

Pedagogic Antecedents of Classroom Writing

Patricia Bennett

**Thesis submitted in total fulfilment of the
requirements of the degree of
Master of Education (Hons.) University of Canberra**

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Abstract

This thesis reports on aspects of a large observational study of writing lessons in a range of ACT primary classrooms. The observational study followed students at risk of failure, who had made literacy gains through the Scaffolding Literacy pedagogy developed at the *Schools and Community Centre*, with a view to investigating their subsequent interactions in mainstream writing classrooms. This thesis is concerned with the extent to which teaching in these classrooms supported the children's access to literate discourse.

In order to ascertain the pedagogic antecedents of the lessons, this study focuses on the section of the lessons prior to children being asked to write. It explores two areas of preparation for writing: the first regarding building of the field of enquiry (*what* to write about); the second, the extent to which children are shown *how* to write an appropriate text. The study proposes a level of explicitness that delivers a fine degree of knowledge about language while supporting students who might otherwise be disadvantaged in the classroom.

The analysis in this study attempts to categorise the different kinds of interactions within the discourse of representative lessons by applying a framework for the pedagogic register of writing lessons proposed by Christie (1991, 2002) with particular reference to convergence of instructional and regulative registers. It was found that convergence alone was insufficient to

provide explicitness in teaching. However, when convergence was combined with a particular form of classroom interaction as developed in Scaffolding Literacy pedagogy a high degree of explicitness was made available to promote learning.

Little effective preparation for writing was found in classrooms dominated by ‘whole language’ orientations, especially where writing lessons were based on personal experience. However, use of literate texts provided more powerful access than personal experience to effective writing. The most productive classroom teaching resulted from building shared experience based on a model text which itself provided the resources for the teaching of writing.

The study raises questions about the importance of access to literate language when teaching writing and the role of constructive, purposeful questioning to build the knowledge of field as well as modelling features of language necessary for children to produce their own written texts.

Certificate of Authorship of Thesis

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Pedagogic Antecedents of Classroom Writing

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

1.1 Context of the study

The writing lessons that are the focus of this study were conducted in classrooms in ACT schools in the mid 1990s. One student from each of the classes involved had been referred to the Schools and Community Centre at the University of Canberra for assistance with literacy difficulties. Working as a tutor at the Centre with the developing Scaffolding Literacy pedagogy, I experienced the accelerated literacy development of children attending the program. The supportive pedagogy, which enabled children to work with texts at age appropriate levels, assisted them in developing reading skills while being made aware of features of literate discourse and the deeper meaning of texts. In exposing the children to a literate orientation the program provided an explicit foundation for the subsequent teaching of writing.

A prevailing question for staff at the Centre was how children, who benefited from the Scaffolding Literacy program, fared in their own classrooms, especially in writing lessons. In focusing on writing lessons we acknowledged that writing requires the integration of all aspects of literacy. This notion was based on the premise that successful writers bring to the writing task not only constructive ideas of what they wish to convey, but an understanding of the meaning and form of literate language, that has been enhanced by their reading, as well as complex orthographic skills progressively developed in the classroom. In order to investigate this broad field of enquiry an observational study, *An Observation of 'Oral Literate' Children in Educational Settings* (Gray, n.d.), for which I was the project officer, was conducted by a

research team at the Centre that allowed us to pursue a number of questions regarding the literacy development of the target children. Our initial aim was to follow our target children to see how they responded to writing lessons in their own classrooms.

To understand the responses of children with literacy difficulties to the writing lessons, it was necessary to look closely at the kinds of pedagogic support and literate resources within the lessons that would prepare children to complete a given task. However, in the course of the observational study I found that it was not only the children with literacy difficulties who could benefit from effective preparation. Even the written products of children considered to be good writers by their teachers, often failed to exploit the potential of the particular genre chosen for a writing task, though there might be a choice of vocabulary and other features which distinguished the writing as being of a reasonable quality.

After the first round of observation lessons, where each lesson was followed by a discussion with the teacher of the written products of previously selected children, questions arose concerning teaching styles and the provision of literate resources required to enable *all* children in the writing lessons to produce a suitable written text. Discussions with participating teachers in that period of 1994–1995 showed that their predominant teaching approach was that of whole language. As the report of the Australian National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (Rowe, 2005) shows this continues to be the favoured approach in most Australian classrooms. At this stage of the observational study I continued to be concerned, not only about the extent to which Centre children could profit from classroom teaching, but also other children in the observation classrooms. My interest in the particular discourse of the lessons was influenced by Rothery's comment that the quality of students' writing is 'related to the preparation for writing in the classroom' (Rothery, 1992: 269). This led to the

current project – an analysis of the extent to which teaching strategies were sufficient to enable children in varied ACT classrooms to produce a written text in a target genre.

1.2 Knowledge required by students

Reviews of the relevant literature show that for children to be able to produce a successful written text in a writing lesson three broad areas of knowledge are required. Firstly, to be able to engage with the discourse of the writing lesson, they need to be familiar with the field of knowledge related to the topic and associated with the written task (Christie, 1989, 1990a, 1991, 2000; Rothery, 1992; Gray, 1998). The experience associated with the task, whether it be physical or vicarious, either entirely imagined or linked to a text, is expected eventually to become the basis for the required written product. In order to promote a familiarity with the ideas and concepts around that experience and the language to express these, a discourse needs to be established between the children and the teacher to build up a bank of common knowledge (Edwards and Mercer, 1987). Subsequently, by sharing this knowledge orally, the participants can begin to internalise ideas and ways of expressing them for later use in a written mode.

Secondly, to be able to complete the set task and produce an acceptable piece of written work the children also need to have an understanding of the appropriate generic structure and language choices suitable for the written genre. Generic structure can be shown through strategies like deconstruction and joint construction of model texts, as can suitable language choices (Christie, 1989, 1994, 2000, 2002; Gray, 1998; Rothery, 1996, 2000; Macken-Horarik 1996, 2001). To bring examples closer to the required task Rothery (1992) and Gray (1998)

advocated a joint construction led by the teacher with the cooperation of the students and completed before students attempt their own written texts.

Lastly, the movement from oral language to the language of the written mode, which can be problematic, is also crucial to a student's production of a successful piece of writing. The literate language required for writing is very different from the language of the playground or of the home (Painter, 1986; Hammond, 1990; Gibbons, 2001, 2003). Therefore, exposure to and a subsequent familiarity with the language of written texts are essential factors for developing writers. This issue is explored in greater detail in the analysis of classroom writing contexts with a focus on genre, field and mode which are the dimensions of the writing task given most attention in Scaffolding Literacy pedagogy.

Invariably, the texts produced by children in writing lessons vary considerably in terms of quality. One question this raises concerns the source of this 'quality'. How much is due to resources explicitly provided by the teacher in the lessons and how much is drawn from literate resources that children already possess? This issue is repeatedly debated in primary literacy research and has recently reached public awareness through the report of the Australian National Inquiry Into the Teaching of Literacy, *Teaching Reading* (Rowe, 2005) which was commissioned by the Minister of Education.

1.3 Current approaches to literacy education

The report, which considers different literacy teaching practices with a special focus on the teaching of reading to children experiencing literacy difficulties, also gives an overview of current educational philosophies. Two current theoretical orientations to the teaching of

reading and writing are acknowledged. One is the meaning-based *whole language* approach and the other is code-based instruction that includes an emphasis on the teaching of *grapho-phonics* (Rowe, 2005).

The report acknowledges that *whole language* is still the dominant and prevailing approach to teaching reading and writing in 2005. *Whole language* is based on a constructivist philosophy ‘in which students are viewed as inherently active, self-regulating learners who construct knowledge for themselves, with little or no explicit decoding instruction’ (Rowe, 2005: 28). For children who are either experiencing literacy difficulties or who do not present as ‘active, self-regulating learners’ a wholly constructivist ‘top-down’ approach can appear problematic, but so too can ‘bottom-up’ instruction which usually begins with combining sounds of letters and blends and is bound by codes and rules and is not well connected to meaning. An over-emphasis on either approach can be deleterious for young learners. Indeed, the stress experienced by children attending the Schools and Community Centre (SCC) as a result of their difficulty in meaningful assimilation of code-based instruction or a failure to decode wordings relying on semantic or picture cues contributes to the continuation of their literacy difficulties.

The majority of children who enter the Parents-as-Tutors Program (PTP) at the SCC have been exposed to a combination of whole language and phonics-based instruction with varying degrees of emphasis in classrooms. Despite interventions both medical and educational, including extra input from individual literacy programs, these children have failed to reach acceptable standards of literacy and present as being totally confused and stressed to the extent that they often appear unable to learn having developed elaborate avoidance strategies.

The PTP is designed to show parents a pedagogy that resolves stress issues and teaches

supportive strategies while accelerating literacy learning. Parents work with their child and a tutor, so that the parent can eventually take over the role of the tutor. The distress children and parents can experience as a result of classroom failure is exemplified in the experience of one child in the program who, for remedial reasons, was working in a phonic-based program at school. During his first session he burst into tears when his mother, herself a competent and experienced primary school teacher, showed their SCC tutor a phonics chart of common letter combinations he was expected to learn.

The stress and confusion suffered by this child, typical of most children in this program, prevented him from being able to access the language information to which he had been exposed. This child, like others who attend the SCC, had failed to access literate discourse through the limited model of language provided by code-based instruction with its emphasis on phonics and the impoverished texts with restricted vocabularies that accompany this type of curriculum. But at other times failure in literacy is also seen to come from the ‘benevolent inertia’ (Martin, 1989) of whole language, where the emphasis is on meanings made by the child and little explicit attention is given to the wordings and letter patterns of literate texts. Making the teaching of literacy more successful is not just a matter of combining the main two approaches of code-based instruction and whole language. Integration of these approaches is essential for an interactive model (Harris, Turbill, Fitzsimmons & McKenzie, 2001), but to be successful the strategies involved must be presented through an effective, explicit pedagogy that presents learning about language in a supportive, stress free way so that it makes sense to each child.

An interactive model, one that enabled the child described above and many others to reach age appropriate literacy levels and to succeed at school, was developed at the SCC (Gray,

Cowey & Axford, 2003) and now also forms the basis of NALP, the National Accelerated Literacy Program (Cowey, 2006). At a simplistic level this model could be seen to begin with a ‘top-down’ meaning-based approach associated with whole language, moving into a ‘bottom-up’ approach that includes the teaching of graphophonic elements of literate words. The move from top-down to bottom-up occurs repeatedly within each cycle of the Scaffolding Literacy teaching sequence with one approach supporting the other. The interactive nature of this model ensures that an understanding of the field of experience, the text structure of the particular genre, the literate language of the written mode and patterns within words that form the graphophonic system in the English language are all part of the teaching program. Therefore, the Scaffolding Literacy program combines insights from both top-down and bottom-up approaches. With its commitment to enable all children to enter into the discourse of the lesson through a deep emphasis on semantics at all levels, including sentence, phrase and word level, this program adds further dimensions to the perceived attributes of an interactive model.

The strong theoretical basis of this model determines a powerful pedagogy that allows an engagement with age-appropriate texts at a cognitive level, as opposed to a developmental reading level, and focuses on establishing meanings at a higher level than in other programs through thoroughly explicit teaching. In order to provide information in a stress free environment, the pedagogy involves a teaching sequence designed to enhance the understandings of all children, so that these understandings eventually become common knowledge that can be articulated and internalised. The remarkable multifaceted nature of this program enables children to ‘take up’ literate discourse and emulate it in their own writing (Gray, Cowey & Axford, 2003).

The children attending the SCC who were a focus of the Observational Study were at the early stages of their literacy intervention at the Centre when the study began in 1994. However, from the beginning they were inducted into the supportive literacy pedagogy that is a feature of Scaffolding Literacy. From the beginning of the Observational Study I watched these target children to see if they applied strategies they had been taught at the Centre in their classrooms. One child, who copied words letter by letter had been taught at the Centre to look for ‘chunks’ of letters in a word and write each chunk as one unit eg *st* or *str*. Back in the classroom I observed he had reverted to his habitual ineffectual strategy of copying a letter at a time. Whether he was resorting to a previous habit too hard to break or was under stress in the classroom was unclear. What this incident clarified for me was that in order to change unproductive strategies used by fragile learners proven effective strategies should be reinforced in classrooms as well as in other learning situations. My next step was to wonder about strategies commonly used in the classroom writing lessons we, the staff at the SCC, were to observe and whether they bore any similarity to those being taught to the children attending the PTP through the Scaffolding Literacy pedagogy.

A major tenet of the Scaffolding Literacy program is that children should be thoroughly prepared for writing before they are asked to produce their own texts. The value of a discourse that allows language choices to be made explicit was recognised, developed and utilized in the earlier work of the SCC. Prior to the Observational Study of SCC children in their classroom settings Gray and Rothery (1993) had established an important difference between ‘literacy oriented’ children, who succeed at school and are able to respond to and ‘take’ from literary text, and the typical children referred to the centre whose use of language is primarily restricted to the oral mode. Such children Gray and Rothery (1993) termed ‘oral literate’ because they appeared to be unable to move beyond an extremely limited use of language that

drew on 'oral' experiences. This restricted use of language had a profound effect on the ability of these children to read complex literate texts and to produce written work with the problem compounded by poor decoding skills.

Although the most visible difficulty of children who have extreme problems with writing is usually spelling, Gray and Rothery (1993) found it was their unfamiliarity with the appropriate language resources that had the greatest effect on both their writing and reading skills. Children's difficulties were exacerbated by inappropriate strategies that they had adopted and used in a ritualistic way to survive in a classroom setting. The Observational Study confirmed this, because when children, who were having success with the literacy strategies taught at the SCC, were observed in their own classroom, they were seen to revert to their ritualised, dysfunctional strategies if the teaching did not accord with the pedagogy and strategies operating at the Centre.

It was 'the knowledge about higher level literate language features, and the metacognitive skills for recognizing and employing them' that Gray, (1999:57) found were rarely made explicit in classrooms. Children who fail to bring much of this knowledge from home are immediately disadvantaged. To redress such an imbalance, Gray recommended reversing the typical literacy teaching sequence, which usually begins with children writing from personal experience, to one that begins with reading. In providing learners with the necessary support to read higher level texts their attention could be drawn to the features of literate language that eventually becomes a resource for developing their writing abilities. As in the belief stated by Wood (1998) that children can understand more than they can say because 'their *receptive* language ability (ability to listen and understand) is often in advance of their *productive* language (speech)' (Wood, 1998:126), so can similar parallels be drawn between reading and

writing where the development of understandings through reading can be transferred at a later stage to advance writing abilities. And teachers can support the transfer through explicit pedagogic strategies.

Rothery (1994) proposed a model for secondary English materials in which she identified three phases of activity, deconstruction, joint construction and individual construction. This involved classroom analysis of a model text, joint writing of a new text in the same genre and then independent work on a new text. In his own research Gray (1998) found that high levels of explicit teaching can encourage children to adopt aspects of literate language which they can later access and choose to use in their own text construction. For this to occur, the teaching *before* children are asked to write must provide them with a deep understanding and ability to engage with the language relating to the instructional field which, if it is to be internalised as common knowledge, may need to be part of a series of lessons. My interest in the extent to which teachers prepare students for writing *before* asking them to begin the task led to this present study involving the analysis of the section of lessons where preparation for writing occurs.

In addition to the building of common knowledge research at the SCC showed that students need to be shown appropriate written models, with an explanation of the expected generic structure, and to be supported into a shared construction of suitable literate language before being asked to write alone. With the appropriate input from the teacher, prior to attempting the task, even the child experiencing literacy difficulties can be supported into an achievement that would most likely be impossible if the starting point was dependent upon his/her own limited resources.

As outlined earlier the initial purpose of the Observational Study, which preceded the impetus for my study, was to follow seven children who were receiving assistance from the SCC to see how they were responding to writing lessons in their own classrooms. Without exception, teachers had reported that these children wrote very little compared to most other children in the class. Examples of their school written work showed extreme limitations of language structures and vocabulary consistent with Gray's definition of 'oral literacy' and reflected the dysfunctional strategies the children had adopted to survive in the classroom (Gray and Rothery, 1993; Gray, n.d.; Gray, Cowey & Axford, 2003). Their writing invariably showed an inability to move from an oral to a written mode. The simplistic, oral language structures, often repeated in a ritualistic way and recycled through each piece of written work, have been identified as a survival strategy of the poor writer.

After a few weeks, the 'high challenge, high support' pedagogy (Hammond & Gibbons, 2001) offered to the target children through the teaching methods at the SCC had enabled these children to make considerable progress with their reading and spelling. Because of time constraints (sessions were for 45 minutes once a week), when the classroom observation lessons began the children had not started to produce writing at the SCC. However, they had already responded favourably to the extensive and explicit preparation that is an essential component of the Scaffolding Literacy pedagogy. This component, which provides a literate orientation to a carefully selected text, is one element of the powerful pedagogic antecedents to any writing task children undertake in this program. The program's preparation for writing includes the teaching of strategies that enable children to:

1. Read and comprehend a text at close to age-appropriate level.

2. Use grapho-phonetic processing skills in a meaningful context to assist with reading.
3. Use grapho-phonetic skills to spell words from the same context.
4. Develop an awareness of literate language and aspects of genre associated with the reading text.

1.4 Formulating a research question

Together with the members of the Observational Study research team I hypothesized that any children in the group who made measurable progress in school writing lessons would do so when the teachers were using strategies and pedagogy in a way that was closest to that employed at the SCC, ie high challenge, high support. In order to check this hypothesis with the help of the research team I observed and taped the writing lessons that are the subject of this study.

Once the lessons were transcribed my next task was to listen carefully to the tapes of all twenty-seven writing lessons and make final corrections to the transcripts. As I became more familiar with the lessons the huge range of what teachers consider constitutes a ‘writing lesson’ became of interest to me, as did the quality of ‘teaching’ within these lessons.

Having access to the audio-tapes and transcripts of lessons classroom teachers identified as writing lessons I had the means to analyse the discourse of the lessons and search for the kind and degree of support offered by teachers to children in preparation for the writing task. A major consideration for me was the level of explicitness in the teaching that might be seen to give the children access to the literate discourse of the lessons. Furthermore, I needed to

investigate the extent to which teachers were explicit about field knowledge, genre and literate language of the written mode.

From these initial explorations my interest into the extent to which children are given access to literate resources in writing lessons intensified, leading to the formulation of my general question:

To what extent do teachers prepare children for writing tasks?

More specifically I wanted to investigate the literate resources made explicit to children in writing lessons.

At the SCC, Scaffolding Literacy pedagogy, which is informed by a strong theoretical research base, involves students and teachers in intensive preparation before students begin a writing task. Having worked with this successful pedagogy at the SCC with children who experienced literacy difficulties my aim was to investigate the extent to which classroom teachers prepare children for the writing task. My intention was to analyse the discourse of writing lessons up to the point where children were asked to begin the task. Within that section of the lessons my search was for literate resources made explicit by teachers to children before they began the task.

I felt this study was important because children taught at the SCC were returning to classrooms having made gains in literacy through explicit teaching. The teaching included clear expectations for writing and the means for meeting these needs were provided through negotiated meaning and explicit instruction. In working with these children, who were acknowledged to be experiencing literacy difficulties, it was clear that many of the teaching

strategies they had experienced in classrooms before intervention had left them, and by association other students, completely marginalised. It seemed essential that any gains our children had made should be continued on their return to their classrooms and not ignored, forgotten or diminished. This particularly applies to a heightened awareness of meanings conveyed through language which is a focus of the program. My question aimed to work towards finding out how much preparation for writing these children were being given in their own classrooms.

Examination of the discourse of the lessons therefore was to focus on two areas of enquiry:

1. The extent to which children are given access to the literate discourse and meanings associated with the instructional field associated with the topic.
2. The extent to which children are shown how to construct the intended written product by careful monitoring of the discourse of lessons to find levels of explicit teaching of genre and literate language choices.

1.5 Limitations of the study

At the conclusion of the Observational Study my brief was to analyse the twenty-seven diverse writing lessons. Other members of the research team were to be allocated different projects with one of these being the analysis of the writing samples produced by the children. Having observed first hand approximately half of these lessons and listened to and read all of them at least twice I was aware that a number of lessons were not intended to result in the production of a written text. These lessons were eliminated from this study without further analysis. The remaining lessons were categorised into groups and from each group I chose representative lessons for analysis.

Even though I reduced the number of lessons for analysis I was aware of the difficulty readers may have in following the discussion which moves between the lessons. I have attempted to minimise the problem this might present by labelling the lesson carefully and including a table of the lessons that form the basis of this study (see Table 1, Chapter 3, section 8).

In working from audio-tapes rather than video-tape I acknowledge the impossibility of interpreting body language and other nuances that cannot be picked up on audio-tape alone. There were also sections where answers were inaudible and a section of tape in one lesson where recording ceased for a brief period. These problems have been acknowledged at the appropriate point in the discussion.

My study is strictly limited to the pedagogic antecedents of classroom writing. Therefore, my analysis has been confined to the same section of each lesson extending from the beginning of the lesson to the point where children are instructed to begin writing. In many of the lessons teachers attempted to offer suggestions to individuals or groups of children, or responded to questions, after commencement of the writing task. Because my interest was in the preparation offered *before* the task began, these later comments, which may have had some influence on the written products, have not been included in the discussion.

Readers will very likely be interested in the writing produced by the target children during these lessons. All writing samples from three children in each classroom were collected as part of the Observational Study. In all classes one of the three children was a child attending the SCC because of literacy difficulties acknowledged by his/her school. Although the

analysis of the children's writing was beyond the scope of this study, certain samples have been scrutinised for their outcomes and are discussed in terms of the availability of knowledge provided in the lessons. These samples are included in the appendices.

I am aware that another dimension to the analysis of the discourse of the writing lessons could have been achieved by a detailed application of Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar. However, that again was beyond the scope of this study because of the large number of lessons to be examined. My study was designed to examine a broad range of writing lessons with discussion focusing on the nature and degree of literate resources made available to all children to enable them to complete the task set by their teachers.

1.6 Preview of chapters

This introduction is the first of six chapters in this study of classroom writing lessons. The second chapter gives an overview of the relevant literature beginning with a discussion of progressive ideology and the subsequent attack on what was perceived as the implicit cultural bias of its pedagogy. It continues with a discussion of the significance of different socio-cultural orientations and the problem these can give to children understanding the culture of the classroom. Different approaches to the teaching of literacy are discussed, followed by the important differences between spoken and written language. The next subject explored in this chapter is classroom discourse, including questioning strategies followed by the acquisition of common knowledge and the implicit nature of 'educational ground rules' (Edwards and Mercer, 1987). The value and degree of explicit teaching is discussed in relationship to students' access to the discourse of the classroom. Of the final two sections of this chapter, the first focuses on the theories and research of Christie, whose work has had an enormous

impact and influence on this study, and the second focuses on the Scaffolding Literacy pedagogy developed in the ACT at the SCC, University of Canberra and now the main focus of the National Accelerated Literacy Project based at Charles Darwin University in Queensland.

The third chapter explains the origin of this study which had its genesis in a large observational study conducted by the director and staff of the Schools and Community Centre at the University of Canberra. This chapter also explains the methodology employed in the analysis of the writing lessons and reasons for particular choices within the methodology. Special reference is given to Christie's analytic model of classroom discourse because this had enormous bearing on my analytical approach.

The fourth and fifth chapters are both concerned with the analysis of the lessons. In Chapter 4 the classroom discourse in the Task Orientation segment of the lessons is analysed. In the analysis I examine the extent to which teachers build common knowledge in writing lessons to ensure children have knowledge of the field of enquiry, as well as knowledge of language features and the genre of the model text.

The analysis of the Task Specification of the writing lessons in Chapter 5 is concerned with the extent to which teachers show children *how* they should write. In the course of this analysis I search for a recontextualisation of common knowledge including language features and structures explored in the Task Orientation. I then search for evidence of how this knowledge is incorporated into the discourse that shows children how to construct their own written products.

The final chapter discusses the conclusions I draw from this study and includes some of the limitations of my research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter begins with a review of three major approaches to literacy education with an emphasis on the changes that impacted on the teaching of writing in Australia and the UK following the influence of the Plowden Report published in 1967. The main focus of the chapter is on the exploration of literature from the 1970s to the present day that is relevant to pedagogy for teaching writing and the bearing the literature has had on access to academic literate talk especially for marginalised students in regular classrooms. Because this study emerged out of an interest in the instructional needs of students struggling with literacy, particular attention is given to the extent and kind of explicitness about language available in different approaches to writing pedagogy.

2.1 Progressive approaches to literacy teaching

The Plowden Report *Children and their Primary Schools* (1967), written to advise government on the development of primary education in England and Wales in a time of growing liberalism, had a wide and pervasive influence on educational practices stretching through to America and Australia. At that time traditional pedagogy, with an emphasis on teachers giving explicit knowledge to receptive children, was under dispute by the progressives who believed children should be actively learning through a process of discovery and that the teacher's role was to elicit rather than impart knowledge. In the late sixties and early seventies, progressivist classrooms became more informal and instruction implicit, with teachers providing an educational environment that allowed the children to negotiate their own learning and progress developmentally. Although the pedagogy developed in response to

the Plowden Report had strong connections to Piagetian psychology, contrary to popular opinion the report did not fully endorse ‘discovery learning’, with which Piaget is usually identified (Edwards and Mercer, 1987). However, it did accept Piaget’s idea of children needing to reach ‘readiness’ before they were able to take up opportunities to learn, beginning with their own experience of the world.

With this new approach, teachers were expected to facilitate the process of learning by providing students with a stimulating learning environment. The exploration of problems in a rich environment was expected to lead students to integrate their existing knowledge with new propositions. The resulting ‘discoveries’ were expected to bring deeper understandings ‘owned’ by the students, allowing learning to evolve almost spontaneously.

The emphasis in both reading and writing education was on using the child’s own language resources as a starting point. In reading lessons, children were encouraged to focus on meaning rather than on the elements or building blocks in words, as the teaching of graphophonic processing gave way to the recognition of whole words. ‘Prediction’ became a byword. By using their own experience of language and the active use of meaning, children were taught strategies to help them predict print wordings based on what Smith (1994) in his book *Understanding Reading* (first published in 1971) called ‘a psycho-linguistic guessing game’.

In the progressive writing classroom the focus was on the process of writing with the ‘process theorists’ supporting a child-centered approach to the teaching of writing, expecting students to bring their own experiences and knowledge to the task. To stimulate students’ imagination

in preparation for writing, teachers were expected to provide experiences and ‘allow’ students to discover their own resources. A view expressed by Moffett and quoted by Arnold was that, ‘the writer abstracts from experience, selects from inner speech and organizes thought and feeling in writing’ (Arnold, 1983:125). The process was conceptualised as an individual one, based very much on oral language.

Progressivism had several manifestations in Australian classrooms, described as ‘whole language’ when teachers attempted to characterise their general approach to literacy teaching, or as ‘process writing’ when it came to their teaching of writing. In ‘process writing’ classrooms, teachers took the role of ‘facilitators’ of creative writing, encouraging children to draft texts based on personal experience, using their own linguistic resources and commonsense knowledge of any topic. Any prior instruction was expected to be implicit, so that each child could work from a level of comfort, ‘learning by doing’. Following a process of ‘conferencing’ with the teacher or with peers and after further redrafting the written work could then be considered ‘publishable’. Attention to language necessary to make the writing more successful was incidental in many classrooms. If it occurred at all, it was at the ‘point of need’ when teachers became aware of a persistent problem with a particular grammatical form or spelling word.

This approach to writing, introduced to Australia through the work of Donald Graves in the early 1980s, not only encouraged children to write about their own experiences, but also to use their own language resources learnt primarily through models of oral language to which they were exposed. Teachers, having provided experiences and opportunities for their students, only intervened when conferencing individual children once first drafts were written.

Wholesale attention to the language needed to produce different kinds of texts was not

encouraged. Indeed, the extent to which Graves advocated young children should learn to write using their own resources is exemplified in this quote, ‘If we will only get out of the way, let children lead, then observe, follow and aid them intelligently, who knows what writing we will be privileged to read ... and in a very short time.’ (Graves, 1983:66).

Progressivism has had other offshoots or manifestations in English curriculum. In secondary school English, in which students are expected to increasingly respond to literary texts, it became known as ‘personal growth’. Personal growth has been a powerful and enduring feature of literacy teaching in English (Christie & Martin, 1997). Others have noted its persistence right up to the present. Ian Reid (2003), for example, refers to personal growth as ‘the persistent pedagogy’ of school English teaching across Australia, the USA and the UK to the present day. Its dominance and a continued reliance on ‘whole language’ pedagogy continues to prevail in Australian schools as the recent Commonwealth Inquiry into Literacy teaching acknowledges (Rowe, 2005).

Although many children may benefit from this approach, it is clear that some are marginalized by it. This is especially true for those children who have brought from home the language and socio-cultural experiences which tend to fit easily with that of the classroom (Delpit, 1986; Christie, 1990b, 2002; Freebody & Baker, 2003). For marginalised children and those from cultures or environments where there is no exposure to what Bernstein called the ‘elaborated code’ of English, who therefore come to school using language in ways not valued in classrooms (Bernstein, 1971, 1990), or who because of a social orientation to tasks (Delpit, 1988; Gray, 1998) were unable to engage appropriately within the classroom environment, being thrown back onto their own resources proved disastrous.

2.2 Traditional approaches to literacy teaching

In response to these difficulties, some politicians and media pundits are currently advocating a return to more traditional approaches to literacy education in English. Right wing advocates for a ‘back to basics’ approach, such as Kevin Donnelly in *The Weekend Australian* (2007), are calling for a reduced, but more stable knowledge base to be taught in English. In this model, teachers will impart traditional grammar and received wisdom about ‘great works’ to receptive students. Students will accept and remember knowledge given to them without question or negotiation.

In a traditional approach, children begin with the alphabet and simple phonics, a ‘bottom-up’ approach (Harris, et al., 2001), and this leads them into reading basal, vocabulary reduced texts that often carry little or no meaning. Progression is in small incremental units. Those children who are at all confused by the language and culture of the classroom and/or have difficulty reading do not progress to higher-level texts and the exposure to more literate language as do their more confident or advantaged peers. In the teaching of writing the emphasis is on skills; correctness of form, sentence structure, grammar, spelling and punctuation. Written exercises in grammar and syntax are common, but because such exercises are typically decontextualised, links are rarely made to students’ writing. The ‘products’ of a writing activity may be the focus, but very little attention is paid to the processes by which these are produced. Many of those students who come to the Schools and Community Centre at the University of Canberra for help with reading and writing are refugees from both process writing classrooms and from traditional ‘skills-based’ classrooms.

It is clear that neither the extremes of whole language and process writing or traditional approaches to literacy will suffice here. Researchers committed to finding a new way, such as Edwards and Mercer agree that, while students should be actively engaged in their own learning, the progressive movement is prone to lose sight of ‘the importance of cultural transmission’. In comparing the two ideologies Edwards and Mercer state, ‘The traditional ideology was all about teaching, and the progressive ideology is all about learning. What is needed is *a new synthesis*, in which education is seen as the development of joint understandings.’ (Edwards and Mercer, 1987:36, my italics).

2.3 Towards a new synthesis – the social-constructivist approach

The discovery of the implicit nature of much of the discourse in classrooms led researchers, including Edwards and Mercer, to recommend the replacement of a child-centred ideology with ‘one that emphasizes the socio-cultural and discursive bases of knowledge and learning’ (Edwards and Mercer 1987:168). This view has been supported by Chouliaraki, who found in her research that, ‘progressive’ practices appeared to, “privilege ‘procedural’ or ‘ritual’ types of knowledge rather than ‘principled’ ones” (Chouliaraki 1998:5). To overcome students’ dependence on ‘ritual’ knowledge as a solution to surviving the demands of the classroom and to make education more explicit, Edwards and Mercer recommended there should be ‘a greater emphasis on the importance of language and communication’ in the creation and sharing of meanings and experiences.

This questioning of progressive ideology did not begin in earnest until the late 1980s with social constructivists querying the implicit cultural bias of its pedagogy. As mentioned earlier, concern was particularly expressed for children likely to be left out of learning processes due

to the implicit nature of much of the classroom talk. This marginalisation was demonstrated in the late 1980s and early 1990s by researchers using a systematic approach to classroom discourse analysis (Lemke, 1985; Edwards & Mercer, 1989; Christie, 1990b, 1991, 2002; Gray, n.d.; Cowey, 2006).

Criticism of a progressive approach to literacy and of process writing in particular came from the ‘genre theorists’ who contend that writing which is focused on personal experience is imbued with the characteristics of speech, (Martin, 1985, Hammond, 1990; Christie, 1991). Taking issue with the linguistically impoverished nature of the texts emerging from process writing classrooms, they argued that many children would never move beyond such ‘oral writing’ without the intervention of teachers explicitly scaffolding learners into the more powerful abstract and literate language of the written mode. As other research into genre theory has shown, the need to teach students about the structure and purposes of written texts is just as important in English as it is in other discipline areas such as science or history (Christie and Martin, 1997; Macken-Horarik, 2002).

