

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

**AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF A GROUP OF FIRST  
LANGUAGE STANDARD EIGHT PUPILS IN A "MODEL  
C" SCHOOL ATTEMPTING TO COMMUNICATE  
MEANING IN WRITING**

A dissertation presented in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Education  
specialising in Language and Literature Education

by

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## ABSTRACT

This is an ethnographic study of the writing processes and meaning-making attempts of a group of English first language pupils in a Cape Town secondary school. The project was based on a two-stage design. During the first stage, pupils' writing behaviour was observed, and their writing samples and written reflections provided data for analysis. In the second stage, two "key informants" were selected and interviewed, after a preliminary analysis of their written work.

Three main theoretical fields provided the conceptual framework for the project: process writing theory and research, discourse and genre theory, and theories of identity. In the first research stage, process theory highlighted those aspects of the school writing event which were shown to assist or obstruct pupil writers in communicating their meanings in writing. In the second stage, discourse and genre theory, and especially the concept of intertextuality, provided insights into how young writers borrow from other textual resources, and construct roles for themselves and their readers. The text analyses and the interview findings supported those theories of identity which showed how subjects may construct multiple identities and roles for themselves in conversation and in writing.

This study found that school discourse stresses the significance of socially valued "public" genres over personal expressive writing, and regards school writing as a form of social behaviour where correctness and neatness are of more importance than the communication of meaning. It appears that the teacher should remain central in the school writing event, and should explicitly teach pupil-writers how to select and reconstruct those textual

borrowings and writer-roles which allow them control. Developing a conscious awareness of process seems to be problematic in the case of less confident writers who have developed negative writer-identities which act as a block to the conscious exploration of writing processes. The notion of identity emerged as central to writing, and the suggestions for an approach to writing with which this dissertation concludes are built around this concept.

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## **CONTENTS**

<b>CHAPTER ONE : INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER TWO: THEORY REVIEW</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>CHAPTER THREE : RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, DESIGN AND ETHICS</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>CHAPTER FOUR : STAGE ONE: A STUDY OF TWO STANDARD EIGHT CLASSES ENGAGED IN THE COMMUNICATION OF PERSONAL MEANING IN A WRITING TASK, AND THEIR REFLECTIONS ON THIS TASK</b> .....	<b>37</b>
<b>CHAPTER FIVE : STAGE TWO: A STUDY OF THE TEXTS AND INTERVIEW RESPONSES OF TWO KEY INFORMANTS</b> .....	<b>74</b>
<b>CHAPTER SIX : CONCLUSIONS</b> .....	<b>109</b>
<b>GLOSSARY OF DISCOURSE TERMS</b> .....	<b>117</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	<b>121</b>
<b>APPENDIX ONE : DIAGRAM OF THE DISCOURSE FRAMEWORK OF THE SCHOOL WRITING EVENT</b> .....	<b>132</b>
<b>APPENDIX TWO : MATERIAL FED BACK TO THE TWO RESEARCH CLASSES</b> .....	<b>133</b>

<b>APPENDIX THREE : KEY INFORMANTS' WRITTEN TEXTS . . .</b>	<b>137</b>
<b>APPENDIX FOUR : DIAGRAM OF THE SCHOOL WRITING EVENT . . . . .</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>APPENDIX FIVE : INTERVIEW MATERIAL USED IN INTERVIEW ONE . . . . .</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>APPENDIX SIX : EXTRACTS OF TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW TWO . . . . .</b>	<b>144</b>
<b>APPENDIX SEVEN : MATERIAL FED BACK TO KATHY . . . .</b>	<b>158</b>
<b>APPENDIX EIGHT : MATERIAL FED BACK TO BRANDON . . .</b>	<b>159</b>

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### ***Methodology:***

This is an ethnographic study of the writing processes and meaning-making attempts of a group of sixty-three English first language pupils in the middle stages of a secondary school in the Cape Town southern suburbs. Ethnography, which derives from an interpretive paradigm, is a particularly appropriate choice of methodology in an investigation into the communication of meaning in writing. The ethnographer and her subjects are engaged in a similar activity to the writer and her audience: that of mutually negotiating their interpretations of experience. Because the research process is a journey of discovery, with the researcher's lens focusing progressively more sharply upon those themes which appear to be most significant, my text moves recursively between a narrative and a reflective mode of discourse.

#### ***Context:***

I chose as my research subjects two Standard Eight first language classes in a middle-class "Model C" school. My choice was restricted to this context as I was operating there as "participant-observer" (i.e. as teacher and researcher), and I had been allocated these two classes to teach. I opted to research writing at Standard Eight level as this is a transitional stage between "middle" and "high" school, where the teaching emphasis begins to move from personal to public forms of writing.



The "Model C" label requires explanation. In 1990, during the final stages of apartheid government, the State attempted to maintain the status quo for the future in "white" schools by giving the parent governing body greater control over pupil admissions. Pupils of other races could be admitted if eighty per cent of the total parent body of each school voted in favour of this admissions policy. Unexpectedly, there was overwhelming parent support in most "white" schools throughout the country for an open admissions policy. Such schools were labelled "Model C" schools (although this designation no longer applies), and rapidly acquired racially mixed school populations. These include white, usually monolingual English or Afrikaans speaking pupils; black (African) multilingual speakers, who communicate with varying degrees of proficiency in English and/or Afrikaans and at least one African language; and in certain areas coloured bilingual pupils who speak English and Afrikaans in their home communities. (The coloured people of the Western Cape were originally of mixed racial origins but are now a culturally distinct group.) Muslim and Indian pupils also form minorities in some schools. Most of the "Model C" schools, such as the school where my research took place, seem to have followed an immersion policy, with coloured and black pupils being constrained to adapt to the cultural patterns and language practices already in existence at the school. Such pupils often tend to acquire "outsider" status and a negative self-image, and consequently form subcultural groups. This situation is aggravated by the fact that these pupils frequently come from an under-financed, disadvantaged educational background, and a home culture which is not congruent with the culture of the school.

The school in which I conducted my research has some distinctive characteristics. Because of its geographical position, it is more homogeneous than most (previously) "Model C" schools. The pupil

population at the time of writing consists almost entirely of middle-class coloured, Muslim and white pupils, with the white pupils in the majority. The interviewing stage of my research process revealed the need for researchers to be sensitive to the complexities and particularities of every research situation. One of my interview subjects was coloured and male, the other white and female, with the latter showing far less fluency and confidence in her conversation and writing than the former. My interviewees' different levels of assertiveness and writing proficiency indicated that, although they seemed to follow a typical gender pattern of behaviour, they were not representative of their respective cultural groups.

The two Standard Eight classes which acted as my research subjects in the first stage of the research process had different characters. The 8-C class contained pupils of mixed ability, with few very weak writers. This was a vital and enthusiastic group of pupils, who generally possessed a fairly high sense of self-esteem and the motivation to engage with tasks which were set for them. The 8-2 class was a group of poor achievers, and most of these pupils were relatively inexperienced writers. Here the pupils suffered from poor self-esteem, and had developed negative attitudes towards schoolwork, achievement and the school system.

***Process:***

The research project was generated by my curiosity about how pupil-writers communicate their meanings in the school writing classroom. I recorded my observations of pupils' writing behaviour, and I examined pupils' written texts and their written and verbal responses on the topic of writing. My investigation initially concentrated on the influence of the school context and on the school writing event as a socialisation process. The research focus

then narrowed to a micro-analysis of how individual pupils construct their texts, and, in this process, negotiate and reconstruct their meanings.

