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**Looking in:  
Mapping representations of teachers' discursive  
writing practices**

by  
**Stephanie Dix**

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submitted in fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree  
of  
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## **Abstract**

Over the past four decades changes in political, social, and educational curriculum policies have created discursive shifts in writing theory and practice. While these policies have historically privileged a particular view of writing over others, very little is known about *how* New Zealand teachers engage with discourses of writing. Research in the field of literacy has traditionally favoured reading, creating variable opportunities for building knowledge of writing theory and practice, and often leaving teachers querying how to teach writing now.

Employing an interpretive methodology and a qualitative approach, this study sought to understand how a group of New Zealand primary school teachers taught writing in their classrooms at a particular time. The research was conducted in two phases. Phase One employed thematic analysis to identify how the teachers taught writing in their classrooms. The teachers' self-reported practice described their beliefs about teaching writing, the ways they grouped students for writing, the practices they valued, planning decisions they made and assessment strategies they employed in their writing communities. It became evident that while there were strong commonalities, as a group the teachers demonstrated discursive practices.

The development of a conceptual tool enabled further analysis of the teachers' talk. Three Writing Discourses, Writer, Text and Social, each representing different ideologies, beliefs, theories and practices, provided a framework to analyse *why* teachers subscribed to different Writing Discourses. The findings revealed that the teachers engaged in various ways, taking dominant, merging and often conflicting positions which



created complex identities for them as teachers of writing. The study argues that when teachers confidently work from a dominant Writing Discourse they present a narrowed perspective that may exclude their students from opportunities to participate in other writing experiences. Enhancement of teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, in particular an awareness of the available Writing Discourses, is required for self-reflection and a deepening understanding of "ways of working and being a teacher of writing".

Phase Two of the investigation, a case study, closely observed one teacher's enacted practice in her classroom. The case study focused on *how* this teacher apprenticed her Year 2 and 3 children (6-8 years old) to write a character description. A *participatory scaffolding* framework (PSFW) was developed for analysis. Key indicators signifying characteristics of scaffolding practice identified in the literature were adjusted to accommodate student responses from the data to interpret teacher-student learning interactions. An analysis of the teacher's pedagogy demonstrated that dialogic conversations, student participation and negotiation of the task developed powerful learning. A further analytical framework was developed to investigate how the teacher systematically scaffolded learning writing over time. Five factors were identified as crucial for signifying *a synergy of participatory scaffolding* (SPSFW). The study revealed that the teacher wove layers of scaffolding at the macro, micro and *close-up* levels. These scaffolding interactions were flexible, complex but connected and responsive to the students' participation. When students and teacher collaborated in the construction zone, a magical place where minds could meet, it became evident that learning was enhanced but for each of the participants learning was different.

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# Chapter One

## Teaching writing: Shifting landscapes

Definitions of what it means to be literate are shifting. Linguists, anthropologists, educators and social theorists no longer believe that literacy can be defined as a concrete list of skills that people merely manipulate and use. Rather, they argue that becoming literate is about what people do with literacy – the values people place on various acts and their associated ideologies. In other words literacy is more than linguistic; it is political and social practice that limits or creates possibilities for who people become as literate beings. (Van Sluys, Lewison, & Seely Flint, 2009, p. 199)

### 1 Introduction

This research project arose from conversations with teachers who were somewhat overwhelmed by ongoing curricula changes and school-wide professional development programmes. However, it was when an experienced teacher demanded, “So, *how* am I meant to teach writing now?” that my particular interest in writing pedagogy was challenged. Unsure of the direction and expectations for teaching writing, this teacher was trying re-establish her professional identity and make sense of the contradictions and inconsistencies surrounding educational and school policies in relation to her pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987; Timperley & Parr, 2009).

Teachers at the time, in 2006, were located between New Zealand curriculum policy documents. They were still coming to terms with shifts in previous writing theory and practice (McFarlane, 2000), wrestling with changes implemented by *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1994), a policy document introduced over a decade before,

and they were in the throes of exploring the draft of *The New Zealand Curriculum: Draft for consultation 2006* (Ministry of Education, 2006b). Political, social, educational and theoretical shifts were continuing to challenge teachers' "ways of working" and resonated with my own experiences as a writer and teacher of writing.

### **1.1 "Me" as a writer**

My early memories of authoring are not ones of enjoyment and passion or excitement generated by the love of words. There were no interactions with others but rather memories of procedural engagements, lining up at the teacher's desk to have the red pen correct spelling errors or to sit silently in a chemistry class copying down copious notes from the blackboard.

It was not until I began teaching writing to intermediate students, in the early 1970s, that I quickly realised that if young people are to be engaged they needed to write about their own intense experiences, their feelings and points of view, about things they are interested in. We used to discuss how ideas could be shaped, words selected to create specific meanings, manipulated to tell stories, ask questions, record facts or give points of view. I was introduced to and captivated by a particular teaching pedagogy, the process approach (Graves, 1983; Ministry of Education, 1992) that allowed my students and me the freedom to explore and experiment, to talk and to listen to each other's writing. When an opportunity arose, I attended a week's summer school writing workshop in 1992, based on the National Writing Project from the United States. I participated. I wrote about personal experiences, about people who had influenced my life, I recollected intense early childhood memories, I sketched objects and described them, listened to poetry and enjoyed the rhythms; I became an author.

In the early 1990s I was invited to facilitate the introduction of *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1994); new challenges were posed. We asked teachers not only to write expressively, to shape sensory and descriptive writing as a poetic function but also more importantly to construct specific texts with transactional functions and purposes. The shift in focus demanded I consider the structural and textural features of texts as genres, and that I consider how to organise and apply layers of functional grammar that would fulfil specific social functions. I, like many other primary school teachers, had not analysed or considered the linguistic features or grammatical organisation of genres in any great depth. Viewing writing as a textual product created new challenges. As a teacher of writing I had enthused the writer; now I was expected to teach writing with a focus on constructing a product ensuring certain grammatical features were evident.

Later, I was invited to lecture teacher-education students in the Arts and Language Department at the University of Waikato. A tertiary career placed new demands on me as an academic writer with expectations to research, analyse, critique and report. As a teacher educator I was expected to verbalise and make explicit my beliefs on how to best teach writing, and to articulate the underpinning writing theories and associated practices. My perspectives on writing and how it should be taught changed to embrace a sociocultural view (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000), one that reflected writing as a social act that also called for the design of multimodal and digital texts.

While this research project investigates teachers' beliefs and practices about teaching writing, this thesis has also enabled me to explore my own identity as writer, and as a teacher of writing.

## **1.2 Background rumblings: Educational reforms**

So what were the factors impacting on and shaping my various experiences of writing related to New Zealand primary schools? What anomalies emerged, which encouraged educational researchers and practitioners to question the norm (Hairston, 1982)? And what might future directions for teaching writing entail? This first question is reviewed in respect to recent international and national educational reforms.

In the early 1990s, when many Western countries were experiencing turmoil from social, cultural and economic change, New Zealand did not escape the upheaval (Soler & Smith, 2000; Timperley & Parr, 2009; I. Wilkinson, 1998). The political impact of social and economic restructuring resulted in demands for greater accountability in the New Zealand educational sector. As Timperley and Parr (2009) explained, “in 1989, all layers of district administration were abolished and the Central Department of Education was down-sized into a policy-only Ministry of Education” (p. 136). And while the philosophy of self-governing schools gained popularity worldwide, “nowhere had it been taken to the extremes of the restructured New Zealand system” (p. 136). Pessimistic voices emerged criticising teaching pedagogy, polarising literacy views around debates such as phonics versus whole language, claims of falling literacy standards and demands to bring back the basics. Soler and Smith (2000) wrote:

In the 1990s, attacks by academic experts on the teaching profession’s teaching of reading had been picked up by other community groups, including the Business Round Table and National Party politicians ... Once again, an emphasis upon the ‘three Rs’ served as a political platform for an approaching election as National party politicians stressed the need for standardised testing and assessment of the teaching profession’s ability to teach children to read. (p. 145)

Political debates in relation to educational policy, initiated in part by members of various lobby groups, were prevalent in the early 1990s and had an impact on literacy education and teaching practices. In discussing educational policy in this study I am referring only to those literacy documents presented to practicing teachers. While many of the debates still focused only on reading, I argue that these debates influenced the teaching of writing in primary schools in two ways. First, educational policies resulted in the introduction of a new English curriculum document, *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* [EiNZC] (Ministry of Education, 1994). This document signalled major theoretical and pedagogical shifts for teaching English literacy/writing. Second, the Ministry of Education implemented an assessment agenda along the lines of a number of Westernised countries who had adopted an outcomes-based curriculum. Thus, greater accountability was demanded through the application of a more intensive assessment regime (Soler & Smith, 2000). These two aspects are discussed in relation to teaching writing.

*English in the New Zealand Curriculum*, although forward thinking with its endorsement of a single continuous curriculum for primary, intermediate and secondary students and the inclusion of visual, oral and written language strands, also introduced major theoretical shifts to the teaching of writing. This was partly in response to international research that had highlighted concerns regarding New Zealand students' abilities to write in a range of genres, in particular expository or transactional texts. Hilary Lamb's (1987) report on the International Association for Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) findings, *Writing performance in New Zealand*, indicated that while Year 8 and Year 11 students scored highest on narrative story-telling assessments, they found constructing argument and writing a critical response very challenging. This finding was to be reflected in the EiNZC (MOE, 1994) writing achievement objectives creating a paradigm shift and altering the way writing was to be taught

in NZ primary classrooms. Writing became classified as having expressive, poetic and transactional writing functions, concepts borrowed from James Britton's (1970) work in the United Kingdom. Teachers' pedagogical content knowledge for constructing transactional texts, however, was challenged and found wanting as expressed in the work of Limbrick and Knight (2005) and the *Curriculum Stocktake: Teachers' experiences in implementing English in the New Zealand Curriculum* (McGee et al., 2003). Teachers themselves wanted exemplars, as they were expected to learn a new metalanguage to talk about and teach texts as genres (Macken-Horarik, 2002; McGee, et al., 2003). There was a greater emphasis placed on the linguistic aspects of genres, the schematic structure of texts and associated grammatical features that dominated classroom teaching. Young (2000), however, noted: "It is apparent that that the developers have resisted a return to prescription and rule-based grammar. The emphasis is on learning about structures of grammar in authentic contexts and at the point of need of the child" (p. 116). While New Zealand educators and teachers avoided teaching many of the specialised linguistic and grammatical terms embraced by Australian educators, there were expectations from the Ministry that the exploring language process strand in EFNZC would call for teachers to have a basic knowledge of grammar. Consequently the Ministry approved the development of a supporting text, *Exploring Language: A handbook for teachers* (Ministry of Education, 1996b). The expected professional development in relation to this text, however, did not eventuate.

Secondly, many international reforms of the 1990s demanded greater use of externally referenced assessment procedures to measure, compare and publicise students' achievement (Johnstone, Guice, Baker, Malone, & Michelson, 1995; Messenheimer & Packwood, 2002; Tierney, 1998). The New Zealand Ministry of Education, in line with policies adopted in countries such as England and Australia, embraced an outcomes-based

curriculum with standardized achievement objectives set out across eight curriculum levels.

New Zealand educationalists, such as Hill, (2000) and Lee and Lee (1998) raised concerns relating to Ministry demands for a form of standards-based assessment. The multiple curricula documents were developed by the National government of the time, and Soler and Smith (2000) claimed their purpose was to obtain greater control of curriculum knowledge. For writing, it was claimed a written product would enable student achievement to be monitored more easily and the impact of teaching would become more visible (McFarlane, 2000). To achieve this the EiNZC document was set out in achievement levels or bands. Initially the objectives provided a planning and teaching framework but quickly shifted to include an assessment focus for mapping and comparing students' progress as signalled in the *Report of the Literacy Taskforce* (Ministry of Education, 1999) Teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical understandings of how to compare and assess different genres as text products according to the curriculum levels was challenged (Limbrick & Knight, 2005). Teachers were required to make sense of the broad achievement objectives, to interpret the terminology, and differentiate between the levels to identify student achievement. National government policy maintained that the achievement levels were non-negotiable (McFarlane, 2000); in this way assessment of students' achievement in writing was mandated and standardised.

Over the past two decades, Educational Ministry policy has developed more tools to measure students' writing progress against externally referenced, criteria-based assessment procedures. Initially, levelled Writing Exemplars (Ministry of Education, 2003b) formed the main tool, but have been followed by up-dated tools realigned to the New Zealand National Standards. Tools such as Assessment Resource Banks: English



(NZCER, 2013), normed Assessment Tools for Teaching Writing, now online as e-asTTle Writing (Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI), 2013), and finally the *The New Zealand Curriculum Reading and Writing Standards for years 1-8* (Ministry of Education, 2009) were introduced. Schools are required to report against the National Literacy Standards and are open to public scrutiny.

While I recognise that standardised assessment has a valid purpose in terms of looking at trends in national and school achievement, the obligation to assess primary school students against national standards has created tensions for teachers of writing. Concerns about the narrow forms of writing assessment employed (Dix & Amooore, 2010; Hood, 2003; Ward, 1998) and questions regarding the use of data to “manage” schools and teachers are still hotly debated. It is the various political changes and resulting educational policy shifts that provided the background against which this study examined teachers’ writing practice.

### **1.3 Significance of the research project**

Governments, both nationally and internationally, implemented educational policies initially in response to concerns about students’ achievement in literacy/reading. However, questions were also raised regarding students’ achievement in writing. In the United Kingdom, a National Literacy Strategy (NLS) was implemented in an attempt to raise literacy standards. Beard, Myhill, Riley, & Nystrand (2009) reported that “the policies had appeared to have had at least some short-term impact on reading attainment of eleven-year-olds but considerably less impact on writing, according to national test data (e.g., DfES, 2000)” (p. 1). Similar findings were made by the National Commission on Writing in America’s Schools and Colleges, who stated in their 2003 report, *The Neglected “R”*, that they were distressed at students’ writing capabilities. United States researchers MacArthur, Graham and Fitzgerald (2008)

applauded the Commission's report, stating that "writing needs to be at the forefront of current efforts to improve schools and the quality of education.... [H]owever, they must draw on what is known about writing, its development, and effective instruction for all children" (p. 2). So, on the international scene, concerns about students' writing achievement are evident.

In New Zealand also there were indications that all was not well in writing classrooms. These issues are discussed in relation to the significance of this writing project in terms of: the imbalance of research in writing, students' achievement in writing, and teachers' expertise.

### **1.3.1 The imbalance of research on writing**

Research in literacy has historically focused on students' reading development, on how children decode and understand print. Kress (1982) raised the issue of imbalance several decades ago. He identified:

[a] massive discrepancy between the amounts of work which has been done on reading, compared to the work done on writing. In addition linguistics has not provided the theoretical and methodological tools either for the analysis of writing ... or for the analysis and understanding of the developmental processes and stages in the learning of writing. (p. 3)

Beard, Myhill, Riley and Nystrand (2009) more recently affirmed that there was little change in this state of affairs, claiming that "the field of research in writing is relatively young, unlike the well-developed parallel fields in language acquisition and reading, and its impact on instructional design and pedagogy has been limited" (p. 17). The paucity of research into teaching and learning writing, as opposed to reading, continues, as noted in these international studies. In the New Zealand setting progress has also been slow. The Ministry's call for the *Report of the Literacy Taskforce* was guided by the goal that: "By 2005, every child turning nine will be able to read, write, and do maths for success"

(Ministry of Education, 1999). This report, prompted by New Zealand's perceived decline in literacy/reading standards, was a response to our participation in the IEA survey 1990-1991 (Wagemaker, 1993). The report identified a "literacy tail" explained in the following way:

While students still performed highly, 14-year-olds were ranked fourth in overall achievement and 9-year-olds were ranked sixth - a number of worrying trends emerged. Compared with 1970-1971, the 1990-1991 survey showed a widening *variation* in achievement. In fact, New Zealand's 14-year-olds showed the widest spread of scores of any participating country. What an analysis of the scores revealed was both a *gender gap* and a *home language gap*. (Dix, Cawkwell, & Locke, 2011, p. 147)

While the "literacy tail" was a worry and attempts to remedy this situation were to shape and guide future policy, my own concern focused on the lack of writing research to provide background information to reports such as the *Report of the Literacy Taskforce*. As happened in England, there was an assumption that writers' achievement could be improved based on the implementation of reading data. The various research studies referenced in the *Report of the Literacy Taskforce* were based on reading performance only. A notable omission from the Taskforce's research base in respect to writing related to the performance of New Zealand students in the IEA Study of Written Composition (Lamb, 1987) discussed earlier. The authors also failed to acknowledge the "criteria for quality writing" or the "characteristics of the writer" (for emergent, early and fluent writers) as articulated in the Ministry's own handbook, *Dancing with the pen* (MOE, 1992, pp. 121-124).

Although it is widely acknowledged that learning to read and write involves reciprocal understandings and skills (Clay, 1991; Smith & Elley, 1997), as Stannard and Huxford (2007) pointed out, writing needs its own research base. In England, as in New Zealand, there was a tendency to clump reading and writing research together:

There is a common assumption that, because competent writing almost always presupposes the ability to read, reading should be the first priority and that, with reasonable encouragement and opportunity for writing, children's experiences will carry across to their writing. This is not necessarily the case, as data on reading and writing attainment over the years have shown. (Stannard & Huxford, 2007, p. 53)

While the *Report of the Literacy Taskforce* recommendations to the Ministry established a strong set of pedagogical principles, the emphasis was on reading interventions (for example, Reading Recovery). The Taskforce Report did, however, identify features that would demonstrate successful reading and writing, expecting writers to be self-motivated and to be able to construct texts with accuracy and fluency. They presented key indicators for nine-year-olds' "writing for success" (listed in Appendix B, MOE 1999, p. 34-35). However, in spite of the Taskforce claiming that there were "no national indicators for children's writing" (MOE, 1999, p. 8) and along with their failure to establish a research base for writing, a range of National Literacy Strategy initiatives emerged. These initiatives began to shift the balance and place a greater research focus on teaching writing in New Zealand (Dix, et al., 2011; Limbrick, Buchanan, Goodwin, & Schwarcz, 2008; Limbrick & Knight, 2005; Parr, 2011; Timperley & Parr, 2009).

### **1.3.2 New Zealand students' achievement in writing**

International comparisons of New Zealand students' writing achievement were last reported by Hilary Lamb, who summarised IEA findings in *Writing performance in New Zealand* (Lamb, 1987). More recent comparisons report on reading achievement only, as presented in documents such as *International Association for Evaluation of Educational Achievement [IEA]* (Wagemaker, 1993) and *Progress in International Reading-Literacy Study [PIRLS]* (Ministry of Education, 2008). The findings of both international studies focused particularly on the "gap" between

the top achievers and the bottom achievers in literacy/reading. The low socio-economic status and ethnicity of the groups of students forming “the tail” have been consistently reported as concerns for the MOE and literacy educators (Timperley & Parr, 2009). However, there has been little comparison of students’ writing achievement on the international scene. Literacy data collected internationally do not analyse or compare student achievement in writing (IEA, 1984-5).

Myra Barrs and Valerie Cork, researchers from the United Kingdom, reported differentiated achievement in reading and writing. They were concerned about their National Curriculum assessment data. Barrs and Cork (2001) stated that children’s progress in reading was considerably higher than their writing achievement at Key Stage 2 (10-11 year-olds). An involvement in the project Reading and Writing power (RaW) resulted in their text *Reader in the writer* (2001), which aimed to help teachers promote writing through the study of challenging literature.

In New Zealand, Murray Gadd’s (2009) research on reluctant and struggling writers argued that “student under-achievement in writing is a significant issue in NZ schools, especially at the middle and upper primary and junior secondary school levels” (p. 5). His findings are discussed later in relation to teacher expertise. Moreover, conversations I’ve had over the years with teachers when visiting schools have suggested that their students’ achievement in writing is often below their achievement in reading. The teachers’ tacit knowledge is affirmed by several national studies discussed below.

First, the National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) confirmed teachers’ concerns about primary school students’ achievement in writing. NEMP, initiated in 1993 by Terry Crooks and Lester Flockton from Otago University, has tracked and recorded Year 4 (9-year-old) and

Year 8 (12-year-old) students' achievement in all curriculum areas. Achievement data for each curriculum area were collected and reports published on a four-year cycle. Over the years, NEMP has provided useful national information by tracking achievement in writing and highlighting performances of subgroups –categorised according to gender and ethnicity. The NEMP findings in *Writing Assessment Results, 1998, Report 12* (Flockton & Crooks, 1998) celebrated in *Forum Comment* (Flockton & Crooks, 1998) the “good news” that “students were able to engage in a wide variety of writing tasks in a short time without preliminary motivation and guidance from a class teacher” (p. 2). Moreover, they added, “there is evidence of considerable improvement in functional writing and spelling between Year 4 and Year 8. Typical gains of over 30 per cent are amongst the highest seen in NEMP subject reports” (p. 2). However, in relation to confidence and attitudes to writing, the NEMP report stated that 72 per cent of Year 4 students and only 60 per cent of Year 8 students reported a positive feeling about writing.

The NEMP *Writing Assessment Results 2006* (Flockton, Crooks, & White, 2007) demonstrated that while we can be excited about student progress, Year 8 boys were performing below Year 8 girls – and that although the achievement gap had been narrowed between ethnic groups, there was still a concern that Year 8 Māori and Pasifika students are performing below New Zealand Pākehā students.

The most recent NEMP Report on Writing (Gilmore & Smith, 2011) found that for Year 4 students writing was the fourth most popular subject, however, by Year 8 interest in writing was still dropping off and it became the eighth most popular subject. The trend tasks showed that Year 4 students performed substantially better in 2006 than those in 2010 on the “Wolf” writing task and the “Principal’s Message”. There was a

decline in these two forms of writing, descriptive writing and expressing an opinion for this year level. However, Year 8 students in 2010 performed substantially better than those in 2006 on the “Get Well Card” (*expressive writing*) and the “My Fabulous Toothbrush” (*persuasive descriptive writing*) tasks, and less well on “Wolf” (descriptive writing). While overall there was little significant difference in achievement, substantial differences between the overall performances by gender and ethnicity were still evident. Girls scored higher than boys and Pākehā and other’ students scored higher than Māori and Pasifika students. However, the finding that raised concerns for me was that both Year 4 and Year 8 level students “performed better on the tasks related to surface features of writing than on deep features, or demonstrating understanding” (Gilmore & Smith, 2011, p. 3). There are questions to be asked here regarding teaching practices and emphases on writing conventions as opposed to constructing a clear message for a particular purpose.

The NEMP project was reviewed by the incoming National government in 2009. Collaboration between the Educational Assessment Research Unit (EARU) and New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) has led to the development of a new monitoring study, the National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement (NMSSA). Like NEMP, it professes to continue to monitor the achievement of learners in Years 4 and 8, enabling us to continue tracking trends in primary school writing achievement.

Students’ low achievement in writing further up the school system has also been noted, in recognition of the fact that “Writing is linked to academic success; as students advance through schooling they are required increasingly to demonstrate what they know through writing” (Parr, 2011, p. 33). From 2000 to 2004, national writing data from students

at Years 5 to 12 (10 to 18-year-olds) were gathered using the asTTle assessment tool. A representative sample of 21,000 students wrote poetic and transactional texts. Analysis of these texts demonstrated that “the writing ability of a large number of secondary students was not improving beyond curriculum level three (that is, they only wrote as well as many primary school children)” (Ministry of Education & University of Auckland, 2006, p. 2). The findings indicated that secondary school students’ writing at years 11 and 12 (15 and 16-year-olds) reached only level 4, whereas their reading and mathematics achievement levels were at level 5.

### **1.3.3 Teachers’ expertise**

The third indicator that signalled all was not well in primary school writing classrooms, related to teachers’ knowledge and expertise. In the United States, Spillane’s (1999) investigation of the impact of state and national reform proposals discussed teachers’ efforts to reconstruct their practice in the context of the reforms. Spillane (1999) recognised that, “while policy makers and reformers at all levels of the system are crucial, if these reforms are to be enacted locally, teachers are the key agents when it comes to changing classroom practice: they are the final policy brokers”(p. 144). Research interest in teachers’ practice making the difference for students’ achievement (Alton-Lee, June 2003; Cardno, 2003) is evident in more recent professional development programmes following recommendations from *The Report of the Literacy Taskforce* (Ministry of Education, 1999). A focus on improving teacher capability by up-skilling teachers’ literacy knowledge and expertise has been evident in New Zealand through both large-scale projects, such as the Literacy Professional Development Programme (LPDP) and classroom-based interventions (Bareta & English, 2007; Dix & Amooore, 2010; Dix & Cawkwell, 2011; Limbrick, et al., 2008; Locke, Whitehead, Dix, & Cawkwell, 2011; Parr & Timperley, 2010; Timperley & Parr, 2009).



Limbrick et al. (2008) maintained that building teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, that is: "knowledge about the nature of writing; assessment of writing; the writing process; pedagogical approaches for teaching writing and awareness of research and resources to support the nature of writing" (p. 37), informed teachers' practices and raised student achievement. These authors had identified concerns about teachers' professional knowledge of writing in reference to an earlier study in 2005. They argued that many teachers

lacked confidence in analysing writing and using data from assessment of writing to inform their teaching. Many of these teachers expressed gaps in their own knowledge about writing and instructional strategies that focus on teaching and learning for a particular purpose. (Limbrick & Knight, 2005, p. 34)

Acknowledging that teachers have been grappling with multiple curriculum changes over the past few decades, and that these documents have not only signalled major shifts in educational policy in terms of writing theory and practice but have also placed greater accountability on assessment of learners, it is not surprising teachers lack confidence and direction in their professional practice. Teachers' lack of confidence as writers themselves was also reflected in data collected at the beginning of the project *Teachers as writers: Transforming professional identity and classroom practice* (Locke, et al., 2011) and further expressed by case study teachers when describing their self-efficacy as writers and as teachers of writing (Dix & Cawkwell, 2011).

The New Zealand Education Review Office (ERO) collected further information regarding teacher effectiveness. They reported on *The quality of teaching in Years 4 and 8: Writing* (Education Review Office, June, 2007). ERO based their findings on 159 teachers who represented a range of school types, locality and decile rankings. The report found that 41 percent of teachers were effective or highly effective across the six areas of quality teaching evaluated. A further 46 percent were effective in some

areas but less effective in others and thirteen percent of teachers needed to improve significantly across all aspects of their teaching practice (p. 1). In particular, the ERO report raised concerns in relation to teachers' pedagogical content knowledge. In terms of the effectiveness of teachers' subject knowledge, the report found 74 percent of teachers had appropriate subject knowledge to provide suitable programmes for their students. "The remaining 26 percent of the teachers did not have the appropriate subject knowledge. Many teachers needed to further extend their knowledge in writing" (p. 19). Furthermore, the report noted that, while 69 percent of teachers used effective pedagogical strategies to promote students' learning in writing, "almost a third (31 percent) of teachers lacked pedagogical content knowledge to support students' learning in writing" (p. 19). This report sends out strong messages for teachers of writing and highlights concerns. Factors that need to be reviewed include: a lack of differentiated programmes, lack of planning and assessment, teacher-dominated lessons, students not being taught to manage their own learning, and teacher feedback that did not provide next learning steps for students.

New Zealand researcher Murray Gadd (2009), too, noted various factors which impinge on students' learning to write. These range from students' lack of self-efficacy, lack of motivation, and lack of choice for writing topics, to considerations about teachers' instructional practices. Teachers' instruction, he maintained, must be built on sound pedagogical content knowledge and the ability to design scaffolding that supports writers. Factors that must be included are: "making the task manageable;" "engaging the students in the writing task through a variety of rich and interesting ways;" "providing a planning scaffold;" "setting up goal-oriented instruction;" "explicit teaching that demonstrates learning" and "self and peer assessment of progress in relation to learning goals" (pp. 6-12). Additionally, Gadd (2009) maintained that a classroom should be

well managed with sound routines, and that “working in a positive classroom climate builds students’ willingness ‘to have a go’ and take risks in their writing” (p. 12). The intention of this research project is not to determine if the teachers’ practice is effective or not, but it does raise concerns regarding some teacher’s pedagogical content knowledge and the impact this might have on learners.

Added to the mix of information on teacher expertise is what Timperley and Parr (2009) have described as the “middle space” – a space opened up since the introduction of self-managing schools, in the gap between policy makers and teacher practitioners. Timperley and Parr (2009) argued: “The division of the system into a policy-oriented Ministry of Education and individual schools since 1989 has left a ‘middle space’ between layers of the system, mostly filled by contract providers” (p. 139). While this space allows expertise to be shared through professional development programmes, it also makes room for publishing companies and self-appointed experts. Writing theory and practice, I believe, deserve a solid and future-oriented research base, one that teachers can confidently draw on to support their ongoing practice in the classroom.

#### **1.4 An overview of the research project**

This study acknowledges that *what* we teach during writing time is shaped by educational and school policies and our theoretical beliefs and classroom experiences, as well as the purposes one expects the written word to fulfil: it recognises that the teaching of writing shifts according to social and political perspectives. Rassool (1999) argued that “each (literacy) perspective brings with it not only its own particular view of what literacy is and what it is for, but also a particular worldview” (p. 36). So *what* are the literacy/writing theories and practices teachers subscribe to and *how* do these discourses impact on teachers’ practice?

In response to teachers' queries, this thesis asked the "big" question: What is happening out there? *What* beliefs and practices guide the teaching of writing? The purpose of the research was to develop an understanding of how writing was being taught by a group of teachers in New Zealand primary schools. The study is set out in two phases. First, in Phase One, I interviewed ten teachers who explained their decision-making in the context of the writing classroom. Further analysis of the teachers' talk was sought to explore the range and the complexity of the Writing Discourses the teachers engaged in, and to interpret and locate their positioning and identities as teachers of writing.

The following research questions guided Phase One:

1. *What* beliefs and practices characterise a group of New Zealand primary school teachers teaching writing in their classrooms?
2. *Why* do these teachers teach writing the way they say they do?
3. *What* Writing Discourses (knowledge/understandings, beliefs and practices) do they subscribe to?
4. *How* do the theoretical Writing Discourses shape their identities as teachers of writing?

The second phase of the research project followed one teacher, Kat, into her classroom community of practice to interpret *how* she apprenticed and scaffolded writing for her Year Two and Year Three students. The following research questions were posed in Phase two:

1. *How* does one teacher scaffold writing in her classroom?
2. Is there evidence of adjustment and handover for learning?
3. *Why* does one teacher teach writing a certain way?
4. *What* writing discourses (knowledge/understandings, beliefs and practices) shape her practice as a teacher of writing?

### *Thesis layout*

In writing up the thesis the chapters were organised in the following way. Chapter One provides a background to the teaching of writing reflecting the tensions and challenges present in New Zealand's changing educational landscapes.

The second chapter explores the research literature, categorising writing theories and practices as three Discourses that have influenced and impacted on New Zealand primary school teachers' pedagogy over the past four decades. Writer, Text and Social are descriptors used to represent different ways of viewing Writing as Discourse.

The third chapter discusses teacher pedagogy as an interactive practice from a sociocultural perspective. It considers classrooms as communities of practice, where teachers apprentice young writers from peripheral participation to writing independence. This chapter views apprenticeship through scaffolding theory and explores the research literature and the ongoing debates which surround this instructional teaching practice.

Chapter Four explains the research in terms of methodology and design. It justifies the use of an interpretive stance employing qualitative analysis to interpret and discuss the rich data from the teacher participants. The heuristics developed to support data analysis are explained in this chapter. Issues of ethics and validity are also described.

Chapter Five describes, analyses and interprets the findings from transcripts of ten teachers "talking writing". A thematic analysis approach is applied to responses from the interview questions asking how teachers organise, plan, teach and assess writing. This chapter provides an overview of what teachers "say they do" when they teach writing.

Chapter Six refers to the Writing Discourses discussed in Chapter Two and the framework identified in Chapter Four to analyse the teachers' talk in terms of the Writing Discourses they engaged in. It explores how the teachers are positioned in the various Writing Discourses and how this impacts on their identities as teachers of writing.

Chapter Seven follows one teacher into her classroom and employs a scaffolding heuristic developed to observe *participatory scaffolding* interactions. The chapter generates findings supporting a socio-cultural model which views learning as a *synergy of participatory scaffolding*, and views teaching writing as a recursive process and acknowledges that learning takes place over time.

Chapter Eight analyses one teacher's practice and how she positions herself or is positioned in the Writing Discourses. Her practice is interpreted according to her engagement with Writer, Text and Social Discourses and makes comparisons to the earlier analysis of her interview.

The final chapter provides a discussion of the research findings and highlights the contributions this study has to offer the research community. It draws on the conclusions to make recommendations for further research.

The next two chapters provide an overview of the research literature. Chapter Two reviews the literature in relation to three perspectives of Writing as Discourse. Chapter Three discusses the literature in relation to teaching practices, in particular research related to scaffolding interactions.



## Chapter Two

### Locating writing as Discourse

Policy, practice and opinions about literacy education are usually underpinned, consciously or subconsciously, by particular ways of conceptualising how writing can be learned. These different ways of conceptualising literacy lie at the heart of 'discourses' in the broadest sense: recognisable associations among values, beliefs and practices which lead to particular forms of situated action, to particular decisions, choices and omissions, as well as to particular wordings. (Ivanič, 2004, p. 220)

#### 2 Introduction

Teachers have experienced continual political, theoretical and pedagogical shifts played out in their writing classrooms. Consequently various historical writing discourses privileging process, genre, and more recently, multiliteracies approaches have shaped New Zealand teachers' practices reflecting different ideologies, knowledges and practices as evident in Ministry of Education documents (Ministry of Education, 1994, 2007; New Zealand Department of Education, 1961). Rassool (1999) argued that literacy is a selective process influenced by groups with vested interests:

Thus it is that some literacy knowledges are chosen for inclusion in educational policy frameworks, whilst others are marginalised, excluded or derided in social and political debate at specific moments in societal development. (Rassool, 1999, p. 39)

Changes in writing policies and related pedagogy posed challenges as teachers' practice was swayed not only by the political and educational reforms but also by school interpretations of the new policy and



curricula. Teachers were asking themselves how they should be teaching writing. This concern prompted my research project, and raised questions as to what subject and pedagogical knowledge (Education Review Office, June, 2007; Shulman, 1987) teachers of writing could draw on. I wondered how writing was actually being taught in New Zealand primary schools.

This chapter reviews the literature on writing theories and practices over the past four decades with particular attention to the New Zealand context. First, I briefly discuss different ways the research literature has categorised writing theories and practices. I introduce the notion of Writing Discourses to map and conceptualise the different writing paradigms (as explained in this chapter) and I then discuss how I have located Writing as Discourse in relation to three perspectives of writing theory and practice, that is, Writer Discourse, Text Discourse and Social Discourse. These three perspectives guide this literature review. The Writing Discourses are discussed in greater depth to capture the characteristics of each discourse as identified in the literature and for future analysis (see Chapter Four).

## **2.1 Teaching writing: Mapping a complex practice**

The field of research in writing is relatively young, unlike research in the fields of language acquisition or reading, as noted in Chapter One. Beard et al. (2009) stated that the field of writing research is not a unified or a coherent one as various discourses adopted very different methodological, epistemological and ontological stances. The following sections propose a view of Writing as Discourse and justify my reasons for taking this stance.

### **2.1.1 Writing as a discursive practice**

Defining discourse presented challenges as “the term is itself wide-ranging and slippery” (Taylor, 2001, p. 8). This review first drew on Fairclough’s (1994) social theory of discourse, where he views discourse as spoken or written language in-use. Fairclough presented the notion of “orders of discourse”, conceptualising discourse as a three-dimensional, interacting system. The first, and central, dimension of “text” focused on the analysis of textual and linguistic elements (vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and text structure). The second dimension of discourse, Fairclough (1994) described as “discursive practice”. He maintained that discursive practice involves processes of text production, distribution and consumption, and that “these processes varies between different types of discourse according to social factors” (p. 78). Fairclough’s (1994) third dimension viewed discourse as a “social practice”, and more specifically he explored “discourse in relation to ideology and to power” (p. 86). Fairclough (1995) argued that his concept of “orders of discourse”, “provides a means of systematically mapping properties of society and culture onto properties of texts, by way of intertextual analysis” (p. 28). Orders of discourse provided a useful way for this study to consider the impact of writing policy on teaching practice.

The second area of literature that this project drew more strongly from is Gee’s (1999, 2008, 2011b) work and his notion of “big D” Discourse. Discourse, from his perspective, goes beyond the sentence boundaries of traditional linguistic analysis of conversation or text. Discourse analysis looks closely at “language in use”. Gee (2008) maintained, that language always comes fully attached to “other stuff” and recognised that, “we continually and actively build and rebuild our worlds not just through language, but through language used in tandem with actions, interactions, non-linguistic symbol systems, objects, tools, technologies and distinctive ways of feeling, and believing” (Gee, 1999, p. 11). Discourses, he maintains are “accepted as instantiations of particular

identities (or 'types of people') by specific groups, whether families of a certain sort, lawyers of a certain sort, bikers of a certain sort... "(Gee, 2008, p. 3). Discourses, thus represent ways of being in the world, they represent how people enact certain practices, behave and communicate in particular ways.

Furthermore, Discourse communities represent products of social histories that are socially and culturally constructed (Fairclough, 1994; Gee, 2008; Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates, 2008). This is recognised by Gee and Fairclough as a reciprocal process: "Cultures, social groups, and institutions shape social activities... At the same time, though, cultures, social groups and institutions get produced, reproduced, and transformed through human activities" (Gee, 2009, p. 10). Discourse communities have common purposes and are thus relatively stable, but they evolve and personal identities and practices are shaped and negotiated, dependent on social interactions in educational and other contexts, at a particular time.

By locating writing as Discourse, these two views taken together allowed me to identify "who" (*socially situated identities*) is doing "what" (*socially situated practice or activity*) (Gee, 2011b, p. 30), but to also ask "why" writing practice was enacted this way. A justification for locating writing as three different Discourses follows.

### **2.1.2 Key influences on this study**

The research literature has mapped writing theories and practices in various ways (Hyland, 2002; Ivanič, 2004; Locke, 2005; Wohllwend, 2009). A brief overview of four different stances that have influenced this study is now presented.

Hyland (2002) presented a conceptual overview of writing focusing on theories that were “principally concerned with texts, writers and readers” (p. 5). His analysis of writing research, theories and practices was presented in the form of three conceptual perspectives:

1. A writer-oriented view focusing on the writer and describing writing in terms of the processes the writer engaged in;
2. A text-oriented view which emphasised writing as a product and focused on textual and linguistic aspects of texts;
3. A reader-oriented view focusing on the role readers play in writing. This “[added] a social dimension to writing research by elaborating how writers engage with an audience in creating coherent texts” (p. 5).

Hyland (2002) stated that while this classification took certain liberties, it was useful as it provided a convenient descriptive framework for further dialogue.

Ivanic (2004) constructed an historical overview of writing theories. Her meta-analysis of writing theories and research identified six discourses: skills, creativity, process, genre, social practices and socio-political discourses. She argued that, “this does not imply that a teacher should treat writing as one or the other” (p. 241); all discourses make a contribution to a comprehensive view of writing. Ivanic recognised that teachers “draw heterogeneously on these six discourses in ways which sometimes resolve, sometimes maintain the tensions and contradictions among them” (p. 240). Ivanic (2004), like Rassool (1999), was concerned by vested interests in particular views of literacy. She claimed:

Such discourses tend to be driven apart, I suggest, by interests vested in privileging one view of writing over others: the interests of those who will gain politically or commercially from curriculum changes, from the introduction of new

materials, and from the adoption of one particular theoretical stance rather than another. (p. 241)

Ivanic (2004) was concerned that if one theoretical view was presented as the only-way to teach writing, commercial interests would monopolise and capitalise on this perspective.

A third stance on mapping writing is presented by Locke (2005) who discusses writing from a secondary teaching perspective. He suggested that, "one approach to a view of literacy as discursively constructed is to identify the elements that have a (potential) role to play in constructing it" (p. 78). He identified eight key concepts (writer, reader or audience, text, meaning-making mind, meaning, language and other sign systems, technological mediation and social context) as a means to explore four different discourses or versions of English. Locke labelled these categories as:

- cultural heritage,
- personal growth,
- rhetorical or textual competence,
- and critical literacy.

The different discourses offered teachers of writing "a particular position or stance in respect of what writing is about" (p. 79). These positions taken up by teachers, he maintained, "can be expected to impact upon both understandings of what writing is or should be, and pedagogical practice (including formative and summative assessment)" (Locke, 2005, p. 79).

Wohlwend (2009) reviewed the writing discourses proposed by Ivanic (2004) and applied these to early childhood settings for evidence of assessment discourse in teaching writing. Her research found that

different assessment discourses set particular expectations and influenced the way teachers taught and ultimately how children participated in classroom writing experiences. Conflicting views created dilemmas for teachers as Wohlgend (2009) pointed out: “writing assessment is a contested site where competing discourses overlap and invoke conflicting expectations, creating dilemmas for teachers who want to do what they believe is best for children *and* fulfil their school’s writing targets” (p. 341).

These four scholars have mapped writing theory and practice in different ways. This study is interested in categorising writing theories and practice as Discourse in an attempt to identify the various versions of English shaping NZ primary school teachers’ practice. The process, and my justification for categorisation are discussed next.

### **2.1.3 Discourses of writing: Writer, Text, and Social**

In acknowledgment of the fact that writing theories and practices are complex, I required a conceptual tool, a heuristic framework, which could represent and map the research study. I chose to work with three broad Discourses of Writing which fore-grounded teaching writing from a Writer, Text and/or Social-oriented perspective. Each label stands as a descriptor for that Writing Discourse. Each Discourse identified creates a visual and conceptual representation of the big ideas, the beliefs about teaching and learning writing, ways to talk about writing, and associated assessment and teaching practices. These aspects of the Writing Discourses describe the work done by teachers. I was inclined to Hyland’s (2002) conceptual representation, but while he embraced “writer”, “text” and “reader” orientations, the labelling of the third group was an area of concern for me. Beard, Myhill, Riley and Nystrand’s (2009) introduction to their edited text mapped theoretical writing perspectives as writer-oriented, text-oriented and context-

oriented, reflecting their views of writing as a cognitive process, writing as linguistic mastery and writing as social practice (p. 17). Accommodating a “reader” or “context” perspective was difficult for me, as “reader” placed too great an emphasis on the responder as opposed to the writer. I preferred the descriptor “social” as I wanted to capture the social and interactive nature that emerged from the New London Group’s research on multiliteracies (NLG, 1996). I elaborate on this decision later in the chapter. Most importantly, an analysis of the research literature enabled me to not only categorise three Writing Discourses but it also allowed me to identify and label common discourse “markers” and develop an heuristic tool for analysis (see Chapter Four). This enabled me to locate in my research, Writing Discourses that have influenced New Zealand teachers over the past four decades.

Therefore, this literature review frames teaching writing in primary schools as three Writing Discourses and discusses in some detail the characteristics which constitute “markers”. These are applied in subsequent data analysis. Each of the three Writing Discourses represents a community of practice, a way of acculturating and apprenticing learners into that community. While recognising that these descriptors may overlap and embrace common characteristics, each provides a different interpretation and perspective reflecting the theoretical beliefs, teaching acts and “ways of being” a teacher or writer embodied in that Discourse.

An explanation of each Writing Discourse introduces:

- A brief overview of the Writing Discourse and perspectives subsequently presented. This is followed by an outline of the New Zealand setting identifying historical and educational shifts of the time;

- A theoretical writing model that teaching practices draw on;
- A discussion of the New Zealand model for teaching-learning;
- Typical teaching strategies employed for apprenticing writers.

## **2.2 Writer Discourse**

Writer Discourse represented a major paradigm shift in the late 1970s which affected the way writing was taught across the Western world (Smith & Elley, 1997). This “broad approach takes the writer, rather than the text, as the point of departure” (Hyland, 2002, p. 22). The writer is at the centre of learning; value was placed on the individual and what they wanted to say in terms of personal experiences, thoughts and responses to their environment. This theoretical and pedagogical stance reflected the progressive educational movement, and writing as a child-centered activity was affirmed. I have identified in the literature three overlapping pedagogical approaches evident in Writer Discourse that impacted on New Zealand teachers’ practices and refer to these as expressive, whole-language and process approaches.

Expressivist views promoted by international writers such as Murray (1978), Britton (Britton, 1970; Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, & Rosen, 1975) and Elbow (1998) were reflected in the practices and publications of New Zealanders Richardson (1964) and Ashton-Warner (1963). Expressive writing was regarded as a creative act of personal discovery, often written in response to environmental and experiential learning where language and the arts were closely aligned; and meaning was central. The teacher encouraged writers to explore their own thinking as they created their writing. Opportunities for personal expressive writing, such as journal and diary writing, however, later became sidelined as a new educational curriculum and assessment policy, in particular *The New Zealand Curriculum Reading and Writing Standards for years 1-8* (Ministry of



Education, 2009) demanded written texts that could be measured and levelled more objectively.

Ivanic (2004) referred to expressive writing as Creativity Discourse, stating, “writing is treated as a valuable activity in its own right ... with no social function other than that of interesting or entertaining a reader” (p. 229) and referenced Elbow, Britton and Graves’ work. While I agree that the first two authors subscribe to an expressivist writing discourse, we differ on the placement of Graves’ work. I, like others (Smith & Elley, 1997) recognised the influence Graves (1983) had on process writing, which became known in New Zealand as the “Graves approach” to teaching writing.

The second approach, whole-language theories, was actively promoted in junior classrooms in New Zealand. The work of international researchers such as Yetta and Ken Goodman (1986) and Cambourne (1988) valued the reciprocity of learning literacy language skills through oral language, reading and writing. Cambourne’s (1988) data collected from 20 years of classroom observations were analysed to suggest that young children learned language naturally if given certain conditions for learning. Claiming that teachers had followed a pedagogy that was largely a teacher-controlled process of repetitive drill and practice, he maintained that the interrelated learning conditions of immersion, demonstration, engagement, expectation, responsibility, employment, approximation and response gave students ownership of their learning. From this point of view, psycholinguistic theorists attempted to give writing equal value to reading. In New Zealand, Holdaway (1979) developed literacy foundation programmes where guided and shared reading approaches interacted with the writing programme. Dame Marie Clay (1975, 1991) pioneered early reading and writing literacy practices. Clay’s Observation Survey (Clay, 1993a) and her world renowned

Reading Recovery programme (Clay, 1993b) integrated teaching and assessment of the language modes. However, in reality research and practice placed a greater focus on children's reading development, which took a dominant position in language programmes.

The process approach, the third aspect of writer theories and practices, advocated that children needed opportunities to write like "real" writers. Graves, a key initiator of the process approach, argued that schools had traditionally placed obstacles in the way of children's writing, often ignoring the knowledge that children possess when they begin school and this had to be changed. His philosophy was described as:

...breathtakingly simple. No specialist material is needed – no textbooks or workbooks or exercises. The children decide what to write everyday, they talk about it with others, they revise and produce multiple drafts of their work, and finally they present it in some form for others to read. (Smith & Elley, 1997, p. 41)

International writers and researchers such as Calkins (1991) and Atwell (1987) worked with Graves to develop the writing workshop model. Children learned to write as "a community of authors" (Graves & Hansen, 1983). Individual writers' experiences, choice of topic, ownership, and sense of voice were valued and social responses to others' writing supported the revision or reviewing process (Boscolo, 2008; Fitzgerald, 1987). In NZ, the process approach was predominately reflected in the work of Ward (1991, 1992), Phillips (1992), Loane (2010) and Hood (1997). The New Zealand writing community enthusiastically embraced the process approach, as did Australia, the United States and Canada.

### *Writer Discourse: The New Zealand scene*

Writer Discourses dominated the way New Zealand teachers taught writing from the late 1960s to the mid 1990s (see the writings of

Richardson, 1964; Ashton Warner, 1963; Ward, 1992). However, the process approach for teaching and learning was adopted more widely than other Writer perspectives in New Zealand primary school classrooms, partly because the approach presented a clearly articulated pedagogy for teaching writing (Smith & Elley, 1997), but also because the approach was mandated by educational policy. Progressive, writer-centred pedagogy, subscribing to a process-teaching approach was affirmed in primary school classrooms with the publication of *Dancing with the pen* (DWtP) (Ministry of Education, 1992). The Ministry of Education handbook, DWtP outlined expectations for teachers' pedagogical practice and was shaped by the beliefs and principles of an holistic view of literacy learning and teaching. The handbook incorporated statements such as, "reading and writing experiences should be child centred; writing should have purpose and meaning; reading and writing are inseparable processes; reading and writing fulfil a variety of functions" (Ministry of Education, 1992, p. 6). Emphasis was placed on a model of the writing process and each phase was described as classroom interactions and teaching practices. This approach is discussed later in greater depth, particularly in relation to the cognitive writing processes, as it dominated the implementation of Writer Discourses in New Zealand classrooms from the 1960s to the mid 1990s.

The adoption of a writer oriented approach reflected a shift in focus – from the previous teacher-directed, skills-based programmes, which demanded learners practise decontextualised sentence-level skills to produce accurate writing products – to a more personalised, learner-centred, writer-oriented perspective. So which theory underpinned Writer Discourse practice?

### **2.2.1 Writer Discourse: A cognitive theoretical model**

Pedagogical practices informing process writing draw from psychological, cognitive explanations of how adult writers construct texts (Beard, et al., 2009; Flower & Hayes, 1981). Flower and Hayes' (1981) model challenged previous theories which had supported a compositional, linear, staged model of writing that centred on the final product and ignored "the inner process of the person producing it ... the more intimate, moment-by-moment, intellectual process of composing (p. 367).

Cognitive theorists described writing as a recursive process, one where the writer's mental processes reflected cognitive decisions as they generated, shaped and reviewed text. These theorists argued that writing was a problem-solving, rhetorical process that recognised the writer's prior experiences and knowledge. Writing was goal-directed, according to the purpose and the task set. Three major elements formed the basis: the task environment, the writer's long-term memory and the writing processes. Flower and Hayes (1981) explained, "the task environment included all those things outside the writer's skin, starting with the rhetorical problem or assignment and eventually including the growing text itself" (p. 369). The writer was expected to consider the topic being written about, the audience and the writer's own goals because,

As the composing proceeds, a new element enters the task environment, which places even more constraint upon what the writer can say. Just as the title constrains the content of a paper and a topic sentence shapes the options of a paragraph, each word in the growing text determines and limits the choices of what can come next. (p. 371)

The writer's knowledge of writing and the topic content, it was claimed, was stored in the long-term memory, "which can exist in the mind as well as in outside resources such as books" (p. 371), in what some would argue as a distributive view of cognition. The writer had to retrieve,

reorganise and adapt the material to fit the demands of the rhetorical problem.

The third element of writing related to the writing processes – planning, translating and reviewing. These were seen as being controlled by a monitor or brain function. Key to the cognitive model, these writing processes translated to classroom practice. Writers were perceived as constructing a message, moving recursively in and out of the three processes of planning, composing and translating, reviewing and revising. Each of these complex acts influenced or constrained other writing acts. Flower and Hayes (1981) elaborated on the three writing processes. They argued that “in the planning process writers form an *internal representation* of the knowledge that will be used in writing” (p. 372). The representation or schema was stored as a linguistic, visual or perceptual code that the writer then captured as words.

Planning internal representations involved the sub-processes of generating ideas, organising ideas and goal setting. Generating ideas for planning required retrieving relevant information from long-term memory (an important skill for young writers), and was dependent on children’s lived and imaginary experiences, and their ability to retrieve these and talk about them. Organising ideas or adapting information to the rhetorical task was regarded as pivotal involving mental processes of categorising and ordering concepts inherent to the topic, as well as making decisions related to the whole-text structure. Goal setting, a sub-process of planning, provided a focus and guided writers throughout the recursive composing and revision processes. Goals that writers set themselves were both procedural and substantive (related to the topic) and provided a map to create ongoing internal dialogue as the students developed and refined their writing. Flower and Hayes (1981) argued that, “defining one’s own rhetorical problem and setting goals is an

important part of being creative and can account for some important differences between good and poor writers” (p. 373): young writers often required teacher support to write to a predetermined goal (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1982; Clay, 1975; Dix, 2003b; Fox, 2001).

The second recursive writing process of translating was described by these theorists as “essentially the process of putting ideas into visible language” (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 373). The writers’ task was to translate a meaning held, which may have existed as an image, a feeling, an emotion or kinetic sensation, into a linear piece of written text.

Reviewing, the third key writing process, was described as two sub-processes of evaluating and revising. A reviewing process might generate more text or lead to changes. For beginner writers, this process is demanding as many find it difficult to distance themselves from their writing, and evaluate from a reader’s perspective (Graves, 1979). Writers who constantly review against their goals (ever-changing as they may be) were regarded as reflective, flexible writers, who confidently “messed” with their writing at the whole-text level (Coe, 1986; Dix, 2003b; Faigley & Witte, 1981). The monitor (brain function) determined when a writer could move from one process to the next, influenced by “both by the writer’s goals and by individual writing habits or styles” (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 374). An awareness of students’ metacognitive processing is an important consideration for teachers designing scaffolds. The ability or inability of writers to access and use their mental processes was seen to have the potential to influence the quality of writing.

Theorists of cognitive perspectives acknowledge that novice and fluent writers operated differently (Dix, 2005, 2006; Faigley & Witte, 1981; Hayes & Flowers, 1986; Parr, 1991; Smith & Elley, 1997; Sommers, 1980). Learning to write is recognised as a complex developmental learning

process (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1982; Clay, 1975; Dix, 2003b; Fox, 2001) necessitating expert teaching of beginner writers (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1982; Cambourne, 1988; Clay, 1975, 1998; Fox, 2001). Young writers face many complex challenges. They must juggle the complex skills inherent in written English, that is, implement the conventions of print, along with managing the syntactical structures of English grammar, recording the phoneme-grapheme mapping in words, while recognising the regularities and irregularities of spelling, along with the motor tasks required to form letters, while still holding the planning process to the forefront. Clay (1975) explained that, “all features of the language hierarchy must, inevitably, receive attention as the child builds letters into words, words into phrases and phrases into sentences and stories” (p. 2). While this becomes an automatic process for fluent writers, it is a demanding task for young writers who must consciously focus on controlling these early literacy skills. The process approach, as set out in *Dancing with the pen* (Ministry of Education, 1992) acknowledges the progression of developmental learning skills describing writers as at the emergent, early or fluent stage.

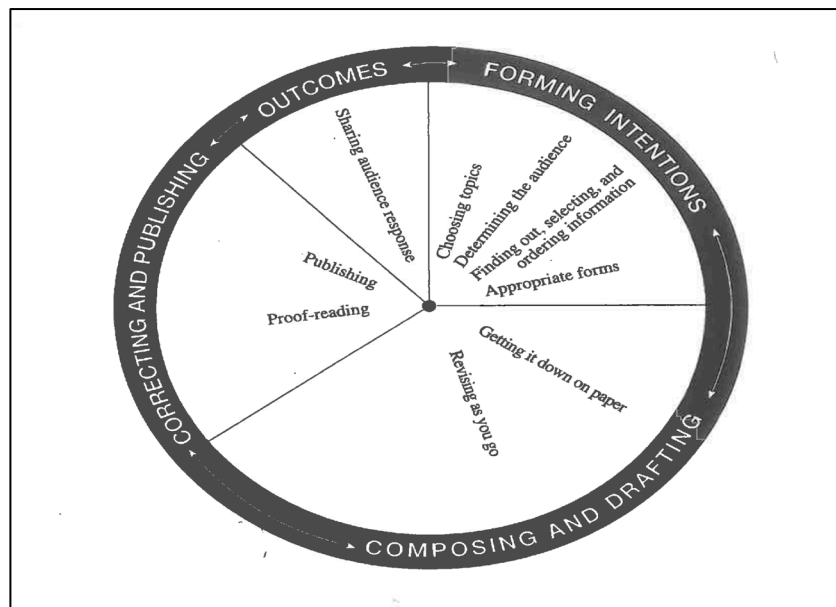
### **2.2.2 Writer Discourse: A New Zealand model for teaching and learning**

Writer Discourse was evident in New Zealand policy in the 1990s. *Dancing with the pen* (Ministry of Education, 1992) provided teachers with detailed explanations of *how to* support writers throughout the phases of the writing process. The process approach, as presented in *Dancing with the pen*, described four writing phases: forming intentions, composing and drafting, correcting and publishing, and producing outcomes (see Figure 1.). This teaching model, selected by the New Zealand Ministry of Education, emphasised the recursive nature of writing. The processes were not viewed as stages but rather as an interactive, reshaping of the writing governed by metacognitive processing and teacher interactions.

The process was described from the learner's perspective in the following way:

The process is not one of sorting out ideas, getting words down, and then tidying them up - its nature is recursive, that is, the writer's movement from one stage to another is affected by what has gone before and what is anticipated: outcomes may influence the choice of a new topic; the completeness of the information gathered and the skill with which it is organised will affect drafting and revision; drafting may throw up the need for more information causing the writer to retrace steps to a previous stage; even at the proofreading stage, making a correction may lead the writer beyond revision to gathering and organising more information; an alteration at any one stage may have a ripple effect far down stream. (Ministry of Education, 1992, p. 23)

The teaching process followed the cognitive model of writing recognising that each cognitive action, often initiated through social interactions between writer and teacher and his or her peers, impacted on other cognitive writing processes.



**Figure 1: A teaching and learning model: Writing as a recursive process** (Ministry of Education, 1992, p. 23).

Within each phase key learning outcomes are identified and the learner's role and their actions and interactions with others are explained. In



*Dancing with the pen* the teacher's role is elaborated, interspersed with teacher information such as teaching strategies, resources and examples of text. The writer was thought to interact with others in a shared enterprise: talking, listening, responding and sharing. Building a sense of community was at the heart of the process approach. Class members were to be organised around common interests to develop "ways of knowing and doing writing". Teachers of writing scaffolded writers through a recursive writing process, a cognitive process that mirrored how "real" writers made decisions when they constructed texts, but the focus remained on the writer's voice (Calkins, 1991; Flower & Hayes, 1981; Graves, 1983; Smith & Elley, 1997).

Assessment practices associated with writer-oriented perspectives were about helping the child author employ metacognitive strategies to clarify what they wanted to say (Graves, 1979; Phillips & Ward, 1992). As such, formative assessment practices, which provided responses to the writing, had a high priority (Calkins, 1991; Graves, 1979). Yetta Goodman (1989) encouraged teachers to become "kid-watchers" and observe children in action. Responses from others in the classroom enabled children to gain feedback, be affirmed yet encouraged them to reflect on their writing and consider possible revisions. Teacher conferencing was advocated as a means to respond to individuals' learning requirements, usually at the request of the student. Its success was dependent on the teacher's facilitation (Atwell, 1987; Graves, 1983; Hood, 1997).

The Ministry of Education teachers' text, *Dancing with the pen* (Ministry of Education, 1992), took a holistic and developmental approach to learning and assessment by describing the characteristics of the primary school writer in three broad overlapping stages: emergent writer, early writer and fluent writer. The characteristics mapped learner progressions under the headings of basic attitudes to writing, understanding of concepts of

print, basic understandings of writing, topic and ownership, ideas and forms, feedback and modelling, revising and drafting, presentation and publishing and spelling (pp. 121-124). In terms of the written product, the handbook suggested that “individual readers respond to a piece of writing by using their private criteria, basing valued judgements on their ability to interact with the author’s message and reconstruct a personal meaning” (p. 118). The product was linked to a personal reader response but guided by pointers identified as: the message and its effect (purpose and meaning, authority and clarity); design (genre and structure and title); and conventions (spelling, vocabulary and punctuation) (pp. 118-120).

The New Zealand model for teaching and learning described above presented a perspective of Writer Discourse. This model transferred to classrooms where teachers supported learners through a range of interactive practices. Teacher practices that support Writer Discourse are now reviewed in the literature.

### **2.2.3 Writer Discourse: Teaching practices**

Writer Discourses reflect beliefs and practices inherent in the cognitive model and combinations of expressive, whole language and process approaches. From the research literature the following practices were identified as typical: promotion of ownership and voice; development of students’ metacognitive processes; demonstrations by talking out loud; reader response through teacher conferencing and peer response, leading to revision and multiple drafting of the message.

#### *Ownership and voice*

Ownership of writing was central to Writer Discourse. Lucy Calkins (1991), for example, believed that through the establishment of writing workshops, not only did children learn the writing process, but they also learnt about each other and themselves as participants in the classroom

and wider community. Students were encouraged to explore their own social and cultural experiences, feelings and attitudes, using writing as a tool for learning about their world. They developed a sense of ownership and identity. Classrooms were filled with the students' own voices and their lives. Calkins explored these themes stating:

Imagine the message we would convey if we began the year by asking everyone to bring photograph albums from home and spend an hour in twos and threes sharing the moments and people in our lives. Imagine the message we would convey if, during the first few weeks of school, we had pot luck lunches together on Fridays, talking in clusters about our families, favourite nooks and crannies and our collections. (p. 12)

Writer perspectives promoted the keeping of notebooks or jottings to record the writers' own thoughts, feelings and retellings of personal and family stories (Calkins, 1991; Loane & Muir, 2010). Children were encouraged to "notice" what was around them and to use the richness of everyday experiences as a springboard for writing. Calkins (1991) stated:

We cannot give youngsters rich lives. We cannot give them long family suppers full of shared stories, rainbow-coloured markers and sheaves of drawing paper, photograph albums full of memories, and beautiful picture books lined up beside their beds. We can't give children rich lives, but we give them the lens to appreciate the richness that is already there in their lives. (1991, p. 35)

Graves (1983) argued that, "the voice is the dynamo of the writing process, the reason for writing in the first place" (p. 31). He maintained that when engaged in high interest topics the child exercises greater control, establishing ownership, and pride. In response to criticisms that children often do not know what to write about, Graves (1983) advocated, that a middle ground is needed: "where teachers listen to these children and 'temporarily' assign topics in areas they think the children can handle" (pp. 27-28).

Whole language proponents, such as Cambourne and Turbill (1987), believed that children should set up folders to contain drafts and jottings of possible future topics and ideas for writing. Literature also played a key role in demonstrating authors' craft (Loane & Muir, 2010; McCallister, 2008), where "the objective is to enjoy plots, the fantasies, the taste of words, to be stimulated by the drama of events" (Graves, 1983, p. 29). Children did not make choices in a vacuum; their own ideas, experiences, engagement with literature, and teacher and student suggestions, all helped motivate the child to write. They were encouraged to explore their writer's voice.

### *Metacognitive decision-making*

Writer Discourse celebrated writers' independence, their metacognitive ability to confidently manipulate text, and explain writing decisions with others. Confident, fluent writers reflected on their writing, carrying out an internal dialogic process, made decisions about what they wanted to include, what they wanted to change, and finally checked for accuracy before publishing their writing (Dix, 2003b; Fitzgerald, 1987). Writers were empowered. Williams (2000) claimed deeper learning resulted when:

metacognitive awareness is gained through reflection about how learning has occurred, enabling pupils to achieve deeper understanding of the processes involved. This will help them to make conscious decisions about how to tackle tasks in the future and, as a consequence, their learning will take a more self-directed course. Therefore, enabling them to acquire metacognitive understanding is both emancipatory and empowering. (p. 3)

The cognitive decision-making required to construct a piece of writing is dependent on the writer's tacit knowledge about language and its uses, and the writer's skills and strategies to manipulate composition and revision processes within the context of the task. Donald Murray (1982) explained how expert writers juggle this internal dialogic process:

The act of writing might be described as a conversation between two workmen muttering to each other at the workbench. The self speaks, the other self listens and responds. The self proposes, the other self considers. The self makes, the other self evaluates. Two selves collaborate: a problem is spotted, discussed, defined; solutions are proposed, rejected, suggested, attempted, tested, discarded, accepted. (p. 165)

Calkins (1991) asserted, "Writing is a powerful tool for thinking, because when we write, we fasten thoughts, observations, and feelings onto paper. We ask, "What have I said?" and we mean, "What am I trying to say?" "Why is this on my mind?" "What other ideas connect with this one?" "What surprises me about this? ... I talk about this kind of questioning as act of revision"(p. 56). In summary, process approaches expected expert writers to own their writing by demonstrating metacognitive awareness of the processes and strategies used for decision-making (Calkins, 1991; Dix, 2003c; Fisher, 2002). The aim is for students to achieve this awareness.

### *Teacher demonstrations, talking out loud*

Writer approaches value mini-lessons where teachers demonstrate aspects of writing indicating that some form of explicit teaching happened in Writer Discourse (Atwell, 1987; Cambourne, 1988; Graves, 1994). Teacher demonstrations focused the writer on "how to write" using the process model to demonstrate aspects of planning, translating and reviewing their texts. Children were shown how writing was constructed and shaped. Graves (1983) explained:

When teachers compose before children on an overhead projector or on large sheets of paper mounted on an easel, they speak as they write. Children need to hear the teacher speak aloud about the thinking that accompanies the process: topic choice, how to start the piece, lining out, looking for a better word. (p. 43)

Teachers composing out loud made the cognitive decisions of writing more explicit. Cambourne (1988) regarded teacher demonstrations, accompanied by thinking and talking out loud, as one of his conditions for learning. Graves (1983) believed teacher demonstrations were a way of showing how expert authors thought and acted: "The teacher writes so that the children can see the words, and gives a running monologue of the thinking that goes with the writing" (1983, p. 45). When teachers thought out loud, they demonstrated the mental decisions they made as they went about composing and revising their text. In Dix's (2003b) earlier research on revision practices, the student participants stated that teacher demonstrations helped them see how "real" writers worked. Fisher (2002) maintained that teachers often discuss and model the task or the writing process, but modelling the thinking was rare.

### *Teacher conferencing*

Response to the writer and their writing is a key aspect of Writer Discourses. It reflects progressive beliefs of valuing the person and what they have to say. In the research literature, response from audience or reader is discussed in several ways. The Ministry handbook, *Dancing with the pen* (Ministry of Education, 1992) stated that writers need many opportunities to talk in groups, in pairs and with the teacher. I will discuss conferencing from the perspective of teacher-student interactions first.

Conferencing as advocated by process approach pedagogy, played a valuable role not only by encouraging the writers to listen to their own "voice" but also to extend their own knowledge about writing (Calkins, 1991; Graves, 1979, 1983). Teacher conferences were enacted as roving conferences or as informal interviews. Roving conferences were short and sharp, initiated by the student or teacher who roved the classroom interacting with each writer who talked about his or her topic, asked for

help and also received specific feedback from the teacher (Calkins, 1991; Graves, 1983; Hood, 1997; Phillips & Ward, 1992).

Graves (1983), a key initiator of the more organised conferencing procedure, suggested teachers use a range of questioning strategies to guide the writer in reflecting on their work. He emphasised the importance of the teacher's knowledge about the writer, and their ability to pose questions which would challenge, extend and scaffold the writer. Such questions, he suggested, would "depend on reading where each child is - in his draft, in the context of his development as a writer, and what he has already said in conference" (p. 107). Most importantly Graves argued that teachers needed to ask the "questions that teach" and categorised these as: opening questions; following questions; process questions; questions that reveal development; questions that deal with basic structures; and questions that cause temporary loss of control. "Good questions provide surprises for both child and teacher" (p. 107). Smith and Elley (1997) specified that, "what happens during conferences with others can be explained by reference to Vygotsky's theory. The children receive and then internalize the feedback from their social environment to further their understanding of how to write for a real audience" (p. 43). Writer Discourse supporters proposed several purposes of a teacher conference. First the conference enables the student to reflect on what they are trying to say, to sort the direction and clarity of their piece. Second, the conferencing situation provides opportunities for the teacher to teach what the child either asked about or the teacher recognised as necessary. The conferencing session also provides formative assessment opportunities to gather data on the students' understanding and progress (Hood, 1997; Ministry of Education, 1992; Smith & Elley, 1997).

### *Peer response*

The view that writing needs to be shared and talked about is reflected in Writer Discourse. Peer responses were highly valued and opportunities for group response, “writers’ circle” and “author’s chair” were part of this pedagogy (Carruthers, Phillips, Rathgen, & Scanlen, 1994; Elbow, 1998; Gere & Stevens, 1985; Hood, 1997; Phillips & Ward, 1992; Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2007). In *Dancing with the pen*, it was suggested that a partner response involves listening to the writer read their writing, asking questions about anything not understood to gain further clarity, and then to comment on something enjoyable or interesting about the writing (MOE, 1992, pp. 107-08). The writer may choose whether or not to use their partner’s suggestions.

Gere and Stevens’ (1985) observational research of various age-groups of writers, noted that during peer-group response the depth of knowledge and response and use of metalanguage depended on the developmental stage of the learners. Eighth-graders debated using precise language and specific comments. This was not evident amongst younger writers. When high-school students debated, it was observed that they engaged in a deeper and more interactive dialogue which involved justification and elaboration. This led to more complex revision practices.

While “writers’ circle” represented a version of peer group response, “author’s chair” was a little different. The practice of “author’s chair” stemmed from Graves and Hansen’s (1983) classroom-based research. The procedure involved the child-author taking the chair to read his or her work. The other children “receive the work by stating what they think it contains, and then they ask questions of the author.... [T]he prestige of the chair grows through out the year” (Graves & Hansen, 1983, p. 176). Graves and Hansen found this practice celebrated writing, encouraged authorship, and developed students’ awareness of options



and the ability to explain or defend their decisions. The teacher takes the role of listener and joins the community of writers.

Although writer oriented practitioners maintained that children need to be taught how to respond and critique writing (Dix & Cawkwell, 2011; Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2007), being a critical friend is quite challenging for young writers. Expecting young writers to scaffold peers in skills they have not yet learned themselves highlighted the limitations of peer response for a writer's growth (Dix, 2003a; Gere & Stevens, 1985; Sadler, 1989).

### *Reviewing and revision*

Independent writers were perceived as those writers who can communicate effectively using the written word and who have the knowledge, skills and strategies to evaluate and revise to further develop their own writing (Carruthers, et al., 1994). Writer Discourses regard reflection, reviewing and rewriting as a crucial part of the composition process (Dix, 2003c, 2006; Fitzgerald, 1987, 1988; Flower & Hayes, 1981). Graves (1979) spent many years in the classroom observing children writing. He believed that revision followed a natural learning progression developed during developmental play. When profiling six-year-old Sarah, he observed: "the tool of revision was part of her learning style; it merely continued when she began to write" (1979, p. 313). Graves (1979) believed that children nine years old were capable of making multiple drafts when there was ownership of the process. However, without direct help children saw little sense in revision. Fitzgerald (1987, 1988) argued that it was only when teachers showed children how to generate options and taught them revision strategies that changes occurred in their revision behaviour. Dix (2003b) found that Year 5 and 6 children constantly revised, but in different ways. A key factor that supported the novice writer to revise was the realisation that writing

is temporary, that words can be added in, exchanged, reordered or deleted (Graves, 1979).

Process approaches in particular encouraged children to re-view their writing, and to make multiple drafts as part of clarifying their message. An initial review was done at the macro level, to reread and focus on the meaning, adequacy of ideas, richness of language and clarity of the text. Further reviewing focused on the coherence and the structure of the text and finally at the micro level, on accuracy in terms of spelling, punctuation and grammar (Dix, 2003c; Faigley & Witte, 1981). The *when* to, and *what* to revise has always been a contentious issue for Writer Discourses.

#### **2.2.4 Writer Discourse: Critique and conclusion**

Writer Discourse reflects the progressive educational movement, placing the writer, rather than the text at the centre of learning. The individual is acknowledged and the writer's voice is encouraged, recognising that writers had something to say when they "tapped into" their personal knowledge, experiences, thoughts and responses.

The process approach was adopted and supported by New Zealand educational policy and supporting documents and this impacted significantly on how teachers taught, and still teach, writing in New Zealand primary classrooms. The process model was successful in that students felt they had greater ownership of their learning, they could choose their topics and were confident about how to proceed through the writing process (Cambourne & Turbill, 1987; Smith & Elley, 1997). An increase in students' enjoyment and engagement in writing was reported (Smith & Elley, 1997; Turbill, 1983). Students' attitudes were positive; writers were keen to write and they wrote prolifically (Flockton & Crooks, 1998).

However, over time critique emerged contesting Writer Discourse in several ways. Process and whole language approach advocates were challenged and accused of utilising research methods which lacked scientific rigour (Hyland, 2002; Smith & Elley, 1997). These approaches employed ethnographic and observational methods open to subjective interpretation. Furthermore, pedagogy was critiqued and found wanting in opportunities to explicitly teach writing skills, in particular spelling and grammar. Other educationalists demanded that teaching writing include a wider range of genres (Christie, 1990; Hood, 1994).

In response, John Hayes (2009) revised the cognitive process model, again with a focus on adult writers. He discussed research on writers' ability to stay focused by looking at the language bursts when transcribing ideas into text. He recognised that while there had been progress in cognitive explanations on text creation, there were still unanswered questions. The United States based National Writing Project continues to promote process writing through professional development programmes. Specific pedagogical practices, however, have shifted. For example, Pritchard and Honeycutt (2007), long-time proponents of process writing in the United States, broadened their repertoire of strategies to include "targeted strategy instruction" (p. 36).

McCallister (2008) criticised the implementation of process approach pedagogy for different reasons. With the introduction of National Standards in the United States, some practices, for example, author's chair and writing workshops were mandated. McCallister (2008) claimed: "[S]chools, under increasing pressure to ramp up writing achievement, were lured by the promise of commercial programmes to raise achievement" (p. 459). Teachers implemented *Teachers' College Units of Study* written by process advocates, experts, such as Calkins and Atwell. Arguing, that writing process pedagogy had been hijacked, taught as a

progression of exercises, McCallister (2008) stated that the students' writing lacked voice and individuality of style. Furthermore, she claimed that teachers' pedagogical content knowledge had "flattened": teachers were less knowledgeable about teaching writing. Her criticism related to *how* Writer Discourse approaches had been adapted for an outcomes-based educational policy in order to make writing achievement measurable.

In the NZ setting, children's writing abilities were compared internationally. In the IEA studies Hilary Lamb (1987) reported that our students wrote effective narrative texts, but were not as competent with expository texts, and lacked argumentative and reporting skills. New Zealand educationalists, such as Harry Hood, challenged Government educational policy questioning the writing development of upper primary students, maintaining that while young children naturally created personal recounts and narrative experiences, older students required more explicit teaching in other genres (Hood, 1994). Teachers' subject and pedagogical content knowledge was thus challenged. Subsequently New Zealand educational policy was to place a greater focus on the text – the written product.

### **2.3 Text Discourse**

Text Discourse, is interested in how language works in particular texts and contexts. Text-oriented views focus on the textual product and examine how writing approaches engage with linguistic elements. Hyland (2002) maintained that:

By establishing a concern for material form, these theories have in common an interest in the linguistic or rhetorical resources available to writers for producing texts, and so reduce the intricacies of human communication to the manageable and concrete. (p. 6)

Hyland (2002) explored text-oriented theories as two broad approaches. His first category described text as autonomous objects, where text is disembodied, “removed from context and personal experience” (p. 7) so that there was no conflict or interpretation about how to construct a text. Writers passively followed rules. This view reflected Hyland’s comment that text construction “reduces the intricacies of human communication to the manageable and concrete” (p. 6). His second category acknowledged the writing context and the writer’s attempt to linguistically shape texts: communicating with readers for a purpose. In this broad category, he described “texts as discourse” and recognised that while a variety of approaches had been considered, “all have sought to discover how writers use patterns of language options to accomplish coherent purposeful prose” (p. 10). In this category, text as discourse, Hyland explored the notion of register (Halliday & Hasan, 1989) including the Systemic Functional Linguistic view of genres and New Rhetoric perspectives.

Italian researcher Pietro Boscolo (2008) applied two categories in his interpretation of genre approaches. He described them as “the Australian perspective” and a “social-constructivist” approach, acknowledging genre as a social construct, similar to a new rhetorical view.

From my perspective, two versions of Text Discourse influenced New Zealand primary teachers’ practices in the mid 1990s and into the first decade of 21<sup>st</sup> century. These versions reflect Hyland’s and Boscolo’s discussions on genre: one promoted the Australian version, a Systemic Functional approach to teaching text as genres, but was taught in a prescriptive manner, and the other took a rhetorical perspective on teaching genre. Both views addressed the relationship between language, context and text, but in different ways.