2.3.1 Teaching genre

The specific teaching of genre was an important initiative begun in Australia, particularly NSW, in the early 1980s. The teaching was designed to help students gain control over the different kinds of texts they need to engage with both in school and beyond (Rothery, 1989; Hammond, 2001; Macken-Horarik, 2002). The genre-based programs, which were developed at this time, involved analysing models, sharing negotiation and developing independent writing. In addition, there was an emphasis on the explicit explanation of the language choices most suited to the production of the particular genre. Teachers needed to be aware that,

‘Teaching students about language and how to use it requires a high degree of consciousness and explicitness in early stages’ (Macken-Horarik, 2002:42). When used successfully these programs were extremely powerful. However, although careful guidelines were prepared for teachers to use, many found the depth of discussion around language difficult and often ended up paying lip-service to the six text types in the teaching program, relying on students to use their own initiative in imitating models displayed around the classroom, leaving them without adequate support (Macken-Horarik, p.c.). Some educational theorists argued that genre-based approaches were too reproductive of the discourses they taught, leaving no space for critique or change or innovation (see, for example, Luke, 1996).

The genre theorists, who believe in educational programs with clear goals, argue for teachers being able to articulate and teach the various genres that students will need to read and write across the curriculum (Martin, 1990; Macken-Horarik, 1996, 2002; Unsworth, 2000). They oppose the contention of those who support process writing, that teachers should not intervene in the initial stages of a child's writing attempt, arguing that joint construction by teacher and child is a major strategy used to support the child when learning to take control of a new genre. Using shared experience in a positive environment, teacher and child jointly construct a written text where learning occurs as naturally as it does between the supportive adult and the young child who is learning to speak (Painter, 1986; Gray, 1987; Christie, 1990a; Hammond, 1990). The point is that learners need the guidance and the support of a knowledgeable other, whether that be a parent or a teacher.

The view that patterns of mature writing differ from patterns of speech (Christie, 1990a; Hammond, 1990), led Christie to maintain that without being taught explicitly how to control the language over a number of genres, young writers do not have the opportunity to take up

options beyond using their own experience of oral language. If left to choose their own way of writing, as encouraged in process writing, for example, linguistic research has shown that students will most likely resort to the simple recount, largely constructed with an observation followed by a comment and written as they would speak (Rothery, 1989, Christie and Gray, 1990; Gray and Rothery, 1993).

Linguists including Christie (1990a), Hammond (1990) and Gray (1987, 1998) believe that just as young children learn to speak the oral genres of their culture through sharing experience with an adult and jointly constructing an oral text around that experience (Painter, 1986; Rothery, 1994), so too can young writers be supported into successfully learning the written genres of our culture providing these are taught explicitly. Although children may be exposed to a variety of genres, both orally and through stories read to them, they may not be able to transfer such patterns to their own writing without considerable guidance. In some cases, as with factual writing, the model is beyond the experience of children, as factual writing is seldom read to children either at school or at home (Martin, 1985; Rothery, 1989; Martin and Rothery, 1993). Another major factor, discussed later in this chapter, involves the important differences between spoken and written language.

2.3.2 Scaffolding literacy

The pedagogy developed at the SCC produces the synthesis called for by Edwards and Mercer, a productive mix of both ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom up’ strategies privileged in whole language and traditional approaches respectively. It provides a seamless spiral where common knowledge including knowledge about genre is built through supportive interactions between teacher and students around age appropriate texts; where reading and understandings about

literate language through a series of strategies informs writing and students' writing informs their reading. In this program the link between reading and writing is valued and exploited in a visible and explicit way with a great deal of importance placed on extensive preparation for writing.

This program offers an alternative neo-Vygotskian approach to a developmental approach to literacy. At the SCC where teaching is pitched just beyond a child's attainment level and progress is set to occur at regular small intervals allowing the majority to make safe, incremental progress. However, for children who are soon seen to be lagging behind peers in literacy tasks and are unable to satisfy the expectations of the teacher, incremental progress is most likely to be too slow for them to ever reach age appropriate levels. An alternative, as practiced at the SCC where children are taught above developmental level but within their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978), enables them to engage at a higher cognitive level on more demanding texts than reading ages might suggest with the support of a mature, competent adult. The support provided, as well as using texts at a high enough level to allow opportunity for accelerated progress, is carefully structured to reduce any feelings of stress and anxiety.

The pedagogy offers support through a process of 'scaffolding' (Bruner, 1986) where the teacher begins by giving maximum support for learning and gradually withdraws it as children take over the discourse and the knowledge needed to understand and complete the task. This manner of teaching is a hallmark of 'Scaffolding Literacy' as practised at the SCC and, more recently, as 'Accelerated Literacy' of the National Accelerated Literacy Project (NALP), (Cowey, 2006). These programs promote the development of common knowledge in classroom teaching and explicit teaching practices which engage children with literate

discourse through reading, spelling and writing. For ease of reference, I will refer to both versions of the pedagogy as ‘Scaffolding Literacy’ as it is this that is associated most closely with the work of the SCC.

Scaffolding is one version of the process of ‘natural’ language learning that Gray (1987) and others like Painter (1986) have seen as so significant for learning of the mother tongue. The term ‘scaffolding’ was initially used by Bruner (1986) to describe the support given by a tutor, who acting as a mentor to a child learning a task, first gave total support, gradually withdrawing this as the child gained partial and later total and control. The task chosen would be within the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) of the child and therefore beyond the child’s independent capabilities, but achievable with the assistance of a teacher or mentor.

The aspect of scaffolding which Gray sees as being so crucial is that of the ‘joint construction of meaning’ which occurs ‘naturally’ between adult and child during oral language learning and can be replicated between teacher and child if this strategy is used effectively. In this situation, the adult and child simultaneously negotiate process and product to create an oral text, by first developing common knowledge of the topic. As Painter (1986) has shown, the young child learns a conversational discourse through repetition in interactions with a parent or carer. During these interactions the adult interprets the child’s actions and linguistic meanings, extending the discourse to provide valuable models, aided by questioning probes and other responses. Meanwhile, the child is encouraged to reconstruct his/her experiences through language. Painter argues that the adult can provide not only models of language, but also of genre by encouraging the child to recognise key points in the narrative, especially

when the child shows an interest in a feature that helps to shape a story, such as an ending where a problem is resolved.

The pedagogy of Scaffolding Literacy developed out of observations and research into the difference between the acquisition of literacy by children who begin school with an understanding and control over literate language, and those who fail repeatedly to acquire appropriate literacy skills valued by schools. This research and the subsequent trialing of strategies that led to the development of a pedagogical sequence (Gray & Cowey, 1997), was conducted by Gray together with other members of the SCC research team including Wendy Cowey and Margaret Graetz. Although Gray's original interest was in improving the literacy standards of indigenous Australians, the directions the pedagogy has taken at the Centre and in ACT and other mainstream classrooms makes it applicable to general aspects of literacy teaching-learning with special implications for the explicit teaching of writing.

Children who are most likely to succeed with literacy are those who enter school with an understanding and control over written language resources. These children are also more likely to engage quickly with the culture and interactions found in the classroom. Such children are 'literacy oriented' in that they will attend to the language of books, and are prepared to explore the meanings and patterns of language found there, which they often later incorporate into their own writing.

In contrast, Gray and Rothery (1993) found that children experiencing literacy difficulties had a very limited understanding and control over the language of books or other written language. Although this group of children had not developed appropriate reading or spelling

skills, it was their inability to connect with the language of written texts that Gray and Rothery saw as the major interference with any further development in their reading and writing skills. Because these children consistently drew on their 'oral' experiences as a basis for writing or telling stories, the term 'oral literate' was used to describe their level of literacy development. They were difficult to engage in the classroom, despite often having individual support, as they appeared to have become dependent on others, not knowing how to move beyond a limited ritual of 'dysfunctional strategies' (Gray, n.d.) that were often compounded by avoidance behaviours. However, not all children who have difficulties with writing are those who are socially marginalised. There are many others who would also benefit from a more visible pedagogy that shows the learner how to take on a writing task and complete it successfully.

Children who begin school with a literate orientation recognise the form of written texts and understand the ways teachers talk about them. With this knowledge they are clearly advantaged in the classroom. Finding a way of engaging *all* learners in a higher level of discourse and moving many of them on from negative positions of failure in literacy demands a high-challenge pedagogy. In order to deliver this, while continually integrating all aspects of reading and writing, the Scaffolding Literacy pedagogy reverses the typical literacy teaching sequence by beginning with reading to provide a literate context from which teachers can show students how to write, rather than from the more traditional way of beginning with students' personal experience and then working to improve their attempts at writing.

With this new approach, the period prior to students reading independently is a time of intense teaching. The texts chosen for reading are ones that provide resources for teaching students about writing. They are texts that are often above the reading level, but within the cognitive

abilities, of many of the participants. This approach promotes not only access to an understanding of the meanings and inferences of the text, but also a knowledge of the genre, structures and literate language used by the author. With the resulting common understandings and knowledge students are able to use prediction and uncertain graphophonic knowledge to enable them to read and discuss the text. The maximum support initially provided and the level of explicit discussion introduced by the teacher replicates the process that Bruner (1986) referred to as ‘scaffolding’, which parents so often automatically employ when reading with their children.

This scaffolding process was successfully adapted to a classroom setting by the teacher in Gray’s study allowing teacher and students to jointly construct a meaningful text (Gray, 1998). Genre-based approaches have also drawn resourcefully on the same insights (Rothery, 1989, 1994) and use strategies such as ‘modelling’ and ‘joint construction’ of texts to the same end.

In his study Gray (1998) showed how a teacher was able to recreate a situation similar to the language support given by a parent to a child (Painter, 1984) in a classroom setting and extend it into the joint construction of a written text. Gray’s intensive analysis focused on a planned sequence of lessons where a teacher introduced children to entirely new information with the lessons culminating in a writing task. He documented in detail the way the teacher built common knowledge with her class through her language choices and careful use of the regulative and instructional registers. He then showed how the teacher successfully scaffolded the children into using this knowledge, together with suitable language choices, to complete a joint writing construction.

In the early part of the lesson, the teacher reframed the knowledge she had given the children in the previous lesson clearly and precisely in a reconceptualisation which allowed for an elaboration. In this way she provided continuity over the series of lessons while strengthening the base of common knowledge. She repeated this process in subsequent lessons until the children held sufficient knowledge themselves to be able to begin the final writing task.

The process of reconceptualisation meant that familiar knowledge was reframed (Cazden,1988), making it more familiar to some, while extending the information to participants to whom it may previously have been uncertain knowledge. To do this successfully a teacher accepts a child's response and extends its relationship to the instructional field. In this way reconceptualisation provides a familiar framework on which new facts can be added, concepts clarified and literate language modelled and internalised.

Another aspect of classroom questioning which Gray documented and has since been developed more fully as an important strategy in the Scaffolding Literacy pedagogy is that of 'preformulation'. Extensive use of preformulation as a strategy allows the teacher to focus the children on prior discussion of common experience in relation to a forthcoming line of questioning. Having been alerted to the context of a question by a preformulating move, a task focus is established, so that children are guided to respond positively to the task. The teacher is then positioned to follow with a reconceptualisation, promoting the instructional register, with the maximum opportunity for mental engagement and learning to take place.

Crucial to the pedagogy of Scaffolding Literacy is the negotiation of meaning where common understandings are built and common knowledge developed. In the course of such negotiations distinctions can be made between literate and oral language and explicit reasons given how and why the author constructed the text and made particular language choices. When students are later shown *how* to write, this previous discussion, which would have led them towards a familiarity with the academic literary language of the chosen text, can be exploited by the teacher to show how such meanings and patterns of language can be taken on by the students themselves and incorporated into their own writing. In doing so they take on patterns of construction of text in the same way that good writers do automatically.

The importance of using a model text for children learning how to write is clearly demonstrated in the writing of children who are considered to be ‘good’ writers by their teachers. These children are almost invariably good readers and their writing style often reflects the style of the author they are currently reading. In the SCC program, the children commonly read and write narrative texts. In fact, learning to produce good narratives is part of learning to participate in a society. Well written narratives provide children with models of literate discourse that are not only interesting in themselves, but important to literacy learning in English more generally. This insight was behind Gray’s decision to use quality narrative texts for initial models when teaching children, who had experienced literacy difficulties, how to write successfully. In using as a model text a short extract from a narrative already read and discussed with the children, Gray ensured that a familiar context was provided. This context provided a basis of common knowledge and an opportunity for exploring the literate language used by authors, with further benefits for showing children how they too might write.

2.4 Literacy and disadvantage

My experience in teaching children with literacy difficulties and working closely with their parents at the SCC convinced me of the limitations of both traditional and progressive approaches. The emphasis on skills and rules associated with a traditional approach overwhelmed some children to the point of panic as they became overloaded with the stress of having too much to remember. Others were left to flounder with the implicit child-centred instruction of progressivism, becoming confused and feeling left behind, as they watched the progress of their peers. And yet many children in the same classrooms learned and made progress regardless of the teaching approach.

Certainly, educators have long been aware of the educational advantage experienced by children who have had positive literate experiences and an exposure to formal language before attending school (Bernstein, 1990; Christie, 1999). The disadvantaged are the children whose social and cultural positions and experiences do not accord with the experiences teachers expect children to bring to the classroom. Where a mismatch is found between what they 'bring from home' and what the school requires, children can be disadvantaged to the extent that they are excluded from participating effectively in the discourse of the classroom (Heath, 1983; Willes, 1983; Cazden, 1988; Delpit, 1986, 1988; Bernstein, 1990; Gray & Rothery, 1993; Freebody & Baker, 2003).

In support of this argument, Cazden (1988:68) wrote 'some children may be at a special disadvantage', because for some 'there will be greater cultural discontinuity, greater sociolinguistic interference, between home and school.' Further support can be found in Delpit's article *The Silenced Dialogue* (Delpit, 1988) where she examined the 'culture of

power' that can disadvantage black and poor students in the classroom. In particular, Delpit focused on the effects a process-oriented approach to writing instruction can have on some students and found, 'that in some instances adherents of process approaches to writing create situations in which students ultimately find themselves held accountable for knowing a set of rules about which no one has ever directly informed them' (Delpit, 1988:287). Delpit also upheld the importance of the 'product', because 'students will be judged on their product regardless of the process they utilized to achieve it. And that product, based as it is on the specific codes of a particular culture, is more readily produced when the directives of how to produce it are made explicit'. In addition, there are certain language behaviours children are required to learn to help them achieve 'appropriate subject positions' (Christie, 1997:138). Christie went on to demonstrate the value of the morning news genre in the primary school classroom as a way of 'establishing some desired linguistic behaviours of a kind that schooling appears to reward' and in the process guiding children into aspects of the discourse of schooling.

In their study of how understanding is developed in the classroom Edwards and Mercer looked carefully at the rules governing classroom talk and behaviour and found that not only were these rules implicit, but even 'participants' who abided by them were unaware of knowing them. The use of the word 'participants' suggests that teachers also can be unaware of these rules, which may cause them to have unrealistic expectations of children with limited experience or understanding of 'educational ground rules' used in everyday classroom practice (Edwards and Mercer, 1987:47). Because these rules were nearly always implicit misunderstandings, concerning both subject matter and the purpose and goals of classroom activities, often occurred. When it came to knowing how to complete a task, such as a written product in a writing lesson, the procedures and knowledge required to complete the task were

inferred, rather than explicitly articulated by the teacher, leaving many children floundering. Analyses of writing lessons in this study have reflected these findings.

Lack of knowledge of ‘ground rules’ can lead to children to be unaware of the appropriateness of particular social practices and behaviours needed when engaged in a literate act. This can lead to judgments being made concerning children’s abilities (Delpit, 1988; Gee, 1990). The same children may be highly literate within their own social environment, but not able to adapt to the cultural literacy demands of the classroom. As Michele Anstey (2003:106) observes, ‘Sometimes a student can be constructed as unable to learn simply because they do not know or understand how to use the literacies of the classroom’. The notion that children learn best when they can bring their own knowledge to the teaching situation leaves many disadvantaged, especially if they feel they have neither the required knowledge, nor the implicit understandings that underpin this progressive approach to teaching and learning.

2.4.1 Visible and invisible discourses

Bernstein’s sociological studies of education showed the relationship between social and linguistic patterns within different cultural backgrounds. He found that success at school was largely dependent upon the codes into which young children were inducted in their home environments, and that students from disadvantaged backgrounds were marginalised by the unfamiliar linguistic codes embedded in progressive teaching pedagogies, which were therefore ‘invisible’ to them (Bernstein, 1975 and 1990; Macken-Horarik, 1996; Gray 1998; Christie, 1999).

The model of educational practices that Bernstein (1990:72) developed showed the relationship between pedagogy and the three identified practices, progressive, conservative and radical. In his model, progressive practices using invisible pedagogy, resulted in competencies being acquired by individuals; while, conservative practices using visible pedagogy, provided a transmission of knowledge between individuals. In the same model radical educational practices, combining both visible and invisible pedagogy, are shown to lead to the acquisition of competencies between groups, rather than just individuals, and are subsequently transmitted into a raised level of performance of the whole group. (Christie et al., 1991; Bourne, 2003; Martin & Rose, 2005).

Using Bernstein's model and his concept of vertical and horizontal discourse, Jill Bourne has given persuasive reasons for more formal pedagogic strategies to be featured in classrooms. In arguing for a more visible pedagogical stance, she provides a critique of 'progressive' educational practice that she sees as 'focused on learning rather than teaching, which is still dominant today, in which the teacher's role is simply to provide a "learning environment" and then monitor individual development' (Bourne, 2003:497). Bourne welcomes the shift favoured by researchers such as Wells (1999) and Mercer (2000) for group rather than individual work, so that learning can be a collective activity, where negotiation of meaning between participants can be a major focus and all children are positioned as learners.

A more visible pedagogy in English teaching, through a functional, teacher led approach, has been advocated by educational linguists such as Macken-Horarik (1998, 2002) and Love (2001). If such a pedagogy includes a meta-language made accessible to students, they will have in their possession a valuable tool for understanding frameworks and structures they encounter in the teaching/learning process. Once students can understand and articulate

information, previously reserved for teachers, regarding why and how learning occurs, a greater level of ‘verticality’ can be achieved (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2007) and levels of progress accelerated.

2.4.2 Spoken and written language

The differences between the modes of spoken and written language, which have been the subject of extensive research, have been shown to exist primarily because each of the two modes provide different social functions. These differences have been clearly demonstrated through calculations of lexical density and by proving grammatical differences through the use of the principles of functional grammar (Christie, 1992).

To enable children to participate successfully in writing lessons it is important that teachers make explicit the differences between the spoken and written mode. Hammond (1990:26) showed, ‘how different from the spoken mode writing actually is’ and that, ‘the written mode is not learned in the same ways as speech.’ In her examination of spoken and written language in a Year 9 writing lesson, she discussed the difference between the two stating that, ‘spoken texts are jointly constructed while written texts are produced by writers in isolation from their readers’ and that this has, ‘a significant influence on their organization and development.’ Hammond’s research showed that there are ‘real and significant differences’ between the organisation and development of spoken texts in comparison to written texts. This has important implications for the teaching of writing, including the need not only to make these differences very explicit to students, but also to show them the language choices they must make if they are to successfully fulfill the requirements and exploit the possibilities of the written mode when constructing their own writing.

The joint construction that Hammond referred to in relation to spoken language is an important stage in the development of what Edwards and Mercer (1989:103) called ‘collective remembering’. During this process knowledge is shaped and shared, enabling an important context to be built that allows teacher and students to develop ‘a shared vocabulary for experience and understanding, and a jointly held version of events’. How this framework can be taken and used to develop writing abilities was an important aspect of Gray’s research. In the pedagogical sequence subsequently developed (Gray, Cowey & Axford, 2003) the process of ‘joint construction’ was transferred from understandings built orally to the shared construction of a written text. To achieve a jointly constructed text, teacher and students apply their shared knowledge and understandings of genre and literate language (Gray and Rothery, 1993; Gray, 1998; Christie, 2000) generated by discussion of a literate text, to the joint construction of a written text in the same genre, using literate language that has been part of the earlier developed common understandings. This process is a valuable and inclusive classroom strategy that enables all students to participate, as well as providing a model for individual writing at a further stage.

2.5 Models of classroom discourse

The staging of lessons and patterns of classroom interaction within the sequence of elements that constitute a writing lesson (Christie, 1991, 2002) need careful examination if, as in this study, the lessons are given by a number of teachers and are to be analysed and compared. For this reason it has been necessary to survey various models of analysis developed by researchers, especially models involving discourse analysis.

Although aspects of classroom language have been of interest since the 1940s it is only since the late 1960s that various models of classroom discourse were developed. These models have incorporated different approaches depending on the goals of the researchers and have included various linguistic, ethnographic and psychological approaches or a combination of these. It is only since such models were developed by researchers including Flanders (1970) and Barnes (1976) that classroom discourse has been ‘deliberately focused on the nature of classroom activity with a view to understanding and ultimately improving classroom work’ (Christie, 2002:1). The approach to analysis of classroom discourse favoured by Christie, especially in her studies of writing lessons, is adopted in my study. For this reason, her work is discussed in some detail later in this chapter.

With the introduction of discourse analysis and the availability of new technology including tape recorders, whole lessons could be observed, documented and analysed. This allowed researchers to focus on the structure of lessons as well as on interactions between children and teachers rather than on short sections of dialogue. As finer levels of analysis were developed, the emphasis shifted from discussion of the form lessons could take and examples of interactions between students and teacher, to a thorough analysis of the meanings conveyed, as well as the extent to which the goals of teachers were realised. The pivotal role of classroom discourse, and hence the importance of discourse analysis, is stressed by Gibbons who identifies classroom discourse as, ‘the means by which educational actions and the activity of education unfold; it is the major semiotic tool that participants make use of to achieve the particular goals of the actions.’ (Gibbons 2004:198).

2.5.1 Classroom exchange/questioning

Among the early exponents of discourse analysis were Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) who devised a way of categorising talk within the secondary classroom. As linguists they were more concerned with language and the cohesive nature of text than with educational goals. They identified patterns of language common to classrooms that they classified under hierarchical headings (Edwards and Mercer, 1987). Under the heading ‘exchange’ they identified the basic ‘I-R-F’, exchange, Initiation by the teacher – Response from a student – Feedback from the teacher, which is identifiable in many secondary school lessons. Later, Willes (1983) showed that similar structures could be identified in the early years of schooling, implying that rituals in classroom talk are developed at a very early stage in a child’s education.

IRF or IRE, Initiation, Response, Evaluation as it was identified by Mehan (1979) has been criticised for the constraints it imposes on teacher-student interactions. In its simplest form these criticisms seem valid, but as Christie (2002) indicates it often has an important role to play in classroom discourse. If the evaluation is extended to include a ‘reconceptualization’ of the kind defined by Cazden (1988:111) and advocated by Gray and used in the questioning techniques of the Scaffolding Literacy program, an important pedagogical goal can be realised especially when the reconceptualisation is extended by the teacher to enhance the instructional register and to make knowledge and ways of expressing that knowledge available to all students (an example of this important strategy is given in Chapter 5, section 1.3). Other theorists of classroom discourse, such as Wells (1999) and Gibbons (2001), advocate the importance of ‘opening up’ the third move in the triadic dialogue as a way of developing shared knowledge and challenging students to expand their textual contribution to classroom discourse.

2.5.2 Access to classroom discourse

Analysis of extended sections of classroom discourse clearly reveals the cultural dependence of educational discourse, which could make classroom talk appear nonsensical to those students who operated outside the culture of the classroom. Without access to the understandings embedded in what Edwards and Mercer (1987) termed ‘educational ground rules’ students were shown to be severely disadvantaged. The same level of disadvantage was also found in particular subject areas, each of which demand an awareness of different genres and particular discourse patterns, which under a progressive ideology were presented to students without explicit explanation.

Researchers such as Lemke, who studied the discourse of science lessons, recorded how the social construction of language often leads to subtle and restrictive ways of communicating that can be very confusing for participants who do not share the same language patterns (Lemke, 1985). As has been discussed earlier, this view of the socio-cultural aspects of language and the problems many children have in accessing the discourse of schooling especially in ‘progressive’ classrooms can be seen as a continuing focus for researchers (Edwards & Mercer, 1989; Freebody & Luke, 1990; Gray, n.d.; Christie 1991; Love, 2001; Anstey, 2003). Most would agree with Lemke, who found that the language of the classroom can often be ritualistic, favouring students who can make sense of inferred meanings from implicit expressions. In a discussion of one particular science lesson Lemke (1985; 27) stated, ‘As is typical in all these science lessons, the system of thematic relations that is needed to make sense of what is being said must be *gleaned* (my italics) from the ‘context’, that is, from the specific ways in which expressions are used in relation to one another, differently at

different points in the text.’ Clearly, students have a lot of work to do to make sense of the knowledge being constructed through talk in classrooms.

Socio-cultural theorists such as Edwards and Mercer and others referenced above have documented difficulties associated with progressive education. However, they were not as forthright as Martin and Rothery (1988) who were quoted by Anstey (1998) as saying that ‘one of the main failures of progressive education is its failure to be precise about the kinds of teacher/student interaction that will lead to learning.’ Anstey, whose work will be discussed later in this chapter, joined the implicit/explicit debate (also discussed later) that gained momentum in the late 1990s by analysing lessons for characteristics of explicit literacy instruction.

2.6 Common knowledge

Although the work of linguists such as Sinclair and Coulthard has been important in identifying interactive language structures in the classroom, Edwards and Mercer (1987) saw the linguistic approach, favoured by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) as being limited to identification of the ‘form’ of classroom talk, rather than showing the patterns of cognitive and educational development that occurs in the course of lessons. In their own wide and influential study of ‘education as a communicative process’, Edwards and Mercer acknowledged that the work of linguists had an influence on their own analysis, but distinguished their interests as being ‘more in the relations between discourse and the sharing of knowledge than in linguistic devices and structures themselves’ Edwards and Mercer (1987:14).

Edwards and Mercer investigated not only how individuals communicate and learn within the classroom, but also how knowledge is shared and negotiated to develop common understandings. Their belief as psychological researchers was that education involves developing ‘a mutuality of perspectives’ between teacher and students, which by necessity is concerned with negotiation. Although a ‘progressive’ approach to education, focusing on children bringing their own experiences and interests to the learning situation and teachers incorporating these in their teaching, might appear to involve sharing and negotiating understandings, these researchers were surprised to find that a high level of teacher dominance existed within the progressive approach. Edwards and Mercer (1987: 129) were critical of ‘the largely implicit basis of much classroom activity and discourse’ where ‘understandings on the part of pupils are seen as essentially inductive insights that the pupils themselves must achieve on the basis of their own experiences’. They were aware of the dilemma that such a child-centred approach posed for teachers, where a curriculum had to be followed and planned in advance and yet the children were expected to bring the necessary experiences associated with the learning, as expounded much earlier in the Plowden Report (1967), thus making successful forward planning difficult.

To understand the underlying dimensions of this dilemma it is necessary to explore the nature of classroom talk and how knowledge is transmitted to students. As previously noted there are many implicit rules within educational talk that remain invisible to a large group of students. Edwards and Mercer (1987:42) defined the ‘educational ground rules’ in progressive classrooms as, ‘implicit understandings participants need to possess to make sense of what others say’. The only access students have to the ground rules is by formulating these themselves through their own intuition, using the hints and subtle clues expressed through the classroom talk delivered by their teachers.

Once these implicit rules are understood, students are more likely to have the procedural knowledge, the ‘know how’ (Heap, 1982) which will enable them to accomplish a classroom activity. However, in child-centred classrooms, where students are expected to discover understandings for themselves, procedural knowledge soon becomes dominant and can become a substitute for understanding underlying principles relating to the instructional field. This is what Edwards and Mercer refer to as ‘ritual’ knowledge. The dominance of ‘ritual’ knowledge leads to the possibility of students having very little engagement with ‘any real exploration of subject matter’ (Chouliaraki, 1998:9) and subsequently being unable to develop creativity and control over their own learning.

2.7 Explicit teaching

Given the difficulties posed by progressivism for many students, explicit teaching has been advocated by educational researchers through the late 1980s and beyond. The term ‘explicit teaching’ is used in connection with a wide range of classroom practices such as; the goals of the teacher, the goals and contexts of the curriculum, pedagogical understandings, procedural knowledge, knowledge of the subject matter - ‘knowing that’ (Heap, 1982) and knowledge of how to complete the task - ‘knowing how’ (Heap, 1982). Then there is the question of degrees of explicitness. If being explicit is to provide common understandings in the above areas to all students, possible ways to do so must come from teacher-student discourse. This possibility was put by Edwards and Mercer (1987:126) who believed that through teacher–student discourse new knowledge should be ‘shaped, interpreted, made salient or peripheral, reinterpreted, and so on’, suggesting the multidimensional nature of truly explicit discourse. Christie (2000:184) was more emphatic when she stated, ‘The principal resource available to

teachers and students with which to achieve educational goals is language.’ Therefore, a close focus on teachers’ language is essential if we are to understand the strategies of explicitness, both the extent and kind of explicitness needed to orient children successfully to writing.

Of course, the nature of explicitness itself is widely debated in literacy education. Discussion of explicitness in teaching has featured widely in the educational literature of the last two decades (Baker and Freebody, 1989; Edwards and Mercer, 1987; Christie and Rothery, 1989; Christie, 1990a; Freebody and Luke, 1990; Taylor, 2002). In effect, the discussion arose as an oppositional response to what was seen as the ‘implicit’ nature of teaching in progressive classrooms where children were expected to work from their own knowledge and understandings to make sense of the implied meanings that were presented to them (Lemke, 1985; Christie, 2005). Such expectations were seen to disadvantage the many children who either lacked, or had difficulty accessing, the appropriate background knowledge and language needed for specified tasks. Although these learning environments were ‘progressive’ in many ways, a lack of teacher guidance and an expectation that children use their own language resources when writing, had implications for the development of literacy skills that are still being disputed.

The failure of progressive education to provide precise information in the teacher/student interactions that are expected to lead to learning was a concern voiced by Martin and Rothery (1988). One response was an analysis by Anstey (1998) of a group of literacy lessons that she saw as providing explicit teaching. Her findings showed that the most explicit lessons followed a structure that included a number of distinct phases followed by a review and a rationale. The only problem was that this group of lessons represented a narrow field where a specific skill was being taught and did not represent the complex multifaceted skills required

for other literacy lessons, in particular the writing lesson. Narrow versions of explicitness abound. One can be found in the draft discussion paper for the National Inquiry Into the Teaching of Literacy (Rowe, 2005: 28) where ‘explicit code-based instruction’ is juxtaposed against ‘implicit meaning-based or *whole language* instruction’. In this case explicitness about meaning is ruled out from the start. These examples show just two of the many contexts where the term ‘explicit’ is used in relation to literacy teaching in an oversimplified narrow way. Oversimplification was a major critical factor identified by Stephen Taylor (2002) in what he saw as assumptions of explicitness as presented in the National Literacy Strategy for England and Wales.

The call for explicit teaching has come from many sources, but this raises questions. What is it that should be made explicit? and What degree of explicitness should be espoused? What needs to be made explicit will initially involve the field of knowledge, recognised by Heap (1982) as ‘knowing that’; closely followed by ‘knowing how’ to complete the task to the satisfaction of the teacher (Hammond, 2001), what might be called genre know how. In writing lessons the field will be related to the task topic. To be able to complete the set task the children need to be shown how to make suitable language choices within the generic structure of a given text. This entails helping children to learn how to ‘reflect systematically on language’ through provision of ‘metasemiotic resources’ in the context of tasks and activities completed at school (Williams, 2004: 242).

The necessary degree of explicitness is more problematic. Researchers in the field of literacy education in Australia, who have addressed the difficult questions associated with explicitness in writing lessons, include Christie (1991), Gray and Rothery (1993), Gray (1998) and Christie and Macken-Horarik (2007). Through her application of Halliday’s functional

grammar combined with Bernstein's view of pedagogic discourse, Christie was able to analyse writing lessons with a strong focus on what forms of knowledge were made available for learners in classroom interactions. This method of analysing the discourse of writing lessons subsequently provided a framework, which could be used to expand and develop ways of talking about language choices to both teachers and students, allowing a degree of explicitness way beyond that which occurred in the typical writing lessons Christie had observed. Explicitness for Christie relates both to forms of pedagogy and forms of knowledge, as well as variations in these over time, and across a variety of different teaching contexts.

In their study of the power of pedagogy Ludwig and Herschell (1998) drew largely on a study by Freebody, Ludwig and Gunn (1995) to show that 'classroom management procedures and pedagogical routines are more prevalent than those of displays of specific content knowledge' (Ludwig and Herschell, 1998: 69). They found that the pedagogical procedures often dominate the discourse to the extent that the procedures and good behaviour become the focus of the teaching rather than literate know how. Consequently, ritualistic responses to pedagogical procedures are often interpreted as evidence of literate competency. As a result of their investigation, Ludwig and Herschell made a series of recommendations that included: a focused, integrated curriculum, literacy learning objectives and the importance of students understanding the pedagogical practices.

