correct spelling	2	2	correct spelling obviously; not bad spelling
clues	2	3	you have to give clues about what's going to happen later so that they read on to see what actually happens
confident	1	1	be confident in what you're writing – you can't hold back on words because you're scared to use them
description	6	8	you have to obviously be descriptive; use lots of descriptive words; a lot of description
devices	1	1	different devices and adjectives, nouns, plurals, metaphors, similes, and all these different types of words
doesn't drag on	2	3	it gets boring if it goes on and on
don't really know	2	2	
exciting	5	6	it has to be exciting otherwise you just don't bother reading it
good ideas	1	1	
good opening	3	3	you've got to make the first bit fun and exciting
I'll know when it's good	2	3	they're just silent after, and that's how you know
imaginative	2	3	good imagination; quite imaginative
interesting	6	8	good writing's got to be interesting or else you'll be getting bored; you've got to keep the reader interested; don't obviously just cram it in as quick as you can but see if you can spread out everything evenly so it keeps them interesting the whole way through
it depends	2	4	It depends who it's for; it depends what it's about; it actually depends on what kind of writing you're doing
make them think	2	2	if it's good it'll make me think; make them think about what they're reading rather than just see what they're reading
makes sense	2	2	easy to understand
paragraphs	2	2	set out into proper paragraphs; if you have very long paragraphs it seems boring but if you have short ones it seems like quick
punctuation	9	9	good punctuation in the right places; good punctuation to make it like how you should speak it; punctuation to make effect
putting your mind to it	1	1	
relates to the person reading it	7	7	sometimes to hit a nerve of the readers, that really make them feel what you're writing about; you need people to be reading it and go on your side; I have to paint a picture in their mind of what they're reading
repetition	2	3	If it's a piece of writing that you want to remember, use lots of repetition
structure	1	1	good writing you need a structure
sentence structure	1	1	structured sentences
techniques	3	3	all the different techniques like alliteration and stuff because it makes it better for the reader to

			understand; similes and metaphors and loads of different techniques you use in writing
uses the right sort of language	1	2	the right sort of language for the right age group
variety overall	3	3	variety overall, innit? I think variety and believing that's the right thing, so instead of using it over and over again, the same tactic, change between them; how much variety you put in
variety of sentences	9	11	using all different sorts of like, sentences like, compound sentences, and like short, simple ones like, that stick in your head; not all like one sentence, so some have commas in and some are short and some are long and things like that
vocabulary	18	22	use good strong words that will keep your attention; good vocabulary; long interesting words; lots of interesting and unusual words; if it sounds good, use it
whatever you've learned	2	3	whole of English put together; whatever you've learned, put it all in

Appendix 19e: Analysis of teacher interviews: final coding

Principal Research Question 1: How do teachers and students evaluate quality in writing?		Verbatim Examples
Conceptualising good writing		
Images of good writing	Descriptions or definitions of good writing expressed in the form of analogy, simile or metaphor	Makes the hairs on the back of your neck stand up
Generic views of good writing	Generalised descriptions or definitions of good writing	Good writing would be writing where students have thought about what they wanted to say
Good poetry writing	Comments relating to genre-specific features of good writing, in this case poetry	word choice is really effective...the fact that you don't have very many words in a poem so every word has got to count
Good argument writing	Comments relating to genre-specific features of good writing, in this case argument	I'm going to be looking for rhetorical devices and evidence that they've attempted to use emotive language
Good fiction writing	Comments relating to genre-specific features of good writing, in this case narrative fiction	identifying with the characters, appreciating the language that's used or wanting to know what happens in the story
Reading-writing relationship	Comments that make a direct link between students as readers and students as writers or which emphasise the connection between reading and writing	A good piece of writing is something that has been written with the reader in mind to have a particular effect on them; the pupils in my class that are readers are better writers
Teaching good writing		
Good teacher of writing	Comments in direct response to interview question: "What do you think makes a good teacher of writing?"	Someone who empowers the child, giving them that confidence of self expression
Self as writer	Comments relating to own writing practice, both outside school and in the classroom	Someone that does do it themselves because then you can share the process
Pedagogical approaches	References to teaching and learning activities and strategies that teachers believe promote good writing and good writing behaviours	Teacher modelling so they can see what is good writing; annotated good things;
Students' understanding of good writing	References to students' understanding of what makes good writing, including understanding of published assessment criteria	They are now starting to see the impact of good verb choice as well, and finding that if they choose the right verb they might not need the adverb after it
Students' struggles with writing	Comments about aspects of writing that students find difficult	Sustaining the quality of a response right through, that's tough
Classroom values	Comments relating to specific aspects of learning or writing behaviours that the teacher tries to encourage or which might contribute to the teacher's evaluation of quality	If he can communicate an effective idea, that would be given value in my classroom, even if his handwriting, his punctuation and everything else was all over the place
Judging quality in writing		
Generic views of evaluation	Generalised comments about the process of judging quality in writing or the criteria used for evaluation	I think I have my own instinctive idea of what good writing is; I'm looking first and foremost for effect on the reader
Assessing writing at KS3	Comments relating to judging quality of writing at KS3, including use of specific criteria e.g. APP	I think APP is probably going to give them the freedom and the time and the creativity to be good writers
Assessing writing at KS4	Comments relating to judging quality of writing at KS4, including use of specific criteria e.g. GCSE mark schemes or grades	Unless you've got that creativeness, and that natural flair, you're not going to get the A* because I don't know if you can teach it