The first and strongest influence on New Zealand teachers' practice was the Systemic Functional prescriptive approach to teaching genres borrowed from the Australian Genre School. Initially, writers such as Christie, (1990), Derewianka (1990), Martin (1989), Macken-Horarik (2002), Rothery (1992) Knapp and Watkins (1994), and Cope and Kalantzis (1993) promoted genre-based theories based on a Systemic, Functional Linguistic (SFL) theory of language. These researchers demanded that writing should be taught more rigorously and explicitly. Motivated by humanistic issues of inclusiveness and power sharing, Christie (1990), Cope & Kalantzis (1993) and others argued that minority groups were "marginalized by reason of culture, or gender, or socio-economic background, or the social meaning ascribed to race" (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993, p. 8), and thus were excluded from participating equitably in society. Proponents of the Australian Genre School claimed that if minority groups were denied access to specific school genres, in particular transactional genres, they were economically and socially "shut out". Cope & Kalantzis (1993) emphasised the role language plays in establishing social status, claiming:

Genres, moreover, give their users access to certain realms of social action and interaction, certain realms of social influence and power... we know these are social realms from which a lot of people are excluded, and this pattern of social exclusion is marked linguistically. Learning new genres gives one the linguistic potential to join new realms of social activity and social power. (p. 7)

Many typologies were recommended. Knapp and Watkins (1994), using Martin's classification as a basis, proposed five genres, that describe, explain, instruct, argue and narrate. They regarded genres as social processes. They then listed a wider range of textual forms or text-types that reflected these purposes. Derewianka (1990) identified, what she termed, six language functions, nominalised as narrative, instruction, information report, argument, explanation, and recount writing. Macken-

Horarik (2002) however, claimed eight key genres were required for learning to write across the secondary school curriculum – recount, information report, explanation, exposition, discussion, procedure, narrative and news story. She focused on the “role of systemic functional metalanguage in the process of initiating students into subject-specific literacies rather than with social processes more broadly” (p. 17). All of these writing functions, Macken-Horarik maintained, are socially located in written products and reflect the schematic structure of a text as a predictable sequence of stages.

While the intention of the Australian Genre School was to present genre as a social process, a function of language, a dynamic process, shaped according to social interaction and context, the moment that key genres were privileged and institutionalised in schooling practice and taught as bounded set patterns, pedagogy became authoritative and prescriptive (Watkins, 1999). The Australian Genre School defined genre by textual regularities in form and content and promoted writing as a staged process. This particular view dominated New Zealand teachers’ writing practice (Dix & Amore, 2010; Ward, 1998) and will be discussed later in greater depth.

The second perspective on genre was based on the re-emergence or rebirth of rhetoric and internationally revitalised the notions of context, audience and sense of occasion for writing (Andrews, 1992; Freedman & Medway, 1994; Kress, 1999; Locke, 2005). Drawing from sociocultural and sociolinguistic theories, genre pedagogies based on a rhetorical approach acknowledged that social context determined the functions of texts. Pang (2002) explained: “Contextual analysis, by contrast begins with topics outside the text itself, configuring communicative intent, that is, the speaker motive and other factors” (p. 146). Freedman and Medway (1994) argued that traditional notions of genre must be reconsidered:

...recognizing that genres can be characterised by regularities in textual form and substance, current thinking looks at these regularities as surface traces of a different kind of underlying regularity. Genres have come to be seen as typical ways of engaging rhetorically with recurring situations. The similarities in textual form and substance are seen as deriving from the similarity in the social action undertaken. (p. 2)

The New Rhetoricians regarded genres as evolving, developing and even decaying texts, represented as social actions within particular social and historical contexts (Coe, 2002). This group viewed genres differently from the Australian Genre School with its somewhat rigid typology: not as mutually exclusive categories, but created according to the purpose and situation, with genres viewed as dynamic and subject to modification, adaption and hybridisation. Aiming to refocus pedagogy, the New Rhetoricians argued that the Australian school promoted learning through transmission, teaching in a prescriptive and decontextualised manner. Coe (1994) pointed out that although teachers proposed students write for a wide variety of purposes and audiences, in reality, this often did not eventuate. He argued:

One way to focus students' rhetorical attention was to insist that each piece of writing have a specifically defined rhetorical situation which may be stipulated in the assignment or by the student and should address such questions as:  
What am I trying to accomplish? (Purpose)  
With whom? (Audience)  
Under what circumstances and *in what genre?* (Occasion)  
(p. 162).

These questions, Coe maintained, should guide writers to ensure that their writing works for a particular purpose and genre becomes an aspect of communicative context and reader expectation.

The rhetorical approach discourse, however, has continued to evolve. Promoted by those who supported Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS), a body of research which explores school-to-work transition, Artemeva



(2006) explained: “RGS moves the study of genre beyond the exploration of its textual features on to the analysis of social contexts that give rise to and shape genres” (p. 10). RGS, she maintained provides a social perspective on the way individuals learn and use genres and as such acknowledges that some researchers have complemented RGS with situated learning theories. For this writing project, I recognise that these Writing Discourses overlap, and like Hyland, Freedman and Medway, and Boscolo, I have categorised a rhetorical view of genre as a text-oriented teaching perspective, but I also recognise that if taking a strong critical and political view of genre, it overlaps into my third writing discourse.

### *Text Discourse: The New Zealand scene*

Text-oriented discourses were introduced to New Zealand teachers as genre-based pedagogies in 1994 when the MOE implemented *English in New Zealand Curriculum* [EiNZC] (Ministry of Education, 1994). Viewed as a political document, in the sense that learning was organised as a progression of achievement levels, this document would ultimately require schools to measure and compare students’ abilities across schools (McFarlane, 2000). EiNZC also recognised the textual functions of writing, thus ensuring all students would be apprenticed in a range of writing genres.

EiNZC, based on the work of James Britton (1970), stated that the writing functions: expressive, poetic and transactional were “not mutually exclusive” and would enable students to “write on a variety of topics, shaping ideas in a number of genres” (Ministry of Education, 1994, pp. 33-36). A greater focus was placed on text products and teaching the function and forms of transactional or non-fiction texts. The English curriculum document signified a major paradigm shift in how to teach writing and challenged teachers’ ways of working – their ways of being a teacher of writing (McFarlane, 2000). The *Curriculum Stocktake* (McGee, et

al., 2003) that surveyed primary and secondary teachers' experiences in implementing the English document reported that teachers found "the English document was hard to interpret, not user friendly and that it had been difficult to separate the different levels within the curriculum" (p. 98).

Professional development offered by the Ministry of Education was limited and offered to school representatives. As a result, teachers who want more direction looked to the Australian Sydney Genre School for guidance. Part of professional development for many New Zealand primary school teachers and facilitators of the English Curriculum was to attend First Steps Writing workshops introduced by the Education Department of Western Australia. The *Writing resource book* and the *Writing developmental continuum* (1994) became a central teaching resource for many teachers. This shifted the focus from Britton's three broad language functions onto teaching a specific number of genres and the linguistic aspects of these texts. Primary school teachers lacked knowledge of what constituted a genre and were also challenged with a new metalanguage to talk about the grammatical layers of text.

Australian genre approaches introduced a SFL grammar, quite different from the traditional grammar taught in NZ schools or as discussed in *Exploring language* (Ministry of Education, 1996b) written to support the English curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1994). Confusions around terminology were evident. At sentence level grammatical terms used by the Australian Genre School, such as moderating words (most, some), connectives (firstly, secondly), mental verbs (remembering, like), controlling words (similarly, finally) were not defined the same way as in *Exploring language*. At the whole text level there were differences in describing exposition as argument and discussion. Claims made about the number of genres to be taught also differed. While most Australian

text-books identified six key genre functions for learning, the New Zealand Educational Ministry text, *Describe, explain, argue* (Ministry of Education, 1996a) identified three. They stated “generally speaking transactional writing is a broad ranging term referring to writing which can be characterised by these three writing purposes: Writing to Describe; Writing to Explain; Writing to argue” (p. 8). They proposed that other functions sat within these broad purposes. This New Zealand text appeared to be ignored by schools; rather, teachers depended on Western Australian curriculum texts.

New Zealand teachers who appropriated a genre approach taught writing as text types with an emphasis on *how to* construct a written product (Dix & Amore, 2010; Ward & Dix, 2004). Students were expected to follow set procedures. Political and educational reforms shifted the teaching of writing from a writer-oriented perspective to a text-oriented focus. The different ways international authors referred to genre, language processes and functions and purposes confused many teachers.

### **2.3.1 Text Discourse: A systemic functional, theory of language**

Pedagogical practices informing writing as Text Discourse looked to functional models of language which were based on earlier socio-linguistic theories advanced by Halliday and Hasan (1989). Halliday’s (1973) functional model foreshadowed discussions on multimodality and multiliteracies (Kress, 2000b; NLG, 1996). He regarded linguistics as one of many modes of meaning that interrelate and define our culture. He stated, “I would use the term semiotic to define the perspective in which we want to look at language: language as one among a number of systems of meaning that, taken altogether, constitute human culture” (p. 4).

Halliday and Hasan (1989) argued that the internal organisation of language itself, the text, corresponded to the external organisation of social context. They attempted to explain a systematic connection between the social context and text meanings, where language could be understood in relation to the function it performs in a particular cultural and social situation. Thus, a letter written would be shaped differently according to the function it was to perform, the purpose it would fulfil and to whom it was written. Central to Halliday and Hasan's theory of language function is the concept of register. Every text was regarded as unique due to the dynamic relationship of the three features of register characterised by the situational context. Halliday and Hasan (1989) referred to these as the *field*, the *tenor* and the *mode* (pp. 12-14). The *field of discourse* relates to what is happening, and concerns what is being discussed. This is important for writers as it forms the stuff or the content being written about in a particular situation. Knapp and Watkins (2005) explained that the field is "actualised in the text as 'ideational' or 'representational' meaning" (p. 18). The *tenor of the discourse* explains who is taking part. It relates to the participants and their relationship. According to Knapp and Watkins (2005), "the social relations between the participants in the context are actualised in the text in terms of 'interpersonal' meaning" (p. 18). The *mode of discourse* describes how language is used – written, spoken or visual. It asks what part language is playing. According to Knapp and Watkins (2005), "the mode or medium of the language event is actualised in the text as textual meaning" (p. 18). Macken-Horarik (2002) described the reciprocal interrelationship of these aspects:

Taken together, these three contextual variables determine the *register* of a text (the patterns of meanings associated with the context). Thus, contextual variation produces register variation. The twin notions of context of situation and register are useful because they show how context 'gets into' text and how context itself is 'recovered from' a text. (Macken-Horarik, 2002, p. 20)

A view of language as dynamic, varying according to the context of the situation, underpins Gee's (1999) notion of Discourse discussed earlier. Language "has meaning only and through social practice" (Gee, 2011b, p. 12). SFL theorists maintained that a strong correlation exists between the organisation of the situational context and the organisation of the textual grammar. Writing was perceived by Halliday and Hasan as a flexible, situated practice; language changed according to who was interacting, for what purposes, and in what situation. Johns (2002) claimed: "much of the theoretical interest has shifted to a contextual approach, to analyses of the situations in which writing takes place. In these theories, the writer is viewed as a social being, and texts are viewed as genre exemplars: purposeful, situated, and 'repeated' social responses" (p. 3).

Systemic functional linguistics theorists recognised that genre, in this case written texts, were represented by commonly occurring linguistic patterns organised according to the context of the situation. These were appropriated for classroom teaching and while some teachers took a rhetorical stance when teaching, others were positioned to follow a prescriptive approach. Genre, as defined in *Dancing with the pen* (1992), was flexible:

Genre refers to the different literary types, classes, sets, or categories of writing, each featuring its own group of attributes—in content, style and form. Traditionally, genre has applied to groups such as the novel, short story, poetry, science fiction, drama, and so on ... The attributes of each genre are conditioned by the *purpose* for the writing and, except in a limited number of genres, are not obligatory—there is no *one* way to write a novel, but there are common expectations of what a novel should contain. (p. 128)

However, as mentioned previously, New Zealand teachers tended to appropriate Australian Genre School pedagogy and teach more prescriptively (Dix & Amooore, 2010; Ward & Dix, 2004).

### 2.3.2 Text Discourse: A New Zealand model for teaching and learning

Text-oriented theories and the identification and description of genres were quickly developed into teaching programmes. The New South Wales Department of Education supported several genre-based programmes that were to influence teaching practice in and beyond Australia and New Zealand. Rothery and Martin (cited in Rose, 2009), working on the Disadvantaged Schools programme, presented a teaching and learning cycle model that provided a clear direction on how to teach the stages in order to construct a specific genre. The three-stage model promoted teacher modelling, joint construction of text, and independent writing. These stages were later revised as “deconstruction, joint construction and independent construction” (Rothery, 1994/2008 cited in Rose, 2009). Derewianka (1990) worked with teachers to write *Exploring How Texts Work* and her work had the greatest impact on New Zealand teachers of writing. Derewianka presented a two-stage writing model; first the teacher writes with the class, and then the class writes independently (see Figure 2).

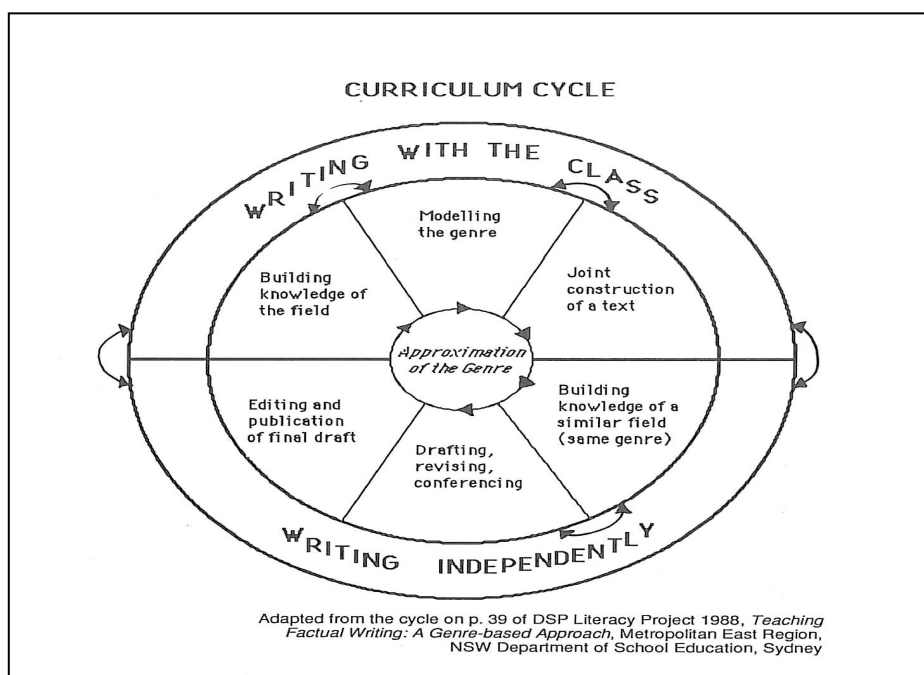


Figure 2: A teaching and learning model: Staged genre-approach  
Derewianka, B. (1991). A PETA professional development programme

In the first stage an emphasis was placed on the preparation aspect of the curriculum teaching cycle. This included identifying the major understandings and content knowledge required to “build the field”, to research and note-take, gathering ideas and information for writing. This stage set goals the children could work towards and an audience they could reach out to. The teacher decided which genre/s would be appropriate to develop for a particular unit and found examples of genre, or texts for reading and modelling. A more intensive investigation of text genre and forms was evident in the Text Discourse than Writer Discourse.

Models played a key role for identifying organisational structural components related to the function of the text, and grammatical features such as tense, specialised vocabulary, types of sentences and word classes. Joint construction of a genre then required the class and teacher to co-construct a new text in the same genre. This process was laborious and repetitive for children and was often omitted by teachers (Knapp & Watkins, 2005).

In the second stage, students were expected to transfer learning and employ linguistic knowledge by writing independently. Revision was perceived as ongoing, and linked strongly to the construction of the specific writing function and characteristics of the text (Rothery, 1992). Knapp and Watkins (2005 cited Callaghan and Rothery, 1988) pointed out that “the final stage of independent construction encouraged ‘the creative exploitation of the genre and its possibilities’. In practice, however, this rarely, if ever, was undertaken, and in syllabus documents and curriculum support material ... the focus is clearly on replicating a set of mandated textual types” (p. 79).

### *Assessment practices*

Assessment practices within the Text Discourse relate to the text as product. In the classroom teachers responded according to the class goals or purposes set and criteria identified in a particular genre. Checklists were developed as guidelines for self-assessment, peer or teacher assessment, either as ongoing formative assessment responses or applied more formally to level and assess student writing (Education Department of Western Australia, 1994b).

Formal assessment procedures and supports introduced in New Zealand schools were the Writing Exemplars (Ministry of Education, 2003b) and e-asTTle writing test (Ministry of Education, 2001). Both forms were developed under the guidance of the Ministry; these are genre-based and assess students against curriculum levels.

*The New Zealand Curriculum Exemplars: English* (2003b) were widely employed by teachers, who found the levelled criteria a useful description for assessing writing functions. The Exemplars stated that the purposes "are to:

- illustrate key features of learning, achievement, and quality at different stages of student development;
- help students and teachers identify the next learning steps;
- guide teachers in their interpretation of curriculum levels" (p. 1).

Teachers were provided with annotated exemplars at each level, analysed according to writing criteria. The criteria were set out in charts as poetic writing or transactional writing forms and organised in relation to the deeper features of a text (purpose, structure and grammatical language features) and the surface features (spelling, punctuation and grammar). This overview gave teachers a clear direction for assessment of students' draft writing and a tool for moderating writing school-wide.



The initial development of asTTle Writing assessment rubrics, by the University of Auckland, is described in Technical Report 6, Project (Glasswell, Parr, & Aikman, 2001). The asTTle writing tests were based on “the conceptualisation of genre as driven by functional purpose” (p. 2). The report identifies writing as serving six main functions and rubrics were developed for each of these functions. The scoring rubrics are set out in three meta-divisions with seven categories with criterion statements. “The meta-divisions with their categories are: rhetorical (audience awareness/purpose); organisational/structural (content inclusion; coherence – sequencing ideas and linking; and language resources for achieving purpose; and conventional: sentences and words (grammatical conventions, spelling, and punctuation)” (p. 4). Like the Writing Exemplars, asTTle writing assessed students’ control of the school writing genres according to the levels in the English curriculum, but added further categories within each achievement level. Students were assessed as achieving at a basic, proficient or advanced stage of the curriculum level.

The teachers involved in the trialling of the writing assessment rubrics indicated that they benefitted from the specific nature of the rubrics – these had added to their understanding of writing. The expectation was that teachers used the rubrics to analyse and level students’ writing. The developers also recognised that this tool could provide diagnostic information for teaching (Glasswell, et al., 2001).

### **2.3.3 Text Discourse: Teaching practices**

Teachers who enacted Text Discourse in their writing communities embraced pedagogical practices advocated by genre approaches. The teaching practices typical of Text Discourse are discussed in relation to: developing a metalanguage for talking about texts; exemplars as models

of genres; co-construction of text; teacher modelling and templates to scaffold independence.

### *Developing a metalanguage*

A key difference between writer-centred and text-oriented approaches was the emphasis the latter placed on developing a language to talk about writing. Text Discourse recognised that texts were different because they do different things. How teachers related a specific metalanguage to a context and associated register was dependent on the teacher's perspective on genre theory and practice. Derewianka (1990) explained:

How language allows us to do things –to share information, to enquire, to express attitudes, to entertain, to argue, to get our needs met, to reflect, to construct ideas, to order our experience and make sense of the world. It is concerned with how people use real language for real purposes. (pp. 3-4)

The genre approach supported explicit knowledge for writing in the different subjects areas, that is, learning *through* language, but also *about* language. Derewianka (1990) pointed out “as we use language, we develop a relatively unconscious, implicit understanding of how it works. A functional approach to language attempts to make these common sense understandings explicit” (p. 3). Students were viewed as requiring a metalanguage or grammar in order to talk about texts (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Knapp & Watkins, 1994). The genre concept of grammar differs from traditional grammar, which formalised the English language system at sentence level and labelled elements as word classes. Genre-based grammar encompasses multiple levels: text-level, sentence-level and word-level explanations of language-in-use. Text level grammar encompasses the formal arrangement of the genre's schematic structure, layout, paragraphing and cohesion of the text. Sentence-level grammar explores the organisation of sentence structures, clauses, and the work word groups perform for that particular function of writing.

Word-level grammar looks at the structure or morphology of words. Genre theorists argued that readers and writers required a language to talk about writing and the function it fulfils. In doing so the writer is more knowledgeable and empowered to talk about texts. For example, the social function of instructing was written as a procedural text and organised at the macro level to include the goal, materials required and the procedure or ordered steps of actions to be taken. Further analysis of the language features or grammatical aspects for instruction was noted. This might include use of present tense, action verbs or commands, temporal or linking words to do with time and detailed information to explain how each instruction is carried out. Knapp and Watkins (1994) described grammar as:

a resource for understanding the different codings, or arrangements, that are used to construct a complete text, rather than as a set of rules for correct sentence construction. In its broadest sense, a knowledge of the grammar of a text provides a way of gaining a detailed and critical understanding of the forms and meanings of a culture. (p. 31)

Knapp and Watkins (1994) explained that, “a genre-based grammar ... assists students in making conscious choices in ways to organise and write texts” (p. 30).

### *Exemplars as models of genre*

Text Discourse proponents enacted a common practice whereby students were introduced to a genre through various practices. Reading a range of text examples enabled teachers and students to analyse the text. “If children are to write in a particular genre, they first need to become familiar with its purpose and features through immersion in the genre and by exploring sample texts” (Derewianka, 1990, p. 7). Australian Genre proponents also unpacked the text structure. Derewianka (1990) maintained: “Each genre has a distinctive set of stages which help to achieve its purpose. These stages make up its schematic structure” (p. 7).

Using exemplars was an important step for knowledge building, viewed as a whole class activity, this information was employed when students and teacher later co-constructed a genre. Furthermore, the schematic framework and related features of the language used, scaffolded independent writers and provided a reference for further writing. Teachers displayed charts of different genres analysed according to the organisational features of the text grammar, labelled alongside linguistic features thus providing future reference points for students.

Several texts have been written for teachers outlining a genre pedagogy, such as *First Steps writing* (Education Department of Western Australia, 1994a), *Write ways*, (Wing-Jan, 2001a) and *Exploring how texts work* (Derewianka, 1990). These Australian texts provided annotated examples of text-types demonstrating the structural aspects of the genres, such as in an argument. The title established the topic, followed by an opening general statement that set the scene and presented the argument. The paragraphs that followed constituted a series of points or arguments, supported by factual information. The argument is summarised with a concluding statement either restating the opinion or making recommendations for action. The argument exemplar was also annotated with grammatical features particular to that genre or writing function. There were expectations of specialised vocabulary, emotive language, use of conjunctions to connect cause and effect, use of present tense, and use of personal pronouns.

### *Co-construction of text*

Genre theorists apprenticed students by introducing genre types through shared reading or reading experiences so that students became familiar with the function and linguistic patterns of genres. By talking about the genre students' built their knowledge before co-construction of a new text in that genre was attempted. Derewianka (1990) explained that students contribute to the construction of the text using content

(ideational meanings) and understandings of the schematic structure of texts. Joint construction was viewed as a collaborative activity where students and teacher could pool information. The teacher's role was one of guidance, asking questions, making suggestions and scribing so that children could focus on creating meanings in particular ways. Students were encouraged to participate and negotiate understandings of genres during whole class, or small group situations. While participatory collaboration was desirable in genre pedagogy, Watkins (1999) stated that in reality it often didn't eventuate.

### *Teacher modelling*

From a text perspective modelling is about explicitly teaching. Wing-Jan's (2001) explanation of modelling employed strategies of writing to, with and by the children. From her point of view, "modelling refers to the planned and incidental opportunities to implicitly and explicitly demonstrate to children aspects about texts types and the reading and writing of these" (Wing-Jan, 2001a, p. 10). She maintained that through modelling the teacher could focus students' attention on the structure and features of different text-types as well as demonstrate how to employ linguistic knowledge when reading and writing these texts. This differs from Writer Discourse perspectives, which demonstrated cognitive writing decisions rather than applying linguistic knowledge to construct a text type.

Knapp and Watkins (2005) proposed that teachers "demonstrate correct textual grammar by transcribing students' oral contributions, reworking students' verbal responses explicitly to reproduce a particular type of text (p. 80). Wray and Lewis (1997), English authors, maintained that teacher modelling was vital for it "not only models the generic form and teaches the words that signal connections and transitions but it also provides opportunities for developing students oral language and their thinking" (p. 137).

### *Templates to scaffold independence*

Text Discourses supported independent construction of text functions by providing frameworks or schematic headings to guide students in their writing (Derewianka, 1990; Education Department of Western Australia, 1994a; Wing-Jan, 2001a). These may have been co-constructed with the class from exemplars or developed as criteria-based checklists. Wray and Lewis' (1997) research had noted that students' writing was mostly fiction and thus they developed writing frames for teachers to trial, to widen students' non-fiction writing skills. As most students wrote recounts their intention was to provide students with the "language of power", recognising that most writing to get things done in society, uses non-fiction written genres. Wray and Lewis (1997) argued that the genre model required a fourth step, a scaffolded activity using writing frames. They explained:

A writing frame consists of a skeleton outline... [It] consists of different key words or phrases, according to the particular genre. The template of starters, connectives and sentence modifiers ... gives students a structure within which they can concentrate on communicating what they want to say while scaffolding them in the use of a particular genre. (pp. 134-135)

These researchers proposed that writing frames be related to real writing contexts and charts of the writing frames could be employed during shared writing and co-construction of text, encouraging students to cross out or substitute words. Most often, individual students used the frames to help plan their text. Wray and Lewis (1997) claimed that they did "not advocate using frames for the direct teaching of generic structures in skills-centered lessons" (p. 137). This view was also evident in *Dancing with the pen* (MOE, 1992), which stated:

Giving learners a framework should not be done so rigidly that it hampers them from developing their voice and meaning. In clarifying their own material for an audience, learner writers will move naturally towards appropriate forms. In the best writing, there is unity between content and form. (p. 52)

New Zealand primary teachers, however, largely ignored the issue previously discussed. They gave their students templates of the genres asking them to fill in the gaps under sub-headings (Ward, 1998). Teaching writing became prescriptive, whereby students followed recipes (Watkins, 1999).

#### **2.3.4 Text Discourse: Critique and conclusion**

Text Discourse perspectives for teaching writing as represented by the Australian Genre approach impacted on NZ teachers and learners in several ways. Genre theory enabled teachers to build their own personal knowledge about functions of text, associated schematic patterns and linguistic features. In so doing, many teachers sought to build a common metalanguage to talk about texts and to assess students' writing. Viewing writing as a staged process provided teachers with a clear pedagogical model: it offered a prescriptive approach allowing direction and control of their teaching. A shift in teaching from a Writer Discourse perspective meant that teachers spent more time building the field and scaffolding students through the pre-write aspect of writing. The genre approach enabled students to construct a wider range of texts at primary school, even though in many cases this was constrained by the six key genres (Hood, 2003). Explicit teaching and whole-class conversations scaffolded student writers. A closer connection between reading and writing texts evolved as teachers selected examples of genre from student-readers to deconstruct. Students learned how to identify the characteristics of a genre through analysis of texts and to apply this to their own writing. Writing to identifiable set criteria enabled students to place a greater emphasis upon linguistic features of text and appropriateness of text construction.

Another area of support for systemic functional linguistic genre theories emerged from teachers of English Language Learners [ELL]. Explicit

teaching of set genres became the catch cry, based on a belief that students should be taught to write specific genres at school so that they were prepared and could compete in the job market. In New Zealand, the *Report of the Literacy Taskforce* (Ministry of Education, 1999) identified that the literacy “tail” was composed of children from low socioeconomic and minority ethnic groups. Concerns about low achievement initiated an educational policy that was intended to promote a genre-based generic form of teaching writing. A genre approach was seen as more manageable and assessable.

Concerns were raised, however. Although the adoption of a genre approach silenced the criticisms pointed at process approaches, pedagogical concerns emerged. International debates amongst theorists and practitioners, according to Christie (2008) “generated the greatest body of research, as well as the most heated and lively debates” (p. 28). Critics of the Australian Genre School (Dixon & Stratta, 1995; Freedman & Medway, 1994; Hyland, 2002; Sawyer, 1995) argued that certain genres were privileged over others, and teachers taught a narrow range, often in a prescriptive manner. Many students and teachers, it appeared, had come to view genres as bounded patterns of text, which ignored changing social needs, emerging genres and differing cultural contexts (Coe, 1994, Ward & Dix, 2004; Watkins, 1999). Watkins (1999) criticized teachers who taught genre as a set of procedures, where the learner did not process the new text type. She stated that:

If structures are viewed as all determining, this produces only rigid formulaic analyses of the social: no allowance is made for change and individual practice is ignored. The system is then a closed construct, an entelechy that reduces agents to a mere automaton, in a sense producing a lifeless result. (pp. 118-119)

Watkins (1999) further questioned teacher pedagogy that taught reproduction of text structures as staged, goal-oriented texts “ad nauseam”. She claimed that: “in teaching text as such, teachers



problematically assume the role of the textual police ensuring the students understand and reproduce these textual rules” (p. 118). Hyland (2002) cautioned:

Because of this text-intensive focus there is always a danger of reifying genres and regarding them as linguistic abstractions, so that students come to see them as set of rules, what Freedman (1994) calls ‘a recipe theory of genre’ (p. 46). Critics argue, therefore, that an exclusive focus on rhetorical surface features can lead to genres being taught as moulds into which meanings can be poured, rather than as ways of making meanings. (p. 22)

The argument of privileging certain forms of language over others was recognised as a highly debatable practice (Freedman & Medway, 1994; Hyland, 2002).

Another tension lay in teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge. Varying emphases were placed on language functions in relation to text and social context, that is, whether the approach should be solidly foregrounded in language and text structure or whether it stems primarily from social theories of context and community. It was the linguistic and non-linguistic emphases that John Flowerdew (2002) regarded as the fundamental difference between genre theories and practice. He claimed that:

ESP (English for specific purposes) and the Australian school take a linguistic approach, applying theories of functional grammar and discourse and concentrating on the lexicogrammatical and rhetorical realisation of the communicative purposes embodied in a genre, whereas the New Rhetoric group is less interested in lexico-grammar and rhetorical structure and more focused on situational context – the purposes and functions of genres and attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviours of the members of the discourse communities within which genre are situated. (p. 91)

These different emphases, as already discussed, have been played out in New Zealand classrooms. From my experiences, like those of other

tertiary educators in and out of many schools, it was evident that many teachers have struggled with pedagogy and a metalanguage to talk about texts (Hood, 2003; Ward, 1998). Unsurprisingly, explicit staged-teaching of selected text-types was taken up by New Zealand primary schools with some vigour. The Ministry's support was limited, and the publication of *Describe, explain argue: Teaching and learning transactional writing, from level 1 – level 4* (Ministry of Education, 1996a) was largely ignored. The development of the Writing Exemplars, and more specifically asTTLe assessment of writing which assessed and levelled students' written products according to six genres, locked in teacher accountability, and viewed writing as an outcome. It was not surprising, then, that a transmission model was adopted by many teachers in New Zealand.

The claim that genre was a way of combatting inequality was challenged by Green and Lee (1994) who claimed that gaining access to a set of approved genres may in fact mean that students, by acceding to dominant values, are denied access to important cultural differences and individual perspectives. Freedman and Medway (1994) pointed out that “students from non dominant positions cannot become powerful by simply adopting the genres of power, since the latter embody values and assumptions opposed to those held by people outside the centres of power” (p. 15).

Issues of cultural identity and diversity, as well as school access to new digital literacies were raised by the New London Group (1996). Educators and researchers were looking for a paradigm shift: one that encompassed a broader view for teaching literacy/writing. A third perspective of writing as Social Discourse follows.

## **2.4 Social Discourse**

This broad Writing Discourse reflects the “social”, the participatory nature of writing that teachers and writers engage in, both in and beyond the classroom. Writers are positioned as members of local and global communities engaging with complex multimodal, and multimedia texts (Anstey, 2009; Kress & Bezemer, 2009; Lave & Wenger, 1991). This view recognises that writing practices are situated in social, political and cultural contexts, shaping the way we “do” writing and the way we “think” and “talk” about writing (Gee, 2008). A Social Discourse perspective acknowledges that writing technologies are more complex, and must acknowledge the different cultural groups, their ways of writing and range of their writing purposes. This notion of writing involves social participation and collaboration in multiple ways.

As discussed, different Writing Discourses put different interpretations and emphases on the elements of writing. Social Discourse, as discussed here, differs from the social aspects embedded in Writer and Text discourses. Writer perspectives, and in particular process writing, engaged others from the classroom community to act as listeners and responders to their individual writing. The Text perspectives considered the social function and purpose of the genre in relation to linguistic mastery of a product. Social Discourse views of writing go beyond earlier cognitive theories, which positioned writing as happening in the mind. A Social Discourse perspective views writers as participants with others engaged in sociocultural literacy/writing practices (Gee, 2008; NLG, 1996; Wertsch, Del-Rio, & Alvarez, 1995).

A conceptual understanding of Writing as Social Discourse emerged in response to social and technological changes impacting on how people interacted, worked and communicated. Society had shifted from a manufacturing-based community to an information-based community

placing new and different demands on what counted as literacy and what literacies should be taught in classrooms. Labels such as, new literacies, future literacies or multiliteracies have been part of international educational discussions since the mid 1990s and were initiated by an influential group of literacy experts known as the New London Group [NLG]. Cazden, Luke, Gee, Kalantzis, Cope, Nakata, Michaels, Carmen Luke, Fairclough and Kress, gathered in New London in 1994. The NLG's purpose was to acknowledge the multiplicity of discourses, to debate and respond to the many and rapid changes influencing the way societies communicated, interacted and gained information for learning, living and working together. Their article, *A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures* recommended a broader view of literacy be implemented and they coined the term multiliteracies to highlight the multiplicity of literacies from two standpoints:

First, we want to extend the idea and scope of literacy pedagogy to account for the context of our culturally and linguistically diverse and increasingly globalised societies, for the multifarious cultures that interrelate and the plurality of texts that circulate. Second we argue that literacy pedagogy now must account for the burgeoning variety of text forms associated with multimedia technologies. (NLG, 1996, p. 61)

The NLG opened debates on future-oriented views of literacy learning and invited other proponents such as Anstey, Bull, Freebody, Comber, Hamilton, Unsworth, Ivanic and Barton to join discussions of literacy/writing as Social Discourse and multiliterate practices. At the time, New Zealand researchers' voices were absent. Partly because a research base for teaching multiliteracies/writing was still evolving in New Zealand, and partly because no pedagogical model had been mandated by the Ministry of Education, I searched the literature and identified three possible approaches consistent with this overarching discourse: writing as a multimodal practice, writing as dialogic interaction, and writing to explore relationships of power.

Writing as a multimodal approach acknowledged students' social interactions with a diverse range of digital, multimedia and print-based texts. Historically the written word had been the most valued form of communication in the Western world, but with the impact of new technologies over the past four decades, print-based texts have lost their dominance over other meaning-making modes (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Kalantzis & Cope, 2012; Kress & Bezemer, 2009). In particular, multimedia and screen-based texts entered school, social and work place worlds. This enabled verbal textual elements to integrate in particular with sound and visual modes to add depth and complexity, incorporating such elements as photographs, morphing graphics, soundtracks, voice-overs, moving images and font styles, all synthesised to produce particular meanings (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Healy, 2008; Kress, 2000b).

Kress (2000b) claimed that all texts are multimodal and "writing-as-mode" is seen in conjunction with other expressive modes. To view texts as multimodal expressions, Kress and Bezemer (2009) argued, we need to view communication from a (social) semiotic perspective rather than a (socio-) linguistic view; to pay attention to the social origins of texts as well as the semiotic effects and the potential of various communicative modes. They added that "to mark the fundamental differences we need changes in focus, metaphors, and orientation - for instance, from *writing* to *text-making*; from *composition* to *design*; and from (adherence to) *convention* to *rhetoric*" (Kress & Bezemer, 2009, p. 167). They are suggesting that new texts, new places and spaces for text-making require new metaphors and ways to talk about writing.

A second perspective of Social Discourse viewed writing as dialogic interaction. Writers as designers, or, to use Kress's term, text-makers, create texts in acknowledgement of their social audiences. While

audience and response have been discussed in the other Writing Discourses, the impact of globalisation and technological changes have enabled writers and readers to connect in new and different ways (NLG, 1996). Writing is no longer viewed as an individual act; rather “writers select their words to engage with others and to present their ideas in ways that make most sense to their readers” (Hyland, 2002, pp. 33-34). Writers can engage with others, irrespective of location and time, as the addition of digital and web-based texts allow meanings to be jointly constructed, changed or to take new directions.

A dialogic interactive view of communication draws on the work of Bakhtin. Bakhtin (1986) professed that human communication is characterised by the dialogicality of voices. Meanings, he maintained, could only come into existence when two or more voices come into contact: when the voice or utterance of the listener responds to the voice or utterance of the speaker. He explained:

The speaker himself is oriented precisely toward such an actively responsive understanding. He does not expect passive understanding that, so to speak, only duplicates his own idea in someone else's mind. Rather he expects response, agreement, sympathy, objection, execution, and so forth ... The desire to make one's speech understood is only an abstract aspect of the speaker's concrete and total speech plan. (p. 69)

This notion acknowledges a Social Discourse view of writing, where the audience is more than a responder to the writing; writers and readers address each other where the reader or writer's utterance or voice is dependent on that which preceded; the writer builds on what has gone before. Furthermore, Bakhtin's concept of dialogicality emphasises his concern of, “addressivity, the quality of turning to someone is a constitutive feature of the utterance: without it the utterance does not and cannot exist” (p. 99). Changes in communication landscapes have enabled writer-readers to communicate dialogically, connect more

quickly, to respond instantaneously and to interactively construct meanings that are locally and globally accessible (Anstey, 2009; Anstey & Bull, 2006; Kalantzis & Cope, 2012; Kress, 2000b; NLG, 1996).

The third view of writing, from a social perspective highlights relationships of power. This view, prompted by globalisation, immigration and economic changes, “emphasizes the social, cultural and institutional climate in which communication occurs, but stresses that the most important dimension of social context is the relations of power that exist in it and the ideologies that maintain these relations” (Hyland, 2002, p. 44). Sociocritical theories play a central role in this discourse. Taking a critical stance, however, goes beyond empowering students with knowledge of how to construct specific academic genre by deconstructing, learning and applying the dominant discourses (Freedman & Medway, 1994). Critical literacy approaches recognise that language is not neutral and that all texts are created from particular ideological positions, that readers and writers are constructed in particular ways, and this may involve issues of power relationships, equity and access (Janks, 2010; Luke, 1992; O' Brien, 2001; Sandretto, 2006, 2011).

Sociocritical theorists take seriously the relationship between language, literacy and power. Janks and Vasquez (2011) pointed out that critical literacy originally focused on how readers were positioned in particular ways. However, writing was later analysed from a critical perspective in relation to multimodal design and the semiotic systems at work. Research in this paradigm tends to explore multimedia, mass media and community texts that deal with issues of gender, racism, ageism and social groupings such as class. A critical literacies stance to writing develops in students “an awareness of how writing practices are grounded in social structures” (Hyland, 2002, p. 47), as students in

classrooms reflect a range of ethnicities, religions, languages, gender and cultural values.

O'Brien (2001) maintained that students can be taught to interrogate and texts in order to question, evaluate and analyse how characters are positioned and how images and events are portrayed. Close analysis of texts and their contexts reveals ideological assumptions and makes dominant discourses transparent. Janks (2010) argued that, "control over text production and the means of production are central", and that it is not only about having choices about which meanings we want to make, but "it helps us to think about how we are positioning ourselves and our readers and the choices we make as we write" (p. 156). The NLG (1996) argued that we need to deal with realities of increasing local diversity, that "effective citizenship and productive work now require that we interact effectively using multiple languages and multiple Englishes, and communication patterns that more frequently cross cultural, community, and national boundaries" (p. 64).

In summary, Social Discourse views of writing acknowledge that literacy learning is diverse, complex and socially constructed and that a broader and more flexible view of literacy is required – one that recognises and critiques the multiplicity of literacies available and enables all students to engage with literate practices to create a range of digital and multimodal texts (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Janks, 2010; Kress & Bezemer, 2009; NLG, 1996). Writing as Social Discourse points to the future: learning to write in today's classrooms requires more than a writer's knowledge of cognitive processes, and how to construct textual patterns or genres to meet language functions. Writers also need skills to participate in a social, digital and global world.



### *Social Discourse: The New Zealand scene*

A social approach to teaching writing in New Zealand, one that acknowledges multiple multimodal literacies, that embraces new technologies, takes a critical view, acknowledges there are different ways of learning to write, has sporadically been implemented in primary classrooms as schools and communities grapple with shifts in theory and practice.

In 2007 political and educational curriculum reforms introduced *The New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC) (Ministry of Education, 2007). The statement relating to teaching English read: "Understanding, using, and creating oral, written, and visual texts of increasing complexity is at the heart of English teaching and learning" (p. 18). This concept was not new to teachers, as EiNZC (1994) had already introduced the three language modes. Two points, however, did stand out. One was the expectation that "students will learn to deconstruct and critically interrogate texts in order to understand the power of language ..." and the other point emphasised that English/writing is fundamental for curriculum learning. However, the Vision statement, "what we want for our young people," was forward thinking. The document wanted students to be confident, connected, actively involved and lifelong learners, "who will be creative, energetic, and enterprising...who will seize opportunities offered by new knowledge and technologies" (p. 8). This poses a challenge.

The Ministry of Education's supporting texts *The Literacy Progressions* (2010), *Effective Literacy Practice, years 1 to 4* (2003a) and the national *Reading and Writing Standards for years 1-8* (2009) placed a pedagogical emphasis on print-based literacy. However, a later text produced, *Effective Literacy Practice, Years 5-8* (2006a) introduced multiliteracies as pedagogy, stating that:

It is useful for teachers to think in terms of multiliteracies –a dynamic shifting set of literacy practices that shape learners,

and all people, as social thinking and creative beings. We need a broader concept of literacy now than ever before. (p. 18)

This teaching handbook also acknowledged that, users of multimodal forms generate communication through a blend of linguistic, visual and digital systems for making meaning. Both teaching handbooks, however, fail to explain the design process of multimodal texts in any detail or to provide a terminology or grammar required to talk about multimodal, digital and electronic literacy/writing. Sandretto (2011) also points out that these texts; while they address critical thinking, fail to address the notion of critical literacy, the language of power.

A social perspective of a multiliteracies approach for teaching and learning writing in New Zealand is beginning to cause a shift from a text focused, product orientated, genre approach to a socially interactive view of writing. But there is scant research of the extent to which classroom learners are engaging with multimodal text-making.

#### **2.4.1 Social Discourse: A sociocultural and sociocritical model**

From a social perspective or multiliteracies approach to teaching writing, the research literature makes little distinction between literacy/language learning and the more specific mode of writing. In a Social Discourse writing assumes an integrated, dialogic, multimodal role in the construction of meaning.

Several heuristics or frameworks have been developed to explore the relationships between society, teaching pedagogy, learners, texts and contexts. I explain the first briefly and then elaborate on writing as Social Discourse, a multiliteracies pedagogy introduced by the New London Group [NLG] and later reviewed by Cope and Kalantzis (2000; Kalantzis & Cope, 2005, 2012) who developed a *Learning by Design* framework.

The work of Freebody and Luke (1990) impacted on New Zealand and Australian educational practice. They proposed a model for re-thinking the teaching of language as a social practice that recognised that learners enact four roles to successfully engage in the technology of written, oral and visual texts. These roles demanded that a speaker, viewer, reader and writer be able to crack the code, engage in the meaning systems, use text to become a social participant, and, most importantly, become a text analyst, that is, take a critical stance to analyse how the text positioned the viewer, speaker, writer and reader ideologically and socially (Education Queensland, 2000).

Also, the New London Group (1996) presented a conceptual framework, noting that, “Literacy pedagogy ... has been a carefully restricted project – restricted to formalised, monolingual, monocultural, and rule governed forms of language” (p. 61). The NLG asserted that theories of practice must acknowledge social changes and they developed a model to explain the knowledges a multiliteracies pedagogy required to integrate four factors: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice.

Later work, by such writers as Kalantzis and Cope (2005, 2012) led to further refining of their theoretical model. Based on a *Learning by Design* project, Kalantzis and Cope (2005, 2012) embraced four fundamental ways of knowing: experiencing, conceptualising, analysing and applying (p. 72). These knowledge processes, based on the NLG multiliteracies pedagogy, will now be described and linked to writing practices.

The first factor identified by the NLG was literacy learning as a *situated practice*, where writers are, “immersed in meaningful practices within a community of learners who are capable of playing different roles based on their backgrounds and experiences” (NLG, 1996, p. 85). Situated

practice is about utilising available resources including students' life worlds and must consider the affective and sociocultural needs and identities of all learners.

Cope and Kalantzis' later work in 2005 and 2012 regarded situated practice as *Experiencing*, noting that there are two ways to experience:

- *Experiencing the known*, a process that draws on life world experience, prior knowledge, community background, personal interests, individual motivation, the everyday and the familiar. This learning, they maintain, tends to be unconscious, haphazard, tacit, incidental and endogenous.
- The second relates to *experiencing the new*. This is a process in which the "learner is immersed in an unfamiliar domain of experience, either real (places, communities situations) or virtual (texts, images, data and other represented meanings)" (Kalantzis & Cope, 2005, p. 76). The new is defined from the learner's perspective. To make sense, though, the new must have some elements of familiarity. "For learning to occur, it also needs to be scaffolded; there must be means for the parts that are unfamiliar to be made intelligible - with the assistance of peers, teachers, textual cross references or help menus for instance" (p. 76).

This factor acknowledged those writing approaches discussed in Writer Discourse. The language experience approach is grounded in children's personal and shared activity.

The second factor for literacy learning identified by the NLG was *overt instruction*. Certain forms of overt instruction were required to supplement immersion so that learners gained conscious awareness and control of what they acquired. Overt or explicit instruction required teachers to actively intervene and scaffold learning activities that:

... focus the learner on important features of their experiences and activities within the community of learners, and that allow the learner to gain explicit information at times when it can most usefully organise and guide practice, building on and recruiting what the learner already knows and has accomplished. (NLG, 1996, p. 86).

Kalantzis and Cope (2005, 2012) further refined overt instruction as *Conceptualisation*. They propose that this involves the development of abstract, generalising concepts and a theoretical synthesis of these concepts; moving away from life experience to expand knowledge by examining underlying structures, causes and relationships. Conceptualising occurs in two ways.

- First, *conceptualising by naming*, describes a process involving the development of the abstract concept in generalizing terms.
- The second way is *conceptualising with theory*, a process where learners connect to concepts by making generalisations. This “is not merely a matter of teacherly or textbook telling ... but a knowledge process in which the learners become active conceptualisers, making the tacit explicit and generalising from the particular (2012, p. 369). This second element links strongly to the Text Discourse metaphor of writing. Genre approaches require teachers to model text deconstruction and identify schematic elements of a text.

NLG's (1996) third factor for literacy learning was *critical framing*, intended to “help learners frame their growing mastery of practice (from situated practice) and conscious control and understanding (from overt instruction) in relation to the historical, social, cultural, political, ideological, and value-centred relations of particular systems of knowledge and social practice” (p. 86). Cultural framing requires learners to stand back and critically view and reflect on what they are studying in relation to its context.

Kalantzis and Cope (2005, 2012) viewed critical framing as *Analysing*, a process examining elements of something, and interpreting the underlying rationale. Analysing takes two forms: *analysing functionally* and *analysing critically*.

- *Analysing functionally* is “a process of involving the examination of the function of a piece of knowledge, action, object or represented meaning” (p. 77).
- To *analyse critically* is the process of “interrogating human intentions and interests” (p. 77). It requires asking whose point of view or perspective specific knowledge, action or object represent, who it affects and whose interests are served. Critical literacy shifts the focus of deconstructing texts to helping students read the world as well as the word.

This third aspect connects with socially oriented perspectives. Interactions with multimodal and multimedia texts require students not only to design and compose texts using a range of semiotic systems but also to write from a critical perspective.

The fourth factor NLG identified is *transformed practice*. It is about the transfer of the meaning-making process, a practice that puts transformed or redesigned meaning to work in other contexts or cultural sites. This pedagogical factor expects teachers to work with their students:

to develop ways in which students can demonstrate how they can design and carry out, in a reflective manner, new practices embedded in their own goals and values. They should be able to show that they can implement understandings acquired through overt instruction and critical framing in practices that help them simultaneously to apply and revise what they have learned. (NLG, 1996, p. 87)

Kalantzis and Cope (2005) viewed transformed practice as a knowledge process of *Applying*. Application in pedagogy involves more or less

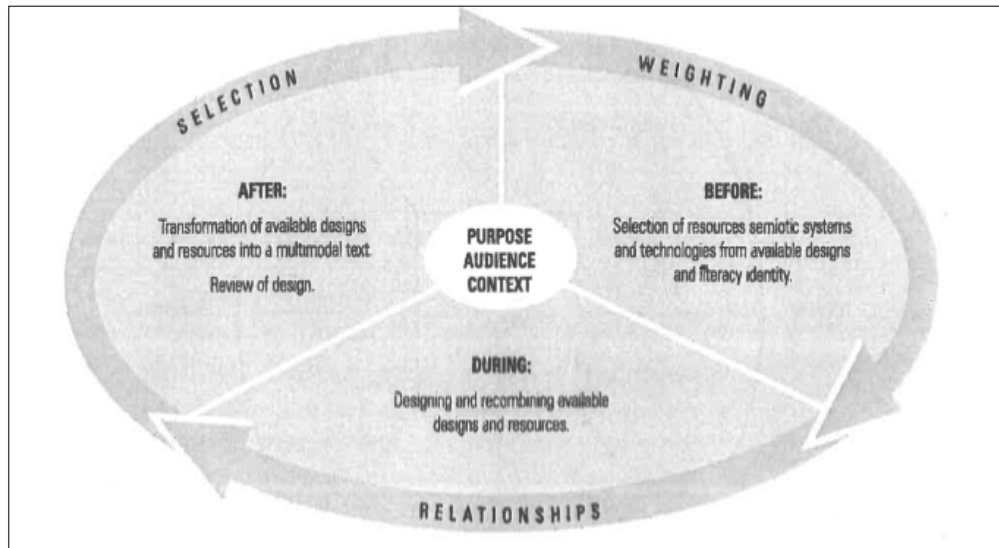
consciously taking knowledge from one setting and making it work in another. Applying can occur in two ways:

- *Applying appropriately* requires taking knowledge and acting upon it in expected ways. "It involves some measure of transformation, reinventing, or revoicing the world in a way which, ever-so-subtly perhaps, has never occurred before" (p. 78).
- On the other hand, *applying creatively* is a process that takes knowledge and capabilities from one setting and adapts them to a new setting. This kind of transformation may result in imaginative originality or creative divergence.

Kalantzis and Cope's explanation of knowledge processes as learning theory provides one way of recognising writing as a Social Discourse in the classroom, where multiple meanings are designed and critiqued in multiple ways.

#### **2.4.2 Social Discourse: A New Zealand model for teaching and learning**

Discussion in the literature relating to a writing process model congruent with Social Discourse or multiliterate pedagogy is still emerging (McDowell, 2010). While internationally researchers have talked about composing and designing multimodal texts using a range of media, there is little acknowledgement of this in New Zealand curriculum documents. Bull and Anstey (2010) referred to "evolving pedagogies", for creating texts in today's world requires new skills and knowledges. They presented a design process for a multimodal text that reflects the three phases introduced by the NLG (see Figure 3). Their figure describes the decision-making that might take place in each of the phases. Central to this is the consideration of purpose, audience and context.



**Figure 3: A teaching and learning model: Designing**  
 (Bull and Anstey, 2010, p. 110)

The Learning by Design framework is another model that could be used to explain the writing process from a Social Discourse perspective (Kalantzis & Cope, 2005, 2012; NLG, 1996). Kalantzis and Cope (2005) maintained that, “Schooling is about designing experiences for people to learn: this is regarded as formal learning (learning by design). The best of formal learning accounts for and integrates informal learning into its patterns and routines” (p. 38). When teaching and learning is by design, teaching practices, while they are active and explicit, conscious, planned and systematic, are also flexible and change according to the situations that arise.

Learning by design recognised literacy learning as a matter of design or transformation, drawing on available designs of meaning, but adding something of yourself and thus changing personal understandings and redesigning new understandings of the world (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Kalantzis & Cope, 2005, 2012; NLG, 1996). The NLG when debating what is it that students need to learn introduced the Design framework. They regarded it as a sufficiently rich concept to found a language curriculum



and pedagogy. The Learning by Design framework was later picked up and developed by Kalantzis & Cope (2012) (see Figure 4).

This writing model is based on three key elements. The first is referred to as *available designs*. The resources for design enable students to make use of other meaning-making resources encountered. *Available designs* or resources include the grammars of the various semiotic systems, the grammars of language and the grammars of genre, identified as: linguistic design; spatial design; visual design; audio design; gestural design; spatial design and multimodal design. Multimodality represents the interconnection between the modes in which semiotic grammars explain and describe different patterns of meaning. This enables students to select and redesign their texts.

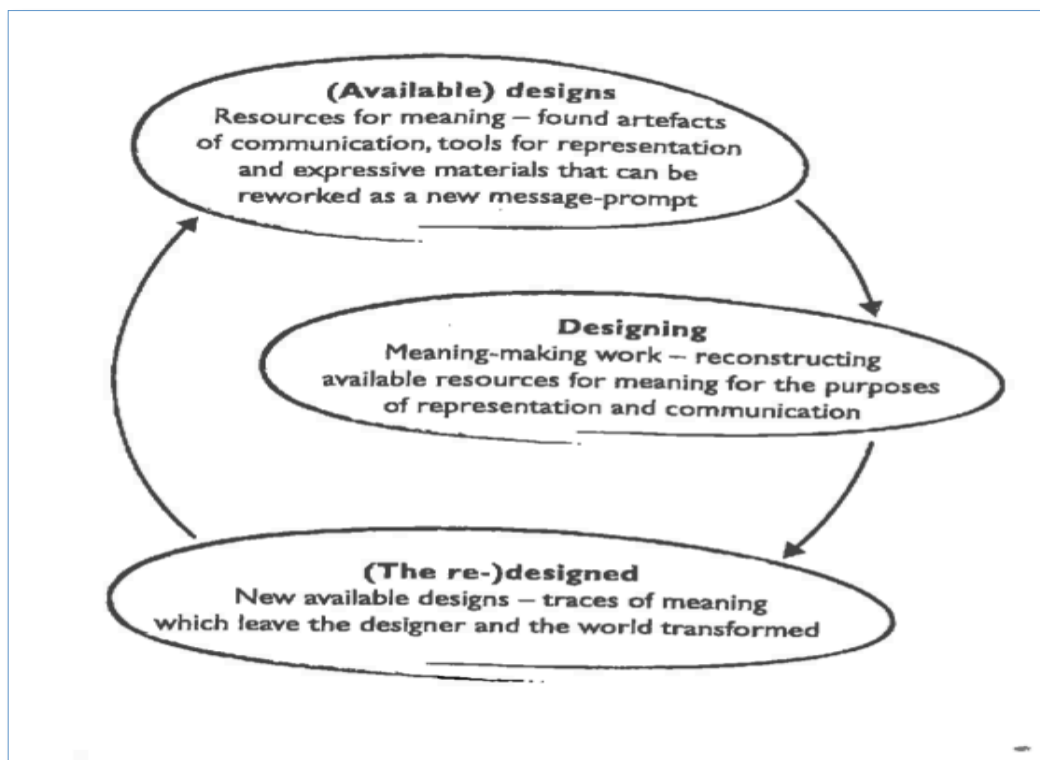


Figure 4: A teaching and learning writing model: Learning by design (Kalantzis and Cope, 2012, p. 183)

The second element is referred to as *designing*. The New London Group maintain that the process of “shaping emergent meaning involves representation and recontextualisation” (p. 75) of available designs. Designing is regarded as an iterative act of meaning-making which creates patterns of meaning that are more or less predictable in their contexts; yet there is something unique. The designer/writer can pick and choose from all *available designs* and then put them together in ways that they have never been organised before. *Available designs* are thus transformed in the act of *designing* (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000).

The third element of a Social Discourse, teaching and learning model is *redesigning*. The outcome of *designing*, is a new meaning, something the text-maker has recreated. This includes creating a “unique product of human agency: a transformed meaning” as well as a remaking of selves, a reconstruction and a renegotiation of identity (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 76). Meaning-makers remake themselves; they reconstruct and renegotiate their identities. The notion of Learning by Design, like the process model, recognises the iterative nature of meaning making. *Designing* always involves transformation of *available designs* and making use of old materials.

The notion of a Design framework has implications for teacher pedagogy, in particular how teachers could scaffold the learning process supporting writers’ to access *available designs* and *designing* appropriate texts so that students’ learning is transformed and *redesigned*.

### ***Assessment practices***

Social Discourse and multiliterate approaches for writing are still being developed as a pedagogical practice in New Zealand schools. Questions are now being raised in relation to assessment practice. What is evident in the international and national literature is the introduction of assessment standards and the impact of these (Messenheimer &

Packwood, 2002; Myhill & Warren, 2005). "The standards approach sets learning objectives, with benchmarks for expected learner achievement at various grade or year levels" (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012, p. 403). *The New Zealand Curriculum National Reading and Writing Standards* (MOE, 2009) states that:

The National Standards provide a nationally consistent means for considering, explaining, and responding to students' progress and achievement in years 1-8. They provide reference points, or sign posts, that describe the achievement, in reading, writing and mathematics...They will help teachers make judgements about their students' progress so that students and their teachers, parents, families and whanau can agree on the next learning goals. (p. 4)

Although the National Standards claim to provide reference points for achievement, national testing in primary schools has been hotly debated. There are concerns that normed standards-based assessment would narrow teachers' pedagogy and that they would teach to the test ensuring their students met the standard (Messenheimer & Packwood, 2002). Kalantzis and Cope (2012) argued that students in the last decades have spent more time than previously taking tests, and teachers spend more class-time preparing students for tests (p. 408), and therefore less time developing students' content knowledge. Recognising that it is pedagogical content knowledge that supports teachers to make sound formative and diagnostic assessment judgements (Limbrick, et al., 2008) and that assessment data need to be analysed and implemented in student programmes (Ministry of Education, 2003a, 2006a; Tierney, 1998) then National assessment tools and assessment policies appear to be asking teachers for different things. Teachers face a dilemma as they appear to be being asked to perform two often-conflicting purposes, to compare and rank students, and to teach and enhance students' learning.

A social-oriented perspective of assessing writing in the classroom is recognised as needing to be flexible and multiple (Kalantzis & Cope,

2012; Sandretto, 2011); it must accommodate the social nature of learning as well as the sociocultural and linguistic diversity of students. Formative assessment practices are well recognised as making a difference to students' learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Sadler, 1998); however, writing assessment practices need to find new ways for including a wider range of procedures and involve student collaboration and ownership, as well as assess multimodal, multimedia forms of writing. Sandretto (2011), in supporting the integration of teaching and assessment practices proposed six assessment tools to support assessment of critical literacy. These include roaming around the known, interviews, rubrics, journals, e-portfolios and learning stories. These tools, she believes, add to teachers' repertoire for analysis of students' learning literacy/writing.

Kalantzis and Cope (2012) argued that teaching and learning procedures need to work alongside National Standards. *The New Zealand Curriculum National Reading and Writing Standards* (MOE, 2009) have attempted to do this, how successfully is still an unknown outcome. Teachers are required to draw on a range of evidence, "to form an overall teacher judgement about each student's performance in relation to the National Standards" (p. 8). The writing standard for students at the end of their primary schooling expects that: "By the end of year 8, students will create texts in order to meet the writing demands of the New Zealand Curriculum at level 4. Students will use their writing to think about, record, and communicate experiences, ideas, and information to meet specific learning purposes across the curriculum" (p. 35). Descriptors relating to content, purpose, structure, syntax and "words and phrases that are appropriate to the topic, register and purpose, including expressive, academic and subject-specific vocabulary" (p. 35) are described in greater depth. While these descriptors identify achievement expectations they do not acknowledge a multiliteracy perspective.

### **2.4.3 Social Discourse: Teaching practices**

Teachers who enact Social Discourse in their writing communities reflect the beliefs inherent in sociocultural and sociocritical theories of writing. They embrace multiliteracy approaches to apprentice writers by: connecting with writers' sociocultural and linguistic experiences; enabling students to become experienced text-makers, designing multiple multimodal texts; building knowledge of semiotic systems to talk about multimodal texts; and teaching students critical literacy.

#### *Connecting with writers' sociocultural and linguistic experiences*

Teachers who enact Social Discourse pedagogy aim to ensure students:

engage life-world interests and ways of being. The take up of this pedagogy avoids the marginalisation of many students who, through traditional approaches to learning and teaching, have had their knowledge ignored and have been required, regardless of background experience, to pick up and follow a knowledge pathway defined by others, primarily the teacher. (Healy, 2008, p. 7)

McNaughton (2002) claimed students often struggled in the classroom when their home social and cultural experiences did not match the linguistic and textural experiences of the classroom discourse. Children's home writing experiences are socially and culturally diverse and may be in conflict with the current classroom culture and literacy expectations (Clay, 1998; McNaughton, 2002). Luis Moll, Cathy Amanti, Debora Neff and Norma Gonzalez (1992) recognized that the child's world experienced outside of the classroom was embedded in community practices which provided children with a wide range of contexts and skills for learning. They coined the term "funds of knowledge" to "refer to these historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well being" (p. 133). From their socio-anthropological research stance, they observed that many teachers did not build on or use the child's "funds of knowledge" as a classroom resource. These researchers

argued that the child's prior knowledge and acquired literacy skills provided a rich learning background for the child and should be recognized, valued and accessed to form the basis of a contextualised writing programme.

McNaughton (2002) argued that different social and cultural groups introduce their children into their communities of practice, reflecting their own way of doing things. What counts, what is valued, differs amongst different groups of people. McNaughton noted that New Zealand Polynesian children's early literacy engagements (English is their second language for learning) are often based around family Christian religious practices and community church congregations. Learning to read is to sing the words of the hymn or to read out loud the words from the bible. These practices are learned often in a repetitive manner, orally imitating the expert elders. "Children construct ways of acting with significant family and community members, who function as socialisation agents - they provide a means for children's learning through their interactions with children and through the activities they employ for these interactions" (McNaughton, 2002, p. 23).

Comber and Kamler (2004) also identified the importance of making connections with the child's world and the school world. Their cross-generational research focused on challenging teachers' professional knowledge in order to influence pedagogy and curriculum design. It was not until the teachers in the research project talked with the children and their parents in the home context that they became aware of and ultimately recognized the children's "funds of knowledge". Moving from a deficit view of learning to one of valuing the child's world by using familiar contexts to initiate writing had huge effects on children's learning and desire to write.

Social Discourse proponents promote ways that engage and connect with diverse learners and their world experiences. “As part of this pedagogy, a teacher’s role is as one member in a community. The task is to expand on, not replace, that which children bring to the classroom” (Healy, 2008, p. 7). Dame Marie Clay’s research over the past four decades documented the diversity of learning journeys experienced by children. Clay (1998) pointed out:

Close reading of what children say reveals that they have travelled differently along the path of language acquisition, and they are not all at the same place in their learning; some have gone further than others. Their individual differences probably arose from different kinds of learning opportunities in their real-world contexts, and the only place to start further language development is to work from what they already control. (p. 88)

It is important, she argued, that teachers pay “systematic attention” and become aware of what children can do and consider how best to build on the child’s current strengths. Clay (1998) acknowledged that children take “different paths” to achieve “common outcomes” and her research thus challenged the prescriptive curriculum based on developmental learning stages. She regarded it as problematic when educators “describe markers along the way as if there is a route to be travelled and achievements that can be checked off” (p. 89). The developmental learning stages should only provide a guide for teaching, where the descriptions of developmental progression act as a “rough fit”, as no one child, she maintained, has ever progressed exactly from marker to marker. She proposed that teachers need to respect students’ prior knowledge and experiences and find ways to incorporate children’s life experiences and their other literate practices into the writing classroom.

### *Experiencing writing in multiple multimodal texts*

Teaching writing as Social Discourse explores ways to incorporate conventional texts across multimodal and multimedia formats such as movies, computer games, clothing and merchandise, television shows,

Internet sites, advertisements, and cartoons. These community and digital texts have infiltrated the traditional texts of the classroom as children experience a broader range in their communities. Teachers and students are bringing technologies of our everyday world, such as iPods, cell phones, iPhones, iPads, television, movies, DVDs, computers, touch screens, emails, wikis, into classrooms selecting *available designs* and *redesigning* new meanings. Healy (2008) argued: "Texts are no longer restricted to print technology as multimodality stretches its wings; they rather morph themselves in ways that neither have a standard format nor are bound to genre as we have thought of it in the past" (p. 5).

Finding that 12 & 13-year-old students were more familiar with creating blogs than writing essays, Walsh (2007, cited in Hansford & Adlington, 2008) capitalised on this and set a homework task that required students to move away from print-only responses to "orchestrate images, written text, sound, music, animation and video into their designs "(p. 60). He found that the students became empowered as authors, producing sophisticated pieces of multimodal work that portrayed the nuance of text in ways that would have been very difficult for his students in a conventional essay. Online environments have created new places and spaces to write and to engage with a wider audience.

Social networking spaces, such as *MySpace*, allow users to change the look and function of components of the site. Free blog services, such as Google's Blogger provide blog authors with an easy to use blog creation interface and web space on which to store the blog.... They are used for creative expression, similar to journaling habits of the teens from yesteryear. (Prensky, 2004, cited in Hansford & Adlington, 2008, p. p. 56)

Young people write volumes on their blogs, adding both alphabetic text and non-alphabetic components, such as movies, music and graphics and employ widgets to transform and change messages (Walsh, 2008). This



includes the use of Apps for iPads, such as comic life, and iMovie which enable writers to add speech and captions to visual images.

Social, political and technological changes have resulted in changing teaching practices and presented different reasons for writing and different ways to write. A Social Discourse perspective of writing challenges teachers to consider how multimodal and digital texts can enhance learning. Kalantzis and Cope (2005) leave us with a sobering thought when they point out that computer-assisted learning and online learning environments can be didactic, lockstep, impassive, and “more dogmatically univocal, linear, and arbitrarily judgmental than even the most rigid of traditional teachers” (p. 100). They suggest that it is *how* the teachers use technology in the act of scaffolding writers that creates effective learning.

### *Knowledge of semiotic systems for designing multimodal and digital texts*

Bringing students’ social worlds into the classroom in the form of community and multimodal texts has placed new expectations on being a writer and a designer in the classroom. Kalantzis and Cope (2012) defined multimodality as “the theory of how modes of meaning are interconnected in our practices of representation and communication” (p. 191). A Social Discourse of writing, like Text Discourse, values a metalanguage to talk about the writing. The NLG, however, viewed writing as a mode of meaning-making, an engagement in conversations about semiotic systems, rather than simply a concern with the linguistic features of design. The NLG proposed five different semiotic systems: linguistic, audio, gestural, spatial, visual, where:

The aim of the metalanguage is not to teach rules but to give students a sense of how patterns of meaning are the product of several different contexts – the changing contexts created by new communications technologies, and the different cultural

contexts in which language is used. (Cope & Kalantzis, 1995, p. 6)

Multimodal texts have presented new grammars to be learned and new ways to talk about texts (Anstey & Bull, 2006; Bull & Anstey, 2010; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Kress & Bezemer, 2009). A metalanguage, the NLG argued, needs to be flexible and open-ended, and the primary purpose should be to “identify and explain differences between texts, and relate these to the context of culture and situation in which they seem to work” (p. 77). Students thus need to know the different design elements and their functions and purposes so that they can select from the available resources to *redesign* texts. Anstey and Bull have written several comprehensive texts to support teachers and have identified the grammars inherent in each semiotic system. On the basis of the work of Kress and van Leeuwen, the grammar of literacies, they maintain, can be explained through semiotics, the study of how we use signs. The addition of and access to other semiotic systems allow the writer or text-maker to select modes, semiotic systems and media that will support the design of the message. The writer must consider how to best facilitate the message, as the arrangement and dominance of particular elements will influence the meaning (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Kress, 2000a).

Proponents of Social Discourse would argue that when designing multimodal texts, the text-maker asks: What are the semiotic resources of this mode? How can the codes and conventions or grammars of the communicative mode be used to create specific meanings? For example, when constructing messages, linguistic elements are often combined with other semiotic resources creating greater depth, impact and more complex multilayered meanings. The interweaving of visual, spatial, gestural and audio modes of meaning with linguistic elements reflects the changing forms and functions of language available to writers

(Anstey & Bull, 2006). The concept of writer has been relabelled as text-maker (Kress & Bezemer, 2009) or designer (NLG, 1996).

### *Critical literacy*

A Social Discourse of writing demands that students work from a critical literacy stance. Luke (1992) pointed out: "In textbooks and lessons, a selective tradition is embodied in particular versions of cultural knowledges and beliefs, identities, and characterisations which become authorised school versions of what 'we' allegedly know and value" (p. 6). From this perspective, he argued, teachers need to not only to be aware of the texts they selected but should also teach their learners to be text analysts.

Proponents of Social Discourse believe that in today's world students must become critical readers and writers of texts, to develop an awareness of how they can shape and create texts thus taking up particular discourse positions being explicit about their ideology. Teachers are responsible for ensuring students can take a critical stance, pose questions and create debates or respond to others' points of view. A critical perspective enables writers to see the world from multiple points of view. Sandretto (2011) points out that teachers must not confuse critical thinking with critical literacy. She argues that "this confusion is strengthened by the lack of explicit mention of *critical literacy* in any New Zealand educational policy" (p. 10): rather, the *Effective literacy practice* books (Ministry of Education, 2003a, 2006a) refer to critical thinking.

Kalantzis and Cope (2012) proposed three ways students might build critical awareness. First, they identified "exploring social issues". By taking a social democratic stance and problematizing local community issues students can find ways to solve these. A second area for student research was to explore situations of "discrimination and disadvantage" and use real life contexts to debate these issues. Students should be

encouraged to solve these situations through inclusion and acceptance, of individuality and difference. The third aspect Kalantzis and Cope (2012) suggested was to help students reflect on their own practices, their own ways of engaging in their worlds. By interrogating social and community texts, writers develop an awareness of how they are positioned by texts, such as in media advertisements. Why and how semiotic systems were selected to design particular texts requires consideration.

Online engagement with the Internet poses further challenges. Writing reports or searching for information necessitates questioning the credibility of the source of information. Children have access to a wide range of information: "Through the resources at their finger tips, they can encounter theories, perspectives, personal beliefs and opinions, and outright lies" (Many, 2000, p. 65). Joyce Many proposed that students develop strategies where "they assume a stance that includes the interrogation of the author, the author's background, perspectives, and expertise" (p. 66). Furthermore, advocates of a social view of writing claim students need "to develop a sensitivity to the use of persuasive language or other propaganda techniques, to consider the context, to expect the use of references, and to look for credentials, affiliations or descriptions of supporting organisations" (Many, 2000, p. 66). Deciding where to publish and what is going to happen to their writing when it is presented on Internet sites raises questions. Who will have access to students' personal information? How might readers/writers respond? Book publishers, who have in the past served as gatekeepers by using professional knowledge and ethical guidelines to determine what enters the public arena may be required to take a different role.

#### **2.4.4 Social Discourse: Critique and conclusion**

Writing theories and practices, viewed as Social Discourse, is played out through multiliterate views of teaching and learning and its impact on text design.

Annah Healy (2008), in response to Australian Education policies, criticised the lack of recognition and connection with literacy communities beyond the classroom. Educational policy and schools are criticised for privileging print-based literacies and for failing to engage students with real-life situations. Healy (2008) argued strongly that:

Literacies that apply to anything other than print are often marginalised in policy and practice; the segregation of disciplines in the curriculum defies real-life practices; there is a failure to engage with global communication networks and knowledge exchange; assumptions are made that literacy activity must be done in the architectural space of the classroom and that teachers are authorities of knowledge; there is failure to recognise the value systems of an ever increasing complexity of cultures and occupations; and, not least, place-bound learning imposes a tyranny whereby students are dependent on what teachers select as content and ways of operating. (p. 3)

Another concern when teaching writing from a social perspective is that teachers are often the learners working alongside their multiliterate students. Often termed digital natives, many students with expertise use the online environment more confidently than their teachers. Prensky (2004) noted that a key attitude of digital natives was their “desire to create”, but in different ways to traditional literacy. Digital natives are active participants. “They are creating web pages, blogs, avatars and worlds: and, in stark contrast to digital immigrants, digital natives readily report and share ideas. They take full advantage of the amiable publisher that is the internet, happily composing for the world (cited in Hansford & Adlington, 2008, p. 57). Many teachers find themselves positioned as new learners of the digital tools but are responsible for redesigning new ways for teaching writing. A social perspective of

writing challenges many teachers' pedagogical content knowledge (Healy, 2008; Honan, 2008).

Other researchers have raised concerns about the "digital divide". Low socio-economic groups are marginalised and do not have equitable access to technology. Leu, O'Byrne, Zawilinski, McVerry, & Everette-Cacopardo (2009) argued that education policies supported the notion of "rich getting richer and the poor get poorer" (p. 267). They maintain that children in the poorest schools have the least access to the Internet at home, and schools do not always prepare them for the new literacies of online learning.

In New Zealand, a clear understanding of what it means to teach writing from a multiliteracies perspective is still being clarified. The MOE teaching texts, while they recognise the importance of digital means for communication they do not address pedagogy relating to melding print and digital literacies, developing knowledge of semiotic multimodal systems or building students' knowledge of critical literacy.

## **2.5 Chapter conclusion**

This literature review has recognised that New Zealand teachers have been positioned historically, politically, educationally and technologically as teachers of writing over the past four decades. Discourses of writing positions teachers in particular ways, reflected in their practices, their beliefs about how writing should be learned, and is evident in how they interact and shape learning for their students. This chapter reviewed the literature in relation to three Writing Discourses, from a Writer, Text and Social perspective. The literature recognises that over time the differing theories and pedagogies encompassed in each of these Writing Discourses have influenced New Zealand teachers' practice. The study raises questions about *how* teachers teach writing in

primary classrooms. Do teachers position themselves, privileging one Writing Discourse over another, or do teachers draw heterogeneously from a range of Discourses? This project focuses on teachers' professional identities as teachers of writing and how they enact particular Writing Discourses in their classroom communities of practice.

The next chapter reviews the literature on teaching pedagogy. It highlights the interplay between cognitive and social theories of learning and uses metaphorical images of acquisition and/or participation to conceptualise different ways of teaching and learning. The chapter reviews the research literature on scaffolding interactions as a teaching practice. This study is interested in *how* teachers might apprentice writers in the classroom.

## Chapter Three

### Teaching as an interactive practice: A “meeting of minds”

Teaching involves the exchange of ideas. The idea is grasped, probed, and comprehended by a teacher, who then must turn it about in his or her mind, seeing many sides of it. Then the idea is shaped or tailored until it can be grasped by students. This grasping, however, is not a passive act. Just as the teacher’s comprehension requires a vigorous interaction with ideas, so students will be expected to encounter ideas actively as well. (Shulman, 1987, p. 13)

#### 3 Introduction

This literature review builds on the previous chapter and investigates how teachers enact socially situated Writing Discourses in their classroom communities of practice. The study is interested in *how* teachers can apprentice writers and interact with students to teach writing. In so doing, the study recognises that teachers draw from a range of sources of knowledge (B. Bell, 2011; Leach & Moon, 1999; Shulman, 1987) as a basis for teaching decisions which shape their professional identities and practice. Wenger (1998) argued that we should also recognise that “the concept of practice connotes doing, but not just doing in and of itself. It is doing in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do” (p. 47).