***Intended Value:***

This dissertation aims to provide

- a deeper understanding of how young people use, or might use, the writing process as a means of creating, discovering and communicating meaning;
- proposals for a pedagogy which may allow the writer's identity and voice to be projected in the text;
- suggestions for further research in the field of school writing.

The ethnographer acknowledges the boundedness of her research context. I have therefore avoided recommending specific practices and policies which may be applied to other South African school contexts and communities, especially those which are situated in different sociocultural frameworks. Nevertheless, my conclusions concerning identity in writing seem especially pertinent in the context of the mixed-race school. The pedagogical proposals with which I conclude this dissertation suggest ways in which teachers of writing may affirm the cultural identities and the experiences of marginalised pupil groups in culturally diverse schools.

***Appendices:***

In my analysis of pupil texts I have frequently drawn from discourse theory and analysis, and I have therefore included a glossary of discourse terms after the final chapter of this dissertation. I have also appended certain samples of the research data, thus acknowledging the researcher's partial perspective and allowing for alternative interpretations.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THEORY REVIEW

#### *THEORETICAL FIELDS*

My investigation into how pupil-writers communicate their meanings in writing was informed by three main theoretical fields:

- process writing theory and research;
- discourse and genre theory;
- theories of identity.

These three lines of thought reflect the chronological progression of my research. My concern about the loss of personal meaning in pupil-writing in the school context led me first to explore the process writing movement of the seventies and eighties. In the second stage of the research process, discourse and genre theory, and especially the notion of intertextuality, offered greater insights into how writers negotiate their meanings with their readers. My interest in writer-identity which evolved from my research findings, and my growing awareness of the multiple roles adopted by speakers and writers in discourse, generated my interest in theories of identity.

From certain elements of discourse theory which seemed relevant to my investigation I developed the model of the Discourse Framework of the School Writing Event (see Appendix One). I conclude this chapter with an outline of the theoretical bases of this model.

## ***PROCESS WRITING THEORY AND RESEARCH***

### ***Reaction to Traditional Pedagogies***

Process writing developed as a reaction to previous composition teaching methods, which required students to formulate their ideas beforehand, to devise a preliminary detailed plan and to conform to a prescribed rhetorical framework (Zamel, 1982: 197). Current-traditional rhetoric was a popular method of teaching pupils to produce extended written discourse: the pupil was trained in increasingly complex discourse structures, each embedded in the next largest form (Silva, 1990: 13 - 14). Zamel (1987: 700) criticises teachers of writing for being dependent on reductionist rules and formulae, and for being over-concerned with rhetorical forms, uniform standards, surface-level features and grammatical correctness.

Process research highlights certain negative aspects of traditional writing pedagogies. Jacobs' study (1982; in Krapels, 1990: 40), and that of Taylor, West and Nightingale (1987; in Nightingale, 1988: 70), show that grammatical accuracy tends to regress in more complex tasks, where the writer's focus is on her message; therefore an emphasis on correctness can affect the writer's capacity to concentrate on the communication of meaning. Rose's study of "blockers" and "non-blockers" (1984) provides evidence that rule-based and skills-based methodologies can be restrictive and may cause writer's block. Sommers (1980) similarly discovered that an obsession with writing as form blocks the process of writing as discovery; and Hildenbrand (1985) found a focus on product and mechanical correctness fosters anxiety and prevents risk-taking.

### ***Process Principles and Practices***

Process theory and practice is a humanistic approach which seeks

to identify those writing processes which skilled writers find most natural and most productive. Process researchers have discovered that writing is a non-linear, exploratory, recursive, "messy" process during which the writer discovers meaning (Emig, 1971; Raimes, 1983; Zamel, 1983; Rico, 1988).

Johns (1990: 25 - 26) distinguishes between two groups of process theorists:

1. The **expressivists** (Britton, 1975; Elbow, 1986; Zamel, 1982, 1983, 1987) view writing as self-discovery, and encourage activities such as journal writing, where students and teachers engage in written dialogue (Spack and Sadow, 1983), freewriting, or the non-stop generation of words and ideas (Elbow, 1986: 45; Thesen and Volbrecht, 1994: 7), and personal narrative (Katz, 1995), in order to promote fluency and confidence. Form is seen as being dictated by meaning (Zamel, 1982: 197; Johns, 1990: 32), and an overemphasis on correctness as obstructing the generative process (Zamel, 1982: 198 - 199). The writer writes for herself, or for a self-constructed audience which suits the writer's text and purpose (Johns, 1990: 30).

2. The **cognitivist** approach sees writing as thinking and problem-solving, and places greater stress on planning (Flower, 1981). It identifies the following overlapping stages: prewriting (when ideas are generated), writing (initial drafting), rewriting (redrafting and revising, generally assisted by peer-group input), and, in the final stages, editing (checking for correctness and cohesion) (Murray, 1980; Flower, 1981; Silva, 1990). Although the main focus in the cognitivist approach is on the writer's thought-processes and composition strategies, there is a strong emphasis on the writer developing a sense of audience (Flower, 1981: 121 - 165). Both

process approaches view themselves as being complementary, with expressivist techniques being used mainly in the prewriting stage.

Process researchers have identified a number of typical writing behaviours. Zamel's study of ESL skilled writers (1982) found that few students use a formal plan when approaching writing tasks; in addition, students need the time to leave their writing and come back to it later. It is common for writers to pause frequently and to re-read their work in order to let ideas germinate (Perl, 1980; Zamel, 1982: 200; Rimes, 1985, in Krapels, 1990: 44). Hildenbrand's study (1985) showed the benefit of student collaboration and peer feedback during the writing process; and Sommers (1980) and Monahan (1984) found that skilled writers revise by re-ordering substantial segments of their texts, whereas unskilled writers are more concerned with form and superficial correctness.

Campbell (1996: 137) sums up the process movement of the seventies and eighties as "a dramatic shift in pedagogy from the teacher's having nearly total authority over students' writing to students having authority over their own work". The writing classroom becomes a collaborative workshop in which pupils, unrestricted by time limits, select their topics and work through their composing processes in consultation with their peers and with minimal interference from the teacher (Silva, 1990: 15; Campbell, 1996: 137). The teacher's role in assigning tasks and assessing pupils' written products is thus vastly diminished, and pupils are theoretically empowered to own their communicative processes. The early process theorists therefore regarded the process movement as a democratic movement which acted against the constraints of tradition and the establishment (Campbell, 1996: 138).

### ***Criticisms of the Process Approach***

The process approach has certain limitations. It stresses writing **behaviour**, instead of **what** and **how** the writer is trying to communicate through the process of composing. That is, process research does not try to explain the writer's perceptions of personal and social reality which she is trying to communicate; nor does it attend to the discourse frameworks within which she is operating (see page 117 for definitions of "discourse"). Process theory assumes that writing is a transparent means of reflecting an external reality, rather than a process during which certain genres and discourse practices may help to construct "reality" for the writer. The expressivists, in addition, place little stress on audience, so that writing is seen as a personal rather than an interpersonal activity: the creative expression of ideas, instead of the negotiation of meaning with a reader.

The process approach has been criticised by both the political right and the left (ibid: 138). The traditionalists accuse process theorists of neglecting skills-training. The social constructivists, especially those of the genre school, also call for a return to basics, but from a different perspective. They criticise process theory for operating in a sociocultural vacuum, and for ignoring the power relations constructed in different forms of discourse. For the constructivists, "knowledge, language, and the nature of discourse are determined for the writer by the 'discourse community' for whom the writer is producing text" (Johns, 1990: 28). Writers therefore need to be equipped with those skills and secondary discourses (i.e. discourses which are not part of one's primary socialisation) which will give them access to powerful discourse communities (Horowitz, 1986); and they should be given a critical understanding of genre (Kress, 1994: 124 - 126).