Appendix 19f: Student interviews final coding frame used on the *Grammar for Writing?* project

(No. of sources/No. of references)

<p>Writing Quality</p> <p><i>Definitions of good writing</i></p>	<p>Images of good writing</p> <p><i>Defining using simile, metaphor or analogy (7/10)</i></p>		<p>Self evaluation</p> <p><i>Statements about judging own writing (7/7)</i></p>			<p>Peer evaluation</p> <p><i>Statements about peer judgements of writing (12/13)</i></p>			<p>Teacher evaluation</p> <p><i>Comments about the influence of teacher judgement of writing (6/7)</i></p>			<p>Summative assessment</p> <p><i>Statements relating to influence of marks, grades and tests (7/7)</i></p>		
<p>Self as Writer</p> <p><i>General attitudes and beliefs about self as writer</i></p>	<p>Writing outside school (14/18)</p>	<p>Writing process and practice (15/19)</p>	<p>Writing dislikes (17/19)</p>	<p>Writing preferences (14/15)</p>	<p>Likes about writing poetry (8/9)</p>	<p>Likes about writing fiction (17/20)</p>	<p>Likes about writing argument (2/3)</p>	<p>Likes other genres (2/3)</p>	<p>Using imagination (4/4)</p>	<p>Making progress as writer (8/8)</p>	<p>Freedom of choice (2/4)</p>	<p>Ideas and influences for writing (9/14)</p>	<p>Easy aspects of writing (2/3)</p>	
<p>Writing Difficulties</p> <p><i>What do students find hard about writing?</i></p>	<p>Vocabulary problems (4/4)</p>	<p>Unfamiliar writing type (1/1)</p>	<p>Time constraints (2/2)</p>	<p>Spelling problems (5/5)</p>	<p>Problems with sentences (2/2)</p>	<p>Problems getting started (5/6)</p>	<p>No right answers (1/1)</p>	<p>Handwriting (1/1)</p>	<p>Getting ideas (1/2)</p>	<p>Genre-specific problems (9/11)</p>	<p>Difficulty remembering (18/25)</p>			
<p>Helpful Classroom Activities</p> <p><i>Classroom activities or approaches that students think help them to write better</i></p>	<p>Writing on own (8/9)</p> <p>Writing frames and prompt sheets (5/6)</p> <p>Choice (2/2)</p>	<p>Vocabulary building activities (17/18)</p> <p>Support for planning (6/6)</p> <p>Checklist of what to include (2/2)</p>	<p>Visual images (10/13)</p> <p>Sentence games (5/7)</p> <p>Rewriting text (3/3)</p>	<p>Variety (2/2)</p> <p>Use of talk (8/9)</p> <p>Role play and drama (12/14)</p>	<p>Teacher modelling of writing (2/2)</p> <p>Use of models (11/12)</p>	<p>Practising skills (4/5)</p> <p>Physical movement (1/1)</p> <p>Pair and group work (15/19)</p>	<p>Memory aids (1/1)</p> <p>Going out of the classroom (2/2)</p> <p>Gathering ideas (2/2)</p>	<p>Enjoyment and fun (2/2)</p> <p>Conversation with teacher (4/4)</p> <p>Background information (1/1)</p>	<p>Activities that are not helpful (5/5)</p>					