This chapter uses sociocultural theorising to review the literature on teachers’ practice relating to three areas of research. First, it highlights the debates and the interplay between cognitive and social theories and presents Sfard’s (1998) metaphorical images of acquisition and/or



participation to conceptualise different ways of teaching and learning. Second, the chapter considers communities of practice as places for apprenticing writers and fostering participation and construction of meanings. Third, the literature review explores teaching and apprenticeship through scaffolding theory. Like any discourse, the scaffolding metaphor is dynamic and has progressed through varied interpretive shifts since its inception: it is critiqued as a pedagogical practice. Finally, the two literature chapters are drawn together to provide a background framework to pose the research questions, to interpret and make sense of the participant teachers' beliefs and their conceptual understandings about teaching writing.

### **3.1 Theoretical positions: An interplay of cognitive and social theories**

Across the centuries, explanations of how students learn have been widely debated over a range of research disciplines and theoretical perspectives. This study pays attention to learning theories that explore the relationship between individual minds and their social contexts, and, in particular, teaching and learning interactions that support writing in the classroom.

In recent years academic research has shown a greater interest in the connections between the individual's cognitive processing and his or her interactions with the social surroundings. Research has challenged traditional cognitive views in an attempt to understand learning in terms of the context of the situation, and sociocultural and technological influences on the learning situation (Bruner, 1996; McNaughton, 2002; Newman, Griffin, & Cole, 1993; Resnick, Levine, & Teasley, 1996; Salomon & Perkins, 1998; Wertsch, 1991). In *Perspectives on socially shared cognition* Resnick (1996) explained:

Within psychology, investigators interested in cognitive, social, and developmental processes have begun to identify important theoretical and empirical questions that bridge traditional research specialties. Such questions concern relationships between intrapersonal processes, such as memory and reasoning, and interpersonal processes, such as parent-child and peer interaction. (p. xii)

Collaboration and a re-examination of conceptual understandings of knowledge construction across the disciplines have led to new ways of theorising learning. In the educational field, varying interpretations of the relationship between the cognitive and social perspectives are often described as shared cognition, socially shared cognition and distributed cognition. Researchers have employed social constructivist and sociocultural approaches to explain psychological processes of the mind and the socially interactive processes engaged in communication and action. Psychologists Salomon and Perkins (1998), supporters of distributed learning theories, recognised that: “[A] focus on the individual learning in social and cultural solitude is increasingly seen as conceptually unsatisfying and ecologically deficient” (p. 2). Newman, Griffin and Cole (1993), proponents of socially shared cognition, argued that cognitive change is as much a social as an individual process and clearly takes place during instructional interactions. Bruner (1996), whose work has bearing on this study, claimed that “culture shapes mind, that it provides us with a toolkit by which we construct not only our own worlds but our very conceptions of our selves and our powers” (p. x). Wertsch’s (1991) research, situated in sociocultural approaches, argued that the development of the mind should be viewed as a social, cultural and an historical act. The mind, he explained, must be defined in terms of its inherently social and mediational properties. It doesn’t act in isolation, rather it employs *mediational means* and these mediational means shape the action. Wertsch (1991) declared that while psychologists found it easier to understand isolated mental processes they found it more

difficult to describe these in action, as they disappear into “the sea of life”.

Sfard’s (1998) metaphorical explanations of learning epitomise some of the debates prevalent in educational research. Sfard explores learning through two metaphors: acquisition and participation. The metaphors are discussed below, as they provide a useful way to identify and compare the breadth of learning and teaching perspectives.

### *Acquisition metaphor*

Sfard’s acquisition metaphor describes learning as internalisation, reception, transmission and accumulation or acquisition of knowledge, where the construction of concepts “can be accumulated, gradually refined, and combined to form ever richer cognitive structures” (Sfard, 1998, p. 5). This metaphorical representation tends to reflect traditional psychological discourse that focuses on the cognitive construction of meanings. Refining and readjusting conceptual schema implies that knowledge is about building “abstractions of experience” in-the-head (Pearson & Spiro, 1984).

The acquisition metaphor presents the teacher in the role of instructor, facilitator, deliverer or conveyor of information. The learner, initially viewed as passive, but more recently, with the emergence of constructivism theories, is regarded as active in constructing cognitive understandings, concepts, and meanings in-the-head. Sfard (1998) identified this discourse as one which describes learning acquisition as appropriation, construction, attainment, internalisation and development. Furthermore, once acquired, the knowledge can be transferred and shared with others. Sfard (1998) argued that this perspective, which views “the idea of learning as gaining possession over some commodity, has persisted in a wide spectrum of frameworks, from moderate to radical constructivism and then to interactionism and

sociocultural theories” (p. 6). Cope and Kalantzis (2000) would refer to this as learning without transformation.

### *Participatory metaphor of learning*

Major conceptual shifts are evident in Sfard’s explanation of the participatory metaphor. Learning is viewed as a process, that of “coming to know”. This metaphorical discourse portrays learning as situated, contextualised, culturally embedded, and socially mediated. Participatory learning is regarded as active, ongoing and embedded in a context that is “rich and multifarious” (Sfard, 1998, p. 6). Learning is about legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and involves apprenticeship in cognition (Rogoff, 1990).

The participatory metaphor positions the teacher as one who may take on the role of learner, but is also responsible for apprenticing individuals in new learning situations. “While the learners are newcomers and potential reformers of the practice, the teachers are the preservers of its continuity” (Sfard, 1998, p. 6). The participatory metaphor of learning theory reflects Lave and Wenger’s (1991) sociocultural view of apprenticeship in communities of practice (discussed later).

### *Competing or complementary metaphors for learning*

A key difference between the acquisition and participatory metaphors is that the participatory metaphor regards the learner not as a separate individual but as part of a social community of learners, where learning is processed with others. While the acquisition metaphor focuses on the individual mind and what goes into it, the participation metaphor “makes salient the dialectic nature of learning interactions: the whole and parts affect and inform each other” (Sfard, 1998, p. 6).

Sfard (1998) argued that in spite of the debates that continue to flourish and polarise learning perspectives, a “metaphorical pluralism embraces a

promise of a better research and a more satisfactory practice” (p. 10). In educational research both metaphors of learning are useful as both provide a powerful means of conceptualising learning that is not accessed by the other, “because no two students have the same needs and no two teachers arrive at their best performance in the same way, theoretical exclusivity and didactic single mindedness can be trusted to make even the best of educational ideas fail” (Sfard, 1998, pp. 10-11). These two metaphors offer different perspectives rather than competing opinions and provide the potential for a more comprehensive insight into how teachers may enact writing in their classrooms.

This study takes a broad encompassing view and regards teaching and learning as situated in the social and cultural practices of the community. The following discussion first looks at the research underpinning communities of practice and then identifies characteristics.

### **3.2 Locating teaching and learning in communities of practice**

Communities of practice, a term attributed to Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991), emerged from their ground-breaking research in the 1970s-80s. Their research drew on a series of ethnographic studies that focused on specialised groups of people and explored a range of community and social organisations (including Mayan midwives in the Yucatan, butchers, Vai and Gola apprentice tailors, naval quartermasters and an Alcoholics Anonymous group). The metaphor was based on their observations of how groups organised themselves around common interests. Groups collaborated to achieve common goals, developing ways of “knowing and doing” through apprenticeship relationships of legitimate peripheral participation. Wenger (2006) pointed out that a community of practice is not just about a shared interest. Members of a community of practice are practitioners, “they develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing

reoccurring problems – in short, a shared practice. This takes time and sustained interaction” (p. 2). Wenger (1998) recognised that these “practices are thus the property of a kind of community created over time by the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise. It makes sense, therefore, to call these kinds of communities, communities of practice” (p. 45).

The ethnographic framework describing communities of practice and apprenticeship relationships was not initially intended for educational theorising. The authors stated: “legitimate peripheral participation is not in itself an educational form, much less a pedagogical strategy or teaching technique. It is an analytical viewpoint on learning, a way of understanding learning” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 40). Their ethnographic research viewed apprenticeship through participation rather than direct instruction as a natural way of learning. Lave (1996) often referred to apprenticeship as informal education.

It is worthwhile, however, to discuss the characteristics of a community of practice. They include: places of situated learning; apprenticing complex and diverse learning; participatory relationships, and identity building. Classrooms as communities of practice are thus eligible to be considered.

### ***Communities of practice: Places of situated learning***

In communities of practice learning is situated in social practices, actions and contexts, and takes place in a participatory framework, not the individual mind. Lave and Wenger (1991) explained that meaning, understanding, and learning are all defined relative to actional contexts, not self-contained structures. Coming to know is not a one-person act, it involves more than what is in-the-head. Coming to know is distributed among the community participants; learning is situated in the social community. Wertsch (1991) stated that the mind acts socially by

employing mediational means, such as dialogue, objects and tools. He differentiated between action and the “individual(s)-acting-with-mediational-means”. Lave and Wenger (1991) argued that: “Activities, tasks, functions, and understandings do not exist in isolation; they are part of broader systems of relations in which they have meaning” (p. 53). Learning is thus recognised as socially negotiated; meanings are attributed and given value in specific communities of practice. Rather than asking what kinds of cognitive processes and conceptual structures are involved, Lave and Wenger (1991) “ask what kinds of social engagements and activities provide proper contexts for learning to take place” (p. 52). From this perspective learning and knowing is developed not through explicit instruction but rather by participation in social practice. The focus is on the person, but as ‘the person-in-the-world’, a member of a sociocultural community. Wenger’s (1998) later work elaborated on the notion of communities of practice as incorporating explicit and implicit practice. He explained:

Communities of practice are the prime contexts in which we can work out common sense through mutual engagement. Therefore the concept of practice highlights the social and negotiated character of both the explicit and the tacit in our lives. (p. 47)

Wenger (1998), like Sfard, recognised that learning is social. Communities of practice provide a context for participatory and negotiated activity that accommodates both implicit and explicit learning opportunities. It is the broader view of participatory learning that this research is interested in.

### *Communities of practice: Apprenticing complex and diverse learning*

Lave (1996) had observed complex and diverse learning amongst the Liberian Vai and Gola tailor apprentices. She noted that not only were they engaged in activities involving “a common, structured pattern of learning experiences, without being taught, examined or reduced to

mechanical copiers”, but they were also “learning to make a life, to make a living, to make clothes, to grow old enough, and mature enough to become master tailors, and to see the truth of the respect due to a master of their trade” (Lave, 1996, p. 151). While acquisition theories often assume that apprenticeship merely reproduces existing practices, Lave noted that the apprenticed tailors were learning multiple, complex lessons at once. In this sense, apprenticeship involved learning the skills of the trade, how to do things, but as well they were learning how to be a member of that community. Members were learning the social and cultural conventions of that particular community of practice. This perspective reflects Gee’s theory of Discourse communities (Gee, 2008).

*Communities of practice: Apprenticeship as a participatory relationship*

In communities of practice special relationships are developed where novices move from participating on the peripheral to ownership of their learning. Systems, language codes, resources, rituals, cultural and social practices are negotiated, learned and sustained over time. Lave and Wenger (1991) explained that legitimate peripheral participation “provides a way to speak about the relations between newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artefacts, and communities of knowledge and practice. It concerns the process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice” (p. 29). Learners co-participate to a limited extent, gaining information that they would not otherwise have access to. Experts gradually hand over the learning by providing increased access for novice learners, who move from participating in peripheral activities toward full participation, on gaining mastery of the knowledge and skills required. “Apprentices learn to think, argue, act, and interact in increasingly knowledgeable ways, with people who do something well, by doing it with them as legitimate, peripheral participants” (Lave, 1997, p. 19). Relationships in the apprenticeship model are crucial for the sustainability of community practices. The



apprenticeship relationship enacted through scaffolding interactions is fundamental to this research project.

### *Communities of practice: Identity building*

In communities of practice participants are defined by and define the relationships they have with others. Learning is therefore involved in the construction of identities. Lave and Wenger (1991) described identity building as “the way a person understands and views himself, and is viewed by others, a perception of self which is fairly constant” (p. 81). They stated: “We conceive of identities as long term, living relations between persons and their place and participation in communities of practice. Thus identity, knowing, and social membership entail one another” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 53). In his later work, Wenger (1998) explored the concept of identity from two interrelated aspects. He argued that it is difficult to determine where the “sphere of the individual” ends and the “sphere of the collective begins”, and that “talking about identity in social terms is not denying individuality but viewing the very definition of individuality as something that is part of the practices of specific communities” (Wenger, 1998, p. 146). Like Gee (2008), Wenger recognised that tensions can exist between individuals and collectivities. Furthermore, Wenger recognised that there are multiple ways of exploring how to define our selves (see p. 149). Identities are negotiated and temporal, defined by histories and social practices. They continuously evolve as people engage with multiple communities of practice, developing new relationships, “finding a different position with respect to a community, and seeing the world and oneself in new ways” (Wenger, 1998, p. 155).

In summary, by acknowledging that communities of practice are places where experts mentor learners through apprenticeship relationships, the characteristics for educational practice need to be considered in the following ways:

- If writing classrooms are described as communities of practice and *learning is situated*, then: What kinds of social engagements, activities and contexts do teachers provide for writers? How is learning distributed across participants, contexts and tools? Is there evidence of explicit teaching and socially negotiated meanings?
- Communities of practice involve *apprenticing complex and diverse learning*, therefore in writing classrooms is learning to write a diverse and complex practice experienced through multiple situations? Do teachers apprentice students not only to learn how to write but also how to be a member of that classroom?
- *Learning takes place through apprenticeship and participatory relationships*. If classrooms operate as communities of practice, do the teachers apprentice students through legitimate peripheral participatory action so they can gain access to the writing skills and understandings they do not already have? Does the teacher scaffold the learning for handover, mastery and independence? Do we see students learning to think, argue, act and interact in “increasingly knowable ways”? Scaffolding interactions are vital to Phase Two of this study.
- *Communities of practice build identity*. Do classrooms as communities of practice support teachers and students’ writing identities over time? How might expert teachers view themselves as they participate and engage in writing situations? Do their identities evolve through forming new relationships? Phase One of this research project is interested in teachers’ professional identities; how they are constructed and shaped by their participation in Writing Discourses.

Furthermore, in recognising that sociocultural theorising explores the interrelation interdependency of the learner within the wider

community, it also explores the specific acts people engage in when “saying, thinking and doing” writing according to the cultural, historical and political environments they are immersed in (Gee, 2011b). Sociocultural perspectives acknowledge the context, the available resources or “mediational means” and the meanings negotiated, where the actions and interactions of the participants contribute to the individual’s higher order cognitive functioning. Wertsch (1991) argued that: “Human action typically employs ‘mediational means’ such as tools and language, and that these mediational means shape the action in essential ways” (p. 12). While acknowledging that communities of practice explain learning as participatory through cognitive and social interactions, a discussion of scaffolding theories which focus more closely on *how* teachers engage with students and mediate cultural tools to scaffold learning forms the basis of the next discussion.

### **3.3 Teaching and learning interactions: A “meeting of minds”**

A sociocultural perspective “presumes that teaching is a highly complex, context-specific, interactive activity in which differences across classrooms, schools, and communities are critically important” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, p. 6). While classroom-based research demonstrates effective teaching and learning as complex, multilayered and often messy, *what* teachers do (their teaching practices, actions) and *why* they do it this way (theoretical understandings of subject or discipline knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and teacher identity work), affect *how* they teach (teaching decisions they make in relation to organising and interacting with the class to meet learning needs). “The notion of ‘practice’ communicates something wider than a technique and skill, something incorporating, as well, knowledge, making judgements, intuition, and the purposes for the action” (Beckett and Hagar, 2002 cited in B. Bell, 2011, p. 1).

The following section introduces “the magic place” where teaching and learning happens. First, this section acknowledges the importance of teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987), a concern introduced in Chapter One. The section then describes the importance of interactive spaces for teaching and learning.

### **3.3.1 Teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge**

The seminal work of Shulman (1987) gave credence to teachers’ professional knowledge when he identified that teachers draw from multiple categories of knowledge. He described these categories as employing knowledge of subject content, adjusted to the knowledge of the students, and knowledge of curriculum to support teaching and learning. Teachers also employ general pedagogical knowledge using a range of teaching strategies, organisation and grouping arrangements – all within the knowledge of educational contexts relating to governance and school and community cultures meeting requisite educational purposes and values (see p. 8). While a great deal of research literature has attempted to elaborate on the multi-faceted knowledge base that teachers draw from (Banks, Leach, & Moon, 1999; B. Bell, 2011; Leach & Moon, 1999). I am interested in teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge. Shulman (1987) described this as representing “the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction” (p. 8), and that “pedagogical content knowledge is the category most likely to distinguish the understanding of the content specialist from that of the pedagogue” (p. 8), a requirement for primary school teaching. *How* teachers employ writing strategies that govern their decision-making as they engage in the interactive teaching and learning zones is of interest to this project.

### **3.3.2 Teaching and learning as interactive spaces**

A developing understanding of the integrative nature of learning and teaching is evident in the literature. Three orientations that comment on the interactive space for teachers and students informed this study: the zone of proximal development (ZPD), the “construction zone” (CZ) and a “meeting of minds”.

Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978) described learning as taking place in the child’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which he defined as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). The individual’s cognitive learning is enhanced when appropriate support is given to the child operating on the edge of their zone of proximal development. Teaching at the edge of a student’s ZPD is based on the understanding that “what the child can do in cooperation today, he can do alone tomorrow. Therefore the only good kind of instruction is that which marches ahead of development and leads it: it must be aimed not so much at the ripe as at the ripening functions” (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 188). Vygotsky’s work highlighted the role of language as a scaffolding tool, recognising that:

Just as a mould gives shape to a substance, words can shape an activity into a structure. However, that structure may be changed or reshaped when children learn to use language in ways that allow them to go beyond previous experiences when planning future action. (p. 28)

Vygotsky recognised the socially interactive nature of learning and the role language and dialogue perform in supporting and challenging learners to make meaning where cognitive change is recognised and valued. The role of the teacher or expert plays an important part in knowing what the learner can do and is capable of – so the learner is

challenged and understanding is enhanced and extended. This kind of instruction is often labelled “scaffolding” and will be discussed later. It is important to also acknowledge Mercer’s (2008) work here. He elaborated on Vygotsky’s notion of a zone of proximal development and introduced the concept of an *intermental development zone* (IDZ). Mercer explained that: “For a teacher to teach and a learner to learn, talk and joint activity must be used to create a shared communicative space, the IDZ, constructed from the resources of their common knowledge and shared purposes” (Mercer, 2008, p. 38). The notion of a shared space for negotiating learning is explored further through metaphorical representations of a “construction zone” and a “meeting of minds”.

The “construction zone” as described by Newman, Griffin & Cole (1993) is “a magic place where minds meet, where things are not the same to all who see them, where meanings are fluid and where one person’s construal may pre-empt another’s” (p. ix). The “construction zone” supports cognitive and social mediation between people. It is a place of shared activity in which inter-psychological processes can take place. The teacher probes and searches for common understandings. This place where minds meet is recognised as being different for all learners and is a place for negotiation, clarification and collaboration where conversation and interchange allow participants to seek common ground for comprehension and understanding. The shared activity, however, “does not necessarily mean a completely shared understanding of the meaning of the activity, or of each other” (Newman, et al., 1993, p. xi), but “the teacher and student acting together may bring about a meeting of minds” (Newman, et al., 1993, p. xii). The metaphorical concept of a construction zone has relevance to this study as it proposes that *how* students make meaning differs for each child: “things are not the same to all who see them”(p. ix).

The metaphorical concept of a “meeting of minds” was a term also explored by both Bruner and McNaughton. Bruner (1996) problematised teaching and learning, raising the “issue of how human beings achieve a meeting of minds” (p. 45). He regarded children as thinkers, active participants in their own learning who hold naive theories which are brought into congruence with parents and teachers’ thinking, “not through imitation, not through didactic instruction, but by discourse, collaboration and negotiation. Knowledge is what is shared within discourse, within a ‘textual’ community” (p. 57). Bruner described teaching and learning as moving toward some shared frame of reference; a “meeting of minds” reflected by the dynamic and interactive relationship between students and teacher. McNaughton (2002), drawing on his research, explained that:

Together they [teacher and students] make up a system of teaching and learning. That is, what a teacher does is part of what a learner does, which in turn is part of what a teacher does.... Their mutual influence alters each other’s ideas and actions immediately as well as subsequently. (p. 20)

McNaughton takes a participatory view, but also warned that for some children starting school the process could be “a risky business”. The child’s cultural and linguistic knowledge and their home experiences may differ from those of the school; a disconnection may exist. Teachers, he maintained, must build bridges and connect with children’s prior understandings to establish a “meeting of minds”. Teachers’ noticing and building on the cultural and linguistic expertise that children bring to the classroom can achieve this. The metaphorical concept of “a meeting of minds” poses questions for this study as to whether the teacher and students’ “mutual influence alters each other’s ideas and actions immediately as well as subsequently” (McNaughton, 2002, p. 20).

Each of the concepts discussed above has contributed to my understanding of how students and teachers interact when learning. The

next part of the chapter explores scaffolding theory as a teaching practice which supports a “meeting of minds”

### **3.4 Scaffolding as pedagogy**

Sociocultural learning theories regard teaching as a social act of apprenticeship, distributed across members, tasks, activities and resources. The notion of scaffolding borrowed the metaphor from the construction business where temporary structures are erected to support the construction of a building. In education, scaffolding as instruction is such that temporary supports are provided to enable a learner to complete a task that they may not be able to complete on their own. The scaffolding metaphor appeals to me as it represents a pedagogical framework, one that will enable minds to meet, and teaching and learning to take place in ways that leave writers empowered to write.

There is much literature on scaffolding as instruction and while the metaphor has been critiqued as an instructional practice, it has persisted in the field of educational learning and been refined over time (Cazden, 2001; Davis & Miyake, 2004; Johnston, 2004; Palincsar, 1998; Pea, 2004; Stone, 1998a; Tabak, 2004; van de Pol, Volman, & Beishuizen, 2010; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). This literature review first references characteristics that underpin earlier cognitive explanations of scaffolding and recognises the seminal work done by Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976). These comments are followed by a review of the research and identify new areas of interpretation. This explanation of scaffolding provides a basis for closely examining *how* teachers may apprentice students for writing (see Chapter Four). This discussion also links to the Writing Discourses discussed in Chapter Two, where different scaffolding interactions mediate particular ways of learning to write.



### **3.4.1 Wood, Bruner and Ross's notion of scaffolding**

The notion of scaffolding first introduced by Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) was not just about completing tasks; it included processes relating to “perceptual components (e.g., highlighting task features); cognitive components (e.g., reducing degrees of freedom); and affective components (e.g., controlling frustration)” (Stone, 1998a, p. 345). Wood et al.'s (1976) scaffolding metaphor emerged from research in which they observed the instructional practices used by a tutor working with a pre-schooler as they completed a puzzle task (using 21 blocks of various sizes and shapes to create a 3 D pyramid). They observed that the tutor scaffolded instructions to help the child complete the task. These scaffolds were classified in three ways: providing directed assistance; presenting a verbal error prompt, which required the child to rethink the task; and a straightforward direct verbal instruction given to encourage further construction of the puzzle.

Wood et al. (1976) were initially interested in how instructional strategies and interactive relationships occurring between an adult and child could result in improved understanding and skill learning. While they regarded young children as natural problem-solvers they recognised that learning could be assisted, fostered and improved by specific interactions with more skilful experts. They acknowledged that “more often than not, it involves a kind of ‘scaffolding process’ that enables a child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task or achieve a goal which would be beyond his unassisted efforts” (1976, p. 90). This description, widely cited in the literature, defines scaffolding as the process of helping children achieve something that they could not do on their own. The notion links with Vygotsky's ZPD: the development of a child's cognitive processing through interactions with others which challenge them beyond their capability, yet provide appropriate supports for successful learning.

To discuss the characteristics of Wood, Bruner and Ross's (1976) metaphor of scaffolding based on research in early education and cognitive theories, I focus on the task, the expert's actions, and the learner's response. Scaffolding is recognised as a three-way process. Each of the elements is part of a dynamic and interactive relationship; all the components must work in unison to synthesise as a "meeting of minds" between students and teacher.

### *The task*

Task design is crucial for successful pedagogical scaffolding and learning. Tasks for the learner, Wood et al. (1976) claimed, should be designed with several objectives in mind. Tasks need to be entertaining, interesting, "feature rich in the sense of possessing a variety of relevant components" (p. 91), and multifaceted to allow cognitive growth.

The task is designed with the learners in mind, challenging enough to encourage learning but not so challenging as to create frustration. It should be "sufficiently complex to ensure that his [or her] behaviour over time could develop and change.... But the task had not to be so difficult as to lie completely beyond the capability of any of the children" (p. 91).

Furthermore, Wood et al. (1976) insisted that tasks should be designed to incorporate constraints or reduction in degrees of freedom. Constraints enable the learner to focus on key aspects of the learning embedded in the task and ensure that learning is manageable. Constraints might be in the form of providing fewer alternatives or a decrease in the size of the task so that the feedback can be regulated.

### *The expert or teacher's actions*

The work of the expert tutor or teacher is complex and multidimensional. It is the teacher who is responsible for shaping the learning. Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) recognised that recruitment of the child's interest

to maintain their engagement is one of the key functions of the tutor. Keeping young learners focused “in the field” (p. 98) and motivated is always challenging. Wood et al. (1976) argued that this can be achieved by setting up an “atmosphere of approval and encouragement so that the children seemed eager to complete their constructions” (p. 93). Students must demonstrate an interest and “buy in” to the learning situation. Interestingly, discussions on scaffolding in more recent research often don’t address the impact of the affective dimensions.

Another key function of the expert tutor identified by Wood et al. (1976) is referred to as “direct maintenance ... in pursuit of a particular objective” (p. 98). A focus on goal-oriented learning (more recently regarded as learning criteria or learning intentions) ensures the students’ engagement in the task has purpose and direction. This necessitates the expert prioritising the learning purpose or goal.

The researchers maintain that the child’s progress must be consistently monitored. The expert intervenes only when the child is not able to complete the task on his or her own. A key understanding is that the teacher’s scaffolding is not fixed; rather, there is an expectation of adjusting, and “controlling those elements of the task that are initially beyond the learner’s capacity, thus permitting him/her to concentrate upon and complete only those elements within his /her range of competence” (Wood, et al., 1976, p. 90). Teaching adjusts to the child’s response, which “thus [determines] the tutor’s next level of instruction” (p. 92). Scaffolding is viewed as an iterative and interactive process.

Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) observed that tutors marked critical features, to accentuate certain features of the task. “Marking provides information about the discrepancy between what the child has produced and what he [the tutor] would recognize as a correct production” (p. 98).

Observing the student and having knowledge of the learning progression is crucial if the teacher is to make decisions regarding which elements of the task to emphasise.

Scaffolding also enables the expert to demonstrate or model solutions to a task. This involves more than just performing the task. "It often involves an 'idealisation' of the act to be performed and it may involve completion or even explication of a solution partly executed by the tutee himself "(Wood, et al., 1976, p. 98). Modelling is a key part of the scaffolding process as students are shown how to perform tasks. Ultimately, the purpose of the teacher's scaffolded instruction is to support the student with new learning.

### *The learner's response*

As noted, discussion on the learner's responses or interactions refers to the individual. The expectation is that scaffolding by an expert initiates change. Change in the child's performance and in the child's cognitive and conceptual understanding of the task must be evident. This is what distinguishes scaffolding from other forms of educational support.

Wood et al. (1976) maintained that for learning to happen the student must have some comprehension of the task involved. They argued that the learner would not benefit from assistance unless comprehension of the solution preceded production. "That is to say, the learner must be able to recognise a solution to a particular class of problems before he is himself able to produce the steps leading to it without assistance" (Wood, et al., 1976, p. 90). The reason given for a student's comprehension to precede production is that without it there can be no effective feedback from the teacher or a deepening understanding for the student. The child must enter the interaction with some understanding of what is to be achieved.

Furthermore, it was recognised that learning involves “a hierarchical program in which the component skills are combined into higher skills by appropriate orchestration to meet new, more complex task requirements” (Bruner cited in Wood, et al., 1976, p. 89). A student’s learning is regarded as a reciprocal process where lower order and higher order skills are supported and influence each other and work towards achieving a particular end.

*The task - the expert - the learner*

Scaffolding was therefore recognised as complex and interactive, and involved dynamic relationships between the expert, the task and the learner which enhanced deeper learning. Wood et al. (1976) explained these knowledge processes by stating that:

The effective tutor must have at least two theoretical models to which he must attend. One is a theory of the task or problem and how it may be completed. The other is a theory of the performance characteristics of his tutee. Without both of these, he can neither generate feedback nor devise situations in which his feedback will be more appropriate for this tutee in this task at this point in task mastery. The actual pattern of effective instruction, then, will be both task and tutee dependent, the requirements of the tutorial being generated by the interaction of the tutor’s two theories. (p. 97)

The effectiveness of the interaction, these researchers maintained, depends not only on the expert’s pedagogical content knowledge, which recognises the learning content inherent in completing the task, but also on the expert’s knowledge of the learner - their skills, understandings and comprehension (or lack of) at the point of interaction - as these together will enable the expert to respond with sensitivity to the individual’s learning situation and task completion.

The scaffolding metaphor as proposed by Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) represented an instructional process in which learners are carefully scaffolded to achieve understandings that they could not manage on

their own. These characteristics have been described according to three key components (task, expert and learner). The potential of the metaphor initiated extensive research over the next decades from a range of disciplines. As a result, the scaffolding metaphor has been reviewed, challenged, elaborated and affirmed over time through varying research interpretations.

### **3.5 Interpretive shifts in the scaffolding metaphor**

The scaffolding metaphor, as stated, originally referred to task instruction with young children and was grounded in the cognitive theories of learning. The learner's performance involved one-on-one situations; thinking and understandings were supported and extended by experienced adults (Rogoff, 1990; Stone, 1998a; Wood, et al., 1976). Research then moved into the classroom, where it focused on teacher-student interactions and scaffolded instructional practices with a greater emphasis on the processes, and involved various interactions, including teacher-whole class, teacher-student and student-student (Cazden, 1988, 1992, 2001; Palincsar, 1986; Palincsar & Brown, 1984).

Cazden's (1988) classic work on classroom discourse extended the metaphor to the classroom. She highlighted the various features of scaffolding, stating that: "They make it possible for the novice to participate in the mature task from the very beginning; and they do this by providing support that is both adjustable, and temporary" (p. 107). For scaffolding to be successful, she maintained, not only must the learner be operating within their ZPD, the help must be "well timed" and "well tuned". It is the "well timed" and "well tuned" practices that support the essential "meeting of minds".

The research that followed the cognitive theories of scaffolding took this metaphor in various directions. I have identified in the research literature four areas that emerged in relation to classroom-based learning:

- Scaffolding learning through talk
- Developing metacognitive thinking through “handover” and “fading”
- Scaffolding as contingency or responsive teaching
- Multiple, multimodal scaffolds encompassing the notion of distributive and synergistic scaffolding.

These initiatives are briefly discussed in relation to classroom learning where, as noted earlier, classrooms are viewed as consisting of highly complex communities of practice, where experts scaffold learners to “doing” writing and “being” writers.

### **3.5.1 Scaffolding learning through talk**

Spoken language is recognised as the dominant mode by which learning occur (Vygotsky, 1986). It is how students demonstrate to teachers much of what they understand and have learned, and it is how teachers instruct and develop learning in the classroom. However, “the notion that talk could be a critical factor in a child’s educational experience only dates back to the Sixties” (Myhill & Warren, 2005, p. 55). Cazden’s (1988) research on classroom discourse viewed talk as a crucial aspect for scaffolding learning. She stated: “We have to consider how the words spoken in classrooms affect the outcomes of education: how observable classroom discourse affects the unobservable thought processes of each of the participants, and thereby the nature of what all students learn” (p. 99). Cazden investigated how patterns of talk can be employed to support learning.

Teacher-talk as a scaffolding tool has been hotly debated, mostly regarding the learning potential of different types of teacher-student talk and interaction (Cazden, 1988, 1992, 2001; Fisher, 2002; Johnston, 2004; Myhill, 2006; Myhill, Jones, & Hopper, 2006; Palincsar, 1986). Teacher-student talk has traditionally relied on the three-part interactive pattern, initiation/response/evaluation (IRE), sometimes referred to as initiation/response/feedback (IRF) (Perrott, 1988), and is often associated with whole class teaching (Myhill, 2006; Myhill, et al., 2006; Myhill & Warren, 2005). The initiation-response-pattern is often criticised for not allowing genuine conversation or dialogic interaction between student-and-student and teacher-and-students as it fails to provide opportunities for students to deviate from what the teacher expects, and furthermore creates student responses of guess-what's-in-the-teacher's-head (Perrott, 1988). Cazden (2001) argued that this type of closed questioning does not extend or challenge students' thinking:

The most pervasive criticism of the IRE/IRF lesson structure is that the teacher only asks display questions to which she already knows the answer. The questions are, in short, 'inauthentic'. Either the teacher is simply testing student knowledge, so the criticism goes, or is co-opting students to participate in what could otherwise be a lecture. (p. 46)

The research literature maintains that worthy questions will challenge students' thinking, deepen understandings, and promote reflection, analysis, self-examination and inquiry (Howe, 1992; Jones, 1996; Perrott, 1988). Cazden (2001) argued that teachers should "add non-traditional discussions that serve better to stimulate and support 'higher-order thinking' across the curriculum" (p. 5). Myhill, Jones and Hopper (2006), referring to Allerton's (1993) study, commented that when students were asked open-ended questions as opposed to closed questions, they gave responses which were longer and more divergent, and allowed teachers greater insight into students' cognitive processing. Open-ended questions invite learners to participate, engage and articulate their



thinking (Cazden, 2001; Johnston, 2004; Myhill, et al., 2006; Wing-Jan, 2001b).

However, enhancing the role of talk involves more than just using open-ended questions that encourage student participation. Myhill (2006) argued that it is about employing interaction patterns “which reduce the teacher’s role as orchestrator or controller of classroom talk, and instead reposition the teacher as an enabler of talk for thinking” (p. 21). More recently, approaches that value the role of dialogic conversations have been promoted. Dialogic spaces allow children to interact more purposefully for gaining conceptual understandings. Meanings are negotiated and joint inquiry proceeds through discussion which encourages critical thinking (Cazden, 2001; Johnston, 2004; Many, 2002; Myhill, et al., 2006; L. C. Wilkinson & Silliman, 2000). Many’s (2002) research explored how students develop increasingly complex understandings through instructional conversations. She used the metaphor “verbal tapestries” to describe the multilayered interactions of students and teacher as they negotiate meanings. Dialogic talk is regarded as a genuine scaffolding process which allows learning to happen in the “construction zone”, where learners use their prior knowledge, create new understandings, and come to different ways of knowing, rather than simply reproducing teacher statements.

The notion of dialogic talk supports the work of Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner (1996) introduced earlier in this chapter, and Bakhtin’s (1986) explanation of dialogicality of voices introduced in section 2.4. Vygotsky’s seminal work on language and cognition recognised that social language not only shapes learning interactions but is also part of the learners’ internal dialogue as they make sense of the tasks they are engaged in. Bruner’s work on scaffolding promoted discourse of collaboration and negotiation in attempts to achieve a “meeting of

minds". Bakhtin highlighted the social nature of interaction: the listener responds to the utterance of the speaker and co-constructs conversations in which responses are dependent on what has been already stated. Myhill et al. (2006) added that: "It is the process that is important rather than the outcome, because by engaging in genuine dialogue with others, individuals can operate at a higher level of thinking than would be possible on their own" (p. 25).

Palincsar (1986) highlighted teacher-student relationships: "The hallmark of scaffolded instruction is in its interactive nature. There is ongoing interplay between teacher and learner in the joint completion of the task" (p. 75). This constitutes a more participatory view of learning (Rogoff, 1995; Sfard, 1998). Furthermore, Stone (1998a) argued, when teachers scaffold participation through dialogic conversations, by slowly reducing support, by "fading" the scaffolds, the teacher is able to achieve "handover" of the learning and students take increased responsibility for solving and completing tasks.

However, it has been claimed that teachers need to vary interactive dialogue according to learning needs (Cazden, 1992; Myhill, 2006; L. C. Wilkinson & Silliman, 2000). Cazden (2001), attempting to categorise teacher questioning for its cognitive value, found that teachers varied their questioning according to the learner, the situation and the context. She stated:

I conclude from these difficulties that trying to apply some scale of cognitive difficulty to individual questions may be heuristically useful for teachers, but is inherently imprecise for research. If instead, we consider discourse in longer sequences, we can think about the cognitive value of classroom discourse as a scaffold and as reconceptualisation. (p. 101)

Cazden (2001) advocated that types of questioning responses should vary according to the purpose. Researchers should focus on an event, a

sequence of utterances in order to identify and recognise the different purposes of questions and talk interactions. Myhill et al. (2006) affirmed her view. They stated that by adopting a simplistic view teachers might:

...miss some of the different ways in which questions can be used, and an effective questioning sequence might, for example, begin with a quick burst of closed recap questions to bring the topic to the foreground of children's thinking, followed by some reasoning questions, and conclude with an open question, or some questions that invite children to reflect on their thinking. It may be more appropriate to think about the right question at the right time. (Myhill, et al., 2006, pp. 18-19)

Therefore, before banishing the IRE sequence it can be argued that it needs to be reviewed in terms of its usefulness, its contribution to scaffolding student learning. While dialogic conversations involve co-construction of meaning and student engagement in their own learning, dialogue needs to be viewed in terms of function and what it is expected to achieve over time, in a particular context (Cazden, 2001; Howe, 1992; Johnston, 2004; Myhill, et al., 2006; L. C. Wilkinson & Silliman, 2000).

### **3.5.2 Fading and handover: Developing metacognitive thinking**

Expectations of scaffolding go beyond ensuring that the child completes a task. Scaffolding seeks to empower students so that they gain ownership of metacognitive processes involved in their learning (Warwick & Maloch, 2003). Experts, therefore, "fade" scaffolding support to "handover" the learning to the students (Stone, 1998a).

Palincsar and Brown's (1984) seminal research on reading comprehension valued teacher demonstrations that modelled "handover" and "fade". The researchers designed an instructional framework known as reciprocal teaching, "chosen because in a reciprocal exchange one party acts by way of response or reaction to the second party" (Palincsar, 1986, p. 77). Dialogue enabled the teacher to model and

demonstrate four metacognitive thinking strategies of prediction, question generation, summarisation and clarification, which together allowed the students to eventually take turns assuming the role of leader. Teachers would “initially provide explanation coupled with modelling, then fade out the modelling and function more on the role of the coach providing corrective feedback and encouragement, promote self-evaluation, and reintroduce explanation and modelling as appropriate” (Palincsar, 1986, p. 78). While this scaffolding strategy related to reading comprehension, the importance of developing independence through demonstrations and handover is also relevant to writers. Palincsar (1986) recognised that learning was a shared responsibility. Her driving question was: “How can educators best aid learners in the zone of proximal development, nudging them from one level of competence to the next and eventually to independent application of the instructed skill?” (p. 74).

Warwick and Maloch’s (2003) research focused on teachers’ dialogue and explicit scaffolding of the *processes* of learning in science and literature classrooms. In considering *how* scaffolding can support the learner to complete a task, Warwick and Maloch were interested in students’ appropriating their learning by developing metacognitive strategies. They stated:

We draw attention to the *how* more than the *what* of learning, spotlighting the *processes* of learning, rather than the products. We suggest that an emphasis on scaffolding the *processes* of learning leads to pupils’ more productive involvement in collaborative work and correspondingly distributes the responsibility of teaching and learning beyond the reader. (Warwick & Maloch, 2003, p. 55)

This view recognised that when teachers make metacognitive decisions explicit, learners are empowered and skills are gained which can be transferred to new learning situations. In the research article, the

literature teacher made previously invisible discussion strategies visible by explicitly recapping the students' comments and "raising participants' awareness of the discussion process" (p. 57). She also increased the productivity of talk through the introduction of conversational strategies such as eliciting follow-up questions that asked the students to elaborate and explain their reasoning. The teacher used indirect and direct cues to encourage participation and demonstrate ways to question. As "pupils began to appropriate the... conversational strategies and became more effective interactors within their discussions, the teacher's focus shifted to more discussion-content oriented issues" (p. 57). The teacher mediated and handed over learning to her students but also shifted the focus on to deeper learning.

For scaffolding to occur, these authors uphold that it is crucial there is handover of learning from the expert. The learners appropriate new skills and understandings as they move from other-regulated behaviour to self-regulated behaviour (Warwick & Maloch, 2003). The concept of handover was raised by Stone (1998a), when he reviewed the metaphor of scaffolding in relation to teaching children with learning disabilities. Scaffolding, he maintained, is temporary and gradually gets dismantled and withdrawn, in order to transfer responsibility from the adult to the child. Stone explained this iterative process:

The adult provides ongoing assistance as necessary to support the child's engagement in the task, but she or she also works naturally to reduce that support so that the child is performing independently. The process by which transfer of understanding and responsibility is accomplished involves a continuing cycle of communication, tension and resolution. (Stone, 1998a, p. 354)

Many (2002), however, proposed a different view of scaffolding, and acknowledged learners as active participants who socially co-construct meanings. She argued therefore "that experts or mentors do not withdraw support, rather they continue to be participants in the

conversation, weaving understandings of concepts along with novices” (p. 402). Scaffolding, she maintains, is not so much about handover from expert to learner but rather, as her weaving model implies, it is about shared negotiation and shared meanings.

The research literature thus acknowledges that putting support in place is not enough; scaffolding involves participation and ongoing conversations that actively changes learners’ thinking and actions.

### **3.5.3 Scaffolding as responsive or contingency teaching**

There is a body of research that considers contingency a key factor in designing and mediating further scaffolding interactions. Although the importance of the expert responding to the child’s actions was originally highlighted as an essential part of cognitive scaffolding, later research has taken a more critical view of how teachers ought to assess and respond. Ongoing diagnostic information is gathered to inform the expert, to help determine the child’s level of understanding, as well as measure it against learning goals. This information determines further teaching instruction. Palincsar (1986) and Stone (1998a) stressed that formative assessment and feedback play significant roles in refining the scaffolded interaction.

Van de Pol, Volman, and Beishuizen’s (2011) research work found that although most teachers provided immediate support they did not determine students’ existing understandings first. They affirmed the claim that for scaffolding to occur the teacher must respond contingently – that is, “teachers must first assess students’ existing understanding before providing support” (2012, p. 193). This iterative interaction requires both diagnostic assessment and teaching interventions. The researchers argued that “it is the *tailored adaptation* to students’ existing understanding that determines contingency and, therefore, whether

support can be labelled scaffolding” (van de Pol, et al., 2012, p. 194). Their concept of contingent teaching is closely tied to formative assessment as it is represented by three discrete steps: employing diagnostic strategies (finding out what the students know); checking the diagnosis, mainly achieved through questioning to obtain common understandings (getting a student’s response); and then employing intervention strategies (which may involve further dialogue). Their model places a greater emphasis on scaffolding for assessment purposes rather than allowing the more open-ended dialogue or exploratory discussions of inquiry-based learning as proposed by Warwick and Maloch (2003) and Eshach, Dor-Ziderman and Arbel (2011).

Sharpe (2006) also examined contingency scaffolding and differentiated between macro and micro level scaffolding. The macro level “involves the overall design of the unit of work to achieve specific outcomes including the sequence of tasks within each lesson and types of resources to be utilized” (p. 213). Macro level scaffolding-design recognises the teacher’s goals, the language demands of the planned tasks, learners’ abilities, and sequenced lessons leading to handover. The micro level scaffolds, however, represent the moment-by-moment interactions within the lesson between teacher and students, and students and students. This type of scaffolding meets the point of need. Sharpe (2006) argued that it is contingency scaffolding, contingent upon the circumstances.

The research literature emphasises that not only are teachers’ contingent responses dependent on students’ understanding, where teachers might focus on clarifying students’ misunderstandings, they may also open up dialogue and challenge students’ thinking (Many, 2002; Myhill, 2006).

### 3.5.4 Multiple and multimodal scaffolding

Sociocultural theories regard learning as complex and multilayered. More recent discussions have acknowledged that: “In general, multiple agents provide scaffolding in the classroom including the teacher, other students, paper-based artefacts, classroom decorations, technology and far more” (Davis & Miyake, 2004, p. 267). Learning is mediated, distributed across multiple, multimodal, contextual interactions. Sharpe (2006) added that:

Other semiotic systems such as visuals, gestures and actions also act as agents of scaffolding as they help to mediate learning. Use of a variety of semiotic systems contributes to the creation of ‘message abundancy’... This ‘doubling up’ of the same message is designed to provide additional support for the learner. (p. 213)

In this context, message abundancy is a response to a particular group of students’ needs at a particular time and looks different in different contexts (Sharpe, 2006). This view supports a Social perspective for learning to write.

The concept of “distributed” scaffolding involving multiple, multimodal forms, varying across different contexts is a key point in the discussion of effective scaffolding interactions (Davis & Miyake, 2004; Pea, 2004; Sharpe, 2006; Tabak, 2004). While the notion of a range of scaffolds was introduced by Wood et al. (1976), Tabak (2004), like Sharpe (2006), discussed “marshalling and orchestrating multiple resources to support learners” (p. 307). Differentiated scaffolds, however, by combining multiple forms of support provide different means to address diverse learners and their specific needs. In particular, Tabak (2004) was interested in the design of scaffolds, the different patterns and functions they could provide for teaching and learning. She formalised distributed scaffolding interactions and presented a framework identifying three different forms or patterns which she labelled *differentiated*, *redundant* and



*synergistic* scaffolds, but she acknowledges that as with all forms of categorising “these three patterns are not mutually exclusive and a single curriculum can reflect all three patterns” (p. 315).

While this research project is interested in synergy of scaffolding it recognises all three patterns of interaction. “Differentiated scaffolds” are regarded as the basic interactive pattern: “The goal in implementing this pattern is to identify the range of support needs and to identify the agent or material that best supports each need. Thus, each need is addressed by its own scaffold” (Tabak, 2004, p. 315). Multiple scaffolds are used, but to support different aspects of performance or learning need. This tends to be a linear process implementing different scaffolds for different needs.

Redundant scaffolds, similar to Sharpe’s (2006) notion of abundance, proposes a range of different means of support to meet the same need, thus opening up multiple opportunities for students to achieve the same performance with assistance. This pattern is based on the premise that “different students possess different competencies and might require different levels of support with respect to different particular learning needs. Including multiple supports that target the same need can cater to the multiple ZPDs that are present in the classroom” (Tabak, 2004, p. 317). Redundant scaffolds maximise the chances for students to actually benefit from any scaffolding interaction that may include improperly calibrated scaffolds or possible missed opportunities for providing necessary support. It is even more significant in classroom contexts in which such misses cannot be immediately diagnosed and repaired as in one-on-one tutoring situations.

Synergistic scaffolds provide differing supports that augment each other, whereas multiple, co-occurring, and interacting scaffolding supports the same need. Synergistic scaffolding is not only directed toward the same

need, but as the scaffolding supports interact, intertwine, they systematically complete each other: there is an expectation that increased understanding is more likely. Synergistic scaffolding is an important conceptual tool to develop an understanding of how “different constituents interact to produce support that is greater than the sum of the constituents” (Tabak, 2004, p. 308). Synergistic scaffolds can support complex classroom interactions. Tabak (2004) explained the multilayered complexity of synergistic scaffolding operating in communities of practice as follows:

One source of scaffolding might introduce particular cultural tools and structure students’ use of these tools. Other sources of scaffolding might communicate what norms, actions, and practices are privileged in the discipline. The synergy between these scaffolds can foster culturally appropriate use of the tools. (p. 320)

A sociocultural view of the scaffolding process apprentices learners into a community of practice, and their learning is mediated through distributed and synergistic scaffolding interactions that employ the cultural tools and resources. The traditional cognitive notion of scaffolding has been revised.

### **3.5.5 Comment and critique of the scaffolding metaphor**

Earlier research literature on scaffolding (Wood, et al., 1976) heralded the interactive nature of learning instruction, one where a more knowledgeable expert could extend the learner’s cognitive understanding and performance through specific scaffolding interactions assisting at the child’s ZPD. This explanation related to parent-child interactions and one-on-one tutor-child interactions in early childhood contexts (Rogoff, 1990; Wood, et al., 1976). It was recognised at the time as sound pedagogic practice – a means to challenge the child in their zone of proximal development, to respond to and recalibrate learning at

the point of need – but several issues have since been debated in the research literature. Six points are discussed further.

First, and a frequent criticism, was the overuse of the scaffolding metaphor (Myhill & Warren, 2005; Pea, 2004; Stone, 1998b). Myhill and Warren queried the watering down of the term, now used synonymously with support:

Like all words which suddenly gain a common currency in any sphere, the term scaffolding is in danger of becoming a vague word for every activity initiated in the classroom (perhaps because most common classroom activities are intended to support learning). There is much less consideration of precisely *how* teachers' talk and actions act as scaffolds to pupils' learning. (Myhill & Warren, 2005, p. 57)

Myhill and Warren note that exactly *how* teachers' practice can scaffold learners needs investigating. Stone (1998a) argued for the metaphor to be salvaged, extended and enriched: "It needs to be invigorated with much more explicit theory of the mechanisms involved of the instilling of new understandings" (p. 352). Stone's discussion, which acknowledged Rogoff's (1995) work in early child-hood on guided participation, requested further research which focused on *what* teachers do and say, and *how* they effectively scaffold multiple learners.

A second area of debate evident in the research literature focused on the scaffolding relationship between adult and child. The earlier cognitive models provided challenges for classroom teaching. Because teachers engage with large numbers of students, resulting in multiple interactions throughout the day, it is difficult to determine an individual child's learning and ensure transfer in the classroom (Myhill, et al., 2006; Stone, 1998a). Contingency responses and handover were regarded as particularly difficult in whole-class teaching situations. Myhill and Warren's (2005) research found that when managing a whole class

teachers narrowed their strategies. The researchers observed that “questioning remains the most common strategy for eliciting responses from children during a whole class teaching episode” (p. 17). The difficulty, they maintained, was that teachers were potentially working with multiple levels of children’s understanding. Added to the complex mixture is the need for the teacher to gain an understanding of each individual’s ZPD, and also recognise the potential development for each child, which will vary from person-to-person. Being able to work with individuals and determine their current understanding and potential provides challenges for a teacher in the classroom.

A third point raised in the literature was whether scaffolds which act as strong prompts, bootstrapping the child’s learning, could be regarded as scaffolding and would transfer to independence. Pea (2004) critiqued the work of Wood, Bruner and Ross’s (1976) early parent-child interactions, regarding them as too constraining. He questioned whether continual constraints limited the range of meanings offered – to the extent that the challenge no longer existed. The child just followed instructions. Myhill and Warren (2005) metaphorically referenced this type of interaction as “straitjacketing”. When students were directed by heavy prompts to complete a physical task without cognitive, social or affective engagement the strategy was not recognised as scaffolding. Myhill and Warren’s (2005) criticism related to educational reforms in the United Kingdom (UK). The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy directed teachers to teach to the curriculum objectives. While the curriculum objectives provided a focus for the teaching, the researchers claimed that this practice resulted in a greater use of closed and factual questioning, and students were disempowered from their own cognitive and social learning. Many teachers, concerned about students meeting curriculum requirements and passing the national tests, responded with a heavy direct prompt and straitjacketed learning rather than providing

temporary guidance. In this sense, Myhill and Warren maintained, scaffolding becomes a control mechanism rather than a temporary guide.

A fourth point raised by Myhill and Warren's (2005) research focused on how teacher-dialogue handled critical moments, and "in particular whether opportunities were taken to hand over independence to the learner, or move them onto a higher level of thinking" (p. 59). The UK National Literacy and Numeracy strategy has also been accused of narrowing student learning in relation to the teachers' response to critical teaching moments. The researchers noted that teachers often missed opportunities "to gain information or cues from children about their prior knowledge or understanding of the learning or did not build on responses made by pupils who were ready to articulate their thinking about a concept" (p. 59). Contingency teaching was limited and scaffolding practice was questionable.

A fifth, and pertinent but often neglected point, is reviewing scaffolding from the learners' perspective (Palincsar, 1998; Sharpe, 2006; Tabak, 2004). Although the research literature examines the task, the teacher/experts' involvement, and scaffolding processes that support the learner, there is minimal research on the actual participatory activity of the learner. Not only are the learning effects of scaffolding not measured (van de Pol, et al., 2010), the learner's voice is often missing or under-represented as well: "The coding of only teacher actions or strategies is not sufficient" (van de Pol, et al., 2010, p. 286).

Palincsar (1998) stressed that students engage in learning in different ways and require time and space to negotiate personal understandings. Palincsar maintained that scaffolding was too often approached as a process of "instilling knowledge - a process in which there is little room for the learner's agenda and sufficient recognition of the processes of

negotiating meaning” (p. 372). “Well timed”, “well tuned” (Cazden, 1992) scaffolding may not be offered to students at the appropriate time, and learning opportunities may be lost.

Tabak (2004) reminded educators that “even if supports are utilised, they may not be sufficient because students may not interpret them as intended by designers and educators. They may not interpret them according to the cultural or disciplinary conventions” (p. 320). This misinterpretation references Bruner and McNaughton’s metaphorical explanation of a “meeting of minds”. Deciding how to plan, organise, teach and assess so that children from varied linguistic, social and cultural backgrounds are given a voice is a challenge for teachers (McNaughton, 2002).

The sixth area that I noted lacking in the scaffolding research was the impact of affective factors on students’ learning. This was affirmed in van de Pol, Volman and Beishuizen’s (2010) meta-analysis. However, a study that tracked teachers’ strategies in support of children’s cognitive and affective interactions when learning science, was carried out by Eshach, Dor-Ziderman and Arbel’s (2011) work in Israeli kindergartens. Taking a synergistic view of scaffolding, their inductive research identified the augmentation of affective and cognitive scaffolding. They noted that teachers scaffolded affective learning in two ways: recruitment of the child and reinforcement of self-esteem. They reported:

Scaffolding strategies in the affective domain enable the child to be emotionally prepared for the task, and this enables the teacher to use cognitive scaffolding strategies required for the child to be able to perform the task. ... . It is our belief that the affective scaffolding strategies included in the ‘reinforcing children’s self-esteem category’ also contribute to inculcating in children positive attitudes towards science. (pp. 562-563)

These two scaffolding factors worked together to form a synergy of support, making a difference for pre-schoolers learning science. The importance of Wood, Bruner and Ross's (1976) early discussion of the affective elements in the scaffolding metaphor and the references made by van de Pol et al. (2010) do not appear to have been followed through in the research literature to any extent.

### **3.6 Chapter conclusion**

This thesis adopts a sociocultural view of teaching and learning and acknowledges the interplay of cognitive and social theories. A review of the literature explored "communities of practice", recognising that the specific interactions members engage in are enacted according to the cultural, historical, and political situations in which they are immersed. The chapter raises questions about whether writing classrooms can be viewed as communities of practice where teachers apprentice learner-writers' social, cognitive and affective functioning through participatory writing activities and interactions.

The literature proposes that learning happens in a "magic place" where "minds meet", a place where the teacher scaffolds in a timely fashion on the edge of the child's zone of proximal development. As a teaching practice scaffolding has persisted in various forms but simply supporting writers is not an adequate explanation of scaffolding, nor is the traditional cognitive notion of scaffolding put forward in the 1970s. As discussed in relation to interpretive shifts in classroom-based research, the scaffolding metaphor has in various ways been reviewed, refined and elaborated on. Sociocultural research describes scaffolding as a dynamic, interactive practice, where the importance of dialogue for interactive meaning making is valued. A focus is placed on metacognitive thinking skills to develop independence through handover and fading, so that contingency or responsive teaching provides feedback in recognition of

the child's prior knowledge and recalibrates accordingly. Furthermore multiple, multimodal scaffolds encompass the notion of distributive synergistic scaffolds to apprentice learner writers.

However, gaps in the literature still exist. Three areas are noted. First, the research literature mainly emphasises teachers' enacted practice, how the teachers' interactions do or do not affect students' learning; the voice of the participatory learner is often silent. Second, examination of the role of affective responses during scaffolding interactions is sparse and requires further research (Eshach, et al., 2011; van de Pol, et al., 2010). Third, how to best measure complex behaviour was an area of concern raised by van de Pol, Volman and Beishuizen (2010). Quantitative measures, they claim, do not do justice to interpreting complex interactive activity classrooms.

Chapter Two and Chapter Three have provided a comprehensive description of the research literature. The detail in the literature review is regarded as necessary. Not only do these chapters present background information for the research investigation but they also map and describe the Writing Discourses and scaffolding interactions which are crucial to the development of the analytical frameworks.

The next chapter discusses the study's methodology and research design. The characteristics of qualitative research are discussed and an interpretive stance is taken. The research questions are presented for each research phase. The participants are identified, the research methods are described and the data analysis is explained. Finally, the trustworthiness of the investigative procedures relevant to this research is discussed.





## **Chapter Four**

### **Design and methodology**

Understanding of individual's interpretations of the world around them has to come from the inside, not the outside. Social science is thus seen as a subjective rather than an objective undertaking, as a means of dealing with the direct experience of people in specific contexts, and where social scientists understand, explain and demystify social reality through the eyes of different participants; the participants themselves define the social reality. (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 19)

#### **4 Introduction**

In this study the research design and methods employed set out to describe and interpret teachers' sense making of the various discourses of writing and writing pedagogy. Building on the literature reviews in Chapters Two and Three, this chapter explains the methodology and outlines the research design. The first part of the chapter introduces the interpretive perspective taken and describes the characteristics of a qualitative research approach. The second part of the chapter outlines the design of the project: the research questions, the participants' involved, ethical considerations and the research methods employed to gather data. The third part describes the data analysis and explains the development of three heuristic frameworks used to analyse and interpret the Writing Discourses and scaffolding practices. Finally, the trustworthiness of the investigative procedures relevant to this research is discussed.

#### **4.1 Research methodology: An interpretive stance**

Scholars have referred to a number of different orientations, perspectives or “world views” that underlie and inform research methodology and methods. Babchuk and Badiee (2010) maintain that understanding philosophical orientations provides a lens, an ontological view of reality, which enables researchers to position themselves when conceptualising their own research designs, and a rationale for choosing qualitative and or quantitative methods to investigate research questions. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) presented three broad philosophical paradigms or “world views”. They refer to these as normative, interpretive and critical paradigms that researchers employ to investigate how people attempt to make sense of their social world. An interpretive view or research orientation is one that presents a naturalistic view of the world and seeks to establish reality from within. That is, it seeks to understand the subjective world of human experience from the perspectives of the individuals who are part of the situation being investigated (Burns, 1997; Cohen, et al., 2007; Creswell, 2008; Patton, 2002). Positivist paradigms, on the other hand, strive for objectivity and employ scientific methods and normative approaches, seeking to measure and explain natural phenomena, or employ laws or law-like generalisations for the purposes of comparing and predicting future action (Creswell, 2008). Critical research perspectives regard the other two paradigms as incomplete, as they neglect the ideological and political aspects influencing social behaviours. The purpose of critical research “is not merely to understand situations and phenomena but to change them.... [I]t seeks to emancipate the disempowered” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000, p. 26). In determining the research design, however, fitness for purpose must be the guiding principle as different paradigms are suitable for different research purposes and research questions. The strength of an interpretive paradigm, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) argued, is its fitness for the study of human behaviour,

“where the immense complexity of human nature and the elusive and intangible quality of social phenomena contrast strikingly with the order and regularity of the natural world ” (p. 11). Because this study is interested in teachers’ understandings, points of view and reasons for engaging in particular writing discourses (Ivanič, 2004), an interpretive stance was taken. Within this paradigm, the study employed a qualitative interpretive theoretical framework, and within this it applied critical discourse analysis to interpret teachers’ positioning in the various discourses of writing.

#### **4.1.1 A qualitative research approach**

Qualitative research has a long history in education and in the social sciences. Scholars have described qualitative research in various ways (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Cohen, et al., 2007; Creswell, 2008). One way of reviewing these descriptors is to use Bogdan and Biklen’s (1992, 2007) framework. They identified five features of qualitative research. These are discussed below.

##### *Qualitative research is interested in “meaning”*

A qualitative research approach is interested in the different ways people make sense of their lives and the worlds they live in. It recognises that credibility and status must be given to the participants’ “voice”. People are not seen as mere subjects; they are experts on what the researcher wants to learn about the fundamental principles of their behaviour:

Qualitative researchers believe that since humans are conscious of their own behaviour, then the thoughts, feelings and perceptions of their informants are vital. How people attach meaning and what meanings they attach is the basis of their behaviour. (Burns, 1997, pp. 291-292)

Multiple meanings are derived from the context studied and portray how the participants personally interpret events, contexts and situations. In qualitative research it is acknowledged that people create multilayered,

complex “realities” as they actively construct their social world; their actions are deliberate and creative. Hence “qualitative research places stress on the validity of multiple meaning structures and holistic analysis, as opposed to the criteria of reliability and statistical compartmentalisation of quantitative research” (Burns, 1997, p. 11).

### *Qualitative research is naturalistic*

Qualitative research acknowledges the subjective experience of individuals immersed in natural settings. It recognises that human behaviour is shaped by sociological and historical experiences. Events cannot be understood adequately if isolated from their context (Sherman & Webb, 1988). To retain the integrity of the phenomena being investigated, qualitative research methodology requires the researcher to get beside people and attempt to understand phenomena from “within”. It is an attempt to study the social world in its natural state with minimal intervention or manipulation by the researcher (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2008). The researcher, “rather than imposing their own modes of rationality on those they study, attempts to comprehend social action in terms of the actors’ own terms of reference” (Burns, 1997, p. 302). However, it must also be recognised that in taking an interpretive stance, the researcher positions the participants as part of the contexts being observed, and as such the researcher cannot avoid being both modified by and in turn influencing the setting (J. Bell, 1993; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Burns, 1997; Lichtman, 2010).

### *Qualitative research is descriptive*

Qualitative research is presented in descriptive form. Thick and detailed descriptions are essential to represent the complexity of the natural situations, contexts, and settings that are the focus of qualitative research. This also reduces the likelihood of simplistic interpretations. Qualitative data mostly deals with pictures and words rather than numbers. Often described as “soft” data, material accumulated from interview

transcripts, observations, teacher and students' artefacts and field notes provides rich sources of information. Descriptive data can better capture the multilayered meanings of contextualised behaviour and when written up the results of the research "contain quotations from the data to illustrate and substantiate the presentation" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 5). Bogdan and Biklen emphasised that: "The qualitative research approach demands that the world be approached with the assumption that nothing is trivial, that everything has the potential of being a clue that might unlock a more comprehensive understanding of what is being studied" (p. 5).

### *Qualitative researchers are concerned with process*

Qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Qualitative methods move flexibly from description and data inference to explanation, suggestion of causation and theory generation (Cohen, et al., 2007). This flexibility enables the researcher to modify and refine findings as collection and analysis of data proceeds. The researcher is able to interrogate the data and develop initial theoretical hunches as part of considering a framework to support analysis of the whole data set. They are able to formulate and reformulate their understandings as part of coming to a more comprehensive and grounded understanding and explanation of events, intentions and actions.

### *Qualitative researchers tend to analyse data inductively*

By its very nature, qualitative research design is explorative. In qualitative research, data tends to be analysed inductively (R. Burgess, 1985; Burns, 1997; Creswell, 2008), moving from detailed data gathered in the field to sorting into general codes and themes. On the whole the researcher does not enter the field and "search out data or evidence to prove or disprove hypotheses they hold before entering the study" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 6). Rather, theory generation is derivative: the

data suggests the theory, rather than vice versa. There are those, including Ezzy (2002), who argue for more sophisticated uses of grounded theory that draw on both inductive and deductive methods of theory generation. In Ezzy's words: "The task of the grounded theorist is to allow deductions from pre-existing theory to suggest specific research problems and foci, but the researcher must not allow this pre-existing theory to constrain what is noticed" (p. 12). The benefit of this unified approach is that both inductive and deductive processes are used for interpreting and analysing meanings and for theorising.

In conclusion, an interpretive qualitative research approach focuses on meaning, is naturalistic, presents findings as rich descriptions, is concerned with the research process and tends to analyse data inductively. This approach has been adopted for this study because it allowed me to value the voices of the teachers and student participants and to gather and present a richer perspective on teaching writing, one that moved beyond understandings derived from the literature.

#### **4.2 Research questions and design**

The purpose of the research was to develop an understanding of how writing was being taught by a group of teachers in New Zealand primary schools. There were two consecutive phases in the research study, as set out in Chapter One, and they are summarised in Table 1. Phase One of the study involved interviewing ten teachers about the beliefs that guided their practice. Further analysis of the teachers' talk was sought to explore the range and the complexity of the Writing Discourses the teachers engaged in and to interpret their identities as teachers of writing. The following research questions guided Phase One:

1. *What* beliefs and practices characterise a group of New Zealand primary school teachers teaching writing in their classrooms?
2. *Why* do these teachers teach writing the way they say they do?

3. *What* Writing Discourses (knowledge/understandings, beliefs and practices) do they subscribe to?
4. *How* do the theoretical Writing Discourses shape their identities as teachers of writing?

The second phase of the study used a case study approach. Case studies are recognised as a key approach in qualitative research methods (Cohen, et al., 2007). They are useful for enquiring into a real-life contexts (Merriam, 1998) and are of particular value when the researcher has little control over events (Cohen, et al., 2007). I was interested to see how the teaching of writing might be enacted as classroom practice: specifically the manner in which young writers are scaffolded. Therefore, the following research questions were posed in Phase two:

1. *How* does one teacher scaffold writing in her classroom?
2. Is there evidence of adjustment and handover for learning?
3. *Why* does one teacher teach writing a certain way?
4. *What* writing discourses (knowledge/understandings, beliefs and practices) shape her practice as a teacher of writing?

**Table 1: Overview of research design in two phases**

Phase and data collection methods	Participants
Phase One Semi-structured interviews	10 primary school teachers
Phase Two Three classroom observations: video data and transcribed teaching sessions  Documents: teacher's recorded resources  Documents: Students' writing samples (writing plan, draft and published formats)  Teacher's semi-structured interview on student participants and programme (post teaching)  Teacher's anecdotal comments	A case study teacher and her class of 27 students       4 focus students



### **4.3 Participant sampling**

My experiences as a classroom teacher, facilitator of Maths and English Ministry of Education curriculum contracts in the mid 1990s, and my current role as tertiary educator at Waikato University working alongside teacher-undergraduates in schools had allowed me to build a network of educational colleagues who helped with the selection of participants. I needed to purposefully invite participants so that I could develop an understanding of how a group of primary school teachers teach writing. Decisions were also influenced by the accessibility of schools and teachers.

#### **4.3.1 Phase One: Teacher participants**

Initially informal discussions took place with school support advisors and school curriculum leaders to identify enthusiastic and effective teachers of writing. Having identified a group of 12 teachers, I contacted them personally (by telephone) to discuss the proposal and to ascertain their availability and interest in the project.

Once ethical approval was given by the University, I obtained entry into the schools via the consent of the school principals (Appendix 1). A formal letter was sent at the end of 2005 outlining the research and the teachers' involvement as well as offering the opportunity to follow up with further discussion. This resulted in visits to two school principals and one deputy principal to explain the project purpose, procedures regarding participants and data collection. Principals consulted with their Boards of Trustees and provided me with permission to proceed with the research on their school sites. The teachers were also sent letters explaining the research purpose and asking for permission to interview them either on site or off site in my office (Appendices 2 & 3). At the beginning of 2006, ten primary school teachers agreed to be interviewed (see Table 2). Two teachers had withdrawn, one teacher changed schools

and the other had new school responsibilities. The ten teachers were given pseudonyms. They taught across five different primary schools from a range of sites.

**Table 2: Teachers and their schools' profiles.**

Teacher	Years teaching & current position	Class	School	Size	Decile
Kat	DP & classroom tcher Teaching 30 years	Y 2/3	Medium rural close to city associated with University	120	9
Lola	Classroom tcher Teaching 23 years	Y 4	Medium rural close to city associated with University	120	9
Trinny	Classroom tcher Teaching 2 years	Y 5	Medium size in city suburbs	475	7
Gail	Acting DP & classroom tcher Teaching 15 years	Y 6	Medium size in city suburbs	475	7
Eliza	Classroom tcher Teaching 22 years	Year 2/3	Medium size in city suburbs	475	7
Mary	DP non-teaching position Teaching 24 years	Junior school	Medium size in city suburbs	475	7
Glen	Senior teacher and classroom tcher Teaching 15 years	Y 5/6	Large size outer city suburbs	600+	3
Faye	DP. Senior school, non teaching position Teaching 30 years	Senior school	Large city school associated with University	500-600	10
Linda	Classroom tcher Teaching 17 years	Y 5/6	Large city school associated with University	500-600	10
Rosie	Senior teacher Teaching 14 years	Y 2	Large rural school associated with University	380	10

All schools were close to the University for ease of access as I was teaching classes and needed to fit interviews around teachers' school commitments and my lecturing and administration responsibilities. The schools varied in size from medium-sized rural schools to large city schools. Two teachers taught in medium-sized rural schools and one teacher at a large rural school. Five teachers taught at medium-sized city schools and three in a large city school. Of the ten teachers, half were involved with teacher education programmes at the university. The different sites provided various organisational procedures and school curriculum policies.

The participants were all Pākehā women, teaching primary-school students (Years 0-6), but other than that they were not a homogenous group for the following reasons. Their teaching experience ranged from 2 - 30 years. Four of the teachers held deputy-head roles; two of these participants were deputy-heads based in the junior school and two took leadership roles in the senior school. Two of the four DPs held acting positions at the time. Of the four deputy-heads, only two were released from full-time teaching but they were still involved with small group teaching in classes around the school. The six class-room teachers taught classes across the year levels. Overall four of the teachers were based in the junior school (Years 0-3, aged approximately 5 to 7 years old) and six were based in the middle primary school (Years 4-6, aged approximately 8 to 10 years old).

#### **4.3.2 Phase Two: Case study participants**

Phase Two employed a case study approach to enable me to explore the complexity of the classroom. Merriam (1998) proposed three key principles for a case study approach. First, the case is regarded as "a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries.... I can fence in what I am going to study" (p. 27). Second, interpretation is context

bound: “by concentrating on a single phenomenon or entity (the case), the researcher aims to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon” (p. 29). And third, case study is viewed as a process; interactions are complex and unfold over time. Merriam stated:

A case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest is in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation. Insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy, practice, and future research. (Merriam, 1998, p. 19)

Bassey (1999) suggested that case studies are prime strategies for developing educational theory, theory seeking and theory testing which contributes to theory through “fuzzy” generalisations or propositions. By this she meant that case studies enable close analysis and interpretation of a situation, however, because of the complexity of the case and variables involved only predictive statements based on that case can be made. Adelman et al. (cited in Bassey, 1999, p. 23) listed the following advantages of case study research:

- Case study data paradoxically is “strong in reality” but difficult to organise. In contrast other research data is often “weak in reality” but susceptible to ready organisation.
- Case studies’ peculiar strengths lie in their attention to the subtlety and complexity of the case in its own right. They catch features that may be lost in larger scale quantitative research.
- Case studies provide insights into other, similar situations and cases and may allow generalisations either about an instance, or from an instance to a class.
- Case studies recognise the complexity and “embeddedness” of social truths. By carefully attending to social situations, case studies can represent something of the discrepancies or conflicts

between viewpoints held by participants. The best case studies are capable of offering some support to alternative interpretations.

- Case studies, considered as products, may form an archive of descriptive material sufficiently rich to admit subsequent reinterpretation.
- Case studies are a “step to action”. They begin in a world of action and contribute to it. Their insights may be directly interpreted and put to use.
- Case studies present research or evaluation data in a more publicly accessible form than other kinds of research report, although this virtue is to some extent bought at the expense of their length (p. 23).

In this study, the case of interest was a teacher working with her students to scaffold their writing.

#### *Selection of participant(s) for Phase Two*

After Phase One, the teachers' interviews, the intention was to work more closely with four of the teachers from two of the schools (selected from Phase One participants). The teachers volunteered to meet, discuss and design intervention strategies that would support their writers in the classrooms. A teacher-release day was held to collaboratively design a teaching programme to explore vocabulary development, an area of concern. However, after my first visit to the classrooms to video, it became very difficult, for a number of reasons, to arrange further times when all four teachers could meet. One of the schools had a new principal and he was reluctant to release the teachers as he was establishing his school culture. Both schools were also involved in several other professional development programmes so access to teachers became competitive. As a result it was decided to change Phase Two from an action research process to a case study focus. One teacher was involved.

### *Phase two: Case study teacher*

I approached Kat to participate in the case study because from her initial interview conversations it was apparent that she reflected on her own practice, read avidly searching for professional information in written and online texts and said she enjoyed professional conversations with her colleagues. But the most significant reason was that an initial analysis of her interview data indicated she engaged with all Writing Discourses identified in the literature review. A letter was sent outlining the research proposal and the teacher's consent was gained (Appendices 4 & 5).

Kat was a mature, experienced junior teacher, having taught in the classroom for 30 years. Her administrative and leadership responsibilities included the deputy principal role, and leader of the school's Literacy Curriculum Professional Development initiative. In addition, she was the liaison contact for student teachers from the University of Waikato. I knew Kat professionally, having brought students to work in her school, and we had developed a collegial and professional relationship so I was able to gain permission to work with her and her class. Ethical considerations and consent forms were already in place. Confirmation of Kat's involvement was followed by a visit to her and her school principal. As noted by Bogdan and Biklen (1992): "Your arrival on the scene with a research permission slip from central office is likely to ruffle feathers, unless you do the necessary ground work first to court potential subjects" (p. 82).

Kat taught year two and three students in a state, co-educational rural school situated within the wider urban area of Hamilton, New Zealand. The school has a close relationship with the University of Waikato supporting student-teacher programmes. It is located five kilometres from the city and the close proximity enabled me to fit in observational data gathering with my Faculty of Education teaching and

administration duties. The school had seven teaching classrooms and a roll of approximately 130 students. The roll consisted of 92% Pākehā students and 8% Māori students. The decile rating of the school was 10, indicating it drew its students from a comparatively wealthy socio-economic base. Many parents either transported their children from other areas to the school or lived nearby on lifestyle blocks. A majority of parents held professional jobs or were involved in farming dairy cows and small horticultural blocks.

Although the research focus was on teacher practice, which involved continuous interactions with Kat’s class of 27 students, the participation of four students was tracked. Students were allocated pseudonyms. Kat selected two able writers, Jack and Laura, and two less able writers, Elliot and Karne. By focusing on these four children I could observe how they responded to teaching situations as part of the class but also when working with the teacher or a peer.

**Table 3: Research procedure and time frame**

Methodology	Time frame and activity
Phase One: Teacher interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethical permission and consent gained in December 2005</li> <li>• Teachers' interviews, transcription and alterations January–March 2006</li> </ul>
Phase Two: Case study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethical permission and consent gained from teacher/s, parents and students in April 2006</li> <li>• Case study set up in July</li> <li>• Observation of three sessions in July 2006 for approximately 40 minutes each.</li> <li>• Teacher-researcher brief conversations after teaching</li> <li>• Students' writing samples over the period of writing process (plan, draft, final)</li> <li>• Post study interview August 2006</li> </ul>

Letters of explanation were sent and permission was sought from the students' guardians (Appendices 6 & 7), from the four student participants' guardians (Appendices 8 & 9) and further ethical consent was to be sought and obtained from the students' parents/care-givers if any video data was to be used publicly and identified any of these students (Appendix 10). Otherwise the participants' faces would be blurred. The following diagram shows the research timeframe.

#### **4.4 Ethical considerations**

It was necessary for me, the researcher, to gain the confidence and trust of the participants and to assure them that confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained. It was also necessary to quickly establish a collegial relationship so that teachers would develop confidence in my questioning and my being present in the classroom. It was also important that the participants shared information openly and honestly (Burns, 1997; Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). I had been a teacher practitioner, deputy principal and tertiary educator and was familiar with the school setting and systems. My teaching experience enabled me to quickly establish a positive relationship with the student participants so that they felt comfortable with me in their room.

Ethical principles required careful consideration in any research setting, particularly in qualitative research where not only the subject matter is involved in ethical issues, but also the methods and procedures used (Burns, 1997). Qualitative researchers acknowledge that moral and ethical issues encountered can be extremely complex and subtle. A number of factors need to be considered, including voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality and the storage and use of data (J. Bell, 2010; Burns, 1997; Cohen, et al., 2007).