Certain critics claim that the process approach is culturally biased. Notions of child-centred learning and individual ownership tend to match the cultural patterns of middle-class children from child-centred homes (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993: 6). Process theory assumes a uniform writer identity, and does not attend to the ways in which the multiple identities of gender, race and class affect student writing (Jarratt, 1991; in Campbell, 1996: 138). Its pupil-centred pedagogy favours those writers "whose voice is closest to the literate culture of power in industrial society" (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993: 6), and ignores the unequal value placed on different voices in the wider social context.

Process research has also generally disregarded the immediate context, in that much early process writing research was conducted under laboratory conditions rather than in the classroom. More recent research reports on classroom writing programmes, such as that of Peyton et al (1994), cast doubt on the feasibility of using process methods in conditions where time, space and resources are restricted. Peyton et al record how unskilled students were unable to generate text owing to poor self-esteem, refused to revise, failed to benefit from consultation with inexperienced peers, and were highly dependent on the teacher for modelling and support. Payne (in Campbell, 1996: 139) describes the difficulties she experienced as a result of giving up her authority role in order to implement process methods. Cope and Kalantzis criticise the process approach for relegating the teacher to the role of manager, rather than expert; they stress the need for explicit teaching of literacy on the grounds that orality and literacy are different both in their discursive structures and in the nature of the learning processes involved (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993: 6).

Process theory is generally seen as oppositional to genre theory,

which argues that writers need to be taught the "genres", or conventionalised text-types, which will allow them access to powerful discourses and institutions. Nevertheless, certain writers see process methods as useful in the learning of genre skills and secondary discourses, especially for unskilled and second language writers. Britton et al claim that expressive writing forms the basis for other modes of writing (Britton et al, 1975: 14). Spack (1988) advocates the use of process-centred tasks based on the use of texts or data at tertiary level, and Spack (ibid) and Katz (1995) argue that students' personal writing may productively form the springboard for critical and expository writing.

### ***DISCOURSE AND GENRE THEORY***

#### ***The Development of Discourse Theory: The Linguistic Model***

Theories of discourse seek to provide analytical frameworks for the study of spoken and written communication within its context. Early discourse theory was a departure from the structural linguistics of de Saussure and Chomsky. De Saussure held that, by an unspoken social agreement, linguistic expressions and speech styles are governed by a system of rules and determinate meanings shared by all members of the speech community (Esland et al, 1981: 13; Graddol and Swann, 1989: 145). He therefore posited that any systematic study of language should be a study of the system itself, the "langue", and not of its use (Fairclough, 1992: 62). Chomsky focused on the principle of "competence" - the notion that speakers have an internalised rule-system that allows them to produce and understand grammatical sentences irrespective of the social context (Esland et al, 1981: 15 - 16). Like de Saussure, he advised that language study should ignore the specific social context of language use.

The linguistic concept of discourse developed away from the Saussurean and Chomskyan views to include the context of the immediate situation and the study of language in use. The various forms of linguistic analysis include speech act theory, interactional sociolinguistics, the ethnography of communication, pragmatics, conversation analysis, and variation analysis (Schiffrin, 1994: 5). Linguistic approaches to discourse share an emphasis on the following:

- higher-level organisational features of the text;
- interaction between speaker/writer and hearer/reader;
- the situational context of language use.

This model ignores the power relations implicit in communicative events. The text is regarded as a "communicative occurrence" whose communicative effectiveness depends largely upon how the textual elements are organised to produce cohesion and coherence (see glossary page 117)(De Beaugrande and Dressler, 1981: 3.- 7). The term "discourse" generally refers to different types of language used in different social situations (for example, "classroom discourse") (Fairclough, 1992: 3).

### ***The Poststructural Model***

In the poststructural model, discourse theory is strongly influenced by social theory. One of the key proponents of this model of discourse is Michel Foucault (1972), whose chief concern is the relationship between language and power. In the poststructural view, "discourse" refers to different ways of structuring areas of knowledge, social practices, social entities and social subjects (Fairclough, 1992: 3). Texts are linguistic manifestations of discourse which arise in specific social situations (Kress, 1989: 12, 18). Linguistic differences are viewed as symptomatic of social differences; and the status and value attached to certain language practices is seen as created and sustained by ideologies and social

institutions (Graddol and Swann, 1989: 146).

Graddol and Swann (ibid: 157 - 164) identify the following as two key features of the poststructural model of discourse:

1. An emphasis on the **role of context** in determining the meaning of utterances and texts.
2. The claim that **language determines consciousness**.

These features are explained more fully below.

1. Poststructuralists attack the notions that words and sentences have fixed and stable meanings, and that ideas may be transferred from one mind to another through language. Poststructuralists insist on the "arbitrary nature of the sign" (Giddens, 1987: 201): they argue that meaning is dependent on context, the latter including both the linguistic context of the utterance or sentence, and the social and political relations surrounding the communicative act. Discursive practices therefore do not have absolute meanings, but are structured by social contexts, and the power relations implicit in them. Discourse analysis, in this view, therefore needs to attend as much to the way in which the power relations of the social context have structured the discursive practice as to the study of the language used in utterances and texts.

2. Poststructuralism also assigns language a powerful role in determining a speaker's thoughts and consciousness. It claims that discourses construct the individual's subjectivity; that is, her unconscious and conscious self. The subject is decentred, in that she cannot act as a conscious agent (Giddens, 1987: 205). The individual's subjectivity is seen as fragmented, or "dispersed", to use Foucault's term (1972: 54 - 55), as competing discourses draw forth different responses and construct various subject positions - that is, modes of thinking and acting (Kress, 1989: 37) - for the

individual. Poststructuralists therefore insist that meanings can only be changed by transforming the social relations in which discursive practices are embedded, rather than by changing language practices.

### ***Intertextuality***

The poststructuralists' emphasis on the decentring of the subject accords with their claim that the writer is irrelevant to the creation and interpretation of texts (Giddens, 1987: 206; Barthes, 1992: 114 - 118). Poststructuralists and process writing theorists therefore take oppositional attitudes to the notion of the writer as creative generator of meaning. Barthes (ibid) argues that the meaning of the text is located, not in its creation by the writer, but in its interpretation by the reader. He deconstructs the notion of the author-as-creator by claiming that all texts consist of intertextual elements. The concept of intertextuality is a major theme in Kristeva's writing (1986; in Fairclough, 1992: 101), and is also an important element in both Barthes' and Foucault's theories of discourse. Barthes (1992: 116) describes the text as "a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture". Foucault similarly regards every text as being "caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network" (Foucault, 1972: 23). All texts, in this view, are constituted by elements of other texts, and the writer can only imitate, not create.

### ***Criticisms of the Poststructural Model***

Graddol and Swann criticise the deterministic position of the poststructural model of discourse. They argue that "language comprehension and production require an active role by a reasoning speaker or hearer" (Graddol and Swann, 1989: 165). Giddens takes issue with the deconstruction of the writer as agent in written

discourse; he comments that "the relegation of the author to the role of a shadowy adjunct to writing is manifestly unsatisfactory" (Giddens, 1987: 211).

Bakhtin's notion of dialogicality, upon which Kristeva drew (Fairclough, 1992: 101), suggests that the writer actively negotiates her meanings in dialogue, not only with her reader, but also with the voices of other texts. For Bakhtin, "each utterance is filled with various kinds of responsive reactions to other utterances" (Bakhtin, 1986: cited in Wertsch, 1990: 119). This view allows the writer greater agency in the process of constructing or reconstructing meanings, in taking up subject positions, and in resisting dominant discourses, through the mediation of the text.