Reading-Writing Relationship				
<i>Statements that make a direct link between students as readers and students as writers (20/26)</i>				
Grammar Knowledge		Terminology		Punctuation Knowledge
<i>Statements about sentence grammar and its role in writing, whether or not specific terminology is used (55/119)</i>		<i>Specific uses of terminology relating to grammar for writing (excluding the terms text, sentence and word) (21/39)</i>		<i>Statements specific to use of punctuation, including misunderstandings (25/43)</i>
Genre Knowledge Poetry	Poetry Model Text	Poetry Model Sentence	Poetry Model Word	Improving Poetry Model
<i>Statements relating to students' understanding of the generic features of poetry writing (29/88)</i>	<i>Comments about text-level features of poetry models used in interview (28/78)</i>	<i>Comments about sentence-level features of poetry models used in interview (21/27)</i>	<i>Comments about word-level features of poetry models used in interview (21/37)</i>	<i>Students' suggestions for improving poetry models (16/19)</i>
Genre Knowledge Fiction	Fiction Model Text	Fiction Model Sentence	Fiction Model Word	Improving Fiction Model
<i>Statements relating to students' understanding of the generic features of fiction writing (26/57)</i>	<i>Comments about text-level features of fiction model used in interview (24/42)</i>	<i>Comments about sentence-level features of fiction model used in interview (21/25)</i>	<i>Comments about word-level features of fiction model used in interview (21/38)</i>	<i>Students' suggestions for improving fiction model (22/35)</i>
Genre Knowledge Argument	Argument Model Text	Argument Model Sentence	Argument Model Word	Improving Argument Model
<i>Statements relating to students' understanding of the generic features of argument writing (30/85)</i>	<i>Comments about text-level features of argument model used in interview (26/61)</i>	<i>Comments about sentence-level features of argument model used in interview (25/36)</i>	<i>Comments about word-level features of fiction model used in interview (22/28)</i>	<i>Students' suggestions for improving argument model (28/44)</i>
Writing Decisions	Poetry Scheme Writing	Fiction Scheme Writing		Argument Scheme Writing
<i>Decisions and thoughts about the writing process, not specific to genre (7/11)</i>	<i>Conversations with students: decisions about own poetry writing (27/32)</i>	<i>Conversations with students: decisions about own fiction writing (29/37)</i>		<i>Conversations with students: decisions about own argument writing (28/30)</i>

<p>Improving Writing</p> <p><i>Conversations with students about generic revisions to own writing</i> (8/9)</p>	<p>Poetry Scheme Writing</p> <p><i>Conversations with students about changes to their own poetry writing</i> (15/18)</p>	<p>Fiction Scheme Writing</p> <p><i>Conversations with students about changes to their own fiction writing</i> (16/18)</p>	<p>Argument Scheme Writing</p> <p><i>Conversations with students about changes to their own argument writing</i> (14/17)</p>
--	--	--	--

Appendix 19g: analysis of *Grammar for Writing?* lesson observations: coding frame

Linguistic Subject Knowledge in the Classroom

This theme relates to the pedagogic implementation of teachers' LSK. The original coding from the teacher interviews has been expanded to encompass examples of observed practice.