One of the transcripts analysed by Ludwig and Herschell is an early segment of a Year 3 writing lesson. The teacher was preparing the children to write the first part of a story where they were expected to describe an alien. As Ludwig and Herschell point out, rather than using a focused teaching strategy, the teacher asked the children for their own ideas about where

and why they saw the alien and then attempted to work from their responses. This became problematic as it was clear the children were unsure as to how they should participate in the discourse. The researchers found the talk was ‘mainly about the social and cultural context’ and that, as in many classrooms in the early years of schooling, knowledge about texts and writing practices was left implicit. Clearly, to ascertain explicitness in the substance and direction of the discourse of such lessons a more definitive and detailed analysis is required.

Characteristics of explicit literacy instruction were explained by Anstey (1998) as several kinds of knowledge and practices which must be brought together, integrated and adapted within a particular context. In response to conclusions that literacy teaching is too implicit, Anstey identified and analysed a group of lessons that she saw as providing explicit information to students. In defining explicit instruction she drew on the work of Heap (1982, 1986, 1991) for three types of knowledge required by literacy learners and Freebody and Luke (1990) for their work on the four reading practices. From her analysis of research on metacognition, teacher-student interaction and a social critical approach to teaching literacy, Anstey (1998:208) identified ‘a set of literacy characteristics which might provide explicit literacy instruction’. The characteristics identified were teacher talk, the structure of lessons, materials and the way the materials were used.

In the explicit lessons Anstey showed much of the teacher talk was in declarative form, especially at the start of the lesson when a clear learning focus orientated the students to the skill being taught. The teacher talk continued to engage the students cognitively as the teacher moved through the task explaining the thinking and decision making process. In addition, Anstey showed how the explicit lessons followed a structure that included a number of distinct phases, identifying, practice, transfer and report phases that were followed by a

review. In the explicit lessons the phases included explanations that teachers often summarized on a board and later referred to in subsequent reviews. In these lessons the reviews occurred more than once during the course of a lesson and after a group of phases. In contrast, the less explicit lessons resembled a testing situation where students were mainly told at the start of the lesson what they were to do, ie given procedural knowledge, they were then asked to provide information themselves by answering teacher questions and the review process was generally omitted.

Because, as Anstey admits, the literacy lessons she observed were all concerned with teaching a reading skill such as skimming or note taking, the teachers were actually teaching a procedure which mainly followed a logical sequence. The teacher of the explicit skimming lesson did not, and probably saw no need to, say anything about the content of the passage being skimmed as her focus was to teach the skill. As most literacy lessons, and in particular those which demand the reading and understanding of a text, require a far greater range of common understandings about language as well as a variety of skills, Anstey's findings would be limited in their application to other literacy lessons beyond those that teach a specialised skill. Writing lessons, in particular, require students to have knowledge of a wide range of complex issues including; familiarity with the context, the gathering of information, the ability to reform and apply knowledge of language and how to compose a written text using knowledge of genre and other necessary aspects of literate language. Therefore, 'explicitness' as described by Anstey seems not to be transferable to the majority of literacy lessons, especially those that require a written product. For this reason a more differentiated model of explicitness is required, one that is adequate to the challenges and complexities of writing, particularly in the literate mode.

Although it appears that more complex tasks require different levels of explicitness, the level of complexity may be difficult to gauge. Certainly, some of the complexities of writing lessons noted above would require a number of strands of explicit teaching to give children knowledge of the field of enquiry, as well as providing knowledge of the genre and models of language they might use in their own writing. As Christie (1991) found in her analysis of writing lessons, a number of teachers appeared to assume children's knowledge in some or all of these areas, so do not provide the explicit information needed to help children complete the task.

The real difficulty in assessing what is meant by 'explicitness' in educational contexts was taken up by Stephen Taylor (2002). Taylor noted that 'explicit' has been used repeatedly as a key word in the discourse of linguists and literary theorists over the last two decades. It is a word that has played an important role in educational debates in Australia (Ludwig and Herschell, 1998; Anstey, 1998 and 2003; Gray, 1998; and Edwards-Groves, 2003) as well as in the UK, where explicitness is an essential component of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS), (Edwards and Mercer, 1989 and Taylor, 2002).

Within educational discourse, the concept of explicitness can be seen to vary in interpretation and in intensity. In his discussion on the NLS and explicitness, Taylor offers a criticism of the assumptions of explicitness as outlined in the NLS framework. Not only does he see 'the notion of explicitness' in the NLS as having limitations, but that these limitations exist from both of the different perspectives on writing development; from a 'personal growth' or 'process' approach and from 'a critical perspective' (Taylor, 2002:199). Through his discussion of C.S. Pierce's theory of Firstness within a triadic system, Taylor argues that the NLS appears to be reacting against a process approach to the development of children's

writing, favouring a more theoretical approach to the teaching of language to assist writing and in so doing is creating what Taylor feels is a ‘new kind of lop-sidedness’ (Taylor, 2002:205).

Taylor sees assumptions of explicitness within the NLS document as being greatly influenced by those of the LINC project (Carter, 1990) that emphasised the value of explicitness in the teaching of writing. However, he is critical of the assumptions, which he describes as ‘oversimplified’ when viewed from either of the two perspectives (‘process’ or ‘critical’), and argues that there are areas where something necessary for writing development is missing, leading to a discounting of explicitness. In his search for what he calls the ‘missing element’ within these assumptions, Taylor found that there is some knowledge that might be excluded from the discussion of explicitness because it cannot be fully articulated linguistically, but saw that it could be expressed through analogy or metaphor. In addition, Taylor feels views of explicitness in the teaching of writing can become focused on the theoretical aspects of language with the risk of neglecting the intuitive, including tone, levels of inference and other aspects of language that convey invisible messages within the realm of intuition and feeling. It is this realm that Taylor equates with Pierce’s theory of Firstness and appears to be invisible in many discussions of ‘explicit’ literacy teaching. However, it is also a crucial feature of literate discourse, a feature which makes it particularly challenging to children with low level literacy skills.

The argument for the combination of implicit and explicit pedagogy was explored by Cazden (1995:169) who referred to Bernstein’s two chapters on invisible and visible pedagogy written fifteen years apart in 1975 and 1990. Although both chapters are usually ‘read as strong theoretical rationales for the benefits of visible pedagogy for working-class and other

educationally disadvantaged students' Cazden sees these benefits as being qualified by Bernstein, especially in his later chapter. His particular concern regarding the suppression of invisible pedagogy was in relation to the relaxed pacing and the lower emphasis on the speed of attainment of specific competencies, which is a feature of implicit teaching, as he could see a value in this approach for disadvantaged students. However, it has been shown in the Scaffolding Literacy pedagogy that it is possible to address this problem by providing a sequence, where each new element in the sequence is supported by the previous one, and that the questioning within each element is both recursive and progressive. This allows teachers to vary the pacing of an explicit pedagogy depending on the needs of students and to automate relevant 'knowledge about' text in reading/writing processes.

In summary, explicit teaching is a term often used, but difficult to define, due to the many layers of understandings and meanings that are bound up with the transmission of knowledge in a school environment. The culture of the classroom, the pedagogy employed and the particular field of enquiry within each lesson, are some of the major factors carrying understandings that need to be made visible to students. All of these dimensions need to be made explicit. Writing lessons need also to contain explicit instruction on *how* to construct a piece of text and *how* to craft language to fulfill expectations associated with the task. For all this to occur children must be given understandings of genre and the literate language structures this entails by means of the development of joint understandings proposed by Edwards and Mercer, negotiated through the 'principal resource' of language (Christie, 2000:184) so that children become involved with mastering 'literate behaviour' (Christie, 2002:88).

2.8 Christie's analytical model

A major contributor to the theory and analysis of educational discourse Christie (1990b, 1991, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2002) has published extensively in the area of literacy education. One of her recurring concerns is for teachers to have clearly defined goals that they are able to meet through the primary resource of language and through explicit teaching. In her analysis of educational discourse Christie's synthesis of Vygotskian principles, Bernstein's notion of two discourses within what he termed 'pedagogic discourse' and Halliday's functional grammar, has produced a powerful and efficient tool for studying patterns of language that occur in classrooms and the contribution these make to children's learning.

Christie has developed an analytical model that allows for fine distinctions to be made in the analysis of pedagogic discourse. This is made possible because of the layers of theoretical insights into pedagogy that are included in her model. The theoretical layers include concepts of genre proposed by Martin (1984), as well as the roles of regulative and instructional discourse proposed by Bernstein (1996) and Halliday's systemic functional grammar (Halliday, 1994). Christie has applied the notion of genre to her analysis of cycles of lessons, referring to these sequences of lessons as a curriculum macrogenre (Christie, 2000).

The two discourses and their functions as proposed by Bernstein are pivotal to Christie's theory of regulative and instructional registers. Bernstein (1996) used the terms 'regulative' and 'instructional' to classify what he saw as the two components of classroom discourse; the regulative discourse, which 'creates the rules of social order' (Bernstein, 1996:48) and the instructional discourse, which contains the knowledge and understandings associated with the field of study. Bernstein proposed that the two discourses work together in such a way that the

instructional discourse is ‘embedded’ in the more dominant regulative discourse. Together they form the pedagogic discourse.

Through her research into writing lessons Christie identified three stages in what she termed ‘the writing planning genre’. In its simplest form, the writing planning genre consists of three stages or elements. The first element, the ‘Task Orientation’, involves an introduction and broad discussion of the topic or field of enquiry. This is followed by the ‘Task Specification’, where the teacher establishes the requirements and skills needed for the specific writing task, incorporating knowledge of the topic established in the Task Orientation. In the ‘Task’ element the teacher directs the students to begin the writing task and moves around the classroom offering incidental assistance. In each of the three elements the way in which the two registers, regulative and instructional, operate demonstrates the progression of the pedagogy (Christie, 2002). The function and operation of the two registers as discussed below is integral to Christie’s analysis of the discourse of literacy lessons.

2.8.1 Registers – instructional and regulative

Christie has proposed a general theoretical framework of pedagogical discourse that operates through the use of two registers (Christie, 2002). To reach this level of understanding Christie combined Bernstein’s theory of two discourses with concepts from Halliday’s systemic functional grammar. This resulted in her use of the term ‘register’ to accord with concepts developed by Halliday and to clarify the functions of what she called ‘instructional register’ and ‘regulative register’. In addition, whereas Bernstein saw the instructional discourse as being ‘embedded’ in the regulative discourse, Christie, incorporating another of Halliday’s concepts, proposed that the regulative register ‘projects’ the instructional register. As well as

corresponding with principles of systemic functional grammar, this terminology continues to support Bernstein's theory of the relocation of information from the outside world into the classroom. Christie argues that one of the functions of the regulative register is to 'project' the instructional register from a context outside the school into a necessarily changed form within classroom pedagogy in order to promote learning.

The two registers have distinctive roles; the regulative register is 'responsible for initiating teaching-learning activities' while the instructional register 'identifies the instructional field(s)' (Christie, 2002:63). In his exploration of the relationship between the two discourses proposed by Bernstein, Gray (1998), who applied Christie's model to his own analysis of classroom discourse, explicitly warned against a narrow interpretation of Bernstein's regulative discourse, which encompasses far more within the pedagogy than merely directing behaviour and establishing control. Gray stressed the active role of the regulative register 'in negotiating and shaping the actual thinking and reasoning processes through which children engage with the content presented' (Gray, 1998:53). It is the negotiation, promoted by the regulative discourse and developed in the instructional discourse, that Gray considered enables children to engage productively with the knowledge base.

A most valuable aspect of Christie's model is that it allows the user to monitor the interaction between the regulative and instructional registers and so observe how teachers direct and orchestrate children's engagement with the instructional field. For instance, in following the progression of the regulative register, which, 'determines the pacing, sequencing and ordering of the operation of the instructional register' (Christie, 2002:192), it is possible to monitor the direction of the pedagogy. When interaction between the two registers occurs Christie refers to this as 'convergence'. She observes that during convergence the regulative register

promotes and directs engagement with the instructional register and with the tasks to be completed. It is at this point that mental engagement (Gray, 1998), and learning takes place (Christie, 1991, 2000, 2002) through negotiation. For students to be inducted ‘into an understanding of a particular body of instructional information in pedagogically valued ways’ (Christie, 2000:202) the two registers need to work together with the regulative register leading the direction of the pedagogy. As Christie demonstrates through the application of functional grammar and understandings of registers in classroom discourse, when the discourse is most successful the regulative register eventually disappears, leaving the instructional register to carry the discourse associated with learning. In writing lessons this should occur in the last part of the Task Orientation once common knowledge has been built around the field of enquiry and again in the Task Specification when all aspects of shared understandings concerning field and genre previously established are recontextualised.

In applying Christie’s theoretical model to curriculum macrogenres, both Christie and Gray have been able to analyse the movement of registers over a series of lessons. Their research has demonstrated that the regulative register, which at first dominates classroom discourse, on later occasions converges with the instructional register, allowing students to take on the role of learners. Eventually, the regulative register, which defines the goals and tasks within the lessons, gradually fades as the instructional register begins to dominate. This can occur at different developmental stages across a macrogenre, signalling places of significant teaching-learning. With newly acquired knowledge, made available through such productive classroom interaction, Christie and Gray have shown that students are gradually able to enter into discourse initiated by the teacher, and that in a series of lessons, common knowledge can continue to be built between participants as students take more and more control of the discourse. Christie (2002:186) calls this ‘a process of *logogenesis*: an unfolding of the text in

such a manner that a kind of momentum builds as the students move towards the capacity to use language to represent new understandings’.

The logogenesis Christie reported as present over a series of early childhood natural science lessons, could not be found in the writing lessons she studied because of the different nature of the writing planning genre. Writing lessons, if linked at all, are usually very loosely linked, but tend to have discrete genres. Christie noted that even when writing lessons were connected by common elements in the instructional field, the connections were very loose without any real evidence of progression.

In typical writing lessons, the field relating to the topic for writing is built before any explanation is given concerning how to go about the task. However, in the writing lessons Christie (2002:64) studied, she noticed, ‘the advice provided to do with the nature of the writing task, as distinct from the topic about which to write, is often very general’. Because of the very weak classification and framing in these lessons, Christie used a more analytical approach to explore what she called ‘the pedagogical and content registers’, ie the regulative and instructional registers, of the writing lesson. In identifying and separating the two registers, Christie was able to show a distinction between talk that related to setting up and maintaining direction of the lesson, and talk concerned with developing understandings of content. The lack of explicitness concerning what children need to know about language in order to be able to write successfully and also the lack of clearly articulated principles of evaluation for their written stories, which was made apparent, was a concern for Christie. In her view these are outcomes of a curriculum with an ideology that is weakly classified and framed, that is without clear principles for teachers to follow over a period of time and without sufficient challenges for students. The practice of building from what students know

and developing understandings from personal experience Christie (2002) clearly states are an insufficient basis on which to develop a curriculum.

2.9 Towards an explicit literacy pedagogy

The research reviewed in this chapter argues the necessity for an explicitness of literacy pedagogy beyond that which is currently employed in classrooms around Australia and beyond. It points to a visible pedagogy that allows students to know what they are learning and why, to develop a fascination with language and what it can do, to see and understand how authors shape and manipulate language to make meaning for their readers and to be shown through an exploration of a model text with an informed teacher how they too can write like real writers.

Too often in the writing classroom there is no model text and students may be given the unexpected and more confusing task of writing in a different genre to that of the text read in class. A common occurrence in lessons based on narrative texts is for teachers to expect students to focus on the events and characters in a selected section of a class novel and for them to speculate beyond the text to construct a field that later can be drawn on in the written task. For children experiencing literacy difficulties, as well as those who are not in tune with teachers' expectations, this is a complex and demanding task requiring a number of layers of knowledge and understandings. The main aspects of these understandings include:

1. A familiar knowledge of the text beyond that which could have been gained from a single reading.
2. An ability to synthesise knowledge of the text with knowledge from personal experience.

Children with extensive literary knowledge would be advantaged.

3. An ability to reconstruct and reform aspects of the experience from oral to written language and to present this in a form acceptable to the teacher.

Children with problems at any stage of this knowledge chain would have great difficulty in producing a successful written text. Therefore, it is essential that teaching is made explicit, so that each child possesses both the common knowledge and access to the literate language to enable him/her to complete the written task.

A major difficulty identified by both Christie and Gray is the problem many children have in knowing how to 'take' from model texts. This then becomes a problem for teachers in knowing how to teach writing with the necessary level of explicitness, as a high level of explicitness in literacy teaching is very demanding, requiring teachers to identify and discuss far more than general concepts. Understandings of genre and general principles of functional grammar provide much of the necessary background knowledge for explicit literacy teaching as has been shown by Rothery (1960), Macken-Horarik (1996), Love (2001) and Christie & Macken-Horarik (2007). How this might be translated into a theoretical model that is more transparent for students is addressed by Christie and Macken-Horarik (2007) in their exploration of 'building verticality' in subject English. Such understandings of explicitness and explicitness in teaching are found in the Scaffolding Literacy pedagogy.

The difficulty for many teachers when initially introduced to the Scaffolding Literacy pedagogy is how to move children from reading to writing. The discursive discussion of Literate Orientation, which occurs around the text before reading, moves from the meaning of the text to an engagement with literate discourse within an effective context. At this stage,

academic terminology such as ‘character’, ‘complication’ and eventually ‘metaphor’ are woven into the discourse. The generic structure of the target text is explained, initially in simple terms. Then, as in a spiral curriculum, in subsequent lessons the discourse is revisited, expanded and enriched by the teacher, as the children build their knowledge of the field and become able to enter into the literate discourse themselves. Unlike learning to speak, learning to write is ‘a highly conscious process’ (Macken and Slade, 1993:206), but once the necessary language resources have been internalised, effective teaching of writing by showing children how to ‘borrow’ the patterns of literate language from authors at phrase, sentence and paragraph level, can be successfully introduced together with the teaching of the appropriate generic structure (Painter, 1986, 1992).

By broadening the enquiry into writing lessons to include a further range of observed lessons as in this study and by applying the principles of findings by researchers included in this chapter, the search for explicitness in writing lessons continues. In an attempt to add to the body of knowledge already assembled by experts in the field the lessons in this study are analysed for two factors:

1. The levels of explicitness that enable students to build common knowledge of the field of enquiry as it relates to the topic of the writing lesson.
2. The extent to which teachers make explicit the linguistic resources needed by students in order to know how to write their own text.

In the next chapter I outline my approach to this study and the methodology employed to analyse the writing lessons.

Summary

This chapter has reviewed research into different approaches to literacy teaching with particular reference to practices of classroom interaction that may cause difficulties for students who risk being marginalised in the classroom. Such students face bewildering difficulties when unfamiliar classroom ‘ground rules’ are embedded in a child-centred approach. The failure of progressive education to be more precise has led to calls for a more visible pedagogy.

Many of the researchers cited have been shown to be critical of the implicitness of classroom discourse. Amongst them Edwards and Mercer (1987), who explore how knowledge is shared and negotiated, acknowledge the dominance of procedural knowledge that often becomes ritualised, while field (or content knowledge) is left implicit. Although explicit teaching appears to offer answers, I have proposed that most accounts of explicitness do not go far enough.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter explains the origins of my study and gives the rationale behind the methodology employed as well as the research methods used in the exploration of the research question.

This study arose from a large project that had at its core an observational study, discussed in this chapter, in which I was involved as project officer. Therefore, I was fully aware of the ethical considerations and was involved in correspondence with participants in relation to such matters. My own study is an ethnographic case study in which discourse from a large range of case study classrooms is analysed.

3.1 Origins of the study

The observational study, from which my study evolved, was designed to explore the extent to which children with literacy difficulties, who were part of an intervention program in the Schools and Community Centre at the University of Canberra, were supported in their own primary school classrooms. This large, ethnographic case study began with the project, *An Observation of 'Oral Literate' Children in Educational Settings* (Gray, n.d.) with the aim of providing a systematic observational base from which issues relating to effective support for children who appeared unable to move beyond an 'oral literate' stage of development. The term 'oral literate', used by Gray and Rothery (1993), referred to a state of dependency on the limited language of 'oral' experiences. Children dependent on 'oral' language when writing showed very little control over language resources associated with literate 'written language' which was reflected in their very limited, often repetitive, meagre written attempts.

The larger observation study was to incorporate a number of sub-projects investigating the level of support offered to children who attended the SCC program both at the Centre and at school. In addition, the sub-projects would investigate the degree to which patterns of interaction changed after the children were encouraged to take a greater part in the teaching/learning activities initiated with parents and tutors at the Centre. Amongst the patterns of interaction to be investigated were those that occurred in classrooms between the target children, who attended the SCC program, and their teachers and peers.

The observers/interviewers were three tutors from the Schools and Community Centre and myself as Project Officer. As observers we were originally each assigned to two classrooms. In the initial interview at the beginning of the project we discussed with the teachers, who each had a child from her/his classroom in the intervention program, the forthcoming lesson observations, the collection of writing samples from the target children and the teachers' goals. Although the teachers' goals are not a subject of this study, it is interesting to note that some teachers appeared to avoid answering the question relating to goals. Those who did answer made reference to practices and strategies pertaining to 'whole language' models as defined in the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (Rowe, 2006). Other researchers working within functional approaches to literacy teaching have also recognized the difficulty many teachers have with articulating their goals for learning, particularly when it comes to connecting these goals to language demands of particular literacy tasks (Macken-Horarik, 1996; Rothery, 1996).

After each writing lesson short interviews were audiotaped, one with the teacher and one with each of the three target children from each class. Of the three children, one was a child referred by the child's school to the Centre for intervention with literacy. The other two

children were nominated by the teacher of the class, as ‘above average’ and as ‘average’ in writing abilities. Over the semester when the observations took place, teachers were asked to keep copies of the writing of the three target children and these were collected regularly. All four observers were surprised at how little writing was collected by the majority of teachers in case study classrooms. Although it may have been difficult for teachers to keep track of and photocopy all writing from the three nominated children in each class, we were not aware of teachers expressing any difficulties. After further requests for copies of all writing from students was met with no more being offered, we assumed that little writing was being done in these classrooms.

There were three possible sub-projects that were to follow from the larger observational study. These included:

- (a) An analysis of the writing produced by the children over the observation period to show each child’s development as a writer.
- (b) An analysis of the children’s reading which would explore the interaction between the reader and the text and the extent to which ‘literate’ features within the text influence the children’s reading.
- (c) The sub-project assigned to me - to organise and check the transcription of the writing lessons and to investigate the extent to which classroom interactions enabled children to access ‘educational content’ presented by the teacher. The goal of this sub-project was expressed as follows:

Lessons in the classroom will be transcribed and will be analysed in order to explore the extent to which the children were able to access the educational content presented by the teacher. Significant teaching strategies and child response strategies will be identified from patterns of communicative moves within the discourse. (Gray, n.d.)

Therefore, the research field central to my study included the transcripts of the observed writing lessons.

Close attention to the transcripts was particularly important because we were interested in the extent to which mainstream teachers were making reading and writing demands explicit for children from the Schools and Community Centre. We needed to know how well mainstream classroom pedagogies were serving them once they left the Centre in order to work out how we might help to make classroom literacy a positive experience for the children.

3.2 Research environment of my study

The writing lessons analysed in my study were observed in six central ACT primary schools. Five were ACT government schools and one was a non-government school. The lessons I report on in this study took place in seven classrooms within the six schools. The schools approached to take part in the observation study were those that had each referred a child to the Schools and Community Centre for assistance with literacy difficulties. Therefore, classrooms involved in the study each had a child who was enrolled in the SCC program.

In each classroom four lessons were observed. Two of those lessons occurred at the beginning of a six-month period when the identified target children began their program at the SCC. The other two lessons were observed towards the end of the six-month period. In one school timetabling problems made it impossible for a final lesson to be observed.

The classes ranged from Year level 3 to Year level 6, which reflects the years when teachers typically refer children to the SCC for intensive literacy intervention. Of the seven classes which were observed and recorded the numbers and year levels were,

Three Year 3 classes

One Year 4 class

Two Year 5 classes

One Year 6 class

3.3 Data collection

As Project Officer my first responsibilities were to organise the observation visits and the collection of data. Therefore, over the course of the main project I had contact with all the schools and teachers involved. The class teachers who taught the writing lessons were at all times very co-operative and helpful. At each writing lesson the designated observer/interviewer had assistance from another person who set up the recording equipment. As well as officially observing the lessons of one Year 3 and the Year 4 class, I also assisted with the recording in two other classrooms, enabling me to act as a defacto observer.

Once recordings of lessons had been collected these were transcribed. I carefully checked and corrected all transcripts of the twenty-seven final lessons which took a considerable time. The audiotape recordings included a full transcript of the teachers' talk, children's contributions where these were audible and observer's comments. There were also audiotape recordings of brief post-lesson interviews with the teacher and the three target children from each class. In

addition, observers wrote brief factual notes to record, for example, teaching aids and what was written on white or blackboards.

Teachers were asked to collect copies of every piece of writing from the three target children over the observation period of one semester that included two school terms and to place the originals or photocopies in folders provided. Every four to five weeks I would collect the samples, photocopying them where necessary so that originals were left with the schools.

All twenty-seven lessons were recorded successfully apart from one where a segment of approximately ten minutes did not record due to a problem with the recording equipment. All tapes and transcripts were labelled with a numbering system to protect the identity of schools and classes. Classes were identified by numbers 1 to 7, followed by lesson numbers 1 to 4. Thus, Lesson 1.1 refers to class 1, lesson 1 and Lesson 6.3 refers to class 6, lesson 3.

3.4 Lesson selection

The purpose of my study was to investigate the provision of literate resources in writing lessons where children were required to produce a piece of written text, I therefore looked for lessons that had this outcome. The teachers of the classes involved had been asked to allow observation of lessons ‘which result in the production of a piece of written work’.

Communication with the teachers prior to the observation of lessons was by formal letter, telephone and interview, all of which confirmed the observation was to be of writing lessons that would lead to written products. It should be mentioned that ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Canberra and the ACT Department of Education by the project leader.

Of the twenty-seven lessons subsequently observed, twenty resulted in the children being asked to produce an extended piece of written text. In the remaining seven lessons the written work children were expected to produce could not be considered to constitute a text. Neither could all of these seven lessons be considered to be 'writing lessons', as four of the seven were based on activities or worksheets where only single sentence level answers were required. One of the remaining three lessons was based on a short poem and the children were asked to write a similar 'syllable poem'. In the other two lessons, sections from a class novel were used to develop the content of the lessons, but the tasks the children were given required them to write only short answers. In one of these two lessons the task was to write questions for an interview with the protagonist in the novel being studied and in the other lesson the children were asked to write newspaper headlines for various incidents that occurred in the class novel. Because the purpose of this study was to investigate the provision of literate resources in writing lessons to enable children to produce an extended piece of written text, I excluded these last seven lessons from the discussion.

Of the remaining twenty lessons there was one lesson where the children were asked to produce a piece of free writing. They could choose their own topics or choose to use one that was written on the blackboard. Because the nature of this lesson precluded any class interaction that would contribute to the provision of literate resources, it was not included in the lessons considered for analysis. However, because students in this lesson produced a written text it is included in the twenty lessons I needed to group and categorise in a constructive way.

3.5 Shaping the research project

Initially, I was daunted by the task of analysing twenty-seven writing lessons that appeared so various; lessons that were given by different teachers, to different class grades, within different schools and with no apparent commonality. By this time, I was working as a tutor in the SCC, using the innovative teaching methods that were still being refined through research into our teaching of children with literacy difficulties. Underpinning our teaching of writing was the strong belief that thorough preparation should be given before the children were asked to write. This preparation for writing, which usually took place over a number of sessions, was designed to guide children, who were not good readers, into being acutely aware of literary discourse in model texts. We showed them how to read, understand and draw on the discourse from the model text in their own writing.

The positive outcomes that came after extensive preparation for writing with individual children led me to look for the kinds of preparation for writing that was provided in classroom settings. This reasoning lay behind my decision to limit my study to the examination of the discourse of writing lesson up to the time children were asked to begin the task. My intention was to search for the kind and degree of preparation for writing that was offered by teachers in writing lessons, but at this stage I had only a general idea of my research question, based on the broader research project brief – an examination of the educational ‘content’ of the different lessons.

After working through the meaning of ‘content’ in the context of writing lessons I felt my investigation should include an examination of the kinds of meanings about writing teachers shared with students and how students ‘took up’ these meanings. This decision is congruent

with Christie's argument in her introduction to the theoretical framework in her book, *Classroom Discourse Analysis* that it is important to consider 'the nature of the meanings in construction, the relative roles and responsibilities of teachers and students at the time of constructing those meanings and the placement of such patterns in the overall larger cycle of classroom work' (Christie, 2002:5).

With these considerations in mind the final form of the question for this study was divided into two parts as follows:

In the discourse of writing lessons:

1. To what extent are children given access to the literate discourse relevant to the writing task and its topic?
2. To what extent are children shown how to construct written products using appropriate language choices?

3.6 Analysis of lessons

In order to address these emerging questions the analysis of the writing lessons needed to satisfy three broad concerns. It needed to:

1. reveal the development of shared understandings about the language patterns relevant to the topic or field of enquiry;
2. show the extent of knowledge about literate discourse made available to students; and
3. provide an analytical framework that could be applied over a wide range of classroom writing lessons.

I was drawn to the work of Edwards and Mercer (1987) because their significant study into ‘education as a communicative process’ illuminated the development of understanding in the classroom through the sharing of knowledge. Their notion of ‘common knowledge’ fitted well with the kind of understandings I hoped to find in writing lessons I was to analyse and to the notion of ‘content’ as this was articulated in the original project brief (Gray, n.d.).

Because Edwards and Mercer had examined the transcripts of a number of lessons I looked carefully at their methodology. This included the application of a number of theories such as ‘given’ and ‘new’ information and IRF sequences as proposed by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975). I was aware Edwards and Mercer had admitted that they had not attempted to present data systematically in terms of particular structures or linguistic devices. With a number of lessons to analyse and compare in a much shorter study, I needed a more systematic approach that included an analytic model which could capture the learning structure of each lesson more precisely and yet accommodate a wide range of writing lessons.

My search led me to various models of discourse analysis. Finally, I decided to use Christie’s model even though my approach would adapt hers to new circumstances and focus less on fine-grained linguistic analyses. One difference was in the time frame of the classroom data. Of the four writing lessons I was to examine from each of seven classrooms, two took place early in one semester and the other two towards the end of the same semester. In addition, the lessons were apparently unconnected, whereas Christie’s research focused on a macrogenre showing how classroom talk developed over time. However, the tools Christie used, especially the regulative and instructional registers, would enable me to monitor the interaction of the discourse between teacher and students. Because my study was not intended to be a fine-grained linguistic analysis, I did not attempt to apply a functional grammar as a

means of analysis although my approach was informed by the same general principles of a functional approach.

My final decision to use Christie's model was two-fold:

1. Through the application of registers (regulative and instructional) it would enable me to show the extent to which teachers developed a shared understanding about field and how meanings were made.
2. The framework it provided had a number of relevant features. It could be applied over a wide range of writing lessons, was easily accessible, yet allowed for considerable flexibility. It was also extremely effective in showing the commonalities and differences in the writing lessons.

The framework, which is explained in more detail in this chapter, section 3.9.2, is a schematic structure for writing lessons. In its most minimal form it comprises three elements in the following sequence, Task Orientation, Task Specification, Task (Christie, 1991).

3.6.1 Finding commonalities in lessons

Prior to my final decision to apply Christie's model and after much deliberation, rereading and making notes on the lessons, I made a first attempt at analysing one lesson. There seemed much to say about this lesson, but my major problem was how to represent all the other lessons in a manner that would allow me to make constructive comparisons and find a way to explore my research questions, while fulfilling my obligation to analyse the whole group of lessons.

3.6.2 Grouping the lessons

I began by making a number of attempts to group the lessons. To do this I firstly divided each lesson into the three elements proposed by Christie and then with notes on each lesson on separate sheets, tried to group these in different ways. To find further distinctions I retyped sections of lessons in clauses and superimposed the use of registers by using bold type for the regulative register and plain type for the instructional register.

Patterns finally began to emerge which indicated differences in length of Task Orientations and Task Specifications and distinctive patterns formed by the registers within each of these elements. However, these patterns were not sufficient. I still needed a way to group the lessons, not by technicalities, but by topic or subject matter while also allowing, where appropriate, for one lesson to represent others.

I had noticed that a substantial number of the lessons were based on narrative writing. This had made some impact on me, because the teaching program used at the Centre, which successfully improves the literacy skills of the children referred there, used good quality narrative as a teaching tool and model. In addition, aspects of the pedagogy we employed reflected the building of common knowledge as explained by Edwards and Mercer (1987) whose work I greatly admired. Finally, in searching each lesson for a common experience, which after discussion and negotiation should develop into common knowledge, I decided to group the lessons by the source of the common experience of each one.