### ***Genre Theory***

The concept of "genre" is a development of Halliday's notion of "register" - that is, "the kind of variation in language that goes with variation in the context of situation" (Halliday and Hasan, 1985: 38). Genres are conventionalised forms of texts used in specific social contexts. Genre theory is closely related to discourse theory; Kress (1989: 20) explains that, just as discourse carries meanings about the nature of the social institution from which it derives, so genre carries meanings about the conventional social occasions which give rise to the construction of texts. Just as the writer is constrained to adopt a certain subject position by the discourse framework within which she is operating, in the same way she is constrained to take on a particular writer-role by the genre which she is using.

The mastery of certain genres allows their users access to socially powerful discourses (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993: 7). The primary discourses of certain marginalised social groups are far removed

from such genres, and they are therefore excluded from the domains of social power; moreover, such primary discourses are oral-based, and as Kress (1994: 28) and Cope and Kalantzis (1993: 6) point out, orality and literacy differ in their discursive structures and in their processes of learning. Primary oral discourses are acquired; the written genres of secondary discourses must, to a large extent, be learned, especially when they are not highly compatible with the individual's primary discourse (Gee, 1990: 152 - 153). Genre theorists therefore advocate the explicit teaching of genres, particularly to students from historically marginalised groups (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993: 8). By acquiring a metalanguage, such individuals are empowered to understand the social purposes of different genres, to critique and denaturalise socially powerful genres and discourses, and to establish a dialogue between their own cultures and the culture of schooling (ibid: 8, 18, 19).

### ***Criticisms of the Genre Approach***

Reservations about the genre approach have come from outside and inside the movement. Process theorists accuse the genre school of favouring a transmission pedagogy, owing to the latter's stress on skills (ibid: 6). Traditionalists who are preoccupied with the maintenance of educational standards are suspicious of genre theorists' insistence that schools should attempt to achieve equitable outcomes (ibid). Cope and Kalantzis voice the fear that reductionist genre pedagogies may take as their goal the uncritical transmission of powerful discourses and genres, thus implementing the cultural deficit model of literacy teaching (ibid: 16 - 17).

Like the poststructural model of discourse, the genre approach is limited in its stress on the wider social context as determining genres, texts, and writer-reader relationships, and in its lack of focus on how change occurs in written discourse. There seems to

be little field research into actual writing events at secondary level, and into how young writers accede to or resist the dictates of social discourses in their writing practices.

### ***THEORIES OF IDENTITY***

One of the chief causes of conflict in the debate between process and genre theorists is the issue of writer agency. The difference in these theorists' standpoints is echoed in the different theories of identity posited by theorists in the field of psychology. Bruner (1990: 100 - 114) gives an account of these concepts of the self, which bear comparison with:

- process theorists' view of an integrated and creative writer-self;
- poststructuralist notions of subjectivity, and the poststructuralist claim that different discourses construct various subject positions for individuals (Kress, 1989: 37).

The early view of self was similar to the process view in that it envisaged an integrated identity, constructed by the individual. This gave way to various versions of a self constructed in interaction with others. One line of thought denied individual agency, and saw the self as culturally situated and distributed - that is, as constructed by its cultural learning experiences, a multiple product of the situations in which it operates. This view of identity has much in common with Foucault's notion of the "dispersion" of the subject in discourse (Foucault, 1972: 54 - 55). An extension of this non-agentive view saw the self as an official or marginalised stereotype constructed by social power groups.

However, another theoretical view outlined by Bruner shows the self as an autonomous agent as well as a product of social or cultural history. The self is an agent because, firstly, it has the



capacity to reflect on and transform the past in the light of present experiences, and, secondly, because it can conceive of alternative ways of being and acting. Related to this view is the concept of self as storyteller, where the self develops a self-narrative and reconstructs the past to give its experiences coherence and adequacy. Giddens holds the same view of the self as a "reflexive project" in which we continually remake ourselves. Giddens terms this process "the trajectory of the self": a trajectory of development from past to future in which the self creates its own sense of coherence through reinterpreting its past in the light of present experiences and the anticipated future (Giddens, 1991: 75).

Bruner points out that this continuing reconstruction of self involves form as well as content - the text structure itself reorganises the meaning of the content, so as to develop a coherent notion of self. The New London Group similarly sees the process of text production as one of redesigning existing patterns of meaning, so that the text becomes "a unique product of human agency: a transformed meaning.... Through these processes of Design, moreover, meaning-makers remake themselves. They reconstruct and renegotiate their identities" (The New London Group, 1996: 76). This concept of an agentic self, who actively constructs and reconstructs its positions and identities, provides a counterweight to the poststructural view of a non-agentic self constructed in discourse.

### ***THE DISCOURSE FRAMEWORK OF THE SCHOOL WRITING EVENT***

In order to make this theoretical overview more specific to the research context, I have incorporated various aspects of discourse theory into the diagram of the **Discourse Framework of the School Writing Event**. This model centres around the principle of

**negotiation**, and is based on the four elements of **writer**, **reader**, **text** and **context**, which Silva (1990: 18, 20) sees as the cornerstones of the writing process. The **writer** and **reader** are shown as each bringing to the communication process a set of schemata, or knowledge frameworks (Carrell and Eisterhold, 1983: 556 - 562; Zakaluk and Samuels, 1988: 129 - 130; Bock and Winberg, 1993: 70; Baynham, 1995: 13 - 14). According to schema theory, the text does not transparently transmit meaning; it merely offers guidelines to readers, who construct meaning on the basis of previously acquired knowledge (Bock and Winberg, 1993: 70). Baynham describes schemata as "the psycholinguistic correlates of discourse and ideologies: they create the set of structured expectations about how the world is or should be, what is to be expected, taken for granted, given" (Baynham, *ibid*). Schemata are shaped, firstly, by the individual's social experiences, and the subject positions which she adopts in the social discourses which influence her perceptions of reality (Kress, 1989: 10); secondly, by her cultural identity (Bock and Winberg, 1993), which is largely formed by her family and peer group; and thirdly, by her reading experiences: not merely those centred on language, but also those involving visual and media texts (The New London Group, 1996: 64).

The position of **reader** is filled almost exclusively by the writer, as reader of her own work and by the teacher, who acts as target audience and as assessor; the latter therefore wields considerable power in the communicative process (Britton, 1975: 64 - 65; Martin, 1976: 12). The **text** (considered both as the product and the process of a communicative event: see glossary page 119) becomes the site of shared experience, as writer and reader strive to find common ground upon which they may negotiate their meanings; this is what Grice (in Leech and Thomas, 1990: 180) calls the

"Cooperative Principle" of discourse. The text mediates the three functions of discourse which are specified by Halliday (1985: xiii): it is the site on which the negotiation of meanings and relationships takes place (Halliday's "ideational" and "interpersonal" functions of discourse), and it provides "texture" - it shapes the writer's meanings through the way in which the text elements are organised (Halliday's "textual" function of discourse).

The relationship of writer and reader through the medium of the text forms the inner core of the **school writing event**. Street and Street's research shows how school writing events are ways of organising authority structures and social relations in the classroom (Street and Street, 1991: 156 - 159); thus pupils are disciplined in preparation for a hierarchically ordered world of work (The New London Group, 1996: 72). Gee points out that school discourse practices are forms of socialisation into "mainstream ways of using language in speech and print, mainstream ways of making meaning, and of making sense of experience" (Gee, 1990: 67). School discourse practices are therefore a form of induction into the **wider social community**, where the individual voice struggles to be heard and negotiates for an assertive position vis á vis the voices, the cultural practices and the discourse practices of powerful social institutions.