Code	Definition	Sources	Refs
Sentence variety	Comments/examples which refer simply to sentence variety	9	12
Punctuation	Comments/examples which refer to teaching punctuation for meaning	12	19
For effect	Comments which use the phrase 'for effect'	6	7
Curriculum-led LSK	Comments which are close to curriculum or Strategy objectives or related to test demands	6	7
Formulaic LSK	Comments/practice which suggest a formulaic approach to grammar	5	7
Incorrect LSK	Comments/practice which reveal errors or insecurities in grammatical knowledge or applied LSK	15	23
Manipulating	Comments/practice which refer to moving words or phrases around, manipulating sentences or changing words or phrases	2	2
Choice and control	Comments which refer to how knowing grammar gives choice or control/ownership	3	4
Applied LSK	Comments/practice which link a grammar structure to a teaching/learning purpose	17	24

Inter-relationship of Students' and Teachers' Linguistic Subject Knowledge

In the teacher interviews, this theme related to teachers' comments on how students cope with grammar in the classroom, often revealing aspects of their own LSK through these comments. The coding from the interviews has been maintained but expanded to encompass examples of observed practice.

Code	Definition	Sources	Refs
Student confidence	Comments/evidence of students' grasp of grammar and applied grammar in writing	13	24
Student difficulty	Comments/evidence of aspects of grammar which students find hard	14	25
Forgetting	Comments/evidence of students forgetting the grammar they have been taught	4	6
Pedagogical	Examples of situations where teaching grammar	9	11

problems	creates a problem or difficulty, including where students' questions create a difficulty		
Recognition of impact of LSK on teaching	Comments/practice which suggest that teacher lack of confidence is linked with students' problems e.g. examples of teachers avoiding or glossing over aspects of grammar detailed in the schemes of work; confusing explanations	11	12

Pedagogic Practices

This theme relates to how teachers used the materials provided for them; in Intervention schools, these included detailed short term plans, teaching notes and resources to support contextualised teaching of grammar.

Code	Definition	Sources	Refs
Difficulties	Problems caused by specific activities or use of pedagogical support materials	16	30
Adaptations	Changes to activities or use of pedagogical support materials made by teachers	7	11
Models	Examples of use made of teacher modelling of writing or use of text models e.g. for students to imitate	8	13
Annotation	Examples of use made in lessons of text highlighting or annotation	10	13
Success criteria	Examples of defining and sharing success criteria for writing, including guidelines given for peer assessment	9	11
Talk for writing	Examples of activities that promoted talk as preparation for writing, including role play and drama	9	12
Talk for LSK	Examples of discussion used to extend or consolidate students' metalinguistic understanding	7	10

Features of observed practice to which I have paid particular attention in order to address my second principal research question: How might teachers and students use their understandings of writing quality for the purpose of improving writing?

Appendix 20: Single case study intervention data analysis

Students' verbatim responses to open-ended prompt: Good writing.....

Class 1 (31 students)	Class 2 (25 students)	Class 3 (30 students)
Comments at whole-text level; audience, purpose and impact on reader (AF1, AF2)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Something that grabs the eye of the beholder • Is captivating • Has to be interesting • Put in the stuff they would enjoy, not stuff to make you sleep • Depends on what type of writing x3 • Depends what you're writing about • If it's fictional writing maybe a good cliff hanger; if it's non-fictional it would need interesting facts • Keep it linked to the subject/genre e.g. horror • Factual • Lots of information • Interesting • Keeps you hooked • Exciting • Uses the reader's mind • Finds a way to stay in your head • Suitable story for age • Detail x2 • Clear x2 • Quotes back up the point x2 • Makes sense x3 • Sense, so people understand it • Depends on what you are writing about x2 • Needs to fit the subject • Stay with your point/topic • Depends on whether keeps the reader interested. Yes you can get all fancy with connectives, colons etc. but as long as it makes sense and the reader's hooked then that's good writing • Be readable and connect with the one that is reading it if it's a story but most of all I think the writing should express what you feel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has to have an impact on the reader • If you or your reader likes it • Makes you want to read on • Interesting and gripping which will hook the reader • Interesting to different types of people • Interesting x2 • Keeps you interested • Something holds your interest • Suits the target audience • Has a clever catch to the designated novel • Has an awesome intro! • Steady but exciting build up • Cliff hanger x3 • Tense • Characters • Includes description (similes, metaphors etc) • Similes and metaphors • Be quite descriptive • Description • Descriptive • Creative • Paint a picture • Easy to pick up • Isn't confusing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depends on what type • Depending on type of writing form • Doesn't go off the genre • Fits its genre • Makes you want to read more • Makes you want to read further on • Draws you in/makes you read on • Something that catches the audience • Should draw you in • Will keep you interested and wanting to read more • Makes you want to turn the page • Has to have the ability to make people want to continue reading • Makes you feel as though you are there x2 • Good choice of language that invites the reader and makes you want to read on • Gets your attention • Interesting x3 • Imaginative • Use of imagination • Description • Is descriptive • Exciting, fast paced and action packed • Dramatic • Doesn't bore you • Not boring • Characters in stories that inspire the readers • Great detail in setting • Full of action e.g. battles • Mysterious (secrets revealed during story) • Iconic • Has a better beginning • Have metaphors that fit with the story/writing • Exciting vocabulary • Has lots of detail • Detail x3 • Makes sense x5 • Should make sense and get to the point