Voluntary participation required me to obtain informed consent. “The principle of informed consent arises from the subject’s right to freedom and self determination” (Cohen, et al., 2007, p. 51). This means that participants have the right to understand the purpose of the research and what was required of them. They also have the right to accept, decline or even opt out of participating in the research study. This issue was especially relevant when working with young students (Graue & Walshe, 1998). Often young participants, who are selected by adults to take part in research, have little knowledge or understanding of what is expected of them. In the case study research, Kat always explained to her students what was going to happen when I was in her classroom.

In addition, participant confidentiality and anonymity was maintained. As researcher I was obliged to ensure the participants came to no harm, and to keep research data confidential. Participants’ responses to questions and interview data remained confidential and anonymous so they could not be identifiable to readers of the research. Participants had a clear understanding of how the data might be used. Balancing the participants’ right to privacy and the public’s right to know research findings can create tension if the purpose and usefulness of the outcomes are not clearly established. All participants were provided with pseudonyms for privacy reasons.

In this study I ensured that all ethical issues were attended to as already discussed. Informed consent was received from both teacher participants and the parents/guardians of the young writers. I worked as unobtrusively as possible. When information arose that benefited classroom teaching, it was shared with the school as requested. Any articles written were disseminated to the school and teachers.

## **4.5 Data collection**

This study employed multiple data collection methods. “Qualitative findings grow out of three kinds of data collection: (1) in-depth, open-ended interviews; (2) direct observation; and (3) written documents” (Patton, 2002, p. 4). These three methods were employed in order to capture the richness and diversity of the teachers’ perspectives on writing and writing pedagogy in the following ways (see Table 3). Phase One: semi-structured interviews; and Phase Two: observation of the teacher’s practice, including video data, a semi-structured interview with the teacher post teaching, and documents, such as the teacher’s resources, books, charts and written demonstrations. In Phase Two the students were observed and videoed and their written scripts (writing plan, draft, final copy) were copied.

### **4.5.1 Semi-structured interviews**

In qualitative research, the interview is commonly used to gather information from the participants. Burns (1997), for example, referred to the interview technique as a “verbal exchange, often face to face ... in which the interviewer tries to elicit information, beliefs or opinions from another person” (p. 329). The interview is a purposeful conversation that can be used in two ways. “[Interviews] may be the dominant strategy for data collection, or they may be employed in conjunction with participant observation, document analysis, or other techniques” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 103). The interview recognised that what the participants had to say was an important means for developing insight on how the participants interpret the world. In this study semi-structured interviews were employed twice. In Phase One, the interview was used to gather data from the teachers. In Phase Two, the interview followed up on video observation of the classroom.

A concern about the use of data from interviews is that it is self-report and therefore open to subjectivity and also personal interpretation. This method was therefore counter-balanced by using other forms of data collection, especially classroom observation.

In effective interviews the subjects are put at ease and talk freely about their views and understandings. Quality interviews should produce rich descriptive data, filled with words that reveal the participants' perspectives. An effective interviewer will demonstrate a personal interest in the participants' views by listening and giving appropriate nonverbal responses, and where necessary will use verbal prompts to probe for clarification and specificity (Burns, 1997; Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995).

Burns (1997) listed four advantages of interviewing: repeated contact, where greater periods of time are spent with the informant and thus greater rapport develops; presentation of the informant's perspective rather than the imposition of the researcher's perspective; the use of natural language to express informants' points of view; and the informants' equality of status with the researcher, because they are the holders of the knowledge.

As with other qualitative methods, interviews may vary according to several factors, such as the degree to which they are structured, the information required, the type of questions asked and the degree of control the interviewer has over the interview (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). At one end of the continuum is the formal, interview with a structured schedule where questions are predetermined, concisely written, and presented in the same format to all of the participants. This form of interview is useful to those researchers who need to interview large numbers of participants, cover a wide area of information and seek

generalisations. The aim is to decrease interviewer bias and the subjectivity of the data.

At the other end of the continuum is the informal, open-ended and unstructured interview procedure. The unstructured interview or conversation provides the researcher with scope for prompting, deviating or probing for further information. It also allows the interviewee to answer questions in his/her own way. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) maintain that the aim of the unstructured interview "is to provide for a greater and freer flow of information between the researcher and the subject" (p. 162). The apparent lack of structure can provide a window into routinely constructed interpretations and elicit unexpected and relevant material for the researcher.

In this study the semi-structured interview provided the main form of data collection for Phase One. The interview followed a set schedule with planned questions, enabling me to collect common aspects of the phenomena, but also allowed for deviation and a greater depth of information to be gathered. In this way, while the purpose of the study was kept in mind, I could probe and prompt in particular areas for further understanding. I was able to conduct conversations with the teachers in my office off site or in quiet rooms in their schools. The semi-structured interviews took approximately 45-60 minutes and followed an interview schedule (see Appendix 11), during which time the teachers' responses were audio-taped. The teachers were given a pseudonym, and the interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriber, then checked by me as I listened to the audiotapes. The transcripts were then returned to the teachers to ensure that their intended meanings were captured. Often the teachers made changes, by clarifying points or completing sentences.

A semi-structured interview was also used in Phase Two (see Appendix 12). The interview with Kat took place in August, a month after my observations of her teaching sessions in July. The purpose of the interview was for Kat to reflect and comment on her teaching and discuss her sessions, but also to share her understandings of the participants' engagement and what they achieved with their writing. While the interview was taken post teaching to gain an overall discussion of the three teaching sessions, brief anecdotal comments were also recorded after the videoed sessions.

#### **4.5.2 Observation**

Observation involves a process of gathering data from everyday, real-life situations. In this research I closely observed the behaviours of the participants in their natural setting and video recorded a number of teaching sessions. Patton (1990) claimed that there is "simply no substitute for direct experience through participant observation" (p. 202). He maintained that the researcher could miss opportunities observing what was actually taking place "in situ" if they depended only on explanations from others.

Two types of observational positioning are noted in the literature: participant and non-participant (J. Bell, 1993; Cohen, et al., 2007; Lichtman, 2010). A participant observer is someone who lives as much as possible with and in the same manner as the individuals being investigated. This stance has been criticised for presenting a potential for bias and posing a threat to research objectivity. This could occur when the observer loses objectivity, becoming so familiar with the environment and characteristics of the participants that he or she overlooks aspects evident to an objective outsider or non-participant observer (Cohen, et al., 2007). In contrast, researchers who are non-participant observers remove themselves from the group so that there is no interaction with

those under observation; they merely observe and record (J. Bell, 2010; Cohen, et al., 2007).

Brown and Dowling (1998) maintained that data may be collected using a range of recording techniques. These range from a highly structured form of recording to informal semi-structured forms, unstructured and anecdotal forms of collection. Brown and Dowling (1998) proposed that "the descriptive power of the categories is a key element in establishing the validity of the schedule as an instrument for collecting data" (p. 49).

- Collecting observational data in a highly structured manner presumes that the researcher knows in advance what they are looking for, and that the data is to be recorded in terms of specified categories.
- Semi-structured observations operate in a less, predetermined and systematic manner. The data are hypothesis-generating rather than hypothesis-testing. Semi-structured observation allows for a more open-ended exploration of the setting. Burns (1997) maintained that in this case the researcher is guided by broadly defined research interests and revisits the data, analysing inductively, noting trends, relationships or patterns, then imposing a tighter structure on the data as a focus is developed.
- Unstructured observation recognises that while the observer may have a clear idea of the purpose they may be less clear about the detail. Therefore the researcher needs to observe what is taking place before deciding on the significance of the observation. Judith Bell (2010) stated that unstructured observation is when the researcher starts with no predetermined categories; they have no checklists or charts. Observations are made in a natural open-ended way. When patterns in the data emerge structure will be imposed.

- Anecdotal notes or reflective field notes record personal thoughts that are related to hunches, insights, ideas or themes or even questions to prompt further thinking. These notes are often made during the observation or at the end of it, as the researcher is leaving the site.

For the purpose of this study, I operated as a non-participant. The children were familiar with visitors in the classroom and they continued working and interacting with their teacher, largely ignoring me. Using a video camera enabled me to enter the research context with an open mind and capture complex classroom activity. Videoing took place over three teaching sessions of approximately 20 – 40 minute sessions. After the initial session, the camera was stopped when the teacher engaged in organisational processes such as asking students to move from the mat back to their desks or to sit with a peer for discussion purposes. The camera was placed mostly behind the children at the back of the room using a wide-angled perspective, an over-shoulder-angle of students so I could capture the teacher's actions and dialogue. Some occasional close-up recording took place, when I focused on partner discussions to cut out other classroom noise or when I wanted to see what Kat was demonstrating on charts or in her modelling book.

Camera work can be used in an uncomplicated manner to take inventories of objects in a setting but their typical purpose is to record people in action. Researchers "want a visual record of how their subjects look in their natural setting" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 113). In this study I was interested in capturing the interactions and nuances of conversation and actions so I could revisit the classroom context numerous times in an attempt to interpret teacher-student interactions.

Some concerns regarding observations and video data as a data-gathering technique relate to research bias and selectivity, which have the potential to impact on the trustworthiness of the research process. To overcome this, as stated earlier, the video camera was placed at the back of the room taking a wide-angled perspective. Another concern is that the researcher's presence can influence students' performance, in particular when a camera is used. Participants may change their behaviours to try harder or react in ways they consider the researcher may expect (Cohen, et al., 2007). To address this concern Kat spoke to the children explaining my purpose was to record her teaching. I familiarised the students with the camera by trialling the videoing sessions earlier. All of the teaching sessions were videoed.

One of the strengths for collecting data via video recording is that for close up analysis the data can be reviewed many times. An observer seated in the classroom with recording schedules may get distracted, affecting the trustworthiness of the data collection.

#### **4.5.3 Teacher and students' artefacts and documents**

In qualitative methodology artefacts or physical evidence gathered in the field are valued and used to describe and interpret the participants' interactions with their social world. Traditional ethnographic research was "exhaustively" descriptive and many artefacts were collected from the site. In this study, cultural tools or "meditational means" in the form of the teacher's documents, which included wall charts, a display of children's literature, a modelling book that recorded the classes learning goals and writing demonstrations on the whiteboard, were captured on video. The video images demonstrated the complexity of classroom interactions and showed *how* the documents or cultural tools were used to mediate and scaffold teaching and learning. In the findings chapters,



several images are used to support analysis of scaffolding where relevant.

The students' written scripts or documents also provided key data. The students' written work samples in the form of templates or mind maps for planning, the draft writing in the students' books and the final written pieces of text were photocopied as data rather than removed from the setting. These documents were used to interpret students' understandings of writing and to analyse how their learning developed in response to the teacher's purposeful scaffolding interactions over a period of time.

#### **4.6 Analysis of data**

Data analysis in qualitative research is not a linear process but rather an iterative process, where the researcher systematically sifts, segments, categorises, codes and reassembles the data to interpret and make sense of the material gathered in the field (Ezzy, 2002; Lichtman, 2010). Although this analytic process is regarded as the most crucial part of qualitative research, often there is limited explanation available in terms of the detail required in the different methods for analysis (Thorne, 2000, cited by Lichtman, 2010). In this section I will describe my process of data analysis, including detail of the inductive and deductive processes. I modelled this after Ezzy (2002) who reasoned that when involved in data analysis "the researcher should enter into an ongoing simultaneous process of deduction and induction, of theory building, testing and rebuilding" (p. 10). His argument was not so much about the existence of prior hypotheses, since these cannot be avoided, but rather with the way theoretical dispositions interact with the research process. His explanation of integrating the processes, drawing on previous theory and placing it alongside new data parallels the data analysis process that I used for my study.

I drew on earlier theories (from the research literature) on Writing Discourses and scaffolding interactions to provide conceptual frameworks to aid the inductive/deductive analytical process. The selection of these analytical tools was influenced by the research questions and the conceptual design. Identifying the Writing Discourses the teachers subscribed to, and illuminating one teacher's scaffolding practices as she apprenticed her writers, required multiple forms of analysis to identify, describe and interpret teachers' writing practices. For each context, the teachers' descriptions of their beliefs and practices, and the classroom case-study, different analytical tools were applied to the data to address the different research questions. I employed four different forms of analysis (to analyse five sets of data) as described in Table 4, methods of analysis.

- The first form employed thematic analysis, used to analyse the teachers' interviews to identify key ideas and patterns in the teachers' descriptions of their beliefs and practices about teaching writing. The interview questions framed the analysis process.
- Second, I developed an analytical framework employing discourse analysis. Eight discourse markers that encapsulated key ideas in Writer, Text and Social Discourse were identified. The Writing Discourse markers were used to analyse the teachers' positioning and engagement with different writing theories and practices. This framework was used first to analyse the teachers' interviews in Phase One and later it was employed to explore the case-study teacher's video data and her post-study interview data to analyse her engagement in Writing Discourses as observed in her classroom in Phase Two.
- Third, I developed a second analytical framework to identify scaffolding indicators to conceptualise teachers' scaffolding practices. This heuristic guided my analysis and interpretation of

the video data where one teacher's classroom *participatory scaffolding* interactions were observed.

- And fourth, a third analytical framework was developed. It became necessary to accommodate new understandings of scaffolding - that it is participatory, collaborative, synergistic and temporal. The indicators from the scaffolding heuristic were reviewed and five key indicators were defined to investigate evidence of and understand the process of *a synergy of participatory scaffolding*.

While the two interrelated contexts, Phase One and Phase Two, were being studied, the data set was analysed in four different ways. An overview of the data analysis is presented in Table 4. While these frameworks or heuristics were initially based on previous research theory, they were adjusted in terms of their wording as I engaged with the data. This was especially evident in respect of scaffolding theory, where gaps in the literature resulted with the addition of students' responses during teaching interactions. Furthermore, the generation of a sociocultural model, one that reflected a *synergy of participatory scaffolding*, led to the development of a framework to closely analyse the classroom interactions over time.

A detailed discussion of each of the analytical tools used, and the context and the coding frameworks or heuristics developed, will be presented next. These frameworks are justified in terms of their role in analysis for interpretive understanding and theory generation.

**Table 4: Overview of data analysis process.**

Context and data	Research questions	Method of analysis	Process
Phase One Teachers' interviews	1. <i>What</i> beliefs and practices characterise a group of teachers?  2. <i>Why</i> do the teachers teach writing this way?	Thematic analysis to interpret a description of teachers' beliefs and practices.	Inductive /deductive
Teachers' interviews	3. <i>What</i> writing discourses shape their practices?  4. <i>How</i> do the theoretical Writing Discourses shape their identities as teachers of writing?	Discourse analysis of the research literature to develop a framework represented by Writing Discourse markers.  The framework was refined to analyse teachers' uptake and positioning in Writing Discourses.	Deductive/ inductive
Phase two Case study	1. How does one teacher scaffold writing in her classroom?	Development of a conceptual framework identifying scaffolding indicators located in literature. This was adjusted in response to classroom observations. The framework guided analysis and interpretation of participatory scaffolding interactions.	Deductive/ inductive
Case study	2. Is there evidence of recalibration, adjustment and handover?	Development of a conceptual framework for referencing a synergy of participatory scaffolding across time for theory generation.	Deductive/ inductive
Case study	3. Why does the teacher teach writing this way?  4. What writing discourses shape this teacher's writing practice?	Discourse analysis of Writing practice provided a reference frame to analyse and compare teacher's reported positioning and identity.	Deductive/ inductive

#### **4.6.1 Teachers' interviews: Thematic analysis**

Inductive thematic analysis was employed for the teacher interview data. While this process is a widely used method for qualitative analysis, Braun and Clarke (2006) pointed out that thematic analysis is often described in a vague manner and is an under-theorised tool. Because thematic analysis is not wedded to any pre-existing theoretical framework it is regarded as a flexible tool, defined as “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Creswell (2008) argued that identifying themes allows the complexity and depth of storytelling to emerge, which adds insight to understanding individual experiences. “A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). However, themes are ultimately determined by the researcher's judgement as they are reshaped as the analysis proceeds (Lichtman, 2010).

##### *The process and justification*

In this study thematic analysis focused on the data gathered from the teachers' interviews, in which they reflected on their beliefs and practices. While the interview questions semi-structured the conversation (see Appendix 10), the following research questions provided a lens for thematic analysis and interpretation.

1. *What* beliefs and practices characterise a group of New Zealand primary school teachers teaching writing in their classrooms?
2. *Why* do these teachers teach writing the way they say they do?

A thematic analysis of the teachers' decision making was required to capture their perspectives, similarities and differences. To analyse the teachers' perspectives their transcripts were read and re-read. The data

were initially chunked into two topics relating to beliefs and practices, and then patterns and ideas were coded. Coding involves “the process of segmenting and labelling text to form descriptions and broad themes in the data” (Creswell, 2008). Codes played an important role as they enabled me to categorise, to sort and shape ideas, and identify emerging themes for description and interpretation. Graue and Walsh (1998) explain: “Codes are merely the signifiers for ideas, analytic categories that a researcher has identified in the data. More important than the code itself is the idea (or theme) that the researcher is trying to communicate with that code” (p. 163). Initially, teachers’ comments were coded and possible categories were noted alongside the transcripts. Then the final categories were set out electronically on a grid and the teachers’ comments were checked off accordingly (see Chapter Six). As the analysis proceeded, big ideas or themes were identified in the data, for example, challenges and issues that the teachers described relating to teaching writing. These new themes and sub-themes were processed and with the consolidation of thematic patterns, the significance and implications for teachers’ practice could be interpreted.

#### **4.6.2 Teachers’ interviews: Discourse analysis**

The intention of this part of the research analysis was to examine teachers’ subscription to certain Writing Discourses: to interpret *why* they taught this way, *what* range of views and understandings were held and *how* the various Writing Discourses, introduced in Chapter Two, shaped their teaching practices.

Since discourse analysis is concerned with the meanings of events and experiences enacted by members of the Discourse community (Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates, 2001), a qualitative analytical tool was chosen to interpret teachers’ engagement in the three Writing Discourses. Critical discourse analysis was a way of locating teacher beliefs and practices

within the larger context of one or more Discourses related to the teaching of writing. Locating teachers in this way provided a stepping-stone for considering *how* discourse subscription played out in the way they identified professionally as teachers of writing.

This research study argues that the notions of Discourse (Fairclough, 1994; Gee, 2008, 2011b), positioning (Davies & Harré, 2001; Harré & Lagenhove, 1999) and identity (A. Burgess & Ivanič, 2010; Gee, 2011b) are interdependent. The following discussion first revisits the concept of Discourse, and then explores the relationship of positioning and identity revealed in discourse analysis.

When teachers engage in dialogue and activity at the institutional, policy, school and classroom level, they both shape and are shaped by various Discourses related to subject disciplines and pedagogies (Fairclough, 1994; Gee, 2008, 2011b; Ivanič, 2004). Gee's (2011a) view of Discourse analysis which guided this research project, "deals with meaning in social, cultural and political terms, a broader approach to meaning than is common in much mainstream linguistics" (p. ix), as discussed earlier in 2.1.1. He describes language-in-use in society, as being attached to "other stuff" and meanings are thus dependent on how language is used in particular texts and social contexts. In this case, the language-in-use is "attached" to the perspectives of Writer, Text and/or Social Discourses. The development of an heuristic was required to help frame meanings representative of each Discourse. Discourse markers identified in the analytical tool allowed me to "look" closely at the teachers' degree of subscription to each of the three Writing Discourses. Evidence of their engagement was identified and analysed in the teachers' interviews when they talked about their beliefs about teaching and learning writing, how they engaged with writing theories, implemented writing

approaches, planned for writing, employed teaching strategies and assessed writing in the classroom.

The Discourse markers, while they allowed me to analyse the ways in which each teacher subscribed to the three Writing Discourses, they also supported discursive analysis and interpretation of the practices enacted by this group of primary school teachers. As Locke (2005) argued: “one approach to a view of literacy as discursively constructed is to identify the elements that have a (potential) role to play in constructing it” (p. 78). Here, a discursive view of teaching writing focused on the teachers’ practices, including the language used by the group to describe their versions of events as they made sense of “doing” writing in their classrooms.

Critical discourse analysis was used to interpret the teachers’ talk, to reveal how they had been positioned or positioned themselves as writing teachers – in relation to political and educational theories of the time. Harré and Lagenhove (1999) connect the concept of positioning to a person’s attributes where positioning is understood as the discursive construction of personal stories. It is these stories that make a “person’s actions intelligible and relatively determinate as social acts and within which the members of the conversation have specific locations” (p. 16). Personal stories, in this case, are the stories shared by the teachers about their beliefs and practices of writing. The teachers’ stories instantiate and are located across the different Writing Discourses, which in turn are evident in the complex positions they adopt. Each Discourse offers teachers of writing “a particular position or stance in respect of what writing is about” (Locke, 2005, p. 79). These positions taken up by teachers “can be expected to impact upon both understandings of what writing is or should be, and pedagogical practice” (p. 79).



Furthermore, a critical discourse perspective encourages positions of resistance and compliance to be tracked. Through focusing on the ideas, issues, and beliefs the teachers expressed, then tensions or power relationships in educational writing settings can be identified (Fairclough, 1994; Gee, 2009; Janks, 2010; Sandretto, 2011; Wetherell, et al., 2001). Subscription to various Discourses impacts and shapes “who one is and is always open to question depending upon the positions made available within one’s own and other’s discursive practices” (Davies & Harré, 2001).

An investigation of teachers’ positioning in relation to various Writing Discourses, therefore, allows the teachers’ identities to be explored as they take up views and identify with certain writing practices. Lave and Wenger (1991) proposed identity building be defined by the way a person views him or her self and a perception of how others view them: it is about the relationship between self and the surround. Their understandings of identity building in relation to communities of practice is discussed in 3.2. Here they claimed that: “identity, knowing, and social membership entail one another” (p. 53).

Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop’s (2004) research on teachers’ professional identities affirmed the concept of self as central to identity building. They maintained: “images of self strongly determine the way teachers teach, the way they develop as teachers, and their attitudes towards educational changes” (p. 108). They also argued that identity is influenced by expectations of others; social norms are imposed, setting expectations of what a teacher should know and do.

This research draws on Burgess and Ivanič’s (2010) work on discursive construction of identity. Although focusing on writer identity, they argue this view can be applied more widely. The authors raised two points; the

concept of discourse is crucial to a theory of [writer] identity and identity must be viewed in terms of timescales. They argue that: “identity is discursively constructed by all social practices” (p. 229), and like Wenger (1998) and Gee (2011b), they propose that identity building, who we are, is socially and historically shaped by discourses we participate in. Furthermore, identities are not static, unitary or fixed but are negotiated through social interactions with others over time. When tensions exist, where individual identity conflicts with a sense of the collective (Wenger, 1998), this may lead to the development of new ways of being a person in that community (Beijaard, et al., 2004; Wenger, 1998). In this case, identities as teachers of writing are shaped and located in the Writing Discourses and the positions they subscribe to.

Finally, by appreciating that teachers’ practices, their positioning and professional identities are shaped by their involvement in various discourse communities, discourse analysis enabled me to identify “*who*” (a situated identity) is doing “*what*” (a socially situated practice or activity)” (Gee, 2011b), and it also enabled me to ask *why* teachers were doing writing in a particular way.

### *The process and justification*

Deciding on “discourse markers” was viewed as a necessary step in the process to foreground the teachers’ talk and the Writing Discourses they enacted through their practices. The heuristic tool was developed from the research literature, as discussed in Chapter Two, to help analyse the data related to the research questions:

1. *What* Writing Discourses (knowledge/understandings, beliefs and practices) do they subscribe to?
2. *How* do the theoretical Writing Discourses shape their identities as teachers of writing?

Initially each of the Writing Discourses (see Chapter Two for discussion of Writer, Text and Social perspectives) was analysed in relation to the research literature to establish usable and viable Discourse markers. Discourse markers were represented by words and phrases, and key concepts associated with different theories and practices. Eight markers were selected to represent the key ideas associated with each of the three Discourses of writing pedagogical practice. A heuristic or framework was developed which encompassed the three sets of Discourse markers and this was refined as interview data were analysed. Eventually this became the tool for analysis to identify the Writing Discourses the teachers appeared to engage with. The final framework is set out in Table 5. Each marker is described in some detail to ensure comparability and translatability as discussed in Chapter Four (4.1.1).

During the analysis process, each teacher's transcript was then read and re-read; each transcript was systematically analysed in relation to the markers in the heuristic. The analysed samples of dialogue or statements were recorded as separate instances under each Discourse heading of Writer, Text and/or Social, on a grid. Items of uncoded data were considered further for the development of a new category or discarded if they were too obscure. Quantifying the responses revealed prevalent patterns, and these were the basis for claiming the extent to which teachers were located in particular Writing Discourses. This allowed comparisons to be made. This is reported on in Chapter Six. I could then move "from a description of what is the case to an explanation of why that is the case" (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p. 139).

**Table 5: Writing Discourse markers.**

Writer Discourse markers	Text Discourse markers	Social Discourse markers
<p>The writer is central: A child-centred process supports ownership of learning, personal growth and identity building. Writer's voice is encouraged through exploration and self-expression. Writing is a creative process, a medium for clarifying thoughts and building confidence.</p>	<p>The text is central: The textual product represents the social purpose and linguistic function it fulfills. A focus is placed on the selection and arrangement of language elements relevant to the context of the situation and register (dictated by <i>what</i> the writer wants to say, <i>how</i> they will communicate and to <i>whom</i>).</p>	<p>Social participation is central: Writers are positioned as members of local and global communities where writing practices, situated in social and cultural contexts, shape the way writing is done and is talked about. Multiple meanings, texts and practices are valued.</p>
<p>Personal contexts: The writer has choice of topic. Content is based on the individual's unique and personal experiences of their world. Meanings are explored through imagination and affective and emotional responses to situations.</p>	<p>Criteria to support learning: Students' writing is supported with co-constructed criteria or learning intentions, written exemplars, checklists, and templates or frameworks relating to a text type. Teachers scaffold students and co-construct a genre, leading to independent application.</p>	<p>Real-life contexts: World, home and school social experiences are valued. Culturally responsive pedagogy connects with and acknowledges diverse communities, languages and cultural contexts. Students write about current social issues.</p>
<p>Cognitive processes: Writing is regarded as a goal-oriented, problem-solving task. The writing process is a recursive act comprising phases of pre-writing, drafting, re-viewing, proof reading and publishing. Interactions with others may happen throughout.</p>	<p>Meta-language: Students are expected to develop language to talk about genres. This draws from a systemic functional linguistic model of language learning. Students are empowered to understand the patterns of texts employed in social and school settings.</p>	<p>Collaboration: Involves co-sharing learning. Students teach each other. Teachers' and students' roles as "expert" varies accordingly. New digital and online media may challenge teachers' knowledge of how to access and design multimodal texts.</p>
<p>Wholeness of language: Learning to write values the reciprocity of reading, oral and visual forms of communication. Talk underpins written language and is supported by multiple discussions and responses from others.</p>	<p>Written exemplars: A range of genres is collaboratively analysed and deconstructed to identify text structures and linguistic elements. These are often annotated. Students read the genre they are studying to determine how they are specifically constructed.</p>	<p>Dialogic interactions: Writers are aware of shaping texts to address their readers, allowing for continuous conversations and communication responses. Writing can have a face-to-face or electronic audience, enabling instantaneous response and feedback.</p>

<p>Teacher demonstrations: Students are shown how to engage metacognitively in a range of decision-making mental processes for composing and revising their work. Teachers talk out-loud to verbalise these processes. Emphasis is initially on clarity of meaning.</p>	<p>Genre writing: Teachers lead students to “knowing how” to construct a range of selected school genres. There is a greater emphasis on expository texts learned in the context of other topics or curriculum areas, and taught explicitly through whole class discussions.</p>	<p>Diverse audiences: Writers engage in changing social, political and global contexts where technology has broadened and diversified writing for personal, school and community purposes. Students’ more active engagement in writing outside the classroom is constructed by social media.</p>
<p>Conferencing: Teacher-student learning conversations are usually initiated by the student seeking guidance. This is needs based, sometimes planned and one or two points are taught. The focus begins at the macro-level to initially ensure clarity of meaning, then moves to organisation and finally accuracy of writing conventions.</p>	<p>Explicit teaching: Whole-class teaching often requires the teacher modeling explicit aspects of text construction. This is teacher initiated and regarded as a collaborative practice, directing writers’ knowledge of genres and how the language elements work in different situations with different genres.</p>	<p>Digital and multimodal texts: New texts and new media enable writing to take place in a range of spaces to create meanings through multimodal representations. Students need to know the semiotic systems or grammars of linguistic, oral, visual, audio, gestural, spatial and tactile modes for redesigning.</p>
<p>Audience response: Writing is shared; an audience is given through writing circles, peer response and author’s chair. The intention is to gain an audience response, which may impact on the student evaluating and revising before publishing in a variety of formats.</p>	<p>Genre-based grammar: Students are taught layers of grammar; the social function of the genre; the structure at whole text level (schematic); the organisation of sentence patterns (lexico-grammatical features), and word level knowledge (specialised vocabulary and morpheme patterns).</p>	<p>A critical perspective: Students are encouraged to discuss, critique and argue about written texts. They develop a critical stance when designing and presenting texts, recognising that texts are not neutral, as they position people in particular ways. Students need to consider how they shape texts.</p>
<p>Assessment practices: Emphasis is on knowing the child, their understandings, attitudes and control of the writing process. Formative assessment practices are used, including observation, attitude surveys, conferences and examination of written scripts. Broad descriptors guide comments on emergent, early and fluent writers’ developmental progression.</p>	<p>Assessment practices: The student focus is on the final product. The teacher and peers check the accuracy of the genre constructed against rubrics and checklists to identify the use of linguistic features. Students’ writing is leveled and compared against national indicators to identify deeper features and language conventions employed.</p>	<p>Assessment practices: Acknowledgement of the diversity of learners: their linguistic, cultural and academic knowledges require multiple purpose-driven assessment procedures which recognise writing as designing in particular contexts, and the application of multimodal elements. Students are assessed against national standards.</p>

#### **4.6.3 Case study: Analytic frameworks for conceptualising scaffolding**

Phase two of the project was interested in looking at one teacher's writing practice in the classroom. The following research questions were posed.

1. *How* does one teacher scaffold writing in her classroom?
2. Is there evidence of adjustment and handover for learning?

During analysis of Kat's teaching practice a number of research tensions emerged. The first related to the difficulty of examining pedagogy as something separate from teaching content. Leinhardt and Steele (2005) pointed out that "divorcing the content from the pedagogy is an artificial bifurcation; in any teaching episode, the pedagogy is in service of the content goals" (p. 90). This project acknowledges the interdependence of subject content knowledge and teacher's pedagogy (Shulman, 1987). It recognises scaffolding as a pedagogical practice plays an active role in constructing writing content, and reflects a particular perspective on what it means to learn to write (as discussed in Chapter Two). In this research where writing is regarded as a social act of apprenticeship, the analysis focused on scaffolding interactions in the context of teaching and learning how to write a character description.

A further tension concerned the balance between describing and interpreting data when analysing Kat's practice. When what is observed is presented in "language of absolute, incontrovertible fact, a picture emerges that is sparse, sterile and general, consisting of raw descriptions of teacher and student actions without the connective tissue to relate the actions to one another" (Leinhardt & Steele, 2005, p. 89). Because I needed to encapsulate the cohesion and "connective tissue" to show teaching relationships, Kat's teaching practice was analysed, as suggested by Leinhardt and Steele (2005), by first sequentially describing the interactions in each Move and then interpreting them to retain their richness and complexity.

Another challenge was how to best analyse the classroom interactions. The complex interplay between teaching and learning required the development of a framework to serve as an interpretive lens. Video analysis required the imposition of a structure. It is obvious that you can not look at everything but, as Lichtman (2010) recommends, you do not know what is important until you spend time looking and listening and thinking about the underlying meanings of what you see and hear. And “because your goal is to observe human interaction, you need to decide what to focus on” (p. 169). The research literature on scaffolding theory provided a starting place which allowed me to develop analytical categories relating to: a) the task design, b) the teacher’s mediated actions, and c) the responses of the students.

In recognising that the scaffolding metaphor has undergone several interpretive shifts since its inception (see Chapter Three), the idea of students as participatory learners was acknowledged as referenced by Sfard’s (1998) metaphor of participatory learning, participation and apprenticeship in communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1995) and scaffolding interactions (Stone, 1998b). Students’ active participation, however, is often not explained or elaborated on in the literature; much of the discussion in the research is from the teacher or expert’s position (van de Pol, et al., 2010). There is little recognition of students’ voices, what students actually do or say while actively engaged in scaffolded interactions. An iterative process followed where this framework, which was referenced as the *participatory scaffolding framework* (PSFW), was shaped by the literature and emerging classroom data analysis. In addition, a framework was used to investigate evidence of a *synergy of participatory scaffolding* that recognised scaffolding is dynamic and collaborative and that learning takes place over time. This additional framework developed from the data but also recognised the work of Mercer (2008). The significance of a temporal dimension of learning,

Mercer believes, acknowledges the “relationship between time, talk and learning in classroom life” (p. 35). He maintained that learning theories often fail to recognise this connection, that learning is a temporal, discursive, dialogic process. This particular framework is referenced as *a synergy of participatory scaffolding framework* (SPSFW). These two frameworks are explained in greater detail below.

***Participatory scaffolding: An analytic framework***

The analytic *participatory scaffolding framework* (PSFW) was developed in response to critique arising from the research and in response to the research questions: *How* does one teacher scaffold writing in her classroom? Is there evidence of adjustment and handover for learning? The PSFW developed (see Table 6) identified significant characteristics, labelled as participatory scaffolding indicators that related to the task design, the teacher expert and the students’ responses.

**Table 6: PSFW: Participatory scaffolding indicators.**

a) TASK DESIGN	Plays a key role in scaffolding interactions often as a mediation tool for teaching and learning.	Research literature
Goal oriented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goals are determined and pursued according to learning purposes</li> <li>• May involve flexible sub-goals, which can be introduced as part of the scaffolded design</li> </ul>	(Stone, 1998a; Wood, et al., 1976) (Sharpe, 2006)
Feature rich	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complex but not beyond the student’s capability or level of frustration</li> <li>• Designed with challenges situated within the student’s ZPD</li> <li>• “Designed in”, part of planning (but may be readjusted as a contingency response)</li> </ul>	(Wood, et al., 1976) (Vygotsky, 1978)  (Sharpe, 2006)
Multiple, multimodal elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple co-occurring scaffolds</li> <li>• May involve various arrangements of semiotic systems: visual, linguistic, gestural, audio, and spatial</li> </ul>	(Gibbons, 2002; Sharpe, 2006) (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Davis & Miyake, 2004; Palincsar, 1998; Sharpe, 2006; Tabak, 2004)



Constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designed to limit alternatives for achievement</li> </ul>	(Wood, et al., 1976)
<b>b) TEACHER'S ACTIONS</b>	Apprentice through use of cultural tools, actions and dialogue.	Research literature
Inclusive, invites participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourages engagement</li> <li>• Affirms self-esteem</li> <li>• Acknowledges individual's cognitive contributions</li> <li>• Builds relationships</li> </ul>	(Sharpe, 2006; Wood, et al., 1976) (Eshach, et al., 2011)
Makes connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To prior learning, understandings, and knowledge</li> <li>• To individual's social and cultural knowledge</li> </ul>	(Myhill, 2006; Stone, 1998a; van de Pol, et al., 2011)
A model example for demonstration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For cognitive processing</li> <li>• Provides an example of...(a personal experience, written exemplar...)</li> </ul>	(Wood, et al., 1976)
Directive dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tells, repeats, affirms, rephrases or consolidates</li> <li>• Critically marks</li> </ul>	(Cazden, 2001; Sharpe, 2006; L. C. Wilkinson & Silliman, 2000; Wood, et al., 1976)
Interactive dialogue to explore thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenges, probes, and requests justification of thinking</li> <li>• Poses open-ended questions with an open agenda</li> </ul>	(Clay, 2001; Johnston, 2004; Many, 2002; Myhill, 2006; Warwick & Maloch, 2003)
Provides more information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Builds on, extends and elaborates students' knowledge and provides more detail</li> <li>• Uses non-verbal cues to add meaning</li> <li>• Introduces new learning</li> </ul>	(Warwick & Maloch, 2003) (Sharpe, 2006)
Recalibrates or adjusts responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redirects or corrects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- after noticing learning was going off track</li> <li>- often involving error prompts to ensure greater accuracy</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Meets contingency requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a range of micro level interactions to address immediate needs such as clarification, showing how...</li> <li>- assesses progress and monitors</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Student-initiated learning by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- following student interests or questions</li> <li>- accommodating thinking</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	(Wood, et al., 1976) (Cazden, 1988; Stone, 1998a; Tabak, 2004) (Sharpe, 2006; van de Pol, et al., 2011) (Clay, 1991, 1998)

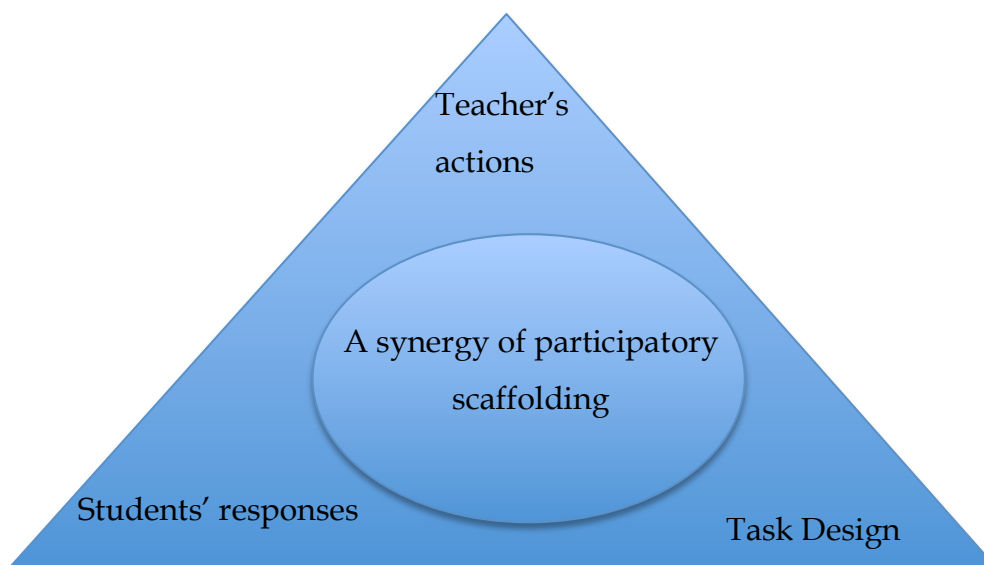
Handover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fading and then handover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to develop student's knowledge (strategy or content)</li> <li>- recognition of learning progression</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	(Pea, 2004; Stone, 1998b)
Synthesis or summary of key concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meta-comments gathering information together</li> <li>• Marking learning to emphasise critical aspects</li> </ul>	(Sharpe, 2006) (Wood, et al., 1976)
c) STUDENTS' RESPONSES Demonstrate:	Engagement in learning signified by varied cognitive, linguistic and emotive responses.	Research literature
Comprehension or cognitive understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goals, purposes for learning</li> <li>• Of the task and learning involved</li> </ul>	(Wood, et al., 1976)
Active social, cognitive and affective participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivated and interested</li> <li>• Shows evidence of engagement and focused learning</li> <li>• Feels affirmed</li> </ul>	(Many, 2002; Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Wood, et al., 1976) (Eshach, et al., 2011)
Offering additional information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Builds on or adds ideas to conversation,</li> <li>• Justifies or explains</li> <li>• Includes non-verbal information by gesture, actions, facial expression</li> </ul>	(Johnston, 2004; Warwick & Maloch, 2003)
Repeating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recapping or affirming ideas already discussed</li> </ul>	(Warwick & Maloch, 2003)
Questioning and challenging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenging or querying teachers' or peers' ideas</li> <li>• Initiating further suggestions</li> </ul>	
Use meta-language related to writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate use of vocabulary or grammatical terms in context</li> <li>• Can talk about characterisation</li> </ul>	(Myhill & Warren, 2005)
Evidence of learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transference of meaning, a shift in understanding</li> <li>• Able to share understanding with another</li> <li>• Meeting of minds</li> </ul>	(Stone, 1998a) (Bruner, 1996; Kalantzis & Cope, 2005; McNaughton, 2002)

Analysis of the data involved the transcription of each videoed teaching session. Three columns were ruled up at the right-hand side of the video

transcription and headed according to the scaffolding components of task design, teacher's actions (mediated by tools and dialogue) and students' responses. The transcripts were analysed according to indicators suggested in the research literature (Appendix 11). After further close analysis of the data, student responses were added to the framework (PSFW) to describe and deepen an understanding of participatory scaffolding interactions. These indicators provided the basis for analysis of scaffolding interactions. These are sequentially analysed, described and interpreted in Chapter Seven.

*A synergy of participatory scaffolding: An analytic framework*

This research proposes a further analytic framework, one that suggests a more dynamic, participatory and collaborative metaphor for scaffolding that I have termed a synergy of participatory scaffolding (SPSFW). This framework is based on a metaphorical model developed in response to further discussions on participatory and collaborative teaching and learning.



**Figure 5: A collaborative model representing a synergy of participatory scaffolding interactions**

The model encompasses the notion that learning is temporal. Learning takes time to embed, ideas need to be revisited in different ways for

consolidation and transfer (Many, 2002; Mercer, 2008; Stone, 1998a). Therefore, any analysis of scaffolding needed to be viewed across the three teaching sessions, across the recursive but sequential writing process of planning, drafting and publishing texts. The notion of synergistic scaffolding recognises that multiple distributed scaffolds interact and work together to achieve the learning, creating support that is greater than the sum provided by individual scaffolds (Tabak, 2004). A synergy of scaffolds operates across time as in the teaching sessions. The model acknowledges that teachers and learners collaborate in various ways: they interact and participate to negotiate new and shared understandings – in the case of this study, about writing (see Figure 5).

This second scaffolding heuristic SPSFW based on the collaborative model recognises that certain elements are key (see Table 7). Recognising that learning requires a synergy of scaffolding and takes place over time (Mercer, 2008) I selected five scaffolding indicators to analyse the complexity of participatory interactions in the classroom. These five indicators provided the basis for further questions to be asked of the data analysed across the teaching sessions.

**Table 7: SPSFW: Key indicators for a synergy of participatory scaffolding.**

A synergy of participatory scaffolding
<b>Shared meanings:</b> Gives evidence of texts and purposes that are meaningful, with shared learning goals and indications of students and teacher collaborating, co-constructing and negotiating meanings.
<b>Connected:</b> Involves a connection not only with students' prior understandings but also in building relationships and positive attitudes through recognition of all students' cognitive, social, cultural and linguistic knowledges.
<b>Multiple scaffolds:</b> Employs a range of, and multiple, multimodal scaffolds working in synergy, distributed across minds, tools and dialogue.
<b>Flexible and responsive:</b> Involves recalibration and adjustment so that contingency scaffolding is responsive to learning needs but may be student directed.
<b>Handover and transference:</b> Leads to ownership and shared understandings of learning. Students' active participation enables transfer of responsibility and creation of new and deeper learning.

### *The process and justification*

These frameworks played a key role in this study as part of the analysis and interpretation of scaffolding interactions, and were developed to:

- Provide a lens to capture and interpret the multilayered complexity of scaffolding as viewed through the observational data (video);
- Allow close analysis where the indicators served to draw attention to aspects of the complex relationships operating within the scaffolding interactions;
- Demonstrate how the teaching and learning is mediated through language, tools and resources for learning writing;
- Demonstrate how teachers worked in the individual child's ZPD;
- Show any shifts and changes in ownership and transfer of learning;
- Identify any changes in teaching focus, continuity and cohesion in the writing process;
- Enable comparisons with other research findings.

#### **4.6.4 Case study: Discourse analysis of teacher's positioning**

The video data gathered from the classroom case study was analysed and questioned again to look at the teacher's positioning in terms of Writing Discourses:

3. *Why* does one teacher teach writing a certain way?
4. *What* writing discourses (knowledge/understandings, beliefs and practices) shape her practice as a teacher of writing?

For this instance the heuristic developed to identify Writing Discourses from the teachers' interviews (Appendix 11) in Phase One was employed. However, analysing the Writing Discourses that Kat actively engaged in when teaching and interacting in the classroom (video observations), was

more complex than analysing the transcript of her first interview six months earlier. The classroom interactions were complex, recursive and diverse. What happened in one situation was often linked back to previous engagements or to set up future learning situations. While the Writing Discourses were identified they were not analysed numerically as in the teachers' talk. As van de Pol, Volman and Beishuizen (2010) have pointed out, episodes or scaffolding dialogues need to be "analysed as a whole because coding at the level of the statement or the interaction might, in fact, miss the essence of the scaffolding" (p. 284).

Case-study observational video data were viewed and reviewed and discourse analysis was employed to analyse and identify the Writing Discourses of Writer, Text and Social perspectives that best represented the teacher's practice. The teacher's interview data from Phase One (written up in Chapter Six) were compared with the video data from Phase Two. Further questions were required to investigate whether her observed pedagogical actions differed from her self-reported writing pedagogy as discussed in Chapter Eight.

To summarise the discussion on data analysis, multiple analytical lenses provided opportunities for the participants' voices to be heard. These analytical lenses also allowed me to synthesise important ideas, differences and understanding that emerged as the teachers explained their beliefs and practices. The trustworthiness of this research study is now explained.

#### **4.7 Trustworthiness of research**

Criteria for ensuring the trustworthiness, qualitative research studies are subject to debate (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). One problem is that qualitative research does not fit traditional models so acceptable criteria for evaluating it are still evolving. Another issue is that in the current

climate of increased accountability and standardisation there are those who want the qualitative research process to be more rigorous and to employ the traditional criteria of objectivity, reliability and internal validity required for scientifically based research (Ezzy, 2002; Lichtman, 2010). Lichtman (2010), however, proposed that the quality of qualitative research can be judged on the basis of the following four criteria:

- Description of the researcher's role: Revealing the self and other connections.
- Convincing arguments: What was studied and what was found.
- Richness in detail: How the study was done.
- Communication: Compelling presentation.

***Researcher's role: Revealing the self and other connections***

This aspect recognises that the role of the researcher is critical to the study. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research does not require the researcher to try to achieve objectivity but rather to recognise the role of self and of the expertise one brings to describing and interpreting the ways participants make sense of their world. The notion of reflexivity, although not a term used here by Lichtman (2010), recognises that in qualitative research the researcher is inescapably part of the social context that they are researching, and their very presence will influence the participants' behaviour, so that in each study the researcher must acknowledge their background, perceptions and biases. In this study I have established who I am, my experiences and the expertise I bring to the research and also recognise that this is a learning journey for me as I am learning from the teachers who willingly talked and shared their practices with me.

Also "the other" studied in the field means that the participants are not nameless subjects but are real people with real opinions, needs and desires. Lichtman (2010) argues that "an understanding of the other does

not come about without an understanding of the self and how the self and the other connect .... [E]ach is transformed through this research process” (p. 224). Although I have used pseudonyms, I visualise the teachers and students and hear their voices. I have attempted to capture these and bring them into the analysis as much as possible. Kat, in particular, valued the research process as part of her own personal learning.

*Convincing arguments: What was studied and what was found*

The researcher needs to be convincing, to ensure the reader understands that what is studied is important to the research field. What is challenging here, Lichtman (2010) points out, is the diversity in qualitative research, the personal interests, agendas, and passions that drive the research topics. She maintains that it is up to the researchers to “make a convincing argument that the topic is important and may be one from which we can learn about our situation ... [and] that the findings are meaningful in the light of the questions asked” (pp. 225-226).

I am passionately interested in the topic of teaching writing in primary school classrooms. However, the research questions posed emerged not only from gaps in the research literature but also reflected questions asked by teachers. This research study was meaningful to all of us who participated.

The convincingness of my argument, I hope, is explained through the research process and the detailed interpretation of the analysis and findings in Chapters Five to Nine. In this study I attempted to demonstrate that the findings, based on a careful process of interpretative analysis, were credible and actually reflected what was there (J. Bell, 1993; Burns, 1997; Cohen, et al., 2007). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), convincingness or establishing the “truth value” of research findings can be established in the following ways. First,



"prolonged engagement" in the field enables the researcher to spend increasing amounts of time with the participants, preferably on multiple occasions, to build an understanding of the context and situation. This was particularly evident in the case study situation where I spent much time with the case-study teacher interviewing and observing her practice. Furthermore, to ensure "respondent validation" of the research the participants read and responded to their scripts, refining them as a check for credibility and validity. Triangulation strengthened the credibility of the study through the use of a diversity of methods. Data were gathered in a number of ways, and each method acted as a checking system to prevent bias. Four different tools for analysis were employed to interpret the data. This enabled me to confront the data from different angles and so to provide a detailed account of the social setting that was being investigated (Burns, 1997; Graue & Walshe, 1998). In addition, "peer debriefing" provided opportunities to justify working hypotheses, through shared discussion with my supervisors where "the inquirer's biases are probed, meanings explored [and] the basis for interpretations clarified" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308). This ongoing discussion with my supervisors required me to develop a convincing argument for this study.

*Richness in detail: How the study was done*

Lichtman (2010) queries whether the reader can determine what the researcher did, how it was done and why it was done. Expectations of adequacy of information and also the interpretation or explanation of new concepts or new ways of working are required. Such requirements relate to criteria of transferability. As qualitative research variables are complex and multifaceted, the study report must be detailed enough to allow for transferability to a different setting. This is in part dependent upon the adequacy of the explanation of the study design and process.

This was the intent in this study. I aimed to provide clear, detailed explanations of the design process, and descriptions of the participants, the analytic tools I developed and the research process in order to explain how the study was done.

***Communication: Convinced by the presentation***

Lichtman (2010) asks whether the words convey a story and provide insight and meaning. Amongst her criteria she asks if the researcher's study is integrated into the research field and draws connections between the "extant research, and what has been learned on the journey, and her own insights" (p. 226). Are there new connections, interpretations or insights offered, and are the voices of others used to contribute to these new insights? This study offers new findings in terms of how teachers describe their practice, how they engage in different Writing Discourses and the implications of both these elements. Furthermore the observation of the case study teacher's practice suggests that a synergy of participatory scaffolding has much to offer teachers in their "ways of working" with young writers in the classroom.

Cohen et al. (2007) suggested that ethnographic and interpretive research could address issues of generalisability (usually associated with positivist paradigms), when this concept is interpreted as "comparability" and "translatability". For comparability the researcher must ensure that the characteristics of the group studied must be explicit enough so that it can be compared with similar or dissimilar groups. "For 'translatability' the analytic categories used in the research as well as the characteristics of the groups must be explicit so that meaningful comparisons can be made with other groups and disciplines" (p. 169). This study is detailed in description and interpretation so that other studies could compare findings. In addition, the heuristics developed to explore Writing Discourses and scaffolding practices are transferable to other studies.

#### **4.8. Chapter conclusion**

The design of this qualitative research employed interpretive methodology. Its purpose was to enable a close analysis of teachers' enacted writing practice in response to the research question that asks how writing is taught in primary schools in New Zealand. First, thematic analysis was discussed as a means to analyse the teachers' interviews; to determine what characterises their teaching beliefs and practices in their writing classrooms.

It was deemed necessary to develop further heuristics for deeper analysis of writing practices. A discourse analysis of the teacher's talk identified indicators representing three Writing Discourses. This framework provided a lens to ascertain *why* the teachers teach writing this way and *what* Writing Discourses shape their practice. The framework will support an analysis of how a group of New Zealand teachers positioned themselves in the different Writing Discourses by taking up particular identities as teachers of writing.

A second analytical framework (PSFW) was developed to closely analyse one teacher's practice as observed in her classroom. This heuristic was required for close analysis of the teacher's *participatory scaffolding* interactions when she taught her students how to write a character study. A third and further framework, *a synergy of participatory scaffolding* (SPSFW), was developed to provide a focus on how the teacher and learners interact over time. This framework enables observation of scaffolding interactions over three teaching sessions and an analysis of how teacher and students negotiate understandings to write a character description in this community of practice.

## Chapter Five

### Teachers talk writing

You have to teach the children, you know we have to teach the writers, not just the writing; you have to teach the children themselves. (Mary)

Pedagogy is more than the accumulation of techniques and strategies: arranging a classroom, formulating questions, developing explanations, creating a curriculum. It is formed by a view of mind, of learning and learners, of the kind of knowledge that is valued and above all by the educational outcomes that are desired. (Leach & Moon, 2006, p. 268)

#### 5 Introduction

This chapter is the first of four addressing the question: What's happening out there in New Zealand primary school writing classrooms? How do primary school teachers enact writing practices in their classroom communities in this particular time of social and educational change? In particular, this chapter surveys a group of ten New Zealand primary school teachers teaching students from Years 2-to-6 (approximately 6-year-olds to 11-year-olds). The first questions posed in Phase One of the research study asked: *What* beliefs and practices characterise a group of New Zealand primary school teachers teaching writing in their classrooms? And *why* do these teachers teach writing the way they say they do?

The self-reported data enabled me to capture the teachers' voices as they made sense of their professional teaching worlds. The chapter recalls the

social and historical context, and then describes and interprets teachers' beliefs about teaching writing, the practices they valued, and the challenges and issues they faced.

### **5.1. Shifting landscapes, contextualising the talk**

When the teachers were invited to talk writing they were still discussing personal understandings initiated by educational policy and curriculum changes experienced during the mid 1990s, as introduced in Chapter One. McFarlane (2000) argued that "environmental turbulence was severe during implementation of the English Curriculum statement, as teachers experienced the most radical restructuring of the education system in 100 years" (p. 98). The teachers had been presented with a document that differed in its theoretical and pedagogical basis for teaching writing and they also had to differentiate and assess learning in relation to eight achievement levels. These political, educational and theoretical shifts continued to challenge teachers' "ways of working".

As well as finding out about school mis/interpretation in the uptake of a genre approach, I wanted to know how, at the time when the *New Zealand Curriculum: Draft for consultation* (Ministry of Education, 2006b) had just been introduced, teachers were "saying, thinking and doing" writing. How did they describe enacted practices? Were practices similar or varied? Were teachers confident in their practice or did they voice concerns? These data allowed me to initially consider the *who* is doing *what* in primary writing classrooms.

In the interviews teachers were asked to explain their beliefs about teaching writing; what they thought constituted effective practice; how they taught writing (the decisions they made about planning, organisation, teaching strategies and assessment); their confidence in teaching and assessing writing; and the impact of school-wide practices

(see interview questions, Appendix 10). From the data, I attempted to capture the discursive voices of the teachers as they described their “professional landscapes” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998). Three main topics were identified in the data and form the basis for analysis and interpretation:

- Teachers’ beliefs about effective teaching of writing;
- Teachers’ practice or “ways of working”;
- Challenges and issues.

Each topic, however, was analysed separately, so that teachers who talked about the value of “using exemplars” in topic one may be different to those teachers who, when identifying their key teaching strategy, selected exemplars or models for demonstration. I have included selected quotes to convey the context of the teachers’ talk.

## **5.2. Teachers’ beliefs about effective teaching of writing**

Several broad themes emerged from the teachers’ responses relating to their beliefs about how to best apprentice writers in their communities of practice. They were: writers are central to teaching and learning; teachers’ knowledge and expertise count; and written exemplars support learning. These are discussed in turn.

### **5.2.1 Writers are central to teaching and learning**

All teachers believed that writers were central to the writing programme. This theme is discussed according to the following sub-themes: acknowledging writers’ personal experiences; contexts that are purposeful, realistic and meaningful; a classroom culture that empowers writers.

Five of the teachers, Lola, Trinny, Gail, Faye and Linda, talked about acknowledging children’s personal experiences by tapping into their

“inner world”, allowing choice of topic to develop voice, imagination and sense of identity. Faye, a senior deputy principal, was keen to open up opportunities for children to write from the “self” by delving into personal experiences. Teaching students to be passionate about writing also underpinned Faye’s theory and practice for teaching writing. Here she describes her thinking:

For me personally, it’s developing a passion for writing and the love of writing. I’ve always come at it from a strong motivation focus and lots of exciting experiences and tapping into kids inner world and showing ...opening it up for them so they can see how they can describe their world and how they feel about it and their responses to it. (Faye)

Trinny and Lola, who both taught in the senior part of the primary school, believed it was important for them to provide opportunities for students to explore their own imaginations and make personal choices about the topic for their writing. Lola shared her reasoning:

I think it’s important to give children the opportunity to write what they want to write, regardless of what the teaching focus is, and time – some children can write quickly, and some children take a lot of time to think about what they are going to do. (Lola)

Trinny believed that children have lots to say, many stories to tell and need opportunities to write these ideas down and take ownership of their stories:

I think my main focus would be that ... children have incredible imaginations, and they have so many stories to tell that I personally would like to see them being able to put their stories down on paper as such for them to relate to later, and take ownership of all those stories that belong to them. (Trinny)

The second sub-theme emphasised meaningful and purposeful contexts for writing. This was discussed by all teachers but in different ways. Four of the ten teachers, Mary, Kat, Rosie and Linda, said explicitly that the

importance of students being engaged in purposeful, realistic, rich and meaningful writing contexts was a key belief underpinning their practice. They believed that students should know why they are writing, and write about content that was relevant to their lives. Mary, a junior school deputy principal, recognising that writing programmes should be child-centred, highlighted the need to surround and immerse children in meaningful, “rich” language experiences:

I really believe it should be child-centred and writing should have a purpose and give meaning to the child.... [T]hey have to be immersed in literacy. It has to be around the room so the more they read and write, the more success they will have and they've got to see that too, it's got to be a language-enriched classroom. (Mary)

Kat collaborated with her Year 3 children by sharing the learning intentions ensuring her students knew *what* and *why* they were writing:

I do a lot of work now these days with the children being let into the secret of what they're doing.... We are learning or I am learning too. By writing up the learning intention, what they're doing, how will they know they've got it, the success criteria. .... I think it's really important they are clear about what they're learning. (Kat)

Rosie, who taught Year 2 children, was very aware that writing was a meaning-making activity for the writer and their audience that young children “have to know that what they're doing conveys a message And that it will be meaningful to someone else as well as themselves.” Linda also believed that her older students required meaningful contexts: “So it needs to be meaningful to the children, so there's a purpose for their writing, whether it's looking at audience or a different range of purposes.”



Other teachers when talking about their planning talked about ensuring they planned for purposeful writing experiences. They referred to linking writing to other curriculum areas or school events.

The third sub-theme acknowledged that students were empowered through risk-taking supported by a classroom culture that encouraged students to “have a go”. While all teachers built positive attitudes towards writing, four senior-school teachers, Gail, Trinny, Faye and Linda, commented directly on the importance of affirming students’ attempts and progress by developing a positive and supportive writing culture. They believed that when students felt valued they would take greater risks resulting with improvement in their written language. A classroom culture with shared expectations and one that respected students’ differences also encouraged all writers to “do their best”. Gail was keen for all of her students to own their learning. She wanted them to feel they all had something to offer and could progress at their own individual levels:

Lots of praise and ... I set the ground rules at the start of the year, I talk to them quite a lot about that, that you might be a writer who only writes three or four lines, and somebody else might write three or four pages, but we are going to value that. Our goal is for everyone to move forward to write a little bit better and we will value that. (Gail)

Trinny reiterated this belief. She valued the writers and what they personally had to say encouraging them to take risks and construct ideas recording them before revising and making changes. Trinny created a supportive learning environment for her students. She said:

I think the ability to be able to, as I said, put their thoughts down in writing is important, to get the support, whether they get the support from me or a peer in their class but to make an attempt in whatever fashion they need to be able to get their ideas down ‘cause we’ll work with that bit later during editing. .... I’ve told them all that’s why normally we have rubbers at the end of pencils so that we can rub out our mistakes. (Trinny)

Faye added: "The first thing I want is the children to feel empowered to write and to love it and I've always started from that, that's always been the successful thing for me." Faye built self-efficacy through passion, instilling a desire to write.

Linda commented: "I encourage the children to be risk-takers and support them in their risk taking." She also believed students' writing should be celebrated and the writers' success affirmed through positive feedback from peers and the teacher:

The big thing for me is that we celebrate the children's successes and we share them and we say how wonderful they are, so they feel they're writers and they get that positive feedback. Not from me but from their peers and from the whole class. So basically I suppose they are empowered to write, they know they're going to be successful in Year 6. (Linda)

These teachers were keen to support their students as writers by making spaces for writing about personal and shared experiences; making writing meaningful by using purposeful contexts; and creating safe classroom communities so that students could take risks and learn the process of writing. These teachers recognised that students learned differently.

### **5.2.2 Teachers' knowledge and expertise count**

The teachers discussed several ideas in terms of knowledge and expertise that underpinned their beliefs about effective teaching. The following sub-themes emerged: understanding the complexity of the writing process in relation to individual learners; developing reciprocity of reading and writing skills and knowledge; continual up-skilling of pedagogical content knowledge.

Two of the ten teachers, Kat and Mary, commented on the importance of teachers' knowing the complexity of the writing process that writers

work through when composing and revising a message (planning, drafting, reviewing and publishing). They commented on how difficult it is for young writers to generate ideas and record these, but also follow grammatical rules and evaluate what has been written:

I think as a teacher you need to have a good understanding about the writing process, about what is important for children to be learning as part of their writing. (Kat)

I think it [writing] is a very complex process, it's not something that is simple ... and children have to learn to create something, you know, get words down here from inside... from in their head and put it on paper. But then they have to also be able to analyse what they've written. So it's sort of like opposing processes really. They've got to create something and be able to, I guess, criticise it to make it better. So that makes it a very complex thing for children.... (Mary)

The second sub-theme that emerged from discussions of teacher knowledge was recognition of the reciprocity of reading and writing processes. Seven of the ten teachers commented on this factor. Three of the four junior teachers referred to the interconnectedness of written and oral language skills. These teachers recognised that young children develop an understanding that what they “say” they can “write” about, and that writing abilities can be learned through their knowledge of reading. Eliza, Mary and Rosie exemplified this with their comments:

I think reading and writing are so interwoven as well. What they read becomes part of their writing.... I think everything overlaps, they [students] need an awareness that print contains a message and what they are actually writing down is their message and knowing that what they speak they are actually writing that down. They need to be able to read it back... and the directional flow, the order and the letter-sounds are all part of it. (Eliza)

[Writing]'s not just something that you teach in isolation, and I think that's something that may sort have possibly been done in the past, whereas reading has been more about development of

the child, they [reading and writing] are reciprocal you know. We've got to look at it like it's not an isolated thing. (Mary)

I keep hearing my lecturer, you know back to the days of whole language and things, back to those late eighties when we were all doing the whole language, and I guess basically that writing and reading and oral language they go, they're so integrated and so intrinsically entwined and you can't sort of pull them apart and separate them. (Rosie)

The senior-school teachers, however, fostered connections between reading and writing in different ways. Gail and Glen talked about analysing different genres to support students' writing. Faye and Linda analysed literature and the author's craft with their students to support their writing. Examples of this difference are discussed later.

The importance of oral language skills as a foundation for children's written language skills was emphasised by Rosie and Eliza. Rosie gave the analogy of oral language (syntax) being the "tree", providing a frame to hook new literacy skills on for learning:

They've got to have some framework to hook on something and honest to God it would be like hanging an ornament on a tree without a branch at Christmas time. They're going to fall to the ground sooner or later. It might just sit there you know, but then its going to drop... Okay the framework - oral language is pivotal. It's got to be that! They've got to have the structures of oral language before they can read or write and I wonder why we undersell that importance? (Rosie)

The third sub-theme that emerged was the importance of teachers continuing to develop their knowledge and expertise. This aspect was discussed by all of the participants at various times throughout the interviews. For example, Glen commented:

I also think it's important that you do talk to people of a similar mind, and I read a lot, I read ... the Literacy handbook funnily enough... it was my sort of choice, you know. I didn't really want another text-book, but I actually found there's a lot of good stuff in there. (Glen)

Other teachers talked about learning from colleagues. Professional conversations, especially when moderating writing samples, were regarded as helpful and as contributing to teacher knowledge. However, only one teacher identified teacher knowledge as vital to her beliefs and practice when teaching writing:

I think reading, professional reading I think is important, I do quite a lot of professional reading and I enjoy it and find that quite interesting and sort of... you know thinking and refining ideas and so on. Talking with colleagues - very important, collegial conversation, I think, is one of the most important things that can happen for helping me teach writing effectively. (Kat)

Like the other teachers, Kat valued the conversations she had with colleagues in the field. She very much appreciated other teachers' expertise.

### **5.2.3 Written exemplars support learning**

The third theme that emerged from analysis of teachers' beliefs and effective practice for teaching writing was the usefulness of written exemplars. Four of the teachers, Glen, Faye, Gail and Linda, endorsed these in a variety of ways. They were: deconstructing text examples to identify the features; using literature as models of authors' techniques; using students' work as exemplars.

Glen viewed learning to write as an apprenticeship, where apprentices copied artwork of the old masters. She encouraged her students to focus on and imitate quality in the examples:

I always say to the children, you know when you see those fantastic artists ... see their paintings in the museum, when they were learning how to paint they actually copied people who were called masters. Because they were proven to have these amazing styles and you know we learn best by imitation. Then when we know how to imitate we can create. (Glen)

Glen, Faye and Linda used exemplars to explore the author's craft. Glen, who had been part of a school-wide writing curriculum focus, would spend several days discussing an example, talking about the model and deconstructing particular text features in preparation for writing:

I think... some of the children learn best when they are actually examining a really strong model and there's a lot of deconstruction and... in my writing programme the children's main tool for three or four days in the writing project may actually be a highlighter. (Glen)

Faye and Linda, on the other hand, talked about using children's literature as exemplars to provide models for writing - a place for noticing and discussing the author's craft. They believed that it was important to share quality writing with the students as a point of discussion, to analyse and identify how the authors used language techniques to create emotions or set a scene. Faye talked about using picture books not only to build a community of practice but also to explore authors' and illustrators' visual and linguistic techniques for jointly constructing meanings:

I do a lot of work with picture books talking about visual language and the way authors put language together. And a huge, huge lot of reading literature and picture books, reading every day, talking about the way writers write ... And sort of building that belief in the community of authors, you know a community of writers. (Faye)

Linda selected literature examples for in-depth analysis as a way to explore the writer's craft and the way they used their skills to shape specific meanings:

One of the big things I think I've jotted here is exposure to quality literature.... [I]f we are doing a special focus I'll have models of quality pieces and we analyse them and we say what's the author's intent and things like that so they can actually see quality examples of the writing. (Linda)

Gail and Faye used students' writing as models for other students. For example, Gail explained: "Then the next day we used some of the children's writing... some of the very good pieces, or a child's who doesn't necessarily write a whole piece ... just use a sentence or two out of it." Faye shared "snippets" of the children's writing with the class and modelled good examples to exemplify her teaching.

### *Summary and discussion of teachers' beliefs about teaching writing*

The teachers were confident and secure in what they believed leads to effective teaching of writing. They recognised that the writer was central to the programme and they commented on this in various ways. They valued the writer, not just their writing. Many of the comments related to connecting with learners by encouraging a love of writing, by telling stories and exploring contexts that were personal and meaningful. The teachers also talked about the importance of teacher knowledge, not only about the writing process but also about writers, as children learn differently. They identified exemplars as a means to "show how" and "show what" quality writing is.

It was interesting that junior and senior primary teachers placed different emphases on teaching writing effectively. Junior teachers valued the reciprocal skills of encoding and decoding written texts as young students made meaning as readers and writers. They also acknowledged the importance of oral language, vocabulary and the development of oral grammatical syntax for developing written language understandings. The senior teachers, however, recognised that attitudinal factors influenced writers' self-efficacy, and that attitudes of risk-taking and affirmation empowered students to take greater control of their own

learning. They were aware of the widening learning gaps between able and less able writers.

### **5.3 Teachers' practice: "Ways of working"**

The next set of questions related to teachers' practices, their "ways of working" with their students. It became evident that their practice was complex, multifaceted and wide-ranging. Four key themes emerged from the data. They were: considerations for planning; varied teaching and learning interactions; teaching strategies; and assessment practices.

#### **5.3.1 Considerations for planning**

When designing long-term plans, all ten teachers identified purposeful and relevant planning as a key consideration for teaching aspects of writing. The teachers expressed the importance of making connections for students; their planning decisions were often complex, flexible and based on multiple starting points. Six different aspects were identified:

- Planning writing across the wider curriculum by linking to topics or issues in science, social studies, and health related content;
- Linking to the achievement objectives in the EiNZC document, identifying genres or text structures to ensure curriculum coverage;
- Using knowledge of student assessment data to guide planning;
- Planning according to personal theoretical beliefs about teaching writing;
- Responding to interesting events or experiences as they arose;
- Allowing students to choose what they wanted to write about.

While all teachers emphasised writing programmes that were purposeful and meaningful for their students, they identified different starting places (see Table 8 for analysis). Nine of the ten teachers (the exception being Glen) talked about linking to a context in another curriculum area.



Seven teachers, Lola, Trinny, Gail, Eliza, Mary, Kat and Linda, acknowledged the EiNZC achievement objectives relating to specified genres as an important consideration for planning. Three of the teachers, Gail, Eliza and Glen, talked about using summative data from written samples to diagnose and identify learning and to set higher expectations for groups of learners. However, one other teacher, Faye, spoke of planning based on what children needed to learn and gathered this information from observing students in action. Six teachers, Trinny, Linda, Faye, Kat, Glen and Rosie, also used high interest or incidental writing opportunities in their planning. Three teachers, Lola, Trinny and Linda, talked about giving students free choice during writing time. Faye and Rosie planned and taught according to their philosophical beliefs, from a writer-oriented perspective.

**Table 8: Starting points for planning.**

Teacher	Cross curricula	EiNZC AOs	Assessment data	Theoretical beliefs	Response	Students' choice	
Lola	✓	✓				✓	3
Trinny	✓	✓				✓	3
Gail	✓	✓	✓				3
Linda	✓	✓			✓	✓	4
Kat	✓	✓			✓		3
Eliza	✓	✓	✓		✓		4
Glen			✓		✓		2
Faye	✓		✓	✓			3
Mary	✓	✓			✓		3
Rosie	✓			✓	✓		3
	9	7	4	2	6	3	

Each of the teachers' "ways of doing" or planning writing showed diversity in their practice. Lola, although she was very flexible with her planning, attempted to make links to wider curriculum content, and

EiNZC writing genres where relevant. She explained: "If we were doing science we might be writing down [in the long term plan] that the children will learn how to... in writing, under the English umbrella, they'll learn how to write up experiments and know what the structure is." At another time Lola explained that she allowed the children to make choices so that they were involved in determining their own purpose, topic and form. She commented: "They're all more than happy writing whatever they liked. Some children are writing factual information, some children are writing reports, some children are writing narratives; some children are just making it up as they go along."

Trinny worked in a similar way. "I'm obviously in a syndicate, and we plan for the term. We used to plan for the year, but we plan for the term now. We have our topics. Our topics (from the wider curriculum) normally generate our writing." But Trinny also made sure that children had opportunities to write from their imagination, as she elaborated:

However, every now and again I might throw something in like, 'You're a super hero'... and I have a list of super powers that they might have. I ask, 'How would they use them? What happens to them?' Boy! We have fun with those as well.  
(Trinny)

Gail planned as a member of a syndicate and described the complexity of the members' decisions when planning their writing programme. Coverage of genres in EiNZC was typically used as a starting point, but again it was evident that it was related to the wider curriculum. Gail and her syndicate looked for opportunities to teach students how to construct specific genres:

We'll do our overview for the term and then I tend to do a [personal] writing overview for the term as well. Which is sort of not set in concrete but there are certain things we might be looking at structurally as well as the different genres of writing and then the writing for purpose and certain genres might fit in very nicely with a topic that we're doing. Or in our reading we

might be reading for information so we think how we can teach children to write in that genre. (Gail)

Linda planned from EiNZC objectives to ensure coverage of the writing functions/genres, and tried to connect this learning with other curriculum topics: "For instance this term we were doing some transactional writing and we've had exposure to that and that was planned because it integrated in with my other subjects." So in this instance Linda identified the text-type to be covered first and then explained:

I try to integrate wherever I can, you know, and to make it meaningful. Yeah, so I mean the transactional piece written at the beginning of the year, we had Civil Defence disaster day and they [the students] had to decide whether it was a beneficial day and was it a worthwhile experience. (Linda)

However, Linda believed that children required ownership and personal choices for writing. She took opportunities for children to respond to incidental experiences happening in the school:

And also the incidental things like the digger was there so we just went for it and we sketched the digger and the boat, and wrote wonderful descriptive pieces about the digger. (Linda)

Kat made connections between wider curriculum topics, school events, EiNZC objectives and inclusion of the three language modes, oral, written and visual, wherever she could. She explained:

I usually use a term overview linked with my long-term plan linked to what topics we're doing, so I try and link it all in. My term overview really has the speaking, listening, reading, writing, visual language, sort of as an overview and then from there I will do a unit plan. (Kat)

Mary was more insistent that writing should always be planned and purposeful, and that the writing genres emerge from the learning

contexts. She believed that written genres should reflect real writing situations taught in meaningful contexts.

I think there has to be an overview that children are sort of taught these [genre formats] but it definitely has to come from what you are doing. If you've been on a trip to wherever then a report can be written on that, or whatever.... Or, if you have done some cooking some procedural sort of writing can be written. It comes from whatever your topic is, that way rather than the other way round. Again it has got to be meaningful.... But yes, it's got to have purpose; they've got to see that it's coming from something and not just something plucked out of the air... (Mary)

Kat talked about the multiple decisions required when planning for writing: needing to establish a "real" purpose by contextualising the writing, situating it in real events. But she also recognised the need to teach genres explicitly as identified by EiNZC. She also talked about providing students with a real or perceived audience, noting that when they identified an audience her students were more engaged in their writing:

So usually if I'm involved in a batch of things, say we have focused on explanations, and they're [students] caring for calves, caring for animals I gave this little thing [news item] about the children who had been in the earthquake, and probably haven't got pets. And one thing that would be really comforting would be a pet and they need to know how to care for it. You could see them hooked into it [an audience] and that was fine, so I just typed them up and published them and yeah I sent a copy off to Karachi or whatever. (Kat)

Eliza and Glen explained that they organised their planning based on assessment data collected at the beginning of the year. Glen, however, had shifted her thinking in terms of starting places for planning. She no longer started with a curriculum topic and possible genre functions, but rather used assessment data and analysed information she had about her learners. She elaborated: "When I looked at my asTTle data I had a whole lot of children here who really are quite deficient in using strong

language features in their writing. I'm going to teach them that, and then look for a vehicle".

Eliza also referred to the students' assessment data, in particular their writing samples. She stated:

Basically I will analyse their writing, and I'll put down, like the levels, where will I take them to next... and that 's how I'll group my children, because that's how I will needs assess them... look at their writing and analyse where to next. (Eliza)

However, Eliza went on to explain that she was flexible when it came to the context and looked for teaching opportunities for student-focused learning. She explained her decisions:

Probably it would be around a theme, or if it's writing a letter to thank someone, depending what we're doing as our unit-topic, that does influence a lot of how I approach the writing topic. If we've been on a trip, we'd be writing something about it.... If I see something that comes up the day before, and I think I need to teach it, I will change. Flexibility. It's meeting their needs. I think that influences me totally because if I have something down in my work... it doesn't mean I will follow it. (Eliza)

Gail talked about developing programmes based on school and syndicate assessment data. She said:

I think across our school that maybe the writing needs a lift, so we have been working with our Year 6s using the exemplars ...we don't think the children are quite where we would like them to be, so we thought how could we lift them? (Gail)

Rosie and Faye's planning decisions, however, differed from those of other teachers. They were both strongly influenced by their philosophical beliefs about how students learn to write. Faye's beliefs reflected a whole-language perspective: "You see this is not a unit plan, this is a year plan, this is a whole philosophy, a whole approach that is

underpinning everything we do throughout the year” (Faye). And, like the others, she worked from the children’s obvious needs. This anecdotal data came from her observations and classroom-based activities, rather than formal summative testing as discussed by Eliza, Glen and Gail.