3.7 Common experience

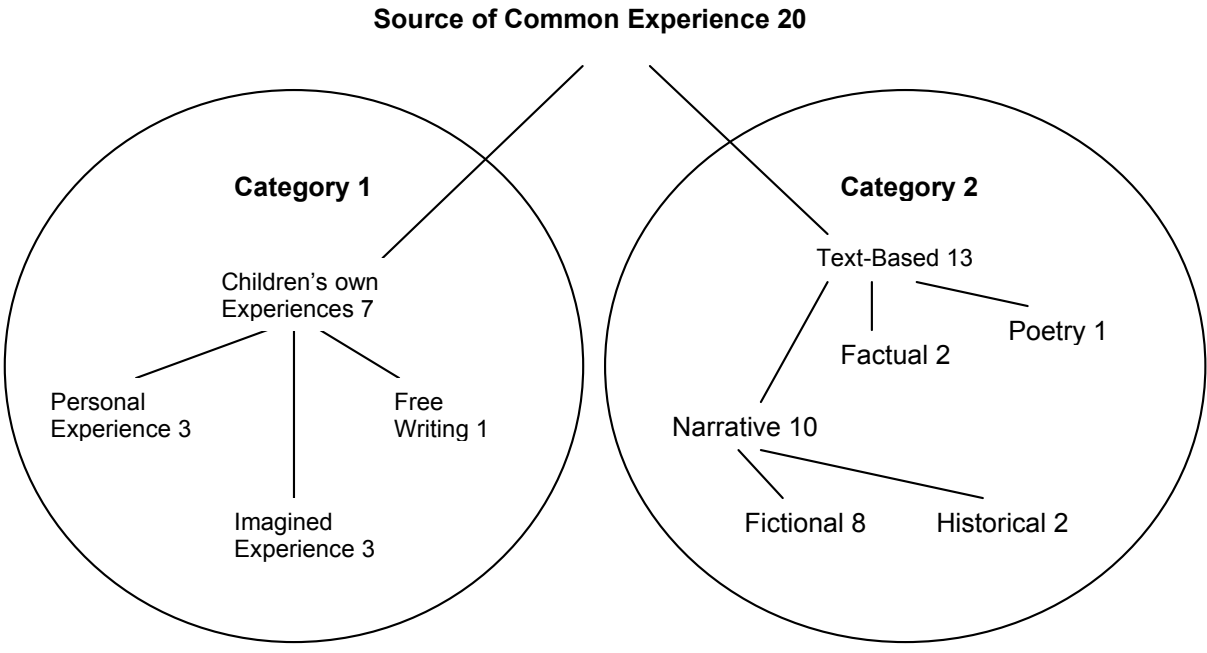
The common experience in writing lessons constituted what Christie calls ‘the particular field of enquiry’ which, like Bernstein, she sees as being ‘selected from some context outside the school’ (Christie, 1991:211). Within the writing lessons she studied Christie found that teachers explored and discussed this field, which would include the field of enquiry and sometimes brief references to format or generic structure, in the Task Orientation, the first section, of the lesson.

A focus of my analyses is the extent to which teachers made explicit and explored the field of enquiry in the writing lessons. Drawing on Christie’s model I have examined the Task Orientations of typical lessons to show how the teachers built understandings of the topic and to what extent they developed these understandings, so that they became an important part of the common knowledge held by all participants in the classroom. Where this occurred it enabled the field of enquiry to become available and relevant to the writing task.

3.8 Applying categories

The reason why I finally chose to categorise the twenty writing lessons according to the source of common experience that provided the contexts for the writing tasks, (see Diagram 1.) was because it was hypothesised there would be some commonality of purpose in the lessons in each category. As has been noted, it is the development and building of common or shared experience through discussion that leads to the establishment of common knowledge which itself allows for a deeper level of communication.

Diagram 1: Source of common experience for 20 lessons



Source of Common Experience for 20 Writing Lessons

- 7 Children's own experience
 - Personal Experience 2.1, 2.4, 6.3
 - Imagined Experience 2.3, 3.1, 3.4
 - Free Writing 7.1

- 13 Text-based
 - Poetry 4.1
 - Factual 4.4, 5.3
 - Narrative
 - Fictional 1.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.2, 5.1, 6.1, 6.2, 6.4
 - Historical 4.3, 7.2 (video)

This notion was seen as crucial by Edwards and Mercer who spoke of ‘the importance of establishing communication on the basis of shared experience’ and ‘of building an ever-expanding foundation of shared knowledge which will carry the weight of future discourse’ (Edwards and Mercer, 1987:6). In Christie’s model this mainly occurs during the Task

Orientation element of the writing lesson, giving children access to understandings and language resources that can be reiterated and developed in the context of ‘how to write’ which occurs in the Task Specification.

Lessons in which the children’s own experiences provided the knowledge base accounted for a substantial proportion (35%) of the lessons studied. This sizeable number reflected findings by Edwards and Mercer (1987:130) who, when investigating the communication of common knowledge in classrooms, found that ‘understandings on the part of pupils are seen as essentially inductive insights that the pupils themselves must achieve on the basis of their own experiences.’ The relationship between this statement and the writing lessons considered here can be more clearly demonstrated by applying Christie’s model TO[^]TS[^]T to the lessons as this model proposes a method for an exploration of the discourse of writing lessons beyond that which was available to researchers such as Edwards and Mercer. This group of lessons based on students’ personal experience formed my Category 1.

Of the total twenty lessons 65% were based on a published text with 50% of these based on a published narrative. Because of the high number based on a narrative text, these were the lessons I chose to focus on when discussing lesson from this group. Also, undocumented research conducted at the SCC showed a considerable measure of success in using narrative texts when working with children who were experiencing literacy difficulties. These text-based lessons formed my Category 2.

Therefore, the common experience contexts that formed the basis of the lessons in this study have two main sources:

1. Children's own experience (Category 1 - seven lessons)
2. A published text (Category 2 - thirteen lessons).

Each of these two groups of lessons were sub-classified. The seven lessons based on children's own or imagined experiences were divided between:

- Three lessons based on personal experience, eg Lesson 2.1: writing about their own families.
- Four lessons based on an imagined experience, eg Lesson 3.1: *Being a Third Grader* (early in the 20th Century)

The thirteen text-based lessons were grouped as follows:

- One lesson based on a poem
- Two on factual texts
- Ten on narrative texts.

Eight of the ten narrative texts used in Group 3 were fictional and two historical. One of the historical narratives was based on the teacher's oral reconstruction of a video concerning bushrangers in the goldfields. This was the only non-print text used in these lessons.

The twenty lessons selected (see Table 1.) have been examined for the provision of literate resources that assist children in the writing task. For children to succeed in a writing lesson they need shared knowledge and understandings of the field; to complete the task they need some knowledge of how to construct the written text. They need to be shown explicitly *how* to write, which involves having knowledge of genre and an awareness of appropriate language choices.

In order to find out to what extent these issues were addressed within the lessons observed, each lesson has been investigated for two factors; firstly for the availability of common experience and how this was reconstructed within the lesson, and secondly for the provision of language models explicitly made available for the children.

3.9 The analysis – Christie’s model

One of the advantages of Christie’s model for this analysis is that her framework can be applied to all writing lessons and allows for comparisons to be made within and between sections of various lessons. When a number of lessons are grouped together, the model also allows for comparisons to be made between the kind of learning carried in each of the three elements. For example, the Task Orientations of a group of lessons can be analysed and compared to show how teachers helped children to develop understandings of the field of enquiry. In these contexts I felt I could investigate the extent to which the teachers enabled students to better understand relevant subject matter, become familiar with suitable language choices and explore the structure and features of the genre of the target text.

3.9.1 Registers

The lessons in my study were examined for the extent to which the children were given access to knowledge relating to the field of experience and the extent to which this knowledge was made explicit. This includes an exploration of the development of understandings around the topic for the writing task as realised through the instructional register. At the same time notice is taken of the pedagogic directions given by the teacher as she introduces the field through models of literate language and guides the children in the direction of the task. These directions are shown in the activity of the regulative register which regulates behaviour as

well as focusing children on the instructional register. In this context an examination of the registers allows a differentiation between teacher talk that focuses on procedural knowledge – how children are to learn and talk that is concerned with the specific content of the lesson – what is to be learned.

In order to show how these factors influenced children's writing lessons I have analysed the lessons according to the theoretical framework proposed by Christie (1991, 2000, 2002). Christie's method of discourse analysis incorporates Bernstein's principle of pedagogic discourse being formed by an activity or subject being brought in from outside school into a school teaching/learning situation and in the process devolving into two elements, a regulative discourse and an instructional discourse. For Christie, the regulative register has to do with 'the overall pedagogic directions taken their goals, pacing and sequencing' while the instructional register has to do with 'the content and its specialized skills' (Christie, 2002: 25). These two registers and the ways in which they interact are essential components within Christie's model of a curriculum genre and a major source for this analysis.

The regulative register of classroom interaction is concerned with management of children's behaviour in the learning context, eg. where and how to sit, what to do, directing the discourse as in how to respond to questions etc. So the teacher uses this register while preparing the children for the appropriate behaviour she expects from them in the forthcoming task. In contrast, the instructional register focuses on the 'content' of classroom learning, knowledge of the topic or of the text under consideration.

3.9.2 The writing planning genre

Christie's study of early primary writing lessons where children learned to write led her to name the curriculum genre of these lessons 'the writing planning genre'. As mentioned earlier this genre was found by Christie to have a schematic structure which at its most minimal consists of three elements represented as TO[^]TS[^]T, standing for Task Orientation, Task Specification and Task, with [^] indicating sequence (Christie 1991, 2002). This apparently simple framework has allowed the very varied lessons in this study to be separated into three sections, which in turn can be divided into phases, enabling important comparisons to be made between the structures of a number of lessons. Other models did not allow comparisons to be made with such clarity. Phases were an important tool for Love in her linguistic analysis of secondary English lessons which also draws on Christie's model. Although a linguistic analysis was beyond the scope of this study, I found Love's definition of phases as, 'clearly defined steps which occur within an element of schematic structure, signalled as they are by shifts in [the] linguistic choices' (Love, 2000:37) a valuable one. Another great advantage of Christie's model for this study is its ability to be recursive, allowing for repeated elements to be noted, eg in many lessons there may be a Task Reorientation or a Task Re-specification.

Christie's model also allows for a finer examination of the discourse by distinguishing the linguistic features of both regulative register and instructional register and plotting the movements of these to show not only which register dominates at any one time but, more especially, where they converge which is the point where Christie sees learning beginning to take place. The ways in which the two registers operate, both separately and when convergence of the two occurs, are analysed to show where and how opportunities for learning within the writing planning genre have been provided.

In order to show the distinction between the two registers, in this study the regulative register has been printed in bold type and the instructional register in plain type as shown below:

Regulative register and Instructional register

- T: **Tim**, what's the race
that you've been entered into?
C: The 27th annual African hippopotamus race.
T: **Fantastic for remembering** that whole title,
it took me ages to remember it.

Opportunities for teaching/learning within the writing planning genre can be found in two areas or elements:

1. In the Task Orientation where knowledge of the text/genre of the lesson can be explored while developing common knowledge. This knowledge is built through discourse relating to the topic or *what* to write about and exposes students to the use of language features relevant to the genre.
2. In the Task Specification where students can be shown how to take the language features and structures explored in the TO and recontextualise them so that they fit with the required genre of the written task. It is in this segment of the lesson that students can be shown *how* to write.

Within these two elements the use of Christie's model allows a tracking of the discourse to show, not only the resources provided by the teacher in building the field of knowledge related to the topic of the lesson, but also the introduction of language resources the children need to enable them to produce the required written text.

3.9.3 Interaction of registers - convergence

Another very important advantage of this model, is that it provides linguistic evidence for the two registers, and allows us to track moments in classroom interaction, where the regulative register actually guides children into learning in productive ways, as the regulative and the instructional register ‘converge’. In a typically productive writing lesson the regulative register, as shown below, will predominate at the beginning when the teacher settles the children and explains her expectations concerning their conduct with convergence of the two registers coming later. Examples are given to show the progression of convergence. These come from Lesson 6.4 – a full analysis of this lesson is given in two parts in Chapter 4, section 4.1.4 and Chapter 5, section 2.4.

Regulative Register:

**T: Ok, turn. Let’s look this way now please.
 Side talking to end.
 Turn and face me, it's listening time.**

As shown in the following extract the instructional register begins to emerge during the early part of the task initiation, led by and converging with the regulative register:

Regulative and Instructional Registers:

**T: We've been talking about
 what's special about Canberra recently,
 and we've been looking at our early inhabitants,
 which are the, which were the aboriginal population.**

As the topic of the lesson is explored the instructional register becomes more dominant so that the patterns of the registers change. In this study the bold print of the regulative register becomes broken with the plain print of the instructional register. This indicates the beginning of the convergence of the registers when the regulative register inducts the children into the

task with the instructional register gradually becoming more dominant as the field of enquiry is explored and common knowledge is built:

T: **Now of course**, the aborigines used to tell these wonderful stories about their animals from the Dreamtime.

As the lesson progresses the teacher, wanting to refocus the children, returns to the regulative register using only two words in the instructional register:

T: **Ok, now, I am going to read** two stories.
Now, I want you to listen carefully.
You're all fairly puffed
so it's a good time to just listen.

Immediately after this directive the two registers again begin to interweave with the instructional discourse emerging more fully as convergence occurs:

T: **Now, I want you to listen to**
the animals that are involved,
so listen for that.
I want you to listen to any special words
that are used.

The convergence of the registers in the last sentence shows how the regulative register led the children towards listening specifically to language that could eventually be used in their writing. In this case, the instructional register is beginning to focus them on the knowledge and use of language, an essential area of common knowledge for writing lessons. In writing lessons any effective Task Orientation should create common knowledge with children concerning both the topic to be written about and language relating to the topic that they could use in their texts.

A clear example of the later stages of convergence occurred later in Lesson 6.4 and is given below. Here the regulative register keeps a focus as the instructional register dominates:

- T: **Then what** could be the ending of this story?
Why the Kangaroo Hops was the name of it.
Why Catherine?
- C: That he tried to walk on four legs
but he couldn't
so he still hopped.
- T: **Right** so his, so his four legs....
his legs were.... because of the fire,
he then had to hop.

The convergence of the registers demonstrates how the teacher initiated the use of common knowledge, established during earlier phases of the Task Orientation, to build a further layer of knowledge about narrative structure. The regulative register, in bold print, directed the children's attention towards the instructional register that confirmed and/or expanded their knowledge of the text that, by this stage, was held as common knowledge by all participants, allowing the children to give back to the teacher information previously established by use of the instructional register.

Convergence at this level, where the instructional register is almost totally dominant in the discourse, is an indication that common knowledge is being shared and learning is able to take place. In my analysis of the writing lessons it was this kind of interaction in the Task Orientations and Task Specifications that I looked for as an indication of negotiation of shared meanings.

In the next chapter I examine in detail the Task Orientations of the writing lessons to find to what extent children are given access to literate discourse relating to the field of enquiry. In doing so I explore how knowledge of the field is shared and to what extent common knowledge is built in these particular lessons.

Chapter 4: Task Orientations of Writing Lessons

Introduction

The analyses in this chapter focus on the beginning of the formal part of the writing lessons in which students were required to produce their own written texts. As outlined in Chapter 1 the discussion explores to what extent the students were prepared for the various writing tasks by searching for evidence of resources explicitly shown to them *before* they began the designated tasks. The analyses here examine the discourse of the first section of the lessons, the Task Orientation, which is the segment that provides an orientation to the task.

The Task Orientation is the first of the three elements identified by Christie (1991, 2002) as components of the curriculum genre for writing lessons that she called ‘the writing planning genre’. In the Task Orientation of this genre teachers typically engage students in an exploration of the field of enquiry about which they expect children to write. This exploration has the potential to include aspects of generic structure and to include language related to the topic. Once these factors have been developed as common knowledge held by teacher and students they become part of students’ experience and can be revisited and extended in the Task Specification.

A list of the lessons that form the basis of this study, together with the class year, source of common experience and a summary of the writing tasks are provided in Table 1 (see Chapter 4, section 1).

Table 1: Writing Lessons

Lesson	Yr	Common Experience	Task
1.1	6	Fictional text: <i>I am David</i> . David rescues girl from fire.	Write your own rescue story. Include feelings of characters.
2.1	3	Personal: Child's family	Write about your family.
2.3	3	Imagined: Place researched for project.	Write a postcard from the place of your project.
2.4	3	Personal: Class visit to the National Science and Technology Centre.	Write a report of your visit to the Centre.
3.1	3	Imagined: Proposed visit to educational museum.	Write about a day at Hall School in the early days of Canberra.
3.2	3	Fictional text: <i>The Paper-Bag Princess</i>	Retell the story.
3.3	3	Fictional text: <i>Without a Shirt</i>	Write another story about finding a bone on the beach.
3.4	3	Imagined: No discussion.	Write a story titled 'Abracadabra' about a magical object that gives three wishes.
4.1	5	Poem: <i>Once there was....now there is...</i> environmental theme.	Write a poem using a similar pattern.
4.2	5	Fictional text: <i>Dad's Mummy's Big Night Out</i> . First part.	Continue writing the story.
4.3	5	Historical text: <i>A Day in the Life of a Digger</i>	Pretend you are Peter and write his letter back to his family.
4.4	5	Factual text: <i>Gold</i> . Story of riot at Lambing Flat.	Pretend you are a reporter and write a newspaper report on the riot.
5.1	4	Fictional text: <i>Penny Pollard's Diary</i> .	Pretend you are Auntie Sue or Mrs Bethany and write a letter replying to Penny's letter to you.
5.3	4	Factual text: Recount of a fictional class visit to a bakery.	Retell the recount in three sections.
6.1	3	Fictional text: <i>The 27th Annual African Hippopotamus Race</i> Edward's race.	Pretend you are Edward and write a letter to a friend about the race you are entered into.
6.2	3	Fictional text: <i>The Selfish Giant</i> .	Pretend you are a child who went into the Giant's garden and write a letter apologising to him.
6.3	3	Personal: Year 3 Camp	Write a thank-you letter to camp organisers.
6.4	3	Text: Aboriginal animal legends.	Write a similar story telling <i>Why the Emu Cannot Fly</i> .
7.1	5	Free writing: Sample topics given.	Free writing or choose topic from the board.
7.2	5	Historical video: On the road to the goldfields.	Write a chapter for your 'Gold' book entitled, 'On the Road'.

4.1 Components of task orientations

The discussion that follows is concerned with the extent to which teachers made explicit and explored the field of enquiry in the writing lessons that are the focus of this study. The Task Orientations of typical lessons are examined to show to what degree teachers built common understandings so that they became an important part of the common knowledge held by all classroom participants. Where this did occur it enabled the common experience to become available and relevant to the writing task.

As my later analyses show, building shared understandings with students is crucial to the effectiveness of Task Orientation sessions. Two questioning strategies that make this possible are ‘preformulation’ which tunes children into the specific information being sought by the teacher, and ‘reconceptualisation’ which makes knowledge shared by one child available to all students (Bourne, 2003) and ensures it is relevant to the task at hand. These strategies were previously discussed in Chapter 2 in connection with the pedagogy of the SCC. The following discussion focuses on the Task Orientations in the two main groups of lessons, experience-based and text-based, as described in Chapter 3 and Diagram 1 (see Chapter 3, section 8). To enable a finer analysis of the discourse of the Task Orientation particular reference is made to the ways the regulative and instructional registers operate.

Because the Task Orientation element within writing lessons has particular bearing on the sharing of common experience between teacher and students, this element is analysed across the full range of lessons. Representative sample lessons are examined from the two categories determined by the source of the common experience:

Category 1 - Children’s own experience, both personal and imaginary.

Category 2 - Text-based experience.

4.2 Variations in task orientations

It was found that all of the twenty lessons considered conformed generally to the staging pattern identified by Christie (1991, 2002) ie Task Orientation ^ Task Specification ^ Task. Each of the lessons began with a Task Orientation with the teacher employing the regulative register to modify the children's behaviour before introducing the lesson's topic. This was followed by varying amounts of discussion to build knowledge of the field of enquiry. The next element, the Task Specification, was used to give the children an understanding of how to go about the writing task. Finally, in the Task element children were given instructions allowing them to begin the task.

However, within this basic framework significant variations were found between the lessons. The most obvious variation was concerned with the length of the Task Orientation. In six of the lessons, which had the children's own experiences as the basis of their field of enquiry (Category 1), the Task Orientations were found to be minimal in length, while one of these six lessons had no noticeable Task Orientation. In contrast, the Task Orientation of text-based lessons (Category 2) were mostly much longer.

Other significant variations were found in the quantity and quality of discourse in the two registers. In some of the lessons, as is shown in the following analyses, the instructional discourse was too minimal to build knowledge of the instructional field, forcing children back on their own resources when attempting the written task. The free writing lesson, Lesson 7.1 which has been excluded from the analysed lessons, was an extreme example of a lesson

where the regulative register dominated. In this lesson the only discourse in the Task Orientation was what is usually the preliminary behavioural control. After that the teacher immediately announced the task and set the class to work.

4.3 Lessons based on children's personal experiences

Three of the lessons in Category 1 were based on children's personal experiences. Use of personal experience might have been expected to cause difficulties when developing common knowledge especially when the experience was not shared by all participants. As will be shown, this was largely the case in this study with writing lessons concerned with imagined experiences and also to a certain extent in Lesson 2.1, where children were asked to write about their own families, and each child's experience was very different. However, the personal experience in Lesson 2.4, which followed a class visit to the National Science and Technology Centre, was an experience shared by all participants and therefore provided the teacher with opportunities to build common knowledge beyond those available in most other lessons involving personal experience. The Task Orientation of this lesson, Lesson 2.4, is examined below. Reference will also be made to the only other two lessons based on personal experience, Lessons 2.1 ('My Family') and 6.3 (letter to camp organisers). All three lessons were given to Year 3 classes.

4.3.1 Analysis of lessons based on personal experience

Christie (1990) identified within the Task Orientation element a lower order initiating structure that she called a Task Initiation Phase. This Task Initiation Phase was in turn composed of two sub-phases. The first sub-phase had to do with the organisation of behaviour as the teacher settled the children in order to commence the new activity. The discourse

within the first sub-phase typically involved the foregrounding of the regulative register, which is where the teacher organises and prepares the children for the behaviour expected of them. Similar patterns were regularly found in the writing lessons analysed in this study as typified by those shown in the following extracts. Where bold print is used in the transcripts this signifies the regulative register, plain print represents the instructional register. Individual children are not purposely identified ie 'C' can refer to any child in the class. 'O' refers to the observer.

Lesson 2.4

Task Orientation

Task Initiation

Phase 1

- T: **Who only has a couple? Not a three, not a trio, just a couple.**
- O: **Some are in twos and some are in threes.**
- C: **We've only got (inaudible).**
- T: **Pip and Brooke.**
Tania, you can come with Pip and Brooke.
Now on your bottoms everyone please.
Sit on your bottoms so you're not going to wriggle.

Here the regulative register was realised through the teacher's language choices as she firstly organised the children's seating and then focused their behaviour signalled by her use of the continuative 'Now' and imperatives such as 'Sit'.

As in Christie's model the second phase in Lesson 2.4 included a general introduction to the task again foregrounded by the regulative register. This was the final phase of the Task Orientation in this lesson.

Lesson 2.4

Task Orientation

Task Initiation

Phase 2

- T: **Now the reason that I've got you to sit in the groups that we were in yesterday for our excursion, is because you're going to write a report today.**
- Cn: **(groan) Oh, oh.**

T: **And some of these reports are going to be put in the newsletter.**

In this second phase the regulative register is again realised through the teacher's language choices as she seeks to give an explanation for her behavioural directive while introducing the task. At this stage there is a very minimal use of the instructional register with the phrase 'our excursion' providing the only reference to the field of experience.

After the Task Initiation the writing lessons Christie observed progressed into the Task Orientation Body where the instructional or 'content register is foregrounded' (Christie, 1991:213), and the role of the regulative register diminishes. It was found that this progression towards foregrounding of the 'content register' rarely occurred in the lessons observed in this study and did not occur in the lessons based on children's own experience. In these lessons the Task Orientation typically remained undeveloped beyond the Task Initiation, with little or no appearance of the instructional register. After Phase 2 of the Task Initiation in Lesson 2.4 the lesson moved straight into the Task Specification. This meant that opportunities for developing shared knowledge about the topic of the writing task were passed over, leaving the children responsible for building this themselves when they attempted to write.

Following the pattern established in Lesson 2.4 it was found that in both Lessons 2.1 ('My Family') and 6.3 (letter to camp organisers) there was only a minimal reference to the instructional field within the Task Orientation. At most there were three clauses in the instructional register, which was too minimal to allow for any development of the content or instructional field, before the discourse moved on into the Task Specification.

To show how little of the discourse was concerned with the building of common knowledge an examination has been made of the registers within the Task Orientations of Lessons 2.1 and 6.3. Both Task Orientations, reproduced below, were very brief. In both lessons classroom control had been addressed before the writing lessons began, though the teacher of Lesson 2.1 began Phase 1 with a comment to one child and a general ‘OK, ssh,’ to the whole class to refocus the children's attention. Both Task Orientations included a Task Initiation with a qualifying comment in the second phase. It is in this phase that the instructional register emerges, as shown by the plain type in each extract.

Lesson 2.1

Task Orientation

Task Initiation

Phase 1

T: **Brooke, would you like to get rid of that please?**
OK, ssh.

Phase 2

T: **I thought it would be nice to go on with** our theme,
we started with our family tree,
to go on with our theme about families.
Now, to write about our family.
Every family is special in some way
and every family is different from other families.
Concentrate here please children.

Lesson 6.3

Task Orientation

Task Initiation

Phase 1 (behaviour control established before taping began)

Phase 2

T: **You can see I've started already put up** our address
and at the beginning of our lesson,
because today we are going to write a letter to Ray, Rhonda and Shirley
to thank them for the lovely time we had at Camp Sturt.

T: **Now last week** (inaudible reference to format of letter address)
but we've probably forgotten a few of the important little things.

Apart from short references in these lessons, as in Lesson 2.4, the instructional field (in plain type) was left implicit within the Task Orientation with the teachers assuming the children's

knowledge of the experience. With no reconstruction of the field, the children were not reminded of the experience, nor were they exposed to the language choices relating to that experience which could eventually be employed and reformed in their writing.

Another consequence of there being no reconstruction of the instructional field within the Task Orientation was that there was no common context upon which the children could build an understanding of the forthcoming Task Specification. Their dependence on such a reconstruction was made apparent in an examination of the Task Specification of Lesson 2.4 below, where the only three words in the instructional register, that specifically referred to the field of experience, were picked up by the child who used this information to supply an answer to the teacher's question.

Lesson 2.4

Task Specification

Phase 1

T: **Now, it's going to be a little different because you're going to work as a group. You're not going to just do an individual report because two or three, excuse me Holly. Two or three heads are quite often better than one. And some people will remember certain things that other people will have forgotten. Someone will, would have enjoyed a gallery more than someone else.**

Phase 2

T: **Now what sort of things will you include in your report? Adam.**
C: **(inaudible)**
T: **Of course. Paul.**
C: **How was it.**
T: **Ah, what do you mean, how was it?**
C: **If it was good or...**
T: **Well what was our spelling about this week?**
C: **Like I enjoyed it.**

The child's answer, which was modelled on the only information available from the instructional register (apart from the words 'our excursion' in the Task Orientation), shows

that his experience at the gallery was not in itself sufficient for him to be able to respond to the teacher's question. His answer, which shows his dependence on the provision of common knowledge within the discourse of the lesson:

C: How was it. If it was good or...Like I enjoyed it.

related back to the only contribution made by the teacher to the construction of the instructional field where she had said:

T: **Someone will, would have** enjoyed a gallery **more than someone else**.

This accords with Gray (1998:103) who, in his research, noted that the language resources children drew on, when responding to adults, had often been provided by the adult on an earlier occasion. Gray quotes Painter (1986:72) who, in her analysis of interactions between children and adults, found that a child's answer to an adult's question would include what the adult had said previously. In her later work Painter (2007) explained these kinds of interactions as part of the horizontal discourse that enables a young child to develop socio-cultural perspectives as well as knowledge of every day experience through language. In addition, children in an environment where an elaborated coding orientation (Bernstein, 1990, 1996) operates, are likely to be exposed to the integration of horizontal discourse with forms of vertical discourse expanding their understandings into new areas of knowledge.

Further exploration of the common experience during the Task Orientation of Lesson 2.4 would have provided the child in question with a broader knowledge of the field as well as a familiarity with the language on which to model his answer. As has been discussed in Chapter 2 and will be demonstrated later in this chapter, strategies such as preformulation and

reconceptualisation are vital to this process, but were not in evidence in the Task Orientations explored here. Up to this point, the realisation of the instructional register has been shown to be severely restricted, which meant that the teaching content was not explored at all within this element. With the common experience left undeveloped within the Task Orientation, the children were left to rely on their own resources to provide the contextual knowledge they would need for the forthcoming Task Specification.

4.3.2 Lessons based on imagined experience

Similarly, two of the three lessons based on an imagined experience also had short Task Orientations and again showed a minimal realisation of the instructional register. The remaining lesson that used an imagined experience, Lesson 3.1 ('Being a Third Grader' at Hall Village School), was the only lesson based on children's experiences with a long Task Orientation. However, as shown in the following discussion, although the Task Orientation was much longer there was no corresponding increase in the effective building of an instructional field.

Lesson 3.1 was concerned with a future excursion to an old school, now an education museum at Hall Village in the A.C.T. The children had not yet been to the museum and one of the teacher's purposes for the lesson was to prepare them for this visit. Because the lesson was based on an anticipated experience it has been classed with the lessons based on imagined experiences. Although the Task Orientation was longer than in the other lessons it will be shown that apart from a long ineffective Task Orientation, an additional area of difficulty in Lesson 3.1 was the historical perspective that was clearly unfamiliar to the children and was not adequately explained to them.

As in the lessons discussed previously the Task Initiation of Lesson 3.1 followed patterns outlined by Christie (1991) with the instructional register not emerging until Phase 2. Phase 1, reproduced below, was, as in Christie's model, all in the regulative register. Here the regulative register is used to regulate movement and procedure.

Lesson 3.1

Task Orientation

Task Initiation

Phase 1

- T: **Brendon and Nathan move back.
Thankyou.
Ok, can everybody move back,
legs crossed.
No, we're not going to continue.
Those people who haven't finished your handwriting,
you'll need to put it on my desk
and come
and sit down on the floor.**
- C: **I haven't finished ... (inaudible)**
- T: **No, put it on my desk.**
- O: The handwriting's finishing. The children are still coming down to sit on the floor and face the blackboard.
- T: **Peter can I rub this off now?**
- C: **Um, ... (inaudible)**
- T: **Ok.**
- C: **Finished.**
- T: **Ok, put it on my desk.**

At the beginning of Phase 2 of the Task Initiation there was a noticeable shift in the use of the regulative register, which then began to project the instructional register as the teacher introduced the task in general terms. It appeared that this could indicate the beginning of the expansion of the instructional register, but after introducing the task and setting the time frame by talking about, 'when Canberra was first being built', instead of developing the field the teacher reverted to the use of the regulative register. Consequently, there was no elaboration or discussion of the historical context to begin the building of common knowledge.

Lesson 3.1

Task Orientation

Task Initiation (cont)

Phase 2

T: **As part of our going out to Hall**
to visit the education museum,
we're going to start
to think about
what it was like for people
who lived in Canberra
when Canberra was first being built.
So, we're going to start that work by thinking about a time
when people didn't have all the luxuries
that we have.

No information, i.e. no building of the field, was given about the region as it might have been or how people might have lived at that time, nor was there any visual material provided to set a context for the children. Instead, as the regulative register re-emerged, the teacher reframed the way she spoke of a past time, using negative realities – what people in the past did *not* have. Again, no attempt was made by the teacher to begin the sharing of common knowledge of the field. As the question that followed immediately from Phase 2 showed, ‘What are some of the things we have that people haven't always had?’ the information was expected to come from the children’s own resources, so confirming the opinion held by Edwards and Mercer (1987) that one aspect of implicit educational discourse is that children’s understandings are expected to arise from insights based on their own experiences.

Lesson 3.1

Task Orientation

Phase 3

T: **What are some of the things**
that we have
that people haven't always had? **Sean?**

C: Um,(inaudible)

T: **Pardon.**

C: (inaudible)

O: The target child is not paying attention. Several children have their hands up.

T: **Kyle, Carl sorry?**

C: (Inaudible)

T: **That's it.**
Think about some things perhaps in the classroom or in your home.
Adam.

C: (inaudible)

T: **Mmm**

C: They had wood.

T: They had wood walls instead of bricks.

As seen in the extract below, the responses supplied by the children consisted mainly of a list of material objects that drew little acknowledgement and very few comments from the teacher. Although the questions the teacher used constituted a series of probes, through which she attempted to shape the children's perceptions of the context about which they were to write, her brief comments were mostly confined to an acceptance of the answers the children gave. The brief replies did not allow her to construct with the children the common knowledge that would help develop a suitable instructional field for the subsequent writing task, neither did she expand on their responses through the process of re-formulation or reconceptualisation which Gray (1998) stresses are essential teaching strategies.

Lesson 3.1

Task Orientation

Phase 3 cont.

- T: **Carl?**
C: A clock.
T: Clock.
T: They had some form of telling the time
Sean don't they?
C: **Yeah**, they had those little dial things
that (inaudible)
T: **Ok. Shane?**
C: Ah, (inaudible)
T: Blackboards instead of books.
So they didn't have pens or pencils.
C: They used a feather.
T: (inaudible)
Ok, so once they wrote something on their chalkboard.
Did it stay there?
Cn: No.
T: They had to rub it off.
Ok, what other things might have been different?