The diagram encapsulates my view of writing as a dynamic and interactive process in which language practices and social practices are interrelated. I have criticised poststructural and genre theory for denying agency to the writer; and I subscribe to the notion of writing as a dialogic encounter of voices. The writer is not only engaged in the negotiation of personal meaning and relationships with a reader through the mediation of the text; she is also engaged in the negotiation of social meaning and relationships with dominant discourses. Writing, in this view, takes place in a discursal

context, rather than merely in a textual or linguistic one. The ways in which the discourses of the school and the wider social context impact upon pupil-writers' attempts to communicate meaning in writing form the major focus of this research project.'

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, DESIGN AND ETHICS

#### *METHODOLOGY*

The theoretical fields which provided the conceptual framework for my investigation indicated a specific type of methodology. Process writing theory stresses the centrality of the writer; social constructivism, and certain theories of identity, claim that meanings are constructed, rather than transferred, during social interaction. The methodology most congruent with these notions is ethnography, which places the active research subject, rather than the researcher, at the centre of the investigation, and regards the process of data collection and interpretation as one of negotiation and meaning construction.

Ethnography is often confused with "qualitative" and "naturalistic" research. The latter are general approaches rather than specific methodologies. Qualitative research, according to Watson-Gegeo (1988: 576), is "concerned with identifying the presence or absence of something and with determining its nature or distinguishing features (in contrast to quantitative research, which is concerned with measurement)". Naturalistic research conducts observations in natural social environments among ongoing activities (ibid: 577). Ethnography uses both qualitative and naturalistic methods, but a more detailed picture of its methodological principles, practices and problems may be drawn by placing these against the background of its disciplinary and paradigmatic origins.

***Origins:***

Ethnography is the research approach of anthropology, where it uses extended periods of participant observation in order to describe and interpret the cultural features of a particular community (Vulliamy, 1999): 13). An ethnography (as product, rather than method) is a detailed description and analysis of a sociocultural context and its social processes (Watson-Gegeo, 1983: 582). Early ethnographic research, such as that of Malinowski, derived from a positivist paradigm, with the researcher seen as an objective observer and reflector of the social and cultural life of his subjects (Harvey, 1992: 71). This approach shares with the quantitative methods used in natural science research the implicit belief that there is an objective reality which may be recorded and represented by a neutral observer (Cameron et al, 1992: 5). Critiques of positivism, associated with traditions such as symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, and philosophical hermeneutics (Vulliamy, 1990: 6; Smith, 1993: 195 - 197) have led to the development of the interpretive paradigm for social science, which argues that the study of human social activity should focus on the way individuals and groups themselves interpret and give meaning to their social situations (Vulliamy, 1990: 8). Interpretive anthropologists, led by Geertz, claimed that the analysis of culture is an interpretive science in search of meaning rather than universal laws (Henstrand, 1993: 90 - 91). Geertz argued that the participant observer can come to understand the ways in which the subjects of research interpret their situation through referring to the networks of meaning which constitute a culture (Harvey, 1992: 72). Geertz's work foreshadowed current ethnographic methodology, which views research in the social sciences as a dialogic encounter between researcher and researched. Researchers consciously locate themselves in their research texts, and regard the results of their research as the

negotiated outcomes of their interactions with their research subjects (ibid).

Anthropology and sociolinguistics have joined forces in applying ethnographic methods to the processes of communication and schooling. The ethnography of communication, pioneered by Fraake, Hymes, Gumperz and Labov, aims to examine the patterns, the functions and the social contexts of speaking (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989: 144). Hymes sees speakers as engaging in different communicative events, each governed by different sets of norms and requiring different competences, according to the social context of the event (Esland et al, 1981: 21 - 24). The ethnography of schooling views the classroom as being composed of a series of communicative events which are influenced by the social, cultural and institutional processes and discourses of the school, and of the wider sociocultural context, which may include family, community, tradition, class, ethnicity and gender (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989: 144). The school writing event which takes place in the English language classroom is one such communicative event, and serves as the focus of this ethnographic research study.

***Methodological Principles:***

Ethnographic research is conducted according to the following principles:

1. It is **contextualised**. It studies social processes in naturally occurring settings (Brause and Mayher, 1991: 59), in which the researcher collects data on an ongoing basis (Vulliamy, 1991: 11). It investigates the effects of sociocultural context on human behaviour, and attends to the significance of social activities to the participants themselves (ibid).

2. It is **intensive**. It seeks to collect a wide array of information from a small number of people, seeking an intensive understanding of each person's processes and understandings (ibid: 59).

3. It is **varied** and **holistic** in its approach. It uses a wide variety of research techniques and data from different sources ("thick description") in order to validate research findings and to provide a complete picture of the cultural situation under study (Hornberger, 1994: 688; Kantor, 1991: 106; Vulliamy, 1991: 11).

4. It is **systematic**, carefully planned and highly organised in its cycle of data collection, researcher reflection, analysis, validation and clear and comprehensive documentation (Brause and Mayher, 1991: 47).

5. It is an **inductive** process by which the researcher generates hypotheses from the data (ibid: 58). Glaser and Strauss (1967; in Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 23) claim that the goal of this inductive process is to build theory that is grounded purely in the data. However, Brause and Mayher (1991: 58 - 59) warn that inductively-derived hypotheses should be regarded as being tentative, and having limited generalisability, recognising the relative unpredictability of human action; in addition, Cameron et al claim that all comprehensive research should respond to the existing literature on the topic (Cameron et al, 1992: 138).

6. It is **interactive**, **negotiated** and **recursive**. Researchers are required to interact with their subjects, and to negotiate both the understandings that result from such interaction, and their research agendas (Cameron, 1992: 128). The researcher frequently operates as participant-observer, adopting both the "emic" and "etic" perspectives. Pike (1964; in Watson-Gegeo, 1988: 579) uses the



term "emic" to refer to "the culturally specific framework used by the members of a society/culture for interpreting and assigning meaning to experiences", whereas the term "etic" refers to "the researcher's ontological or interpretive framework". The researcher moves recursively back and forth between the emic and the etic perspectives, and between the roles of insider and outsider, participant and observer, data collector and data analyst.

7. It is **ethical**. The researcher must ensure that subjects understand and agree to research objectives and methods, that confidentiality is provided for (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989: 201), that research conclusions are validated with the actors being observed (Cameron et al, 1992: 12), and that research is conducted "on the basis of balancing as fairly as possible the needs of a discipline in pursuit of knowledge and truth with the interests of the people on whom research is conducted" (ibid: 14).

***Practices:***

There is a number of specific methods commonly used at various stages of the ethnographic research study, and which I have incorporated into my research design. The ethnographic research project is initiated by a **general premise or problem**, rather than a precisely defined hypothesis (Brause and Mayher, 1991: 53). Vulliamy points out that "it is not until researchers have begun to get inside the perspectives of those whom they are studying that they can begin to see what the significant issues are" (Vulliamy, 1990: 86). Extensive **data is collected from a number of sources**, and/or **through a variety of techniques**, in what Rhedding-Jones calls "a self-conscious engagement that attempt(s) to develop a rigour of investigation by drawing on a variety of techniques and procedures by which the researcher's originally embryonic interpretations (are) checked, extended or changed" (Rhedding-

Jones, 1996: 25). These sources and procedures may include the following:

- Observation, or participant-observation, takes place in natural settings where subjects' activities are not manipulated by the researcher (Brause, 1991: 183). Fieldnotes are recorded during and/or immediately after observation (ibid: 187).
  