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planned
Comments on text structure, paragraphs and presentation (AF3, AF4)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paragraphs x5 Structure Is structured x2 Is well planned and structured Eye catching Has got to be neat It depends if you're neat at writing Depends what kind of writing it is, like fancy writing or just your normal handwriting A tidy piece of work that has good punctuation and lots of connectives That you can see every word 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paragraphs x3 Paragraphed well Well organised and easy to understand Good structure Structure their writing Beginning, middle, end Good presentation Presentation x2 Lay out x2 Has to be quite neat Has neat handwriting Neat x2 Writing that is neat To be neat, fluent and the same sized letters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An understandable structure Needs a bit of sequencing Good handwriting which you can read
Comments on sentences and punctuation (AF5, AF6)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Punctuation x5 Is punctuated correctly x2 Needs to have perfect punctuation I think that a good piece of writing should always have punctuation Good punctuation x2 Right punctuation in the right places Should include punctuation Use punctuation to help tell the story and to make it clear Uses a wide range of punctuation Capital letters Full stops and capital letters Mostly full stops, capital letters Long and short sentences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correct grammar and punctuation Uses correct grammar Right punctuation Grammar Punctuation x6 Punctuation is well used Sentence lengths Uses punctuation in the right places and at the right times Uses a few short sentences for effect Punctuation is correct Good sentences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good sentence structure Extending sentences Punctuation x2 Full stops
Comments on vocabulary and spelling (AF7, AF8)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses good vocabulary Persuasive words Strong words Powerful words Strong vocabulary May contain good vocabulary Interesting and strong vocabulary Good describing words Strong adjectives Verbs Adverbs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use adventurous language Creative words are used Good use of vocabulary Good use of adjectives Uses adjectives, adverbs Vocabulary x2 Adverbs x3 Adjectives x3 Connectives x3 Spelling x4 Spellings are correct or can be corrected Words that are spelt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good variety of words Description/describing words Has a range of vocabulary and connectives Good use of things like connectives Connectives Adjectives Spelling Has good spelling

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjectives • Connectives x4 • Good spelling • Correct spelling x2 • Words spelt right • Has got little or no spelling mistakes 	<p>correctly</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your spelling is correct 	
Other comments		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levels • How much effort you put into it 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Took time • Is longer than one sentence
Teacher's response to prompt: Good writing is....		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interesting • Exciting to read • Gets the point across clearly • Encourages a reader to learn/think/feel something 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fluent and well written • Realistic, not contrived • As accurate as they can make it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engages the reader • Is exciting • Sets the context well • Uses vocabulary for specific effects