Rosie, like Faye, was directed by her teaching philosophy. She believed in whole-language approaches, making connections between the language modes. “What I like to do is integrate it with my reading, if I can. So it might be that I sit down at the end of the term and then think what am I going to do next term, yes we’re going to do a Dr Seuss study, great, okay, what can we do with the Dr Seuss study?” Rosie planned writing based on high-interest topics, often those that arose incidentally during the day. She did not tie herself to the term-plan and often challenged and resisted school expectations. Instead she contextualised the learning in terms of what she planned to happen or from what arose incidentally:

I am saying if it can link and it feels natural to carry on doing it, why not? .... I mean when we were doing this thing on Thumbelina a little while ago, it was like this multiple intelligence unit, they had written Thumbelina’s songs, and it doesn’t say anywhere in my implementation plan about writing songs. I said look you are going to write a song today about Thumbelina in a rowboat and she’s rowing along in the dishwater. Let’s write a song about what she’s thinking about and let’s perform it to the class. (Rosie)

Rosie worked hard to make connections for learners – to have them engaged in high interest topics, but she also sought to develop young people’s language skills through acknowledging the reciprocity of written skills and understandings.

### *Summary and discussion of teachers’ planning*

Planning writing programmes involved teachers making complex decisions, based on multiple aspects. The teachers varied their starting points to accommodate a range of purposes. While most teachers talked

about choosing three or four different starting points, Glen chose two. This was probably because assessment data was her starting point. Findings showed that teachers were keen to make connections and purposes for students writing by linking to other contexts such as curriculum studies and incidental high-interest events that were happening in the school community. Ensuring that the English curriculum objectives were met was a priority, as this document set out learning objectives according to levels. Seven teachers mentioned this latter point. For two teachers, theoretical beliefs about teaching writing shaped their practice; for others, assessment data provided information and direction. While several teachers talked about the need to be flexible with starting points for planning, tensions were evident when making decisions for planning. These challenges are discussed later.

### 5.3.2 Teaching and learning interactions

From the teachers' data, a range of teacher-student interactions for learning was evident. They discussed one-to-one teaching, small instructional groups, peer grouping and whole-class teaching as having various purposes and benefits (see Table 9). As Mary observed:

I think when you set your SLOs [specific learning objectives], you know where you're working with your children, sometimes it may be in groups, sometimes it's individually, it just depends where the needs are, what the needs of the children are. (Mary)

**Table 9: Teachers' ways of interacting for teaching and learning.**

Teaching and learning interactions	Teachers
Whole-class, individual	Rosie, Lola, Gail
Whole-class, individual, peer	Trinny, Faye
Whole-class, group, individual	Mary
Whole-class, group, individual, peer	Kat, Linda, Eliza, Glen

Whole-class teaching was employed for multiple purposes, often depending on which part of the writing process was taking place and what learning needs were recognised. Whole-class teaching was often employed at the beginning of the sessions to establish learning intentions and to set goals. Trinny said: “We talk about the purpose of the lesson. Why are we doing this? And the reason is we’re going to see how we can....”

The learning intentions were usually followed by some form of explicit whole-class teaching that might include demonstrating an aspect of writing or exploring a model to identify the text structure or some feature evident in the text. Gail explained whole-class teaching as providing her with opportunities to explore a range of exemplars, a teacher’s model, MOE Writing Exemplars and students’ writing to highlight aspects of writing throughout the writing process:

We did character writing where you’re writing about a person, I wrote one as a model and we talked about all the things we could find out about the person from that... And I then showed them the exemplars and just explained what they were and why we could use them. Then the next day we used some of the children’s writing... some of the very good pieces. (Gail)

A whole-class focus had the purpose of motivating and engaging the students through a range of experiences and associated learning dialogue. Faye’s purpose was to have children working as a community of writers, apprenticed by the teacher, students and authors of literature. But Faye also recognised the purpose of explicit teaching with the whole class, which she explained as follows:

When we’re doing writing, things would emerge as teaching points so sometimes it might be I do a whole class lesson on using direct speech and how you might go about that. Maybe the topic that we have chosen to do is one that needs a littler bit of work on that and you would be using direct speech. (Faye)



The purposes for grouping children were expressed in different ways. Kat talked about ability grouping and how she regrouped for more effective teaching. Formal ability grouping was not a common feature discussed by these writing teachers, even though it is common practice for teaching reading in New Zealand classrooms. Kat explained that ability-grouping enabled her to extend or consolidate learning, such as when her more able writers wanted to know more about how to record speech:

I really had three identified groups, my ones who are ready to go, the 'middlies' and the little strugglers. ... And I guess they're my target group, my little fellows, I really work with them most of course. So I usually do our modelling or whatever we're doing, and off they go but I'll keep these little fellows back with me, do a bit more talk, maybe write the first sentence together and they can copy it.... And then I might have the top group, I mean one time we were doing, not this particular time, but they were beginning to explore using speech marks, so I brought them in, we had a little session about using speech marks. It was sort of quite child driven really, from where they're at. (Kat)

Eliza used whole-class teaching by modelling for some aspects of writing then reorganised the class for flexible group teaching. The groups varied. "If I've got a group I need to work with, perhaps reluctant writers, I might sit down and do a general mind map with them, develop ideas, to extend their thoughts ... then write sentences." Eliza varied her grouping according to teaching needs rather than establishing ability groups. Glen, on the other hand, either selected children to work with or encouraged students to recognise their own learning requirements and opt into small instructional teaching groups:

I will say today I'm going to be working with these children and we are going to be looking at the beginning part of what we're writing about, or we're looking at how to use a conjunction to make our writing, you know, link together. If anybody's having difficulty in that area then come and work with me. (Glen)

These ten teachers all recognised the importance of one-on-one teaching for various reasons. Gail, Lola and Rosie mostly taught the whole class, and then worked alongside individuals for focused teaching and conferencing centred on personal goals. Goal setting not only provided direction for the whole class, but also provided a basis for teacher-student discussions, placing different expectations for different students. Gail explained: "Then I work with them individually so they know where they're heading, that we are all going in the general direction; it is about our criteria and you might get to here, and you might get to there."

Lola mostly liked to work with the whole class and then one on one. She saw small-group instruction as not being specific enough and preferred to individualise the teaching:

One child might only just need a quick reminder, another child might need complete teaching and more discussion, and they still don't get it, so you've got to go again. You're holding the other ones up if you're trying to do too much group work.  
(Lola)

Lola also talked about the importance of setting up children's writing books so that she could interact one on one and teach: "I've ruled up the books so that the margin is wider, so the margin's about 7 cm wide. That's my writing space. It's the teacher's writing space.... If I have to give them any sort of teaching points I would generally write in there." She provided an example:

So I've got that space... For instance, one child had written ... he's a very capable reader, and I said to him 'There's something wrong with this word' - he'd left the 'e' off - 'Why doesn't it look right?' and he still couldn't figure it, so I wrote 'here', 'there', 'where' and showed him and talked to him about the relationship between those three words (Lola)

Faye preferred to teach and conference with individuals on personal goals rather than teach small groups. This enabled her to monitor and differentiate the learning. She explained:

...Lots of goal setting, that's where I do all the grammar things and the little chats about this and that to do with how you construct sentences and spelling words and pull those out for them, and get them to go and look for more. (Faye)

Peer-grouping for peer teaching was important to six of the ten teachers. Trinny encouraged the more skillful students to pair up with those who needed more help. Working with a buddy formed a key aspect of her writing community. She explained: "The more competent writers, more able writers, are very happy to share their skills sometimes with the kids who struggle, and they love to be buddies."

Kat also organised peer-grouping as part of her practice. "I'm trying to get independence, like they have to go back and read their stories, correct them, or read to a friend." Glen also valued pair-grouping during writing time, commenting that "the writing buddy has been really successful."

Summary and discussion: Teachers and students' interactions for writing  
Teachers reported using a variety of interactions for teaching writing for a range of purposes. Kat, Eliza, Linda and Glen varied their teacher and student interactions the most, often using the widest range of interactional patterns: whole-class, individual, and groups. However, they were flexible, setting up teaching groups as required.

Three teachers, Rosie, Lola and Gail, preferred to teach either the whole class or individuals, with individual learning centred on goals or needs as they were recognised. The practice of two of the teachers, Trinny and Faye, centred on whole-class interactions, individual and peer response situations. One teacher, Mary, preferred to teach a mix of whole-class, group and individuals. While the teachers reported different "ways of

working”, all could justify what they were doing and how it benefited their students.

### 5.3.3 Teaching strategies valued

A list of teaching interactions or strategies identified in the research literature provided initial prompts for teachers to consider. Teaching strategies reflected their theoretical beliefs and pedagogical decisions regarding scaffolding and apprenticeship of writers in the classroom. While analysis of the teachers’ preferred practices lists their first three preferences, where 1 indicates their first choice (see Table 10), the following analysis shares each teacher’s most valued scaffolding practice: goal setting for guidance; teacher modelling/ demonstrations; dialogue to support writing; responding to writers; peer feedback. Conferencing and use of exemplars did not rank as the teachers first choice of teaching strategies.

**Table 10: Preferred teaching strategies.**

Teachers	Goal setting	Demonstrate	Conference	Exemplar	Peer feedback	Teacher response	Dialogue
Kat		1	2	3			
Lola		1	2				
Trinny		1	3		2		
Gail	1	3		2			
Eliza	1	3			2		
Mary	1	3	2				
Glen				2	1		3
Faye	2		3			1	
Linda	2			3			1
Rosie	1		2	3			
First choice	4 tch	3 tch			1 tch	1 tch	1 tch
Second choice	2 tch		4 tch	2 tch	2 tch		

### *Goal-setting*

Four of the ten teachers, Mary, Gail, Eliza, and Rosie, identified goal-setting as their key strategy for scaffolding learners. Setting goals enabled the writer to make cognitive decisions, to check internally against criteria, as they generated ideas and constructed text (Flower & Hayes, 1981). Mary negotiated the goals with her learners. Goals were individualised and specific to the task, providing a focus for the child for improving the writing:

Goals, something you have to develop, you know between students and teacher, so it becomes specific for that child because otherwise you've got to be careful that it's not just, oh I want to be a better writer. You know, and that has to be a learned sort of process. So I think that it's definitely important so that the child has a goal, 'I am learning to whatever...'  
(Mary)

Mary also observed that goals formed the basis for individual conferences. She maintained that very young children could set goals, so long as the teacher's conversations supported their understanding that goals provide a direction for writing. She encouraged students to go back to their specific goals and self-assess:

Talking with the children individually when you're conferencing them. Asking, 'What do you think that you need to work on?'.... And you can do that very simply with the young ones and they soon learn to understand that I'm learning to add on to my story and make it more interesting. If you're doing that all the time with them, you know, talking about it, they soon come to understanding what they've got to do, then they've got a goal, they've got a focus. They can revisit that and say 'Oh yes, you know I have done that, I have added to my story and it's much more interesting'. (Mary)

Eliza also supported goal-setting as a strategy for giving writers a focus and direction for creating text. She justified goal-setting as follows: "Children need to know where they're going, what they're aiming for, otherwise they're just writing 'willy nilly'. No real focus!"

“Definitely the goal setting!” Rosie was emphatic about the importance of goal-setting to scaffold writers. Like Eliza and Mary, Rosie worked with the child collaboratively to establish personal writing goals. For Rosie, these personal goals were quite separate from class learning intentions as she explained:

...[I]n their books I can turn to a page and show you, you know, ‘Marie, you are learning to and you’ve got to...’ I write it in, I don’t like those checklists at the front of the book that the kids sit down and check. I don’t like that; I hate it because I can’t keep control of it. (Rosie)

Rosie talked about how she worked with the child to support his/her thinking and provide direction and “handover”. But Rosie also challenged students, working in their ZPD. She elaborated on her strategising:

So we sit down together and I go, ‘Oh my goodness, this is absolutely fantastic, let’s see if we can move on to the next stage which is putting in some adjectives or something’, so we move on from there. (Rosie)

Rosie’s class goals varied from attitudinal challenges to syntactical improvements. Goals were specific for individual learners but also she set class goals to support her general teaching: “But there is always that class goal, that base, that starting point. This term I added ‘now challenge yourself even further and vary your sentence beginnings, stuff like that, okay?’”

For Gail, however, goal-setting was teacher-directed and focused on the whole class working on the same learning goal to construct a particular writing genre. She used written examples from the MOE Writing Exemplars as a scaffold for writers and forming the basis for a conversation. Gail identified specific linguistic features required for genre construction at several levels. In this instance the MOE exemplars provided the learning goals:

Teacher goal setting.... It's criteria-based as well so that we know what they're aiming for. And I will give them a level 2 example and a level 3 example and I will give them what, in child talk, I would expect in a level 2 because a lot of them are still there and what I expect at a level 3 and then I want them to be comfortable that they could be in either or they could be between the two. (Gail)

Gail also described the criteria-achievement expectations for the writing at each curriculum level. She explained that aspects of a student's writing might straddle two levels.

### *Teacher demonstrations, modelling, showing how*

Kat, Trinny and Lola identified teacher demonstrations with explicit teaching as their key scaffolding strategy for writers. Kat maintained that by showing students how, by demonstrating in a big book and encouraging co-construction, and making the learning explicit, she engaged children in the process. Kat argued: "Okay, I think teacher demonstration and explicit teaching is a must. Those deliberate acts of teaching sort of stuff. It's absolutely vital, we can't expect children to learn by osmosis." Kat added that it is about "making the learning more visible."

As a teacher of emergent literates, Kat knew children have varied early literacy experiences. She pointed out that often parents read to their children or listen to them reading, but the same conversations do not happen with writing. Kat believed that parental modelling and/or demonstrating writing was a must for young children. She argued:

... those little struggling writers, I think as new entrants they need modelling, modelling, modelling, that's what they need ... and deconstruction, or looking at text and so on. See as little children, pre-schoolers, they get a lot of work with reading at home don't they? But they don't see... all they see are their parents writing is shopping lists. (Kat)

Although Lola initially taught new learning with the whole class she was happy for those who understood the teaching to move off and work independently. Those children who required more personalised teaching stayed on the mat:

I tend to teach, so that I will start off with whole class, and as kids have got it, I realise that those children know what I'm talking about... The ones that have got it sorted can go. I end up with the ones who need the support. They also have the opportunity, though, that if they don't feel they understand what's going on, or they're not sure, they can pick up their books and come and sit by me, and they know that's the way to get one-to-one on the mat.

For Trinny, teacher demonstrations were key as they provided an authentic example of the writing process, showing how writers struggle with ideas, create mind maps, make changes, and check spelling. Trinny modelled a range of skills, processes and understandings, but also put a human perspective on writing, as she explained:

Well, first of all, I do believe that modelling, if the child is able to see that I... on the board, sometimes struggle to think of a word, or I perhaps spelt it wrong, and I have to go and get a dictionary. (And I don't do that on purpose, there's some words that I don't know how to spell). They can see that I'm not just this marvellous person who can write and get it all right, and expect them to do the same thing. There's times when I write a story for them on the board, and they just can't wait to see what's going to happen next, ... rather than read the story, I actually model it. But then I also, I might have a brainstorm where I've crossed off one of the points used, or done a sequence, boxes or something... and I do a lot of modelling like that. I wouldn't say that it's time consuming because I do believe that it's very valuable. (Trinny)

Trinny used this time as an opportunity to build relationships with her students, showing that she was not perfect, that she didn't know everything, but there were strategies for solving writing issues.



### *Dialogue to support writing*

“What’s important? A huge amount of oral talk!” Linda believed her writers were best scaffolded through talk. Talk permeated her class writing activities. Before the students wrote, discussion was paramount, providing opportunities for them to share and clarify ideas, to generate excitement and motivation. Linda set up talk opportunities for writers to scaffold each other. Sharing circles enabled students to talk, listen, respond and critique each other’s writing. This acknowledged ownership of their writing and also encouraged the students to affirm positively what the writer had done and to offer further suggestions:

Sharing circles are really, really powerful because that’s when they get to share back to their peers so we use those a lot.... So they have the oral and the written [script] to refer to. So they listen, and only that person to their right is allowed to make the positive comments so they go around and they must say only the positive qualities of that piece of writing. And then they’ll go back round and say where to next, what perhaps they could actually improve on from there. (Linda)

Furthermore, Linda was aware that talk is a learning tool, enabling writers to clarify their own thinking and be exposed to alternative suggestions. While she differentiated for groups of learners, Linda was aware of the power of teacher talk for exploring and consolidating ideas. She explained:

There’s some that need to stay with me, you know and there’s some that might need a little bit more talk so I perhaps keep them in, I’ve got a little group of four that find it hard, so I talk to them more and I monitor them a lot more. (Linda)

Linda noted that able writers also needed opportunities to learn from each other, to challenge and extend each other’s ideas. She explained that sometimes she put talented writers together and at other times the students chose whom they wanted to work with, “so it just varies.”

### *Responding to writers and their writing*

Faye considered response very powerful and she responded to her students as writers in various ways. She worked at a very personal level and identified conferencing as a key teaching interaction for scaffolding and apprenticing writers. Faye also celebrated children's writing and shared examples with the class:

Sometimes I'll say to a child when I'm conferencing, 'Oh, I love this little snippet here,' and I say, 'Do you mind if I share that with everyone? Would you like to share it?' And if they don't mind I will, we'll stop and I'll say, 'Listen, listen to what so and so has just written about this,' and we read it, and I'll ask them, 'Why do you think I would be so excited about it...?' (Faye)

Faye also provided feedback by taking the students' books home, looking for interesting phrases to discuss:

I take the books home and I write on big huge sheets just really special bits of writing on them. I put it up on the wall, say these are pieces of writing I loved. ...And I put them up and then we have lots of talking about it. 'Why did I put that bit, why this bit?' and we do lots of critical analysis if you like... of our writing and I always put the children's names to it. (Faye)

Selections of the students' texts became the focus for discussion and celebration but also with an expectation that students would engage and respond critically.

### *Peer feedback*

For Glen, peer feedback permeated her whole programme. It was not something used just during writing time; for example, the students also provided feedback after they'd been out for a game of tee-ball. Glen acknowledged the power of peer response, the critical thinking involved and the seriousness that the children gave to this scaffolding strategy. Peer response followed a pattern similar to Linda's format of first responding to writing goals and then providing affirmations with suggestions for revision. The children were expected to consider possible

options, such as: “Perhaps at the end you need to link your conclusion a little bit more to the beginning sentence to sort of, you know, round it off more.” Glen’s excitement was evident when there was handover and learning was transformed. She shared a personal anecdote:

One of the things that really warmed my heart, and God as teachers we need our hearts warming some days, you so do ... this wonderful thing happens when children asked for feedback from their peers. You see these very intense children sitting down listening and saying, ‘Well, Robert, I think you achieved your goal of using three different language features because in the first sentence that you used ... you said this, but also I like the way that you tried to make it sound like we were actually there.’ And Robert’s sitting on the learning chair nodding very sagely and then saying at the end of discussion, ‘Would anybody like to give me feedback on ways I could improve or add to my writing?’ and the children very sagely say, ‘Perhaps you would like to...’, ‘Have you thought about...’ (Glen)

Glen described how she scaffolded the students’ skills to provide feedback to each other. She noted that this didn’t come naturally and she mediated steps so that the students learned and owned the ability to respond, support and critique each other’s writing over time.

### *Summary and discussion of teaching strategies*

The analysis focused on the scaffold each teacher valued most for supporting learner writers. Four of the ten teachers prioritised goal-setting, recognising that goal-setting directed cognitive thinking as students shaped writing to meet the task. Three other teachers stated that for them demonstrating deliberate acts of teaching were key. These teachers valued “showing” students how to write by thinking out loud and by engaging students in conversations about a whole range of skills and understandings required for writing. Another teacher declared that providing opportunities for children to talk about their writing was important for their learning. While talk was evident in all teachers’ practices, this teacher emphasised the collaborative nature of learning

through conversation. One teacher maintained that teacher response initiated by individual conferencing made a difference to students' writing. It enabled her to individualise the teaching and also share quality examples with the class. Another teacher regarded peer talk and peer response as the basis of scaffolding her writers. Again, the interactive nature of teaching and learning played an important part in the enhancement of students' writing.

For most of these teachers their strategy permeated the way they taught writing. All of the teachers were able to justify *how* and *why* they employed these strategies.

#### **5.3.4 Assessment practices for writing**

Assessment practices employed by the teachers were varied and complex. The following analysis discusses teacher responses regarding how they assessed writing and their confidence in so doing.

Linda used a range of formative assessment procedures to assess the students' writing and inform her teaching. Linda's information about her writers was collected formatively from observations, conferences and samples from the students' books. Written scripts were assessed against criteria from the MOE Writing Exemplars. Class data were also used to identify curriculum achievement levels and to moderate school-wide achievement.

A book for recording formative assessment data was part of Linda's practice. She copied criteria from the matrices in the Writing Exemplars and highlighted these, checking them off when she noted that the children displayed certain writing knowledge and skills. Linda explained: "I've got my little checklist which is in different levels, but I just highlight it and I've got a surface one and deeper one and then I

know where that child's going." These data were important and were discussed with the child during conferences. This formed goals and gave direction for the child's learning, as Linda explained: "... So I can say to Matthew, 'Well this is where you need to go,' that's sort of like goal-setting so they've got it as well." If the students made changes in their texts showing evidence of reflective thinking and revision practice, Linda recorded this anecdotally and stated: "So part of that and evidence of the re-visiting is they are prepared to go back in, they've changed and they've fixed parts, it shows, because mine do it in red pen."

Linda was very comfortable assessing writing and felt she could confidently identify the "magic" in quality writing. Because of her school's involvement in an assessment project which was examining MOE assessment tools to analyse, interpret and level writing (MOE Writing Exemplars and the asTTle Writing test), she felt increasingly confident analysing and talking about students' use of punctuation, spelling and grammar in a different way:

The Exemplars make you focus. And I mean I can tell a quality piece, I mean it jumps out, it's got personal voice and there's something quite special, magical about a piece of writing. But yeah, to actually go back in there to the exemplar criteria and look at those surface features it does actually make it easier I think for me, because what I do I just highlight, these are all the things they're doing. (Linda)

Glen worked with her students and collaboratively developed checklists with the children to support construction of their texts. Student progress was checked against the criteria, or goals, rather than referring to the Exemplar matrices (levelled-criteria), which was Linda's practice. Glen explained:

What does help me [manage assessment] is that I very rarely assess a piece of writing as a piece of writing. I will be assessing aspects of it. And that's for me quite liberating. You know, 'I like the way you separated your report into the three main

areas' and 'Each time you introduced a new idea you supported with evidence. Well done'. (Glen)

Glen also used assessment to find out what children knew and did not know as a way of managing her teaching so "that we're not over teaching stuff to children who have already got a handle on it, and that we're re-visiting stuff for children who really haven't got it after three goes." Glen attributed her confidence to a range of sources: "Knowledge from asTTle, using the knowledge I've gained from looking at the exemplars, [and] using the expertise of my colleagues."

Rosie was confident assessing students' writing skills on the basis of her teaching experience, her knowledge of learner-writers and professional conversations with colleagues. She commented: "I assess in terms of what I believe they [the children] should be able to do. The document doesn't tell me, it's too vague." Rosie worked from the child, using a writer-focused approach, identifying goals or criteria for the whole class and for individuals. Her teaching and assessment were guided by students' recognition of their achievement of their particular goals:

I mean if you look up on the board there you will see a writing checklist... and I'm forever starting off the lesson and it gets to the point where today... I was really rapt about this. I was able to say 'Right Ryan, what's your goals, what are your writing goals?' 'Oh, I've got to form my letters correctly.' ...I could go round the class today and pick them off one at a time and they knew, the kids knew. Whether or not that means anything, although they are saying this to me like you know I have done this, or I have done that, and that's when I can put their names on that breakthrough chart. (Rosie)

Rosie's breakthrough chart acknowledged those children who had achieved their goals. It was a way of encouraging the child to take ownership and celebrate moving to the next stage of their learning.

Faye acknowledged the student's attitude as an important part of knowing that person as a writer. Assessment was mostly done through a draft piece of writing and close one-on-one conferencing. Faye encouraged the students to write their name on the board when they were ready to conference. She commented: "It's never-ending, I never get to the bottom of it." Her conferences were for individuals and related to their goals: "And that's where I do all the grammar things and the little chats about this and that, and to do with how you construct sentences, and the spelling of words."

Faye was confident assessing students' writing. She monitored her writers closely through conferencing, teaching and setting further personal learning goals. However, she was aware of the varied interpretations and emphases teachers placed when assessing and levelling writing. She spoke of the need for school-wide moderation and consistency through professional development discussions:

I feel, I can put a level score on a child and I can put an attitude comment because I know whether they love it or not, but it's still my subjective view and as I said when I took that piece, especially that one piece of writing, we got a variety of views, all of them said it was a good piece of writing but most teachers are scared to take her out of Level 3 and put her in Level 4, even though it was clearly a Level 4 in my opinion, but they said she was only Year 5 and she'd got some spelling mistakes. (Faye)

Mary discussed assessment from a school-wide perspective, from her view as a school literacy leader. She was also aware that practices varied from teacher to teacher and that an overall view of a student's progression was required for school-wide reporting. Mary regarded the MOE Writing Exemplars as one way to deepen teachers' understanding of writing and to shift their thinking from just editing spelling to looking at the quality of ideas:

We've [the junior school] got to really pull it together now because they [Writing Exemplars] are very valuable for

assessment. Like you're taking your Level 2 and saying what's happening here. So let's look at where my children in my class are. Are they doing all these things? ... Because, I mean, traditionally teachers look at children's writing, right, and you know they focus on the spelling, punctuation because it's there in front. ...Yeah, so we have to get into the, you know, the deeper meaning. (Mary)

Mary found the annotated Writing Exemplars a useful guide for assessment and moderation and as a model to change teachers' thinking about surface and deeper features.

Eliza worked differently from most of the other teachers. She assessed students' writing samples at the beginning of each term. She recorded information on the computer and used the data to set her teaching goals and goals for individual learning. She explained: "That's my goals. I'm constantly informally assessing and thinking where to move this child to next, as I'm conferencing and the students are self assessing their work." Eliza also encouraged students to reflect on their writing, to select one piece from their week's writing and justify why they chose it. She explained:

Instead of just writing, I like them to write and think about why they liked that writing. What could they have done better next time? What might be changed next time? And to improve, what are you going to do before publishing? (Eliza)

She added:

Some children might say, 'It's because it's about my grandmother,' but others might say, 'It's because I used good words, or I had my full stops in it,' depending what our focus is, or it might not even be their focus, it might be just be where they like to go. (Eliza)

Eliza explained that she formally assessed writing several times a term. As one of the teachers Mary worked with in the junior school, Eliza



valued professional discussion about the Writing Exemplars and said that not only had it given her more confidence to analyse scripts, it also shifted her focus from editing issues to include the content, ideas and organisation of a text in terms of deeper features. Eliza explained:

I've become more confident with the Exemplars by just by generally using them. I think I probably was analysing mostly surface features. Well, a few deep, but I wasn't aware of the difference and it now it has just made it so simple, so clear for me. (Eliza)

Gail, a teacher in the same school as Eliza and Mary, but who taught in the senior area alongside Trinny, stated that she felt "reasonably confident" about assessing writing. Gail gathered her assessment data from classroom observations and individual conferences. But, she also valued the information that the Writing Exemplars provided her. In fact she saw the Exemplars as helping her to analyse the middle-school cohort more carefully and therefore set higher expectations. Gail stated that, "When we started using the Exemplars, I have to say, we weren't as far along, or the children weren't achieving as high as we thought they were. That was quite interesting, and it was a jolt to us." For Gail, having the opportunity to use the matrices and assess against the levels signalled to her and her syndicate that they needed to look more carefully at their teaching programmes.

Trinny was a less experienced teacher but was quite confident in how she viewed assessment. She was student-driven, taking a Writer-perspective and individualised assessment and teaching. Trinny described her assessment practice as "formative", since she focused on helping the students learn and grow as writers. She maintained that:

Writing is subjective, and also I don't feel that I go in to test or to assess a child. I think I go in with the thought that I go in to help improve or work with the child. So I probably think that a lot of my assessing is feed forward and feed back... it's a point

for me to know that that's where I've got to work with the child from and get him moving on from there. (Trinny).

Trinny was expected to collect and assess writing samples; this was school-wide policy. However, she didn't refer to these at all. Rather, she kept anecdotal notes in a notebook, recording specific information about each child. She used classroom-based data to inform her teaching. She stated:

What I'm doing when I'm assessing a piece of work it is not the fact that he was able to do this, or she was able to do that, it's what do I need to be concentrating on? What is going to be more beneficial for me to help them with? It's pointless me saying 'Oh, look, they just need story writing', because that doesn't tell me anything at all." (Trinny).

For Trinny, assessment was part of the teaching learning cycle as she recorded learning conversations with the children and set goals when conferencing:

So that the next time I work with the child and we've gone through capital letters, starting sentences, I can say to them, 'Look, you've really come on. You've remembered what we said last time, now how about if we start making our words colourful by using richer language.' (Trinny)

Kat's assessment practice informed her teaching focus. Like Trinny, her teaching was reported as responsive and learner-focused as the need arose. Kat interacted through roving conferences with her young students. She explained: "I feel I do a lot of formative assessment, just the ongoing assessment for the individual and knowing what it is that they need at the moment, lots of that...."

Kat, as literacy leader, recognised that formative and summative assessment provided a balanced view of the learners. She explained:

As far as the summative type assessment, I guess we're into more the school-wide stuff, where we do something at the

beginning of the year and something at the end of the year and see what shifts [in learning] have been made. (Kat)

At Kat's school the teachers moderated school-wide so they could compare, for example, Level 2 proficient writers. "You know, so we get common ground on that one." Kat was a very experienced junior teacher in a large rural school and, like Trinny, commented that assessing writing "can be quite subjective." However, by using more formal procedures, such as the MOE Writing Exemplars or asTTle writing, a framework guided the teachers when making assessment judgments. Kat stated that these frameworks helped with the management of assessment: "As long as you keep those there with you it gives you a framework." Furthermore, like several other teachers, Kat indicated that the Exemplars provided a new way of thinking about analysing written scripts and prompted discussion on levelling. She commented:

I do quite like the way that it has the deeper features and the surface features and one thing I think I've really got past is looking at something and just commenting on the surface and thinking this is hopeless because there's not a full stop in sight.... We found when we were doing our moderation that sometimes to read it out to the others was much better than them looking at it, because you look at it and you look at a very neat one, but it says nothing anyway. If you look at a scruffy one it might say a lot. That was really useful. (Kat)

Lola, who taught in the same school as Kat, assessed writing as she conferenced alongside the children. Feedback was written directly on the child's book with feed-forward comments. However, when asked to talk about assessment, Lola referred to school-wide formal assessment. She explained, "When I'm doing formal assessments I think it's all right, because we tend to do that as a whole school. We use the Exemplars and we use asTTle."

### *Summary and discussion of assessment practices*

The responses from these ten teachers were complex and exhibited similarities but also differences. The teachers employed a range of formative assessment procedures to support their teaching. Observations recorded as anecdotal notes, conferences, draft examples from writing books, and teacher-made check lists formed part of their practice. Seven of the teachers, Linda, Glen, Rosie, Faye, Mary, Eliza and Trinny, mentioned assessing against personal goals, an important part of individualising assessment. This meant that the teachers focused on individuals when conferencing or gathered data from more formal assessments to focus on students' specific learning. They recognised that goal-setting empowered students to be more active with their learning.

Eliza was the only teacher to talk in any detail about the role of self-assessment as part of her practice. She encouraged personal critique and, like Mary, encouraged the students to reread their writing in response to the goals set. Of the ten teachers, eight discussed the use of formal summative assessment tools for levelling student writing, MOE Writing Exemplars and/or asTTle Writing. They commented that through analysis of students' writing against the MOE tools, their personal knowledge for assessing writing had been deepened. Several teachers, Mary, Eliza, and Kat, also attributed the Writing Exemplars with providing a shift in focus from surface features to looking at the deeper meanings of texts, such as ideas and organisation.

Three teachers, Mary, Faye and Kat, who were responsible for curriculum literacy leadership in their school, regarded the Exemplars as a useful tool to deepen all teachers' understanding and to bring consistency and clarity to assessment through moderation and professional discussions. Two of the teachers did not see the relevance of levels-based formal assessment, as they claimed it didn't really provide

information for teaching. These teachers, Trinny and Rosie, individualised the teaching and learning based on formative assessment gathered during teaching.

## **5.4 Challenges and issues identified**

In reflecting on their practice several of the teachers talked about problems related to teaching writing. Four key themes were raised: conflict between assessment policy and practice; conflict between school-wide teaching policy and practice; concerns related to levelling students' writing; concerns for supporting writers who struggle.

### **5.4.1 Conflict between assessment policy and teaching**

Kat, in particular, regarded political and educational messages as confusing and contradictory. Her long professional experience had exposed her to several Language/English curriculum documents over time. She had worked with process approaches, genre approaches and, more recently, was beginning to consider a broader view of writing, a more purpose-driven approach – one that acknowledged social purposes for writing, and multiple forms of communication. However, the summative, levelled assessment procedures, then an expected part of teachers' practice (especially MOE-directed asTTle writing tests and the Exemplars), were devised to test students' knowledge of text as a product, that is, how to write specific genres. The confusion was evident in Kat's discussion of school expectations:

I still bear quite a lot of confusion I might tell you about being genre driven or not genre driven, because in one breath we're told it mustn't be genre driven and now at this time of the year, today we had to do a writing sample right across the school and we had to do it on a particular genre.... Well it was from the Exemplar: 'Why do we wear seatbelts?' So the genre was structured as explanation, but then knowing it's going to be assessed on how it's been written as an explanation, for that to happen we've had to do teaching of explanations. Do you know what I'm saying? (Kat)

Conflicting messages frustrated Kat, who felt that she had to specifically teach before she could test. Kat had concerns regarding young students' engagement and cognitive development when teachers were required to use a prescriptive approach for teaching genres. She saw prescriptiveness occurring, with genres taught as a stepped set of procedures, as opposed to allowing young students to problem-solve a situation cognitively, select ideas and organise their own writing.

#### **5.4.2 Conflict between school-wide policy and teachers' practice**

Rosie was irritated by school policy that expected teachers to teach a particular genre for a whole term. The school policy was too prescriptive and restrictive for Rosie, since she felt it did not acknowledge context or the needs of her own learners (as discussed earlier under planning). Like Kat, Rosie did not like organising writing into separate genres, as was the current practice in NZ schools:

You know strictly speaking every term we're supposed to do a different sort of genre. Now I think it was last term that we were supposed to do procedural writing and it was how to make a sandwich, how to make toast and I thought God help me I am not going to sit here and teach this stuff when I'm learning about the weather cycle, the water cycle, why can't they write about the water cycle? .... This is why I get really angry about the document. (Rosie)

Rosie blamed this pedagogical approach on EaNZC rather than challenging the school leadership's interpretation of how genres should be taught. In response to school policy, Rosie chose to teach the genre quickly and then return to her own way of teaching writing.

Mary and Linda verbalised the dilemma of ensuring students had personal writing time alongside learning specific genres. This dilemma had arisen because in many schools their policy placed a greater emphasis on transactional writing functions outlined in EaNZC, which embraced the genres of instruction, argument, factual recount, report,

explanation, and consequently shifted the emphasis from expressive personal writing. School policy focused on coverage of these particular genres again, often focusing on teaching one genre over the term. Linda shared her frustration as follows:

We get a bit pushed [for personal writing] you know that tends to go and that's a shame ... You know I definitely use personal experiences, I mean ideally I would like them to have their own list of what they want to write about, but I don't get to it, but it's there so they can choose. (Linda)

#### **5.4.3 Concerns related to levelling writing**

Concerns raised by the teachers about assessing students' writing related mainly to using levelled assessment. This was not unexpected, as at the time of the interviews schools were taking part in a number of professional development programmes to review writing practices, with moderating and levelling of student writing one of the points of interest. Many teachers were trying to unpack the matrices provided by the MOE Writing Exemplars and asTTle Writing not only to interpret how levels were differentiated but also to determine whether a level 2 piece of writing was regarded as "basic", "proficient" or "advanced". Schools divided the broad banded levels into three sub-levels to monitor achievement and progression more easily.

Trinny explained that the formal writing samples collected were often not used diagnostically; they were decontextualised as they did not link to current teaching topics. She argued that they provided limited information for immediate feedback or teaching conversations, and emphasised the importance of classroom data:

Once we've done that [test with unassisted writing samples] at the beginning of the year it just gets filed away. But I think it's the daily work with the children that is important. I just don't believe that children fit into boxes, not all the time. (Rosie)

Rosie worked with a wide ability range of Year 2 children and focused on the individual writers in the classroom. She relied on her professional expertise to inform her teaching and felt that adding another layer in the form of assessment tools was irrelevant, as she explained:

But you know, Steph, honestly I'm teaching [beginning] Year 2s, I can't tell you what the Exemplars say and I probably should look them up and see, but the fact is, it doesn't matter to me what they say, I still have to get to 'that' point. So I'm getting to whatever point it is by teaching I guess, ... I've got a range in this class from non-readers to reading at level 12, 14, and if you can imagine the writing range, same thing. (Rosie)

Faye was irate that one-off, levels-based writing tests didn't acknowledge individual differences:

Some children just love writing narratives and some just hate it. Some children love writing about science and being very clinical and you know...structured and precise in their language and they do exceptionally well and some children don't find that easy. (Faye)

Lola's dilemma was different. She was concerned with the reliability of asTTle and Writing Exemplars in relation to each other:

I've found that asTTle and the Exemplars don't line up as much as I'd like them to. We prefer to use the Exemplar stuff because it's a bit more specific and easier to follow for us. But then we need to enter the information onto e-asTTle sites, so you can't do that. We really have to use asTTle, which is not so easy I don't think. (Lola)

The issue of alignment between the two most commonly used formal assessment tools was a concern voiced by many schools at the time of the interviews.

Lola also struggled, as did many other teachers, with unpacking the detail to identify clear criteria and boundaries between each level. As noted earlier, Lola said:



But the levels aren't quite as specific to me, I mean they might be specific to the person who wrote them, or to other people, but I find them a little bit more difficult to decide whether a kid's a one or a two for instance, and where's the fine line between a 2P and a 3A or 3B. It's pretty hard. (Lola)

Overall, at the time of the interviews teachers noted limitations when assessing students against curriculum levels, both in relation to the usefulness of the data to inform teaching and in interpreting the descriptors to differentiate between writing levels.

#### **5.4.4 Concerns for supporting writers who struggle**

Six of the ten teachers mentioned working with "struggling writers". However, four of these teachers explicitly discussed their concerns regarding how to teach writers who make slow progress. Three sub-themes emerged from the data: teachers' reflections on their own pedagogy; it is mostly boys who struggled to learn writing, attitudes impeding writing progress.

Kat knew that explicit teaching of writing was vital and that children required daily practise. Yet her concern was that some children still "didn't get it". She recognised that it was teachers who must make changes, but exactly what this entailed she was unsure of, as she said:

That's what bothers me a little bit, I mean writing is a huge part of our daily programme and yet some of these little kids still aren't getting there, so what has got to change? You know something has got to change, something in the delivery is not right for them. (Kat)

Rosie questioned her own teaching skills. She stated:

You see one of the things that really upsets me or worries me is, because I damn well know, there are kids in here that hate it, writing that is. ...That there's kids that are capable and won't. Well why, why is that happening, what am I doing wrong? Am I not giving input, feeding them and building them up and am I

not giving good literature examples? Am I not reading enough stories? You know...? (Rosie)

Gail's challenge was with older students who had struggled with writing skills over the years and subsequently lost confidence and self-esteem. She talked about these children in the following way:

You find with Year 6 children by the time that they get to me if they are struggling writers or reluctant writers, there's quite a lot of work to do to get them over that mind-set, that they're not very good at it... I had for a while to make sure that those children could move along and feel confident, you know, and keep their self esteem intact and be learning the skills of writing as well. (Gail)

From experience, Gail also noted that more boys than girls seemed to struggle to get words onto paper. Often they have "got the ideas up there, so lots of one-to-one" is required. Gail sought professional guidance and affirmed that, "A lot of the stuff I did in the juniors, I hadn't necessarily carried forward to the seniors, because I hadn't had that need particularly. So I went back to a lot of those earlier junior practices and they worked really well."

Linda was also concerned about the quantity of writing from some boys. "I've got one boy who writes a minimal amount because he is worried about his spelling.... And as much as you try to support him in that he still, you know, still struggles."

Rosie's view of boys not engaging with writing was related to attitudes and interests, because she saw them as still wanting to explore and play. Rosie observed:

... Those boys, I mean I know I'm being very sexist, but it's true, their heads are in the sandpit, they're out there and they're thinking about what they're going to do at lunchtime and they've got their tractors and they're digging and they're going to build a road. (Rosie)

Rosie believed that some boys were not ready for formal structured schooling.

### *Summary of teachers' concerns*

Challenges and issues relating to assessment, school policy and classroom pedagogy were the dominant concerns. Teachers recognised conflicts in beliefs and practices between their own "way of being a teacher of writing" and school and educational policy requirements. Conflicting messages in school-wide assessment practices were also queried. Prescriptiveness in school policy for teaching genres challenged others in the sample. Some teachers queried the subjective decisions involved in levelling a writer's ability, the clarity of the criteria to differentiate between levels, the usefulness of formal assessment and the narrowness of the text-types assessed. For others, on the other hand, school-wide professional development meetings on levelling students' writing enhanced their pedagogical content knowledge through professional conversations and moderation of scripts. Reflective practice was evident amongst these teachers. Concerns on *how* to support those children who were still struggling with writing were raised and for some teachers were unresolved.

## **5.5. Chapter conclusion**

The initial research question sought to identify New Zealand primary school teachers' beliefs and practices in relation to teaching writing. From the rich data it emerged that while there were commonalities, the teachers' "ways of working" varied, according to their beliefs and understandings of how children learn and their theoretical perspectives on writing. The teachers' talk demonstrated their confidence in their own practice, their individuality and identity as teachers of writing. Their conversations explained and justified *how* they planned, organised students, taught and assessed writing. Teachers' knowledge and confidence were expressed, but dilemmas were described as well and

there was evidence of frustration. Furthermore, teachers reflected on their pedagogical content knowledge, seeking ways to refine their practice, searching for a “meeting of minds”, ways to connect with and scaffold their writers. The teachers’ practices reflected commonalities typical of their professional communities of practice. In the classroom varied practices were evident as the teachers justified *what* they did and *why*.

However, even though the teachers described *what* they did and *why* they made particular teaching decisions, further discourse analysis was required to deepen understanding of *why* the teachers taught in complex and specific ways. Discourse analysis, introduced in Chapter Four, is applied in the next chapter and used to analyse *why* teachers worked differently from a discursive perspective. Chapter Six explores teacher identity – how teachers located themselves in relation to different Writing Discourses.



## Chapter Six

### Teacher identity located in Writing Discourses

An individual emerges through the processes of social interaction, not as a relatively fixed end product but as one who is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate. Accordingly, who one is is always an open question with a shifting answer depending upon the positions made available within one's own and others' discursive practices, the stories through which we make sense of our own and others' lives. (Davies & Harré, 2001, p. 263)

#### 6 Introduction

In Chapter Five, the teachers' talk presented a rich picture of diverse classroom writing activity. The chapter identified the reported beliefs and practices that characterised a group of ten New Zealand primary school teachers. It also discussed their reasons for practising writing in particular ways. In this chapter, an examination of this picture in terms of Writing Discourses helps us understand the questions under study: *What* Writing Discourses (knowledge/understandings, beliefs and practices) do they subscribe to? *How* do theoretical Writing Discourses shape their identities as teachers of writing?

This study draws on sociocultural theorising of discourses, positioning and identity (see Chapter Four, 4.6.2) as discussed earlier. In particular, this chapter explores why the teachers taught in different ways. It makes use of the heuristic tool that established sets of conceptual Discourse Markers (see Table 5) to reveal how the teachers are positioned, or position themselves in Writer, Text or Social Writing Discourses. A discussion of their discursive practices follows and describes how the

teachers are positioned in dominant, merging or conflicting Writing Discourses. These positions show how the teachers construct their own versions of their teaching worlds, thus constructing their own identities as teachers of writing.

### *The analytic process*

This chapter revisits the teachers' interview data to address the research questions mentioned above. The teachers' scripts were analysed using frequency counts, discussed, illustrated with examples, and are placed in tables to show teachers' comparative subscription to various Writing Discourses. My interpretive descriptions of the teachers' discourses as they reference the Writer, Text and or Social discourse markers are identified as italicised words. I have selected some shorter quotations to demonstrate the discourse markers and to avoid repetition, since the previous chapter analysed themes from the teachers' talk in greater depth and included larger chunks of text to provide context and a descriptive richness. It is also important to note that the teachers' talk shows that many Discourse Markers overlap when teachers describe their practice, therefore comments are recorded accordingly for analysis. Where teachers made general statements relating to their practice, such as organisational aspects that do not identify a particular Writing Discourse marker, they were not included as part of this discourse analysis.

### **6.1 Teachers talk Writer Discourse**

Writer Discourse in the classroom positions the child-writer as central to the learning process. Teachers support ownership and development of the writer's voice, encouraging students' awareness and engagement in metacognitive processes when creating their texts (Flower & Hayes, 1981; Graves, 1983). The framework for analysis of the Writing Discourses was introduced in Chapter Four, Table 5.

The following table outlines the teachers' engagement in Writer Discourse (Table 11). The data identified that three teachers, Trinny, Mary and Faye, associated more strongly than the others with the characteristics of Writer Discourse. Rosie, Kat and Linda also included Writer practices and beliefs in their classrooms.

**Table 11: Analysis of teachers' interviews: Writer Discourse.**

Indicators	Kat	Lola	Trinny	Gail	Eliza	Mary	Glen	Faye	Linda	Rosie	
Writer is central	4	3	10	3	1	5	3	12	3	1	45
Personal contexts	4	5	5		2	5	2	6	7	5	41
Cognitive processes	2	2	4		1	6	2	4	5	3	29
Whole language	2	1		1	4	2		3	1	6	20
Teacher demonstration	1		3		1	4		2		3	14
Conferences	5	5	5	1	3	4	1	3		3	30
Audience response	3	1	4		5	7		5	7	2	34
Assessment	1	1	3		2	2	3		1	3	16
	22	18	34	5	19	35	11	35	24	26	

In terms of the indicators, all ten teachers identified with the first marker, writer is central, when teaching writing. They commented on its relevancy in 45 instances. Furthermore, ownership of learning, encouragement of writer's voice, opportunities for clarifying thoughts, and concern with personal growth and identity building constituted a major aspect of these teachers' practice.

Mary stated: "You have to teach children, you know we have to teach the writers, not the writing. You have to teach the children themselves." Mary strongly believed that writing is *a child-centred process*, and that writing is about *ownership of learning*, an *identity process*. Affirming the



*writer was central to her teaching; she saw her role as one of knowing the writer, and supporting growth and individual development.*

Trinny valued her students as writers and *acknowledged their ownership of the process*. She explained: “It’s for them to know it is their work, it is their ideas, and it is their process that they’ve gone through to get to the point of sharing.” However, Trinny’s discourse also recognised that her writers engaged in the *cognitive processes of generating ideas and translating, revising and sharing*.

Linda said: “The big thing for me is that we celebrate the children’s successes and we share them and we say how wonderful, so they feel they’re writers.” Linda believed in celebrating *personal growth and writer identity*.

Mary explained: “The writing programme should empower children to independently record their ideas and experiences with confidence and should engender a love of writing.” She focused on how teaching could *encourage writers’ exploration of ideas and build their confidence*.

The second most named marker in Writer Discourse was writing from personal contexts. Writing topics were based on children’s unique personal experiences, use of their imagination and their emotional responses to situations as they explored their world around them. This element was valued by the teachers and indicated in 41 instances. Nine of the ten teachers identified with this discourse marker. Gail, alone, did not make any reference to it.

Faye celebrated the *child’s personal and unique experiences*, valuing these as writing material to give the child *a voice*. She suggested that children write best from their own *lived experiences* and that it is up to the teacher

to help the *child explore and express* these ideas. She explained that you have to start with “what’s inside the child and their ideas first,” and saw teaching about writing as being about providing “lots of exciting experiences and tapping into kids and inner world.”

Lola explained: “It is important to give children the opportunity to write what they want to write, regardless of what the teaching focus is.” Lola believed in students’ self-motivation and ability to *choose their own topic* content. Trinny emphasised that students must “take ownership of all those stories that belong to them.” She recognised students have *stories to tell* and need opportunities to *explore personal meanings*.

Three other Writer markers are worth commenting on. Audience response, conferencing and engagement with cognitive processes were identified in 34, 30 and 29 instances respectively. These three characteristics of Writer Discourse were highly valued by nine of the ten teachers and formed a key part of their practice when teaching writing in the classroom.

In relation to audience response, Faye explained: “I do get them to read aloud to a friend, because, when the words are said out loud, they sound different from when they’re written and so they do lots of refining.” Recognising that writing needs to have *an audience* and be *responded to* in ways that prompt rethinking and revising was important in Faye’s classroom.

Of conferencing, Kat explained: “I do quite a lot of on the hoof conferencing, like roaming, roving, that sort of stuff.” Kat’s *learning conversations* often resulted from questions that arose from the students or *student needs* that she noticed as she moved around the classroom. Faye’s discourse on conferencing related to goal-setting and *individual needs*, discussed between teacher and student. “And that’s mostly done

through a draft and a conference, close one-on-one conference.” Lola shared her conferencing discussion as follows: “I said to him, ‘There’s something wrong with this word,’ he’d left the ‘e’ off, ‘Why doesn’t it look right?’ And he still couldn’t figure it, so....” In this situation, Lola is conferencing spelling, focusing on the *accuracy of writing conventions*.

Cognitive processes were an important marker for Writer Discourse. Mary was aware that writing could be challenging for young people, specifically as it is *a recursive act*, involving many interrelated *cognitive processes*: “It’s a very complex process...they’ve got to create something and be able, I guess, to criticise it to make it better.”

To summarise, the framework provided an heuristic to identify how various teachers positioned themselves in Writer Discourse. In creating a community of writers in their classrooms, the teachers in varying degrees embedded child-centred ideologies which viewed writing as a personal expressive experience. Students were engaged by writing from their personal experiences. Writer Discourse practices reflected certain beliefs about learning which emphasised creating opportunities for students to find their own voices and develop as individual writers through exploration and self-expression. Six of the ten teachers gave greater importance to this discourse than the other four teachers. Teachers’ dominance and positioning in particular discourses is discussed later.

## **6.2 Teachers talk Text Discourses**

The Text Discourse positions the writer as a learner who develops linguistic skills and understandings about how to construct texts for particular social purposes, in particular ways. Here the teacher as expert apprentices students into knowing how to construct five or six genres for successful school and community engagement. For the teachers’ involvement in Text Discourse see Table 12 below. Analysis of the data demonstrated that Gail positioned herself in the Text Discourse more

often than any of the other teachers. In her case, 29 instances were recorded. Kat, Eliza and Linda subscribed in part with 15–17 instances. Lola, Mary, Glen, Faye and Rosie made between 5 –10 references to Text Discourse, while Trinny did not align herself with this discourse at all.

**Table 12: Analysis of teachers' interviews: Text Discourse.**

Indicators	Kat	Lola	Trinny	Gail	Eliza	Mary	Glen	Faye	Linda	Rosie	
Text is central	2	2		4	1	1		3	2		15
Criteria for learning	2			3	3		2		5	3	18
Metalanguage	2			2	1						5
Written exemplars	2	1		3	3		2	3	2		16
Genre writing	2	1		7		1	1		1	2	15
Explicit teaching	2			6	3				1	3	15
Genre based Grammar	2			1							3
Assessment	3	4		3	4	3	1	4	6		28
	17	8	0	29	15	5	6	10	17	8	

The key marker that teachers identified most strongly within Text Discourse was assessment practice. Teachers focused on the writing as a finished product, and spent time identifying how they might check for the elements of the genre taught. This marker was discussed in 28 instances, involving eight out of the ten teachers. While formative assessment practices in the classroom were varied, checklists or rubrics based on matrices from Ministry generated tools, such as in e-asTTle and Writing Exemplars, gave the teachers a base from which to comment on, critique and level written samples.

Examples of assessment practice are represented in the following instances: Linda explained: "I've got my little checklist which is in different levels, but I just highlight it and I've got a surface one and deeper one and then I know where that child's going." Linda checked the *accuracy* of a student's text, based on *criteria copied from writing exemplars* and she *checked off features* when she noted certain *writing knowledge and skills had been achieved*.

Glen assessed confidently on aspects of students' writing. She attributed her pedagogical content knowledge to *a range of sources, assessment procedures and collegial discussions*. She stated: "Knowledge from asTTle, using the knowledge I've gained from looking at the exemplars, [and] using the expertise of my colleagues" supported her assessment decisions.

Faye, an experienced teacher, used her knowledge of writers and *their texts to assess and level against national indicators* to establish their writing abilities. "I feel, I can put a level score on a child and I can put an attitude comment because I know whether they love it or not, but it's still my subjective view."

In Mary's school, the teachers used *text-based national indicators* to compare students' achievement and to *identify language skills for learning writing*. She explained: "You're taking your Level 2 [exemplar] and saying you know what's happening here, so let's look at where my children in my class are at, and are they doing all these things?"

The second marker most commented on was the use of criteria for learning, commented on in 18 instances. Six of the ten teachers identified with this marker. Often teachers would share these or co-construct learning intentions or success criteria with the students. These criteria

were genre-based and would guide their teaching. This practice was discussed in 18 instances.

Reflecting on her practice, Eliza talked about making learning more explicit, particularly in relation to *writing goals* when she was teaching *a particular genre*: “Now before a lesson I’d say, ‘Today we’re learning to ... in our transactional writing’ ... Like, if we’re doing a recipe book, we talk about writing down the recipe.” Kat believed in making learning expectations clear. Continuous references to *learning intentions* and *success criteria* gave students direction. She stated: “By writing up the learning intention, what they’re doing, how will they know they’ve got it, [they use] the success criteria.” Gail used the MOE *written exemplars as guide* to show students *what criteria* were required in their writing. She explained it in the following way: “Goal setting we do. ... It’s criteria based as well so that we know what they’re aiming for.”

Four other markers were referenced in 15 or 16 instances each. These were the use of written exemplars, explicit teaching, constructing genres and the text is central. Five of the teachers referred to explicit teaching and seven of the teachers referenced the other three Text Discourse markers.

Teachers identified the practice of using written exemplars as a way of identifying and modelling characteristics of a genre. An example would be discussed and deconstructed to identify the language function, schematic structure and language features typical of that genre. Seven of the ten teachers acknowledged this practice in 16 instances. Glen believed that: “Some of the children learn best when they are actually examining a really strong model.” Glen recognised the value of *models* to teach from. She noted that *class discussion* happened when teacher and students analysed the *linguistic elements of the text*. Linda made *links to her reading*

*programme* so that the students had *good models* to work from. She explained: "I try to make my reading programme ... and if we're having a strong focus on narratives, then I'm reading narratives, I'm sharing the narratives as well because they are very closely linked."

An emphasis on teaching explicitly and somewhat repetitively with the *whole class* to ensure students knew *how the language elements* differed in terms of the range of genres studied. This was evident when Gail shared: "We try to do each thing [genre] in reasonable depth, so that the children see the whole process through ... We probably focus on one or two different genres a term amongst our other writing."

When teaching new learning of a particular genre Kat recognised that *explicit modelling* and *deconstruction* of text were necessary. She argued: "I think teacher demonstration and explicit teaching is a must." She went on: "I feel I've done some good teaching with explanations." Kat was referring here to *using exemplars* and *explicit teaching* as she immersed the children in the *schematic structure and associated lexico-grammatical features* of genre, making connections with her oral and written language programmes.

In an attempt to contextualise the learning, the teachers in the senior school talked about teaching writing genres in other topic or curricula areas. Gail expected that students would *know how to construct genre in different subject areas*. She explained: "Writing across curriculum ... there are certain things we might be looking at ...different genres of writing and then the writing for a purpose, and certain genres might fit in very nicely with a topic that we're doing."

The text is central is a crucial tenet of this Discourse. The teachers were focused on the textual product and the selection and arrangement of

elements of a particular genre. Eliza, although she was flexible, taught texts according to a *realistic purpose*, often *related to* topic areas: “Writing a letter to thank someone, depending what we’re doing as our unit topic, that does influence a lot of how I approach the writing topic.”

To summarise, when teachers positioned themselves in Text Discourse, they created writing communities in their classrooms that represented the two Text perspectives introduced in Chapter Two. They either considered creating texts in relation to the context of the situation (Coe, 1994), as was the case for Kat, and Glen in some instances, or they taught Text Discourse with a focus on genres: a staged process that was product-focused and followed grammatical rules (Derewianka, 1990). Writing from a prescriptive genre approach was viewed as the construction of different texts patterns or genres employing appropriate schematic structures and linguistic features to fulfil writing functions. The teachers, however sought to link genres to other curriculum topics. Three teachers, Kat, Gail and Linda, indicated subscription to this discourse more frequently than the others.

### **6.3 Teachers talk Social Discourse**

Students who are positioned in this discourse participate actively in designing writing tasks, often for global audiences (Hansford & Adlington, 2008; Walsh, 2008). Their texts are often more complex, multimodal and digital. Teachers who teach from this discourse perspective engage with the multiplicity of new literacies and create multiple ways for communicating.

From analysis of the teachers’ interviews (see Table 13), participation in Social Discourse was less evident in the teachers’ practice than in the other Discourses. Glen was located more strongly in a social-oriented perspective of writing than the other teachers, and referenced these



markers in 24 instances. Kat, Trinny and Eliza made 8–11 references to the Social Discourse markers, and Lola, Mary, Linda, Faye and Rosie made 2–4 references. Gail did not align with this discourse at all. See Table 13.

The most common marker relating to teachers’ social practice indicated that collaborative teaching and learning was valued by eight of the ten teachers. They talked about the teacher and children working collaboratively when involved in text-making, responding to each other’s work, critiquing their own learning and taking on various teaching roles. This was mentioned in 26 instances.

**Table 13: Analysis of teachers’ interviews: Social Discourse.**

Indicators	Kat	Lola	Trinny	Gail	Eliza	Mary	Glen	Faye	Linda	Rosie	
Social participation							1				1
Real-life contexts	2						1				3
Collaborative teaching	5	1	4		1	1	13		1	2	26
Dialogic interactions	1		2		1		2				6
Diverse audiences	2		1		1		1				5
Digital & multimodal	1	1					1	1		1	5
Critical perspective					3	1	3	3	1		11
Assessment			2		2		3				7
	11	2	9	0	8	2	24	4	2	3	

Glen believed adamantly that the classroom *culture should be collaborative*. Learning was a *shared experience*. She worked hard to ensure she wasn’t at

the centre of her students' learning: "I'm not the font of all knowledge, I don't want to be held up as that in the classroom. I don't want to be the person that you are trying to please." Trinny buddied up her students to co-construct ideas before writing:

I might say 'Ok, you're going to write about Goldilocks and the three bears today. I'd like you to share with your writing buddy your idea, and then I'd like you to listen to your buddy'. And then, of course, they get into 'Oh, yeah. Oh yeah, what about the other bear doing that?'. And they'd play with ideas the whole time. (Trinny)

It was important to Trinny to encourage *students to share* their writing with each other. She explained: "The more competent writers, more able writers, are very happy to share their skills sometimes with the kids who struggle, and they love to be buddies." Linda encouraged her students to *talk about* and *respond to each other's* ideas before writing. She explained: "I've got to get them going because going in flat is quite hard. And once they're fizzing, then that's the opportunity to go off and write." Linda used interactive talk before writing to motivate her students' thinking and engagement in the task.

The second most commonly referenced marker was teaching students to take a critical perspective on writing. Five teachers identified with this marker in 11 instances. Liz challenged her Year 3 students, pushing boundaries to encourage *thinking* differently when *designing* texts. She wanted to prepare them for the *changing global and social contexts* that these students would be part of:

They've got to think outside the square. I think, one of the things that drives me is the work I've done in thinking skills, in higher order thinking. When these children go out into the workforce ... they're going to have to constantly be thinking, changing their ideas, how they approach things...(Eliza)

Kat encouraged her Year 3 children to *think critically* and provide *peer feedback* to support each other's writing. She explained: "Now when we do our talk time, we have feedback and we have two feedbacks for compliments and we have one feedback for future learning, so they're very into giving, telling one another and accepting from one another the feedback. It really works."

Other teachers encouraged the students to personally reflect and critique their own writing. Rosie encouraged her young students to *critically own* and *monitor their learning*, by recognising their writing goals and when they had reached them. "I was able to say, 'Right, Ryan, what's your goals, what are your writing goals?' 'Oh, I've got to form my letters correctly.' ...I could go round the class today and pick them off one at a time and they knew, the kids knew." Glen gave children *ownership* of their success criteria. She wanted them to *critically consider* what was relevant to their learning. She explained: "It's not a game of guess what's in the teacher's head ... it's taken me a while. The children are actually able to determine their own success criteria for their writing now from a very generic learning outcome or learning intention."

The teachers did not reference the other markers as often as the two just discussed. Four teachers talked about writing for diverse audiences. Kat in particular would create audiences for her children. For example, their written pieces on "Why we should be wearing seat belts" were being sent off to a car safety magazine.

Four teachers talked about writing being an interactive and dialogic practice. Glen encouraged her students to *think of their readers*, that writing was a social act. She encouraged the children to "see their writing realistically as a living thing." She said to the children "I believe that writers write for readers. Who are the readers? Who's reading it? I don't

want it to just be written for me.” Glen viewed writing as an *ongoing dialogic process* where she encouraged writers *to have conversations* and *address* their readers (Bakhtin, 1986).

Two teachers, Kat and Glen, referenced using real-life contexts, which recognised cultural and social issues. Initially, starting with *a context* was a challenge for Kat and she constantly sought ways to make the *writing realistic*. She explained one situation: “We’ve got this hall, and we were all taking [our] shoes off and it was absolutely a hubbub. So I just wrote up one day, ‘Should we, or should we not take our shoes off?’ And we had this big discussion, and I said: “Now if we were writing about this we would say this is an argument.” So I guess I am starting with the children. Kat was in fact starting with a social issue and then focused on writing it up as an argument. In this instance Kat had introduced the notion of *critical literacy*, in sense that a problem in the school community had arisen. Kat used this problem to generate thinking and problem solving and to form the basis for teaching a writing structure.

Five of the ten teachers referenced texts as multimodal designing. However, in all bar one case, they talked about print-based design only. Faye and Linda used picture books as a means to support students’ visualisation. Kat encouraged her students to draw and represent meanings. Linda used semantic word maps to design and organise the writing. Glen, however, used a digital camera and encouraged her students to capture pictures of their home interests.

In summary, when teachers positioned themselves in Social Discourse, they created communities of writing in their classrooms, which reflected values of equity, inclusiveness, the celebration of difference and diversity. Writing was viewed as a cognitive, social and technological practice; children learnt collaboratively, taking ownership of the

technologies or resources available to interact and design multimodal texts (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012). Teacher practices reflected beliefs about learning, in creating opportunities for dialogic conversations for students to negotiate their own meanings and engage with personal, local and global communities to develop their identities as writers.

An analysis of the Writing Discourses revealed that the teachers did not locate themselves in this discourse as strongly as they did in the others. Opportunities for instant, digital and global engagement were possible at this time, but teachers did not talk about providing experiences for students to engage with their audiences in this manner. Nor did the students create or design on screen using multimedia elements available for linguistic and visual design. While taking a critical literacy stance is part of Social Discourse, teachers mostly provided situations to support critical thinking, rather than critical literacy as described by Sandretto (2011).

#### **6.4 Making sense of discursive practices**

An analysis of the teachers' discursive practices revealed that the teachers positioned themselves in different ways, constructing different identities as teachers of writing. While eight out of ten teachers were positioned or positioned themselves across all three writing discourses, two of the teachers engaged in only two of the three Writing Discourses, as interpreted from the interviews. Gail did not engage in Social Discourse and Trinny did not engage in Text Discourse. This raises questions as to whether the teachers ignored a third writing discourse because it did not fit with their perspective of how children learn writing, or whether they chose not to engage as they could not make sense of conflicting discourses. Or were they unaware of the different Writing Discourses available to them?

Nine of the ten teachers referenced Writer and Text Discourse markers. Their positioning themselves strongly in these discourses made it evident that characteristics of the process and genre approaches were still highly valued and practised in the writing classrooms. This was confirmed by the spread of teachers' engagement across all discourse markers. The predominance of Writer Discourse markers was evident. They were referenced in 229 instances. Text markers were evident in 115 instances and social markers were referenced in 65 instances.

Three themes emerged from analysis of the three writing discourses to determine teachers' discursive engagement or positioning. What became evident from the data was that the teachers' engagement with the discourses happened in various ways.

The teachers were positioned in dominant and bounded discourses of theoretical and pedagogical practice, or they merged overlapping discourses, or there was evidence of competing and conflicting discourses which created tensions and dilemmas. This was evident in the teachers' voices, and their reference to the three Writing Discourses (Table 14).

**Table 14: Teachers' discursive engagement in the Writing Discourses.**

	Kat	Lola	Trinny	Gail	Eliza	Mary	Glen	Faye	Linda	Rosie
Writer	22	18	34	5	19	35	11	35	24	26
Text	17	8	0	29	15	5	6	10	17	8
Social	11	2	9	0	8	2	24	4	2	3

#### **6.4.1 Positioning in a dominant discourse**

I determined that a dominance in positioning in Writing Discourses was evident when the teacher's key writing Discourse was at least ten points

stronger than the other two Discourses. Seven of the ten teachers tended to position themselves in terms of a dominant theoretical position. Of these teachers, most of them - Trinny, Mary, Lola and Rosie and Faye - positioned themselves in Writer Discourse. One teacher, Gail, engaged in Text Discourse the most often and one teacher, Glen, positioned herself strongly in Social Discourse. Kat, Eliza and Linda located themselves across all three discourses, aligning themselves in a more balanced manner.

Trinny, Mary and Faye scored at least 20 points higher in the Writer Discourse than in the others, whereas Lola and Rosie had a ten and an 18 point difference respectively. These discourses strongly reflected the teachers' beliefs about how children learn as well as how they learn to write. Four of the five teachers identifying with writer perspectives were experienced teachers and had lived through the era of process writing; however, Trinny had not. Trinny was a mature adult student who had been teaching for only a few years, and surprisingly showed a strong affinity for the Writer Discourse.

Writer Discourse practices build a community of practice that values the person and apprentices the writer (Calkins, 1991). Faye believed this was a vital principle when learning to write. She said: "That belief in the community of authors, you know a community of writers. We are all writers here, we can write, it's an exciting thing to do." Faye explained that "inside every child is this wonderful bank of ideas and knowledge, you know, responses and we have to show them how to tap into that." Teachers must "light a fire for kids." Rosie believed that teaching writing through a whole-language approach was a key component of her classroom literacy programme: "Writing and reading and oral language, they go...they're so integrated and so intrinsically entwined and we can't sort of pull them apart and separate them." She was aware of her

theoretical influences, stating: “If I had to think of theories, I suppose I trained under that whole-language and Donald Graves... that reading process... the whole-language thing.”

Lola valued giving children topic choice. She recognised that choice gives the writers ownership and knowledge of their writing. It was the teacher’s role to scaffold and prompt them to explore these ideas more deeply. Lola explained her thinking: “I think it’s important to give children the opportunity to write what they want to write, regardless of what the teaching focus is, and time”; and children “need to be confident to know that they can write, and that people are going to appreciate it when they do write it.”

Mary maintained that: “The outcome of the writing programme should empower children to independently record their ideas and experiences with confidence and should engender a love of writing.” Mary believed that: “We have to open children’s eyes to see what they bring to the world. That inside every child is this wonderful bank of ideas and knowledge, you know, responses, and we have to show them how to tap into that.”

Gail, however, positioned herself in a dominant writing discourse, in the Text Discourse for teaching writing in the classroom. She employed the genre approach – at times in a decontextualised way – teaching texts prescriptively and repetitively. She often looked for opportunities to explore genre and text structures. “I tend to do a writing overview for the term as well. Which is sort of not set in concrete but there are certain things we might be looking at structurally as well as the different genres of writing.” Teaching and writing to specific criteria, or features of a particular genre, were an important aspect of Gail’s teaching and assessment. Keen to teach genre and ensure the students could construct



transactional texts, she referred frequently to the *First steps* (Education Department of Western Australia, 1994a) planning templates, putting these alongside the Writing Exemplar matrices. The purpose was to make constructing text explicit to the children, “so they know that’s what they should be doing.”

Glen’s engagement of the writing Discourses reflected a dominant position in Social Discourse. This enabled her to present writing as an opportunity for students to create meanings in texts by discussing, negotiating and collaborating with one another. She explained that she had changed her practice: “I’m teaching about writing as an integral part of daily life rather than teaching genre, rather than looking at my topic and thinking: Well, we’re doing volunteers right, well, we could write a report that would fit in nicely.” She also commented on her students at work drawing attention to the way they discussed features of texts. “At writing time, they’re all sitting there with their orange highlighter frantically pulling out bits and...arguing and discussing and talking about writing.”

An earlier discussion in Chapter Two, on Writer, Text and Social perspectives of Writing Discourses, highlighted how each discourse has the potential to shape teachers’ identities as writers and teachers of writing. Not only do these Discourses position them as teachers of writing, the dominant discourse represents their views of what writing is, and how they consider students best learn writing. While teachers may confidently work from a dominant discourse, questions are raised as to what this might mean for students?

#### **6.4.2 Merging and overlapping discourses**

In the analysis of how the teachers taught writing and *why* practices might be different, it became evident that Kat and Eliza, in particular,

used their discursive affiliations in a relatively balanced way, demonstrating that discourses can overlap and at times merge. Linda, however, seemed to locate herself mostly in two of the discourses. The following examples demonstrate (shown by italicising) overlapping discourses and merging practices.

Kat really made an effort to present learning as meaningful experience. She attempted to situate and contextualise the topic in relation to the child's world-view. At the same time, she sought to develop the students' linguistic knowledge of a particular genre. In this way she straddled Text, Writer and Social Discourse, as demonstrated in the following examples:

It [writing] is often linked with what's going on, like for instance we had our calf day (*writer and social discourses*)...so we had a little unit on caring for pets. I went to caring for pets because we could have written explanations (*text*) about caring for pets. (Kat)

Kat showed how she worked from the child's world, the children's experiences, to ensure they learnt how to communicate ideas through building an argument. She explained:

We've got this hall, we were all taking our shoes off and it was absolutely a hubbub (*writer*) so later I just wrote up 'Should we, or should we not take our shoes off?' (*social*) And we had this big discussion (*social*), and I said 'Now if we were writing about this, we would say this is an argument' (*text*). (Kat)

Eliza liked to tap into children's creativity, but she also encouraged them to think critically in situations. She explained that:

I do teach creative writing (*writer*). One day we could be something creative. They've got to think outside the square. I think probably one of the things that drives me, is the work I've done in thinking skills, in high order thinking (*social*). When these children go out into the workforce... they're going to have to constantly be thinking, changing their ideas, how they approach things (*social*). If I can give them skills (*text*) that they can turn to, things to think about... (Eliza)

When I asked Eliza: “Do you subscribe to a particular theory of writing, or a particular approach?” she responded:

No, I’m probably a mismatch ‘cause of lots of things I try.... because I don’t think you can use one theory, because I’ve got so many different children in the class ... so I try lots of different things to hopefully connect with perhaps some child.  
(Eliza)

Other teachers also merged discursive practices, as in this example. Glen merged three different discourses as she explained how she used a digital camera to enable children to choose their own topics for writing but also to explore another language medium:

I bought my children a digital camera (*social*), which they take home on the weekends and they discover (*social*) – and that’s been really interesting because they’re capturing moments in their lives (*social and writer*) and so they’ve got these things that might refer to write about another time (*writer*). They might use the photo that they took of their cat to make a card (*social and text*) for somebody. So it’s not – doesn’t drive it but it’s a nice little way to... it’s another tool (*social*). (Glen)

These teachers selected and merged aspects from a range of Writing Discourses. They created new and blended discourses for teaching writing by drawing from Writer, Text and Social Discourses. In so doing they demonstrated how they rebuilt their teaching worlds and repositioned their identities as teachers of writing. However, other situations, as the next section indicates, were more challenging.

#### **6.4.3. Conflicting discourses, contradictions and dilemmas**

Analysis of the data also demonstrated that when teachers took up certain discursive positions there were occasions on which they experienced problems. Concerns or dilemmas became evident when contradictions emerged between aspects of particular discourses. This occurred when teachers experienced a mismatch between certain aspects

of a Writing Discourse and their identities as teachers of writing and/or when educational or school policy imposed pressure or constraints that the teacher was not sympathetic to. The following two examples illustrate such dilemmas.

Kat's teaching and leadership experience had exposed her to several Language/English curriculum documents over time. She had worked with process approaches (writer), genre approaches (text), and acknowledged the importance of dialogic conversations (social). At the time of this study Kat's school was involved in literacy professional development, exploring text approaches for teaching genres. Kat attempted to follow the teaching cycle promoted by her institution, school leadership, and the professional development programme. In spite of her extensive use of multiple teaching interactions to ensure her students knew how to construct explanations, Kat had concerns regarding student participatory engagement and their cognitive understanding of genres when taught as set procedures. She verbalised her confusion when describing the multiple strategies she had employed when teaching explanations:

I look at what my kids did today and I feel I've done some good teaching with explanations: we've read explanations, we deconstructed explanations (*text*), we have a talk time for our speaking and listening component where they're giving oral explanations... and all this sort of stuff. And we've modelled them, we've done them as shared writing and we've done a model together (*text*) and they have gone off and written. And then they've done their own plan and written. Some of the work I get today...isn't what I expected and it really bothers me. What are we doing to these kids? (Kat)

Kat had scaffolded teaching explanations in multiple ways. She demonstrated, employed shared reading of an example, discussed the grammatical structures using a model, co-constructed the genre together, and transferred the learning to oral language news time. Nonetheless,

Kat voiced deep concerns about the quality of the children's writing: "But I think, actually, little children, we should just let them go and let them write. And if they say that seatbelts are safe at the end rather than as a introduction does it matter?" (*writer*). Kat raises the dilemma of conflicting discourses: encouraging a Writer perspective, where children express their ideas, finding their voice, as opposed to following a prescriptive Text procedure. Kat's positioning in Writer Discourse was challenged by her school's policy and expectations to subscribe to a prescriptive form of genre teaching, a Text Discourse.

Rosie's dilemma with conflicting discourses became evident when school policy expected her to teach one particular genre a term. This practice conflicted with her own "way of doing". Not only was Rosie involved with a Writer, Text conflict, her identity as a teacher of writing was challenged. Rosie believed that her school policy was prescriptive and did not acknowledge contexts or the needs of her own learners. She chose to put aside her identity as teacher of writing, to quickly "jump through the hoops" by adopting the school policy or practice of a discourse that she had resisted. She said: "I am not going to sit here and teach this stuff when I'm learning about the weather cycle, the water cycle. Why can't they write about the water cycle?" (Rosie)

When asked, "And must you cover certain genres?" Rosie verbalised her resistance, explaining how she managed to maintain her identity as a teacher of writing. "Mmm, but some of us pretend we do it. We pay lip service to it. I mean and even we know, even in the very junior rooms we say the same thing. For goodness sake, it's not important if a kid can write an explanation or not." Rosie was more interested in engaging with Writer Discourse, getting young children involved and learning to be writers. Her frustration was evident:

Who gives a you know! I pretend I do it, 'Right, kids, today in your book, get out your book quickly write down "how to

make toast". 'Right, that's out of the way, let's carry on with what I really want to do which is all about this water cycle.... I hate the way we've got that delineation of genre (Rosie).

So how did these teachers manage the conflicting and contested writing discourses? Both Kat and Rosie "played the game". Kat played the game and taught accordingly; however, this practice was in conflict with her knowledge of her students' developmental progression as early writers. Competing practices containing elements of the Writer and Text Discourses enacted in Kat's classroom indicated a conflict between school literacy policy and her identity as a teacher of writing. Rosie chose to work with mostly Writer Discourse, as it reflected her beliefs about how emergent writers are apprenticed into writing. She vented her frustration at being asked to plan and teach prescribed genres across the school term. This focus on teaching Text prescriptively did not fit with her developmental, whole-language approach to teaching from a Writer perspective. However, she "played the game", but not in the same way as Kat did. Rosie did what was required and then disengaged from that discourse, choosing to ignore institutional demands that conflicted with her view of herself as teacher.