At this stage of the Task Orientation, which Christie (1991:213) called 'the body', she found that 'the content or instructional register is foregrounded and the pedagogical or regulative register finds little if any expression,' as teachers focussed on building the instructional field. In this lesson the regulative, or pedagogical, register projected the instructional register, as the teacher questioned three to four children, after which the regulative register emerged again to

begin a similar pattern as shown in the extract above. This kind of pattern, where there was no interactive response to children's answers by the teacher to develop and share understandings, allowed the teacher to maintain control and was repeated a number of times.

Towards the end of the Task Orientation, after questioning the children in this manner, the teacher summed up the little information provided and immediately asked them what they might put in their 'story about being a person in that time'. From the children's point of view this was the first time in the lesson that they had heard the word 'story'. It appeared they were expected to know that their task would be to write a story. No common knowledge had been built concerning what it meant to be a person at that reasonably unspecified time, nor had the children been given any idea of whom that person might be. In addition to these problems, the answers the children gave had been in response to negative questions comparing their own time to that of the past. These questions and answers did not help them build a picture of the situation they were expected to write about. In fact, the difficulties encountered by the children related to the lack of explicit information built within the instructional field.

Although the Task Orientation in this lesson is longer than in the lessons previously discussed, it has been shown that there was no effective building of the instructional field that could have helped develop common knowledge of the topic on which the children were expected to write. In addition, the negative questioning is an example of the implicit nature of much classroom discourse where children are expected to interpret the complex rules of educational talk (Edwards and Mercer, 1987). An example of this was in Phase 2 of Lesson 3.1, where the teacher indicated her intended line of questioning before asking the question:

Lesson 3.1
Task Orientation

Phase 2

T: **So, we're going to start that work by thinking about** a time when people didn't have all the luxuries that we have.

T: **What** are some of the things that we have that people haven't always had? **Sean?**

Although some children might be able to answer successfully because of their personal knowledge, others would have little idea of the teacher's implicit expectations. For example, it is most likely there were children in the class who did not understand what the word 'luxuries' suggested in this unspecified context which possibly accounted for the random list of answers given by the children.

An episode towards the end of the Task Orientation of Lesson 3.1 demonstrated the children's dependence on how the context was shaped by the teacher within the lesson. In this episode the child, Sean, responded to a question by using a language form which the teacher herself used earlier. However, because of the implicit nature of her question the child did not give the response the teacher was looking for. The question asked was:

Lesson 3.1

Task Orientation

Phase 3

T: **So what** are some of the things that **you might have in** your story about being a person in that time when they didn't have all those things **Adam?**

Adam's answer was inaudible. The teacher continued with:

T: **What** was one of the other things they didn't have?

C: Fridges.

T: Fridges, **ok. Sean.**

C: They don't have...

T: **Ah, no, we don't want to talk about** things that they don't have **now.**

Sean responded using a language model and content that the teacher had used earlier in the lesson. The confusion for the child is demonstrated by the distinctions between the registers. What had previously been classed as instructional register, 'things that they don't have', was suddenly unacceptable within the wording of the target writing register. To the children the paradigms appeared to have changed.

Two major problems occurred for the children, firstly the language modelled by the teacher could no longer be used and secondly, because no effective field base had been established nor knowledge of the historical context, the children were left to provide the necessary knowledge they would need for the eventual task from their own resources. This was shown in the following answer that gained the teacher's approval. The answer, which had not been a subject of the previous discussion, was volunteered after others had been dismissed:

C: (inaudible)...instead as we have pens and pencils they had feathers and ink.
T: **That's right.**

Children who already possessed this kind of knowledge and were able to recall and articulate it could gain the teacher's approval; those without this advantage, who were increasingly marginalised as the lesson progressed, would have included the children with poor literacy skills. For such children to be able to participate in this part of the lesson previous preparation should have occurred, which fully developed the instructional field, while modelling language appropriate for the discussion.

The discussion so far has focused on lessons based on the personal or imagined experiences of the children. Apart from Lesson 3.1, concerning the proposed visit to Hall, these lessons had Task Orientations consisting of two short phases dominated by the regulative register. In

these lessons the instructional register was barely visible which clearly indicated that the field of enquiry remained undeveloped and children were left to intuit expectations about the writing task. An exception was Lesson 3.1 which had the much longer Task Orientation.

Although the instructional register began to emerge as in the example below:

Lesson 3.1

Task Orientation

- T: **That's it.**
Think about some things perhaps in the classroom or in your home.
Adam.
- C: (inaudible)
- T: **Mmm**
- C: They had wood.
- T: They had wood walls instead of bricks.
- C: Um, (inaudible)
- T: **Ok, bring it back to thinking about** in your home and in the classroom.

The interaction was insufficient to develop a knowledge base for the children to use when attempting the writing task. In this lesson the writing task itself was not mentioned until approximately halfway through the Task Orientation when the teacher said:

- T: **Ah, no, we don't want to talk about** things they don't have now.
You'll keep those for when you're writing your story,
but what might it have been like.
You need to be thinking about what sorts of things
you're going to put in your story.

Here, in the final stage of the Task Orientation, the instructional register emerged again, but in this case the phrases and clauses gave very general or even 'empty' implicit information as in the expression 'sorts of things'.

Summary

The lack of development of the instructional register in the Task Orientations of the lessons based on children's own experiences, whether personal or imaginary, suggests that either,

1. there was an assumption by teachers that children already had their own knowledge of that experience, or
2. that building common knowledge around an experience not shared by all participants is a more complex and difficult task than usually expected by teachers.

4.4 Text-based lessons chosen for analysis

The remainder of this chapter focuses on lessons where the source of common experience was a published text. Thirteen of the twenty writing lessons considered in this study, 65% of the lessons, used a text as the focus of common knowledge. One text was a poem, one a non-fictional video of gold-rush times and two were reports of life in the goldfields. The remaining nine lessons all used a narrative text as the source of common knowledge. Because the majority of lessons used the narrative genre, lessons from this genre were chosen for more detailed analysis.

The final choice of lessons to be analysed in greater detail was also influenced by the inclusion of two factors found to have a positive effect on children's writing. The first factor was the use of teacher modelling, a critical aspect in lessons where the children's task is to write a narrative text (Rothery, 1996). The second factor was the explicit nature of the discourse as this gives children access to the fundamental understandings provided by the teacher. This notion was explored and explained by Christie, (1991), Gray, (1998) and Anstey, (1998) in their analyses of classroom discourse. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, the level of explicitness established by Anstey was restricted by the narrower focus of the lessons she studied.

The analysis that follows focuses on the Task Orientations of the writing lessons based on narrative texts. A feature of this analysis is an exploration of the use of the regulative and instructional registers to establish the extent to which common knowledge concerning the field of enquiry was developed and made explicit, and also to see if there were any similarities to the lessons based on children's personal experience.

4.4.1 Task orientations of text-based lessons

Analysis of the text-based lessons showed that many had long Task Orientations, especially when the teacher read sections of the focus text. Despite the length of this element there were lessons found in this group where, beyond the reading of the text, the instructional field was not developed in the Task Orientation. In this respect many of the text-based lessons were similar to those based on children's personal and imagined experiences. However, a more extensive development of the instructional field was found in Lesson 6.4. The analysis of this lesson, later in this chapter, suggests that text-based lessons might be more suitable for effective teaching of writing than lessons based on children's personal experiences.

Returning to the text-based lessons in which there was little development of the instructional register, it appeared that in most cases one of two things happened. Either the regulative register dominated because the teacher was focusing on organising the children, explaining aspects of the task or very occasionally exercising control as in the following example where the teacher subtly used a mixture of these:

Lesson 6.4

Task Orientation

T: **Ok, now, I am going to read two stories.
Now, I want you to listen carefully.
You're all fairly puffed
so it's a good time to just listen.**

Now, I want you to listen to
the animals that are involved,
so listen for that.
I want you to listen to any special words
that are used.

or the registers alternated due to a questioning routine. Typically, on these occasions the questioning followed an IRE pattern, as shown in the examples below, but there was rarely any evidence in the questioning of elaborations where preformulation or reconceptualisation was employed to expand on children's answers and effectively extend and build common knowledge. Minimal expansion of the field occurred purely from contributions by the children who often appeared to be responding to the 'guess what's in the teacher's head' form of questioning of the kind shown in the following examples:

Lesson 4.2

Task Orientation

- T: **Ok good.**
Right and what were some of the tombs of the very famous kings especially very famous people.
What did their tomb look like?
What sort of shape was it?
- C: Triangle.
- C: A triangle type shape.
- T: **Yes, and what do we call it when** it's actually a three dimensional shape?
It's made of triangles.
- C: Pyramid.
- T: Pyramid **good Philip.**
Ok, all right, Chris, what else do you know?
- C: **Um, that** they have carvings all over the walls.
- T: **Mmm.**
- C: Paintings.
- T: Paintings, **yep.**

And later,

- T: **What** sort of places might he be at when he's at his job?
- C: Jungle.
- C: Out in the desert.
- T: **Ok** he might be out in the desert.
Where else might he be?
- C: Dry land.
- T: **Mmm.**
- C: Jungle.
- C: Egypt.

- T: **Yes** he definitely might be in Egypt.
C: Places where strange things are and (inaudible)

Problems associated with the development of the instructional field in text-based lessons can be illustrated by the use of the regulative and instructional registers that often remained noticeably separate. Whenever this occurred, for example in lessons where a text was read with little or no intervening discussion, the two registers showed little or no convergence, demonstrating an ineffective building of the field of enquiry.

Another problem, which also became apparent in some of these lessons, was that even when the instructional fields were more fully developed they were very often not constructed with a focus towards the forthcoming writing task. This occurred in Lesson 4.2 where the written task involved the children attempting to write a continuation of a fictional story entitled *Dad's Mummy's Big Night Out*. In this lesson the greater part of the long Task Orientation was concerned with factual details concerning Egyptian mummies and archaeologists. Although this provided a knowledge base, it was not one that the children were subsequently required to use in their writing, where the task was to continue the fictional fantasy, nor did the teacher refer to this discussion within the Task Specification where she was expected to give children knowledge of how they should to go about the writing task.

In lessons where the field was either not developed within the Task Orientation or where it did not provide the necessary knowledge base required for the task, children needed to use resources of their own to further develop or expand aspects of the field, so that they could complete the set written task. This, as discussed earlier, was particularly difficult for children with poor literacy skills.

The following two lessons, Lesson 1.1 with a Year 6 class and Lesson 6.1 with a Year 3 class, are analysed for similar features within their Task Orientations. Both lessons had as their point of departure incidents in class novels from which the teachers had previously read early chapters to their classes over a period of a few days. Lesson 1.1 was one of a series of lessons based on the novel *I am David*. The common experience in Lesson 1.1 was the extract where the protagonist, David, rescues a young girl from a fire. In Lesson 6.1 early chapters from the novel, *The 27th Annual African Hippopotamus Race*, were used to provide the common experience for the writing task which was concerned with the reasons why Edward, the protagonist, was entered into the race. This lesson will be analysed in greater depth.

In both Lesson 1.1 and Lesson 6.1 the text had been read and discussed with the children in previous lessons. No rereading of any part of the text occurred in the observed lessons, neither was any reconstruction of the appropriate section of text given during the Task Orientation to provide a basic framework for the development of the instructional field. The importance of such a reconstruction, which would have contributed to the knowledge base required by the children for the writing task, has been demonstrated by Gray (1998) in his analysis of a series of lessons and is a vital requirement in both Scaffolding Literacy and NALP pedagogy.

Lessons 1.1 and 6.1, each based on a section of a class novel that had been read and discussed over previous lessons, were lessons where a reconceptualisation of previous learning was necessary to ensure all children possessed the common knowledge needed to complete the required task. Although there was some evidence of reconceptualising in

the Task Orientations of these lessons, it was minimal and consequently insufficient for the needs of the children, except for the most literate.

At this stage it is interesting to note that the observers of these two lessons were impressed by the apparent rapport between the teachers and their students and also by the organisation and structure of both lessons. However, closer analysis of the transcripts revealed that more explicit teaching and further development of the instructional field was needed in this element if all children were to gain adequate access to the field of enquiry. A reconceptualisation early in the Task Orientations would have keyed the children into background knowledge of the texts onto which new knowledge for the forthcoming lesson could be grafted.

The following discussion of the early part of Task Orientations from Lesson 1.1 to and Lesson 6.1 shows the need for a reconceptualisation at this stage in lessons where class novels are used over a sequence of lessons.

4.4.1.1 Task orientation of Lesson 1.1

In Lesson 1.1 the teacher expected the students to begin writing their own rescue stories and to include references to the feelings of their own characters, after reflecting on a short episode in the novel *I am David*, where David rescues a young girl from a fire. The following extract from early in the lesson includes a brief reconceptualisation of only four words referring to the field of experience that occurred in the Task Orientation. These four words in the instructional register (shown in plain type) may have triggered memories for some students, but were far too minimal to reconstruct enough of the field to provide language models for them to use later in their writing.

The pedagogic content of the Task Orientation began with the teacher drawing the students' attention to the relevant extract in the novel by his statement:

Lesson 1.1

Task Orientation

Phase 1

T: **what I want to start looking at now**
is in that story
we saw how David rescued someone

This was followed by two short phases prior to the Task Initiation. The first of these phases consisting of four short clauses was concerned with a discussion on rescues from a previous lesson.

Lesson 1.1

Task Orientation

Phase 2

Task Initiation

T: **Now, we all know the idea** of rescue
we've been talking about
that there are always situations in life
that we hear about rescues.
We see rescues on television
that whole bit.

In this phase the regulative register (in bold type) projected three clauses in the instructional register. These may have reminded some students of the previous discussion, but were insufficient to enable recall of specific subject matter and the language resources used at that time, as well as being too general to be of much use to the forthcoming writing task.

The third phase referred to David's life in the prison camp and something he was reported to have remembered, but contained no reference to the extract concerning the rescue of the girl. There were nine clauses from this phase that were all in the instructional register as follows:

Lesson 1.1

Task Orientation

Phase 3

T: In this book, David had lived a, well... not a protected life, but a very limited life in the prison camp, didn't see much. But things he did remember like when the man escaped from the burning building wrapped in the towel, are the things... he turned back into his own life, and his experiences.... and he remembered them.

The first reference to the actual rescue came after the following partial Task Initiation that referred to only one aspect of the task:

Phase 3 (cont)

T: The question I'm going to ask you today revolves around feelings.

This was followed by a reference to the extract from the text concerning the rescue and came in the form of a literal question about the number of people involved in the rescue. The teacher phrased the question in two ways:

Phase 3 (cont)

T: **H**ow many people are concerned, involved in that rescue?
How many people are involved, or would have been affected by the rescue?

The students were then asked to supply the characters involved in the rescue, and after that the kind of feelings each would have had during and after the rescue.

As in other lessons discussed so far, this example shows that most of the information used to build the instructional field was expected to be provided by the students themselves with minimal input by the teacher. In this case there was no reading from the text, which was the source of the original information, nor was there a reconstruction of the episode to expand on

the reconceptualisation. Because the students were not provided with information relating to the instructional field, neither could they be exposed to appropriate language models that they might have internalised for later use when approaching the writing task.

4.4.1.2 Task orientation of Lesson 6.1

Another example of a lesson that needed a reconceptualisation early in the Task Orientation was Lesson 6.1. This lesson, based on the novel *The 27th Annual African Hippopotamus Race*, was taught to a combined Year 3 class of approximately sixty children. The lesson was highly structured with procedures concerning the movement and actions to be undertaken by the children made explicit. Consequently, the children knew how to conduct themselves in the classroom and what preparations they needed to make before performing the required tasks. In contrast, more detailed examination of the text of this lesson revealed that the provision of common knowledge needed before beginning the writing task, was mostly either assumed or implied and minimal references were made to language choices which could be adopted by the children when writing.

A feature of the structure of Lesson 6.1 was the inclusion of a preliminary task that was used as a preparation for the main task. The teacher used a similar technique in Lesson 6.2. As the preliminary tasks had their own micro-generic structure which followed that of the writing planning genre (Christie, 1991, 2002) and also acted as Task Orientations for the main tasks, the elements of these two lessons could be represented as $TO(TO^{TS^T})^{TS^T}$.

In Lesson 6.1 the common experience, in this case the knowledge of the first few chapters of the novel, was assumed and was not adequately reconstructed during the Task Orientation to

provide a reconceptualisation. As in Lesson 1.1, no part of the text, *The 27th Annual African Hippopotamus Race* on which the lesson was based, was reread to the children. Without an oral reconstruction or re-reading of extracts from the text children, who had not retained sufficient knowledge of the text from previous readings, would have had minimal information to take to the discussion and the writing task.

The preliminary task of Lesson 6.1, used as a preparation for the main task, served as the main part of the Task Orientation for the whole lesson. For the preliminary task the teacher had printed a planning page for each child with four questions and spaces for written answers. After completing the answers, the children were to be introduced to the main task, which was to write a letter incorporating the ideas on the planning page. Although the answers to the questions might have contributed to the building of the appropriate common knowledge, the main limitation was that the children were expected to supply these answers with no additional elaboration from the teacher.

This continuing analysis of the Task Orientation of Lesson 6.1 includes the transcript of the lesson from the beginning of the lesson to the end of the discussion relating to the first question on the planning page. The remaining questions were dealt with by the teacher in a similar fashion.

The whole of the preliminary task, acting as the major part of the Task Orientation, for the lesson can be represented as $TO(TO^{\wedge}TS^{\wedge}T)$. The Task Orientation began in the same manner as the lessons based on personal experience and like those lessons, but contrary to Christie's model, the lesson did not continue to include a development of the field of enquiry. The first

two phases were procedural and organisational in purpose, while the third and last phase referred back to a previous activity. Because of the nature of the discourse, the first three phases were almost exclusively in the regulative register with only three references in the instructional register. These references comprised of five words in the instructional register three of these being the use of the protagonist's name, Edward.

Lesson 6.1

Task Orientation

Phase 1

T: **.....we just want
you to be your normal sensible selves.
And, we're going to be doing some fun work this morning on Edward.**

In Phase 1 having regulated the behaviour of the children the teacher drew their attention towards Edward, the protagonist, as the main focus of the lesson. Included in this statement was the suggestion of the co-operative nature of the task indicated by the linguistic choice, 'And *we're* going....', a device described by Christie (1991) and Gray (1998) and often used by the teacher of Lesson 6.1 when she began focusing on the activities within the lesson, but dispensed with when she switched back to the regulative register to organise the children as in Phase 2 below.

Lesson 6.1

Task Orientation

Phase 2

T: **Ok now, I want, the pencil sharpener is out of operation,
so please don't try to come and find a pencil sharpener,
and please avoid walking in that area.
If you need to go to your trays, walk around.
Ok, I want you all now to come and sit down on the floor facing the easel.
And, lots of people who are over in that far area,
I want you to think about where you are,
because I think here is a more sensible place,
you're going to see more.
Emma, can you come right here please.
I want you to be sitting on your bottoms.**

The pedagogical discourse of the second phase, all in the regulative register, accords with Christie's observation (Christie, 1991) that at the beginning of each element of the writing planning genre the regulative register takes precedence over the instructional register, as it is at this point that the teacher directs the activity and the children's behaviour. In this phase the teacher gave some general rules concerning the movement of the children followed by instructions organising where they should sit.

In the third and last phase of the Task Orientation the teacher indicated she intended the lesson to take a different direction by changing her voice to a softer more confidential tone as she referred back to an earlier activity undertaken by the children in her own class. The change from one phase to another was documented by Gray (1998) who noted linguistic markers signalled a change of phase, such as that in Phase 2 above where the teacher began her directions in the regulative register with, 'Ok now...' or 'so please...'.

The change of tone used by the teacher in Phase 3 acted in a similar way to the use of specific linguistic markers by emphasising what Gray refers to as the 'staging' of the lesson and served to refocus the children's attention on to the class activity. For this activity they had gone outside and performed exercises Edward might have used in his training program. The discourse relating to the training program 'Edward's training program', provided the only few words within this phase which were in the instructional register.

Lesson 6.1

Task Orientation

Phase 3

Sub Task Orientation

T: **We just went outside then 3K
and did a bit of a training program,** Edward's training program.

**And I know you've got some of it for your homework as well.
Now, we're going to be looking at today about Edward.**

Immediately after Phase 3 the teacher moved into the Sub-Task Specification (Phase 4) to explain what she expected the children to do with the planning page and after that she returned to the Task Orientation in Phase 5 – (labelled Sub-Task Re-orientation)

The following Task Initiation for the preliminary task began with an introduction of the planning page and its purpose. In Phase 4 the regulative register was foregrounded with a brief projection into the instructional register as the teacher referred to the instructional field to explain the task. Then in Phase 5 she asked a question to promote recall of the general field which was the reference to the race as shown below.

Lesson 6.1

Task Orientation

Phase 4

Sub-Task Initiation

T: **And you've got a special task.
I've actually put this on your desk,
and it's got...
when you go back
you'll have a look.
This is a planning page,
and you're going to be Edward
writing to a friend or a cousin about this race
that you've been entered.**

Here the activity was introduced as ‘a special task’, but even though the children were shown and told of the existence of a ‘planning page’ no explanation for its purpose was given. As the reference to the main task of writing a letter about the race followed immediately, some children later tried to write their letters on the planning page. This suggests that they were confused by the implicit nature of the instructions and confirmed the need for more explicit information. A more direct and explicit outline of the structure of the lesson and the expected task has been built into the Scaffolding Literacy pedagogy to avoid, as much as is possible,

any later confusion. This information is given in the Task Initiation, early in the writing lesson once the children have been settled, with further details given at the appropriate time, usually within the Task Specification element.

Lesson 6.1

Task Orientation

Phase 5

Sub-Task Re-orientation

- T: **Tim, what's the race**
that you've been entered into?
- C: The 27th annual African hippopotamus race.
- T: **Fantastic for remembering** that whole title,
it took me ages to remember it.

With the reference to the race in Phase 5 the instructional field was activated at a minimal level. The teacher then staged the entry into Phase 6 with the continuative 'Now' and drew attention to her 'ideas', but before explaining these she returned to the regulative register to give detailed instructions on procedure and movement in the classroom.

Lesson 6.1

Task Orientation

Phase 6

Sub-Task Specification

- T: **Now, we've got,**
I've got some ideas.
So when I say to you,
all go back to your places,
you'll be working in pairs
and talking about some of these ideas,
but you'll, each of you will actually write down on your sheet, the information.
You'll be staying in your same places,
unless I move you because somebody is away.
Just your normal groups, the person next to you,
just like we've done before
when we did the work about winter and some other work.

Following Phase 6 the instructional register emerged again in Phase 7 projected by the regulative register. Here the instructional and regulative registers were used in conjunction with each other with some elementary convergence of the registers, the point where effective teaching negotiation takes place, as is shown in this part of Phase 7:

Lesson 6.1

Task Orientation

Phase 7

- T: **The first one says:**
How have you been entered in the race
and why?
Now remember,
you are Edward.
Ok, why have you been entered in the race?
Who can remember that one?
Chrissie?
- C: Cause he was a good swimmer.
- T: Good swimmer, **right**

Greater convergence would have occurred if the teacher had expanded on children's answers with reference to further details from the text. This would also have given her the opportunity to model language structures in the instructional register. The notion of revisiting the text to reframe and continue to build common knowledge is seen as essential to the success of the Scaffolding Literacy pedagogy. As has been shown in Chapter 1 research by Rothery (1994) recommends a period of deconstruction before moving on to joint construction in the teaching of writing. Also the explicit teaching needed before children are asked to write, during the period of deconstruction, should provide them not only with a deep understanding of the subject matter, but also an ability to engage with the language relating to the instructional field (Gray, 1998). In Lesson 6.1 this engagement could have been promoted by the teacher in the Task Orientation which is where Christie expects the development of the instructional field to occur.

If working with the Scaffolding Literacy pedagogy the teacher would use the process of preformulation to set up the background knowledge to a question that is then put to the class. Preformulation may well include reading or rephrasing from the text. Having received and accepted an answer in order to make it available to all students, the teacher would then use the process of reconceptualisation to expand and elaborate on the answer, and in doing so develop

more sophisticated knowledge of the field. In following this line of questioning the understandings held by a few children can be reiterated and confirmed for others, giving all the opportunity to hear information and ideas expressed in appropriate language which could be internalised and later used by students in their writing. When this type of questioning is used there is a marked increase in the use of the instructional register and also convergence with the regulative register.

In Lesson 6.1 up to Phase 6 most of the instructional register involved the teacher reading and re-stating the questions on her 'planning sheet'. There was no development beyond the focus of the questions and no reference to the language of the text. At no stage in this lesson did the teacher return to re-read or quote from the text to confirm or elaborate a question or answer. The restricted use of the instructional register at this stage showed that there was very little development of the instructional field which continued on into Phase 7 as the following discussion reveals.

The extract below is from the first part of Phase 7 and includes dialogue relating to the first question on the planning sheet. Similar patterns of dialogue were repeated for the remaining questions that have not been documented in this discussion. In the following extract, both the regulative and the instructional registers were represented, with some convergence of the two registers beginning to occur.

An initial convergence of the two registers began as the teacher read the question and added her comment:

T: **Now remember you are Edward,**

before repeating part of the question:

T: **Ok, why** have you been entered in the race?

But because she focused only on the provision of ‘ideas’ relating to each question, rather than on the form and language needed for the required answer, the teacher did not expect to elaborate on the answers given by the children nor explore the language which could be used to express those ideas. Where there is no elaboration or reconceptualisation there will be no continuing productive convergence of the registers and the pattern of questioning becomes one of teacher question, reply, teacher response as seen below,

Lesson 6.1

Task Orientation

Phase 7

- T: **Now, we'll go over, and we'll get** some ideas **first.**
The first one says:
How have you been entered in the race and why?
Now remember, you are Edward.
Ok, why have you been entered in the race?
Who can remember that one?
Chrissie?
- C: Cause he was a good swimmer.
- T: Good swimmer, **right.**
Big clear voices to me.
Nick.
- C: Because his grand father thought he was um, very good at, swimming.
- T: **That's right.**
Why else do you think he might have been entered into the race?
- T: **Chris?**
- C: Because his grandfather was in the race and he wanted him to win it.

Following this last response the teacher provided a short, but effective elaboration. She began this by using information from the last child’s answer to formulate a new question about the race Edward’s grandfather had entered.

Lesson 6.1

Task Orientation

Phase 7 (cont)

- T: **Yes, can you remember which race his grandfather entered?
Catherine?**
- C: The fourth.
- O: A lot of hands went up then. Our target child's hand didn't go up.
- T: The fourth, a long time ago.

Catherine's one word answer was accepted, repeated and expanded with the elaboration 'a long time ago.' At the same time, the observer (myself) noted the reaction of the children in the class and noted that the target child was one of the few who had not raised his hand to answer the last question. To include those other few children, after providing her short elaboration, the teacher could have reframed the information gathered up to this point into a form which would have created understandings necessary for the children to answer the first question on the planning page. In doing this, the teacher would also have clarified for the other children Catherine's earlier response:

- C: Because his grandfather was in the race and he wanted him to win it.

A reframing and elaboration, or reconceptualisation, would have developed the common knowledge of all the children in the class, including the target child. It would also have provided a context and language model for children who may not have been engaging with the discourse. With common knowledge provided in context, all children in the class would have had a basis to initiate responses of their own.

However, instead of a reconceptualisation the teacher chose to ask a quantitative question, which had little bearing on the final answer the children were expected to give to the first question and provided no suitable language models. The exchange below finished the discussion of the first question on the planning sheet:

Lesson 6.1

Task Orientation

Phase 7 (cont)

- T: The fourth, a long time ago.
How many then, if this is the 27th,
and his grandfather entered the fourth,
how many races before?
Ben?
- C: 23.
- T: **That's right, ok.**

In Lessons like 6.1 and 6.2 which both include a preliminary task the expectation would be that the purpose of the preliminary task would be to provide support for the main task. The preliminary task could then act as the Task Orientation for the main task and include effective building of the instructional field. For this to occur common knowledge of the texts on which the lessons were based need to be developed and focused in a particular way, so that aspects of the language used in discussion can later be used by children in the writing task. If common knowledge is to be established, the instructional register that carries the context and meaning of the negotiated knowledge should predominate. The limited use of the instructional field in Lessons 6.1 and 6.2, and the absence of effective convergence of the regulative and instructional registers, shows how much the development of common knowledge was restricted.

4.4.1.3 Provision of common knowledge in Lesson 6.4

Of the twenty writing lessons analysed for this study, the lesson that was most successful in providing common knowledge within the Task Orientation, was Lesson 6.4. The teacher who gave this lesson was also the teacher of Lesson 6.1. These two lessons have been chosen for analysis because they include aspects of modelling by the teacher and show a clear level of engagement between teacher and students.

The following discussion shows that there were two significant factors that emerged in the analysis of the Task Orientation of this lesson:

1. a greater and more effective use of the instructional register to build common knowledge.
2. the increased convergence of the regulative and the instructional registers which Christie (1980, 2002) identified as the time when learning takes place.

Neither of these factors was found to be a major feature in the previously discussed lessons.

Analysis of the Task Orientation of Lesson 6.4, for use of the instructional and regulative registers, showed a greater use of the instructional register within the Task Orientation than in the Task Orientations of lessons previously analysed. This indicated a more extensive provision of common knowledge within that element. Although the length of the Task Orientation was increased by the inclusion of the reading of two quite short stories, this element was also expanded by the deconstruction and discussion of the stories in a way that was considerably more extensive than in any of the other lessons.

4.4.1.4 Analysis of the task orientation of Lesson 6.4

As in most of the other lessons in this study the first phase of the lesson was all in the regulative register as the teacher settled the children and organised their behaviour. She concluded this phase by asking them to face towards her as, ‘It’s listening time.’

Lesson 6.4 Task Orientation Phase 1

**T: (clapping) That's it please.
Right, I want you all now to sit still and listen.
Mark, are you going to be in the right place for listening?
Catherine, take your cap off please.
Ok. Is this ready to go? Yep.
Ok, turn. Let's look this way now please.**

Side talking to end.
Turn and face me, it's listening time.

The second phase was the Task Initiation. Even in this early part of the Task Orientation, the instructional register can be seen to be more dominant than in previous lessons. In Phase 2 the regulative register leads the children towards the subject of negotiation while the instructional register increases their knowledge of the field of enquiry. The interweaving of the two registers indicates convergence. This occurred, because in this phase of the lesson the teacher gave a brief reconceptualisation of past lessons and consequently re-established a context for the children, while simultaneously providing language models they might use in discussion or in their own texts,

Lesson 6.4
Task Orientation
Phase 2
Task Initiation

T: **We've been talking about what's special about Canberra recently, and we've been looking at** our early inhabitants, which are the, which were the aboriginal population.
Now of course, the aborigines used to tell these wonderful stories about their animals from the Dreamtime.
And you've done a couple of work sheets about these animals.

In Phase 3 below the teacher then asked the children to name the animals that had featured on the worksheets. This line of questioning would have helped key the children back into the general context of Australian animals and their traditional links with aboriginal peoples.

Lesson 6.4
Task Orientation
Phase 2 (cont)

T: **Who can tell me what animals they are? Sagen?**
C: Kangaroo.
T: **Yes**, another one.
C: Emu.

- T: **Right.**
Ah, what other animals do you know as well were involved? **Ben.**
- C: (inaudible)
- T: **Yes.**
- C: Wallaby.
- T: Wallaby. **Aaron.**

Having established a general context, the teacher returned to use of the regulative register to focus the children on listening to the stories she intended reading. The two sections of Phase 3 below illustrate the increasing convergence of the two registers. With the regulative register predominant in the first section and only two words in the instructional register, the development in the second section shows the two registers interweaving with the instructional discourse beginning to emerge more fully:

Lesson 6.4

Task Orientation

Phase 3

- T: **Ok, now, I am going to read** two stories.
Now, I want you to listen carefully.
You're all fairly puffed
so it's a good time to just listen.

At this point the teacher gave the children two factors she wanted them to listen for, causing the registers to converge again:

Phase 3 cont.

- T: **Now, I want you to listen to**
the animals that are involved,
so listen for that.
I want you to listen to any special words
that are used.

The teacher's instructions at this stage, although apparently non-specific, were part of a gradual process of drawing the children's attention towards a story they had heard before. Firstly, the instruction 'to listen for any special words' was enough to alert the children to think about the language of the text that they might later use in their own writing. More specific discussion of the language was developed later in the lesson.

Secondly, in reminding the children that they had heard this story when they had worked on a 'read and retell' completed 'in about first term' and then stating the title of the story the teacher again provided a general context. This enabled the children to focus quickly on the animal involved and to use their memory of the first story to expand their knowledge of the context, re-establishing aspects of common knowledge formed earlier in the year:

Phase 3 (cont)

T: **Now you've read this one before way back in I think in about first term, you did a read and retell. Now this one's called *Why the Kangaroo Hops*.**
(reading) Long long ago in the Dreamtime the kangaroo walked on his four legs like other animals. etc.