Students' rank ordering of narrative writing: verbatim responses

CLASS 1 (31 students)			
Story 1	Number: 24	Story 2	Number:7
Reasons			
<p>Wants to make you read on x2 Kept me hooked It was interesting and exciting to read I enjoyed it more Goes straight into it therefore making it eye-catching and interesting Catches your eye Starts on the first person: makes you think if it's true and read on Has lots of info about the skier Had much more detail I understood it more Made you feel sorry for the man who died Felt like he was there with him Kept us hooked: want to know what else happened Makes you want to read more Made me want to read more with the last sentence Last paragraph good Ending is a good cliff hanger x5 Used cliffhanger at the end, makes you want to read on The last paragraph makes you want to read on Tells you what he does before the story starts More edge of the seat stuff More realistic x2 More dramatic It felt longer Interesting x3 More interesting than story 2 More interesting information Wasn't repetitive like the other story Exciting Entertaining Tension Lot going on Not too much going on Good detail x3 Written very clearly Good clear writing Lay out good Good structure Put into paragraphs Used paragraphs x9 Because it's got paragraphs Good paragraph structure Good/great punctuation x7 Used punctuation to help tell the story Capital letters Good formal language Good words Good use of words</p>		<p>Detail in the story Builds tension Good vocabulary Uses cliffhangers Ends in the cliffhanger and makes us want to read on Gives you lots of information about what's happening Makes the reader ask questions Not too long Got detail and action More detailed Great description Spelt correctly Good use of punctuation Good vocabulary x2 Adventurous vocabulary Very powerful vocabulary Good words Spellings really good Lot of connectives Lots of punctuation Different length sentences Sufficient amount of punctuation Good punctuation</p>	

Descriptive words The words are direct Good punctuation There weren't as many mistakes	
Suggested improvements	
Better opening Description Put more info into it Adding more different connectives Not so many mistakes Spelling Get all the spellings right Work on the spellings	Paragraphs are needed Better use of punctuation More use of connectives Spelling

CLASS 2 (25 students)			
Story 1	Number: 24	Story 2	Number:1
Reasons			
Grips reader x3 Interesting x3 More interesting storyline It makes you want to read on (intriguing) It intrigued me Didn't give away too much I was interested from the first word More interesting It's really interesting Keeps you interested all the way through Brought you in Drew me in Wanted to know what happens next Felt like I was actually there It is dramatic and doesn't give too much away Gives a lot of detail and explains it well Had a gripping start and end Ending wasn't expected Gripped the reader at the start as you wanted to know if he would get the safe route back It draws you in because the person is late to meet their dad Unexpected ending with the death; wanted you to read on the rest of the story Someone dies so it becomes almost a cliff hanger The last sentence is best as it just comes out of nowhere Descriptive Quite descriptive but still upbeat Gives the detail of where they are It went into a lot of description and detail x2 More detail It was longer I understood it a lot better Tension More exciting The layout is in paragraphs Best thing is that it has paragraphs It was set into paragraphs		Used punctuation well	

They did paragraphs Paragraphs x7 Short snappy sentences Short and snappy sentences Long and short sentences 3 dot ellipsis It has ellipsis to create more tension Good punctuation (apart from a bit) Lots of punctuation Better punctuation Good adjectives They used stronger words	
Suggested improvements	
Improve spelling More complex vocabulary Use more connectives	

CLASS 3 (30 students)			
Story 1	Number: 19	Story 2	Number: 11
Reasons			
Story 2 was sort of hard to follow and everything happened too quick Story 1 had more description and was easier to picture in my head Story 2 didn't build any drama The other one just repeats itself Good at drawing in my eye as a reader GRIPPING! Tension It's tense It was more gripping Leaves you wanting more The ending made me want to read on Makes your brain think Lot of description on what's happening More exciting and made you want to read more Made a story out of a story First person is believable Tells you immediately where it is set and what's going on It makes you want to read more as it ends on a cliffhanger Surprise ending Laid out better Paragraphs Different types of sentences Good use of words		Grabs you in quicker I could visualise it more Made me want to read all of it Makes you want to read on More exciting and made you wonder about what was about to happen It's left at a cliff hanger which makes you want to read more It drags you in by making you think of the story plot Good story line More detailed description More descriptive and interesting Detailed and more interesting It made sense More to the point It wasn't spaced out but it still had more punctuality (sic) and more exciting connectives Varied sentence length Sentence structure was better The sentence structure Punctuation is better x2 Had caps Used better vocab Vocabulary is better Better spellings x2	
Suggested improvements			
An explanation to the ending More punctuation Correct punctuation There were a few spelling errors and perhaps a few punctuation errors as well Check spellings		Use paragraphs	

Sample of transcripts from group presentations of rank order choices, chosen from across the whole sample

Students who chose Story 1

Group A

It's planned out and has like a cliffhanger at the end...umm, the opening has like quite a lot of description, more vocabulary and it's quite gripping. The ending kind of like goes into a cliffhanger kind of thing, it doesn't drag on and it just gets straight to the point and leaves you wanting more...umm the sentences are descriptive and makes you think about what they mean and the best sentence we think was, "Later on, my video became evidence all over the world". The vocabulary didn't like try too hard but it makes it sound kind of like better and the best words were 'off-piste' and the dot dot dot thing. The story can be improved by spelling, punctuation and an explanation for the ending.