### **6.5. Chapter conclusion**

First, the data were interpreted to demonstrate how the teachers were positioned or positioned themselves in Writer, Text and Social Discourses. Some teachers indicated alignment with one dominant discourse that reflected beliefs of how children learn to write. Other teachers worked in terms of overlapping discourses and tended to merge two or three of these writing perspectives. In so doing, the teachers learned to work alongside old discourses or "actively built and rebuilt their own" creating their own "ways of doing". However, when characteristics of the Writing Discourses collided teachers questioned the reasoning of a particular discursive practice.

What emerged from analysis of the data was the complexity of teacher identities as they worked in multiple ways subscribing to different and sometimes competing writing discourses. Analysis of the data revealed teachers' professional identities are discursively constructed (A. Burgess & Ivanič, 2010). In seeking to enact their professional identities, the teachers projected themselves as certain kinds of writing teachers engaged in selective practices. There was no one-way of "saying, doing and being" a teacher of writing. However, an issue that these findings raise is that while teachers might comfortably work in dominant discourses what are they offering their students?

The next chapter looks in detail at how Kat taught her students to write. The focus here will be on the scaffolding of interactions.

## Chapter Seven

### One teacher's enacted practice

*Scaffolding*, however, is not simply another word for *help*. It is a special kind of help that assists learners to move toward new skills, concepts, or levels of understanding. Scaffolding is thus the temporary assistance by which a teacher helps a learner know how to do something, so that the learner will be able to complete a similar task alone. It is future-oriented: as Vygotsky has said, what a small child can do with support today, she or he can do alone tomorrow. (Gibbons, 2002, p. 10)

#### 7 Introduction

In the previous two chapters, I discussed how a group of ten teachers described their writing practice; first in relation to teaching decisions they made and second how they were positioned in relation to different Writing Discourses. In this chapter, one teacher's classroom practice is foregrounded for detailed analysis. It investigates *how* Kat apprenticed her writers in the classroom by describing and interpreting the research questions posed in Phase Two of the research: *How* does one teacher scaffold writing in her classroom? Is there evidence of adjustment and handover for learning?

In the first part of the chapter the teaching context, the students, the classroom and the purpose of the unit of work are described. The second part of the chapter presents an analysis of the teaching and learning interactions and is set out in the three following interrelated components. The first component analyses, describes and interprets how Kat enacted writing pedagogy in her writing classroom. The analysis is organised according to three Teaching Sessions and subsequent Teaching Moves and employs an analytical framework, PSFW, of *participatory scaffolding* to



investigate how Kat scaffolded her writers. The second component revisits the teaching and learning and uses a SPSFW for analysis, to find evidence of handover and transfer of learning. It seeks evidence of *if* and *how* a *synergy of participatory scaffolding* takes place over time. The third component focuses on the four case study students and analyses in greater depth their interactions and completed writing tasks in response to Kat's scaffolding in the classroom.

The analysis in this chapter seeks to interpret the complexity of teaching writing in the "construction zone", a place where learning happens, and it queries whether there is a "meeting of minds" for all students.

## **7.1 Teaching context**

I elected to observe Kat's writing practice and asked to be invited into her classroom as discussed in 4.3.2. Kat enjoyed talking writing and reflecting on her practice. I was especially interested to see how she scaffolded writing for her students (Chapter 7) and how she engaged with the Writing Discourses that influenced her practice (Chapter 8).

### **7.1.1 Students and classroom environment**

Kat's class consisted of 28 Year 2 and Year 3 students. These children at the beginning of the year were aged 6-8 years old. Of these children, 16 were girls and 12 were boys. Four of Kat's students, Elliot, Jack, Laura and Karne (all pseudonyms), were observed as focus children. Their participation and engagement in tasks during scaffolding interactions were tracked, and their responses reflected upon and commented on in terms of their learning interactions and their writing. Two of these children, Karne and Elliot, were achieving in the lowest quartile and two, Jack and Laura, in the highest quartile for their year level.

Kat's classroom was a typical oblong room with three walls covered with students' work, charts and information relating to all subject areas. The fourth wall had large open windows. Along the back wall Kat had placed two computers. On the front wall was a pin board. Kat's teaching desk was in the front left-hand corner, and in front to the right was an A-frame teaching board, which supported a news-print book that Kat used to record learning goals, students' contributions and teaching points. To the left-hand side at the front was a display of children's literature to support this literacy unit. A large mat was placed at the front of the class, where the children gathered for teaching sessions. A teacher's chair faced outwards. Tables with 4-5 student chairs were grouped around the mat.



**Figure 6: Kat's class**

Students' seating was flexible according to social interests and/or abilities. Examples of language and artwork were strung across the ceiling on wires, and a range of picture books was displayed on a front table, reflective of the literacy discussions about to take place.

Throughout the teaching sessions Kat positioned herself at the front of the room so that she had eye contact with the children when they were seated on the mat. From this position Kat was able to mediate learning and write and direct students' attention to the A-frame board, where she demonstrated writing skills and co-constructed written texts with students. Otherwise Kat would be seated on her chair initiating learning conversations. When the students turned to sit knee-to-knee engaging with a talking partner (TP) or were seated at tables writing independently, Kat was able to rove and interact with small groups of students or engage in one-on-one situations. I placed the video camera at the back of the room to provide an over-the-shoulder view, to gain the students' perspective. There was some panning and close-up work to focus on student-to-student conversations and to zoom in on Kat's recorded work.

### **7.1.2 Designing the unit: Writing context and teaching purpose**

Kat's purpose for this unit of work was for the children to write a character description. Not only did Kat want to mediate conceptual understanding of a character description, she also wanted to teach a writing process. Kat was keen to scaffold children on how to plan and map key ideas, and to demonstrate how to organise ideas and develop these into paragraphs based on three features – appearance, behaviours and feelings. Her intention was to hand over learning, to facilitate independence so that individual writers could then create their own character description. Kat's aim was to apprentice the students through a series of "designed in" mini-tasks, some structured, others less structured, and to mediate learning through collaborative dialogic discussions, setting class goals, and developing student understandings using multiple, multimodal tools. The "designed in" scaffolds at the macro level (Sharpe, 2006) were planned and prepared before instruction began.

## **7.2. Data analysis and layout**

In Chapter Four (4.6.3), I identified several tensions regarding analysis of classroom data. The challenge here was to examine *how* Kat scaffolded her writers through enactment of her pedagogical content knowledge and knowledge of her writers. The teaching and learning content, writing a character description, was embedded in the complexity of the scaffolding interactions. Iterative scaffolding interactions reveal the rich meaning-making experienced by the classroom community of practice. A further challenge was to go beyond simple mapping or describing of what was observed and to achieve a balance of description and interpretation that captured the nuances of Kat's scaffolding interactions and decision-making. A narrative of her teaching and learning sessions with interpretive discussions explores the coherence of her teaching and reveals how she keeps the writing content at the centre as she takes "the class on a bounded intellectual journey" (Leinhardt & Steele, 2005, p. 89), across a period of time (Mercer, 2008).

### *The teaching sessions and teaching moves*

To support analysis, each of the three teaching sessions was organised into Moves (Fisher, 2006). These Moves signalled a shift in the literacy focus during the lesson and often reflected different literacy purposes or goals. The Moves encapsulated literacy events and were represented by different activities or strategies, explicit teaching or co-constructed learning episodes, such as teacher instructions, peer talk, and teacher demonstrations. Each Move was analysed according to the scaffolding indicators (Table 6), and written in italics. An overview of each of the three writing sessions is set out in Table 15 below to enable reference for flow, connection and coherence over time. The time frame indicated that the Teaching Sessions and each Move varied in time and purpose.

**Table 15: Overview of the three teaching sessions with teaching moves.**

Move	Session one	Session two	Session three
1	0.00 – 1.17 Teacher [T] sets writing goals for unit and session on characterisation with class.	00. – 2.02 T shares and records goals for class - how to transfer ideas from mind-map to sentences.	0.00 – 4.17 T reads several students' written work and asks for responses from class.
2	3.15 – 4.58 T explains task to pairs [TPs].	2.02 – 4.53 T begins demonstrating and talking out loud how to begin writing.	4.17 – 7.15 T conferencing with Jack.
3	4.58 – 6.20 TPs share character description.	4.53 – 6.50 T continues writing and thinking out loud (dreamt/dreamed).	7.15 – 8.51 T conferencing with Karne.
4	6.20 – 7.30 S and T share descriptors for characterisation (class).	6.50 – 9.00 T introduces new additional goal to include setting in the introduction.	8.51 – 10.22 T conferencing with Elliot.
5	7.30 – 15.06 T and S discusses Aslan's 3 features with class.	9.00 – 10.26 TPs share introductory sentences.	10.22 – 12.22 T conferencing with Laura.
6	15.06 – 17.55 T uses scientist example to mediate discussion.	10.26 – 13.10 T asks class to share introductory sentences.	12.22 – 15.25 T conferencing with Elliot.
7	17.55 – 21.15 TPs co-construct description of scientist (pairs).	13.10 – 14.45 T clarifies how to start writing by introducing character.	
8	21.15 – 28.28 T maps scientist's characteristics with class.	14.45 – 18.00 T works alongside 4 students to ensure understanding.	
9	28.28 – 31.50 T revisits scientist example to focus on 'feelings' with class.		
10	31.50 – 35.50 Task: Pairs to select picture & mind-map character's features.		

In terms of reporting on the analysis of each Teaching Session, the teaching context is first established and the writing goal or purpose is identified. For each Teaching Move the sub-goals are also stated. When relevant the scaffolding interaction is elaborated on and several Moves are highlighted for detailed discussion and are interpreted according to the characteristics of the framework (PSFW).

These vignettes of analysed discourse (described and interpreted) have the purpose of telling a story and illustrating an interpretive point. Each “prompts certain kinds of understanding - as you try to frame a story and figure out critical issues, vignettes can help show you where you are analytically” (Graue & Walshe, 1998, p. 221). The conversational extracts highlight the complexity of teaching and learning interactions and are set out as tables. Photographed images of classroom activity or students’ writing have been included for further explanation of Kat’s story of teaching writing. For ease of referencing and interpretation the scaffolding characteristics are italicised.

## **7.2 Kat’s Teaching Sessions: Scaffolding**

The description, analysis and interpretation that follow are set out according to three progressive Teaching Sessions but they are not consecutive. Kat continued with the writing, which I did not observe, after Session One, after Session Two and after Session Three when she finally published their work in books.

### **7.2.1. Teaching Session One**

In Teaching Session One each move is contextualised and a close analysis of Moves 4, 5, 8 and 10 is provided to demonstrate teacher-students’ scaffolding interactions. A focus on Moves 3 and 7 demonstrates peer interactions.

**MOVE 1: Time: 0 – 1.17 minutes.** Kat sits on a chair in front of the class who are sitting on the mat facing her. As a reward, one child is invited to sit on a chair at the back of the room. In the first Teaching Move an enthusiastic Kat introduces the topic and purpose of the unit of work. The overall writing task is designed with *goals* oriented to *connect* to students' *prior knowledge* of characters in storybooks. Kat refers to the previous week's discussion on the literary characters they had enjoyed. She *leans forward, and critically marks* key points *establishing the purpose* as she explains to the students:

Last week we were writing stories and retelling stories from books... and we were thinking about the writer and illustrator how they had worked together to make a picture for us, hadn't we? That's what we were doing. This week for our writing, we're going to be looking at and writing about characters...(video script 1)

The students *respond with a buzz of engaged excitement* as Kat *recaps* on characters they talked about earlier in the morning. The students *participate* by *joining in, and naming* characters. Kat then focuses on a *sub-goal* for Teaching Session One. She is working in the pre-write or rehearsal phase of process writing (Flower & Hayes, 1981; Graves, 1983; Smith & Elley, 1997) developing students' content knowledge and conceptual understandings of characterisation by providing a cognitive framework that will scaffold successful writing.

**MOVE 2: Time 3.12 – 4.58.** Kat sets up a paired task, asking the children to either *think about* the character they talked about that morning or to choose a character from one of the books displayed. She *connects* to earlier reading experiences: "you might think of some stories," and *elaborated providing an example*, "I was thinking of *The Magician's Nephew* and the characters in there." The children were directed to sit facing each other knee-to-knee, spread around the mat space and given the instruction: "Right, okay number ones (in the TP partnership), think

about everything you can about your character” (video script S1). Kat’s *goal* sets the students up to dialogue and describe a character.

**MOVE 3: Time 4.58 - 6.20.** All of the children are *buzzing*, noisily chatting and *dialoguing* about book characters. This allowed me, the researcher, to focus on two research participant children, Elliot and Karne (who perform in the lowest quartile for writing achievement). I was interested in their cognitive and social engagement and their comprehension of the task. I asked if I could listen in. This was their dialogue:

Karne: Maybe we could make up like magic trees that maybe can walk and they can talk... they can make magic.

Elliot: Yeah, like the magic faraway tree, and we could make a rainbow that goes over the world.

Karne: And we could find gold.

Elliot: And maybe we could have something about the magician’s nephew as well and then we give them...

Karne: Wings that make you fly.

Elliot: Yeah.

Karne: But you run out of gas... And like maybe we could make up the jet packs that can last forever.

Elliot: Yeah, and maybe there might be a lolly world like Candy Land...

### ***Interpretation and discussion***

Kat *handed over* the task and her scaffolds were *faded* at this point for the students to each share a *telling* of their character. While it is evident that these two boys were *engrossed* as they *shared ideas* and *co-constructed* narrative elements of setting and action, they were not, however, focused on the teacher’s *goal* of describing a character as requested. Although these two students continued *interacting socially* to a fantasy storyline, Karne and Elliot *participated* but meandered from the task goal, showing that they did not really comprehend or cognitively engage with the purpose. The three elements of scaffolding - designed task, teacher mediation and student response - failed to connect and work as a



synergy. There was social engagement but limited “meeting of minds” for Karne and Elliot.

**MOVE 4: Time: 6.20 - 7.30.** Kat gathers the pairs back together as a whole class. She sits on a chair and *directly invites* children to contribute; *inviting them by name* to share with the group about the character they discussed. When Karne and Elliot are invited, Karne happily explains: “Well, we were thinking of the land cause you’ve got to have some land for the characters as well”. Elliot added, “And we’d go lots of different places you know, and they use magical wings and they run out of gas.”

### *Interpretation and discussion*

Kat didn’t interpret this as a “critical teaching moment” (Myhill & Warren, 2005) and probe more deeply to determine which character they were talking about. Rather, she *affirmed* their response and *redirected* their thinking by commenting: “So you were thinking of the character and the setting, the place where they would be. You are taking it one stage further. Well done!” (video script S1). Kat affirmed their effort but did not use their lack of focus (on character description) as a teaching moment. This dialogue was reported on because Kat reconnected to this conversation in Teaching Session Two.

**MOVE 5: Time: 7.30 - 15.06.** This seven-minute scaffolding interaction was complex and multilayered. It was selected for deeper analysis because of the varied and complex interactions. Kat introduces *the sub-goal* by *gesturing* to the news book on the A-frame, *critically marking* key features, written up as appearance, behaviour and feelings. The students are initially *invited to participate* and *make connections* with the characters they had just discussed, a character of their own choice. Kat wants her students to identify the three characteristics. Kat, however, finds she

needs to *repeat* her *telling* in response to a student's *question* asking for *clarification of vocabulary meaning*.

Kat: Great, okay, I have put up three headings because when we are thinking about characters, and we are trying to make a picture, a painted picture in our mind about this, we need to think about them in three different ways. [Kat points to the chart, where the headings to describe a character are recorded as Appearance, Behaviour and Feelings.] How could you describe your character that you were thinking about, what was something about the appearance? How did they look?

Jack: What does appearance mean?

Kat: Appearance? What they looked like.

Kat realises that she needs to *recalibrate, adjust* and *extend* the range of scaffolding based on a student's lack of understanding. Also in recognising that the students want to talk about Aslan, a character from *The Chronicles of Narnia*, a story they had just listened to, Kat built this into her *contingency response*. She *encourages dialogic interactions*, asking them to describe the physical appearance of Aslan. Kat finds she needs to *adjust* the scaffolding and further *connect* to children's *prior experiences* by *accommodating* their avid interest in the lion character.

The dialogue in Table 16 demonstrates how Kat was able to *adjust, re-connect, engage* and *challenge* students' thinking *more deeply* in three ways.

- She used *dialogue*, by *prompting, and querying*, first by asking the students to cognitively *visualise* an image of the character Aslan.
- Second, she asked them to *transfer* their understanding of a character and use *specific* and *contextualised language* to describe Aslan's appearance.
- Third, Kat eventually captured *deeper learning* by allowing the children to use *gesture* and to *physically act out* the character and role-play.

The following script is an example of the first two instances and demonstrates *recalibration* accommodating students' ability to *visualise* and specifically use *descriptive vocabulary* relating to a character.

**Table 16: Kat readjusts task for deeper learning.**

Description: Co-constructing a character description	Interpretation: Multiple scaffolding for deeper learning
Kat: Tell me about Aslan.	Kat <i>invites more information</i> in relation to Aslan's appearance.
Student: Cause he's cool and he's also a lion.	S responds by <i>labelling</i> the lion, but a vague descriptor is used.
Kat: He's a lion, now you are saying he's cool, that's not really telling me what he's looking like. Let's think about Aslan the lion, let's build up a picture in our mind... if we wanted to think... If there was a person, who had never seen a lion, and they were wanting to build up a picture of him in their mind, what would we say about Aslan?	Kat <i>redirects</i> and <i>prompts</i> for more <i>specific language</i> description relating to <i>the goal</i> .  She offers a <i>model, visualisation, picture in your mind</i> , as a scaffold and <i>challenges</i> the students to take on a perspective of not knowing what a lion looks like.
Laura: Maybe he looks mysterious?	L. <i>participates</i> with an appropriate descriptor.
Kat: Mysterious, I like that.  So he's got a look in his eye and you are not quite sure what he is thinking, like this? [Kat leans forward with appropriate facial expressions added].	Kat <i>affirms, repeats</i> child's response.  Kat adds by <i>elaborating</i> on word meaning through <i>dialogue and gesture</i> .
Laura: He's got a big furry thing around his head.	L. <i>adds descriptive</i> information of appearance.
Kat: So he's got a big shaggy mane?  [Holds hands around head making a shape] Right?	Kat <i>clarifies</i> descriptor and <i>labels</i> mane.  She begins to <i>readjust</i> scaffold design and <i>model through gesture</i> and <i>stance</i> to <i>build more detail</i> of specific language description.
Karne: He's magic.	K. <i>adds</i> a quality but not an appearance descriptor.
Kat: How can you tell he is magic by looking at him? Or if I saw him...  How could I tell he was magic, by his appearance, by looking at him?  Josh?	Kat <i>prompts for more</i> information on appearance focusing on the goal through <i>open questioning</i> .  Ss. have hands up. Kat <i>invites</i> a child to contribute.
Josh: I know Aslan the lion is magic because the animals that are frozen... he can unfreeze them. [He waves his hands around.]	J. <i>offers an</i> action or behaviour related to Aslan, not quite "meeting of minds".

<p>Kat: Okay so we also, we've started to talk about how he behaves, he behaves in a magical way, and it sounds as though he is rather kind and caring. Great.</p>	<p>Kat <i>affirms</i> his contribution and <i>critically marks</i> that the descriptor is about how Aslan behaves (second feature).</p>
<p>Karne: I know why he looks sort of magicky because not all lions have their fur all sort of clean and sparkly.</p>	<p>K. <i>clearly comprehends</i> and relates Aslan's magic to a <i>description of</i> physical appearance.</p>
<p>Kat: Oh he's sparkly, and that gives you the feeling that he is magical.</p> <p>So I am getting a picture of this great proud looking animal, he's mysterious, so he's looking, his eyes have got a faraway look, and he's magical and he's got his big thick hot furry collar, that Laura talked about, round his neck and it is soft and looks brushed and drawn out and he's magical, so it's looking glittery and sparkly. [Kat acts out as she describes].</p> <p>Have you got that picture?</p>	<p>Kat affirms and repeats the phrase.</p> <p>Links back to <i>goal</i> of building a picture with words.</p> <p>Kat provides a <i>meta-comment</i> by <i>synthesising and summarising</i> students' participatory responses.</p> <p>She also <i>adds descriptive</i> phrases <i>gestures</i> and facial expressions as she speaks.</p> <p>Kat <i>invites</i> children into visual image they have <i>co-constructed</i> (through dialogue and role play), extending language acquisition.</p> <p>Kat <i>connects</i> to students and <i>checks</i> for their understanding.</p>

In this instance, language phrases and vocabulary meanings were *clarified, and elaborated on* in terms of the character's physical appearance, action or behaviours. For example when Laura *added*, "He's got a big furry thing around his head, Kat clarified "thing" by *telling* her it is a mane and *added* to her vocabulary by *introducing* the word "shaggy". Furthermore, when Kat set up the task of *visualisation* and talked about the character Aslan, she *synthesised and summarised* with a *meta-comment* providing *a model* but also *connected* to her *goal* of building a picture of the character in their minds. Kat wanted the students to *transfer* visual images to their writing. Kat also *invited* further comments. She did this three times in Move 5, building a community of practice, of inclusion and *acknowledgment of individuals' contributions*.

In the third instance, when Kat *adjusted* the scaffolding and *connected* to children's *prior experiences*, she allowed the children to *act out* the character through role-play. Even at this point, the task was *adjusted*

several times, enabling Kat to also *challenge students' understandings* and describe the features of Aslan's behaviour through action and dialogue. Kat first asked: "Please tell me how your Aslan walks? Just close your eyes and get that picture in your mind, how does your Aslan walk?" (Several children got up on all fours). Kat at this point responded to the unexpected physical activity with a firm *request and repeated*: "No, tell me with words." However, recognising the learning potential in the role-play she then rethought her decision and *accepted the student' initiated actions*; she *adjusted and recalibrated, redesigned the task to accommodate the students' physical role-play*. See Table 17.

**Table 17: Redesigning the task incorporating other semiotic systems.**

Description: Students acting out the characteristics of Aslan	Interpretation: Scaffolding for further understanding
Kat: Okay Elliot, I'm wondering does he walk light or heavy?	Kat <i>challenges</i> his thinking and ability to <i>visualise</i> .
Elliot: He walks quite heavy... and light.	E. <i>acts out, compares</i> possibilities but struggles to verbalise.
Kat: How does your Aslan walk, Laura? [The child acts out the walk.] Oh! Laura's Aslan walks quite differently, her Aslan walks on tippy toes. Show us again.[Several children join in.]  And his ears, he is looking around; now he is looking around quite proudly.  Why is he looking around so proudly?	Another child is <i>invited</i> to contribute. Kat then <i>redesigns</i> the task and <i>encourages</i> acting. She <i>makes a comparison</i> for the children, <i>marks</i> the learning by asking for a <i>repeat</i> . She then <i>adds words</i> to describe appearance and actions role played.  Kat <i>challenges</i> thinking with an <i>open question</i> .
Laura: He's King of Narnia.	L. obviously enjoyed Narnia Chronicles and <i>adds a reason</i> .
Kat: King of Narnia so he's looking like the king.  Ah! How does your Aslan sit? Sit like your Aslan sits [directing this to everyone].  How would you say your Aslan sits, Karne?	Kat <i>affirms</i> and <i>rephrases</i> using comparative language 'looks like'...  Kat <i>invites</i> then <i>tells</i> all students to go into role.  Kat notices Karne sitting tall and <i>invites</i> him to share.

Karne: Like this! [Karne is sitting tall and proud with a straight back and chin up. (see Figure 7).]	K. enthusiastically <i>models</i> and <i>shows off</i> his Aslan sitting tall.
Kat: You are doing it beautifully. Other people, let's give some words about how Karne's Aslan's is sitting.	Kat <i>affirms</i> the in role behaviour and <i>encourages</i> children to <i>add words to describe</i> the physical activity.
Kat: How can we tell how he is feeling from the way he is sitting?	Kat <i>probes</i> for words and <i>critically marks</i> the third feature of the task – feelings.
Karne: Proud.	Karne <i>comprehends</i> this concept and <i>participates</i> .

In this Move the teacher mediated *deeper learning* by reconsidering her expectations of the students' responses and *allowed the students to explore* the features of Aslan's character by engaging in different *semiotic systems* through role-play and specific and descriptive talk describing Aslan in relation to how a student modelled Aslan sitting proudly (see Figure 7).



Figure 7: Karne demonstrating how Aslan would proudly sit.

### *Interpretation and discussion*

Kat's intention was to *invite* students to talk about the characteristics of a character in terms of the *three marked features*. As the teacher listened to the responses, she realised that the children didn't quite understand how to talk specifically about physical appearance, from either a conceptual or

a linguistic perspective. Kat *responded contingently* and *adjusted* her task five times in this move, employing a *synergy of multiple scaffolds*.

- In the first *adjustment* she captured a common meaningful experience that the students introduced based on the character Aslan, which created a shared understanding.
- The second *adjustment* to the task came when she asked the students to *visualise* by taking the perspective of someone who doesn't know what Aslan looks like.
- A third *adjustment* was to use oral language; words and phrases to *describe in detail* his appearance. Kat was not prepared to accept vague colloquial descriptors (cool) and *redirected* the discussion *prompting for specific use* of descriptive language to describe features of the lion. The students were encouraged to *add on* to each other's ideas to build an oral description of Aslan's physical appearance. Kat then grounded the *negotiated* dialogue by making a summary, a *meta-comment* providing a *model* of how to "build a picture in your mind". Kat *demonstrated* how to use words to describe a character.
- The fourth *adjustment* came after telling the students to use words not actions when Elliot and others *acted out* Aslan's movements. Kat's response was to *readjust* the task to incorporate the students' *interest* to *act out* Aslan's behaviours (*child initiated*). In fact, Kat *designed* a new component for the lesson. This involved the students' engagement with a task that employed *another semiotic system* to communicate meanings.
- Kat initiated a fifth *adjustment* to the scaffolding interaction. When Karne demonstrated "sitting proudly," she *requested*, "Let's give some words about how Karne's Aslan is sitting!" An *adjustment* was made, *challenging* students to observe and come up with words to describe a *child modelling* how Aslan sat proudly by using *non-verbal language* to *act out* a character.

At this point in the teaching (S1,M5) no writing had been completed. The intention of the prewriting activities was to motivate and to tap into children's *prior experiences* to build ideas, phrases and vocabulary to support their writing (Calkins, 1991; Ministry of Education, 1996b). It was, however, interesting that the unplanned teaching interactions created a *contingency response*, and were very powerful, involving *kinaesthetic activity* along with *dialogue*. The students' *participatory engagement*, their voice and *interests* were recognised and *acknowledged*. The scaffolding interactions enabled the students and teacher to *negotiate* and *co-construct* their own understanding of a character description. In the attempt to reach common understandings, Kat's framework structured the interactive dialogue around three features of appearance, actions and feelings. How this was done varied as Kat *readjusted* the task activity and employed *multiple scaffolds*.

**MOVE 6: Time 15.06 - 17.45.** Kat's *goal* is to further *consolidate* and scaffold the children's understanding of a character description based on the three guiding features. Kat provides another resource intended to mediate the "designed in" task; she provides *another model*, using an available resource by reading a description of a flustered scientist. She introduces the task and *goal* in the following way:

We have been talking about characters you know fairly well, now I'm going to read you a little... some writing about a character. And I want you to think as I read, about the picture you make in your mind about his appearance... about what he looks like, about his behaviour, what does he do? And how does he feel? [she pointed to board with the headings]... Is he a kind feeling person? (video script 1)

This *planned task* required some *redirection* on Kat's part. The children had been engaged in this task for nearly eighteen minutes and were fidgety. One child wanted to continue talking about Aslan. However, Kat decided to persevere and read the character description of the scientist. In



retrospect (in conversation with the researcher) Kat said that she could have asked the students to brainstorm Aslan's features either as a class or in pairs rather than introduce a new and different task.

**MOVE 7: Time 17.55 – 21.15.** Kat realises that the students need to think and talk more about the example, in particular the character's feelings. She decides to *encourage greater student participation* in the task and develop a more focused discussion by revisiting the scientist description. Kat asks the children to *dialogue* with their TPs (talk partners), *telling* them to "talk about the picture that you have in your mind about the scientist" (video script 1). This time, I listen to Jack and Laura (able writers) who *negotiated* a description of the scientist. The following quote demonstrates the students' abilities to *explore and challenge* each other's ideas. In this quotation Jack *challenges* one of Laura's descriptors:

Laura: His coat buttons might be really small 'cause they're unbuttoned.

Jack: She didn't say it was unbuttoned; it was wrongly buttoned.

### ***Interpretation and discussion***

The task was *handed over* and the children were given the independence to *co-construct* a description of scientist's characteristics. These two students were *focused* on the task and *negotiated* their oral description. As peers and able writers in this community of practice, they felt comfortable enough to *critique* each other's descriptions for greater accuracy.

**MOVE 8: Time: 21.15 – 28.28.** In this move, Kat's *goals* are to employ a strategy to quickly record the class's understanding of the scientist's characteristics, and to *demonstrate* how to record key ideas in relation to appearance, behaviour and feelings.

Kat begins this episode standing beside the A-frame and stating the lesson *purpose*: “Okay, now we want to focus the learning and do a very quick brainstorm ....Now, we are very quickly thinking about the scientist, we could give him a name” (video script 1). This is discussed, and Professor Wacky is the name agreed on. Kat continues: “People were building up other information about how their character looked, how he behaved and what his feelings were” [again *connecting* to earlier learning by pointing to the chart].

Kat’s teaching results in two outcomes that she had to address. First, Kat’s quick brainstorming strategy did not work as she had anticipated. She intended to hand over the decisions by inviting Elliot to begin. She explains to him: “I am going to start with you and when you’ve shared your idea you find someone, not people who say me, me, me, but just someone by you and then I don’t have to keep looking around” (video script 1). Elliot suggests the scientist was wearing a beanie on his head. He then finds it difficult to invite or choose someone else to continue adding information. Kat *intervenes, adjusts the task requirements* and takes back the control.

Second, the students continue to just describe the scientist’s physical appearance rather than behaviours or feelings. The students contribute by *adding detail* about the scientist – that his “hair sticks up high,” “his coat buttons are incorrectly done up” and “he has toast in his top pocket”. However, some students meander into different areas of thinking, describing the scientist as lazy and claiming, “he needs a lazy-boy” and “he needs a good sleep because of all his thinking.” Kat *redirects* the conversation.

### *Interpretation and discussion*

This move demonstrated Kat's ability to tune in to her students, *assess* their understanding and their focus on the task, and *respond contingently* by *adjusting her goals*. There were two aspects here that Kat mediated more closely.

- First, Kat's brainstorming strategy where one child made a suggestion and then *invited* another to add to the brainstorm was dropped. It slowed down the recording process and Elliot couldn't maintain the conversational dialogue as hoped. Kat took back control and mediated to keep the momentum.
- The second aspect that Kat recognised was that students required further *explanation* of how to use specific vocabulary to describe all aspects of the character. They were struggling to differentiate between the three features.

On several occasions, during this Move, Kat *co-constructed* understandings with the students by *summarising* and clarifying with *meta-comments*. For example, she said: "So, that tells us he was a bit of a sloppy dresser and that he didn't care too much." Another example was when they *explored* the concept of the scientist being distracted.

As well, Kat added humour, using her own *personalised* experiences to help students understand the word "distracted" by *telling* the children the scientist was passionate about science – to the point of distraction.

Kat: Why do you think he had a forgotten piece of toast in his pocket?

Laura: Because he got distracted and forgot about it.

Kat: Ah, and you know I am the world's worst, aren't I? I'm sometimes in the middle of doing something and then someone will come to me and I will get involved and I put something down and then I forget where I had put it.

Elliot: And then you forget where you put it and you've forgotten it.

Kat: So we know that he [the scientist] got distracted, do you think?

Class: Yeah!

Kat: Ah, do you think that's my problem when I get distracted? [Lots of laughter]... And also it also tells me that he's a scientist, he's passionate, he's absolutely keen about what he's doing and it was far more important to be doing what he was doing than to be eating his toast.

Both Elliot and Laura *joined in* with Kat, both at a personal level and in their understanding of the meaning of "distracted".

**MOVE 9: Time: 28.28 – 31.50.** In this move Kat revisits her *goal*, creating a *contingency response*, because she realises feelings were still not completely understood by the students. She walks back to her chair, picks up the script and says: "Now I'm going to read one more time and I want us just to think, because they don't tell us about his feelings, but I want you to pick up on his feelings" (video script 1). She *narrows the focus*, *adding constraints* and *critically marks* her expectations by identifying one aspect, feelings, explaining that the feelings may not actually be stated because inferential thinking is required. Furthermore, Kat provides an *example* and *invited* a response:

I am going to share one of my ideas to begin with, one thing I thought was that he was a kind person, I think he has kind feelings and I got the idea by the way he felt about the rat. Did you have any ideas?

Kat *probed* with *open-ended questions*, encouraging the children to think about how the scientist felt about things. From the discussion the students decided the scientist was happy doing his work, was not bothered about rats, showing he was tolerant, and that he got excited doing his experiments. Their understanding of the character's feelings was enhanced after Kat *probed*, *gave an example* and *narrowed* the task focus by *adding in constraints*.

**MOVE 10: Time 31.50 – 35.40.** At this point Kat wants the students to *transfer* their learning so she introduces another “designed in” task. Kat wants the students to work with their partner. She *tells* them to select a picture image of a character from those that she had placed on the floor. The students are then *told* to take a template (see students’ examples in Figures 9, 12, 15, 18) and then go away to a table and brainstorm the characteristics of the person in their selected picture. Kat *tells* the pairs to first “talk about the appearance, what your character looks like, how you think your character would behave and what feelings your character would have.” She *connects* to previous learning and peer interactions.

Kat: You are going to work with a buddy because last week when we did that it worked very successfully and you can share. You are going to have a paper each [template for brainstorming], and you probably won’t get it completed, so I am going to give you, or maybe let you choose, a picture of a character.

However, there are mumbblings, protests and requests to write about characters already known. Rather than transfer their thinking to build new cognitive frameworks of another character, Laura *asks*: “Can we do the same character we talked about before?” And another child says, “I want to write about...” During this episode, Kat recognises the students’ desire for ownership and to develop their own writing content; she *renegotiates, adjusts* and completely *hands over* the *designing of the task*, first *checking* with the class that they understand the new task requirements.

Kat: Some of you have got your own character in your head. Who’s got their own character in their head? [Hands go up]. Great, and you have got ideas about their appearance. Check? [Requesting confirmation from students and *giving a thumbs up*]  
Class: Yes! [Thumbs up]  
Kat: Behaviour? Check?  
Class: Yes! [Thumbs up]  
Kat: Feelings? Check?  
Class: Yes! [Thumbs up]  
Kat: You have got your own character, but you need to think, and you might have to make yourself close your eyes and even

perhaps go for a little walk like that character around the room, you might just have to sit and let that character soak into your body. Right, just have a little soak into your body before you come to get your paper. ...Right, if you know where you are going, come and get your paper (template).

### *Interpretation and discussion*

Kat's "designed in" task requesting students to work in pairs and co-construct an initial plan or mind-map lacked *participatory engagement* (cognitive and emotional) from the students. They demonstrated *concern and displeasure* and wanted to *renegotiate* the task so that they could write from what they knew, from *prior literary experiences*. A major shift in power happened here as Kat willingly *listened and reshaped* the task *acknowledging the students' requests*. The students *initiated change* and *requested having a say in redesigning the task*. Kat accepted this and *reconnected with* the students by completely *handing over the design of the task* to the students.

In addition, Kat *recognised* the success of earlier learning, when the students engaged with *multiple sensory experiences* – kinaesthetically, visually and linguistically – when describing Aslan. Kat thus encouraged the students to *physically walk* or move like the character they were going to write about. She recreated scaffolding situations, *making connections* that had *earlier supported* the students' learning. She told the students to "close your eyes and even perhaps go for a little walk like that character" (video script 1).

When the students were seated at their desks and were writing, Kat stood back and watched them. She was clearly excited and said: "They were right on their own path, weren't they?" I whispered that she had gone with the "teachable moment." Kat replied, "And you've got to let

them follow their own path ... if it's the right time" (conversation with Kat).

Kat's words reinforced those of Cazden (2001), who recognised that successful scaffolding should be "well timed" and "well tuned". But Kat had also allowed the young writers to *redesign*, and not just participate, but own their learning.

### **7.2.2 Teaching: Session Two**

During my absence of one day, the teacher and students had continued to work on their own mind-maps. To ensure that the students understood mapping the three characteristics of appearance, behaviour and feelings, Kat had read *The three legged cat* by Margaret Mahy (1993). As a class they co-constructed a mind-map based on Tom, the main character, who was a three-legged cat.

In Session Two, Moves 3 and 4 are described and interpreted in greater depth. They are discussed in terms of how the teacher renegotiated and readjusted the next task. Three new literacy moves were also added as a contingency response.

To begin this next lesson the children were again seated on the mat facing Kat as she unclipped the modelling book from the A-frame board. Kat's purpose for this lesson was to demonstrate to her class of Year 2 and Year 3 students how to take key words from a plan or semantic mind-map and write them into sentences. The task for the students would be to use their own mind-maps, already completed, to write a character description. The teaching process would involve using "available resources" for mediating learning. The picture book of *The three-legged cat*, a chart with the previously brainstormed words about Tom the cat, a teacher-made modelling book with learning goals

recorded, a news-book for today's writing demonstration and students' planning templates, were all used along with teacher dialogue and gesture to mediate and scaffold learning.

**MOVE 1: Time 00-2.02.** Kat introduces the writing purpose for this session by recording the *learning goals* in the modelling book, stating: "Today we're going to write about... I'll put the date." She records date and goals, then continues to talk and write. "I am learning to write a description about a character I know about." Kat *connects* to students' previous learning by stating, "Now I haven't got a plan like you did on your characters but this is sort of my plan about Tom because we brainstormed it yesterday and I recorded the words as we went " (video transcript 2).

When a child asked what a description was, Kat first *invited* the students to reply and then reiterated by *repeating* the definition with everyone chiming in: "Looks like, behaves and feels."

**MOVE 2: Time 2.02 - 4.53.** In this move Kat *explains the more specific lesson purpose*, stating: "We need to think about how to start off our writing." The lesson continues as Kat *demonstrates* by talking out loud, making cognitive decisions about what she wants to write. The children attempt to *participate*, *offering* eight suggestions for Kat to include in her description of Tom. Kat accepts only two of these. In Session Two, Kat is quite *focused on her goal* and her intention *to model her cognitive decisions*. In the following example she demonstrates selecting and ordering ideas.

Kat: I am going to write 'Tom was a'...

Class interjects: '...was a three-legged cat.'

Kat: I don't want to put about the three-legged cat yet, because I want to save that information a little bit further down in my description. I am going to put 'Tom was an old cat'.



Kat first included a *student-initiated* idea when she wanted to write about Tom's appearance. She accepted Katy's offering of "Tom is a tabby cat" and *showed* the class how to write and insert the word "tabby". Later on Kat accepted the adjective "hungry".

Further on Kat *demonstrates* how to vary sentence starters. She explains:

Kat: Now let me think, I have talked about his colour. [She turned, reread and wrote more, verbalising as she went]. She stated: 'Tom was an old tabby cat who lived with Mrs Dingle at number 7.' [She begins to start the next sentence]. 'Tom', no I can write, 'He only had three legs.' [Kat changes the sentence starter because she didn't want to begin with Tom twice].

While there were two instances of *co-constructing* the character description with the class, Kat remained focused on *showing how* the students could use words from the mind-map and how she made thoughtful *cognitive decisions* as she selected, ordered and shaped her writing.

**MOVE 3: Time 4.53 - 6.50.** During this sequence Kat continues to write for the children, *demonstrating* how she uses key words to construct her story, while also *acknowledging the ideas they contributed*. In this Move Kat reveals how she responded to the students' several confusions (*contingency response*) over the past tense of the word dreamt/dreamed, the American and English version (see Table 18).

**Table 18: Kat negotiates writing past tense**

Description: Kat's responds to students' concern	Interpretation: Kat's contingency response and negotiation
Kat: 'Tom was' ... oh, we can put, 'He was a sleepy cat' (writes on board then turns to talk to children to explain her thinking) ...because it was when he was sleepy, that was when he had his dreams and imaginations. (Kat continues reading aloud what she is writing), 'He was a sleepy cat who dreamt a lot'.	Kat <i>models</i> cognitive decision-making. <i>Connects</i> to descriptor in the story.
Students: (muttering) Dreamt a lot? Dreamt? Dreamed?	S. <i>responds to confusion</i> and misunderstanding of word use.
S: What is dreamt?	S. <i>questions</i> for meaning.
Kat: Dreamt a lot (repeats firmly). Now we are going to add...	Kat <i>repeated and affirmed</i> word. Kat wants to continue <i>modeling</i> writing.
S: (muttering over word). It doesn't make sense.	Student <i>verbalising</i> lack of sense making.
Kat: (realising confusion over word) Oh! Okay, there is a concern here. (She rereads and points to the words), Tom was always hungry, he was a sleepy cat, he dreamt a lot! (emphasises the word).  We can say he dreamed a lot or dreamt. We could change it to dreamed a lot (and she changes the word).	Kat recognises <i>lack of understanding</i> and rereads to explain by <i>clarifying</i> and <i>adding information</i> of two alternative ways to write past tense of word.  She <i>assesses</i> student understanding and <i>adjusts</i> to change her written text.

### ***Interpretation and discussion***

Kat eventually picked up on the students' concern when she verbalised and wrote down "dreamt". By assessing their comprehension of dreamed/dreamt, she *responded contingently*. Kat *clarified* by explaining the different ways of writing the past tense "dream" and then recognised that students struggled with "dreamt" and *made a change* to her written work to accommodate the students' understanding. Her modelling books also showed how to insert the word "tabby" as in Figure 8.

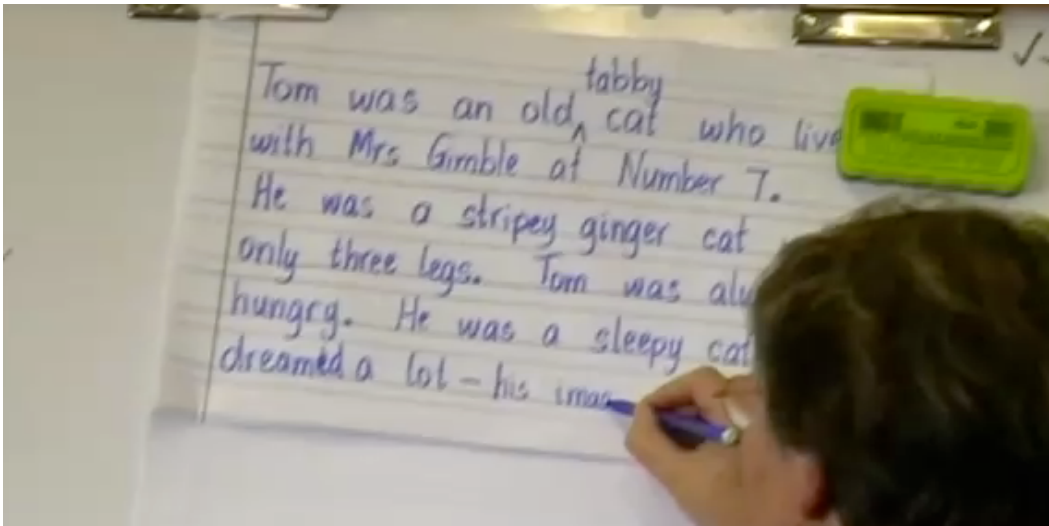


Figure 8: Kat demonstrating how to write a character description.

**MOVE 4: Time 6.50 – 7.30.** This move signifies the introduction of a *new and additional learning goal*, as Kat perceives a teaching opportunity to *extend* students' learning. When Kat has completed her writing demonstration she reread the paragraph out loud: "Tom was an old tabby cat who lived with Mrs Gimble at number seven..." but she fails to finish reading the whole text. Kat decides she wanted to *redesign the task* by *adding an additional learning goal*. She asks the students to think about their characters and place them in a "setting" as she had with Old Tom.

Her conversation continued (see Table 19) and demonstrates how Kat provides further scaffolding when she introduces new learning that was too challenging. It became evident that the additional goal was beyond some students' ZPD and challenged the class's shared understandings.

**Table 19: Introducing a character setting.**

Description: Putting the character in a setting	Interpretation: Making connections by closely scaffolding new learning
Kat: ...now in that first sentence we haven't talked about this much, but someone the other day said, ... I think it might have been Elliot or Karne, when we were talking, you said that we need to put the character somewhere, didn't you?	Kat introduces a new idea and <i>challenges students' thinking</i> by wanting <i>more information</i> when writing a character description.  Kat <i>re-connects</i> to lesson one as an example and <i>acknowledges the students' earlier thinking</i> .

<p>Elliot and Karne: Yeah we both did.</p>	<p>The boys <i>affirm</i> that it was their response.</p>
<p>Kat: When you were doing that, putting them in fields or something, we have also let the reader know where Tom lives, that is we have given him a setting.</p> <p>Now, we didn't talk about that with your planning and when you go back to your planning sheet, you might need to think of an introduction and a setting, because we're starting off letting the people know 'who' Tom is [points to her written work].</p>	<p>Kat <i>tells</i> how the reader is more informed by <i>connecting</i> a character to a setting.</p> <p>Kat turned to point out in the Old Tom text and alongside her first sentence writes 'the introduction shows the setting' on the chart. <i>She redesigns</i> by <i>adjusting the writing goal</i></p> <p>Kat makes a <i>connection</i> to her writing plan.</p> <p>And scaffolding is <i>readjusted</i> to include new learning</p>
<p>Kat: So - if you are writing about Rainbow Fish, what could we say about Rainbow Fish for an introduction?</p> <p>S: They are colourful?</p> <p>Kat: No, We are thinking of where he lives and who with... (emphasises) Rainbow Fish lives... (Kat invites students to complete the sentence.)</p> <p>Students: Under the sea.</p> <p>Kat: Rainbow fish lives under the sea with his friends. Right?</p>	<p>Kat provides <i>an example</i> of a book character and <i>invites</i> a response.</p> <p>S. <i>describes</i>, but doesn't engage with question purpose.</p> <p>Kat <i>redirects</i> by <i>telling</i> them the answer is not correct and then <i>repeats the purpose</i> and scaffolds more closely by providing another <i>prompt</i>, and <i>adding constraints</i> with a starter sentence for them to finish.</p> <p>All students complete the sentence in unison, <i>reconnecting with the concept of setting</i> (Is this bootstrapping?)</p> <p>Kat <i>summarises</i> in sentence form providing a <i>model</i>.</p>

### ***Interpretation and discussion***

In this example Kat seized a teaching opportunity *to add* to students' learning, but in doing so took a risk when deviating from her original plan by teaching added and new information. Kat *linked back* to Session Two, Move 2 by referring to "how we start off." This demonstration, however, did not go smoothly, even though Kat *mediated a range of scaffolds* by:

- *connecting* to her Old Tom *example*;

- *critically marking* new learning about placing the character in a setting by writing “setting” beside the first sentence of her Old Tom text;
- *explicitly modelling, by inviting* the children to orally share the setting for their characters;
- scaffolding even *more tightly* with *added constraints*, providing sentence starters as *prompts*.

The students struggled to understand this new goal. There was no “meeting of minds” evident at this point, even though Kat repeatedly asked the children to include a place or setting in the introduction. The scaffold was *recalibrated* with a *predictive prompt* and a *model* of the answer. At this point, I was wondering: Is this bootstrapping? Or is it an example of a teacher recognising contingency needs and adjusting with constraints and narrowing the scaffold?

Kat’s decision to *adjust* the task *prompted* considerable dialogue involving *further invitations* for the children to provide examples. But, more importantly, it *changed* Kat’s teaching plan to include a further three Moves; Moves Five, Six and Seven were initiated. These were not part of Kat’s intention or “designed in” task for the day’s lesson.

**MOVE 5: Time 9.00 - 10. 36.** This is a short sharp move. The *goal* here was for the students to work with their TP (talking partner) and revisit their understanding of putting the character in a setting as part of the introductory statement. I listen to Laura and Jack who again were engaged and on task. While Jack *tells* his setting he *adds in* some action regarding Danny Phantom.

Jack: Mine’s Danny Phantom, he lives in a big hotel and there is a big room at the top and he has lots of signals and things like that. He catches ghosts and puts them in a ghosting.

Laura: Mine's Winnie the Pooh, and Winnie the Pooh lives in a little hole, and...

Jack: (takes over) No, it goes like this, he lives in a little hole in the tree!

Laura: He lives in a hole in the tree and he likes honey and he is really fat.

### *Interpretation and discussion*

These two students were able to finally include a setting as part of the character description. Jack *added detail* to Laura's description of place.

While both children were *focused on the goal*, Jack dominated and *added* to Laura's response. She was not fazed or put out; rather, she *readjusted* by accepting the added phrase and continued.

**MOVE 6: Time 10.36 -13.10.** The students are back on the mat and Kat is seated at the front. This Move presents four opportunities for Kat to check and *assess* if the students understand how to write their introduction to include a setting for the character. In the first instance Kat specifically *invites students* to: "tell me your opening sentence for your character description" (video script two). She *invites* Laura, who appears reticent to share, even though Laura was able to include the setting and *tell* it to her partner, so Kat *co-constructs* by inviting the students to help complete the sentence, asking: "Shall we help her? ... Pooh Bear is a friendly bear who lives in the woods." Kat *assesses understanding* and checks in with four more children. Two of these children are clear with their first sentence beginnings. However, two others need extra prompting.

**MOVE 7: 13.10 - 14.45.** In the following interaction, Kat challenges the students by *checking* that they comprehend the task before sending them off to write. She asks: "Are we going to be writing about an adventure? Are we going to be writing about why we like this character?" The class responds appropriately with a "No!" and Kat *invites* Sam to confirm the

task: “What are we going to be writing about Sam?” Kat follows on with a *meta-comment* of what was required. Kat *adds* that writing is about selecting and shaping words for a purpose emphasising the cognitive writing processes of drafting a character description. She says:

...just a little bit about the setting, what they look like, how they behave, and about their feelings. [Points to the chart] Notice when I wrote about Tom those were my words and I didn't just go and write all the words, I picked them and then made them into sentences. Okay?

And finally, Kat asks the children to *confirm* again their comprehension of the task by turning to a partner and “Say your opening sentence, then you are ready to write.”

### *Interpretation and discussion*

In Move 4 Kat had introduced a *new additional goal* that challenged students' cognitive understanding of the task. A range of *multiple scaffolds* was employed to scaffold students' learning across the next three Moves.

- Kat provided an opportunity for the students to *share their* introduction with a friend in Move 5, allowing students to support each other by providing a *model* of their learning.
- In Move 6 she *assessed* students' understanding by requesting them to share. However, only two of the four children had understood the task requirement.
- In Move 7, Kat scaffolded four interactions as she *checked their understanding again* and then *invited* a child to confirm the task before she scaffolded further by providing a *meta-comment*.
- And then, finally, the children *tell* their first sentence to each other.

So, in spite of the *multiple range of scaffolds* and opportunities to revisit the concept of setting, transfer of learning or shared understanding with the teacher did not become evident until the children completed their own writing.

**MOVE 8: Time 14.43 – 20.15.** The students are then sent off to write independently. This next Move opened with the students at their desks. Kat is standing behind Elliot, Jack is to Elliot’s left and Laura and Karne are sitting opposite. Kat is checking that the students are setting out their books correctly, starting the writing on a new page with their plans beside them. Kat walks around all students having a quick chat about their starting sentence. She pauses beside Elliot. Elliot struggles to stay focused, to organise his thinking and encode his thoughts as written words. The following example, in Table 20, shows the beginning of Kat’s *close-up* scaffolding to help him organise his thoughts and write the introduction.

**Table 20: Kat begins to conference Elliot.**

Description: Kat supports Elliot with a teaching conference	Interpretation: Elliot requires focused prompts
<p>Kat: Start there okay? Now we are ready for action, Elliot. I am going to do the date for you so that speeds things up a bit. (Kat kneels down and writes the date knowing Elliot takes a long time to organise his thinking and begin writing down his words.)</p> <p>I want to know your first sentence, what’s your first sentence going to be?</p>	<p>Kat takes over setting out the date, demonstrating how well she knows Elliot as a writer and the difficulties he faces.</p> <p>Kat <i>prompts</i> for his first sentence, <i>connecting</i> to earlier discussion.</p>
<p>Elliot: Fry, uummm; Fry, mmmm; Fry gets into the future.</p>	<p>Elliot finds it difficult to describe a setting.</p>

***Teaching Session Two: Concluding points***

This teaching session took place in two distinct parts. First, Kat *demonstrated* to the class how to take a writing plan and build the key words into a written character description. She was very focused on *the goal* and made conscious decisions regarding how much participation she required from the students – when to accept students’ suggestions and when to ignore responses. Multiple learnings were demonstrated.



The teaching changed in Move 4 when halfway through the session Kat decided to *redesign the task*, asking students to include a setting in the introductory sentence. Because the students found this difficult, Kat *recalibrated* the scaffolding with a *range of multiple* supports adding in unplanned teaching Moves. Eventually she *added constraints* to the task and *narrowed the options* for response. For some children there was evidence of “a meeting of minds” in the “construction zone” on how to complete this part of the task; for others, such as Elliot, this was not the case.

### **7.2.3 Teaching: Session Three**

The class continued to work on their draft writing, referring to their plans to write their character description. I visited a day later to continue observing and videoing. This teaching session involved the class sharing their writing with each other and was followed by some teacher one-on-one conferencing. I have analysed two of the four student participants’ close-up interactions as exemplars of Kat scaffolding students with different learning needs, but have analysed all four students’ writing in the final section to demonstrate transfer of learning.

**MOVE 1: TIME 0.00 - 4.17.** In this session Kat’s aim is to read out examples of the students’ writing completed so far and *encourage* the class audience to listen and *respond* by *questioning* or making suggestions to the writer – a form of author’s chair (Graves & Hansen, 1983). Kat is sitting with the writing books open on her knee. The children are on the mat and Pam is standing beside the teacher. The interactions follow in this format:

**Table 21: Class responds to character studies.**

Description: Kat invites students to share and respond to each others descriptions	Interpretation: Kat scaffolds how to interact and respond to writing
Kat: Remember, we are painting a picture with words, see how well Pam has done with Piglet.	Kat <i>connects</i> back to Session One and Two. Uses Pam's work as <i>a model</i> . Kat <i>connects</i> to earlier teaching.
Kat: [reads] Piglet is a little pig and he is very small, he is pink and shy and he likes nuts, he is always very intelligent, he learns things quickly, and he is loving, and kind. Piglet is also cute and cuddly, he lives in a tree that is very tall, and his friends are Pooh, his very best friend, and Tiger, Owl, Eeyore, Roo and Kanga.	Kat reads Pam's description to the class as <i>an example</i> .
Kat: Is there some information? Is there a question you would like to ask Pam? Josh, is there something you would like to ask Pam that might help her to give more information to make the picture a little clearer? [Gestures to Pam and says] Speak to Pam.	Kat <i>invites</i> participation and <i>directs</i> students to interact.
Josh: Was there another friend?	J. Asks <i>a question</i> for clarity.
Karne: There was that bunny thing!	K. <i>added</i> information.
Kat: Oh so she has missed out one friend. All right! Now thinking about building up a picture of Piglet.	Kat <i>affirms</i> contributions and <i>redirects</i> to sub-goal.

There was some discussion about Rabbit and then Kat asked who else would like to share their writing. Karne offered his and proudly stood up the front. Like Pam, Karne had written his opening sentence to include a setting. Kat *affirmed* this and then *requested more information*.

Kat: Karne hasn't got very far on, but I want you to listen to his introduction, his beginning sentence and be ready to comment on that. (Kat emphasises the listening).

Kat reads: 'Danny Phantom is a ghost, he lived in a ghost world'. ... [and the next part he starts with] 'He is very...'. (Kat looks at Karne and touches his arm) What was the next part going to be?

Karne: He was very mysterious.

Kat: Was mysterious! And maybe you might need to tell us more information so that the reader knows why or how he shows he's mysterious.

The lesson changed direction here, shifting from a class focus to individual learners. In the next five moves in this teaching session Kat sat alongside individuals and conferenced, scaffolding accordingly. In Move 2 she conferenced with Jack, Move 3 with Karne, Move 4 with Elliot, Move 5 with Laura, and Move 6 back with Elliot again.

**MOVE 2: Time 4.17 – 7.15.** Kat spent three minutes with Jack and his draft writing (see Figure 10 and Table 22), discussing a character study on Danny Phantom, a Futurama cartoon character. The character Danny is a teenager who is able to go back in time and also into the future. He enters a ghost zone, through a portal. Danny becomes half ghost and fights to save the world from ghost attacks. The time shifts make it difficult for Jack to establish and write about the setting.

**Table 22: Kat’s conference with Jack.**

Description: Kat’s interactive dialogue	Interpretation: Kat scaffolds using multiple prompts
<p>Kat: A good start. Perhaps now ...look at your plan and see where you are okay? [Kat reads] Good. You’ve introduced your Danny; he’s a teenager. ‘He goes out of bounds, he always fixes’.... I am wondering what this says? Is it ‘it?’ What does it mean?</p>	<p>Kat <i>affirms</i> first sentence. <i>Directs</i> J. to plan noting words crossed off. J comprehends task. Kat questions meaning of “it”.</p>
<p>Jack: Sometimes he goes off bridges and cliffs.</p>	<p>J <i>adds information.</i> ‘It,’ refers to Danny Phantom’s actions to fix the world.</p>
<p>Kat: Oh, okay, so you might need to add that extra information in, because as a reader I thought, that's the first thing I thought, I wonder what ‘ it ’is, okay?</p> <p>‘He is very, very, very secretive. I like your list of ‘very’s. Do you know what we need to do when we make a list like that? We put a comma after each one except for the last one! [Jack adds these in].</p> <p>All right and again I am wondering how he shows people that he’s secret, what does he do?</p>	<p>Kat <i>asks</i> for ideas to be added/written.</p> <p>Kat <i>acknowledges</i> use of repetition for effect.</p> <p>Kat <i>shows/teaches</i> use of commas.</p> <p>Kat <i>questions</i> for more information.</p>
<p>Jack: He doesn't show people that he is secret, ‘cause secret doesn't mean shyness.</p>	<p>J. attempts to <i>explain</i> his meaning of “secret”.</p>

Kat: Okay, so how does he keeps a secret?	Kat <i>questions</i> for clarity.
Jack: [He looks up and thinks] Aah, he goes where people aren't allowed and he changes into a ghost and he flies somewhere.	J. responds with <i>an example</i> .
Kat: Okay, does anyone ever see him as a ghost?	Kat <i>questions</i> for more information.
Jack: Yeah. [Nods his head for "yes"]	Gestures, yes.
Kat: So if people see him as a ghost maybe you need to tell what he looks like as a ghostly figure too. You've got quite a lot to think about, haven't you?	Kat <i>asks for more</i> information on appearance.
Jack: What do you mean like a ghostly figure?	J. <i>questions</i> Kat's meaning of words.
Karne: Like a ghostly phantom.	Kat <i>explains</i> by comparing.
Kat: So is he a tall slim figure or is he short...?	Kat <i>questioning</i> physical appearance.
Jack: A tall slim figure.	J. responds and adds information.
Kat: Okay, so you have got a picture of him in your mind and you need to paint that picture of words so the reader can have that picture, because I haven't got a picture of him at all in my mind yet.	Kat <i>tells</i> Jack she needs more information.
Jack: Tall and skinny,	J. <i>adds more</i> physical description.
Kat: Okay and what else?	Kat <i>prompts</i> for more detail.
[Children interrupt ... Jack sits and ponders.] Jack: He fits through small places.	J. <i>adds more</i> information about character's actions.
Kat: So you've said lots of things, so let's just write some down here. I'll just do some jotting for you [reaches for Jack's plan and writes]. You said he was tall, and skinny, and can fit through small places.  ...Now, if I jot those key ideas for you that will help you to remember the sort of things you want to say about him. You see a good writer when they think of things, they jot them down, because you think you'll remember and sometimes you don't. So can you write that now? [Jack nods his head.]	Kat records words on plan (see plan). <i>Adds and shows</i> how.  Kat <i>challenges</i> J by providing <i>a connection</i> and <i>a model</i> of what good writers do.

### *Interpretation and discussion*

The conversation shown was focused on Jack's plan and his draft writing. The draft was incomplete at the time of the conferencing session. Kat focused on Jack's ability to work from his mind-map to his draft. She provided several scaffolds by *prompting for clarity* of "it", *asking for more information to describe* Danny's appearance, and she *explicitly taught* him how to use commas when listing. Finally, in this short time, Kat had also *shown him how to add more descriptors* to the mind-map, explaining: "That's what good writers do." However, Kat didn't focus on Jack's failure to write about the setting, although this was evident in his plan when he talks about Danny living with two scientists (see Figure 9).

**MOVE 3: Time 7.1 - 8.15.** Kat then conferenced with Karne, who was also writing about the cartoon character Danny Phantom. In terms of the new goal introduced in lesson two, Karne had put his character in a setting, as was seen when he shared his writing in S3 M1. Kat affirmed his use of words in describing Danny Phantom as mysterious and secretive. When asked what he was going to write about next, Karne said: "About what kind of friends he has, and I might make like imaginary people." Kat recognised Karne was working in his ZPD, but reinforced the task expectations and reminded him of what was expected:

Okay now can you remember what we are doing? We're describing our character, we are painting a picture with words so that the reader can have a picture in their mind of this character and then later on we'll go on and write about the adventure... But just think about what the reader would need to know about that character. Okay, keep going with your mysterious bit.

Kat then moved on to work with Elliot.

**MOVE 4: Time 8.51 – 10.22.** Conferencing with Elliot, however, required Kat to scaffold his learning in a different way. Elliot struggled with his writing. In Teaching Session Three Kat held two conferences with Elliot, M4 and M6. The first focused on the draft and plan.

**Table 23: Kat’s conference with Elliot.**

Description: Conference one: Kat and Elliot	Interpretation: Kat scaffolds within Elliott’s ZPD
<p>Kat: Now Elliot, let's have a look at you, can you move up a wee bit buddy just so I have got a bit more room.</p> <p>Elliot: Look I've got the clock [timer to keep him on track]</p> <p>Kat: Oh that's a good idea cause that helps you doesn't it?</p> <p>Now who was this person?</p> <p>E: Fry!</p>	<p>Kat <i>engages</i> E and builds a working relationship.</p> <p>Kat uses a concrete, <i>visual</i> reminder to keep on track</p> <p>Kat <i>invites</i> E to explain.</p>
<p>Kat: Reads, 'Fry was frozen to the future', oh that's where you got yesterday, 'he has spiky front hair', that was it wasn't it, and you were going to say something about that hair, weren't you? You were going to say something about it sticking out [gestures].</p> <p>Elliot: Yeah, it... he has a spike, he has a spiky front.</p> <p>Kat: Yeah, but does the front hair stick up or stick out?</p> <p>Elliot: stick out front! [points to book]</p> <p>Kat: Oh, so that's why you know that it goes out front. Okay, so where would it stick out, would it stick out over his eyes? [pulls hair out over eyes]</p> <p>Elliot gestures and twists his own hair, crossing over parts.</p>	<p>E's writing is difficult to read because of poor letter formations.</p> <p>But Kat <i>connects to previous</i> conference and <i>prompts for</i> more description.</p> <p>E <i>explains</i> what the hair looks like.</p> <p>Kat <i>probes</i> several times for clarity and <i>more detail</i> or <i>vocabulary</i> use.</p> <p>E <i>gestures</i> and <i>demonstrates</i> the hair style.</p>
<p>Kat: Oh, what else has he got, have a look here [turns back to planning map and points], there you said it sticks up,</p> <p>...Oh, you said that it was spunky, so what could you say? ... something about his hairdo? It looks very...</p> <p>Elliot: Funky [looking very pleased with himself].</p> <p>Kat: Could you say it for me?</p>	<p>Kat <i>links back</i> to plan trying to make <i>connections</i> between words and sentences.</p> <p>Kat <i>tightens scaffold</i>, <i>adds constraints</i> to support with sentence starter.</p> <p>Elliot provides a <i>descriptor</i>.</p> <p>Kat asks child to <i>repeat</i>/</p>

Elliot: His hair looks very funky.	<i>consolidate</i> idea before writing.
Kat: That's cool. See if you can get that written by the time the timer is finished. [She turns it over.]	She leaves Elliot with a <i>goal</i> .

Kat was very aware that Elliot was a somewhat reluctant learner and wrote the date for him, she *prompted* for ideas and *more descriptive detail* and recorded key words on his plan to support his writing speed and fluency. Elliot struggled to comprehend teaching expectations and required more specific and *constrained* scaffolding. Kat constantly *probed* for specific information. While Elliot had the vocabulary, he found it difficult to record quickly and accurately.

**MOVE 5: Time 10.22 - 12.22.** Laura has written her character study on Winnie the Pooh. She has done this well, but Kat is aware Laura could be challenged further, her ZPD could be extended as her draft writing meanders and was not organised around key ideas. In this conference of a few minutes, Kat raises two aspects for further learning.

- First, Kat introduces Laura to the idea of grouping ideas for paragraphing. She proposes that when Laura has finished writing her description, Kat will show her how to physically group ideas and organise her text into paragraphs. Kat explains: “Keep writing and when you have finished we might reorganise it. We might cut it up and reorganise it to keep the ideas together” (video script 3).
- Secondly, Kat links back to other writing situations and points out how commas have been used. “You know there are two ways of doing lists. We often do a bulleted list like I did for the rules for cooking, but what do we do when we have got a list like this?” [Kat points to Laura’s book.] Laura responds: “Add a comma.” She demonstrates comprehension of how commas are used when listing Pooh’s friends, and how to separate the last two items in a list with “and”.

**MOVE 6: Time 12.25- 15.25.** The second conference Kat has with Elliot has a different focus. Kat scaffolds Elliot and his writing by emphasising the writing conventions. Kat directs Elliot to take care, write neatly and practise writing high frequency words using grapho-phonetic patterns of “is” and “his”. She again *places constraints* on their interactions by narrowing Elliot’s options through her *questioning prompts*.

**Table 24: Kat’s second conference with Elliot.**

Description: Conference two: Kat and Elliot	Interpretation: Explicit and focused scaffolding
<p>Kat: Can you please hold that pen properly and can you please do a full stop where I have asked you to do full stops - no, remember I like full stops sitting on the line, about that big [she demonstrates].</p>	<p><i>Tells, repeats and demonstrates</i> setting out and letter formations.</p>
<p>Kat: Please write ‘is’.            Elliot: I... S.            Kat: Neatly, very neatly. Now underneath write ‘his’.            Take care, please; show me that you care.            Can you think ‘his’? Look ‘is’, that’s ‘is’. You listen and say ‘is’, ‘his’. You say ‘is’.            Elliot: Is.            Kat: Right you say ‘is’, ‘his’            Elliot: Is , his.            Kat: Did they sound the same? Yes they do, so you need to think. Write ‘is’ three times.</p>	<p>Kat <i>explicitly teaching</i> “his” spelling from word generation.</p> <p>Scaffolds <i>explicit phonemic pattern</i> knowledge, “is” to “his”.</p> <p>Kat asks for <i>repetition</i> of learning.</p>
<p>Kat: Wooh! In your neatest caring handwriting. Yes that’s close, now the next one is going to be neater, closer and neater again....</p> <p>Well done!</p> <p>Can you please just put a line through there and write it correctly above [points to place on page]. In fact I think you have got two places you might need to fix it up. Keep it nice and close, good boy, and was there somewhere else?</p>	<p>Kat <i>stops and redirects</i> Elliot for greater accuracy in letter formations, setting expectations.</p> <p>Kat <i>affirms</i> accuracy.</p> <p>Kat <i>tells</i> E to correct the other words (his), <i>building on</i> what he now knows.</p>
<p>Kat reads: ‘Fry was frozen into the future, he has spiky front hair, his hair is spunky’. Great, so you have written that. What’s this bit here about yellow? [Points to plan]. What was that going to be about?</p>	<p>Kat rereads and <i>questions for more</i> detailed information on plan.</p>



<p>Elliot: He's got yellow hair.</p> <p>Kat: Oh my goodness, we haven't said that, now somewhere you will need to write it now and we might have to reorganise it afterwards. So what are you going to write, what are you going to say about yellow?</p> <p>Elliot: His hair is yellow.</p> <p>Kat: His hair is yellow, all right now you will remember how to spell 'is' this time, won't you?</p> <p>Elliot: Yeah.</p>	<p>Kat <i>demonstrates connections</i> between plan and draft, <i>telling</i> Elliot that information needs to be transferred from plan to draft.</p> <p>Kat <i>prompts</i> E to formulate his idea into a sentence.</p> <p>Kat leaves Elliot with <i>two goals</i> for writing: spelling 'is' and constructing a sentence describing Fry's hair.</p>
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Kat *constantly revisited* the learning with reminders and directed Elliot by telling him specifically to do tasks, such as rewrite "his" three times. She set small manageable goals.

### *Teaching Sessions*

In summary, over the three sessions we see how Kat had scaffolded her class to write a character description. The lessons progressed from a prewriting session that built the content field by connecting to students' knowledge of other literacy characters. Kat framed the talk and writing with a structure based on three features required when writing a description: appearance, actions and feelings. Kat used an exemplar of a scientist for the students to identify characteristics; then the students went off to develop their own mind-maps.

In the second session that I observed, Kat linked back to the story she had read and the mind-map they developed about Tom. In this session Kat explicitly modelled how to take words generated and use them in sentences. She also introduced an addition to the task, asking the students to include a setting for their character. The students then went off to work on their mind-maps and write their introductory setting, while Kat roved and monitored students' learning.

During the third session Kat used the students' writing, requesting them to be an audience and listen and respond to each other's work. Then Kat

sent the students to their desks to continue with their character description. At this point, Kat conferenced with four participants, scaffolding them according to individual requirements. While there was ample evidence of Kat's teaching using a synergy of scaffolding interactions, was the teaching and learning transferred? Did the students learn how to write a character description that included the three language features and place their character in a setting?

### **7.3 A synergy of participatory scaffolding?**

The next section seeks evidence of *a synergy of participatory scaffolding* happening in Kat's classroom. As discussed in 4.6.3, Table 7, the analysis employed five indicators (SPSFW). These represent a sociocultural view of scaffolded teaching and learning but also recognise that teaching and learning are iterative and complex and happen over time. The synergy of participatory scaffolding is discussed under the key indicators nominated and set out in Table 7. They included: shared meanings; connected; multiple scaffolds; flexible and responsive; and handover and transference of learning.

#### *Shared meanings*

In her classroom community of practice, Kat mediated student engagement and meaning-making in an inclusive manner. When interacting with the students, Kat consistently referred to the class as "we". She did not talk from the "I" perspective but co-constructed the learning with the children, developing a culture of "we are learning this together". Kat constantly sought ways to develop shared meanings in her classroom community of practice.

During teaching the students enthusiastically related to the writing context. They were familiar with literature and Kat surrounded them with books they had shared as a class; these children had already been introduced to the concept of characters. By connecting to characters in

the literature, building on the known (NLG, 1996), Kat scaffolded their interest and engagement.

The overall purpose for writing was shared with the students, and Kat either verbalised or recorded the ongoing goals in the modelling book. The goals guided Kat's teaching: what she said and did; how she interacted and conversed with the students. These goals were shared, discussed and unpacked with the children at the beginning of each session. Each of the 24 teaching moves showed clear direction of what was going to take place and why. Even when Kat initiated change in the task design and introduced new sub-goals this was signalled to the children. Throughout the writing process over the three observed sessions, Kat constantly referred back to the goals and sub-goals, reminding the students of the writing purpose.

Opportunities to act out, talk out, or question the goal-directed tasks were encouraged. To ensure that learning was shared and comprehended by the students, Kat would check their understanding and even adjust her scaffolding to accommodate new tasks or directions the students wanted to follow. Further shared meaning resulted from the students and teacher collaborating and renegotiating the goals and learning tasks. This led to shifts in power relationships.

### *Connected*

Kat apprenticed her learners from having peripheral understandings to being independent writers and constantly found ways to connect with them in three ways: on an academic level, a social and emotional level, in their community of practice.

Kat initially made connections to the students' prior knowledge by forming discussions and links about different literary characters the children knew. Throughout the three sessions Kat systematically kept the

students' focus on the goals, using the three features of a character to provide an ongoing connection. This structure, along with her main purpose, became the link for not only the "designed in" activities but also the newly introduced tasks.

Kat was in tune and connected with her students' thinking and learning. This was very evident in the first session (S1,M5), when the students were describing the character Aslan. She allowed them to act out the character and often adjusted her teaching contingently according to their prior understandings, their current thinking and interests. But Kat also made connections across the lessons for learners, as when Karne and Elliot described the actions and settings of their character rather than the appearance in S1, M3. Kat later scaffolded a connection to the boys' comments and affirmed their response when teaching an introductory sentence in S2, M4, asking the students to include a setting for their character.

The teacher desired emotional and social as well as cognitive engagement. She consistently invited students by name to contribute and share their thoughts. Kat listened to the students and acknowledged their thinking, affirming individual's contributions. Even though Kat affirmed students' thinking with comments of "Well done", this wasn't to the detriment of their learning. If they went off track she ignored it or revisited the learning at a later date. Kat was explicit about what the students were to learn and on occasions said "No", and redirected the discussion, as when students were sharing their introductory sentences (S2, M6). Kat would scaffold students back on track by providing an example. The students felt safe in this classroom environment. They knew that their ideas were valued, that they were listened to and that they were learning.

As well, Kat set up many social learning opportunities for students to peer share and scaffold each other's cognitive and social growth (S1,M3; S1,M7; S2,M5). She mediated class learning, provided opportunities for sharing their thinking and reading their work (S1,M4; S2,M6; S3,M1), modelling how to respond and gathered suggestions from others. The teacher actively sought to build relationships of trust; the students felt part of the culture of the classroom.

### *A synergy of multiple and multimodal scaffolds*

Whether the goals were "designed in" the task or mediated as the dialogic conversations and student-teacher interactions progressed, Kat would engage an abundance of diverse scaffolds (Sharpe, 2006) to support learning. In the example during Session One, Kat wanted the children to focus on three features of characterisation - physical appearance, behaviours and feelings. This learning was supported in multiple ways. The concepts were labelled and recorded on the chart. The unplanned opportunity for the children to explore Aslan's character evolved and role-play, descriptors and visualisation all worked together, co-constructed through dialogic conversations to support understanding. The identification of these features was revisited again when the students listened to an example of character study, the scientist, read by Kat. Students in pairs co-constructed the scientist's description and the class shared their ideas; these were then recorded under the headings on a chart. Furthermore, Kat scaffolded these three key ideas by providing a template for the students to use when they were to plan their own characters. During conferencing, Kat followed up on these aspects when interacting with individuals, and prompted them to confirm that these concepts were present in the writing.

### *Flexible and contingently responsive*

The unit progressed from the students listening to the purpose, talking about the characters they enjoyed (S1,M1) to completing their final

written product, a character description that should include the appearance, the behaviours and feelings of a character of their choice, as well as adding a setting. During the scaffolding interactions, Kat was responsive, making continual adjustments. The teaching sessions demonstrated that Kat met contingency needs. She recalibrated and adjusted the task throughout the writing process, often in response to learning needs as in S1,M7 and in S2,M3 or in response to students' requests as in Session One (M5 and M10).

Kat challenged the students. This was evident through individual conferences where she added to Jack's understanding and taught him how to add in more information on his planner. She redirected Elliot and set small manageable goals for adding detail and spelling accurately. Karne was told to think about his character's appearance and Laura was taught about use of commas when listing.

Kat also challenged the class by introducing an additional goal in S2,M4. Although she connected to previous learning examples as in S1,M4, and in S2,M4 by "critically marking" the setting in her writing demonstration, the students were challenged. They struggled to make meaning of the task, as it appeared to be beyond their ZPD. Kat tightened the restraints and narrowed her prompts to support understanding as in S2, Moves 5, 6, 7, and 8.

An interesting and unexpected finding during scaffolding interactions was not just the students' negotiation of the task design but their "take over" and insistence on having a say in the task. Tasks were redesigned in response to students' requests on several occasions:

- The first was when the students wanted to actively participate through role-play and act out how Aslan moved and behaved (S1,M5).