Having read the story, the teacher immediately began Phase 4 by using the regulative register to focus the children's attention on a sheet of butcher's paper attached to an easel and to direct their behaviour, before beginning the instructional pedagogy. In the segment below she introduced information concerning generic structure and thus provided important common knowledge that could be restated later in the Task Specification when the children were shown *how* to write:

Lesson 6.4

Task Orientation

Phase 4

T: **Ok, look at this sheet here.
And I've got...
Luke, this way please.
Please concentrate over here now -**

On the paper was an outline of the three stages of narrative generic structure with single word expansions:

Beginning
Setting
Middle (conflict)

Ending (conclusion)

In Phase 4 of the Task Orientation convergence of the two registers emerged again. As the phase developed and more common knowledge was established, the role of the instructional register gradually increased.

In this phase the teacher analysed the story with the children using the model of generic structure of narrative text which she had prepared on the easel. The model provided an explicit framework for the analysis, while the analysis itself allowed the teacher to further establish the provision of common knowledge relating to the meaning of the story. At the same time the teacher was able to discuss some of the language used to convey that meaning.

The first section was concerned with the reading and recognition of the words on the paper. To show how these words dominated the instructional register they have been printed in italics:

Lesson 6.4

Task Orientation

Phase 4 cont.

- T: *Beginning and I've got like the setting.*
I've got the *middle*.
Who can read this word? **Mark**.
- C: **Me?**
- T: **Yes, can you tell me**
what a conflict means?
- C: (pause)
- T: **Tara Brannon?**
- C: Something like a battle between good and evil.
- T: **Yes, good. Well done.**
And here Hayley Grule, ending.
Can you read this one **Adnan?**
It's another meaning for *ending*.
I've just put a larger word.
- C: (inaudible)
- T: **That's it, good. Very close.**
You got the *beginning right*

and you got the *ending* right.

You read it to me Hayden.

C: *Conclusion.*

T: **Yes, it's** another word for *ending* **isn't it?**

It's a bit more grown up now.

During this exchange the teacher pointed to the words on the paper as she read them. There were two brief expansions; one where a child explained what was meant by 'conflict', and another where the teacher equated 'conclusion' with 'ending'. The children, especially those with literacy difficulties, might have benefited by the teacher confirming or slightly expanding on the meaning of 'conflict'. There was always the possibility that someone in the class did not hear Tara's answer, or did not fully understand how it related to the model on the paper. Similarly, a brief explanation of 'setting' could have provided a preformulation which would then have been available to be developed as common knowledge in the following segment of this phase when the term was used again.

In the next phase of the lesson, Phase 5, shown below, the teacher led the children through the three stages outlined on the butcher's paper matching the stages with key phrases from the story she had just read. Two important factors emerged from this phase. Firstly, some of the specific information given was later used by the target child, who had been referred to the SCC for support with literacy skills, in his written product. Secondly, in this phase the regulative and instructional registers continued to converge with the instructional register becoming more dominant. It was at this stage that the children's participation began to increase, showing that they were gradually taking on more of the language and understandings of common knowledge that had been built through increased classroom interaction.

As before the words on the easel have been written in italics:

Lesson 6.4

Task Orientation

Phase 5

- T: **Who can remember** in this story
what *the beginning* was?
What was *the beginning* Luke?
- C: Long long ago.
- T: **Right.**
Tell me
what other word was right at *the beginning*
with the opening sentence, **Ben?**
- C: Long, long ago in the dreamtime.
- T: **Good.** (writes –Long long ago in the dreamtime)
I'll read some more
and you'll see that
there's very very similar *beginnings*....
There was a kangaroo.
Remember the story was about the kangaroo.
Why the Kangaroo Hops
so you've got to tell your reader,
or these people used to tell the stories.
They used to tell the story about the animal.
And he used to just walk on four legs, just like other animals.
So that's *the beginning*.
You're *setting* the scene.

In this segment the teacher's focus was concerned with the beginning of the story, the language used to begin the initial sentence and the introduction of the central character. Her use of 'beginning' throughout this part of the phase referred back to her earlier explanation, expanding on common knowledge that had been previously established. In writing the theme of the first sentence, 'Long long ago in the dreamtime,' next to where she had written 'Beginning' the teacher provided the children with an important language model.

Her final comment, 'You're setting the scene,' referred back to the generic model on the paper. For some children this comment needed further explanation especially as there may have been some confusion over the use of 'setting' which appeared as a noun on the paper, but was used here as part of a verbal group. The same statement, 'you're setting the scene',

was reiterated again in the following segment. In this case the teacher seemed to be referring to the orientation of the story, which includes what she labels as ‘the beginning’ and includes ‘the setting’:

Lesson 6.4

Task Orientation

Phase 5 cont.

- T: **Where** did this kangaroo live, **Aaron?**
- C: Bush.
- T: **Good that's** one word.
They used another bush, ah, another word
which means low flat area, **Tom?**
- C: Plains.
- T: **Yes that's right.**
Different from the aeroplanes.
Right the P-L-A-I-N-S (writes – plains).
Just sit on a chair Shianne, ok.
Then what happens?
So you're setting the scene.
This, long, long ago in the Dreamtime,
there was this kangaroo
who walked on all four legs like other animals
and where he lived.

Here the teacher defined the word ‘plains’ and wrote it on the paper for the children to see and have available during the writing task. She then returned to the concept of ‘setting the scene’ by repeating the orientation of the story, but finishing with ‘where he lived’ a phrase which she emphasised slightly as the children were expected to link it back to ‘the plains’ and fill the gap for themselves.

In comparison to other lessons discussed in this study, this brief reference to what should be included in the orientation of the story and the focus on the language the author used, provided valuable information and language models for the children to use when writing. As will be shown later, the full impact of the common knowledge established by the teacher during this Task Orientation was reflected in the improved quality of the written work produced by the target child who had been identified as having literacy difficulties.

In the following segment discussion of the complication occurred. By this stage it can be seen that the instructional register increased in dominance as the children contributed to the retelling, sharing common knowledge with the teacher. At the same time the teacher expanded the instructional register by equating ‘the middle part’ with ‘what happened’:

Lesson 6.4

Task Orientation

Phase 5 cont.

- T: **Ok, what** happened?
What was the middle part?
What happened to him? **Chrissie.**
- C: A fire started.
- T: **Right, right.**
So something happened.
It's like a happening.
Fire started.
What happened **when** this fire started, **Jayde?**
- C: (inaudible)
- T: **Right, and then what** did he have to do?
- C: (inaudible)
- T: Leap over it.

Although two of the children’s answers were inaudible, the time taken for their answers indicates that they were using phrases rather than the single word answers that were used more frequently at the beginning of this phase.

Likewise, the child who contributed to the discussion of the ‘ending’ gave an extended answer which the teacher confirmed by paraphrasing the child’s answer:

Phase 5 cont.

- T: **Then what** could be the ending of this story?
Why the Kangaroo Hops was the name of it.
Why Catherine?
- C: That he tried to walk on four legs
but he couldn't
so he still hopped.
- T: **Right** so his, so his four legs....
his legs were.... because of the fire,

he then had to hop.
Let's look at this one.

The deconstruction of the story, as shown above, was carefully orchestrated to show the children how the narrative followed the generic structure outlined on the paper on the easel. The process of deconstruction was led by the teacher questioning and prompting the children who responded by using reconceptualisations drawn from common knowledge that had been established earlier in the Task Orientation. The teacher's prompts were focused on each stage of the narrative structure outlined on the easel. In taking the children through the story in this way she was able to demonstrate to them how the stages of the story related to the model of narrative structure she had provided for them.

Phase 5 of the Task Orientation of Lesson 6.4 provides a clear example of convergence of the regulative and instructional registers. The convergence of the registers demonstrates how the teacher initiated the use of common knowledge, established during earlier phases of the Task Orientation, to build a further layer of common knowledge about narrative structure.

Following the discussion above which was based on the story *Why the Kangaroo Hops*, the teacher of Lesson 6.4 turned to a similar story, *How the Kangaroo Got his Tail*, which she read to the children to further establish the pattern of the generic structure of such stories.

During the reading she used the regulative register to foreground stages of the text.

Consequently, there was again convergence of the regulative and the instructional registers, although this time the common knowledge was not concerned with the facts of the story, but with the structure of the narrative.

The transcript below includes the orientation of the second story. It provides a good example of what happens when regulative and instructional registers converge and shows that when this happens it is more possible to produce explicit understandings. The words on the easel, which had been left in front of the children, have been written in italics:

Lesson 6.4

Task Orientation

Phase 6

T: **Let's look at** this one.
(reading) *How the Kangaroo got his Tail.*
Let's see if it's got a fairly similar *beginning*.
Long ago in the Dreamtime the kangaroo had no tail.
So has it got *the setting*, long ago in the dreamtime?
Related to the title,
the kangaroo had no tail.
This is a bit different.
Setting the scene though at the beginning.
He and his wife and six children lived together in their camp
and although none of them had tails they were all very happy.
Setting the scene.

The teacher began this interaction by using the regulative register, ‘**Let's look...**’ to elicit the cooperation of the children. At the same time she showed them the book of the story and then read the title. Her use of ‘**Let's see ...**’ again prepared the children to cooperate and listen for what followed. It was here that the two registers began to converge. Her choice of ‘if it's got a fairly similar *beginning*’ suggested that the beginning was most probably very like that of the first story, implicitly indicating the pattern of language the children should expect. Her subsequent reading of the first sentence, ‘Long ago in the dreamtime...’ would have confirmed expectations for most children and would have given a model example of how to begin the first sentence for those who may have been unsure of what to expect.

Having read the first sentence the teacher then asked a rhetorical question where she equated the setting with ‘Long long ago in the dreamtime’.

T: Long ago in the dreamtime the kangaroo had no tail.
So has it got the setting, long ago in the Dreamtime?

Again the two registers converged as the pedagogy led the children into reasonably explicit information concerning aspects of generic structure which had been reconceptualised from earlier discussion,

With continued convergence of the two registers the teacher next reminded the children that the second half of the first sentence related back to the title:

T: **Related to** the title,
the kangaroo had no tail.

In this way she explained the functions of both halves of this sentence and followed each explanation with a repetition of the sections of text relating to her comments.

She continued by indicating a difference within the next phase of the orientations of the two stories by stating:

T: This is a **bit different**.

Then to show links to the structure of the first story she referred to ‘*Setting the scene **though at the beginning***’ and gave the example from the text. Afterwards she confirmed this sentence was ‘*Setting the scene.*’:

T: *Setting the scene **though at the beginning.***
He and his wife and six children lived together in their camp
and although none of them had tails they were all very happy.
Setting the scene.

After stating the structural components of the orientation of the second story and giving examples the teacher read the complication and resolution, but she did not use the terms ‘complication’ or ‘resolution’. Having finished reading the story she returned to discussion of the problem within it by asking the children to identify the conflict:

Lesson 6.4

Task Orientation

Phase 6 cont.

- T: **In this story,**
what was the conflict?
What was the sort of happening that occurred? **Kesha.**
- O: (2350) About five hands are up.
- C: Um (inaudible)
- T: **That's right. Sagen?**
- C: (inaudible)
- T: **A bit louder please.**
- C: (inaudible)
- T: **Right.**
Why did he pull the kangaroo's bottom? **Shianne?**
- C: Because he wanted two of his children.
- T: **That's right.**
So, you've got to think up.
You've got to think of
why this happened.

Once the children had explained ‘the conflict’ to the teacher’s satisfaction her questioning turned and focused on the reason for the conflict between the characters. This indicated, without being made explicit, that the children should similarly give a reason for the conflict in their own stories.

In the transcripts, given above, of the discussion about *How the Kangaroo Got his Tail*, it can be seen that when the teacher referred to the elements of generic structure she repeated the language choices she had used earlier in the lesson when talking about the first story. Most of the key words, written in italics in the transcript, were still displayed on the easel. In using the same language choices she had deployed when discussing the first story, the teacher used a

reconceptualisation strategy. There were two reasons for doing this; firstly to foreshadow the stages of the second narrative and secondly to show how the stages of the second story compared with those of the first story. All this information was given to the children so that it was available for them to refer to when writing their own stories.

In the process of reconceptualisation terms such as ‘beginning’ and ‘setting’, which in early discussion were part of the regulative register, at this stage became part of the instructional content. These terms at this point were projected by the regulative register and carried information given by the teacher earlier in the lesson to explain the structure of the stories. For this reason these terms have been included in the instructional register.

The teacher concluded her more detailed discussion of these two stories by a comment on their length:

Lesson 6.4

Task Orientation

T: **Now are** these stories very long?

Cn: **No.**

T: **No** they're not.

They're not great big lengthy stories.

She then summarised the stages within the genre. To do this she began by referring to the language used in the first sentences:

T: **But as you can see**
you've got a beginning
which starts off something like *Long, long ago in the dreamtime.*

And continued by hypothesising what the children might write if using a different animal. She did this using the specific example of a snake.

The following summary, given by the teacher, of the next stages of writing for this genre, clearly shows the convergence of the two registers where learning takes place. In this phase the teacher moved into discussion that typically would be found in the Task Specification rather than the Task Orientation. During the discussion she combined a model example of a story with directions to the children on what to include in their own writing. Her directions included language choices such as ‘beginning’, ‘something happens’, ‘a conflict’, terms that by this stage would have become common knowledge. Once such common knowledge was established it provided a base to which the children could link and then take on further information.

Lesson 6.4

Task Orientation

T: **Maybe if you were writing about** a snake.
Why a snake hisses.
There was a snake
that **maybe** used to make a sound like another animal.
Ok, tell me where it lived.
Then something happens.
A conflict **Shian, to change this** beginning part.
And at the end it's all related back to the title.

In the above extract another animal was introduced. Here, the snake was used to illustrate the teacher’s reconceptualisation of the structure of the story. The regulative register shows how she led the children through the stages of the structure she expected them to use in their own writing. The instructional register indicates what they should write about and illustrates the sequence outlined in the regulative register.

The most explicit part of this model is in the orientation where model sentences were given. However, because the teacher’s focus was to show the children the general structure of such stories, her comments relating to the complication and resolution were

less specific. Inherent in this illustration was the suggestion that the children should be thinking of another animal for their own story:

T: **Maybe if you were writing about...**

For this reason the complication regarding the snake appeared less relevant.

In the final phase of the Task Orientation the teacher showed the children a number of other similar books. As she did so she made a general comment about a few of the stories and mentioned the quality of the illustrations. Then, as shown below, she referred to the language used in the first sentences and animals, 'that could be involved in your story':

Lesson 6.4

Task Orientation

T: **But again, I'm just reading** the opening sentence **and it's got** 'Long ago in the Dreamtime there lived a woman called Quork-Quork.' **This one's** a little bit different.
But here's some more of these animals that could be involved in your story. Blue tongue lizard and the taipan, the snake.
This one, 'Long ago.'
Just the opening word.
Long ago the boy who became a white cockatoo.

And a little later:

T: In the Dreamtime **this one is**.
In the Dreamtime.
Long ago. The long ago back in the Dreamtime.

The different beginnings that the teacher read may have caused some confusion as it prompted one of the children to volunteer, 'Once upon a time' as a beginning. The teacher's immediate reaction was:

T: **No** it's not once upon a time.

This comment was taken up by another child who provided the model:

C: **No**, once there was.

The teacher acknowledged this and then gave her explanation:

T: **Yes**, once there was.
Once upon a time belongs to the fairy tales, **ok**.
This **is completely different**.

From this point she began the Task Specification.

Summary

Exploration of the Task Orientations of the writing lessons in this study has revealed differences in the provision of common experience between the experienced-based lessons and the text-based lessons. In the experienced-based lessons, whether the experience was personal or imagined, there was little development of the instructional register indicating a lack of exploration of the subject matter relating to the topic of the lesson. Subsequently, when the children came to approach the task, they needed to rely on their own resources in order to know what to write about. In addition, they also needed to use their own resources to supply the language with which to express any ideas they might have. This indicates the dual importance of the role of common experience as realised by the instructional register in writing lessons; because effective discussion of the topic, where the instructional register in conjunction with the regulative register gradually builds common knowledge, is also the place where children are exposed to language they need to be aware of when writing their own texts.

The text-based lessons, especially those using narrative texts, were found to provide a greater exposure to the common experience. Although much of that knowledge came from readings from the text, which in some cases had happened in previous lessons, there was also more likely to have been some discussion, however brief, that related to the texts. Where the Task Orientation included readings from the primary text, students had a greater opportunity of being exposed to some aspects of the instructional field. However, without further discussion and scaffolding from the teacher, students who were not familiar with the language of the written text would have been at a disadvantage. Despite this opportunity, in the majority of text-based lessons the analysis has shown there was little productive development of the instructional field to give children access to resources they could use in their writing.

The most successful lesson, Lesson 6.4, which did include development of the instructional field, also built common knowledge concerning generic structure and language choices associated with the genre. Where the discourse relating to the subject matter gave students exposure to the language, structure and deeper meanings of text they had access to a resource they could use both in their own discussion and in their eventual written work. Although only one lesson paid adequate attention to the form of generic structure, other narrative based lessons may have resulted in some students producing more successful writing because of an instinctive knowledge of narrative genre which is so commonly part of our culture. However, the students with literacy difficulties or insecurities would have been less likely to access this resource unaided.

In the more successful Task Orientations, patterns were found showing convergence of the two registers with the regulative register, inducting the children into knowledge found in the instructional register which gradually began to dominate the discourse. In addition, evidence

of some reconceptualisation was found, although this could have been developed further to promote and confirm valuable common knowledge. For the building of common knowledge to be more successful in all Task Orientations use of the questioning strategies, preformulation and reconceptualisation as described in Chapter 2, section 3.2, would enable all participants to be exposed to information relating to the lesson topic and the language associated that information.

In the next chapter I analyse the Task Specifications of the lessons in the search for productive and explicit discourse which shows children *how* to construct their own written texts.

Chapter 5: Task Specifications of Writing Lessons

Introduction

This chapter will explore the pedagogic discourse from the Task Specification element of the ‘writing planning genre’. The derivation of the name of the genre is of particular interest. Named by Christie after her observation of many lessons where children were learning to write, (Christie, 1985, 1989 and 1991) ‘writing planning genre’ suggests that conscious planning for writing was a feature of these lessons. The ‘planning’ for a writing task and the degree to which this is made explicit is the main concern of this chapter.

The Task Specification is the second in the sequence of the three minimal elements that Christie proposed forms the schematic structure of a framework for the writing planning genre. At this point it should be noted that this generic model arose from analysis of writing lessons where one of the teaching goals was to complete an educational activity within the time frame of a single lesson. Therefore, time constraints have a greater significance in these writing lessons than might be expected over the number of lessons required within a macrogenre.

In writing lessons the main function of the Task Specification is to reframe discussion of the field of enquiry that has occurred in the Task Orientation in terms of the particular requirements of the writing task. The field of enquiry includes common knowledge of the topic, built through understandings of relevant language, as well as some preliminary knowledge of genre through discussion that includes organisational structure. In the Task Specification the requirements of the writing task would necessitate a further refinement of

knowledge of the particular genre together with discussion of suitable written language choices. Therefore, it should be at this stage of the writing lesson that students are provided with the knowledge of *how* the written text should be constructed within a framework of a particular genre.

Ideally, as Gray (1998) reported in his study, earlier negotiation in the Task Orientation should include the teacher using explicit models of language choices for all children to hear and reiterate when they are later encouraged to offer what they ‘remember’, thus providing a valuable language resource for the Task Specification. This is the ‘collective remembering’ Edwards and Mercer (1989:103) spoke of as a process that involves, ‘developing a shared vocabulary for experience and understanding, and a jointly held version of events in the classroom’ in this way ‘teachers and pupils construct together a framework of educational knowledge,’ (see also Chapter 2, section 4.2). With the use of a questioning technique that includes preformulation and reconceptualisation (see Chapter 2, section 3.2 and Chapter 4, section 4.1.2) and incorporates language models suitable for the chosen genre, children can learn to appropriate more sophisticated language choices which can be further refined and made appropriate for the written task.

The process of reframing and recontextualising common knowledge in the Task Specification of the lessons Gray studied, fits with Bernstein’s theory of recontextualisation. Bernstein proposed that a function of pedagogic discourse is to access other, usually academic, discourses from outside the school situation. In order to bring this knowledge into the culture of the classroom and make it available to students a particular pedagogic discourse is required involving both a regulative and instructional discourse (Bernstein, 1986). As the two discourses interact the regulative clarifies and enhances the instructional. It is at this point that

the regulative register can be seen to lead the direction of the pedagogy and ‘convergence’ occurs with learning becoming more possible (Christie, 1991, 2000, 2002). This process, which supports the establishment of common knowledge at the end of the Task Orientation, is essential in the Task Specification where recontextualisation of common knowledge via negotiation provides an understanding of how to write the particular required text.

The negotiation process at the Task Specification stage of the lesson is expected to include the children being shown:

1. the form their writing should take with reference to a generic structure, and
2. the language choices appropriate for the chosen genre and the particular topic.

Therefore, the instructional register, when it appears in the Task Specification, would be expected to include references that teach about how to write for the specific task, providing a recontextualisation of shared knowledge specific to the task at hand.

Having developed a body of knowledge in the Task Orientation including a shared vocabulary of the experience; through a group negotiation process (Bourne, 2003) of ‘collective remembering’ (Edwards and Mercer, 1989) in the Task Specification, teacher and students together can construct a framework appropriate for the writing task. During this process children need to be shown the structural features of the genre required and how they should manipulate language to fit with that genre. The broad contextual framework developed for the Disadvantaged Schools Program comprising four variables is particularly applicable for assisting teachers and students come to terms with the required genre, knowledge of the field

of study, adoption of a suitable relationship between writer and reader and a command of the appropriate written language (Macken-Horarik, 2002).

For these four variables of the writing context to operate successfully with all children in a classroom a supportive pedagogy is required. A curriculum cycle first published by Callaghan and Rothery (1988) (cited in Macken-Horarik, 2002) proposed a cyclical approach to literacy that promoted explicit teaching of generic models with an emphasis on teaching the structure of text and important language features. Strategies which support the curriculum cycle and have proved successful when incorporated into the pedagogy of writing lessons include, modelling with a level of deconstruction, followed by a joint negotiated construction and later by independent construction (Gray, 1998; Hammond, 2001; Macken-Horarik, 2002).

A model with a theoretical base linked to the work of Vygotsky and Bernstein that focuses on negotiated learning and explicit teaching of the complexities of literate written language within a supportive sequence was developed at the Schools and Community Centre (Gray, Cowey and Axford, 2003). The model, a teaching sequence, which is now also the basis for the National Accelerated Literacy Program, has an emphasis on the notion of scaffolding learning, allowing students with the initial support of the teacher to work at a level beyond what appears to be their individual capabilities. Strategies for the teaching of writing which have proved successful in this and other programs include, the deconstruction of a model text featuring academic/literate discourse, a negotiated joint construction incorporating features of the model text and an emphasis on appropriate language choices. Therefore, in the following analyses of Task Specifications of lessons in this study particular attention will be paid to the inclusion or exclusion of strategies like these which support children's production of a new written text.

During the process of renegotiation and reframing in the Task Specification, involving participation by both children and teacher, convergence of the two registers can be expected to take place. Convergence, at this stage of the writing lesson, was noticed by Christie in the lessons she studied, although she described it as ‘brief and rudimentary’ (Christie, 1991:213). The explanation she gave for the brevity and quality of the convergence was that teachers feel ‘least comfortable in guiding talk’ as they bring children closer to the writing task. As will be shown in the following discussion, very few of the lessons in this study contained any talk which might have helped children know how they should frame and select appropriate language in their written products to fulfil the expectations of their teachers.

The purpose of this study was to explore the extent to which literate resources are provided in writing lessons, prior to the commencement of the task, in order to assist children to complete the designated writing product. Consideration of the Task Orientations of lessons in Chapter 3 has shown that, in the majority of the lessons, knowledge of the instructional field was neither sufficiently developed nor made explicit for all children. In many cases the children were expected to have sufficient knowledge of the field to participate instantly in the lesson. This could cause some children, especially those with literacy difficulties or unsure of their capabilities, to be marginalised (Edwards-Groves, 2003) or silenced (Delpit, 1988). In addition, where the common experience was left unarticulated, many children would be left with no exposure to language resources that they could later use in their own writing. Therefore, it can be argued that a Task Specification can only be successful in offering enough resources for children if the Task Orientation has provided a sufficiently relevant instructional field from which children can draw in their own writing.

In the discussion that follows the pedagogic discourse of the Task Specifications for the two main groups of writing lessons in this study, those based on children's own experience and those based on existing texts, are examined. The lessons chosen for examination are mainly those discussed in Chapter 3 with the focus on the search for explicit information, initiated by the teacher, on the form and structure to be used in the writing task, as well as any provision of language choices the children might later use in their own written products.

The lessons based on children's own experience discussed in this chapter are:

1. Lesson 2.4 Year 3
Experience – Class visit to the National Science and Technology Centre.
Writing task – Write a 'report' (recount) of the visit.
2. Lesson 2.1 Year 3
Experience – Child's own family.
Writing task – Write about your family.
3. Lesson 6.3 Year 3
Experience – School camp.
Writing task – Thank-you letter to leaders of the camp.
4. Lesson 3.1 Year 3
Imagined experience – Forth-coming visit to Hall school museum.
Writing task – Imagine you were a third grade student at the school.

Lessons based on narrative texts:

1. Lesson 6.1 Year 3
Text: *The 27th Annual African Hippopotamus Race*
Writing task – Pretending to be Edward (the protagonist) write a letter to a cousin or friend about the race you have entered.
2. Lesson 6.2 Year 3
Text: *The Selfish Giant*
Writing task – Pretending to be one of the children who went into the giant's garden write a letter to the giant explaining why you went into his garden and apologise to him.
3. Lesson 6.4 Year 3
Text: Aboriginal legends, *Why the Kangaroo Hops, How the Kangaroo got his Tail* and other stories.
Writing task – Write a story entitled, *Why the Emu Cannot Fly*
4. Lesson 1.1 Year 6
Text: *I am David*, extract describing how David rescues Maria from the fire.
Writing task – Write as if you were David rescuing Maria from a different situation.

A discussion of all these lessons is necessary because they:

1. provide links to lessons discussed in previous chapters
2. exemplify the different ways teachers try to move children into the specifics of a writing task
3. highlight the difficulty of building effective writing programs on experience alone without a focus on the literate language for rendering the experiences vivid for readers.

5.1 Lessons based on children's own experience

In the following discussion, I revisit three lessons to explore the effect of the earlier Task Orientations on the Task Specifications, before showing the extent to which teachers provided literate resources which would help students know how to complete the writing task. Each of the three lessons had different outcomes from the Task Orientations, but (as discussed in Chapter 4) all have been shown to contain very little reference to the relevant instructional field. The first, Lesson 2.4 had a Task Orientation with minor reference to the instructional field; the second, Lesson 2.1 had no Task Orientation and the third, Lesson 3.1 had a long ineffective Task Orientation.

Similarly, there were differences in the information given to show the children how to approach the writing task, although in each case this information was sketchy and implicit. References to generic structure were extremely limited or non-existent. In Lesson 2.4 where the teacher had confused a recount with a report a general reference was made to newspaper reports. In Lesson 2.3 the teacher, in passing, referred to a lesson from the previous term when 'we talked about how we should have a beginning, a main of our writing and then

an ending'. And in Lesson 3.1 only general procedural knowledge regarding time sequencing was given to suggest an approach to structuring the written text. As will be seen, a failure to build shared knowledge of an instructional field compromised children's ability to produce successful pieces of writing. Analyses of the Task Specifications of these three lessons are given below.

5.1.1 Task specification of Lesson 2.4 - Visit to the National Science and Technology Centre

The following discussion of Lesson 2.4 outlines the impact the lack of development of the instructional field in the Task Orientation had on the effectiveness of the Task Specification. Lesson 2.4, which is representative of this group of lessons with minimal development of the field, followed a class visit to the National Science and Technology Centre. The writing task the children were given was to write a recount of the previous day's excursion. The teacher referred to the task as the writing of 'a report' which linked to her later reference to newspapers and newspaper reports in the Task Specification. Earlier analysis of the Task Orientation showed the discourse was dominated by behavioural and procedural directives, all in the regulative register, with few words found to be in the instructional register (see Chapter 4, section 3.1).

From this point the lesson moved directly into the Task Specification, the second stage of the lesson, but because there had been no earlier reconceptualisation of the shared experience, as the teacher moved into the Task Specification she needed to provide some reorientation to sustain the discussion due to the lack of previous preparation and consequent common knowledge. This resulted in implicit and confusing information within the Task Specification

and the need for recursive movements back into a Task Orientation discourse to clarify and develop the instructional field, as if from scratch.

Organisational matters dominated the regulative register in the first phase of the Task Specification. However, there was one sentence that contained the three words in the instructional register discussed in Chapter 4 that were picked up by a child in response to a later question:

Lesson 2.4

Task Specification

Phase 1

T: Now, it's going to be a little different because you're going to work as a group. You're not going to just do an individual report because two or three, excuse me Holly. Two or three heads are quite often better than one. And some people will remember certain things that other people will have forgotten. Someone will, would have enjoyed a gallery more than someone else.

The second phase began with a question asking the children to draw on their own resources:

Lesson 2.4

Task Specification:

Phase 2

T: Now what sort of things will you include in your report? Adam.
C: (inaudible)
T: Of course. Paul.
C: How was it.

The first answer, which was accepted but not expanded upon, was inaudible. The second child who answered, 'How was it,' was responding to three words in the instructional register that the teacher had provided which were 'enjoyed a gallery'. This prompted a short exchange:

Lesson 2.4

Task Specification:

Phase 2 cont.

T: Ah, what do you mean, how was it?
C: If it was good or...

- T: **Well what was our spelling about this week?**
C: **Like I enjoyed it.**
T: **Good. Remember we thought we'd get away from 'good'.**

After the child had clarified his response as the teacher asked, she then reminded the class of discussion they had had in a spelling lesson that related to more precise vocabulary. This led to a child offering 'enjoyed' as a variation on 'good'.

The next exchange, given below, again showed a child recycling the phrase 'enjoyed it', presumably because it had been used as a model and had gained the teacher's approval. This child was attempting to make an association, but the emergence of the regulative register for control purposes as the teacher tried to redirect the behaviour of the class, drew attention away from the child's question which she eventually accepted with, 'Of course', before immediately redirecting the talk towards newspapers. Up to this point and through the remainder of Phase 2 the children were given a very limited chance to comment on their visit to the science museum with no opportunity to reflect on what they saw and did there.

Lesson 2.4

Task Specification:

Phase 2 cont.

- T: **Using some of those other words.**
Right. Excuse me Michael, if you've got something to say put your hand up and we'll listen to you.
C: **If you enjoyed it...**
T: **Oh shh, hand up. Sophie.**
C: **Um, (inaudible) you enjoyed it. Can you put in some of the ..?**
T: **Jarad Lee, if you have something to say put your hand up and we'll listen to you.**
Please don't speak there.
C: **Some of the (inaudible)**
T: **Of course. Hands down, hands down.**

Phase 3

- T: **Who has never read the newspaper?**

Phase 2 shows that the children were not able to provide the teacher with more than a few words in answer to her question about what they should include in their reports. Their responses indicate how reliant they were on the instructional field supplied by the teacher. This suggests that if the instructional field had been developed more and shared in the Task Orientation, the children would have had a wider knowledge base and an exposure to the appropriate language choices to assist their understanding of the Task Specification's discourse. Such common knowledge, which would have included language resources, would have been valuable in the Task Specification where children should be shown how to reshape knowledge of the instructional field to fit with the required writing task.

An opportunity arose for the teacher to expand on the instructional field and provide examples of language choices when Sophie asked her partially inaudible question:

C: **Um**, (inaudible) you enjoyed it. **Can you put in** some of the ..?

Instead of just accepting the child's proposition and immediately shifting the focus as shown below:

C: Some of the (inaudible)

T: **Of course. Hands down, hands down.**

the teacher could have discussed Sophie's choice of topic in a reconceptualisation which would then have been available for others to use. This question also revealed the child's need to know what she could include in her 'report'. This was information she expected from the teacher and would have been required by most other children in the class.

With the shift in direction to talk about newspapers the discussion concerning what might be included in the reports was delayed until Phase 3 when another two general comments were made. In this phase the teacher discussed reports in newspapers, because, as she explained a little later, one of the reports written by the children could be chosen for the school newsletter.

This implicit discussion of newspaper reports was followed directly by the two comments on the kind of things children might include in their writing. No specific examples were given:

Lesson 2.4

Task Specification:

Phase 3

T: **Who has never read** the newspaper?
Shh, no comments. Shh.
Now in newspapers we have what we call reports
and they report an incident or a happening
or something that's going on in the world.
They report, the report includes the place,
what is actually happening, some of the background information,
perhaps who was involved, **what** actually happened.

Now with your reports for the science and technology centre **Michael**,
you might include things like where your group started.
Now you have to really think very hard to remember
what was in each gallery **that you went in to**.