Group B

We thought Story 1 was the best because they put like paragraphs in it and good structure and it was interesting to read and like exciting as to the actual story and it starts off with the first person and makes you want to read more as you go on...err...the paragraph's got a good ending because it leaves you on a cliffhanger or it did leave me on a cliffhanger because I like found a dead body next to me and it wants you...makes you want to read on more. Things like connectives and good punctuation so like umm cause like tension with the ellipsis. They make the words direct so they don't like go on and go on with loads of different words they make it go straight to you so you get the full direct way of the words. It could slightly be improved by...err...spelling, and...err...a bit more describing words.

Students who chose Story 2

Group A

It was more detailed with better sentence structure and good punctuality...err punctuation, and at the end it had like just one big short, well, small short sentence that says until he blacked out and it's also got like a comma and stuff which makes like a two second break which like builds it up and still leaves you on a cliffhanger and wants you to read more so you want to kind of like find out what happens to him. It's like the story wants to continue whereas in Story 1 the story just kind of stops and there's nothing more to read. It's got good vocabulary like 'surged'...it's got like one sentence here where it says 'shuddering, he steadied himself and carried on'...shuddering...uses a word you kind of haven't heard before, it's not like using a word like 'and' or something in that general category but uses a word that makes you think it's getting better and better, it's not boring, and also like story 2 made a lot of...well, in some places, made a lot more sense than story 1, and in story 1 some of them were missing like full stops and with the wrong punctuation marks so you had to like read the same sentence again to make sure it was correct in your head before you carried on reading, and of course it's better spelling, I believe, in Story 2, I think.

Group B

The opening is like more straight to the point and it makes you like want to read what happened when he like fell off the rock, and like the sentences were even. A lot of them start with 'He' but some of them were short and some of them were long and like especially with the ending it left you with a bit of a cliffhanger and I found it made you just want to know what happened to him after. The spelling and the punctuation was better than in the first one 'cos they've spelt 'camera' and 'next' wrong. There was more interesting vocabulary used....like the bit 'shuddering, he carried on'...it had more like tension coming up to the end...'blacked out'.

Teacher talking about Story 1

It's one of those things, isn't it, where it's more instinctive. You kind of know why you like something or don't like it but don't know exactly why, that's what I feel. I didn't like story 2 because obviously from an English teacher's point of view the main thing that jumped out at me was the boring sentence starters with I think... 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, about 10 or 11 sentences start with 'He' or 'His' and where the student does try and start in an interesting way it almost feels mechanical. like 'Shuddering, he steadied himself'...I mean 'shuddering' is a great word but it's like they've thought, "Oh, I'd better change my sentence start, I'd better put "Shuddering" there, it's not like it's fluent or flowing or natural. Story 1 I felt worked because of the ability to intrigue the reader. If you look at the words used in the first paragraph, there are lots of safe words like 'dad', 'stick', 'instructed', they're all safe words and then it comes to 'Suddenly something caught my eye', the mood changes and I think that's what creates the mystery and it's very subtly suggested that things are going to start changing and start going wrong which is what keeps the reader interested. Umm... again, you know, "I carefully examined him while trying to keep in control of myself" gives intrigue, you want to know, I think because of the way it's written...I'm kind of rambling here, but the way it's written, it's from...it's almost like someone is telling you a story or something about what happened to them and that gets you engaged because I suppose it's more like real life...umm...and then on the second paragraph where it says, "I carefully examined him", you want to know what the person saw when they came and examined them, then it goes on to say he was too blurred and distant to make anything out and that leaves you feeling frustrated. You want to know what this person's seeing and thinking. I think to me that's what makes Story 1 better, it's keeping the reader wondering, guessing, empathising with the narrator. That was all a bit rambled...