- The second was when Kat wanted the students to pair up, choose a picture and brainstorm characteristics under the three subheadings. This was cognitively demanding as the students were still focused on other characters. Their mutterings and queries were listened to by Kat, who valued their thinking, included their suggestions, and then redesigned the task (S1,M10).
- Thirdly, when Kat was demonstrating how she was using her mind-map to write an introduction to her character study on Old Tom, her use of “dreamt” was queried. “We have a concern” noted the teacher and changed the spelling to “dreamed”, a word they could understand (S2,M3).

Kat was flexible with her teaching, she happily negotiated learning with these children when she thought it was relevant.

### *Handover and transference*

Across all three sessions, it was evident that the scaffolding and mediation of resources and dialogue were temporary; as the lessons progressed these scaffolds faded and new scaffolds were introduced. The use of tools or available resources such as the written goals and sub-goals changed; the use of literature to initiate ideas became redundant; the ticking off of Old Tom’s descriptors provided a demonstration “showing how”; the individual template plans supported the final writing of a character, but they too only served as an initial way to structure thinking and writing. Kat created an abundance of scaffolds; and for some students these were redundant, but for others they were crucial.

While there was handover of task design and handover for independence, was there transference of learning? Kat encouraged independence and set up three situations that I observed for the students to peer share or co-construct meanings without the teacher mediating. Understanding from the class was monitored through feedback and

sharing of ideas. However, only by observing a student's final writing can we determine if the learning was transferred over this allocated time.

In summary, Kat constantly invited the children to participate in their own learning. She challenged their thinking, prompted with open-ended questions and pushed their zones of proximal development to ensure they understood vocabulary meanings or could explain the features of a character. She provided more information and elaborated on discussion points. At times she emphasised critical markers to highlight points and provide summaries or meta-comments to consolidate learning before moving on. Kat mediated the class's learning through intensive, purpose-driven dialogue and employed a range of multimodal tools.

#### **7.4 Students' learning**

The third component in this chapter discusses the findings in relation to the students' learning. While Kat scaffolded her teaching in a planned, systematic and responsive way, was there evidence of "a meeting of minds"? Did the students' writing samples, their plans, draft and published pieces written during the teaching sessions, demonstrate transfer of learning?

The four student participants represented a selection from the diverse range of learners in Kat's classroom. In this section the student-participants' writing interactions and written samples are analysed in greater detail. The purpose is not to critique the scripts or level their writing ability but rather to interpret the effects of Kat's scaffolding. The analysis discusses the teacher's apprenticeship of the young writers from peripheral understanding to independence and full participation in a writing classroom community of practice. It discusses the students' participatory social, affective and cognitive engagement as they each learn how to write a character description.



## *Jack*

Jack participated throughout the three teaching sessions. While he didn't always offer suggestions or get as involved emotionally as Karne did, Jack contributed in a thoughtful manner. When engaged in dialogue with Kat, he was self-assured and offered suggestions in response to her requests. During the conference he felt confident enough to question her when he was unsure of her word usage: "What do you mean by a ghostly figure?" When working with his talk partner (TP) Laura, Jack interacted assertively and offered suggestions. He questioned Laura's description of the scientist, thus demonstrating careful and accurate listening. He also added more specific detail to her description of where Winnie the Pooh lived.

When analysing his three pieces of writing that demonstrate the writing process - planning, drafting and publishing (Figures 9, 10, 11) - I was interested in whether his writing included the three features of the character description discussed throughout the lessons. And did Jack include a setting for his morphing character? Had he learned from the teacher's demonstration in Lesson Two and the conference in Session Three? Did he transfer his ideas from his plan to his final writing?

The writing plan, Figure 9, showed that Jack understood Danny Phantom's characteristics as organised according to three features that were scaffolded in Session One. On the plan he has listed feelings, for example, "happy", "kind" and, while we get a sense of Danny, the feelings are not transferred to the draft or final piece. After working with Kat, Jack added more detail about Danny's physical appearance on the plan. This detail had been transferred to his final text.

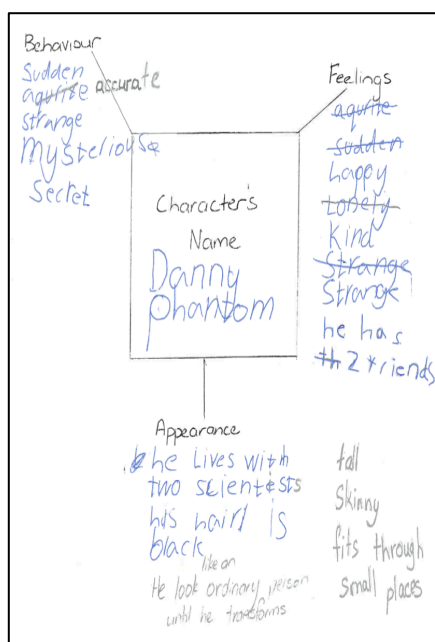
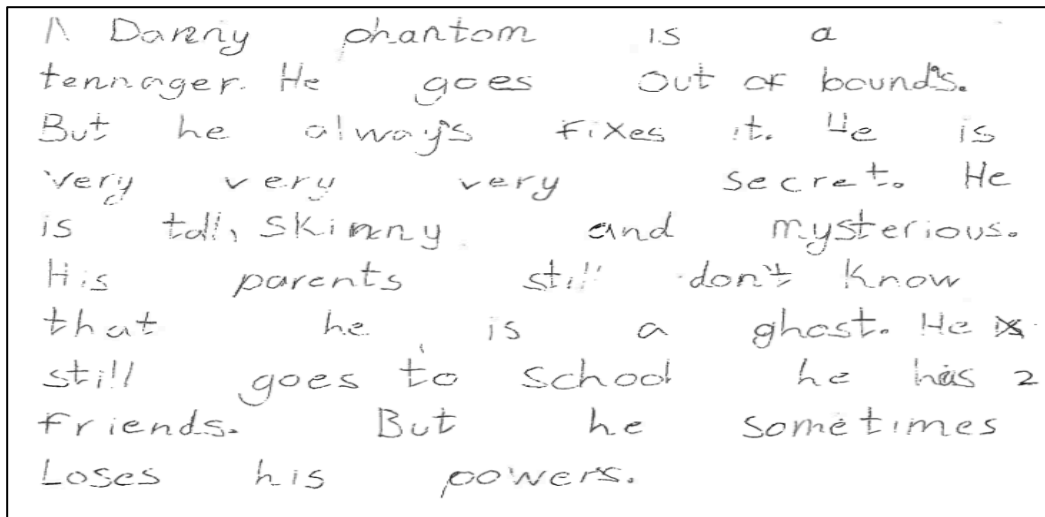


Figure 9: Jack's plan

Figure 10: Jack's draft

Jack, however, hadn't transferred Kat's conferencing question that she prompted for: "What is 'it'?" And while Kat's conferencing discussion on the use of commas was evident in the draft, it was not transferred, not written in the final piece.

Surprisingly, Jack didn't include a setting in his first sentence although he demonstrated this understanding when he shared his introductory sentence with Laura (S2, M5). He had stated: "Danny Phantom, he lives in a big hotel and there is a big room at the top and he has lots of signals and things like that." And when sharing back he explained that "Danny Phantom is a ghost catcher," and in response to Kat's question said: "He lives in a hotel at the top of the house in a great big room." Jack had earlier stated that to describe the appearance of Danny Phantom was difficult, "as he could be two things: an ordinary guy who goes to school and a ghost."

A rectangular box containing handwritten text in black ink on a white background. The text describes a character named Danny Phantom, a teenager who goes out of bounds but always fixes it. He is very, very, very secret, tall, skinny, and mysterious. His parents still don't know he is a ghost. He still goes to school, has 2 friends, but sometimes loses his powers.

A Danny phantom is a teenager. He goes out of bounds. But he always fixes it. He is very very very secret. He is tall, skinny, and mysterious. His parents still don't know that he is a ghost. He still goes to school he has 2 friends. But he sometimes loses his powers.

**Figure 11: Jack's final writing**

Although I got a sense of the character Danny Phantom as a mysterious being, Jack's writing still needed detail and clarity. Jack described appearance and action, but the character's feelings were not explicitly or implicitly stated and the setting was not recorded. Not all of Kat's scaffolding expectations had been achieved.

### *Laura*

Laura quietly and consistently participated in class discussions. She contributed that Aslan had a "big furry thing around his head." She demonstrated that her Aslan walked on tippy toes and he walked proudly, because he was King of Narnia. Laura also participated in Kat's discussion on why the scientist might have toast in his pocket when she explained: "He got distracted and forgot about it." When working with her peer, Laura happily shared her ideas. Even when she described that the scientist's coat buttons were unbuttoned rather than wrongly buttoned and was challenged by Jack, she continued to describe the scientist's coat, stating "that his long white coat might be shiny." Laura had participated in Kat's scaffolding interactions throughout the sessions. She was focused and contributed consistently.

During the teaching sessions, Laura showed that she had listed many ideas about her character Pooh Bear on her planner and had ticked them off as she wrote (see Figures 12, 13, 14).

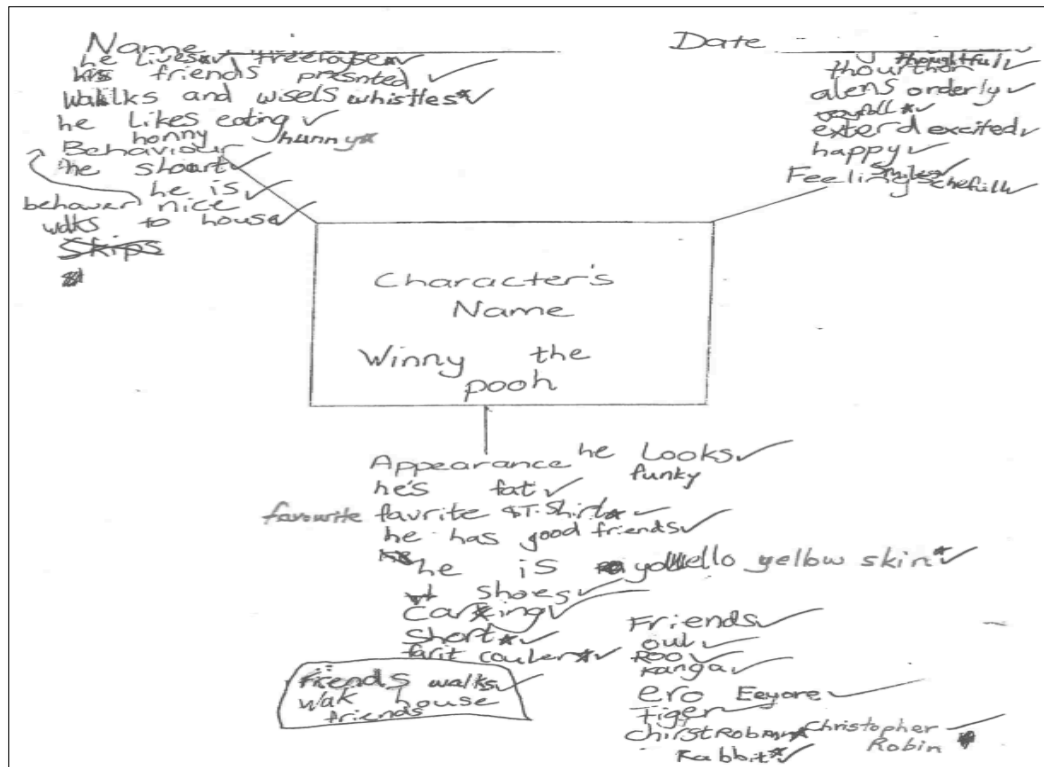


Figure 12: Laura's plan

She listed his appearance as “fat”, he had “yellow skin”, he was “funky” and wore a “favourite red T-shirt”. But she also listed other attributes, and Pooh Bear’s friends at this point and that Pooh “is caring”. Under behaviour, Laura had written where Pooh lived. She identified his setting as discussed earlier with Jack. Pooh’s behaviours were listed as “walking” and “whistling” in the woods and his love of “eating honey”. In relation to feelings, Laura had listed “happy”, “excited”, “thoughtful” and “orderly”. Laura had identified all aspects of the characterisation that Kat talked about. She had, however, placed some comments incorrectly. For example, she had listed “short” under behaviour.

Did Laura take her listed ideas and use them in her draft writing? Her draft writing covered two pages in her book. She had taken her ideas and written them as sentences.

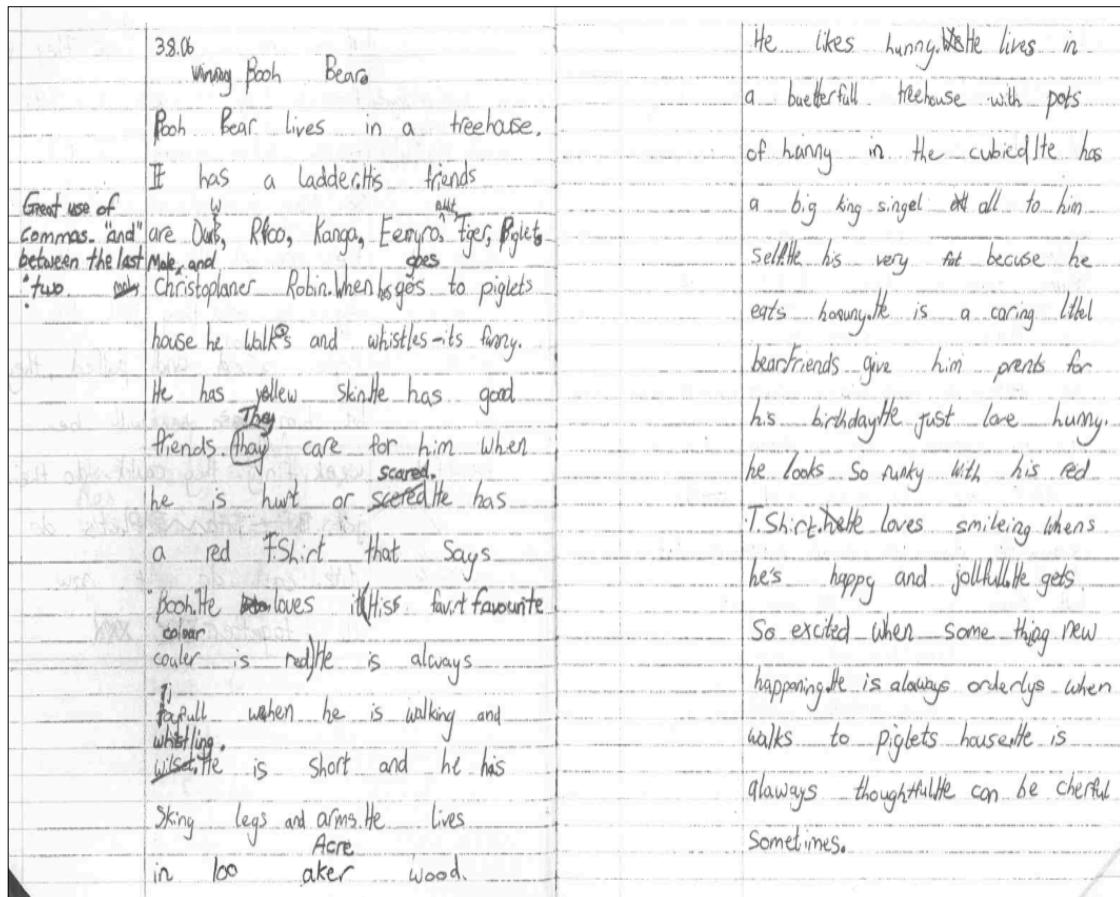


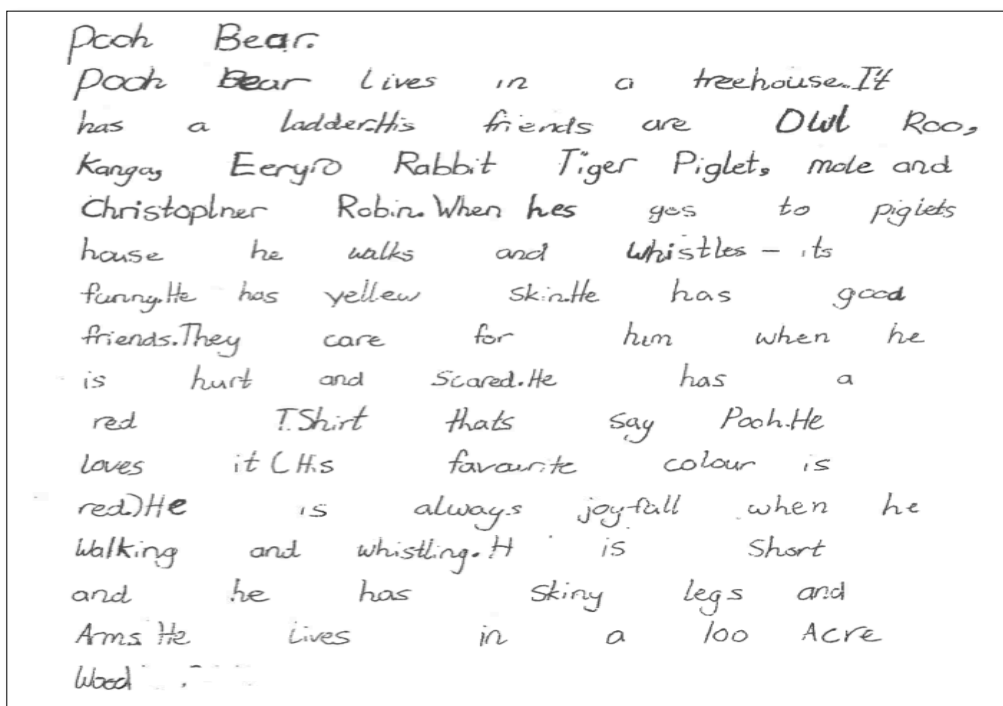
Figure 13: Laura's draft

She listed Pooh's friends and talked about how they cared for him, and provided a lot of detailed description and information about Pooh, building an interesting character description. However, she hadn't organised or grouped the ideas together. She randomly wrote sentences about appearance, behaviour and feelings. Her ideas were sometimes repeated.

During the conference, Kat talked about how to use commas when listing friends and about using "and" between the last two friends. Kat corrected Laura's spelling of gos/goes, thay/they, couler/colour,

aker/acre, scered/scared and capital letters for Pooh's name. She also corrected capital letters where required. In the conference, Kat stated that her next learning would be how to group common ideas and write paragraphs. However, I don't think this happened, as the final writing does not show paragraphing.

When Laura wrote out her final copy, she had corrected most of the errors.



Pooh Bear  
Pooh Bear lives in a treehouse. It  
has a ladder. His friends are Owl, Roo,  
Kanga, Eeyore, Rabbit, Tiger, Piglet, mole and  
Christopher Robin. When he goes to piglets  
house he walks and whistles - its  
funny. He has yellow skin. He has good  
friends. They care for him when he  
is hurt and scared. He has a  
red T-shirt that say Pooh. He  
loves it. His favourite colour is  
red. He is always joyfull when he  
walking and whistling. He is short  
and he has skinny legs and  
Arms. He lives in a 100 Acre  
Wood.

Figure 14: Laura's final writing

Several apostrophes are missing or used incorrectly and she has attempted to use a hyphen and brackets. But what was interesting was that she wrote out only the first page of her draft for her final copy. She did not write out the second page.

Overall, Laura transferred Kat's teaching into her writing. Laura placed Pooh Bear in a setting: "He lives in a tree house." She also incorporated

the three features of a character that Kat had focused on. Laura achieved the writing task, learning through participatory scaffolding.

**Karne**

Karne was also an active participant in the teaching sessions and contributed to the learning conversations. He described Aslan as “magicky”, because his fur was clean and sparkly. Karne enthusiastically showed how Aslan sat, tall and proud. Kat was so excited that she asked the students to generate phrases that described, “what he looked like”.

During the discussion about the scientist, Karne was especially interested in the pet rat, stating: “It’s sort of weird having a rat crawling all over you.” When sharing with Kat and the class, he said of his character “Danny Phantom lives in a world of people and kills folks.” Throughout the teaching sessions, Karne was enthusiastic; he confidently participated during class discussions and co-constructed a story with his TP, Elliot.

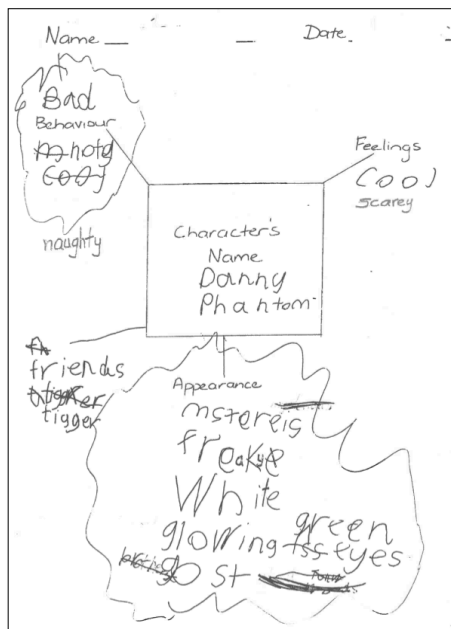


Figure 15: Karne's plan

Figure 16: Karne's draft

Karne's writing plan, shown in Figure 15, demonstrated that he was able to record basic vocabulary under each of the headings. The behaviour of Danny Phantom he listed as "bad" and elaborated on this as being "naughty" as he went into a toilet to change into a ghost form. Karne saw this as a negative behaviour and didn't recognise the good Danny performed. In terms of feelings written on his planner, he listed "cool" and Kat later added "scary". He tells us that Danny has "green glowing eyes" and that he is "freaky" and "mysterious" but we don't really know the reasons why he behaves secretly. This behaviour Karne had listed under appearance.

In Karne's draft, Kat corrected his spelling of secret/secret, gose/goes, chagne/changes. She also wrote affirming his use of commas and descriptive words. She reminded Karne to complete his sentence and bring the writing to an end.

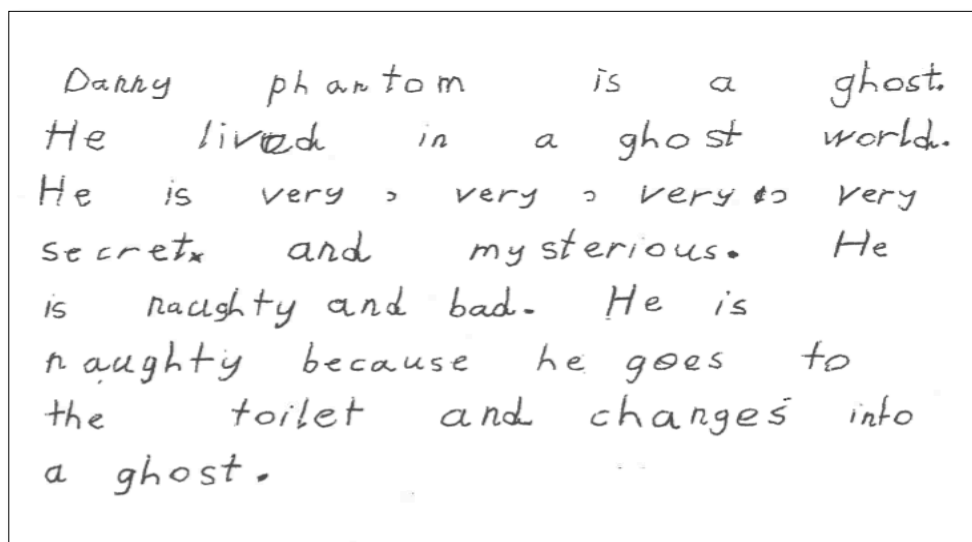


Figure 17: Karne's final writing

Karne managed to place his character in a setting, the ghost world. He did not transfer the descriptors of appearance to his draft or final piece although he had listed them on the planner so in the end we don't really know what Danny looks like as a ghost. We learn about some behaviour



but we don't know about his feelings. Karne has transferred some but not all of the scaffolded learning into his writing.

### *Elliot*

Elliot struggled at times to comprehend the immediate task and to stay focused on his writing. Kat was always aware of Elliot's concentration span and set up situations with mini-tasks that would keep him focused and on task. She introduced a strategy (S1,M8) to quickly gather people's thoughts and descriptions about the scientists, but Elliot found it difficult to take a leadership role and, while he could offer a descriptor, he couldn't maintain social relationships and invite others to contribute. During peer discussions with Karne, he was enthusiastic and showed a love of creating ideas but he did not implement the task as asked for by the teacher. When observing Elliot on the mat, I noticed he found it difficult to stay focused and often wiggled around the edge of the mat.

For writing, Kat scaffolded Elliot's recording by tightening the options, setting a time for Elliot to complete his work, by roving and monitoring him as a writer who needed more time. Kat had learning conversations more often with Elliot than with the others, recognising the level of support required to get him started. Elliot struggled with multiple aspects of writing, such as spelling accuracy, fluency, letter formations, and spatial layout, as can be seen in his three pieces of writing (Figures: 18, 19, 20).

Elliot's plan, Figure 18, is difficult to read for an understanding of his ideas. His letter formations, immature development of letter sound relationships and high frequency words were not established and interfere with his recording ideas. With Kat's help, he added "funky hair" to his jottings of being "kind" and acting "secretly".

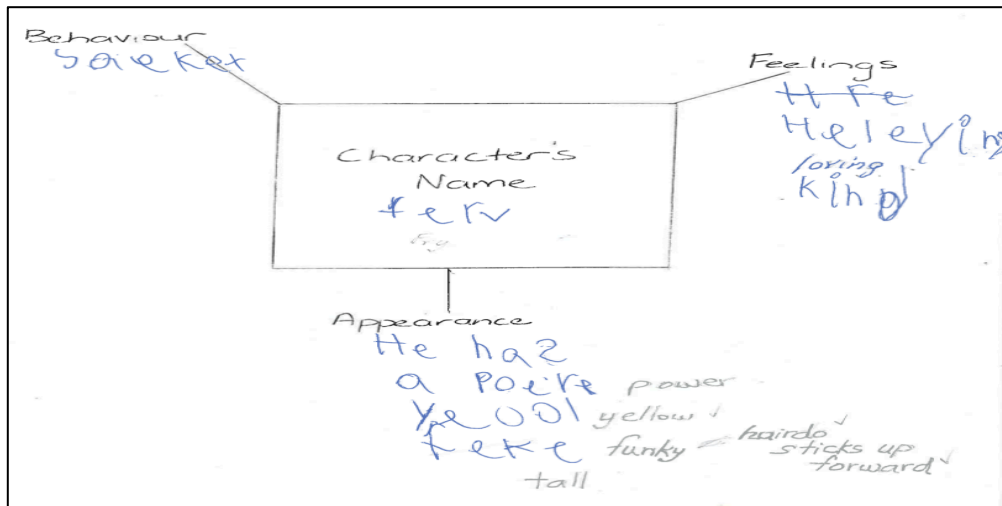


Figure 18: Elliot's Plan

In his draft book, Elliot's writing showed the struggle and effort to get his thoughts organised and recorded. With Kat's help he had written a setting, some physical description, told what Fry does and that Fry has feelings for Lola.

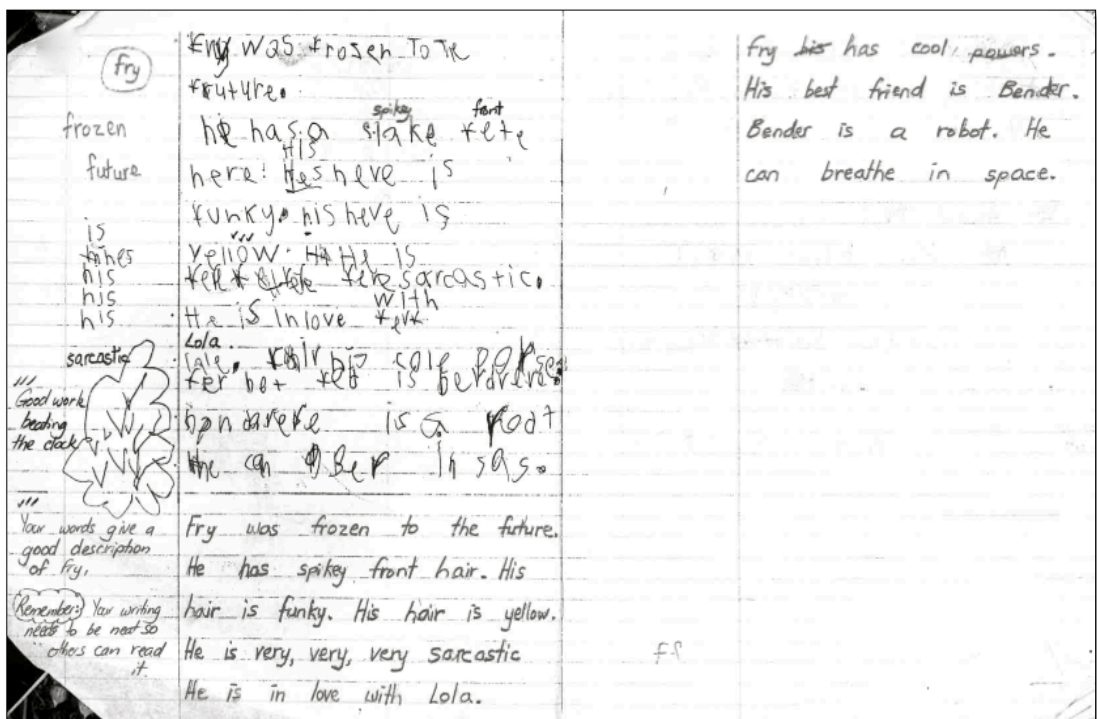


Figure 19: Elliot's draft

Elliot's letter sound relationships were not established, as was evident when Kat was helping him generate spelling "is" to "his". Many blends were not secure; neither was his knowledge of high frequency words.

This impacted on Elliot's writing fluency. With Kat's constrained scaffolding prompting for ideas and the spelling of words, Elliot worked hard to get his ideas down. Kat rewrote this underneath and Elliot copied his draft to the final piece.

Elliot was able to complete the task and write about another futuristic TV character, Fry. He explained that Fry was stuck or frozen in future time, so we know the setting that Kat worked so hard to establish. Elliot described Fry's physical appearance - the hair, what it looked like and the colour. He told us who Fry loved and who his best friend was. The use of words such as "sarcastic" demonstrate an understanding of word meanings.

Many of Kat's interactions with Elliot were constrained and acted as heavy prompts. Even though Elliot met the task requirements, in his case, while there was evidence of transfer Kat confirmed that he could not achieve the same work independently. Kat predicted that Elliot would not be able to transfer his closely scaffolded learning.

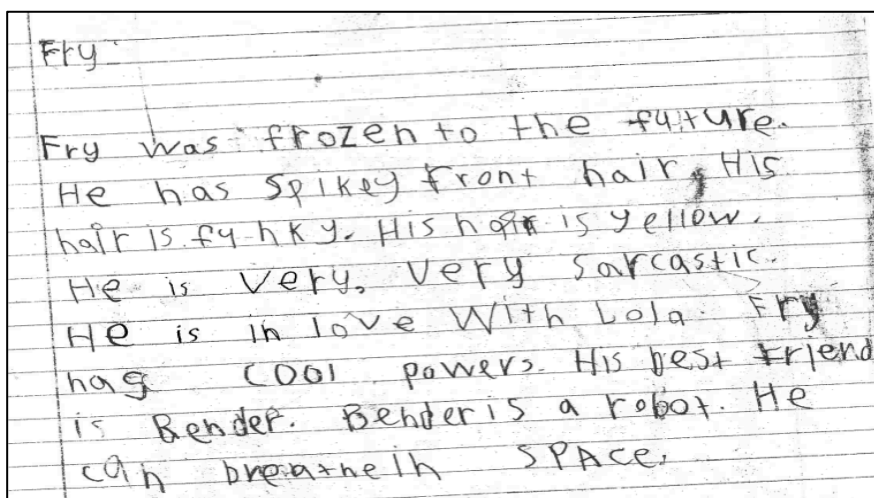


Figure 20: Elliot's final writing

In summary, all four participants still required more scaffolded learning around the characteristics that Kat focused on. They needed to consolidate their understanding of writing a character description.

## **7. 5 Chapter conclusion**

An analysis of the video data interpreted *participatory scaffolding* from the teacher's mediated actions, task design, and student response. These elements in fact interact and work reciprocally. Each session was a sequenced story and showed how Kat scaffolded teaching and learning interactions as they unfurled, were redesigned and reconnected to earlier events and to her understanding of the students' learning.

What became evident over these teaching interactions was that Kat made multiple decisions, constantly readjusting the scaffolding to accommodate individual and specific needs; to respond to and accept student interests; to redirect learning going off track; to challenge students' current understandings, and to add clarity to her teaching and students' understanding.

*Synergistic participatory scaffolding*, as defined here, includes five factors. Kat set up teaching and learning interactions to scaffold students so that they could engage in a meeting of minds. This was complex teaching, as Kat made multiple decisions, some planned, others contingently responding to the situation and to the students' understandings. While *what* Kat did and *how* she did it, is vital for successful learning, for some children the learning was more difficult and took longer, consequently requiring a mix of constrained and open-ended scaffolding. For others, while there was an understanding of the learning, through verbal explanations, this understanding was not evident in the actual writing. As for transferred learning, this varied from student to student. Some

aspects they transferred, others they did not. Some wrote fluently and independently, others struggled to achieve a “meeting of minds”.

The next chapter analyses the Writing Discourses that Kat engaged in when she taught her students how to write a character description.

## Chapter Eight

### Positioning the teacher in Writing Discourses

In speaking and acting from a position people are bringing to a particular situation their history as a subjective being, that is the history of one who has been in multiple positions and engaged in different forms of discourse. (Davies & Harré, 2001, p. 264)

#### 8 Introduction

This chapter employs the Writing Discourse framework to investigate how Kat engaged with Writer, Text and Social constructions of writing theories and practices. The chapter discusses Phase two research questions and asks: *Why* does one teacher teach writing a certain way? *What* writing discourses (knowledge, understandings, beliefs and practices) shape her practice as a teacher of writing? An analysis of the video observations and her post interview data describes and interprets how Kat projected herself as a certain kind of writing teacher when she interacted and scaffolded her students to write a character description.

#### 8.1 Why did Kat teach writing this way?

The Writing Discourses markers, developed in Chapter Four, Table 5 and applied in Chapter Six to determine how the teachers subscribed to the different Writing Discourses, are employed here to look more closely at Kat's practice. This analysis has used the markers to identify the Writing Discourses across Kat's three teaching sessions.

The questions raised earlier in Chapter Six when analysing the ten teachers' engagement in the Writing Discourses apply here. Does Kat position herself in a dominant Discourse space, a bounded place which

defines her as a particular type of writing teacher? Or does she engage in merging discourse practices, actively rebuilding her world? And how does she manage the various Discourses available in respect of writing: what tensions, dilemmas and contradictions occur in relation to her teaching?

Identifying the Writing Discourses that Kat actively engaged in when teaching and interacting in the classroom (video observations) was more complex than analysing her first interview (transcript), taken six months earlier. The interview presents static data and can be analysed more easily. On the other hand, classroom interactions were complex, recursive and diverse. What happened in one situation was often linked back to previous engagements or used to set up future learning situations. While certain Writing Discourses were identified, they were not analysed numerically as in Chapter Six. I made this decision because Kat's initial interview demonstrated that she synthesised discourses and merged discursive practices as noted in Chapter Seven findings.

In her observed teaching sessions, the focus was on Text, as Kat wanted her students to structure their writing in a particular way. However, the writing was contextualised according to personal choice of characters and Kat scaffolded writing according to the writing process of planning, drafting and publishing - indicators of Writer Discourse. As van de Pol, Volman and Beishuizen (2010) pointed out, episodes of scaffolding dialogues need to be "analysed as a whole because coding at the level of the statement or the interaction might, in fact, miss the essence of the scaffolding" (p. 284).

The Discourse markers identified in Table 5, although applied in a more holistic way by looking at events, enabled me to explore the video data to

interpret Kat's practice when teaching the writing process. The data set consisted of:

- Transcriptions and videos of the three teaching sessions
- A final interview after her teaching
- Incidental conversational comments relating to her teaching experiences.

## **8.2 Discursive practice: Analysis and interpretation**

Kat's enacted practice demonstrated her desire to scaffold her writers in multiple ways, to mediate students' learning and negotiate shared understandings on how to write a character study. A discussion of her engagement with each of the Writing Discourses follows. I begin with an analysis of her subscription to Social Discourse.

### **8.2.1 Social Discourse**

Kat's belief in students' negotiating and renegotiating ownership of their learning was key. Not only was Kat apprenticing her learners in the traditional cognitive notion of scaffolding, her teaching also reflected sociocultural practices of participation in the following ways.

#### *Multimodal engagement*

Kat used a range of available multimodal resources and mediated learning experiences with a variety of semiotic systems (Anstey, 2009). She conversed openly and encouraged talk, and she supported student learning with visual objects such as charts, literature, images, mind-maps, templates and diagrams. She would also invite the students to visualise their characters and use gesture and role-play to demonstrate understanding of a character's actions. The students' final writing was represented in group-books that included written and visual texts.



### *Dialogic interactions*

Kat's scaffolding with students was dialogic and interactive; Kat was aware of the value of talk to co-construct and clarify thinking. Students and teacher's talk permeated her lessons and was evident throughout all aspects of the writing process. Sometimes talk was uninvited but was highly acceptable as students buzzed and responded enthusiastically, as when the purpose of the lesson, writing about characters, was introduced (S1, M1). At other times Kat firmly guided the participatory talk. This was evident when she invited students by name, asked for a class response, or zoomed in closely for focused learning during conference times; and, in Teaching Session Two, she demonstrated by talking out loud but also selecting specific contributions offered by the students, when showing how to begin writing about a character.

### *Collaborative learning*

Kat also set her children up with a talk buddy to co-construct and clarify thinking. Peer collaboration played a key role in Kat's enactment of Social Discourse. In Teaching Session One, this happened twice. While the first move was "designed in" to her plan (S1, M3), the second opportunity occurred as a contingency response when Kat observed that the students needed to talk more about how to describe a character (S1, M7). In Teaching Session Two (S2, M5), Kat, after demonstrating explicitly, responded contingently, wanting the students to revisit new learning. She asked them to use talk partners and share their introductory sentences. In these three snapshots, it was evident that the two less able writers, while they deviated from the set task, collaborated with their own storytelling, whereas the two more able writers negotiated and critiqued each other's telling.

Kat shared her beliefs about the value of peer talk in her final interview. Here she explains her reasoning, providing four points in support of her decisions:

I believe the one thing is that it [use of talk partners] gives everyone the opportunity to talk rather than one child talking to the teacher and everyone else switching off, it becomes active learning rather than just passive learning.

I think it gives them opportunities to verbalise and organise their ideas in an oral way, which is the precursor to the writing that needs to happen.

I think that it allows them to interact with one person particularly and at least get one other person's ideas.

When we come up to share.... usually the rule is no hands up - so everyone expects to be asked. And so again it gives them time to reflect and review and verbalise again. (Final interview)

Kat's belief about the important role of talk in active learning related to her own personal experiences. She explained: "You know yourself, if you're somewhere and someone's been talking, you just want to talk to the person about it. Well I do. I think, 'Now what did she mean? Did you hear? What do you think she meant when she said that?'" (Final interview). Kat's understanding of her own way of learning contributed to her teaching.

### *Renegotiation and adjustment*

Kat provided spaces for students to negotiate their participatory engagement but also renegotiated the task, as discussed in greater depth in the scaffolding analysis. She was open to negotiation of the writing task and was prepared to readjust learning to accommodate students' requests, their interests and their learning needs. In Teaching Session One, Kat redesigned her task incorporating students' desires to act out a character's appearance and behaviour (S1, M 5). Initially Kat's request was for a description based on visualisation, when she asked: "Please tell me how your Aslan walks." She requested the children to tell, rather than act, stating: "No, tell me with words." Later, when Laura again acted out with actions, Kat accepted kinaesthetic responses and adapted to

accommodate the language systems of space and gesture by responding: "Oh... Aslan walks on tippy toes. Show us again" (S1, M 5).

Other examples of renegotiation were apparent when students "took over" the lesson. In Teaching Session One (M 10), Kat redesigned the writing task based on a picture image. When the children protested, putting forward their own ideas, Kat allowed for individual and personal choice. This was not part of her "planned in" scaffolding.

### *Critical thinking*

Social Discourse would call for Kat to develop students' critical thinking, to scaffold for deeper understanding by questioning, challenging and expecting more of the children. Her conversations often did not provide the students with answers: she used open-ended questions and prompted for more detail, as when asking the children to describe Aslan: "How can you tell he is magic?", and "Can anyone add to the picture of Aslan?" Furthermore, Kat would provide more information to extend the children's language and vocabulary. She provided meta-comments: "He's mysterious. ... so his eyes have got a faraway look." And, "He's got this big, thick hot furry collar that Laura talked about."

In her final interview Kat shared her beliefs about children being active participants in their own learning. She stated: "I think that making them re-think helps; it is that clever type of questioning. 'And what is next? Tell me more'. So you just probe, probe, probe, more, more, more" (Final interview). Kat's prompts and challenges throughout her teaching engaged all children actively but also pushed many of them to the edge of their ZPDs. Not only did Kat encourage critical thinking but she also posed social problems to solve through writing. Kat introduced her students to critical literacy, she encouraged them to consider: If they should take their shoes off when they go into the hall.

### **8.2.2 Writer Discourse**

Writer Discourse played a strong role in Kat's teaching practice. As in her initial interview Kat engaged with Writer Discourse in a variety of ways.

#### *Integration of language modes*

Kat encouraged holistic learning; talk, listening to stories, reading exemplars and sharing writing – all components of her beliefs about how children learn to write. She actively sought ways to connect students' learning skills. At the very beginning of her three teaching sessions, Kat established links to earlier stories shared in class. "Last week... we were thinking about how the writer and illustrator had worked together to make a picture for us, hadn't we? This week in our writing, we're going to be looking at characters." Characterisation had also formed the context for oral language discussions in Kat's class. She added: "... and this morning it was fun hearing during snippet time some of your favourite characters that you remembered. I remember hearing Winnie the Pooh and...." Kat made connections between oral, written and visual language valuing reciprocal skills and by teaching holistically added meaning to the students' writing.

#### *Personal choice*

Allowing students' personal choice formed part of Kat's Writer Discourse. She set up situations for students to talk about their own characters and allowed them to choose their character for writing about. Kat was excited when the students engaged in their own character choice:

I think a thrilling thing for me was the fact that I felt that they wrote about their characters very willingly, very sincerely from the heart, and I think that was because the character was the one they chose. So it was one that they knew quite a lot about, so they were able to relate that or re-tell that within their writing; being able to give that voice and sincerity, writer sincerity. (Final interview)

Kat believed that when students had choice they brought personal knowledge and greater participation to their writing. The students' writer-voice shone through.

### *Conferencing*

Conferencing formed an important part of Kat's teaching. She roved quickly around her students, ensuring they were on task and understood their task. Kat explained: "Usually it's a needs thing. If we're doing something like thinking about full stops ... I might have modelled it or talked about it, and just to know that children are doing it, I grab those moments to check" (final interview).

However, Kat also conferenced individual students by working closely in their ZPD, prompting, probing and explicitly teaching writing skills. During her last Teaching Session, Kat took four conferences with children. Kat explained that this was a practice that she had changed to ensure there was greater quality time during these interactions:

I was never big on conferencing; you know that long, in-depth stuff... I've always been quick ... snappy bits, sort of trying to... but I think there's a difference between conferencing and roving. Roving, when you're just checking that they're on task. (Final interview)

Conferencing at the student's ZPD was evident in Kat's teaching during Session Three. Her conferences were individualised and focused on the students meeting the writing task and planning their next learning steps.

### *Teacher demonstrations*

Demonstrations that included talking out loud and explaining cognitive decisions formed a large part of Kat's Teaching Session Two. In Moves 1-4 Kat clearly showed how she employed Writer Discourse as she made decisions about what she wanted students to write. Her demonstrations within the first nine minutes included six aspects of writing. She

demonstrated: how to start writing; how to order the ideas; how to add description of physical appearance; how to take ideas from the mind map and write them into sentences; how to show word tense in different ways, and how to add in a setting. The children understood the first five demonstrations. However, the sixth, putting the character in a setting, proved to be challenging.

### *The writing process*

Planning, writing, revising and finally publishing underpinned Kat's teaching sessions. The planning and mind-mapping phase was discussed in great depth and in several different ways. Kat used her example of Tom the cat, an example based on the scientist, and the students had their own templates. In this case a more structured schematic form of mind-mapping was demonstrated, based on three key features as followed in genre approaches or Text Discourse. The students took their ideas and developed them into a character study. Their drafts were shared and responded to and finally they drew a picture and then published their writing in booklets as in Figure 21.



Figure 21: The students' published stories

When I commented on the children's books and asked: "So did you just take their writing and get them to illustrate it ... and make your beautiful books?"

Kat replied:

They published from their drafts, and onto a pad of paper, and I photocopied them off there, and they've drawn their pictures and made them into books. I always make, I never put them into one book. I always make several books. So that means now we've got four children who can actually take a book home, rather than one great big book. (Final interview)

Kat was keen for her students to share their writing both in the classroom and in their home communities.

### *Knowing her students*

Another indicator of Kat's engagement in Writer Discourse was that she valued getting to know her students as individuals as well as learners. Kat not only had pedagogic content knowledge of writing but she also knew her learners. She would invite them by name to participate and would work alongside them. Kat lived in her school community and knew her students and their parents; thus she could pitch her expectations appropriately. She explained:

The importance of building up relationships and rapport and trust with the children, and that's got to be there. They've got to know that it's ok to work in this room. Then, once that's there, I mean, Karne can still give me rubbishy looking work too, but I can say, "Now, Karne, come on, let's have a look," and the relationship is there, and he will go off and do something about it. (Final interview)

Kat valued affiliations of trust and often used humour to build positive and open relationships with these children. She shared her personal experiences, spoke to them as intelligent learners, listened carefully to what they offered and always engaged them in conversations that

challenged their meaning-making processes but also allowed them to experience learning their way.

### **8.2.3 Text Discourse**

The analysis of the videos showed that Text Discourse permeated Kat's teaching. She structured the students' learning by identifying that they were writing about a character. A schematic structure or template supported students' cognitive thinking for planning and Kat showed them how they were to structure the text by focusing on three organisational features. Kat stated: "We need to think about them in just three different ways" (pointing to chart and headings of appearance, behaviour and feelings). These three features governed her teaching throughout. When reading an exemplar of a character, Kat directed them to these aspects:

...Now I am going to read you some writing about a character and I want you to think as I read, about the picture that you are making in your mind about his appearance, it is a guy, the character. Think about what he looks like, about his behaviour, what does he do, and how does he feel, is he a kind feeling person? (Observation, S1, M 6).

The text goals also drove the written description: "What sort of things do we need to write about when we write a description? Remember? It's about what they look like! How they behave!! And how they feel!" (S2, M1). The class all joined in on the last three ideas; they expressed a common understanding.

### ***Models***

Kat also used two models, as did the teachers in Chapter Five, to provide exemplars of a character description that exhibited the three features. In Teaching Session Two, Kat referred to a story she had read the day before along with the plan or mind-map based on the main character in *Tom the three-legged cat*. This children's book provided content, visual and



linguistic information for Kat to connect to and use to demonstrate her writing points. A second exemplar was used. A description of the scientist was read several times and Kat generated discussion with the students identifying descriptors that characterised the scientist. The students' ideas were recorded throughout the discussion.

#### **8.2.4 Writing Discourses: Dominant, merging or conflicting?**

A significant finding from the data was that Kat actively positioned herself in Social Discourse far more strongly than she had indicated during her initial interview. In this discourse, Kat encouraged participation; she negotiated and actively involved students in dialogic conversations to gain deeper meaning of their writing task.

The second point, that was evident in the initial interview data, revealed that Kat was eclectic and purposefully borrowed from all three Writing Discourses in an interactive way. Rather than situate herself in a dominant discourse for teaching writing Kat selected and wove a new identity as teacher of writing. This was evident when I considered her teaching sessions but also when focusing on a particular Teaching Move. The following description from my observation in Session Two demonstrates this:

When demonstrating (*writer, text*) how to use the organisational features (*text*) discussed earlier to incorporate into a character study, Kat modelled the writing process (*writer*) by taking information from a plan to construct a full description (*writer*). As she wrote, she asked Laura to hold up the plan and to tick off the descriptors used as she wrote (*social, text*). "Now could you please, Laura, put a tick by the ones (turns to Laura holding brainstormed words in book) that I have used, so we've used 'old' and 'tabby' (*social, text*)."

And when asked in the final interview if there were any surprises from her teaching sessions Kat commented:

Were there any surprises for me? Well, I think my concept of rich language has broadened, that it doesn't just have to be with the adjectives and whatever, it's more the way they put the language together and they can add to make it more precise. And that happened this week, we were doing a report about (*text*) ...about the cross country race (*social/writer*) ...[a child said] 'We run a long way' and then someone said, 'run a fairly long way', then someone said 'run a reasonably long way', ...and they were just refining, refining, refining, and I'm finding that quite exciting, playing with the words to make it more precise (*writer, text, social*). (Final interview)

Kat appears to have drawn from all Writing Discourses and unconsciously merged discourses to support her way of being a teacher of writing. In terms of contested or conflicting discourses, she never discussed policy conflicts or clashes during the teaching sessions or after teaching, although some dissonance had been evident in the initial interview. The initial interview schedule did ask for comments about school writing programmes, and Kat had raised questions about assessment policies which demanded assessment of writing in decontextualised ways, and needing to teach a specific genre structure for the test. These same questions were not put to Kat in the second interview and Kat did not mention any policy conflicts.

The concerns Kat did raise during the teaching sessions were based on the students and their learning. These same concerns were raised during her initial interview. In particular, she recognised the intensive teaching Elliot required. Kat acknowledged his abilities, stating: "I think he has got creative lateral thinking. He has good language and he can bring it together very nicely, but he needs all that prompting and support to get it" (Final interview). And later she shared her frustrations: "Just saying to him, 'Well, what are you going to write next?' isn't sufficient, he needs... But it's all that whole self-discipline thing really" (Final interview). Kat raised issues concerning Elliot's participation and self-efficacy:

Yes, there's a bit of an attitude. I actually believe he doesn't, hasn't yet connected with what this learning thing is all about. I think he thinks that he is just there to go through the motions, to fill in the day, and he's not making links. (Final interview)

It was not uncommon for Kat to have to redirect Elliot to stay on task. He was also a shuffler, who moved around the perimeter of the mat on his bottom, often disengaged. His lack of participation in the class learning discussions was played out in the conferencing sessions discussed in Chapter Seven. Elliot often struggled to stay focused and to engage with the content being discussed. This was reflected in his ability to independently perform the set writing task and come to terms with several elements crucial to learning to write.

### **8.3 Chapter conclusion**

From listening to, observing and talking to Kat after her teaching sessions, it became obvious that she knew *what* she was doing and *why*. Her ways of working as a teacher and her engagement with the Writing Discourses were based on her experiences and her pedagogical content knowledge built up over many years. Her desire to make sense of the various theories and practices resulted in Kat merging discourses, and in so doing taking on her own professional identity as a teacher of writing. However, in relation to which Writing Discourses shaped her teaching, there was a mismatch between Kat's self-reported "ways of working" in Writing Discourses and my observation of her teaching. This finding is revisited in the final chapter.

The next and final chapter draws together the research questions and findings from the data analysis and discusses these further. The research process is discussed and the significance of the findings and possible implications are stated. Further recommendations based on these findings are presented and limitations of the study are acknowledged.

## Chapter Nine

### Discussion and conclusion

Developing a practice requires the formation of a community whose members can engage with one another and thus acknowledge each other as participants. As a consequence, practice entails the negotiation of ways of being a person in that context. (Wenger, 1998, p. 149)

#### 9 Introduction

This research project took an interpretive stance as it set out to explore teachers' beliefs and practices about writing in New Zealand primary schools during a time of ongoing social, economic, political and curriculum change. Challenged by one teacher's dilemma, her uncertainty about the direction and expectations for teaching writing, this study asked: What's happening out there in writing classrooms?

Throughout the thesis the importance of social, political, educational and historical contexts for teaching and learning writing has been recognised. Nine of the ten teachers had personally experienced paradigm shifts in writing theory and practice as a result of changes in curriculum policy and direction over the course of their teaching. The English curriculum document, *English in the New Zealand curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1994) had been influencing and guiding teachers' pedagogy for eleven years at the time of data collection, and the *New Zealand Curriculum: Draft for consultation* (Ministry of Education, 2006b) was being discussed in schools. Interestingly, it was not so much the introduction of the draft curriculum that created debate, but rather the impact of the 1994 English

Curriculum that continued to direct teachers' conversations about how to teach genres and level students' written texts.

This chapter discusses the findings in relation to the research questions posed in Chapter Four and is set out according to three areas of the research process. The first two research discussions relate to Phase One, the teachers' self-report of their writing practices, and the third area of research responds to Phase Two, a case study observation of one teacher's classroom practice. These two phases are examined independently as the research recognises that self-reported data often presents differently from observed practice (Parr & Limbrick, 2010).

In Phase One, the first two research questions allowed me to investigate *what* ten primary school teachers' practice looked like at a particular point in time. What were they "saying, thinking and doing" in regards to teaching writing? *What* did the teachers talk about when describing their enacted practices? I wondered if their writing practices were similar or quite varied. Were the teachers confident with their pedagogical content knowledge or did they voice concerns? I was also interested in *why* the teachers taught writing in a specific way. The teacher interview data allowed me to consider *who* (socially situated identities) was doing *what* (socially situated practice or activity) with regards to teaching writing, and *why* (justification) they did it this way when apprenticing their writers in classroom communities of practice. This component of the study adds to the growing research on New Zealand primary school teachers' beliefs about teaching writing in the classroom (Dix, et al., 2011; Gadd, 2009; Glasswell, Parr, & McNaughton, 2003; Limbrick, et al., 2008; Parr, 2011).

The second area of research in Phase One responds to research questions 3 and 4, and again analysed the teachers' talk. In this section I was

interested in the teachers' subscription to the various theoretical and pedagogical Writing Discourses. When the teachers talked about their beliefs and practices, analysis of their self-reported discourse revealed their positioning, that is, how they were located and how they located themselves in Writer, Text and Social Discourses. Discourse analysis gave me a deeper insight into the teachers' explanations of *why* they practised writing in a particular way and allowed me to better understand the writing theories they subscribed to. I was able to explore the teachers' differing ways of conceptualising writing and the eclectic mix of Writing Discourses that shaped their practice. These discursive practices revealed their individual professional identities as teachers of writing. At this point in time, I have been unable to locate any research that provides an overview of New Zealand primary school teachers' engagement with the different writing theories and practices. This study adds significantly to the research field on New Zealand teachers' professional identities and their location in Writing Discourses.

Phase Two presented a third area of research and allowed me to observe *how* one teacher put her theoretical beliefs and practices into action. For this phase of the research study I was interested in the implementation of scaffolding theories and in particular *how* Kat scaffolded her writers. The development of two analytical frameworks allowed me to observe closely and describe and interpret *how* one teacher scaffolded a range of young learners to write a character study. Furthermore, a discussion on Kat's engagement with the Writing Discourses is explored and compared to earlier interview data. While the research literature continues to investigate teaching instruction as scaffolding practice, this study significantly contributes to the research field as it presents scaffolding as a collaborative and participatory activity and tracks students' writing progress.

While the data were discussed and interpreted in some depth during analysis reported in Chapters Five, Six, Seven and Eight, this chapter presents an overall discussion of the research findings and makes links to previous research literature in relation to the research questions posed. The research process is critiqued in terms of the usefulness of the metaphors and the limitations of the research process. Conclusions are drawn and the significance of the writing project findings is advocated. Finally, recommendations for further research are made.

### **9.1 Ten teachers talk teaching writing**

The first question, posed in Phase One of the research study, asked: *What* beliefs and practices characterised a group of ten New Zealand primary school teachers? *Why* do they teach writing this way? Chapter Five presented the teachers' self-reported data, revealing rich and detailed descriptions of their practices and beliefs. This study demonstrates that the teachers' practices are multilayered and complex, thus confirming the research literature (B. Bell, 2011; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Leach & Moon, 1999; Leinhardt & Steele, 2005). The teachers expressed many commonalities in their beliefs and their reported practices, but indicated they enacted these in different ways. This study recognises that teachers' practice is discursive; they draw from a range of knowledges to make personal teaching decisions (B. Bell, 2011; Shulman, 1987).

The teachers' self-reported practices are examined in relation to the literature reviewed in the first three chapters. However, it must be noted that in Chapter Two the literature on writing is set out according to three Writing Discourses rather than to the literature on effective writing practice. This is partly due to my interest in interpreting teachers' engagement with Writing Discourses, but also because, as I pointed out in Chapter One, international programmes and literacy initiatives are based on research into effective teaching or on reading data, "there is

little evidence related specifically to the teaching of writing” (Fisher, 2006, p. 195).

### *Commonalities*

In terms of commonalities, the findings showed that the teachers organised themselves around a set of shared beliefs (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). These shared beliefs indicated that the teachers established common purposes in their classroom communities as they supported their students to move from a peripheral understanding of writing tasks to insider knowledge as they gained expertise as independent writers. The teachers in this study described multiple, complex, thoughtful decisions for apprenticing writers, drawing from a range of knowledges, in particular, subject knowledge of writing, knowledge of pedagogy and knowledge of their learners. The importance of teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge to support teaching decisions is discussed in Chapter One. The findings from this study resonate with points raised earlier. The Educational Review Office (June, 2007) recognised that ineffective teaching of writing could be improved substantially if teachers’ subject and pedagogical knowledge were enhanced. Limbrick et al. (2008) found that teachers’ knowledge of writing was deepened by moderating and levelling writing alongside collegial conversations.

The overriding and common message that emerged from this part of the study was the teachers’ shared practices, their talk focused on their learners. This focus is reflective of Writer Discourse (see 2.2) and is evident in New Zealand educational policy documents as outlined in the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) and in the Ministry text books (Ministry of Education, 2003a, 2006a). The notion of the writer being central to all teaching and learning decisions reflects expectations of effective teacher pedagogy as stated in the ERO Report (June, 2007) on Quality Teachers.



The teachers' core belief – that the learner is central to their decision making - reflects a view of writing as a situated practice (NLG, 1996). The teachers' talk described this notion in several ways. First, they recognised that situated practice is about making connections, utilising available resources, including students' life worlds. This was evident when the teachers encouraged the students to express themselves in the written word, to write from the self (Calkins, 1991; Graves, 1983) and to articulate personal, social and cultural experiences (Calkins, 1991; McNaughton, 2002; NLG, 1996). Kalantzis and Cope (2005) refer to this process as students "experiencing the known" – and the teachers described this as enabling writers to "tap into inner worlds" for writing content and to "tell their stories", as exemplified in 5.2.1. The teachers considered that this orientation to learning provided realistic and meaningful content for the students' writing, allowed them to make choices about writing topics and to maintain ownership of the writing process. Gadd (2009) considered writing about meaningful contexts as a necessary factor for struggling writers. Putting learners at the centre of the teaching and connecting to their prior knowledge is recognised as effective teaching by cognitive and social theorists (Calkins, 1991; Comber & Kamler, 2004; Healy, 2008; Moll, et al., 1992). Importantly, McNaughton (2002) argued that when teachers find ways to connect with students by linking to personal and cultural experiences there is a greater opportunity for students to learn; there is a "meeting of minds". Thus the findings of this study suggest that the teachers shared a common understanding: they all valued their learners' individual world experiences to provide rich material for writing, as a means for personal expression, and for developing writer's voice.

Teachers also sought to promote additional connections for their students. Common practices for this were reported as all ten teachers planned to teach new learning based on commonly experienced content

related to other curriculum topics, events happening in the school or a teachable moment that emerged (see 5.3.1). Teachers wanted to ensure that new learning was contextualised and added further meaning and purpose for the students. The teachers deliberately set up opportunities of situated practice so that students could experience the new, as recognised by Kalantzis and Cope (2005). To make sense of new learning teachers connected to elements of familiarity, so that unfamiliar parts were made intelligible. The teachers scaffolded their writers' knowledge of text structures by asking them to argue the benefits of the Civil Defence Disaster day, write instructions based on class-cooking experiences, scribe Thumbelina songs after listening to the traditional tale; and they learned "the secret" of why they were writing to explain seat-belt safety (see 5.3.1). The teachers made further connections for their learners by contextualising writing experiences, giving the writing a purpose, a form and, in most cases, an audience. The teachers' desire to contextualise writing is an important finding, although it was established that one teacher still taught genre prescriptively as a staged sequence of learning as discussed in Chapter Two.

Common practices were also indicated when the teachers talked about building a classroom culture that supported the learners and their learning (see 5.2.1). Teachers were keen to instil positive attitudes to writing. Faye talked about developing "a desire to write", building "a passion" for writing. Discussions from the senior teachers indicated developing attitudes of risk taking, "to have a go". They wanted students to feel empowered and take ownership of their writing, but they also acknowledged that learning to write was different for all students. These findings meet the recommendations proposed by both the ERO Report (June, 2007) and by Gadd's (2009) proposal for supporting reluctant writers.

These teachers fostered positive attitudes in a variety of ways. Mary talked about motivating and immersing students in rich texts. Gail valued the role of praise to affirm quality writing. Linda emphasised celebrating the writers and their writing through teacher and peer feedback: "We celebrate children's success and we share them and say how wonderful they are so they feel they are writers." The teachers all valued a classroom culture where students felt safe to explore and share ideas. Not only did the teachers teach writing, they aimed to teach a love of writing. The teachers' recognition of the impact that students' attitudes have on their writing is affirmed in the literature. Boscolo and Gelati (2007) maintain that students build a set of beliefs based on their writing experiences and these affect their motivation and desire to engage in writing. These authors, like Watkins (1999), explain that when writing is taught in a "rigid way" and teachers expect conformity, students' passion to communicate is destroyed. While several of the teachers in this study taught genres in a "rigid way" they sought to make contextual connections.

In summary, the ten teachers shared common practices associated with valuing learners and their learning. The teachers sought a sense of connectedness, encouraging students to write about experiences that affirmed students as having something worthwhile to say and to share in their writing classroom communities of practice. The teachers looked for ways to contextualise learning new texts, to locate opportunities for purposeful and meaningful writing. All reported that they fostered classroom communities of practice that encouraged students to write. This key idea, of providing opportunities for writers to connect with their writing at a personal and contextual level, resonates with the literature on writing pedagogy recognising a sense of connectedness impacts on the quality of writing (Barrs & Cork, 2001; Calkins, 1991).

### *Commonalities but also differences*

Data presented in Chapter Five revealed that when the teachers talked about their ways of working in the classroom, while there were commonalities and shared understandings there were also differences in their expressed beliefs and practices. Varying practices emerged from the teachers' talk relating to their beliefs about planning, teacher-student interactions, teaching strategies and assessment. These practices revealed that the teachers created complex identities as teachers of writing (Gee, 2011b; Ivanič, 2004) something that was particularly evident in their explanation and justification of *why* they enacted preferred practices. As noted in Chapter Five, and affirmed in the literature (Gadd, 2009; Parr & Limbrick, 2010), all teachers believed that planning should provide purposeful learning, yet they selected various starting points for this, making complex decisions which indicated a valuing of different aspects of teaching writing at the time of planning. Decisions about planning ranged from such considerations as pre-task assessment data and writing samples to linking to other curriculum topics and coverage of specific genres (see 5.3.1).

Further evidence that teachers do writing differently, or exhibit a variety of practices, even when pursuing a common purpose, was demonstrated when the teachers talked about *why* they organised their students for writing in particular ways. They identified various organisational arrangements for teacher-student interactions (see 5.3.2). They all maintained that they valued whole-class teaching, but for a range of reasons, including to engage and motivate students, set learning goals, model, and at times share and respond to student writing. Teachers also grouped students in different ways and for a range of instructional writing purposes, basing groupings sometimes on ability, sometimes on learning needs. Varying groupings according to the purpose for learning, needs of the students, and management of writing tasks resonates with

the research of Wray, Medwell, Fox, and Poulson (2000). These authors claim that: “effective teachers make decisions about the grouping of children in their classrooms ... organisational patterns are chosen for their fitness for the teacher’s purpose at the time” (p. 76). Findings in this study indicated that this small sample of New Zealand primary school teachers varied grouping for a range of teaching purposes.

Additionally, the findings indicate that teachers use varying teaching strategies. For example, goal-setting was a practice common to all teachers, providing a cognitive focus for students when creating texts. Differences in purpose and implementation were evident. Some goals were class-oriented; others were developed for individual writers. Some goals were based on text or genre criteria; others related to the writer’s personal growth. Some goals were teacher directed; other goals were co-constructed with the student/s. The ten teachers also stressed the importance of making connections to the class learning goals, regarding this practice as supportive to student learning. These practices reflected the findings of Parr and Limbrick’s (2010) research that showed effective teachers articulate the learning aims clearly and share these with students. In their explanations and in their justification of their practice the teachers in this study revealed that goal setting met a range of learning purposes.

Findings indicate that conferencing conversations, as described by Smith and Elley (1997), Hood (1997) and Graves (1983, 1994) are part of teacher writing practice. However, the reasons *why* the teachers implemented conferences the way they did varied. Teachers taught in numerous interactive spaces: sometimes the teachers roved and moved to work beside students, at other times the students remained on the mat. Purposes for conferencing varied: sometimes the teachers monitored class goals, at other times the goals were individualised for each student.

Sometimes the students booked in for conferences, at other times the teachers roved and conferenced on the move, as exemplified in 5.3.2. The “construction zone” was sometimes used to explicitly teach aspects of writing; in other instances teachers checked and monitored students’ progress as formative assessment practice as discussed by Smith and Elley (1997). The variety of conferencing methods suggests that teachers, while focused on their learners’ needs, are flexible and respond according to the situation and to the student at a particular time.

Diverse practice is also revealed in the teachers’ elaboration of students’ learning in peer response situations. The teachers explained *why* peer interactions suited different purposes, different groupings and different spaces. They said that for some students, peer talk was a time to share their writing with an audience; others received feedback to improve their writing; and others worked alongside their partner to edit writing. This discursive practice is affirmed in the literature. For example, Phillips and Ward (1992), Hood (1997), Calkins (1991), and *Dancing with the pen* (Ministry of Education, 1992) view peer response as an opportunity for students to listen to each other’s work and pose questions or make suggestions for improvement. In this study the students sometimes stayed and worked at their tables during peer interactions, at other times they gathered on the mat. The teachers’ justifications for *why* they organised students for writing varied, according to their professional beliefs, and, in particular, their beliefs about how children best learn to write. As a group, all recognised that cognitive learning was enhanced through social and collaborative interactions.

Another example of varying enacted practice is evident in the findings related to assessment. Formative assessment practices were part of teachers’ dialogue. The data disclosed that teachers ascertained students’ prior understandings. The teachers reported that they gathered

information continuously in the classroom to find out what their students knew about writing, and “built a picture” of what the students could do, then used this to inform their teaching. This is a key factor for effective teaching, one that is widely acknowledged as part of the teaching-learning cycle (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Sadler, 1998; Timperley & Parr, 2004) and that is noted in Ministry texts (Ministry of Education, 2003a, 2007).

The study indicates that the teachers were confident with their formative assessment practices. They talked about employing a range of data-gathering methods to assess, teach and monitor learners. These methods included checklists, co-constructed criteria, observations of students in action, comments on written samples, pretesting, self-assessment, peer assessment and reflection of progress against individual and class goals (see 5.3.4). This range of formative assessment practices is evident in the work of New Zealanders: Ward (2000), Hood (1997), Smith and Elley (1997) and Timperley and Parr (2004). Furthermore, all teachers reported that they chose to work with students individually for conferences or learning conversations. One teacher explained: “I work with them individually so they know where they’re heading.” Another recognised that individual students had different teaching needs: “One child might only just need a quick reminder, another child might need complete teaching.” In this study, eight of the ten teachers worked collaboratively with their students, sharing assessment data and setting personal goals (5.3.4). For these teachers engaging with writers at an individual and personal level enabled them to connect with each writer and to differentiate their teaching. In terms of assessment procedures, however, the teachers’ ways of working were diverse and complex. Their assessment practices reflect aspects of all Writing Discourses, as discussed in Chapter Two, and demonstrate that while as a group the

teachers drew from a wide range of theoretical positions all focused on enhancing their students' writing abilities.

### *Confidence in practice and critique*

At a time of change and reform, the teachers' confidence in their own practice was an unexpected finding. These teachers shared their thinking with assurance, passion and critique. The study indicated that the teachers were able to express their pedagogical content knowledge as they confidently described their ways of working: *what* they did as teachers of writing. These teachers explained *why* they planned, grouped and interacted, and assessed students' progress in particular ways. The teachers justified their decisions in relation to their beliefs about teaching writing, what worked for them and their students, as well as how a practice responded to a particular school-wide policy. This study suggests, however, that while teachers are appreciative of collegial conversations to help them understand how to level students' texts, as indicated by Limbrick et al. (2008) they also feel confident enough in their own practice to challenge school and syndicate policy when presented with different "ways of saying, thinking and doing" writing. Wohlwend (2009) regarded critique from grassroots level as necessary for sense-making and argued that teachers must get past self-monitoring as that can keep teachers compliant and complicit.

In this study these teachers questioned Ministry, school or syndicate policy when it did not sit comfortably with their personal beliefs and understandings. The teachers' dilemmas and conflicts experienced in this study can be explained by Timperley and Parr (2009) who claimed: "In reality, policy-making is not just the prerogative of a central Ministry but, rather, occurs at all layers of the system as the policy intent is re-translated by actors at each level" (p. 138). Timperley and Parr (2009) point out the complexity involved in policy implementation and the impact different systemic layers ultimately have on interpreting policy as



classroom practice. This research study revealed that the teachers demonstrated confidence and self-assurance in their decision-making when explaining their classroom pedagogy and several teachers questioned conflicting messages regarding policy and practice. For example, one teacher lamented the fact that school literacy policy had placed increased focus on writing transactional texts because this did not allow her to teach expressive or personal writing as much as she had in the past. Another teacher was irritated at being directed to teach young children a specific set of genres at an established time according to syndicate policy. This did not fit with her class programme's current contexts or her beliefs about how young students learn. She questioned the suitability of teaching a Text Discourse perspective in this manner, limiting her "ways of working" (see 5.3.4). The teachers' reporting demonstrates reflection and critique of assessment practice especially in relation to levelling students' writing. While some teachers recognised that moderation deepened their own subject knowledge, others were more critical of the expectation to level students' writing. The teachers challenged, for example, the lack of consistency between the two national assessment tools, asTTle and MOE Writing Exemplars; they questioned the fuzzy boundaries between each of the levels. And others challenged the EiNZC objectives in terms of the exact meaning stated in the descriptors. These issues are similar to those highlighted in the English Curriculum Stocktake report (McGee, et al., 2003) and in Limbrick and Knight's (2005) research on enhancing teachers' assessment practices. However, this study demonstrates the teachers' ability to critique policy impacting on their own practice.

### *Changing practices*

This study reveals that these teachers' were able to talk about and draw on their pedagogical content knowledge of writing. The teachers hold strong personal beliefs about teaching writing, they could verbalise *what* they taught, *how* they taught writing and *why* they did it this way. While

they believe in common and shared understandings there is also strength in their discursive practice. Furthermore, the study demonstrates teachers' reflective practice and how this influences their teaching of writing. Kat, Mary and Eliza acknowledged that the discussions relating to the Writing Exemplars prompted changes to their practice. Glen talked about how she now focused on texts in a different way (see 5.3.4). The teachers' personal and professional beliefs were challenged, partly through collegial discussions and partly through experiences in professional development programmes. There was talk of teacher changes in writing practice over time. These included a shift in focus from mostly assessing surface conventions to analysing deeper features of writing, collaborative conversations around writing matrices enhancing their subject knowledge, and a move away from prescriptive teaching of genres to take a more rhetorical stance. These primary school teachers also talked about unsolved challenges and reflected on how to "best" teach writers who had lost their enthusiasm or were difficult to engage, particularly those boys whose "heads were still in the sandpit digging roads" (see 5.4.3). The findings in this study indicate that when faced with challenges, the teachers questioned policy change and different expectations for "doing" writing. They either reconsidered their pedagogical content knowledge to find more efficient ways to teach or they ignored school policy and continued with their own way of teaching writing. Several teachers recognised writing practice as an evolving process (B. Bell, 2011; Ivanič, 2004; Leach & Moon, 1999) and created new identities, exploring new and different ways of "being" a writing teacher. Teacher identity is explored further in the discussion on Writing Discourses.

In summary, this discussion responds to research question one that asked *what* characterised the beliefs and practices of a group of primary school writing teachers and *why* they taught writing in a particular way. To

conclude, commonalities in teaching writing as described by the ten teachers affirm the notion of a professional community of practice (Lave, 1991; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, June, 2006) amongst New Zealand primary teachers of writing. The teachers described shared goals and shared purposes. While common understandings draw from a professional community of practice, it is also evident that individual teachers had preferred ways of working in their classrooms. These teachers described their different ways of “doing” writing and justifying *what* they are doing and *why* these practices benefited their students. Moreover, the teachers’ practices changed and evolved as they reflected on other ways to teach writing. This study reflects the research findings of Limbrick, et al. (2008) and suggests that when teachers justify *why* they teach a particular way, reflective practice is evident.

The importance of teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge to support teaching decisions is emphasised. The findings from this study resonate with points raised earlier. The Educational Review Office (June, 2007) recognised that ineffective teaching of writing could be improved substantially if teachers’ subject and pedagogical content knowledge were enhanced. Limbrick et al., (2008) found that teachers’ knowledge of levelling writing was deepened through moderation alongside collegial conversations.

Furthermore, the findings in this study value many of the practices identified in the literature associated with Writer and Text perspectives. The teachers drew from a range of knowledges, including pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of subject matter, pedagogical practice and knowledge of their learners, to make personal teaching decisions for various reasons, but primarily in response to their interpretation of students’ requirements. This detailed description of the practices of a small sample of New Zealand primary school teachers provides evidence

that teaching writing is a complex practice and from a teaching perspective adds a richness and diversity to New Zealand primary school classrooms. These findings have implications for future teachers' practice, as discussed in section 9.5.

## **9.2 Teacher identity located in Writing Discourses**

The second area of investigation in Phase One focused on *what* Writing Discourses the teachers engaged with and, more specifically, in what way the Writing Discourses shaped their identities as teachers of writing. Although the findings in Chapter Five captured and interpreted characteristics of *what* a group of teachers did, their commonalities and differences when teaching writing, it did not explain the theories behind their *differing practices*. Chapter Six provided evidence of the way this group of New Zealand primary school teachers positioned themselves in relation to Writer, Text and Social Discourses characterised by the discourse markers explained in 4.6.2.

This study resonates with Ivanic's (2004) work as she proposed that "different ways of conceptualising literacy lie at the heart of 'discourses' in the broadest sense" and that these are recognisable according to "values, beliefs and practices which lead to particular forms of situated action, to particular decisions, choices and omissions, as well as to particular wordings" (p. 220). The findings in this study described and interpreted *how* the ten New Zealand teachers talked about their theoretical understandings of writing practice; that is, how they engaged with the three Writing Discourses. These teachers projected themselves as certain kinds of writing teachers determined by their subscription, or not, to certain kinds of practices (see 6.4). Their discursive positioning exemplifies how the Writer, Text and Social views of teaching writing created differences in their "ways of saying, doing and being" teachers of writing. The following discussion first identifies the prominence of each

of the Writing Discourses in the teachers' practices. It then discusses the teachers' location in the various Discourses as identified in the findings.

### *Valuing the Writing Discourses*

Discourse analysis of the teachers' participation in the three Writing Discourses aligns with the research literature and recognises that teachers' identities are constructed in different ways (Hyland, 2002; Ivanič, 2004; Locke, 2005; Wohllwend, 2009). This study explored the teachers' uptake of writing theory and practice through the lens of Writer, Text and Social Discourse perspectives. To summarise, when engaging strongly in Writer Discourse teachers are positioned as facilitators supporting student choice, encouraging messing with writing as students shape the telling of personal stories and experiences. Text Discourse, however, positions teachers as linguistic experts, directly teaching a progression of procedures for constructing set genres with identifiable language features (Knapp & Watkins, 2005). When teachers are located in Social Discourse they are presented as interactive, engaging in dialogic conversations and supporting students to design culturally appropriate digital multimodal texts (NLG, 1996). Power relationships are shared. This group of teachers, through their sense making of best writing practice, positioned themselves discursively in various arrangements within and across the Writing Discourses.