- Participants' products, such as writing samples, may serve as data for analysis; their written reflections may also provide valuable information. Sternglass and Zamel describe the insights they gained through written feedback from their subjects during their respective research studies into student writing (Sternglass, 1988; Zamel, 1983: 176 - 179).
  
- Interviewing is a key ethnographic tool by which researchers engage with the perceptions of their respondents. Ethnographers commonly use unstructured or semi-structured interviews, in contrast to the structured interviewing methods employed in quantitative research. Researchers using quantitative methods usually use random sampling in order to select subjects who are representative and typical (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989: 62). Ethnographers are less concerned with generalisability, and usually choose key informants according to the principle of "theoretical sampling", which involves "choosing people or situations to study which seem to give the greatest possibilities for generating theories or for testing emerging hypotheses" (Vulliamy, 1990: 114). The researcher needs to be aware of any features of the interviewing context which might influence the course or results of the interview: for example, the relationship and relative status of interviewer and respondent, their age, gender, possible bias, the image which each is trying to present (especially through the use of

a particular linguistic code), their past experiences, cultural and social backgrounds - in other words, the range of social, cultural, institutional and linguistic factors which comprise the "ethnographic context" of the interview (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989: 88 - 93).

In the **data analysis** phase of the research study the researcher moves from description to analysis, and from there to the generation of tentative hypotheses. The researcher concentrates on identifying what Stephens terms the "central holding ideas" which create the patterns on which hypotheses are based (Stephens, 1990: 158). These hypotheses are tested and revised by the systematic study of a range of data. Kantor stresses that all of the data should be accounted for in the analysis, which should provide a comprehensive explanation of the essential components in the process under study (Kantor, 1991: 96).

Watson-Gegeo points out that ethnographers occasionally employ quantitative research methods where appropriate. She also notes that discourse analysis has become a central approach to data analysis (Watson-Gegeo, 1988: 583). In my research study I have sometimes used discourse analysis frameworks as a basis for the analysis of written texts, and I have included a quantitative table in order to show the distribution of writing patterns. Vulliamy says of his own research study that "the explicit quantification of the student data did provide a crude cross-check for both the researcher and the reader that misleading impressions were not being created by the selective use of quotations or analyses" (Vulliamy, 1990: 174).

Briggs (1986) warns that interview analyses should not be based on the positivist perception that the respondent reflects to, and through, a neutral interviewer the reality of the processes under

study. He stresses that the interview is a communicative act based on a set of communicative norms and role relations, and interview data is "an interpretation which is jointly produced by interviewer and respondent" (Briggs, 1986: 3). The researcher, in the process of analysis, therefore needs to examine both how the situational context has impacted on the interview, and how the context has been continually renegotiated in the course of the ongoing verbal interaction (ibid: 25). Individual utterances should be studied not only for their relevance to the subject of research, but also for the way in which they fit into the whole interactional network of meaning (ibid: 104 - 106).

The final stages in the research process comprise **validation activities** and the **writing up** of the research report. Two approaches are commonly used to validate data: triangulation, and re-interviewing/re-analysis. Denzin (1970; in Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989: 105) distinguishes between two methods of triangulation. "Within methods" triangulation refers to the replication of a study to test its reliability; "between methods" triangulation - more typically used in ethnographic research - entails the use of more than one method of data collection, and/or data collection from a number of different sources, within the same study (ibid: 104 - 105; Brause, 1991: 193). Interview findings may be validated through re-interviewing of respondents and subsequent re-analysis (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989: 106). The process of falsification is also occasionally used - that is, "systematically looking for negative cases in an attempt to refute or to refine emerging hypotheses" (Vulliamy, 1990: 113). Finally, researchers need to write up their research reports in a style and format that are accessible both to research participants and to research consumers (Brause and Mayher, 1991: 109; Vulliamy, 1990: 20).

**Problems:**

Ethnography is not an unproblematic methodology. Critiques of ethnographic research focus on

- the problem of **generalisability** (the extent to which research conclusions can be generalised to a wider social context so as to contribute to theory-building);
- the **position and perspective of the researcher**;
- the **epistemological paradigm** which underlies the interpretive research approach, and which questions whether research offers any possibilities for the formulation of theory or of widely applicable interventionist strategies.

Quantitative researchers tend to link **generalisability** with the notion of reliability - that is, the extent to which the results can be reproduced using the same methods and/or measuring instruments (Vulliamy, 1990: 12). Qualitative researchers are frequently accused of using methods which are unscientific and lacking in rigour.

Researchers using ethnographic methods are far more concerned with the principle of validity (that is, the accuracy of research findings)(Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989: 61), particularly with ecological validity ("the degree to which the circumstances created by the researcher's procedures match those of the everyday world of the subjects")(Briggs, 1986: 24) and with internal validity (the extent to which the researcher's presence and choice of subjects affects results)(Hitchcock and Hughes, op. cit.). External validity - the extent to which data and analyses can be applied to similar research contexts (ibid) - is considered as being of less importance. The difficulty of proving the external validity of ethnographic research studies limits their potential for theory-building and social transformation.

The ambiguous **position of the researcher** in ethnographic research

has given rise to the "observer's paradox" (Cameron, 1992: 5), alternatively known as the "insider-outsider dilemma" (Hornberger, 1994: 689 - 690). On the one hand, the researcher is expected to play the part of the objective observer who does not intervene to influence her subjects; on the other hand, she is expected to engage interactively with them. She functions simultaneously as a member and a non-member of the social group under investigation, and her familiarity with the culture of the group may distort her interpretation of the data. Bias in interpretation may also result from researcher-subject differences in age, gender, race, assumptions, political views and personality (Briggs, 1986: 21). The course and results of interviews may also be affected by the differing interactional styles of interviewer and respondent and by their relative degrees of authority (ibid: 123). The researcher's control over the research agenda affects the selection and analysis of data, which must be organised and expounded coherently and persuasively; for, as St. Maurice points out, in order for qualitative research to be successful, topics need to appear credible through being presented in convincing narratives (St. Maurice, 1993: 208 - 209). On many levels, therefore, the final research report would seem to be the researcher's construction of meaning rather than an objective, valid and generalisable study of a sociocultural process.

The problematics of ethnographic research derive largely from the **interpretive paradigm** which has been a major influence on ethnographic methodology. Interpretivism developed in opposition to positivism, which holds that "social facts exist independently of the observer and can be perceived from without"; also that such social facts have stability and observability (Briggs, 1986: 22, 119). Interpretivism, conversely, sees meaning as being intersubjectively produced by author and interpreter in dialogic interaction during which meanings, understandings and assumptions are negotiated

(Smith, 1993: 195 - 196). Social reality does not exist outside of the actors' subjective experiences and intersubjective encounters.

The researcher must necessarily take a theoretical position in this debate in order to justify her choice of methodology. Positivist methods seem inappropriate as a means of interpreting a social reality which is inextricably bound to human agency and understanding. Interpretivism, on the other hand, seems reductionist in denying a social reality outside of human consciousness. I would argue that these two paradigms are not mutually exclusive. I visualise three concentric circles of meaning. Firstly, there is the outer circle of universal human experience, which allows human beings to share meanings on this level. Secondly, there is the circle of meaning which is socially and culturally constructed, and which is shared by its members. Although this circle is humanly constructed, and may be reproduced through human consciousness, many of its structures nevertheless have an independent force and operate on the "macro" level outside of human subjectivity. Thirdly, there is the inmost circle which is intersubjectively created, where meaning is negotiated through human interaction. This "micro" world of negotiated meanings, and the socially constructed world outside of social actors, exist in a dialectical relationship, each influencing and being influenced by the other. The inner negotiated circle of meanings is the problematic area with which the ethnographic researcher and her respondent engage, and is also the focus of this research study into school writing. Just as social discourse patterns are both reflected in and mediated by the writer's text in the process of negotiation with the reader, so in the same way social patterns may be reflected in as well as mediated by the engagement of respondent and researcher. There is therefore a degree of probability that the patterns discovered in the course of researcher-respondent interaction may to a certain extent be

generalised to similar sociocultural situations.