The limited reference to 'newspaper reports' would only have had an impact on children who were already familiar with newspaper articles, which according to the teacher's response to a show of hands when she asked, 'Who has never read the newspaper?' would include very few indeed. For the reference to have had real value a prior series of lesson would have been necessary to explore the new genre and its structure. As the purpose of the lesson appeared to be for the children to write a recount, the newspaper references seem to have been unnecessary and potentially confusing within the context of this lesson. Apart from this news stories have a different generic structure from recounts, beginning not with an orientation but with the newsworthy event or crisis (Macken et al, 1988).

Considering that this element is the one where children could be expected to be shown what and how to write, to this point the directions given were vague and implicit. In using language (in Phase 3 above) such as ‘you *might* include...’ and ‘you really have to think hard to remember what was in each gallery’ the teacher was suggesting the children were expected to use their own resources to construct a field for their writing. The issue of ‘how to write’ about the topic could have been addressed at this point with modelling of appropriate language constructions to use when writing.

The vague unspecific directions were repeated through the short remainder of the Task Specification as in the following extract:

Lesson 2.4

Task Specification:

Phase 4

- T: **No Michael, second time. Move away from him.
You must be very eager to start Michael if you're talking all the time.
Not so much** your opinion.
**What does opinion mean Aiden?
You better listen to find out. Kate.**
- C: **What you think.**
- T: **Good. Not so much of what you think.
That hasn't, that's not the major part of a report.
The major part of a report will be made up of
what you actually did and saw there, ok.**

to where the teacher attempted to sum up by saying:

Lesson 2.4

Task Specification:

Phase 4 cont.

- T: **The main point of it is that you, what you did
when you actually got into the centre, right.
Any questions?**

No discussion or modelling was provided to give the children ideas about how they should structure their writing before they were asked if they had any questions, nor were there any examples of appropriate language choices they could use when writing. On the only two occasions when expressive language examples were given both were negative, in that the children were told what they should *not* say. The first occasion was just prior to the summing up remark when the children were told:

Lesson 2.4

Task Specification:

Phase 4

- T: **....and they want to know**
what **you actually** saw and did at the technology centre.
Not that you thought the colour of the walls was wonderful.
- Cn : (laugh)
- T: **Or** that the weather was hot and sunny, **right**.

The second occasion was in answer to a question from a child at the end of the Task Specification in Phase 5, below. The teacher wanted the children to know they should give a reason why they liked a certain exhibit, but her explanation became confused, mainly because of her negative statement. She tried to rectify the situation by saying, ‘You have to say why you enjoyed the earthquake machine,’ but did not enlarge upon her answer, beyond agreement, to the child’s previous question, ‘Can you say what it did?’

Lesson 2.4

Task Specification:

Phase 5

- C: **Can you um, like if you had** your favourite things,
and this one was your favourite thing,
can you say what it did?
- T: **Oh certainly. You have to say why it's** your favourite.
You can't say I enjoyed the earthquake machine.
And no-one will ever know why you enjoyed the earthquake machine.
Right that was just an example. Right?
You have to say why you enjoyed the earthquake machine.
- C: **I know why** (inaudible)
- T: **Shh. If you've got something to say put your hand up and we'll listen to you.**

One child seemed eager to give a reason and began to do so, but the teacher not wanting specific examples moved into the control register and dismissed the answer. The teacher's earlier interjection, 'Right, that was just an example,' referred back to her example of the earthquake machine as something the children might have enjoyed. From this comment it appeared she did not want to influence the children's choice of subjects they might write about; she did not want to influence what would be included in the field, nor how this might be expressed. Up to that point she had avoided mentioning any of the exhibits, which could have been discussed as part of the development of the instructional field. It seemed she unwittingly named the earthquake machine, as she was quick to point out that that was 'just an example,' which suggested the children could and perhaps should use other examples in their own writing.

The last part of the Task Specification, all in the regulative register, ended with the teacher replying to the child who asked about illustrations saying they were not to worry about those until a later time. The final direction to the children concerned the scribe:

Lesson 2.4

Task Specification:

Phase 5 cont.

**T: Oh, we're not going to worry about illustration at this point, ok.
When we get up to that we'll talk about illustration.
Any other questions?**

Phase 6

**T: Ok, one person in your partnership or trio is going to be what we call the scribe.
So they're going to be doing the writing.
Right. And that person needs to get their draft book.**

From this point the Task element was articulated in the regulative register and the formal part of the lesson ended.

Lesson 2.4

Task

T: So find a place in the room with a draft book and start.

Lesson 2.4 was typical of the other writing lessons in this group which were based on children's own experience in that there appeared to be an assumption that the experience itself provided the knowledge the children needed to complete the written task. Also, in asking the children to work on their reports with one or two others, the teacher seemed to expect them to share ideas and formulate the written text together pooling their own resources.

The uncertainties the children had concerning the instructional field were shown in the kind of questions they asked at the end of the Task Specification, eg

C: **Can you um, like if you had** your favourite things,
and this one was your favourite thing,
can you say what it did?

That there were no questions about how to write the texts is indicative of the low profile the form and construction of writing is given even in writing lessons. This would be true for the great majority of the lessons observed in this study.

In summing up the teacher's perceived aims in the Task Specification of Lesson 2.4, it appears her main focus was to make sure the children understood the basic instruction, which was to include in their writing what they saw and did when they were in the Science and Technology Centre. It was expected that the children would know what to write about. The assumption being that because they had visited the Centre they would have some knowledge and memory of what they had seen there. This indicates that the instructional field would be expected to be drawn from the children's own resources, in this case, their experience.

Another assumption was that working in groups would allow them to share information by articulating this knowledge to each other using their own expressive language. But without talking about specific exhibits there was no chance for the teacher to model the more sophisticated language choices the children might use in their written language. In addition, there was no discussion about the structure and form the writing might take, which would include language choices appropriate for the writing task the children were expected to complete. As has been demonstrated in the Task Specification of this writing lesson no instruction was given to the children on *how* to write. Further investigation of other lessons based on personal experience and imagined experience given below shows that this was found to be a common trend.

5.1.2 Task specification: Lesson 2.1 *My Family*

The complete lack of a Task Orientation in Lesson 2.1, where children were asked to write about their families, meant that the teacher began the Task Specification with no articulated common knowledge. As this became apparent she entered into short dialogues with the children attempting to build aspects of the field while giving directions concerning the task.

The topic knowledge required for Lesson 2.1 (*My Family*) was more personal than that needed for the group experience of Lesson 2.4. As discussed in Chapter 3 it might be assumed that all children had knowledge of their own families which may account for the complete lack of a Task Orientation in Lesson 2.1. However, it could not be assumed that all children would know what they should choose to write about from that range of knowledge, nor could it be assumed they would know how to structure the written product.

As shown in the previous chapter, Lesson 2.1, where children were asked to write about their families, began without a Task Orientation beyond brief behavioural control. Immediately after settling the children and announcing the topic the teacher moved from the control element of the regulative register straight into the Task Specification. Without a Task Orientation it must be assumed the children were expected to provide the necessary knowledge of the instructional field, but not all would have known what kind of information might be suitable for the task. Others would not have had sufficient control over language choices needed to express their ideas either orally or in suitable written language, so would have benefited from the modelling of language by the teacher. Because there was no development in the Task Orientation there were attempts to rectify problems as they occurred during the Task Specification.

The Task Specification of Lesson 2.1 began with the teacher stating the task and then immediately asking the children what they might ‘talk about’ in the writing task as if writing is the same as talk written down:

Lesson 2.1

Task Specification

Phase 1

T: **Right, now in your story writing today, you're going to write about your family.**
Right.
Now, what sort of things might you talk about when you're talking about your family?
How might you start off?
Remembering that we talked about this last term, how we should have a beginning,
a main part of our writing Paul,
and then an ending.
Right, so, Sophie?

The reference to the structure of the written text needing ‘a beginning, a main part and then an ending’ is the only time this was mentioned in the lesson. There was no other reference to how the writing might be structured.

As the lesson progressed further into the first phase of the Task Specification the teacher, relying on dialogue with the children, accepted answers and then made recursive moves into the instructional field to fill any obvious gaps. In the section below it is interesting to note that it was a child who offered the first substantial information in the instructional register and gave alternatives that the teacher developed in her reconceptualisation where she referred back to a lesson from the previous term.

Lesson 2.1

Task Specification

Phase 1 cont.

- C: **You can start off by saying**
I've got two sisters or I'm an only child or I've got a mum.
- T: **Good, so a good starting point talking about** our family would be to tell about the family members, **wouldn't it?**
Because remember how we talked about in some homes, **Brooke,** we don't have a mum and a dad, we have only one parent, or we have a step-parent or something special like that.
We don't all have two parents in the same house.
So we might start talking about (writing on board)

Unfortunately, at this point there is a break in the audiotape lasting approximately 1min 10secs. Later discourse suggests that the teacher talked to the children about describing members of their families and suggested they use this as a way to begin their written text.

The next subject was family rules. Again the discourse, mostly in the instructional register, became a Task Re-Oriented attempting to develop the instructional field:

Lesson 2.1

Task Specification

(Task Reorientation)

Phase 1 cont.

- T: **And we go on to** rules, if you have any family rules.
All families have rules.
You might have noticed, Jared and Aiden,
if you go to someone else's place to play,

right, they mightn't like you bouncing on the bed.
You might be able to do that at home, but at their place that's a no-no.
Or, you might have to take your shoes off at the door.
Each family has separate little rules for their family. **Yes?**

C: **Are you allowed to do another one like we did the other day?**

T: **No, what we did in our homework book is called** a family tree
and this one's we're talking about our family,

In her response to the question about the task to the child who seemed to want to draw another family tree, the teacher stressed the subject was 'our family' and moved into Phase 2 where she summarised what had been discussed to that point before adding 'interests' as another possible topic:

Lesson 2.1

Task Specification

Phase 2

T: **We're writing about** our family.
And these are the sorts of things we can write about,
describing the family, **what** sort of family.
Um, do we get on well with our family members,
or some we don't like as much as others,
or we like everyone, we love everyone.
Do we have certain rules?
We might like to go to what sort of interests your family has.
Some families might be, err, like going bushwalking.
Some families might like watching a lot of TV.
Some families might like to bike riding.
All things like that, right, so interests.

Both the teacher's summary and her examples of possible interests added to the instructional field through the use of the instructional register. But after offering an expansion of the instructional field herself, she reverted to asking the children to offer other topics that might be included in their writing. As new topics were suggested the teacher wrote these on the board:

Lesson 2.1

Task Specification

Phase 3

T: **What else?**
C: **What** your family does.
T: Work, **ok, what** your family works at, work.
Anything else?

- C: **What** your family eats?
 T: Foods.
We might have a great big section, you might be able to talk about favourites
and in that you could have favourite foods, favourite TV, favourite books, favourite music.
- C: Favourite places.
 T: Favourite places.
You might like going to the coast,
or you might like going to the mountains.
Yes?
- C: **What** they look like.
 T: **Well, we have talked about that up here,** describing.
- C: **Um,** family secrets.
 T: Family secrets.
Do you think you should write about those?
- C: **No.**
 C: **I've got** secrets.
 T: **But you could say that** you had secrets or special things that you talked about.
Ok, anything else?

Although the teacher widened the idea of favourites and gave a couple of examples of favourite places, there was no further discussion of any of these new topics to contribute to the building of common knowledge. However, even this minimal discussion was greater than that given in recursive episodes in Lesson 2.4. The phase finished at this point with no other topics suggested by the children.

The final phase of the Task Specification, given below, focused on words the children might use in their writing that were associated with the topics written on the board. The children were asked to supply words ‘for describing’ which the teacher wrote next to the relevant topic. As shown below all words were accepted in random order as they were offered, rather than one topic at a time.

Lesson 2.1

Task Specification

Phase 4

- T: **What sort of words would help us now if we go back through,** for describing?
What sort of words would we need there?
What sort of words would we use in our writing?
Kim?

- C: **You'd use** words like,
how if they've got long hair and what colour eyes they have.
- T: **Righto, so what's** some of the words **we might use to say** those things?
- C: **Like about** the eyes and everything.
What colour.....
- T: **Pardon.**
- C: Affection.
- T: Affection, **well this comes into,**
well we didn't really put that did we, relationships, affection
over here I suppose.
Well, what's some words we're going to use in our writing?
- C: **Describing if it's** young, **like.**
- T: **Right,** youngest (writing), oldest or eldest, **couldn't we?**
Ahh, we'll need all sorts of colours and words.
Relationships, **I've got** 'happy', 'arguments'.
Any other words we might use there?
- C: Exciting?
- T: Exciting, **we'll put** 'exciting'. (writes)
Once we get going we might need more words **up there.**
- C: Lonely.
- T: Lonely (writes)
- C: Quiet.
- T: Quiet (writes)
- C: Noisy.
- T: Noisy (writes)
Of course, some people would be noisy.
- C: **Um, you could put in, like if** you have family pets or something.
- T: Family pets, **there's another one.**
Good, that's part of your family **isn't it?**
- C: Um, personality?
- T: Personality, **that's a good one.**
Personality (writes)
- C: Um, if they have a star sign.
- T: **Sorry,** star sign if you know it.
(whispering) Jared, ssh.
- C: **If, if** they're clean or tidy?
- T: Clean or tidy (writes)
- T: **Ok, I think once we start writing, we'll probably need,**
we'll build on that, what we've got up there.
Now, we're going to do this in our draft book.

The words, supplied by the children, were written on the board by the teacher, so that they were available for the children to use in their writing. However, there was no attempt to construct a context for the words beyond grouping them with a topic word, nor an attempt to use the preferable strategy of bringing them to the children's attention from a familiar context.

The first child to offer an answer in this phase began to provide a context by saying:

C: **You'd use** words like,
how if they've got long hair and what colour eyes they have.

This gave the teacher the opportunity to offer a reconceptualisation that might describe a family member and to follow up by asking more than one child to use a similar construction.

For example the teacher could have said:

That's right, if you were writing about your sister you could say, 'My little sister has long, brown hair, blue eyes and a cheeky smile.'

Then you might like to say what she likes to do. You might write, 'She loves to jump on my bed to wake me up in the morning.'

I'll write this on the board:

First I'll write who I am describing, 'My' - Can you help me? 'little sister.'

Then I'll write three things she has which tell about how she looks, 'has long fair hair, brown eyes and a cheeky smile.'

Lastly, I'll write one thing she loves to do, 'She loves to jump on my bed to wake me up in the morning.'

Who has a brother or sister or someone else they can describe in this way?

Following Phase 4 of the Task Specification the formal section of the lesson ended with the

Task element:

Lesson 2.1

Task

T: **Ok, so if you move quietly to your desks, take out your red draft book.**

In Lesson 2.1, above, the preparation for writing that is the focus of the Task Specification was driven by the children. They were responsible for supplying the topics relating to their families with the teacher supporting some answers with minor selective reconceptualisations. However, the teacher's input did not provide a substitute for the explicit development of common knowledge that could have occurred during the Task Orientation. Neither was there

any attempt to show the children how they might construct their written products, leaving them to use their own resources with their only aid being the individual words on the board.

Although this appeared to be sufficient information for the very best writer in the class, it was less than adequate for others especially the struggling writers who would have needed much more support to produce a written text while still learning about how to write. To support this proposal copies of the written texts by two children in the class are available in Appendix A; one was produced by the child considered by the teacher to be the best writer in the class, and the other was produced by the child attending the Schools and Community Centre for assistance with literacy difficulties.

5.1.3 Task Specification: Lesson 3.1 *Being a Third Grader* - at Hall School

The same minimal support offered to children in the Task Specifications of Lessons 2.4 and 2.1 to assist them with the writing task was also a feature of the lesson based on an imagined experience, Lesson 3.1. Analysis of Lesson 3.1 in Chapter 3 has shown that although Lesson 3.1 had a long Task Orientation this was largely ineffective, while Lesson 2.1 had no Task Orientation. It might be speculated that these differences arose because a teacher might assume children would have some personal knowledge of their own family, but could not make a similar assumption for an imagined experience in a historical context.

The Task Specifications of Lessons 2.1 and 3.1 show a similar approach to the degree and kind of support offered to the children as assistance with writing. In both lessons topic headings were given on the board with the teacher offering the first topic and the children asked to supply subsequent topics. Unlike Lesson 2.1 no associated vocabulary was written

on the board in Lesson 3.1, nor was any other teaching/learning assistance provided before the children began their writing task.

Examples of the implicit nature of the discourse in the Task Specification of Lesson 3.1 are shown below. The Task Specification began with the teacher telling the children for the first time in the lesson that they were to write a story. In both Lessons 2.1 and 2.4, an indication of the task, a Task Initiation, had been given early in the lessons, but this did not occur in all lessons in this study. There were other lessons, such as text-based Lessons 1.1 and 6.2, where no indication of the task was given until the Task Specification.

In the first phase of the Task Specification of Lesson 3.1 there appears to be some convergence of the registers. However, although the instructional register appears, the negative focus is confusing and did not contribute to knowledge of the field of enquiry the children needed to use in their writing. In addition, as the teacher moved further into the discourse, it emerged that the written product was expected to have a time sequence. This had not been mentioned before, and as no explicit explanation was given, the children were left to use their own resources to incorporate the technique into their written products.

Lesson 3.1

Task Specification

Phase 1

- T: **So, in your story writing today, you are going to be** a year three.
You're going to be at Hall primary school before they had electricity,
before they had pen and paper books for you to use.
- T: **Ok.** And computers.
Ok, so they didn't have all those things, they didn't have motor cars.
So, you will need to start your story about getting up in the morning.
And think about the things you've done in the morning, **ok?**
So, if I write these things down for you,
you might be able to help me fill in the parts of the day **that we need to include.**
You'll write these things down in your book
and you'll write a paragraph **about** each of these things.

So all of these things will be included in your story, ok?
Ok, how might we, so we need to get up in the morning and have breakfast.

The child who was attending the Schools and Community Centre program for assistance with literacy followed the teacher's instruction to:

T: write these things down in your book

by copying the time sequence as written on the board, leaving little time to begin the actual task (see Appendix B for a copy of this child's writing). The final procedural directions, shown below, and given to the class at the end of Phase 3 of the Task Specification would have confirmed this was part of the expected task:

Lesson 3.1
Task Specification
Phase 3

T: Ok, in your story writing books you're going to write your plans.
And after you've written your plan you can start writing your story,
but including all those ideas.

The time sequence, if it had been introduced earlier, could have provided a valuable framework for the development of common knowledge in the Task Orientation. It would also have given the teacher the opportunity to introduce language choices for theme, so that sentence beginnings could have been revisited in the Task Specification, and used in a skeleton model for the writing task.

Of the three lessons discussed so far in this chapter, Lessons 2.4, 2.1, and 3.1, not one of them showed any evidence of children being shown language choices they might use in their writing beyond single words. Neither was there evidence of modelling of any aspect of generic structure that might offer support to the children by giving them models to emulate or

incorporate into their own writing. Therefore, the three major strategies involving deconstruction of a model text, a joint construction and an emphasis on appropriate language choices earlier identified as particularly productive in the teaching of writing were not employed in the lessons based on children's own experiences.

5.2 Task specifications of text-based lessons

It might be hypothesised that writing lessons based on published texts are more likely to include discussion relating to aspects of the structure of the text and some degree of modelling of the pertinent literate features. The following analysis of the Task Specifications of text-based lessons showed some evidence of a restricted use of models and minor references to language choices. Despite the opportunities to explore text extracts for teaching purposes there were lessons where no reference was made to possible models.

The Task Specifications of three writing lessons, Lessons 1.1, 6.1 and 6.2 are examined for the successful strategies identified earlier. Each of these lessons is based on a class novel. The first lesson explored in this section, Lesson 1.1 with a Year 6 class, was based on an incident in the novel *I am David* where David rescued a girl from a fire.

5.2.1 Task Specification of Lesson 1.1

The writing task was to write another story of David rescuing the same girl from a different situation. Clearly, there was an obvious potential to use the appropriate extract as a model text. However, as shown in Chapter 3 in the Task Orientation there had been no re-reading of the extract from the novel and minimal references to the field of enquiry. Therefore, there was

insufficient common knowledge that could be transferred and reframed in the Task Specification and no model made available for discussion of form, structure or appropriate language. As a result the teacher gave a Task Re-Orientation towards the end of the Task Specification to help clarify the writing task, but his expectation was that students would use their own resources to establish a field of enquiry loosely linked to the non-specific information given in the lesson on rescues and the feelings of the people involved. Evidence for these statements is given below.

In the final stages of the Task Orientation of Lesson 1.1, immediately prior to the start of the Task Specification, the teacher had summarised the discussion on the feelings of the people involved in the rescue in the novel by saying:

Lesson 1.1

Task Orientation

T: **Right, so when** the girl was rescued there would have been a real sigh of relief there.
Ok, in any rescue situation obviously there's going to be people going through different types of feelings. **Ok**.

In Phase 1 of the Task Specification he explained the task for the first time, although he had told the class at the beginning of the lesson that the focus would 'revolve around feelings'. The explanation, shown below, involved the convergence of the regulative and instructional registers, but only offered directions and general suggestions:

Lesson 1.1

Task Specification

Phase 1

T: **Now what I want you to do now, is I'm going to ask you** to be David.
So you are going to take on the character of David and you are going to rescue Maria.
But, I want you to rescue her from a different problem, not a fire.
For example she could have been drowning and you rescued her.
What else could we look at?

C: **Like if** you have a car smash and she's all mangled up.

T: **Ok, let's just keep them...**

- Cn: (laughter)
T: **It could have been** a car accident.

This phase continued with four students offering rescue situations to which the teacher gave mostly single sentence comments eg,

Lesson 1.1

Task Specification

Phase 1 cont.

- C: Someone grabbed her off, grabbed her to some place.
T: Someone grabbed her and took her away?
C: **Yeah.**
T: **Right, ok, so** you're going to save her and rescue her from a kidnapper. Simon?
C: **Um,** she might have gone up a few storeys on a ladder and then the ladder might have fallen down.
T: **Ok,** and he had to somehow save her there.

The expectation was that students would think of their own rescue situation and develop these themselves by means of a 'quick brainstorm' on scrap paper before writing 'a rough draft'. It became clear that brainstorming was part of the story writing principles of this classroom when the teacher asked in Phase 2:

Lesson 1.1

Task Specification

Phase 2

- T: **Ok, now what I want you to do, is before you do** this piece of work, **obviously we're going to do** a rough draft **first.**
How can we apply our principles we'll do about our story writing **to completing** this activity?
How can we do it?
We've got to start it with a, what?

When a student did not give the expected answer the question was reframed and 'brainstorm' was elicited.

As the lesson progressed the regulative register continued to dominate with the students being given further directions:

Lesson 1.1

Task Specification

Phase 2 cont.

- T: **I want you to do** two things.
I want you to tell me about the rescue,
so you're going to include rescue in it,
and the most important thing is...?

Until this point there had been no revisiting of language choices from the Task Orientation and certainly no attempt to provide any kind of model. However, as he said ‘feelings’ the teacher wrote the word on the board near to the only other word there which was ‘rescue’. To emphasise the point he moved back into a Task Re-Oriented by telling a rescue story involving his own daughter and then asking ‘What am I going to feel?’ Again the words to express feelings came from the students with the teacher repeating them, but not offering any of his own. His reaction to the student who offered ‘indebted’ as how he might feel towards a rescuer was:

- C: In debt?
T: **Yeah. I think you would,**
you'd feel indebted to the person.
That's one word.
There's probably lots more.

The remainder of the Task Specification contained further very general procedural directions on how to go about performing the task. There was no reference to generic structure and no modelling to help students learn how to write.

5.2.2 Comparisons between Lesson 6.1 and 6.2

Lesson 6.1 and Lesson 6.2, both given by the same teacher to a Year 3 class, included aspects of modelling but much of this was implicitly conveyed. Both also had a preliminary task that acted as a Task Orientation for the main task and in both lessons the task was to be written in the form of a letter. Lesson 6.1 was based on a chapter from the novel, *The 27th Annual*

African Hippopotamus Race, and the writing task was to write a letter from Edward to a friend or cousin about the race in which he was entered. In Lesson 6.2, which was based on the short story *The Selfish Giant*, the children had to write a letter of apology to the giant for going into his garden.

The preliminary tasks were different. In Lesson 6.1 the children were told to write answers to questions about Edward's involvement in the race and his training program. In Lesson 6.2 they listened to four parts of the story relating to the giant's garden in each season and after each part, which was read twice, they drew a picture and wrote an explanatory sentence under it. Once the sentences in Lesson 6.2 had been read and discussed they were not referred to again, so the preliminary task did not contribute effectively to the field of enquiry needed for the Task Specification.

A further major complication for the children in both of these lessons was that the writing task required a different genre to that discussed in the Task Orientation. In addition, although the preliminary tasks acted as long Task Orientations, there was an underdevelopment of the specialised common knowledge and that was not focused towards the final writing task. To illustrate these two problematic features, analysis of part of the Task Specification of Lesson 6.2 is given below.

5.2.3 Task Specification of Lesson 6.2 *The Selfish Giant*

At the beginning of the Task Specification the teacher asked the children to put their sheets with drawings and sentences from the preliminary task onto the floor. The information in the

sentences, which had summarised events in the narrative text, was of little use in helping the children with the writing task and was not referred to again.

The teacher then explained the main task, to write a letter of apology from the children in the story to the giant, for the first time. The change in genre from the narrative, with long descriptive passages, which was read in the preliminary task to an apologetic letter involved a quantum leap. Although some common knowledge of the narrative text had been used to build the instructional field in the Task Orientation, it had not been directed towards the main task of writing a letter of apology. The instructional field had not been focused on the topic selected for writing and the shift in focus from narrative to letter was not made explicit, neither was it linked back to the narrative text. Because the class had been working on writing home addresses in a letter format, there appeared to be an assumption that the children would have little difficulty beginning the letter. Behind this there might have been a further assumption that writing a letter need not be threatening task.

Following the initial instructions the children were asked to give reasons why they had gone into the giant's garden, a question that had not been addressed in the Task Orientation. Five children gave brief reasons of their own, which the teacher accepted but did not comment on in any way. The focus was on the children supplying ideas. Consequently, no reconceptualizing occurred which could have related the children's answers to the field and enriched it while demonstrating language choices suitable for the genre chosen for the writing task. During this exchange only the regulative register was used, showing the lack of effective negotiation. This is demonstrated in the following example where patterns of discourse are seen to be in the IRE tradition (Cazden, 1986) despite some of the children's answers being inaudible:

Lesson 6.2

Task Specification

- T: **Who can give me maybe** some reasons? **Shianne.**
C: Our garden's not that good to play in.
T: **That's** a good one. **Kesha.**
C: (inaudible)
T: **I bet Vinka didn't hear** that **though.**
C: (inaudible)
T: **Right. Emily?**
C: (inaudible)
T: **Adnan.**
C: (inaudible)

Another similarity between Lessons 6.1 and 6.2 was the use of model letters, but these are later shown to have been used to little effect. In Lesson 6.2 this was because the model was limited to the very beginning of the letter with the discussion referring only to the first sentence and a possible joining word. The letter had the teacher's home address and the words:

Dear Giant

We are sorry we came into your garden

The remainder of the letter was to be finished by the children using their own resources.

Although a full letter was available as a model for Lesson 6.1 the way in which it was presented, the lack of connection with the field as established in the Task Orientation and the restrictions on its use, lessened its effectiveness. The text of this letter, shown below, is a subject of discussion in the following analysis of the Task Specification of Lesson 6.1.

Dear Andrew,

You will never believe the exciting news I have for you.

I have been entered by my grandfather in the 27th Annual African Hippopotamus Race. He seems to think that I will be able to win the race and become a champion. All I seem to be able to say however is 'Gosh'.

All of my family are really tremendous and are supporting me. My mother is cooking my favourite food, pancakes, and I am now on a strict training program.

I'm really excited and proud about swimming. It's such a great honour.

I have a few worries however. Yesterday I met this big, black, huge hippopotamus called Sebastian. I don't trust him at all.

Must go now and have some rest. Hope to write back later with some good news.
Best wishes,
Edward

In Lesson 6.1, as in 6.2, there was a change in genre from the preliminary task to the main task without any refocusing of the instructional field. Although there were two references to the letter in the task description, neither included any negotiation with the children on how these specific points could be achieved. The first reference was:

T: **Now you have actually written** the information,
you're going to find it much easier now
to put it into letter form.

and the second:

T: **Now, you're writing** a letter to someone fairly close to you,
so it's going to be that sort of language
that is a friendly sort of a letter.

The only connection between these statements and the ensuing dialogue was the teacher's reading of her model letter. The implicit assumption being that the children would recognise the kind of language they were expected to use from the language in the model and produce something similar. This assumption has been recognised to cause major problems for the many children who are not able 'to take' from written language in the way that those who are considered to be good writers are able to do (Gray and Rothery, 1993).

A feature of the Task Specification of Lesson 6.1 was that there was minimal convergence of the registers. The first part, which included the description of the task, was almost all in the regulative register. This was followed by the reading of each paragraph of the model letter, each of which corresponded to a question on the planning sheet. Therefore, connections were

made with the subject matter, but not with form and structure which was a crucial difference between this lesson and Lesson 6.4 which is discussed later.

After each paragraph had been read the teacher made a comment in the regulative register which included a few words in the instructional register. The children were not expected to contribute except for the two occasions when they supplied the words 'Gosh' and 'Edward' in unison.

A typical sample of this dialogue included the second paragraph of the model letter:

Lesson 6.1

- T: **Let's look at** the second.
My second paragraph **which is really like** your second piece of planning about the training program.
But I've added a lot more words **to make** it more interesting.
- O: James is yawning. He's looking at the board.
- T: (reading) All of my family are really tremendous and are supporting me.
My mother is cooking my favourite food, pancakes
and I am now on a strict training program.
I ran out of time and I didn't go on to the training program.
But of course, you can, this is my letter.
Who mentioned in their training program about diet?
- O: Jayde's looking at the board but she's not putting her hands up, nor is James.
- T: **Right, great, well you're on the same track as I am.**

In this extract convergence of the registers is minimal and there is a notable lack of any negotiation with the children.

Once the teacher had finished her discussion of the letter, she followed up her previous comment that referred to her ownership of the letter by saying:

- T: **Now, this is** my letter,
so I don't want you to write exactly the same
as I have written.
You use your information **from your sheet.**

Having exposed the children to the language she wanted the children to use by reading her model letter and by claiming the letter as her own, the teacher denied the children the opportunity of using the language it contained. Although they could refer back to their own sheets, which may have provided some ideas and could re-read the model letter displayed on the easel, the children were expected to use their own resources to synthesise and adapt the concepts and language needed for writing in a different genre without using the language of the model. The complexities involved in such a task would be extremely daunting to a Year 3 child who was at all confused about literacy.

5.2.4 Task Specification of Lesson 6.4 *Why the Emu Cannot Fly*

Lesson 6.4, was based on Aboriginal legends and led to the children writing their own legend *Why the Emu Cannot Fly*. Of all the lessons in this study, Lesson 6.4 offered the most comprehensive preparation for writing, with a substantial Task Orientation that built common knowledge of the field and a Task Specification which reframed and recontextualised that knowledge to fulfil requirements of the writing task.

Previous discussion in Chapter 3 of the Task Orientation of Lesson 6.4, showed how the teacher built the field of enquiry by reading and discussing two Aboriginal legends, which she followed with references to other similar stories. During the course of this dialogue she introduced the children to an outline of narrative generic structure, followed by a deconstruction of the first legend, to show how it fitted within the structure displayed on an easel. The deconstruction included references to language choices in particular the first sentences of legends with their variations on. ‘Long, long ago in the dreamtime...’.

This valuable building of common knowledge was then available during the Task Specification, when familiar knowledge and concepts could be reframed and directed towards the particular writing task, which was for the children to write their own legend. In specifying that all children were to write a particular legend, *Why the Emu Cannot Fly*, the teacher was able to direct her instruction to that context. This freed the children from having to worry about choosing their own topic, which was often expected in other lessons, allowing them more space to take on new information especially information concerning how to write.

Exploration of the Task Specification below explains how the teacher supported the children by modelling features of genre and appropriate language choices. The sheet to which the teacher drew the children's attention had a border with small pictures of emus and a printed title, *Why the Emu Cannot Fly*. At the top of the page were two sentences referring to flightless birds and emus as well as a printed direction to write a story telling what happened to the emu in 'the Dreaming'. The references to flightless birds would explain the teacher's introduction.

Lesson 6.4

Task Specification

Phase 1

- T: **Now on your sheet today, you've got** one about why the emu cannot fly.
Now of course emus have wings and feathers,
and you would think that they could fly.
Who knows the name of the bird in ah New Zealand that can't fly? **Julian.**
- C: Kiwi.
- T: **That's right.**
- C: **I know** another one. Ostrich.
- T: The ostrich.
And who knows the name of another one that can't fly?
- C: (inaudible)

In Phase 1 although there was convergence of the two registers the information in the instructional register was incidental and did not support the children's writing.

Phase 2 demonstrates how the teacher reframed common knowledge that had been established during the Task Orientation. This was done in conjunction with reference to the following model hand-written on butcher's paper and placed on an easel in front of the children. During the Task Orientation the teacher had added the words, 'Long, long ago' and 'Bush, plains'.