### *Teachers' practices instantiate Writer and Text Discourse*

What became evident in this study was that the majority of teachers' exhibited a strong affinity to both Writer and Text Discourse practices. These Discourses created a major component of how they described and explained their teaching of writing. Nine of the ten teachers referenced Text Discourse and all ten indicated they engaged in Writer Discourse practices as exemplified in Table 14.

Writer Discourse was evident in all of the teachers' talk about their writing beliefs and practice, in spite of the introduction of a Text-based curriculum in 1994. Teachers still employed teaching strategies introduced in the 1980s, such as conferencing, teacher think-aloud demonstrations and personal goal-setting, as described in the literature (Fitzgerald, 1987; Graves, 1983; Phillips & Ward, 1992). Furthermore, the teachers encouraged their students' personal voice and allowed topic choice. It is not surprising that Writer Discourse perspectives were evident in the teachers' talk as the MOE text *Dancing with the pen* (Ministry of Education, 1992) is still used in Initial Teacher Education programmes at the University of Waikato, and the writing process approach is prevalent in the most recent Ministry of Education texts on Effective Literacy Practice (Ministry of Education, 2003a, 2006a). This study bears out the view that Writer Discourse is deeply embedded in teachers' "ways of working" and in "being" a teacher of writing (Dix, 2003c; Flower & Hayes, 1981; Graves, 1979; Ministry of Education, 2003a). Valuing the writer's voice was at the heart of the teachers' beliefs as specified in their discussion in sections 5.2.1 and 9.1.

From a historical perspective, however, it was also not unexpected that Text Discourse played a strong role in the teachers' reporting. All New Zealand primary teachers had experienced teaching writing from a Text perspective, with its strong focus on the genre approach. The genre approach introduced by EiNZC (MOE, 1994) has been supported by commercial texts, national assessment tools and professional development programmes that continued to shape teachers' practice at the time of data collection (Derewianka, 1990; Education Department of Western Australia, 1994a, 1994b; Wing-Jan, 2001b). The teachers in this study had built knowledge of how to talk about genres, and in particular grammatical knowledge of text structures. However, the debates

continue on how to teach linguistic knowledge particular to specific genres (Hood, 1997, 2003; Loane & Muir, 2010; Locke, 2010; Ward, 1998).

Even though technological advances have affected the way writing is being taught, these findings demonstrate that Writer and Text Discourse indicators formed an important part of this group of New Zealand teachers' "ways of working".

### *Teachers' practices and Social Discourse*

This study demonstrates that the teachers' self-reported talk indicated that they did not participate in Social Discourse as often as they did in Writer and Text Discourse. While nine of the ten teachers engaged in Social Discourse in various ways, only one of the ten teachers described this as her dominant or main way of working (see 6.3). This could be because Social perspectives of Writing Discourse were only beginning to be talked and written about in New Zealand, although the New London Group and its members had been writing about multiliteracies approaches since 1996.

The current curriculum document, *New Zealand Curriculum for English-medium teaching and learning in years 1-13* (Ministry of Education, 2007), which promotes future-oriented views, was at the time of data collection not yet embedded in the teachers' pedagogical content knowledge although the draft document was part of teachers' professional discussions. The MOE text *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1-4* (ELP) (Ministry of Education, 2003a) was printed earlier and was available to teachers. *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5-8* (ELP) (Ministry of Education, 2006a) makes some references to Social Discourse for writing. It introduces "dimensions of effective practice" and refers to teachers needing to consider contemporary environments which employ multimodal and digital texts. The authors state that "users of multimodal forms generate communication through a blend of linguistic, visual and

digital systems for making meaning” (p. 18), and also recognise that “the development and use of personal devices and cellular networks has made digital means of communication an inherent and indispensable part of young people’s lives” (p. 19). However, in terms of supporting teacher practice, the exemplars in the handbooks only demonstrate teaching reading with digital texts using an electronic CD Rom. There is no example of how to incorporate digital texts or multimedia texts as writing practice. There are no examples demonstrating writing as digital designing or text-making (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; NLG, 1996) or writing as a multimodal process (Kress, 2000b), or how to build student knowledge of the semiotic grammars required to make meaning in paper-based and digital texts (Anstey & Bull, 2006; Kress & Bezemer, 2009). Many of the teachers in this study spoke in passing of limited access to multimedia equipment, and often wrestled with the reliability of technology in their classrooms. There appears to be a gap here, one that Timperley and Parr (2009) described as a “middle space” between policy and practice. While the role private providers play in filling the middle space is beyond the scope of this study, universities and teacher educators have a key role to play in ensuring current research is made available to students.

The following discussion illustrates that teachers of writing engage in various arrangements of writing theories and networks of practice to explain and make sense of their beliefs in a changing world (Ivanič, 2004; Wohlwend, 2009).

### *Teacher identities: Taking a dominant position*

The findings in this study revealed discursive positioning as teachers subscribed to the Writing Discourses as demonstrated in 6.4, and summarised in Table 14. Significantly, many of the teachers signalled dominant positioning. They positioned themselves more strongly in one particular discourse “by the way in which particular beliefs and practices



are foregrounded at the expense of others” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 227). In this group seven of the ten teachers located themselves in a dominant Writing Discourse. Five of the ten identified strongly with Writer Discourse, one teacher identified strongly with Text Discourse, and one teacher with Social Discourse. The other three teachers, however, took a more balanced or eclectic position. The location of these positions was not based solely on historical teaching experiences, as one teacher was new to the profession. Other factors must come into play.

Davies and Harré (2001) argue that by owning a particular position teachers take a vantage point, a lens to view and interpret not only their beliefs and practices but also other [writing] situations or possibilities:

Once having taken up a particular position as one’s own, a person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position in terms of the particular images, metaphors, story lines and concepts which are made relevant within the particular discursive practice in which they are positioned.  
(p. 262)

Assuming a particular dominant position gives teachers security and self-confidence and allows them to speak about their practice with some authority. They can confidently take on the storylines to communicate their perspectives, view the world in a particular way and create a community of practice that apprentices students in those representations and ways of being a writer. The findings in this study, however, suggest that while each discourse offers teachers a particular stance or position, it can lead to a narrowing of focus and perspective. This stance is similar to that implied by Locke (2005).

Although the literature (Davies & Harré, 2001; Gee, 2011b) recognises that teacher identity changes with multiple and ongoing social interactions, the notion of a dominant position in the Writing Discourses suggests a narrowed view for teaching writing and raises questions.

What writing practices are being offered to students in those writing communities of practice? Will students' access to a wider range of writing experiences be marginalised? (Luke, 1992; O' Brien, 2001; Sandretto, 2006). This study proposes that an awareness of the various Writing Discourses and how a particular stance positions individuals as teachers of writing is imperative for reflective and critical literacy practice. When teachers choose to situate themselves in a particular space by taking on a particular identity as teachers of writing it affects what they offer their students. This proposition is supported in the literature on Writing as Discourse by authors such as Ivanic (2004) and Wohlwend (2009) and critical literacy theorists such as Sandretto (2011), Janks (2010), Kalantzis and Cope (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012). This aspect is discussed further in the context of overlooking other Writing Discourses.

#### *Teacher identities: Overlooking particular Writing Discourses*

A significant finding of this research study was that some teachers did not engage in all available Writing Discourses. Their practice was not eclectic. While eight out of ten teachers were positioned or positioned themselves across all three Writing Discourses, two of the teachers engaged in only two of the three, as revealed through the interviews and discussed in 6.4.1 (see Table 14). In recognising that each Discourse sets up different expectations for teaching, learning and assessing writing (Hyland, 2002; Ivanič, 2004; Locke, 2005; Wohlwend, 2009), teachers' practices shape *who* gets *what* as a student learns. In Gail's class, it appeared, the students had no experiences of Social Discourse; they did not get to write or teach each other how to construct multimodal or digital texts, or to debate and discuss multiple meanings. And in Trinny's class, it appeared that the students did not have access to Text Discourse. From the teacher's reporting, the students didn't experience modelling of the different genres and the social functions they served. This class didn't appear to have analysed or deconstructed transactional texts to explore genre-based grammars and linguistic features. This finding of teachers'

disconnection from a Writing Discourse raises several points. First, it could be suggested that this stance reduces opportunities for students to connect in a “magical space,” through a “meeting of minds” (McNaughton, 2002). It could be argued therefore that the teachers who worked from a narrower theoretical view of writing engaging in only two of the three Writing Discourses marginalised learning opportunities for some students (Luke, 1992; O' Brien, 2001; Sandretto, 2006). A second point recognises that critical reflection beyond one's way of “knowing, doing and being” a teacher of writing is enhanced by a deepening of pedagogical content knowledge (B. Bell, 2011). Implications for professional learning are discussed later.

### *Teacher identities: In merging Discourses*

This study revealed that the majority of the teachers merged elements of the three Writing Discourses (see 6.4.2). While three of the ten teachers revealed discursive affiliations in a relatively balanced way, as exemplified in Table 14, it was evident that the practices of eight of the ten teachers drew on the three Writing Discourses in some way. These teachers to various degrees negotiated their identities according to their beliefs, teaching purposes, and contexts as they tried to make sense of their social, political and educational teaching worlds (Ivanič, 2004; Wohlwend, 2009). Most of the teachers sought ways to allow discourses to work alongside each other, as discussed by Sumara and Davis (2006), creating new hybrids, different ways of “doing” and “being” a teacher of writing. This affirms Ivanič's (2004) claim: “[H]uman agents are continuously recombining and transforming discursive resources as they deploy them for their own purposes.... Actual instantiations of discourses are not always homogenous, but are often discursively hybrid, drawing on two or more discourses” (p. 224). Gee (1999) too maintained that “sometimes what we build is quite similar to what we have built before; sometimes it is not. But language-in-action is always and everywhere an active building process” (p. 11). These findings

indicate that the teachers who merged overlapping discourses in a balanced way were conscious of the range of ways of “doing” writing and “being” a teacher of writing. However, a number of questions are raised. Did these teachers have a deeper pedagogical content knowledge and knowledge of their learners? Were they more reflective on their practice, seeking ways to make a difference when apprenticing learner writers in their communities of practice? And are teachers who operate in multiple discourses, subscribing to all three Writing Discourses, better positioned to teach writing than those who take up a dominant, single-focus stance?

*Teacher identities: Conflict and discursive positioning*

This study raises another point in relation to teachers’ positioning in the Writing Discourses. Several teachers talked about experiencing conflict within or across Writing Discourses (see 6.4.3). This was often initiated by Ministry or by school policy when specific Writing Discourses were promoted as discussed earlier. The research literature proposes that conflict between Discourses can be viewed from different perspectives.

From a sociocritical perspective, theorists would argue that conflicting discourses emerge when members of the community feel disempowered, with no say in changes or policies that govern their practices (Healy, 2008; Janks & Vasquez, 2011; Sandretto, 2011). From this perspective, when Writing Discourses compete or clash and there is no explanation of or negotiation on the policies that created the conflict, then conflict becomes an issue of power. This was evident in the case of Rosie, who felt she had no option, but to follow school policy and teach specific genres to beginning writers. While Rosie quickly implemented policy, she then taught writing her own way (see 6.4.3). Linda was keen to engage more intensively with Writer Discourse but had to put it aside to concentrate on Text Discourse. When a gap exists between policy and

practice, teachers begin to question how to make sense of conflicting perspectives.

Wohlwend (2009) in particular argues that the assessment of writing is a contested site, and proposes that teacher educators need to challenge those institutions that “create the dilemmas and their immobilising effects” (p. 341). In this study the issue for teachers was not formative classroom-based assessment; rather their reported dilemmas related to assessment policy that demanded the students writing be levelled by comparing their written texts against National Curriculum criteria. Five of the ten teachers reported feeling disempowered by conflicting elements in the Writing Discourses and excluded from decision making about some aspects related to teaching writing.

From another perspective, the findings indicated that such conflicts and dilemmas prompted the teachers to critique and reflect on their own practice (see 6.4.3). Kat questioned her own identity as a teacher of writing, and whether she should be teaching genres prescriptively to young writers as proposed by school and Ministry educational policy. She sought another, better way to teach writing. Other teachers critiqued school policy that positioned them in a particular way; they tried to bring the school discourses alongside their own writing discourse practices. The interview data indicated that when teachers engage in social interactions and try to interpret and make sense of colliding, conflicting, or even competing discourses, they have an opportunity to transform their own identities and their classroom communities of practice. Several teachers talked about changing practices and creating new identities and new “ways of doing and being” a teacher of writing (see 5.3.4). Evolution of identities is affirmed in the literature (Davies & Harré, 2001; Ivanič, 2004; Sumara & Davis, 2006; Wohlwend, 2009). Davies and Harré (2001) maintain that the socially interactive nature of teaching impacts on

teacher identities: "An individual emerges through the processes of social interaction, not as a relatively fixed end product but as one who is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate" (p. 263). These teachers, through their interactions with colleagues, professional development providers, and literacy handbooks, experienced different ways doing writing.

Wenger (1998) argues that it is inevitable that tensions will exist between individuals and collectivities and that it is through their ways of acting and interacting with others that they deal with such issues. Additionally Davies and Harré (2001) explain that contradictory discourses do not define a person but provide a basis for further negotiation. This study proposes that each teacher takes up different positions within and across Writing Discourses, reflecting their multiple identities as a teacher of writing. This study resonates with the research literature which recognises that teachers' identities are shaped by social interactions and engagements with the differing Writing Discourses (Hyland, 2002; Ivanič, 2004), but acknowledges that conflicting discourses present two pathways - one of empowerment, the other disempowering.

In summary, the previous discussion set out to respond to the research questions 3 and 4 presented in Phase One. The research asks *what* writing discourses, knowledge, understandings and practices shape the teachers' identities as teachers of writing. Furthermore, it questions *the ways* the teachers positioned themselves in the Writing Discourses by subscribing to Writer, Text and or Social Discourses. This study indicates that New Zealand primary school teachers are likely to take on various dominant positions in the different Writing Discourses and offer their students a selected view of writing. But also, the teachers drew from one or two of the other Discourses and merged these with their practice. At times colliding discourses created conflict and challenged teachers and their

“ways of thinking, saying and doing” writing. It could be suggested that so long as teachers’ professional communities of practice view this as an empowering process where issues are debated and negotiated and teachers’ voices are heard, then both professional and classroom communities of practice have opportunities for change, to constantly evolve and be enhanced, offering different ways of “being a writer” rather than remaining fixed and static.

### **9.3 A community of practice: Scaffolding writing**

The third area of research investigated the teaching and learning of writing in a classroom community of practice. In particular, the research questions 1 and 2 in Phase Two focused on *how* the teacher scaffolded her writers. Scaffolding definitions have been debated and their effectiveness discussed in a variety of ways. Gaps in the literature identified in Chapter Three included the following:

- The research literature emphasised the effectiveness of the teacher’s practice, but the voice of the learner was under-represented in terms of *how* they participated during scaffolding interactions (van de Pol, et al., 2010);
- Teacher scaffolding for self-efficacy and emotional engagement during writing is sparse (Eshach, et al., 2011; van de Pol, et al., 2010). The role of affective engagement requires further research;
- How to best measure complex, interactive behaviour (van de Pol, et al., 2010) provides new challenges.

How to best measure complex, interactive and scaffolded learning was a challenge I faced within the study, as indicated by Leinhardt and Steele (2005) and discussed in 4.6.3. This concern was also raised by van de Pol, Volman and Beishuizen (2010), who argued that qualitative measures do not do justice to complex, situated classroom practices. However, I feel the development of a literature-based scaffolding framework based on a

sociocultural model of *participatory scaffolding* framework enabled me to analyse interactions in terms of the task, the teacher expert and the students' responses as set out in 4.6.3. The addition of coded student responses to the analytical heuristic also made it clear that teaching and learning interactions needed to be observed over time to fully understand the iterative and synergistic nature of effective scaffolding on learning. This observation affirms the work of Mercer (2008) who stated: "A temporal analysis can help us see how students' ideas change through the extended process of interaction with a teacher and other students, and how new concepts, ways of using language, and ways of solving problems are appropriated" (p. 56). The resulting five factors were identified and set out in *a synergy of participatory scaffolding* framework (SPSFW) discussed in Chapter Four, seen in Table 7. For the following discussion, I use these two frameworks to reflect on Kat's "way of working" as a teacher of writing in response to the research questions: *How* does one teacher scaffold writing in her classroom? Is there evidence of adjustment and handover for learning? Kat's engagement in the Writing Discourses is then discussed in response to research questions 3 and 4.

Previous analysis of Kat's participation and engagement (see Chapters Seven and Eight) revealed that this teacher employed a range of writing practices underpinned by Writer, Text and Social Discourses of writing. Based on these findings I recognised that the teacher's selective use of writing practices led to teaching and learning that was multi-layered and iterative, but was also systematic, collaborative and adjusted for students' learning. Scaffolding as an interactive and complex practice aligns with the literature (Bruner, 1996; Many, 2002; Sharpe, 2006; Stone, 1998b; Warwick & Maloch, 2003). The case-study findings, however, reveal *how* Kat created a synergy of scaffolds: *how* she sought to



orchestrate a “meeting of minds” through multi-layered scaffolding practice.

### **9.3.1 A multilayered scaffolding practice**

The findings from the three classroom-teaching episodes indicated that this teacher’s scaffolding interactions were complex and interwoven with multiple layers of scaffolding. While Sharpe (2006) identified scaffolding at the macro (“designed-in”) and micro-levels (“contingent”) when teaching her intermediate history class, findings show that this teacher could be seen to additionally scaffold students *close-up*, teaching students at a personal level.

#### *Macro-level scaffolding design*

Teaching at the macro-level, the top layer of scaffolding involved systematically embedding three design elements. Kat’s first “designed in” element was to focus on goal-directed learning. Her purpose was clearly articulated to the children. There was “buy in” and excitement because she made links to previous experiences of literary characters. Making connections to prior knowledge was discussed in section 9.1 and is affirmed in the literature as effective practice (Education Review Office, June, 2007; Gadd, 2009). Throughout the three Teaching Sessions, Kat kept coming back to the main goal of “we are learning to write a character description.” Her sustained and on going attention to the writing goals provided focus and direction for these students as reflected in the literature by Flower and Hayes (1981) and Wood et al. (1976). Not only did goal-directed scaffolding guide the development and structure of the students’ writing, the goals themselves became the focus for teaching by providing a reference point across all three Teaching Sessions.

The second “designed-in” element at the macro-level of scaffolding revealed that Kat situated the new learning within the framework of the

recursive writing process. The writing process takes a cognitive perspective and underpins Writer Discourse promoted by researchers such as Flower and Hayes (1986), Graves (1983), Atwell (1987) and Calkins (1991). This perspective was evident in Kat's teaching as the recursive phases of - planning, drafting and presenting writing - provided further scaffolding for goal-directed learning and also a basis for teaching and learning conversations. In the pre-write phase, Kat spent considerable time building the "field" (Halliday & Hasan, 1989), that is, developing content for writing so that students had a sound understanding of the elements of character writing. To support her students' construction of a character at the drafting stage, Kat employed exemplars from literature, a written example, and students' scripts, as discussed in Text Discourse by proponents such as Derewianka (1990), Knapp and Watkins (1994) and Wing-Jan (2001). The value of templates also aligns with Warwick's (2003) work on writing in the science classroom. Also, Kat provided multiple demonstrations by thinking out loud - showing how to take words and phrases from the plan and write sentences, order ideas and select vocabulary (Cambourne, 1988; Ward, 1992). Kat scaffolded further participation through peer discussion and co-construction of ideas and understandings. These Social Discourse practices were evident in the students' engagement in dialogic interactions. Dialogic conversations underpinned students' writing development, affirming the research of Bakhtin (1986) and Many (2002), and the classroom practices discussed by Phillips and Ward (1992) and Pritchard and Honeycutt (2007). Furthermore, students were conferenced at the edge of their ZPD and challenged to reshape and revise their texts (Calkins, 1991; Graves, 1983; Vygotsky, 1986). The students' writing was published for others to read. Teaching writing as a process approach enabled this teacher to systematically connect to other learning events by employing multiple scaffolds and responsive teaching.

The third “designed-in” element added to the layer of macro-level scaffolding. Kat employed a schematic structure to scaffold the students’ planning, talking and thinking about their writing. Students’ understandings of characterisation were systematically scaffolded and the construction of their texts was based on three features. This form of scaffolding, proposed by Wray and Lewis (1997) and Warwick (2003), helped students organise and shape the structure of their text. In this situation Kat initially wrote the headings Appearance, Action and Feelings on a chart. This provided a discussion point when the children talked about their characters with a partner. Kat also handed out a template with the same headings to support the students’ written planning. During the Teaching Sessions the teacher constantly linked back and connected to these three features to remind the students how to talk, think and write about the character. The value of connecting writing to a schematic framework is supported by all Writing Discourses but is reflected in different ways. Semantic mapping or the recording of observed detail ready for writing is a key practice of Writer Discourse (Calkins, 1991; Cambourne & Turbill, 1987; Ministry of Education, 1992). Writing templates that exemplify the text structure suggest Text Discourse practices (Education Department of Western Australia, 1994a; Wray & Lewis, 1997); and Social Discourse perspectives speak of using available resources to support the writing (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Kalantzis & Cope, 2012).

What is significant in this study, is that macro-level scaffolding enabled the teacher to make continuous links and learning connections for these students across time providing goal-directed learning. Sharpe’s (2006) research identified that macro and micro level scaffolding supports student learning, however, findings from this particular case study also indicated that micro-level scaffolding along with *close-up* interactions are responsible for creating a *synergy of participatory scaffolding interactions*

which make a difference to students' learning. The following discussion interprets the scaffolding interactions evident in this teacher's micro-level contingent scaffolding interactions.

### *Micro-level scaffolding*

The findings illustrate how this teacher's scaffolding practice was multifaceted, flexible, recursive, and moreover responsive to students' learning over time (Mercer, 2008). While Kat's co-constructed teaching supported a participatory approach to learning as discussed in the research (Many, 2002; Rogoff, 1995; Sfard, 1998), it was the variability that highlighted the complexity of this teacher's scaffolding practice. These variances demonstrated *how* Kat orchestrated dynamic but flexible scaffolding interactions when she was teaching. The constant modifications in micro-level and *close-up* scaffolding interactions are detailed. The following discussion exemplifies variances in eleven different scaffolding situations. These are discussed in relation to the research literature.

First, the findings showed that this teacher varied the purpose and procedure for each of the three Teaching Sessions. Teaching Session One was interactive; Kat encouraged discussion, student thinking and participation. In Session Two, Kat was more directive and focused on her intention of showing how to work from a plan to start writing a character description. This was also evident when she needed to ensure that students understood the new goal. In the final teaching session, Kat shared students' work with the class as models, but also worked alongside individual children, *close-up* in their ZPD. Variation in this teacher's purposes for teaching was apparent.

Varied social groupings supported students' cognitive thinking when learning to write. While, in this case, Kat mostly scaffolded through whole-class interactions, the students also worked with peers and

individually with the teacher in *close-up* conferencing interactions. On three occasions the students were encouraged to work with a talk partner. These social groupings encouraged co-construction of particular understandings relating to character descriptions as in S1 and S2. The value of peer interaction and co-construction of understandings is evident in the research literature (Many, 2002; Myhill, et al., 2006; Palincsar, 1986).

Classroom talk was the main medium for scaffolding teaching and learning interactions. Kat mediated interactions in different ways to encourage students' thinking and engagement during writing episodes. She shifted backwards and forwards between Cazden's (2001) notion of direct telling and open dialogic conversations as identified in the literature (Many, 2002; Myhill, et al., 2006; Warwick & Maloch, 2003). At times Kat summarised and synthesised common and shared understandings by making meta-comments for the students. Sharpe (2006) acknowledges this form of teacher response as it consolidates and summarises the learning. This practice enabled Kat to ensure that her students were clear about the learning progression so far, as seen in S1, M5. This teacher also controlled and closely managed the talk as when demonstrating how to write a character description in Session 2. Talk in this classroom, however, mostly involved open dialogic conversations that invited students' thinking and decision-making. Conversational dialogue is also valued by Sharpe (2006), Leinhardt and Steele (2005) and Warwick and Maloch (2003). This "way of working" affirms Many's (2002) findings that dialogic conversations "weave verbal tapestries". The various ways of conversing evident in the classroom dialogue is exemplified by Cazden (2001) and Myhill's (2006) explanations that teachers shift dialogic engagement according to the function of talk. Kat varied and adjusted her conversations as she assessed her students' understandings. The findings in this study demonstrate that this teacher

was responsive to students' comprehension of the tasks and their participation in the conversations as in S2,M4 and 5, when Kat introduced a new goal for writing.

The study also demonstrated that learning connections were scaffolded in multiple ways. This teacher constantly made links to previous Teaching Sessions and to individuals' contributions. For example, Elliot and Karne's suggestions offered in S1,M3 were acknowledged in S2,M4 when Kat introduced character and setting. She also used a range of available resources such as charts, examples of literature and exemplars and constantly made reference to these when revisiting concepts being learned. In S1,M1, Kat introduced the writing goal and linked to the book characters that the students already knew and had been reading about. Connections to other learning situations, such as analysing the scientist exemplar, provided multiple meaning-making opportunities for these students. Teacher activity in this study affirms the work of Sharpe (2006), Mercer (2008) and Leinhardt and Steele (2005), who demonstrated.

Various multimodal texts employing a range of semiotic systems were part of classroom activity. While linguistic systems or talk dominated scaffolding interactions, Kat used gesture with facial expression, gaze and eye movement to emphasise vocabulary and meanings, as discussed by Bull and Anstey (2010) and Kress (2000b). For example, she allowed and then eventually encouraged the students to physically explore the behaviours and actions of Aslan, as seen in S1,M5. Visual resources in the form of picture books, charts and modelling books were used, adding another dimension for meaning-making (Kress & Bezemer, 2009). The students drew colourful illustrations depicting their own characters when they published their writing in group-books. As Sharpe (2006) maintained, "the construction of the ZPD occurs not only through the semiotic modality of language that enables students to actively

participate in a dialogue with the teacher, texts and peers, but also through other semiotic modalities..." (p. 229). The notion of employing multiple synergistic scaffolds is signalled by Tabak (2004) and her research on distributive scaffolding.

Another variation evident during scaffolding interactions was observed as contingency responses (Sharpe, 2006; van de Pol, et al., 2010). At times Kat assessed understanding and just explained or offered information when the students questioned meanings (S1,M4). At other times she passed the question back to the class for their response. She also added new information to extend and enhance their knowledge. Extending students' learning is reflected in the scaffolding research described by Warwick and Maloch (2003) and Sharpe (2006). In this sense Kat provided new vocabulary or verbalised ideas to support sentence writing, as in S1,M5 when she co-constructed a description of Aslan. Furthermore, Kat read her children well. She decided when to focus on the students' concerns, as in the dreamed/dreamt scenario in S2,M3, and when to ignore it, as in the first peer interaction when the boys lost sight of the task expectations. This finding illustrates and confirms the research of van de Pol, et al. (2010) and others (Eshach, et al., 2011; Myhill & Warren, 2005; Wood, et al., 1976), who recognise that monitoring and assessing students' understandings is vital when working in their ZPD.

Another significant finding in this study is that although the teacher's responses varied they often led to readjustments of the task, an expectation of scaffolding as discussed in the literature (Stone, 1998b; van de Pol, et al., 2011; Wood, et al., 1976). For this teacher, while some adjustments were quite subtle as she redirected the learning focus, others led to significant and substantial changes. Such major adjustments to the task was an unexpected finding and resulted from the students claiming ownership of their learning - renegotiating the character they were going

to write about, as discussed in S1,M10. However, major changes were often initiated by Kat, as in Teaching Session Two, when she added several new teaching Moves (see Moves 5, 6 and 7) to support student understanding of character setting. This finding is significant as it suggests that not only is scaffolding a goal-directed activity, it also requires teachers to be flexible in order to negotiate with students and if necessary redesign new learning situations.

Furthermore, while there is little research on the impact of affective scaffolding as discussed by Eshach, et al. (2011), van de Pol, et al. (2010) and Wood, et al. (1976), this teacher responded to students in various ways; at an affective level as well as a social and cognitive level. Kat built an inclusive community of practice; she invited students to participate, and constantly affirmed their individual contribution and thinking. She also shared personal and humorous aspects of her own behaviours, as in S1,M9. The role of affective response appears to be a neglected aspect in the literature (van de Pol, et al., 2010). Further investigations are required to support a greater understanding of how emotions and students' self-efficacy impacts on their participation when learning to write.

Another variation in Kat's scaffolding illustrated changing degrees of control. At times she was tightly focused, to the point of bootstrapping (Pea, 2004) or what Myhill and Warren (2005) referred to as straitjacketing. Wood et al. (1976), however, regard constraints as a key component of the designed task. When the students were insecure with the expectations of the task, Kat scaffolded closely and placed tighter constraints on the students' participatory responses. This was evident when she introduced new learning. For example, she scaffolded tightly when she wanted students to gain specific knowledge (as in S2,M4) and when she demonstrated how to begin writing a character study (S2,M1). But Kat also scaffolded quite loosely (Warwick & Maloch, 2003) and



negotiated learning situations. At times she allowed students to take over the decision-making and redesign the task. This collaboration happened on several occasions. For example, she allowed students to define the boundaries in S1,M5, where they engaged with role-play. In S1,M10 the students redesigned the task and created learning expectations quite different from Kat's "designed-in" plan at the macro-level of scaffolding.

This case study indicated that multiple meanings and different ways of being a learner were represented by the students' various voices. Kat invited students to participate or asked questions so that meanings were negotiated and shared understandings achieved as in S1,M5. By initiating various grouping arrangements, social and cognitive learning interactions enabled the students to share different perspectives of a character being discussed. In Session 1 and in Session 2 Kat provided opportunities for peers to jointly co-construct meanings. Multiple meaning-making is reflective of Social Discourse perspectives (Clay, 1998; McNaughton, 2002; Moll, et al., 1992; NLG, 1996) and the notion of student voice is discussed by Sandretto (2011) from a sociocritical perspective. She regards student voice as a vital element in classroom interactions where power is: "Viewed as a network, power becomes more fluid, potentially shifting during the course of any given school day" (p.166). From this perspective, having a voice is not about taking possession, or taking control, rather expertise is shared and power relationships shift in the classroom. Fisher (2006), on the other hand is interested in students' voice in terms of them having choice and being able to make decisions. For the teacher in this study, student voices were valued as necessary for participatory and collaborative learning. A significant finding in this study was that students' voices were acknowledged and a shift in the power relationship was allowed. Power sharing in this study was fluid (Sandretto, 2011).

Finally, what makes this study different from earlier studies is that it describes *close-up* scaffolding interactions and the students' responses to the teaching goals. The following section discusses how Kat selected aspects of the students' writing to explicitly challenge and teach, individualising and personalising these sessions according to the students' needs. As evident in S3,M2 to 6, Kat worked closely alongside the participant students, often using scaffolding interactions in varying and different ways, as previously discussed.

### **9.3.2 The writers' participation in scaffolding interactions**

This final discussion of the findings relating to scaffolding interactions focuses on the participant students. This study followed four students to determine their participation in the writing sessions and in particular their response to the scaffolding interactions. This aspect provides a key point of difference in the research literature.

The findings indicated that for these students transfer of learning over time and across the Teaching Sessions followed four students to determine their participation in the writing sessions. As already discussed, Kat actively sought and encouraged student participation, explicitly shared learning goals, employed a synergy of scaffolds in multiple ways, connected to students and their learning, responded contingently and adjusted scaffolds in recognition of students' interests and learning needs. Nevertheless, analysis of the students' written work suggested that only two of the four students fully achieved Kat's teaching objectives, that is, to write a character description that included three features and to place the character in a setting. The findings, however, show that for one of these children, Kat was unable to completely fade her scaffolding and handover for independent learning. For others in the study, while there appeared to be an understanding of

the writing expectations, these understandings were not evident in the final written sample.

It is difficult to critique complex practice; teachers have to constantly think “on their feet” and make instant, complex decisions (Leinhardt & Steele, 2005). However, if effective teaching is about reflection and change of practice, what could have been done differently? The following comments and suggestions are made in relation to designed task, teacher’s actions and students’ responses.

The designed task was relevant to these children. The students related to book characters, demonstrating a love of literature and story. Wood et al. (1976) promote task design that includes constraints which limit alternatives ways of responding to ensure greater achievement. In retrospect I wonder whether the student writers would have had greater success in meeting Kat’s goals if the task had included a further constraint and two added scaffolded prompts. If the task had limited the writing topic to book characters only, it would have been interesting to see whether the students would have found it easier to connect to the task. Three of the four students who chose to write about abstract, futuristic characters struggled with aspects of setting and describing “ghostly feelings”.

Second, for students in this class, the concept of character needed revisiting to consolidate the three characteristics that structured students’ thinking and writing. Wray and Lewis (1997) maintain that an organisational structure supports students’ writing. In this study, writing about feelings was challenging and as Kat indicated, the reader often has to infer feelings. Scaffolding prompts, both visual and verbal, such as: “Pooh Bear felt happy because...” may have scaffolded a closer connection and understanding of how to talk about a character’s feelings.

The second scaffolding prompt relates to the character's setting. If the setting had been "designed-in" at the macro-level, at the beginning of the task (Wray & Lewis, 1997) and included on the planning sheet, scaffolding more closely may have been more successful.

Kat's scaffolding actions were engaging, systematic and responsive. More intensive teaching on her part was constrained by time and by teaching a large number of students, a concern also identified by Myhill and Warren (2005). Kat did not find the time in her busy schedule to get back to Laura and teach grouping of ideas into paragraphs. When working with Jack, however, Kat had to be selective with her teaching decisions. She chose to scaffold Jack on how to construct a more complex and detailed planning template, rather than ensure that he had incorporated his character in a setting. When conferencing Elliot *close-up*, Kat tightened the task constraints and selected aspects of his writing in consideration of his various needs. These findings indicate that while *close-up* scaffolding makes a difference to students' learning, teachers have to make teaching decisions when scaffolding individual writers to enhance their writing.

The study showed that the students' responses across the three Teaching Sessions involved cognitive, affective and social engagement as they participated in multiple ways, verbally sharing ideas. So why didn't the students achieve all aspects of participatory learning and achieve a "meeting of minds"? What might have got in the way for some children? Kat's explanations and her knowledge of her students demonstrated that Elliot found it difficult to focus and stay engaged for periods of time: however, with straitjacketing, he achieved the task. In a busy classroom, however, Kat could not maintain the continual and intense teaching for one child. Jack, on the other hand, appeared to comprehend all aspects of the task, but he did not demonstrate this in his final writing. It appeared

that he chose to disengage or not transfer previous understandings to his final writing product. Karne, I believe, simply did not have the understanding of how to construct text that employed various sentence patterns, nor did he have the vocabulary to successfully describe an abstract character, Danny Phantom. Laura was able to list her ideas about her character by working from her planning sheet but needed to learn how to group and sequence ideas. While Laura could successfully generate ideas and meet the teacher's objectives, she had not yet learnt how to paragraph and cohesively join ideas together.

In conclusion, this study indicated that these young writers participated and engaged in their writing tasks. They applied several semiotic systems of knowledge exploring character description through a range of multimodalities: talk, print, gesture and image; however, it was essential for them to continue learning by "weaving verbal tapestries". As proposed by Many (2002), on going participation in the "fabric of conversation" and co-constructing knowledge of character descriptions supports students' expertise in gaining deeper knowledge.

To summarise, this section responds to the case-study research questions posed in Phase Two, which investigated *how* one teacher scaffolded writing in her classroom. The research also questioned whether the teacher adjusted the scaffolds and handed over the learning. It concludes that Kat's scaffolding practice was complex and multi-layered as she apprenticed her students from peripheral understandings to writing a character study. Her scaffolding interactions varied, but were systematic and constantly adjusted in response to contingent needs. Significantly, this teacher's application of her pedagogical content knowledge was adjusted and redesigned to support her students' learning, seeking opportunities to handover the learning. For the students, while they participated in multiple interactions and their learning was recognised as

a cognitive and social act, a “meeting of minds” for some students this would be an ongoing conversation. Scaffolding is exemplified as a flexible practice which varies according to the writing purpose, the students’ participatory responses and the teacher’s pedagogical and content knowledge.

The chapter continues with a discussion on the Writing Discourses that shaped one teacher’s identity.

### **9.3.3 A teacher’s identity located in the Writing Discourses**

Further research questions posed for Phase two, the case study, asked: *Why* does one teacher teach writing a certain way? And *what* writing discourses (knowledge/ understandings, beliefs and practices) shape her practice as a teacher of writing? In this study, observation and close analysis of the teacher’s engagement with the Writing Discourses showed her employment of all three. Overtime, Kat had selected and merged Writing Discourses and created her own way of being a teacher of writing. She was eclectic and borrowed from Writer, Text and Social Discourses making decisions in support for her beliefs about teaching writing. This teacher sought ways for the Writing Discourses to work alongside each other (Sumara & Davis, 2006), and rather than situate herself in a dominant discourse for teaching writing, Kat recognised that all Discourses contribute and build a more comprehensive view of teaching and learning writing (Beard, et al., 2009; Hyland, 2002; Ivanič, 2004).

Kat’s observed practice, however, showed differences from that of her reported practice: there was a mismatch between her self-reported “ways of working” in the Writing Discourses and my observation of her teaching. Parr and Limbrick (2010) referenced research that argues self-reported data is often inaccurate. Shulman (1987), however, argues that

teachers themselves have difficulty in articulating what they know and how they know it (p. 6).

In Chapter Six, Table 14, Kat's self-reported engagement with the Writing Discourses showed that while she positioned herself across all three, she situated herself more strongly in Writer Discourse. However, a significant finding from the data in Chapter Eight showed that Kat actively positioned herself in Social Discourse far more strongly than she had indicated during her initial interview. Kat had either shifted her positioning in the Writing Discourses over the six months or she did not realise she had positioned herself more strongly in Social Discourse (Shulman, 1987).

The study shows *how* one teacher teaches writing in a particular way. The teacher engaged with her students throughout the writing process. Talk permeated her lessons and supported students' co-construction of a character description (Many, 2002; Vygotsky, 1986). The value of dialogic conversations as a scaffolding tool is widely affirmed in the literature (Cazden, 2001; Johnston, 2004; Myhill, 2006; L. C. Wilkinson & Silliman, 2000). Collaborative learning initiated through teacher-student scaffolding and talk buddies play a key role in Kat's enactment of Social Discourse (Walsh, 2008). Negotiation of learning and power sharing are evident in this classroom (Janks & Vasquez, 2011; O' Brien, 2001; Sandretto, 2011). Students negotiated participatory engagement but also renegotiated the task as discussed in the scaffolding analysis. Not all teaching was part of this teacher's macro "planned in" scaffolding, she allowed for students' decision-making. Kat's conversations often challenged students in their ZPD. She frequently used open-ended questions and prompted for more detail as she explained in her final interview: "So you just probe, probe, probe, more, more, more." Moreover, taking a critical literacy perspective was becoming evident in

her practice. Kat used a social issue for the basis of her writing. A real dilemma of whether to take shoes off or not before entering the school hall initiated discussion and writing an argument presenting a point of view. Sandetto (2011), O'Brien (2001) and Kalantzis and Cope (2012) regard writing as future oriented and encourage real problem solving of issues, representing a Social Discourse perspective of writing.

A concern was raised by Kat, both during the teaching sessions, and during the initial interview. Kat constantly reflected on her teaching practice in relation to students and their learning potential. In particular, she recognised the intensive teaching Elliot required. Kat acknowledged his abilities, stating: "I think he has got creative lateral thinking. He has good language and he can bring it together very nicely, but he needs all that prompting and support to get it" (Final interview). This on going concern relates to the teachers' core belief that the learner is central to teachers' decision making and shaped their practice.

Finally, this study indicates that teachers in their desire to make sense of policies and practices weave new identities as teachers of writing. Teacher identity, in this case, is reflected in Kat's history, shaped by her extensive experiences of working from various Writing Discourses along with her professional reading and collegial conversations. All social interactions impact on how she scaffolds and apprentices her writers. This view of identity concurs with Davies and Harre's (2001) work on positioning theory. They argue that when acting and speaking from a position, that particular perspective is shaped by the history, the multiple experiences and engagements in various discourses that are brought to bear on a particular situation. The study affirms that teaching is personal. For this teacher, her practice reflected a richness and depth as she purposefully drew from a range of Writing Discourses and scaffolding interactions.



The next section reflects on the research process. It also discusses the limitations of this study.

#### **9.4 Reflection on the research process**

The design of the research process played a significant role in this study. It involved mapping discourses of writing and the development of heuristic frameworks for analysis of the Writing Discourses and teacher-student scaffolding interactions. These conceptual maps assisted my interpretation of teachers' practices in the following ways.

First, mapping writing as Discourse enabled me to conceptualise writing theories and practices apparent in the research and to organise these in such a way that they represented differing perspectives for teaching writing. Conceptualising writing from different perspectives allowed me to identify and categorise key theoretical ideas, beliefs, ideologies and practices that underpinned Writer, Text and Social views. Each Writing Discourse provided a different historical, social and theoretical interpretation of writing to figuratively describe the work done by teachers. While the broad Writing Discourses were not difficult to name, describing the indicators was. As I commented in Chapter Two, each Writing Discourse embraced fundamentally different perspectives. The difficulty for me was to get the wording specific enough to encompass, for example, both genre and rhetorical approaches for teaching writing as Text Discourse. Differentiating between the subtleties of descriptors, such as audience, was also challenging, as each Writing Discourse places a different interpretive lens on the word.

Second, conceptual representations were particularly useful for the development of the analytical frameworks, a tool for discourse analysis, which added to the methodology of this study. The development of the writing framework enabled me as researcher to analyse and critique the

Writing Discourses that a group of New Zealand primary school teachers engaged with as they talked about their writing practices. The framework enabled me to interpret how these teachers theorised their writing practices and in particular how they positioned themselves or were positioned discursively as teachers of writing. Analysis of the teacher talk showed how these Discourses shaped not only their beliefs and practices but created complex teacher identities. As such, the analytical framework for discourse analysis offers researchers a method or tool for further research.

Third, by employing the scaffolding metaphor to describe teacher and student interactions allowed me to conceptualise this as an interactive space. The metaphors of the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978), the “construction zone” (Newman, et al., 1993) and a “meeting of minds” (Bruner, 1996; McNaughton, 2002) recognised as “magical places” enabled me to visualise the complex act of teaching and acknowledge the multitude of factors that impact on learning. Described as a shared frame of reference, where teacher and students’ mutual influence “alters each other’s ideas and actions immediately as well as subsequently” (McNaughton, 2002, p. 20), the space also recognises that the interchange is about negotiation and collaboration. But this study also identified that it is different for all learners and even involves compliance and resistance. These metaphorical representations allowed me to consider how *close-up* scaffolding could take place and furthermore suggest why some students may not learn immediately all aspects of taught writing.

Fourth, both of the scaffolding frameworks enabled me to look closely at one teacher’s practice and the students’ participation in their learning. The metaphorical representations enabled me to conceptualise scaffolding as a sociocultural act and one that incorporated students’

voices – so often left out of the research literature. This representation helped shape the initial scaffolding framework, visualising scaffolding as incorporating the elements of designed task, teachers’ mediated actions and students’ responses. The PSFW framework was redesigned to incorporate students’ engagement with their learning. The SFWSP, in particular, suggested that learning was recursive and that the teacher adjusted contingently as the lessons progressed. Moreover, the conceptual frameworks demonstrated that learning is temporal and on going, as recognised in the work done by Mercer (2008). Learning progresses across the teaching sessions and beyond. The SFWSP also revealed that learning is different for each student. A “meeting of minds” varies for each child in spite of the teacher’s multiple and synergistic scaffolding interactions.

Fifth, a metaphor that represents classrooms as communities of practice guided the case-study analysis. The consideration of classrooms as communities of practice and learning to write as a form of apprenticeship was posed in Chapter Three (3.2). This metaphor enabled me to explore the kinds of social engagements, activities and contexts the teachers provided for their writers. The case study demonstrated that teaching writing is a complex practice and that students are apprenticed not only to learn how to write but also how to behave as writers, to be members of that writing community of practice. Kat demonstrated apprenticeship by scaffolding her writers from peripheral participatory activity to gaining increasing knowledge about ways of being a writer. Through her scaffolding interactions she provided available resources, explicit demonstrations and encouraged her students to think and interact as writers, to participate as learners of writing.

And finally, Sfard’s (1998) notion of the learning metaphors, acquisition and participation, embraces a metaphorical pluralism that was reflected

in Kat's scaffolding interactions. While the acquisition metaphor focuses on the individual mind and what goes into it, the participation metaphor "makes salient the dialectic nature of learning interactions: the whole and parts affect and inform each other" (Sfard, 1998, p. 6). These borrowed metaphors conceptualise different perspectives of teaching and learning as evident in scaffolding interactions and recognise that teaching is complex and multifaceted and must reflect variation in practice.

This study design recognises that teaching and learning constitutes a social and participatory practice, as set out, and can be applied to further research investigations into teachers' writing practices and students' participation in their learning. A discussion of the limitations of this study follows.

#### *Limitations of the research*

This study provided a snapshot of a group of teachers' beliefs and practices. It took place at a particular time in New Zealand social and political history. If this study were replicated with a different group of teachers, I assume there would be different findings because of differences in teachers' discursive beliefs and practices and the historical and social influences which impact on them.

In this sense only a small group of New Zealand teachers' voices have been represented in this study and therefore generalisations cannot be made to the wider community of primary school teachers. However, the frameworks for Writing Discourse analysis and scaffolding frameworks developed in this study could be applied in other research settings; in this sense, the analytical frameworks allow translatability of the research.

Another limitation is that the data on beliefs and practices were gained via self-report and could not necessarily be equated with their observed practice, in contrast to the case of Kat. Although the ten teachers openly

talked about their beliefs and teaching practices I didn't observe them in their classrooms. This said, the research process enabled data to be gathered on ten teachers which mapped a complexity that is likely to exist across New Zealand teachers generally.

My position as tertiary educator and researcher may have coloured what the teachers shared. However, I tried to develop a collegial relationship of trust with the teachers. This is an interpretive study and so I have been clear about my position, acknowledging that my particular perspective as a teacher, tertiary educator and researcher of writing has provided the lens I used to interpret the responses and observed practices of these teachers.

### **9.5 Conclusions, contributions and implications of the research**

In exploring the beliefs and practices of a group of New Zealand primary school teachers who were teaching writing at a time when schools were experiencing educational policy changes (as discussed in Chapter One), this study contributes to the research field in the following ways.

First, the thematic analysis of teachers' practices adds to the growing research base on writing pedagogy. As noted earlier, the majority of literacy research has focused on reading. Even though this research project is based on a group of teachers' self-reported practices, it fills a gap in the literature. The study contributes to the research field in that it seeks to understand teaching and learning writing from the perspective of the teacher. It allows teachers to voice their thoughts, their beliefs and practices in a professional way. The study also provides a snapshot of the complex decision-making evident in the teaching of writing in the classroom.

This component of the research concludes that teachers demonstrate commonalities in the ways they “say and do” writing, reflecting the shared beliefs of their professional communities of practice thus maintaining and sustaining mutual goals. The teachers reported planning, teaching and assessment decisions to support their students as writers. This signified that the teachers were learner focused. However, when the teachers talked about *what* they do and *why*, this study found that teachers’ practice was rich, thoughtful and varied. The teachers enacted writing practices in different ways, reflecting beliefs about how “best” to teach writing, but most importantly these practices were shaped in response to students’ writing needs.

This research study has implications for teachers, initial teacher educationalists and beginner teachers, in recognising common writing practices that form the basis of school-wide programmes. By recognising that writing can be done differently, it demonstrates that there is no “silver bullet”, no one way to teach writing. And although having no set recipe to follow might be disquieting for beginning teachers, it also allows pedagogical spaces for reflection and innovation demonstrating that there are different “ways of working” and for “being a teacher of writing”.

A second and significant finding contributing to the research literature is that the New Zealand primary school teachers located themselves discursively as writing teachers. The teachers’ demonstrated different degrees of subscription to the various Writing Discourses, thus multiple voices and multiple identities emerged from the data. These findings significantly add to the research literature as there is little evidence of how New Zealand teachers engage with various writing theories and practices, or how they align with Writing Discourses.

This study suggests that teachers' complex and diverse identities are shaped by the *way* they discursively positioned themselves in the Writing Discourses, *how* they subscribed to Writer, Text and or Social Discourses. Furthermore, the study concludes that teachers' writing identities shaped their classroom communities of practice and determined what writing experiences they offered their students. This study contributes to the research literature and suggests that *how* teachers engage in Writing Discourse/s could determine what they offer students. The findings suggest that if teachers overlook particular Discourses, or position themselves or find themselves positioned in a dominant stance, mostly in one particular discourse, they are in fact conceptualising writing from a narrower perspective. I suggest that by conceptualising a restrictive view of writing, such teachers might be marginalising students' experiences of learning to write.

This study highlights teachers' pedagogical content knowledge of writing as having a significant impact on students' learning (Alton-Lee, June 2003; Education Review Office, June, 2007). Teachers' knowledge of the Writing Discourses is discussed throughout this study and the findings strongly suggest that practitioners analyse the Writing Discourses that underpin their practice.

The study indicated that teachers engaged less often in Social Discourse. This suggests that opportunities for students to collaborate, dialogue and participate in designing digital and multimedia texts, engage with cultural contexts and to take a critical stance by using writing to solve social issues, was not a common occurrence. *How* teachers engage with the multiple writing discourses and what they offer their students in their classroom communities of practice should be subject to ongoing review.

A third contribution to the research literature is that the study offers teachers a way to talk and think about writing, to discuss writing theories and the implications of associated practices. Having the language to talk about Writing Discourses empowers teachers to think critically about the “orders of discourse” that might shape their teaching of writing, and, in particular, to reflect on educational and school policy that promotes certain “ways of being” a teacher of writing. Additionally, teachers’ awareness of how they may be positioned by “the other”, not just in terms of educational policy but also by the school’s interpretation of Ministry policy, can be pursued through critique of the Writing Discourses offered. Policies which regard writing as a selective and narrow practice should be challenged (Wohlwend, 2009). This study promotes writing as an inclusive practice accommodating diverse ways of learning.

This finding has implications for school leadership and for teachers’ professional development. Enhancement of teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge is dependent on who fills the gap, the “middle space” (Timperley & Parr, 2009). The study proposes that teachers and schools take a critical stance (Sandretto, 2011) and investigate the messages being promoted by facilitators who fill the “middle space”. Do they offer genuine research-based insights or do they provide curriculum packages based on unreflective personal agendas?

A fourth and significant set of findings is based on the case study. These findings contribute to the body of classroom-based research relating to teacher-student interactions and ways to apprentice writing in primary classrooms. This study presents an exemplar of one teacher’s practice and demonstrates that it is *how* the teacher responds that makes the difference. This case makes a significant contribution to understanding how teachers can apprentice and scaffold writers in classroom



communities of practice. Representing one teacher's way of "saying, doing and being" a teacher of writing made evident the complexity and the variance of actions situated in the layers of synergistic scaffolding. The study adds to the research literature discussed and concludes that teachers who know their children as writers and apprentice accordingly at the macro, micro and *close-up* levels offer greater opportunities for learning. This research study advocates that:

- The teacher varies his/her ways of acting and responding when teaching writing. Scaffolding practice that is dialogic but flexible, adjusting to the situation and responsive to students' understanding of their writing task, is more likely to ensure a "meeting of minds";
- Scaffolding that is multilayered and acknowledges the power of *close-up* scaffolding alongside macro or designed-in scaffolds and micro-level interactions provides a greater synergy for participatory learning;
- When learning is collaborative and negotiated and the teacher is prepared to hand over the learning, students' voices are recognised. And more importantly, power relationships are shared;
- Affective engagement and affirmation of social, cultural and cognitive interactions encourage greater student participation and ownership of learning;
- Learning takes place over time. The study indicated that while teaching connections revisit and build on previous learning in multiple ways, for some students continuing dialogic scaffolding interactions are required to attain a "meeting of minds".

What is specific to this study is that students actively participated in their own learning. Not only did they challenge the teacher's decisions but also on several occasions they designed their own learning. What this study adds to the research literature, as opposed to other research on scaffolding, is that the students' voices were acknowledged. Several

students were tracked to identify their participation and achievement of the learning goals. The study investigated students' engagement in tasks, their interactive dialogue and written responses. While a "meeting of minds" was sought within *a synergy of participatory scaffolding* interactions this study concludes that for each of the students the learning was different; not all participants achieved common and shared understandings. However, for one student it was the *close-up* scaffolding that made the difference.

This case study's contribution to the research domain has implications for researchers, teacher educators, teacher facilitators and teacher practitioners in terms of not only *how* we can interact and scaffold our writers, but also the importance of teacher-student interactions.

A final contribution to the research literature is the analytical frameworks developed to support the research methodology. The discourse analysis framework provides a mechanism for critique. It enables teacher educators and classroom teachers to critically consider the Discourses of Writing they make available to students. For teachers, the discourse markers enable critical reflection on their identities as teachers of writing and the social practices they enact in their writing communities. The framework also provides a mechanism for teaching staff to critique school policy in terms of what is offered to students. And finally the discourse analysis framework enables teachers to question how others position them, to ask what messages are promoted by Ministry policy, curriculum documents and school literacy/writing programmes?

The scaffolding frameworks also contribute to the research field by offering researchers, educators and teachers ways to analyse teaching interactions. The participatory scaffolding frameworks provide a useful basis for conversations relating to teaching. The scaffolding frameworks

encourage teachers to reflect on their teaching role and to consider learning opportunities that encourage participation, negotiation, ownership and transference of learning across language modes.

The next section of this chapter makes recommendations for further research.

## **9.6 Recommendations for further research**

Theories and practices for teaching writing are constantly changing. However, as discussed, there is a lack of research on writing as compared to reading (Beard, et al., 2009; Dix, et al., 2011; Fisher, 2006). Further research related to teachers' writing practice is required to deepen our understanding of teachers' subject, pedagogical and assessment knowledge of writing. Teachers require research-based information and video exemplars that demonstrate sound but also innovative writing practice to enhance their own learning and so enable them to make informed decisions in classrooms. Further case studies of teachers' writing practice would support pedagogy in New Zealand and exemplars that can be viewed and reviewed in staffrooms, syndicates and tertiary institutions would initiate professional conversations and deepen teacher knowledge.

Further research on writing as Social Discourse is required. A great deal of the research has focused on reading as a multiliterate practice (Education Queensland, 2000; Freebody & Luke, 1990) rather than on writing as design. This study identified teachers' somewhat limited engagement with Social Discourses related to writing. This is a concern, since a socially-oriented perspective of writing is required to ensure a "meeting of minds" with the current and future generation of learners. While writing teachers are challenged to connect more closely with the social, technological and cultural worlds of their learners, this study

pointed out that the New Zealand Ministry texts for teachers don't provide exemplars for scaffolding writers from a multiliteracy perspective. Teachers require a range of exemplars that show how to deepen pedagogical practice by using a range of technological devices that scaffold students in designing multimodal and digital texts.

It appears that while some schools enthusiastically embrace Social perspectives of writing and are engaging their students in designing multimodal and digital texts, others have ignored the presence of global and local communities, multimedia and broader views of literacy/writing. The challenge for researchers therefore lies in two directions. The first relates to consideration of the sorts of programmes that enhance teachers' pedagogical content knowledge and enable them to engage with Social Discourses in writing. Research which will build subject knowledge for creating digital and electronic media and multimodal texts alongside effective pedagogy appears to be a national and international need (Healy, 2008; Honan, 2008). Second, in recognition of those teachers who have embraced multiliterate practices and who have embedded digital and multimodal writing experiences in their communities of practice, there would be value in capturing how these teachers work in this Writing Discourse. Also research on students' practices is required. How are they designing texts that employ a range of semiotic systems and screen-based media? Do students as writers embrace the social and dialogic processes of communicating? And are teachers encouraging students to take a critical stance and interrogate texts and analyse how social groups are positioned?

Finally, I suggest further research is needed to investigate more closely students' affective engagement, and their self-efficacy in relation to their participation and follow through with completing tasks. Students sometimes disengage and cut short their tasks (Dix, 2003b). This aspect of

students' decisions to participate or not in their learning, or to what extent they choose to participate needs exploring. Students' self-efficacy, compliance and resistance in classroom writing programmes requires further investigation.

### *Summary*

Writing theory and practice have reacted to changes in New Zealand's political, social, and educational curriculum policies over the past four decades, and particular views of writing have been historically privileged over others. However, very little is known about how New Zealand teachers engage with these Writing Discourses. This research study has added to the research literature on teachers' writing practice in New Zealand primary schools. Furthermore, I envisage that the analysis of the Writing Discourses and scaffolding interactions will provide an overview for teachers and guide their sense-making of writing theories and support their decisions for scaffolding discursive writing practices.

Finally, this thesis is also about my continuing journey, an exploration of and a desire to understand not just *what* we should teach and *why*, but also *how* to "best" teach writing to our students and our future teachers. As a researcher, tertiary educator and writer I needed to reflect on why we teach writing the way we do. What has influenced my current practices? Is there a better way to scaffold and apprentice learners? I needed to reflect on my writing experiences and to understand the social and political changes, the shifts in writing theory that influence me, in order to better understand myself as writer and as teacher of writing.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Principal's letter and consent form

University of Waikato

School of Education

Hillcrest Rd

Hamilton

Date

Dear

I would like your permission to work with teachers in your school on a writing project. For my PhD research project I intend to investigate teaching and learning interactions in the writing classroom, to find ways that will support young student-writers enhance and improve their written texts. The research project will take place in two phases.

The first phase has the purpose of identifying current practices in teaching writing. Since the implementation of *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* document teachers have been presented with changes in theories and practices of teaching writing. I am interested in gaining an understanding of the range of teacher practices and theoretical beliefs which have shaped or been shaped by Ministerial and school policies, implementation plans, and professional development programmes. In particular I am interested in how schools and teachers organise for writing in the classroom.

For phase one I will be talking to experienced teachers and would like to discuss with them how they (and your school) organise and support the writers in classrooms. I envisage that the teachers involved in phase one of the research would:

- Take part in two informal interviews of approximately 40 minutes each, sometime between August and November 2005
- The meeting would be at an agreeable time and place
- They would talk about current writing practices; writing programmes, teaching strategies, and assessment procedures

Phase two is an action research project and would begin in 2006. It is based in the teacher's classroom and focuses on writing practices. It involves teachers working collaboratively with each other and with the researcher. If your school is involved in phase two the researcher will contact you to discuss teacher and student involvement. The research project would insure that teacher(s) identity and that of your school would remain anonymous. Confidentiality will be maintained in any reporting or presentation of the research findings. Teachers would have the right to read and revise interview transcripts and have the right to withdraw their participation at any stage.

If you are willing for your teacher(s) to be part of the research in phase one could you please complete the attached form and fax it to me on 07 8384555

If there are questions or you require more information please contact me, Stephanie Dix, phone: 838 4500 ext 7853

email: [stephd@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:stephd@waikato.ac.nz)

For further questions please contact my supervisor Bronwen Cowie, phone: 07 838 4987 email: [bcowie@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:bcowie@waikato.ac.nz)

Yours sincerely

Stephanie Dix

I have read the attached letter.

I understand that:

Teacher(s) participating in the project do so voluntarily and have the right to withdraw at any time

The school's participation remains confidential to the researcher and other teacher participants

Data generated is confidential and will be securely stored

Data obtained from the research purpose may be used for publication or presentations

I give consent for teacher(s) in my school to take part in the writing project under the conditions stated above.

Name.....

Signed.....

Date.....



## **Appendix 2: Phase One: Letter to participating teachers**

University of Waikato

School of Education

Hillcrest Rd

Hamilton

Date

Dear (Teacher)

For my PhD research project I intend to investigate teaching and learning interactions in the writing classroom to find ways that will support young writers enhance and improve their written texts. Your principal has given written consent for teachers to participate in this project. The research project will take place in two phases.

The first phase has the purpose of identifying current practices in teaching writing. Since the implementation of *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* document teachers have been presented with changes in theories and practices of teaching writing. I am interested in gaining an understanding of the range of teacher practices and theoretical beliefs which have shaped or been shaped by Ministerial and school policies, implementation plans, and professional development programmes. In particular I am interested in how schools and teachers organise for writing in the classroom.

For phase one I will be talking to experienced teachers and would like to discuss with you how you and your school organise and support the writers in classrooms. I would appreciate your time, professional knowledge and interest to take part in this initial research (phase one). It would involve

- two informal interviews of approximately 40 minutes each, sometime between August and November 2005;
- meeting at an agreeable time and place;

- talking about current writing practices; writing programmes, teaching strategies, and assessment procedures

Your identity and that of your school will remain anonymous. Confidentiality will be maintained in any reporting or presentation of the research findings. You have the right to read and revise interview transcripts and you have the right to withdraw your participation at any stage.

If you are willing to be part of the research in phase one could you please complete the attached form and fax it to me on 07 8384555

If there are questions or you require more information please contact me. Phone: 838 4500 ext 7853

Email: [stephd@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:stephd@waikato.ac.nz)

For further questions please contact my supervisor Bronwen Cowie, phone: 07 838 4987 email: [bcowie@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:bcowie@waikato.ac.nz)

Yours sincerely

Stephanie Dix

### Appendix 3: Phase One: Teachers' consent form

I.....have read the attached letter of information.

I understand that:

- My anonymity is assured
- My participation is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw at any time
- I have the right to read and revise transcripts
- All information and transcripts will be kept secure and remain confidential to the researcher
- Data and findings of the study will be used for the research purpose only may be published or presented at conferences.

I can contact Stephanie Dix with any questions or problems I have about the research. Email [stephd@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:stephd@waikato.ac.nz) telephone: 07 8384500 ext 7853.

For any unresolved issues I can contact the supervisor Bronwen Cowie. Email [bcowie@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:bcowie@waikato.ac.nz) telephone: 07 8384987.

I give my informed consent to participate.

Name.....

Signed.....

Date.....

#### **Appendix 4: Phase Two: Letter to participating teacher**

University of Waikato

School of Education

Hillcrest Rd

Hamilton

Date

Dear (Teacher)

I intend to continue to investigate teaching and learning interactions in the writing classroom with the purpose of finding ways that will support young writers to enhance and improve their written texts. Phase two involves a collaborative classroom-based action research project. It represents the major part of the research.

I would like to invite you to take an active part in the project working as a teacher-researcher with me; making decisions about your own practice, reflecting on your writing programmes and considering ways to redesign or reshape writing in the classroom to support your student writers.

The introduction and planning of the action research project for phase two is negotiable and would begin in December 2005 or in February 2006. It would involve:

- Working collaboratively with a school colleague on the writing project.
- An interview to discuss your current teaching practice and beliefs about writing and how you organise your programme
- An initial group meeting (of up to six teachers) held after school or on a Saturday morning to discuss your research goals, research methodology, setting up a journal for personal reflection and establishing ways to build writing profiles for a group students

- Working with your colleague to review your writing programme and to identify/negotiate an intervention strategy you consider will support and enhance your students writing.

Implementation of the phase two, action research will continue for approximately nine months, from February 2006 to October 2006. It will involve:

- Building a continuous writing profile on five of your students (this may be based on your current school practice). Informed consent will be sought from the parents/guardians
- Planning, implementing, reviewing and refining the intervention programme
- Keeping records in a journal noting teaching practices, strategies used, changes observed and comments regarding their effectiveness. This will link back to the writing intervention goals
- Meeting with your school colleague fortnightly to discuss progress and concerns
- Bringing your information to the larger teacher group for professional discussion once a month, after school or in the evening at a time to be arranged. This data may include, writing samples, photographs and video clips taken by you, your colleague or me.
- Allowing me to discuss, observe, photograph and take notes of writing practices and teaching situations in the classroom.
- Allowing me to interview five of your students about their writing at the beginning and end of the intervention period and to talk informally with them during class time.
- Additional informed consent will be sought from parents/guardians if the video/photographs identify any students and are required for the research purpose.

Your principal has given written consent for teachers to participate in this project.

I assure you that your identity and that of your school will remain anonymous. Confidentiality will be maintained in any reporting or presentation of the research findings. You have the right to read and revise interview transcripts and you have the right to withdraw your participation at any stage.

If you are willing to be part of this research phase could you please complete the attached form and fax it to me on 07 8384555

If there are questions please contact me.

Phone: 838 4500 ext 7853

Email: [stephd@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:stephd@waikato.ac.nz)

For further questions please contact my supervisor Bronwen Cowie, phone: 07 838 4987 email: [bcowie@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:bcowie@waikato.ac.nz)

Yours sincerely

Stephanie Dix

## Appendix 5: Phase Two: Consent form from teacher

I.....have read the attached letter of information.

I understand that:

- My anonymity is assured and further consent will be sought if photographs or video clips of myself are to be viewed by anyone other than myself and the research group
- My participation is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw at any time
- I have the right to read and revise transcripts
- All information and transcripts will be kept secure and remain confidential to the researcher
- Data and findings of the study will be used for the research purpose only may be published or presented at conferences.

I can contact Stephanie Dix with any questions or problems I have about the research. Email [stephd@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:stephd@waikato.ac.nz) telephone: 07 8384500 ext 7853.

For any unresolved issues I can contact the supervisor Bronwen Cowie. Email [bcowie@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:bcowie@waikato.ac.nz) telephone: 07 8384987.

I give my informed consent to participate.

Name.....

Signed.....

Date.....

## **Appendix 6: Phase Two: Letter for classes' guardians**

University of Waikato  
School of Education  
Hillcrest Rd  
Hamilton  
Date

Dear Parents/Guardians

I will be working with your child's teacher in his/her classroom on a writing project. The purpose of the research is to investigate teaching and learning interactions and strategies that help students enhance and improve their writing.

As this is a classroom-based project your child may be involved in the following ways:

- An initial class discussion at school where I will introduce myself as a visitor and explain my work.
- Classroom observations that will look at the ways the teacher sets up and responds to writing tasks. Video clips or photographs taken in the classroom will attempt to maintain student anonymity and confidentiality. If any shots identify your child and are required for the research purpose they will not be used unless further consent is gained.

The principal has given written consent for teachers to participate in this project.

I assure you that your child's identity will remain anonymous. Confidentiality will be maintained in any reporting or presentation of the research findings. You have the right to withdraw your child from participating at any stage.



If you are willing to be part of this research phase could you please complete the attached form and fax it to me on 07 8384555

If there are any questions please contact me.

Phone 838 4500 ext 7853

Email: [stephd@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:stephd@waikato.ac.nz)

For further questions please contact my supervisor Bronwen Cowie, phone: 07 838 4987 email: [bcowie@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:bcowie@waikato.ac.nz)

Yours sincerely

Stephanie Dix

## Appendix 7: Phase Two: Consent form from class parents/guardians

We/ I.....have read the attached letter of information.

We/ I understand that:

- My child's anonymity is assured and further consent will be sought if photographs or video clips identify my child and are to be used for the research purpose
- My child's participation is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw him/her at any time
- Data and findings of the study will be used for the research purpose only may be published or presented at conferences.

I can contact Stephanie Dix with any questions or problems I have about the research. Email [stephd@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:stephd@waikato.ac.nz) telephone: 07 8384500 ext 7853.

For any unresolved issues I can contact the supervisor Bronwen Cowie. Email [bcowie@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:bcowie@waikato.ac.nz) telephone: 07 8384987.

I give my informed consent to participate.

Name.....

Signed.....

Date.....

## **Appendix 8: Phase Two: Letter for student-participants' parents/guardian**

University of Waikato  
School of Education  
Hillcrest Rd  
Hamilton  
Date

Dear Parents/Guardians

I will be working with your child's teacher in his/her classroom on a writing project, which will explore teaching strategies that help students enhance their writing. Based on the teachers recommendation I would also like your permission to include your child.

As this is a classroom-based research project your child may be involved in the following ways:

- An initial class discussion at school where I will introduce myself as a classroom visitor and explain my work.
- Classroom observations, which look at the ways the teacher sets up, organizes and responds and interacts during writing tasks. Any video clips or photographs taken to capture the programme in the classroom will attempt to maintain students' anonymity and confidentiality. If any shots identify your child and are required for the research purpose, will not be used unless further consent is gained.
- Two informal discussions will be taken at the beginning and at the end of the project where your child can discuss his/her writing and what helps them in the classroom. This will be audio taped and transcribed. Confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained by using pseudonyms.
- Written samples of writing will be copied, and used anonymously for further discussion.

The principal has given written consent for teachers to participate in this project. I assure you that your child's identity will remain anonymous. Confidentiality will be maintained in any reporting or presentation of the research findings. You have the right to withdraw your child from participating at any stage. Could you please discuss this research process with your child so the informed consent is fully understood by him/her.

If you are willing to be part of this research phase could you please complete the attached form and fax it to me on 07 83845 55

If there are questions please contact me, Stephanie Dix, phone 838 4500 ext 7853  
email: [stephd@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:stephd@waikato.ac.nz)

For further questions please contact my supervisor Bronwen Cowie, phone: 07 838 4987 email: [bcowie@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:bcowie@waikato.ac.nz)

Yours faithfully

Stephanie Dix

## Appendix 9: Phase Two: Consent form student-participants' parents

I/ We have read the attached letter of information.

I/ We understand that:

- My child's participation is voluntary and I/we have the right to withdraw him/her at any time
- All information, copies of written work and transcripts will be kept secure and remain confidential to the researcher
- Photographs or video clips may be viewed by the other teachers involved in the writing project.
- Data and findings obtained from my child during the project maybe used for the purposed of conferences and published papers.
- My child's anonymity will be assured. Visual images that don't identify my child can be used at conferences. Further consent will be sought if my child is identifiable and the material is required for publication of the research

I can contact Stephanie Dix with any questions or problems I have about the research. Email [stephd@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:stephd@waikato.ac.nz) telephone: 07 8384500 ext 7853.

For any unresolved issues I can contact the supervisor Bronwen Cowie.

Email [bcowie@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:bcowie@waikato.ac.nz) telephone: 07 8384987.

I/ We give my informed consent for my child to be involved in the project under the conditions set out above.

Name.....

Signed.....

Date.....

## Appendix 10: Further consent to use visual information

I/ We have read the attached letter of information.

I/ We understand that:

- Data generated will be kept secure and remain confidential to the researcher
- Data and findings obtained from my child during the project maybe used for the purposed of conferences and published papers
- Photographs or video clips that identify my child and support the purpose of the research project may be used at conferences or for publication of the research
- My child's participation is voluntary
- I/we have the right to withdraw him/her at any time

I can contact Stephanie Dix with any questions or problems I have about the research. Email [stephd@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:stephd@waikato.ac.nz) phone: 07 8384500 ext 7853.

For any unresolved issues I can contact the supervisor Bronwen Cowie.

Email [bcowie@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:bcowie@waikato.ac.nz) phone: 07 8384987.

I/ We give my informed consent for my child to be involved in the project under the conditions set out above.

Name.....

Signed.....

Date.....

## Appendix 11: Phase One: Teacher semi-structured interviews

What's happening out there?

How do schools and classroom teachers organise and teach writing?

Teachers' professional background

Name
Date
School description
Roll:                      Decile rating:                      Rural/ Urban/Private
Years in profession
Teaching:    Administration:
Levels taught:
Current position/role    Current teaching level

Many of these questions will overlap and are regarded as prompts; indeed they may not even be relevant to you.

### A) Teaching beliefs (theory and practice)

1. What are some things you believe about teaching writing effectively?
2. What are some things you believe about how children learn to write?
3. Can you identify any key influences on the way you teach/taught writing in the classroom?
4. Do you prescribe to a particular theory or approach to the teaching of writing?
5. Do you like teaching writing? Why?

### B) Classroom practices

1. Explain how you organise to teach writing? How do you plan?

2. What forms/texts/purposes of writing do you include in your programme? On what basis do you make these decisions?
3. Identify those teaching-learning strategies, which you believe make a difference to student learning. Select from those below or add your own, prioritise and discuss.
  - Student-teacher goal setting
  - Teacher demonstrations -explicit teaching
  - Conferencing; 1-1 or in groups
  - Using models or examples
  - Peer response
  - Prompt cards
  - Reading own writing aloud
  - Check-lists for the purposes of self review
  - Writing/-sharing circles
  - Teacher feedback
  - Structured templates related to specific textual “forms” or “genres”
4. What is the role of the writing process in your teaching programme?
5. How confident are you in assessing students and their writing?
6. How do you assess writing? What happens to the data?

### C) School systems

1. How does your school organize for classroom writing programmes?
2. Are there school-wide expectations for planning and assessment?
3. What influences does the school ‘policy/implementation plans’ have on your teaching of writing?



## Appendix 12: Phase Two: Teacher's interview schedule

Supporting writers/ helping writers improve their text/ T-S interactions/  
Teacher's interview after 3 teaching sequences

1. Did anything interesting or surprising happen?  
Anything you did that had unexpected outcomes?  
Did any child surprise you?
2. What did you want the children to learn? (planning)
3. What did you notice about each child and their writing?  
How did you support them?
4. Explain the buddy talk? What function does it serve?
5. What can you tell me about your conferencing?
6. Could you tell me how whole class teaching supported your writers?  
And what about working 1-1?

**Appendix 13: Data analysis of video script showing task, teacher and student interactions**

<p>T: And you could sort of see back into his eyes, ah so sparkly eyes, they sort of little sparkle like little stars. Tyler?</p>		<p>rephrases addition imite D</p>	<p>(m) adds pomp</p>
<p>He's got a big fluffy tail</p>		<p>P probe imite</p>	<p>(m)</p>
<p>T: Tell me more about your Aslam's tail Tyler</p>		<p>D</p>	<p>(m)</p>
<p>It's got, it doesn't have much fur but at the end of it is sort of puffy</p>		<p>repeats quantity comparative</p>	<p>(m)</p>
<p>T: And is that soft and nice and puffy looking like his mane</p>		<p>repeats quantity comparative</p>	<p>(m)</p>
<p>Yea</p>		<p>repeats quantity comparative</p>	<p>(m)</p>
<p>T: Please tell me how your Aslam walks. Just close your eyes and get that picture in your mind. how does your Aslam walk. How does your Aslam walk (E) and a couple of others starts to get up on all fours). No tell me with words</p>	<p>adjust need visual</p>	<p>probe imite D</p>	<p>(m) act</p>
<p>E: He walks with four legs</p>		<p>rephrases</p>	<p>(m) act describ</p>
<p>T: Okay, E I'm wondering, does he walk light or heavy?</p>	<p>constant</p>	<p>probes D</p>	<p>(m)</p>
<p>E: He walks quite heavy... And light</p>		<p>D</p>	<p>(m)</p>
<p>T: (Acts out) so he pads along quite heavily. So how does Aslam walk (she demonstrates with her hands)</p>	<p>role play adjustment climb</p>	<p>rephrases probe imite</p>	<p>(m) act</p>
<p>T: Oh Aslam walks quite differently. her Aslam walks on tippy toes, show us again. And his ears, he is looking around, now he is looking around quite proudly, why is he looking around so proudly?</p>		<p>rephrases add add quantity imite</p>	<p>(m) act</p>
<p>Lin: Because he's King of Namia</p>		<p>D</p>	<p>(m)</p>
<p>T: King of Namia so he's looking like the king, ah how does your Aslam sit? You all sit like your Aslam sits. (T joins them on the floor)</p>	<p>beautiful act</p>	<p>repeats rephrases rephrases imite</p>	<p>(m) act</p>
<p>Children all position themselves in different ways.</p>		<p>D</p>	<p>(m)</p>
<p>How would you say your Aslam sits K?</p>		<p>imite</p>	<p>(m)</p>
<p>K: Like this (on bottom, up tall, legs astride)</p>		<p>D</p>	<p>(m) act step</p>
<p>T: You are doing it beautifully, other people let's give some words</p>	<p>beautiful feature</p>	<p>imite</p>	<p>(m) act</p>