An important task of the researcher is to adopt safeguards against the possibility that the meanings she discovers have been largely self-constructed. She needs to build into her research design validation processes, such as triangulation and re-interviewing, and to ensure that a wide variety of data is obtained by various methods. She should specify in her research report criteria for the selection of data and informants, outline analysis frameworks and processes, and identify the prejudices and assumptions which she brings to the research process. She must ensure that her subjects understand and agree to the research agenda, and that she takes on the role of learner instead of investigator in order to minimise status and power differences between herself and her respondents. Above all, she needs to practise reflexivity, in continually reflecting on her relation to the research situation (Briggs, 1986: 119).

### ***RESEARCH DESIGN AND ETHICS***

Designing an ethnographic research project creates a predicament for the researcher. Whereas on the one hand ethnographic research is required to be planned and systematic, on the other hand it resists highly organised frameworks which may serve to constrain and shape the research outcomes. Although I paid particular attention to building in the safeguards mentioned above in my design and in the ethical procedures which I followed, I became aware during the project that my highly structured approach may have allowed certain features of the school writing process to be foregrounded at the expense of others.

My design framework was influenced by two structuring factors:



- The process was guided by the diagram of "The Discourse Framework of the School Writing Event". My investigation moved from the outer area of **context**, especially the context of the school writing class, to the inner area where the meanings and relationship of **writer** and **reader** are mediated by the **text**.
- The research design was suggested by Graves' (1975) "pyramid" design, in which Graves initially examined the writing produced by ninety-four children, and gradually narrowed his focus to a single case study (Brause, 1991: 196 - 197; Kantor, 1991: 102). The broader scope of his early research activities allowed for wider generalisation; the final stages enabled Graves to focus more intensively on the exploration of his emerging hypotheses through observation and interviewing.

I adopted a two-stage design, as this allowed me to generalise my findings to a certain extent, but also offered me scope for intensive interviewing of key informants. During the first stage, the two classes who were to serve as my research subjects undertook the following whole-class writing activities:

- an "open" writing task on a topic of personal interest to individual writers;
- a subsequent exercise in which pupils wrote an account of their writing behaviour and attitudes.

These writing activities were supplemented by my observations of pupils' writing behaviour. I later conducted a feedback session through which I checked my analyses of my data by reflecting back to the pupils my research findings, and by asking for their responses.

In the second stage, I conducted semi-structured interviews with two "key informants". Their selection was based on my preliminary analysis of their written work, and on the scope their work offered

for investigating emerging hypotheses. My analysis of the interview transcripts was followed by a feedback activity in which I sought the two respondents' confirmation or rejection of my conclusions.

Bearing in mind that ethnographic research is negotiated and ethical, I took the following preliminary steps:

- I obtained the permission of the headmaster at the start of the project.
- I enlisted pupil cooperation after the initial set task.
- The permission of parents was enlisted before the two key informants were interviewed.
- The framework of the research process was clearly explained beforehand to participants, e.g. the use of a tape recorder during interviews.
- I assured participants that their anonymity would be preserved.
- During the "writing-up" stages of data processing, I requested permission for the use of all material included.
- I reported back my findings to all pupils concerned; and requested their feedback on my research conclusions.
- My status as "participant-observer", i.e. teacher and researcher, was potentially problematic. I took into account the possibility that pupils might regard my enlisting of their participation as coercive, and that they might find me a dominating influence during communicative exchanges, especially in the interview situation. I was aware that their responses might not, therefore, be a valid reflection of their views and feelings. I was careful to emphasise the voluntary nature of participation, to observe as strict an objectivity as possible, and to attempt to neutralise my own personality during interviews.

Through these measures I tried to include my research subjects as co-participants in the process of discovery, and to minimise the imbalance in power relations inherent in the research situation.

My research design and methodology aimed at implementing a process which was interactive and empowering to my subjects. As Cameron et al point out, research has traditionally been a process in which the construction of meaning and the control of knowledge have been in the hands of the research community (Cameron et al, 1992: 2 - 4). In the field of the social sciences, ethnography seems to offer the most democratic alternative available to researcher and researched for the sharing of power and the mutual construction and discovery of knowledge.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **A STUDY OF TWO STANDARD EIGHT CLASSES ENGAGED IN THE COMMUNICATION OF PERSONAL MEANING IN A WRITING TASK, AND THEIR REFLECTIONS ON THIS TASK**

#### ***THE WRITING TASK***

The first stage of the research design centred around whole-class activities. In the initial activity I wanted to focus pupils on personal discourse, personal meaning and the process of interpersonal communication, rather than on public social discourses, appropriate style and linguistic accuracy. I therefore set the two standard eight classes which had agreed to act as my research subjects the task of writing on an issue or topic about which they felt very strongly. I emphasised the fact that I wanted to know what they thought and felt. Surface errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation would be disregarded; only what they were saying to me mattered. Legibility was necessary; otherwise, neatness was unimportant, and evidence of redrafting and editing was quite acceptable.

#### ***AN ANALYSIS OF PUPIL-WRITING ON A TOPIC OF PERSONAL INTEREST***

##### ***Analytical Framework:***

The framework I developed for the analysis of pupil texts uses as a basis the two questions which were chiefly addressed by the Schools' Council Project the Development of Writing Abilities 11 - 18 (Martin et al, 1976: 16 - 18): "What is writing for? Who is it

for?" To these two questions I have added a third: "How is it organised?" I am therefore looking at the following three aspects of pupil writing:

- the **functions** (**what and why** is the writer writing?)
- the **target audience** (**to whom** is the writer writing?)
- the **models/genres** (**how** is the writer writing?)

Halliday and Hasan, in their discourse analysis framework, refer to these three aspects as the **field**, the **tenor** and the **mode** of discourse (Halliday and Hasan, 1985: 12).

Martin et al (1976:18) list six types of target reader that the Schools' Council Project found to be evident in pupil writing:

1. Child (or adolescent) to self
2. Child (or adolescent) to trusted adult
3. Pupil to teacher as partner in dialogue
4. Pupil to teacher seen as examiner or assessor
5. Child (or adolescent) to his peers (as expert, co-worker, friend etc)
6. Writer to his readers (or unknown audience).

I used these types, in slightly modified form, in the table overleaf, in which I divided pupil writing into three categories in which the various functions, audiences and genres may be seen to correspond. The three categories form a continuum of pupil-writing from the private to the public. There follows a detailed explanation of the table, which shows how it relates to the diagram of the Discourse Framework of the School Writing Event.

#### **Category One: Private Writing - The Domain of the Writer:**

Here writing is used purely to express the writer's feelings, and is private and subjective. This is writing as process, not product; the writer writes to herself or to a confidante. The stress is on the writer and the message; reader and form become irrelevant.