Beginning	Long, long ago
Setting	Bush, plains
Middle	(conflict)
Ending	(conclusion)

The regulative register at the beginning of Phase 2 was concerned with procedural instructions that related to the three sections of the genre. The teacher indicated these as she spoke.

Lesson 6.4

Task Specification

Phase 2

- T: **Ok, now on this sheet of paper I want you to... first of all** on the back plan your story.
Look this way please so you know.
You're going to have to divide roughly your page **into three.**
You've got the beginning, the middle, the ending.
And I want you...
You can write down some of these words.
Think of where the emu was living.
Think of what it might have been living with,
who it might have been living with.
Who it may have been friends with.
The middle part, **think of what's** the conflict.
What happened to change the original. **Mmm?**
- C: **What happened like** (inaudible)

T: **That's right.**
Yep, you've got to think of what happened,
and then finally at the ending **of course,**
and this one, it's then it will become why the emu doesn't fly.

In Phase 2, where the discourse was revisiting and reframing common knowledge formed in the Task Orientation, convergence of the regulative and instructional registers indicates that this is where learning was re-established and confirmed. It is unfortunate that the child's answer was inaudible and that the teacher's reconceptualisation was not more extended. A further extension with modelling of 'a conflict' and 'what happened to change the original' with reference to parallels with the kangaroo stories could have offered further support to the children. However, the positive teaching in this phase is shown by the link, established by the teacher, between knowledge of the topic and knowledge relating to the structure required for the written genre.

The final phase of the Task Specification dealt almost exclusively with procedural knowledge, planning for writing and the sharing of ideas, during this pre-writing stage.

Lesson 6.4

Task Specification

Phase 3

T: **Now, you can talk.**
I want, although you're going to be doing your own stories, on the back
you can talk with each other about ideas for the beginning, middle and end.
When you have finished planning you may start to write.
Are people quite clear about that?

Cn: **Yes.**

T: **Plan first. I want to see the planning.**
Um, can we see the time?
My watch is broken at the moment.
Twenty to ten, um, probably ten minutes, fifteen minutes to plan.
Don't be any longer than um five to, because then start to write.

Finally, the Task element was activated as the children were instructed to return to their seats.

Lesson 6.4

Task

**T: Ok, back you go.
 Only share with the person next to you or within your group.**

The support given in this lesson resulted in the child, who attended the SCC for assistance with literacy, writing more than the teacher had seen him write before. He had planned his legend in three sections as directed. His piece of writing, available in Appendix C, shows elements of the generic structure supplied in the lesson together with the use of a suitable initial sentence. These factors alone immediately identify his story with an Aboriginal legend.

This lesson was successful for a number of reasons. Firstly, the Task Orientation provided a gradual building of common knowledge that included knowledge of the basic structure of the genre of the stories read to the children and discussion of important language choices.

Secondly, a deconstruction of one of the stories in the Task Orientation showed how this story fitted with the three stages identified in the genre. Thirdly, there was an attempt to provide a model with some limited language choices made available. Together these factors allowed a level of explicit instruction that was later relocated and reframed, although briefly, in the Task Specification.

Of the three strategies earlier identified as supportive in showing children how to write, the one not included in Lesson 6.4 was that of joint construction. A joint construction in this lesson could have offered increased support with valuable modelling of language, particularly in the complication and resolution stages of the genre.

Apart from many teachers being unfamiliar with the practice of this strategy in the context of writing lessons, the time factor also has to be considered. If writing lessons are viewed as single productive lessons rather than part of a learning process this strategy is likely to be omitted. If learning how to write using a particular genre is to be the major focus, this strategy can be particularly supportive and productive for all students. For this reason it is an essential strategy in the Scaffolding Literacy and Accelerated Literacy programs.

Summary

Discussion of the Task Specification sections of lessons in this study has shown the implicit nature of much of the discourse. Attempts to bring together knowledge from the Task Orientation often revealed little was available, making necessary recursive moves to provide important knowledge of the instructional field. Although such moves were particularly noticeable in lessons based on children's own experience they were also found in text-based lessons.

Text-based lessons tended to offer a slightly higher level of preparation for writing in both the Task Orientation and the Task Specification. However, even in these lessons, for example Lesson 1.1, opportunities to make explicit and exploit meanings and language choices of a model published text were often passed over. Where structure of text and language choices were discussed, recontextualised and renegotiated, as in aspects of Lesson 6.4, access was provided to resources beyond the experience of most children. This higher level of explicitness contributed to the child identified with literacy difficulties appropriating both structure and language features in his written text. His level of achievement was recognised

by his teacher (see Appendix D for extract of interview with teacher) and this is acknowledged in the final chapter.

In the final chapter, Chapter 6, I explore implications arising from this study and attempt to draw conclusions that I hope might add to the body of knowledge concerning explicit teaching in inclusive primary school writing classrooms.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Introduction

In this study I set out to examine a wide range of primary school writing lessons in the search for explicit teaching that would give students access to resources relevant to the designated writing tasks. My focus was on the pedagogic antecedents of the tasks, the depth and breadth of knowledge made accessible to all students before they began to write. The exploration was restricted to the two major teaching components of writing lessons; firstly, the building of common knowledge concerning the field of experience and secondly, instruction on how to write the appropriate text. In each of the two components the study explored the discourse of the lessons for the degree and kind of explicitness offered by teachers. In summary, the majority of lessons have been shown to provide only minimal support in preparing students for the writing tasks expected of them. However, on a positive note, the sample lesson which best illustrated provision of resources within the two components, also gave indicators of the potential for a pedagogical approach for the explicit teaching of writing. Later in this chapter I will use that lesson to illustrate potential opportunities and recommended practices.

In this conclusion I would like to begin by reflecting upon three major points raised in my study that are associated with the provision of resources in writing lessons. These are: firstly, the development of common knowledge within the Task Orientation of lessons; secondly, the kind and degree of guidance on how to write given in the Task Specification; and thirdly, students' access to the pedagogy and hence to literate discourse. The final part of the chapter will focus on implications for the inclusive teaching of writing.

6.1 Preparation for the writing task

A difference between the extent to which teachers prepared children for the writing task was shown to exist in the two main categories of lessons, those based on children's own experience and those based on a published text. In almost all of the lessons based on children's own experience very few words in the instructional register were recorded. This was clearly shown by the use of contrasting type to show the interaction of the two registers with bold print signifying the regulative register and plain type the instructional. For example, a lack of words in the instructional register could immediately be seen in Lesson 2.4 (Chapter 4, section 3.1) in which only a few words in plain type were found in the Task Orientation. Such minimal development of the instructional register restricted the chance of the teacher being able to build common knowledge associated with the instructional field, leaving children in those lessons to rely on their own resources for knowledge of the field of enquiry. My conclusion was that teachers assumed students had the relevant knowledge because of their perceived previous involvement in the experience. That many students may have had no real memory or enduring knowledge of the experience, or did not have the language resources to express that knowledge, appeared not to have been a consideration for teachers.

6.2 Task orientations - Building the field of experience

The longer Task Orientations of the text-based lessons in many instances included a reading from the text that increased the length of the discourse in the instructional register. But often this slab of instructional discourse did not actually instruct students. It was simply a reading of the model text. For readings to contribute to an effective building of common knowledge there needed to be a discussion of the text showing a direct relevance to the forthcoming writing task. Where the discussion was productive and there was an effective building of the

field, convergence of the two registers occurred, as in the Task Orientation of Lesson 6.4. In other lessons, especially in those based on personal experience, convergence appeared to occur, as in the example below, but was often ineffective in building the field of enquiry.

This example from Lesson 2.4 is also discussed in Chapter 4, section 3.1. On first impressions the bold print seems to suggest that the regulative register which dominates Phase 1 projects the instructional register in Phase 2 and that convergence occurs. However, the actual discourse shows almost no reference to the field of experience and no effective guidance from the teacher to develop that field.

Lesson 2.4

Task Specification

Phase 1

T: **Now, it's going to be a little different because you're going to work as a group. You're not going to just do an individual report because two or three, excuse me Holly. Two or three heads are quite often better than one. And some people will remember certain things that other people will have forgotten. Someone will, would have enjoyed a gallery more than someone else.**

Phase 2

T: **Now what** sort of things **will you include in** your report? **Adam.**
C: **(inaudible)**
T: **Of course. Paul.**
C: **How was it.**
T: **Ah, what do you mean,** how was it?
C: **If it was good or....**
T: **Well what was** our spelling **about this week?**
C: **Like I enjoyed it.**

The apparent convergence of registers in this example does not match with a convergence of meaning, leaving students to infer meanings from inappropriate questions that assume a prior knowledge of the field with no subsequent reconceptualisation of shared understandings.

Empty phrases in the instructional register, such as 'certain things' and 'sort of things', did

not add to any knowledge of the field of experience. However, convergence of the two registers is an important means of promoting learning, but only when appropriate questioning is followed by a reconceptualisation, so that shared knowledge can develop into literate discourse.

Therefore, in both major lesson categories there were problems with the building of the field of experience and hence the development of common knowledge associated with the topic. However, text-based lessons, especially where a discrete narrative or section of a class novel was read to the students, did at least provide some exposure to the text, either in the observed writing lessons or in previous lessons. But even in most text-based lessons convergence of the registers was limited, indicating that little explicit teaching/learning took place. If convergence had occurred there would have been evidence of both registers working together in semantic patterns as in the following examples from Lesson 6.4.

In Example 1 from Lesson 6.4 the teacher at first uses the regulative register, when she tells the children she will read other aboriginal legends, before moving to build the instructional field with the instructional register. As the talk progresses, the two registers interweave with the instructional register becoming more dominant when knowledge of the field is built, but with the regulative register available to surface as needed to direct the children's attention:

Example 1:

T: **I'll read some more
and you'll see that
there's** very very similar beginnings.
'There was a kangaroo.'
Remember the story was about the kangaroo.
Why the Kangaroo Hops
so you've got to tell your reader...
or these people used to tell the stories.

They used to tell the story about the animal.
And he used to just walk on four legs, just like other animals.
So that's the beginning.
You're setting the scene.

Soon after the example given above teacher and children moved into the pattern of discourse as shown in Example 2. Here they shared in the building of common knowledge of the 'middle part' and 'ending' of *Why the Kangaroo Hops* with the teacher guiding the talk around the complication and resolution of this story that she had just read to the class. Unfortunately, two of the children's answers were inaudible, but it can be seen that the tendency was for the teacher to be the one to use the regulative register that, in the second example, now appears mostly at the beginning of sentences in questioning words or statements of approval.

Example 2.

- T: **Ok, what** happened?
What was the middle part?
What happened to him? **Chrissie**.
- C: A fire started.
- T: **Right, right.**
So something happened.
It's like a happening.
Fire started.
What happened when this fire started, **Jayde?**
- C: (inaudible)
- T: **Right, and then what** did he have to do?
- C: (inaudible)
- T: Leap over it.
Then what could be the ending of this story?
Why the Kangaroo Hops was the name of it.
Why Catherine?
- C: That he tried to walk on four legs
but he couldn't
so he still hopped.
- T: **Right** so his, so his four legs....
his legs were.... because of the fire,
he then had to hop.

6.3 Advantages of text-based lessons

Despite the paucity of effective convergence of the two registers in most lessons, my analysis of the Task Orientations and Task Specifications of lessons in this study has shown that text-based lessons provide greater opportunities for the explicit teaching of writing than lessons based on children's own experience. This is because texts provide models of literate language and structures within a meaningful context. An initial orientation and general reading of text presents a context in which to situate learning, creating an environment for deeper discussions of literate language and structures used by authors. A familiar context can free memory constraints so that new learning can have a greater impact on students. Unfortunately, very few teachers in the lessons I studied exploited the use of these opportunities. As has been shown in Chapters 4 and 5, one exception was the teacher of Lesson 6.4, where students were asked to write their own aboriginal legend. Of all the lessons, this one showed the most effective use of the resources available in well chosen published text. For this reason I will continue to refer to Lesson 6.4 in this chapter to illustrate some pedagogical opportunities in text-based writing lessons that enable students to emulate or 'take from' a model text.

Where texts form the basis of the common experience and students are expected to be familiar with the text or an appropriate extract, questions of reading ability and comprehension of the text must be raised. Higher-level texts might be more difficult to read, but provide richer language resources. In contrast, lower level texts are easier to read, but because they contain few language features, are not considered worthwhile models for writing. If writing lessons are to be based on published texts with literary merit and the texts chosen provide a challenge to students, a thorough orientation must be provided. If the orientation explicitly shows students the literal and implied meanings embedded in the text and how the language choices realise those meanings, the text can be made accessible to all, including marginalised

students. With a deep understanding of the text, students who are poor readers can apply a high level of meaning, together with uncertain phonic knowledge, to read a text previously seen as beyond their reading capabilities. A focus on language features in the model text, that goes beyond an explanation of general concepts and discussion of unfamiliar words, also provides a later resource valuable for the writing task and allows the more literate students to understand processes they may otherwise have used automatically and without question.

In this study I have argued that minimal exposure to text in the Task Orientation, such as at the level of a single reading with minor discussion or comment, is insufficient to provide all students with background knowledge of the topic as well as a familiarity with the language needed to enter into explicit preparation for the writing task. Where challenging texts provide the common experience, explicit reading and discussion is essential if students are to be able to read with understanding the text providing the context for the forthcoming writing task.

The process of re-reading while negotiating further depths of meaning, commonly employed by experienced readers and through essential strategies in the Scaffolding Literacy pedagogy, importantly allows us to clarify meaning, making further links as we absorb language and structures. This has to be made explicit to readers who are not confident in knowing how to negotiate challenging texts. A further point I would like to make at this stage is that texts or extracts, that become the model for the teaching of writing, should be carefully selected for appropriate literate qualities which can be exploited for teaching purposes.

6.4 Explicitness in interactions

In lessons in this study, where the Task Orientation was not expanded to develop the field of enquiry, common knowledge was left implicit. I have shown that this happened to varying

degrees in almost all of the writing lessons. As a consequence, students were left having to rely on their prior knowledge, however uncertain that might have been, and to make the links teachers expect, but seldom articulate in classrooms where the teacher's role is simply to provide a 'learning environment' and then monitor the development of individuals (Bourne, 2003:497). Under such circumstances teaching is less explicit, because children are not taken into literate discourse.

Classroom discussion about text is seen by Freebody and Luke (1990) to be 'displays of how students ought to have read a particular text'. In the 'displays' students make their readings available for discussion. Freebody and Luke see the teacher's role as one that, 'confirms, disconfirms, or calls for more or different kinds of answers as a guided, jointly built talk about what was read and how it was read'. But in the example they quote the discussion was 'jointly built' by students with the teacher acting merely as a facilitator (Freebody and Luke 1990:11). For more effective teaching/learning the teacher, as well as confirming points made by students, could offer expansions through a process of reconceptualisation, extending answers and bringing in further layers of meaning and knowledge (see Chapter 2, section 3.2). This would provide a deeper layer of explicit teaching than that presented by Freebody and Luke.

The role of the Task Orientation is complex and multifaceted. In the negotiation of meaning which builds common knowledge students should be exposed to important and relevant language choices and structures. This did occur in Lesson 6.4. In this lesson the teacher firstly reminded her class of previous lessons on aboriginal legends and then, before reading the first story, told the children what they should listen for during the reading. Thus, she 'tuned them in' to relevant language patterns in the model text. After the reading she introduced notes on narrative generic structure, engaging with the children in a discussion that showed how

elements of the story she had read fitted with this structure. She also drew attention to distinctive language features, especially those associated with the initial sentence of stories in this genre. The nature of the teacher's continuing engagement with the children during the Task Orientation provided a valuable knowledge base that could be recontextualised in the Task Specification. Because recontextualised understandings begin with an aspect of familiarity, they are more accessible to memory and therefore more easily adapted and manipulated. In this lesson they became a valuable resource in the Task Specification where the children were shown how they might construct their own piece of writing. In this way, common knowledge of field, built in the Task Orientation, became a source of meaning and language on which to base later work on literate language and structure of text in the Task Specification.

There were other lessons that showed some development of shared understandings in the Task Orientations. But, as I have shown in Chapter 4, this was often minimal, consisting of little more than knowledge of individual anecdotes and impressions (eg an excursion to a museum). Another problem I found was that the understandings developed did not always directly relate to the writing task. There may have been implicit connections to the task, as in Lesson 4.2 *Dad's Mummy's Big Night Out* (cf Chapter 4, section 4.1), but these understandings while providing background knowledge were not directly related to the writing task which, in this case, was to continue writing the story. In addition, the genre, a humorous fantasy, was not discussed. Therefore, there was little suitable common knowledge available to be recontextualised in the Task Specification where children are expected to be shown how to construct their writing to fulfil the requirements of the set task.

A situation that contributed to Task Orientations becoming ineffective in text-based lessons occurred when the writing task was expected to be in a different genre to that discussed or modelled in the lesson. The most common change of genre was for a narrative text to provide the basis for the instructional field and for the required task to be to write a letter to or from a character in the narrative. Although aspects of a model letter were often shown or referred to, the main assumption was that students would use their own knowledge to make the necessary language choices within an appropriate generic structure. As the transcripts show this was not something that could be assumed. Nevertheless, writing lessons based on ‘imaginative recreation’ exercises like these, continue to occur in many primary English classrooms without the level of guidance to enable children to produce successful texts.

6.5 Task specifications – Showing children *how* to write

My analysis of the Task Specifications of writing lessons in this study has shown how little of the discourse was dedicated to teaching students *how* to write. This was in contrast to the dominance of procedural directions that often emerged as long passages in the regulative register and is supported by the research of Chouliaraki (1998), Ludwig and Herschell (1998) and Christie (1993) who found teachers often focus more on procedural understandings than on matters relating to knowledge of the task. Too often the Task Specification contained little more than an announcement of the task, which may or may not have been foreshadowed in the Task Orientation. In these lessons this was followed by, either some basic directions and/or a question asking for someone in the class to produce a model sentence. The following example illustrates this point. The discourse quoted followed procedural directions:

From Lesson 2.4 (Visit to Science Museum):

T: Someone will, would have enjoyed a gallery more than someone else.

Now what sort of things will you include in your report? Adam.

In addition to texts that provided the source of common experience, in the text-based lessons, other models of writing were also drawn on in a few of these lessons. One teacher provided a model or part model of her own writing in each of the four lessons I observed her teaching. On one occasion, having talked through her own model letter, she told her class that they should write their own letter, and by implication not borrow from her model. However, the letter was left for the children to view if necessary. In other lessons the model was purposely left incomplete. Two of her lessons involved a change of genre between the text discussed in the Task Orientation and the writing task that was problematic for children who had few resources of their own.

6.6 Suggested principles for writing lessons

This teacher's most successful lesson, Lesson 6.4, was the most supportive and well structured of all the lessons in this study. It was supportive for the following reasons that can also be construed as some general principles for pedagogic antecedents of writing lessons as follows:

1. The writing task should be in the same genre as the model text and linked to the field of experience of the text.
2. Asking all children to write on the same topic, allowed later instruction on how to write be more direct and effective.
3. The Task Orientation should build knowledge of the field of enquiry in a progressive way, eg beginning with framing student's mind set by reminding them of a previous lesson using similar text.
4. The use of a good quality model text needs to be read, then partly reread aloud and talked through with input from the teacher in relation to a simple model of generic structure.

5. The discussion should stay focused on knowledge related to the forthcoming task and include lingering references to distinctive models of literate language appropriate for the genre.
6. Having built common knowledge in the Task Orientation teachers need to recontextualise this knowledge in the Task Specification showing children how to structure their writing. This should be related to the model and displayed on the board or overhead.

In Lesson 6.4, despite the positive support offered, the language choices discussed in the Task Orientation were not revisited in the Task Specification. Rather, the children were directed to work out their own stories. Therefore, further opportunities to highlight certain language features, such as possible beginnings of sentences, were passed by. Instead, the children were told to:

T: **Think of where** the emu was living.
 Think of what it might have been living with,
 who it might have been living with.
 Who it may have been friends with.
 The middle part, **think of what's** the conflict.
 What happened to change the original. **Mmm?**

Although the recursive discussions in the Task Orientation had given considerable exposure to literate discourse and the brief notes left on the easel would have been aids to memory, further discussion of language choices children might transfer to their own writing would have given more specific guidance on what and how to write.

The value of explicit preparation for writing was exemplified by remarks made by a child who was considered a good writer by the teacher of Lesson 6.4. On a previous occasion this child had told me that he sometimes found it difficult to think of ideas about what to write. After he

had finished his story of *Why the Emu Cannot Fly*, he told me it was easier to think of ideas for this story because:

‘...you get more of an idea when you have another story like the kangaroo thing, whereas I didn't have much of an idea before. Like when you try to think of a title at first and all that.’

6.7 Student uptake: A brief excursion

The following observations include material beyond the parameters of this study, but they provide another justification for my use of Lesson 6.4 and are also included for their likely interest to readers.

Immediately after this lesson I interviewed the teacher (see below and Appendix D) and asked for her comments on the writing produced by James, the child referred to the SCC with literacy difficulties. Her comments were:

T: James was um, he was, he was great.
He, he really sat down and planned and I think he enjoyed doing it.

Our interview continued:

O: Right and you would say that's one of his better bits of writing?
T: Oh that's certainly one of his better bits of writing, yes.
O: Well it certainly looks better than anything I think I've seen.
T: Compared to um, again just yesterday's journal, which is, was about two lines I think, yes.
Right, 'Today I going to get a hair cut, and I'm going to soccer'.
Again the tenses.
Um, maybe he needs a, a structure.
O: Well I think the structure's certainly helped him there, hasn't it?

The teacher was aware of the child's difficulty with tenses, but did not remark on his restricted, ritualised writing in a typical 'oral-literate' pattern which characterised every

journal entry he wrote. Each entry comprised one or more simple observations joined by ‘and’ followed by a repetitive brief comment such as ‘it was good’. His improved writing, as well as having a recognisable structure, incorporated more sophisticated language choices he had ‘taken’ from the teaching model. His teacher identified the ‘structure’ or genre information, an important component in her teaching that day, as the factor that enabled the child to write with confidence. The preparation he had experienced in class meant he knew most of what he wanted to write and how he should write it. This was particularly true of the orientation that had been modelled extensively.

6.8 Access to pedagogy

For all students to participate fully in classroom discourse, including the more marginalised students, an accessible and explicit pedagogy is mandatory. Too often the discourse of the classroom becomes a social and cultural barrier because it is incomprehensible or misunderstood by many students. Before coming to school it is expected that most children will have acquired the ‘repertoires’ (Gibbons, 2002; Kramer-Dahl, Teo & Chia, under review) of horizontal (common-sense) discourses that are usually learned at an early age by participation in a culture together with guidance and support from significant adults. Children who have been immersed in an ‘elaborated’ coding environment (Bernstein, 1996) from an early age have the added advantage of exposure to more complex discourse and understandings likely to afford educational privilege (Painter, 2007). This is because higher-level understandings are more likely to blend easily with the abstract and metaphorical language of vertical discourse found in an educational environment. As Bourne has claimed, ‘negotiating can construct socially disadvantaged children as successful learners’ (Bourne, 2003:487). Children who do not have that advantage require a high degree of explicit teaching

to enable them to ‘tune into’ both discourses of schooling and discourses relating to the field of experience, ie into the regulative register and the instructional register. Therefore, for a pedagogy to be accessible teaching must be visible and explicit in the way it inducts children into literate discourse.

6.9 Implications for an inclusive pedagogy for teaching writing

This study has raised a number of issues to consider when developing an inclusive pedagogy for teaching writing. If the ultimate aim is for each student to develop control over language to allow full participation in society, ‘control’ must encompass far more than a check-list of individual reading and writing skills. Writing involves creativity - a process of making choices, being able to understand, manipulate and experiment with literate language resources. These are all things which beginning or struggling writers are unable to bring to the task.

In the classroom, poor writers often either avoid the task or resort to a well-rehearsed ritual in the oral language tradition. In contrast, children who are good writers are invariably good (and even prolific) readers. The best writers have immersed themselves in books and/or have been encouraged to listen to and talk about literate texts. In doing so they have become readers who have implicitly learned to read like writers. In a recorded interview with Colin Thiele, replayed on ABC radio the day after his death, he told of days at the one-teacher country school he attended when bad weather prevented most children from attending. On those days the teacher suspended the curriculum, gathered the remaining few children around the stove and read to them. He valued those times above all others for what he gained, loved and learned through an immersion into the world and language of books.

In reading to students, an essential practice, which should not be underestimated, is to expose them to a continuous range of text models. However, exposure alone will not lead all children to become writers, nor will progress necessarily come with practice and minimal intervention on an individual level as practised in the ‘benevolent inertia’ (Martin, 1985) of whole language. This study has shown that if writing lessons are to be effective and inclusive they should begin with model texts, that the task should be linked to the language patterns and content of the text and be written in the same genre as the model. In addition, teacher talk should give all children access to the understandings and ‘know how’ necessary to produce effective pieces of writing.

Above all, the successful writing lesson prepares students for writing with explicit teaching *before* they begin the task. The task itself should be clearly articulated early in the lesson so that students can be directed towards what will be taught and learned. My study demonstrates the value of a thorough building of shared understandings regarding the field of experience. The process of developing the resulting common knowledge should include input by the teacher and should be enhanced by negotiation and constructive questioning strategies.

A strong implication from this study is that text-based lessons should form a core-teaching component in a curriculum for teaching writing and that these lessons should initially be based on narrative texts (Kress, 1982). Lessons built around a literate text provide greater opportunities for showing students *how* to write, especially when a carefully chosen extract is used as a model. The model text, coming from a familiar context, is then available for teachers to show students how an author uses literate language and various writing

techniques, within a particular framework, in the author's chosen genre. If the structure of the text, the language resources and the meanings they carry, are explicitly discussed, students should then be allowed to 'take' from that language and use similar patterns in their own writing. To make the process of writing more explicit teacher and students can engage in an exercise of joint construction before students write alone. In doing so, students may emulate the style of writing learned from the model and eventually transfer the demonstrated resources to their own individual piece of writing. Once a bank of such resources have been built through further lessons, many students will automatically transfer resources within their experiences to other appropriate contexts.

6.10 Explicit Teaching

Finally, there is the issue of explicit teaching and the degree of explicitness. If children are to be 'tuned into' language they need to know how to listen and what to listen for. They need to have a familiarity with the basics of a meta-language so they too can talk about text (eg what an 'orientation' is, its function and construction). Abstract and metaphoric language must be discussed, or explained by students and reconceptualised by the teacher, so that the meanings are made available to all students.

Such a level of explicit teaching is provided in the Scaffolding Literacy pedagogy. This pedagogy allows for discussion of a text at different points, beginning with an overview of the whole text to provide the initial context. Once an extract is chosen to teach writing, the context of the extract is explained, before rereading for the writing lesson. After the general meaning and understanding of the passage has been established, a closer look at the author's language choices, at sentence, phrase and word level is undertaken in increasing partnership

with students as common knowledge is established. The level of discussion aims to ‘hand over’ (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005) to students the ability to reflect on language by making them aware of the power it has to inform the reader. They learn what language does, how it works and how they too can use language in their own writing. This explicit preparation gives students not only the tools of a writer, but an understanding of the nuances practised by real authors and a powerful methodology which shows students how to ‘take’ literate resources and use them in their own writing.

Summary

This study has shown the importance of classroom antecedents of writing lessons in providing pathways that lead children to recognise and understand literate discourse which they can later take into their own writing. This is especially important for children who are most vulnerable to school failure, yet all can benefit from visible and supportive preparation through an entirely explicit pedagogy.

The study did not seek to analyse the resulting texts produced by children following these lessons. However, it would be helpful if further studies could explore links between texts produced by children ‘at risk’ and different kinds of convergence of regulative and instructional registers in the Task Orientations and Task Specifications of writing lessons. It was disappointing that the preparation for writing offered by the teachers in the lessons studied was so often minimal as there were many missed opportunities where interactions could have been extended and developed. Changing those interactions in ways suggested by the outcomes of this study raises possibilities for developing the teaching of writing in primary school classrooms. Gibbons (2004) points to the value of quality classroom

interactions, ‘changing the means of education – the kind of interactions that occur in the classroom – has the potential to change the activity of education itself.’ (Gibbons, 2004:198). A supportive pedagogy such as that of Scaffolding Literacy demonstrates a way in which teachers can interact with students by explicitly showing them the richness of literary language with the ultimate aim of guiding them confidently into becoming successful writers.

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Appendix A1 & A2 omitted for privacy reasons

Appendix B

Lesson 3.1

Written by target child attending SCC.

Being a Third grader

1. Getting ready for school.
2. Going to school
3. Thing I do at school
4. Going home from school
5. After school job

When I wake up I get ready for school and I have breakfast and then I go to school.

Being a Third Grader

1 Getting ready for School

2 Going to School

3 Thing I do at School

4 Going home from School

5 After School Job

wen I wac up I Getting ready for school

and I have Beft and I Bact my Teff

and than I Go to School

Appendix C

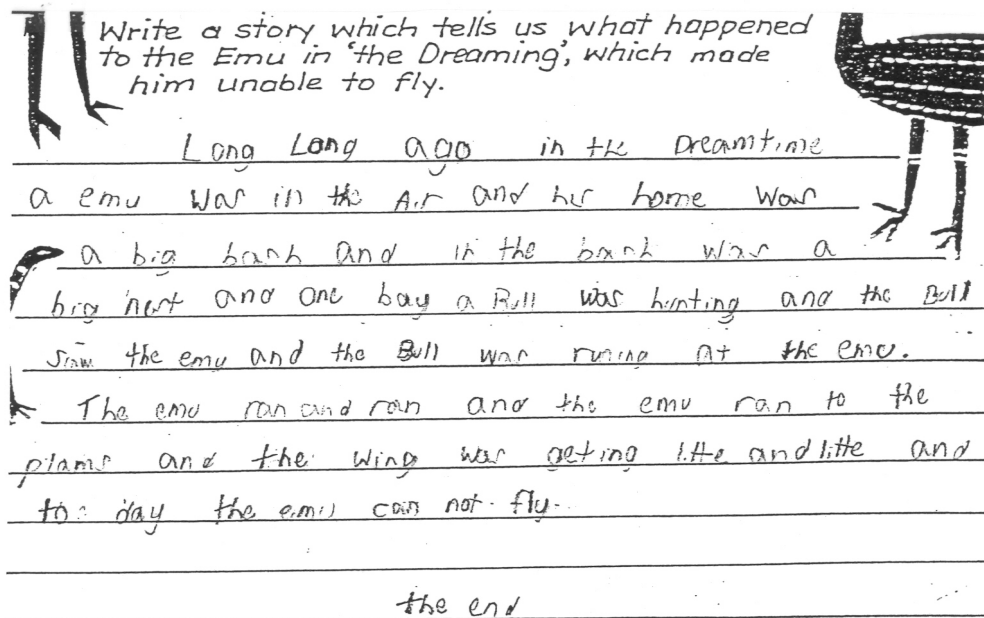
Lesson 6.4

Written by target child attending SCC.

Write a story which tells us what happened to the Emu in 'the Dreaming', which made him unable to fly.

Long Long ago in the Dreamtime
a emu was in the Air and her home was
a big bash and in the bash was a
big nest and one bay a Bull was hunting and the Bull
saw the emu and the Bull was running at the emu.
The emu ran and ran and the emu ran to the
plains and the wing was getting litte and litte and
to day the emu can not fly.

the end

The image shows a child's handwritten story on lined paper. The text is written in cursive and includes a title, a prompt, and the story itself. There are two simple line drawings: one of an emu's legs and feet on the right side, and one of a bull's head and neck on the left side. The story ends with 'the end'.

Why the Emu Cannot Fly

Long long ago in the Dreamtime a emu was in the Air and her home was a big bash and in the bash was a big nest and one bay a Bull was hunting and the bull saw the emu and the Bull was running at the emu.

The emu ran and ran and the emu ran to the plains and the wing was getting litte and litte and to day the emu can not fly.

the end

Appendix D

Lesson 6.4 Teacher/Observer Interview

Extract from teacher/observer interview conducted immediately after the writing lesson.

- T: Oh right, on the children's work, yes.
Um, Jayde took a long time to actually start, and to start planning.
Ah, she was able to say, to rattle off orally what was all happening
and then it took her a while to, to actually write it down.
But it was different as she said.
And Julian took a while as well, he was chatting,
mainly because he doesn't like writing at the moment.
Um, and James was um, he was, he was great.
He, he really sat down and planned and I think he enjoyed doing it.
He, simply because at the end he's opted to shade this in.
- O: Right and you would say that's one of his better bits of writing?
- T: Oh that's certainly one of his better bits of writing, yes.
- O: Well it certainly looks better than anything I think I've seen.
- T: Compared to um, again just yesterday's journal,
which is, was about two lines I think, yes.
Right, today I going to get a hair cut, and I'm going to soccer.
Again the tenses.
Um, maybe he needs a, a structure.
- O: Well I think the structure's certainly helped him there hasn't it?
And um, certainly the planning stage,
because he obviously thought about it, that, in fine detail.
- T: Mmm.