ASPECTS	CATEGORIES		
	PRIVATE WRITING	INTERPERSONAL WRITING	PUBLIC WRITING
<b>FUNCTIONS</b> (Field of discourse)	Express feelings (Private subjective writing)	Explore, discover, communicate and negotiate personal meaning (Interpersonal communicative writing)	Inform, argue, persuade, record, demonstrate learning (Public objective communicative writing)
<b>TARGET AUDIENCE</b> (Tenor of discourse)	Writer as reader; writer's peers; teacher as confidante, i.e. as trusted adult or as writer's "alter ego" (Stress on writer and message)	Reader/teacher as partner in dialogue (Stress on reader, writer, message and form)	General public; social groups and institutions; teacher-as-assessor (Stress on reader, message and form)
<b>MODELS/GENRES</b> (Mode of discourse)	Personal reflective; certain autobiographical, descriptive and poetic texts; diary; informal letter (Text as process)	Personal reflective; autobiography; certain expository and discursive texts; short story; play scripts; some descriptive texts (Meaning and form, i.e. process and product, are interwoven)	Formal expository; formal discursive; textbook; documentary; transactional (Text seen as object, as finished product)

## CATEGORIES AND ASPECTS OF WRITING

Personal expressive modes are vehicles for this type of writing; for example, some modes of autobiography and free verse poetry, some types of descriptive writing, diary, and the informal letter.

**Category Two: Interpersonal Writing - The Negotiated Terrain of Writer and Reader:**

In this category, writing is used to explore, discover, communicate and negotiate personal meaning. This results in interpersonal communicative writing. The target reader is seen as a partner in dialogue, whose questions and responses are anticipated and accommodated in the text. The writer and the reader strive respectively to produce and to discover common meaning in the content and the form of the text. The genres which may serve the functions and audiences of interpersonal writing are personal reflective writing; certain modes of autobiographical writing; certain expository and discursive texts; the short story; playwriting; and some modes of poetic and descriptive writing. In interpersonal writing, meaning and form - that is, process and product - are interwoven.

**Category Three: Public Writing - The Domain of Social and Institutional Discourses:**

The functions of writing here - to inform, argue, persuade, record, and demonstrate learning - result in public communicative writing, which usually adopts an objective tone. The target readers may include the general public, various social groups and institutions, and the teacher-as-assessor. The stress is on the reader, the message and the socially appropriate form; the personal experiential world of the writer is not significant. The main "public" genres are the formal expository and discursive essay, the documentary (including the school textbook), and transactional, or functional, texts. The text is seen here as an object and a finished product

which shows what has been learned, not as a process of meaning-making through which learning takes place. I contend that school discourse practices encourage pupils to produce writing which falls within this category (see also Britton et al, 1975: 195; Martin et al, 1976: 26).

***Analysis of the Texts:***

I sorted the pupils' written texts into the three categories of "private", "interpersonal" and "public" writing, as reflected in the table below. I added a fourth category for those texts which showed a mixture of modes. I also sorted the texts according to the writer's gender, in order to examine any possible gender patterns and preferences.

NUMBERS IN CLASS	CATE-GORY 1 : PRIVATE WRITING	CATE-GORY 2 : INTER-PERSONAL WRITING	CATE-GORY 3 : PUBLIC WRITING	CATEGORY 4 : MIXED MODES			
				TOTAL	BORROWINGS FROM CATEGORIES		
					1	2	3
BOYS 18	0	2	8	8	6	4	7
82 GIRLS 11	0	1	3	7	7	1	7
TOTAL 29	0	3	11	15	13	5	14
BOYS 15	0	1	9	5	4	2	5
8C GIRLS 19	0	12	2	5	5	3	3
TOTAL 34	0	13	11	10	9	5	8



Certain differences were evident in the ways in which the two classes handled the writing task. In the 8-2 class, the majority of the pupil-writers - boys and girls - gravitated towards "public" writing, although I had tried to make it clear that personal expressive writing was required. Sternglass, in her analysis of her students' writing, similarly found that "less self-confident students avoided providing their own interpretations even when the task specifically seemed to demand this" (Sternglass, 1988: 132). Many of the less confident writers seemed to be guessing at the "required" form, with the expository and documentary genres being the most frequent choices. Formal introductions and conclusions were often used, and the impersonal pronoun "you" was usually substituted for the first person personal pronoun. The most common models were texts from textbooks and magazines; some texts had elements of discursive writing, and a number included tentative insertions of the personal voice which were quickly abandoned. In 8-C, on the other hand, there was evidence of a fairly even spread of the major genres of extended school writing: reflective, expository, documentary, discursive, narrative, autobiographical and descriptive. There was also far more interpersonal writing in 8-C than in 8-2. However, as the table above shows, a gender-differentiated pattern emerged here, with the majority of the girls gravitating towards interpersonal writing, while most of the boys' texts were situated in the public writing category.

Some possible reasons for the gender differences evident in choices of genre, voice and target reader are as follows:

- Different attitudes to the teacher-reader. The girls may have a greater trust-relationship with a female reader, and may therefore find it easier to relate to the teacher as a partner in dialogue. The boys may feel a greater experience-gap with a female teacher-reader, so that in those texts where there is dialogue with the

reader, it is seen in terms of formal debate rather than mutual exploration.

- Stereotyping may be a factor. Males are socially reinforced for using those "public" objective modes of communication which characterise the discourse practices of social institutions and offer access to social power. Moreover, the majority of writer role-models in this area (in the arenas of political debate and academic textbook-writing, for example) are male. As Barton points out (1991: 9), personal and emotive modes of communication are considered to belong more to the female domain. It therefore seems that certain pupil-writers may be taking on the gender-identities marked out for them in discourse.

I quote below part of a text, written by one of the boys, which demonstrates the trend towards public impersonal writing. It is a documentary piece in textbook style on the destruction of the tropical rain forests.

*The lumbering companies only cut down one particular type of tree but in order to get that particular tree (they) have to cut down numerous others.*

*There is however a way to increase the fertility of the soil. They burn down all the small trees or tree stumps and all the nutrients of the trees goes into the soil. This is called the slash and burn technique.*

This writer shows he is conversant with the conventions of his particular genre in that he uses an impersonal voice and adopts the textbook technique of moving from description to definition. He has imitated textbook style without giving evidence of any personal meaning or identity in his text; it seems that he has opted for a genre in which he felt able to demonstrate expertise to his target audience, who is clearly the teacher-assessor.

There may be social and cultural reasons for the writer's avoidance of the personal. The piece was written by a new pupil in a strange learning environment, who is, in addition, a Muslim in a predominantly white Christian school community. This may have created in him the feeling of an unbridgeable experience gap between himself and his reader. This pupil's past writing experiences and limited text models may be factors; also, possibly, the Muslim tradition of learning the Qu'ran by rote, a learning method which excludes the personal and subjective.

There was occasional evidence of the racy commentary style used in some sport magazines, with the inclusion of emotive cliches to excite the interest of sporting enthusiasts, and to demonstrate to the teacher-assessor the writer's acquisition of this style:

*There have been some surprises in the selection of the team, for instance Paul Adams, S.A.'s new spinner who burst onto the international cricket scene at the end of last year at the tender age of 18. Many people doubted his ability to stay at the top with all the pressures of the media and critics. But he proved them all wrong and ripped into England's top batsman and making them look like amateurs as he spun the ball in every conceivable way. He is a young man any father would be proud to call son...*

In the "mixed mode" category, the high proportion of pupils who apparently used a personal voice (category one) is misleading: frequently pupils began in personal mode and then moved quickly into the impersonal. The text below was written by a pupil who found it difficult to select a topic. Even after I had extracted from him the information that fishing was his main interest, he could still find no way into exploring this occupation and his feelings about it. When I tried to provoke him by declaring that I saw fishing as a boring hobby, he started writing energetically. However, he soon

moved into the expository mode, as may be seen in the short piece which he produced:

*You may think that fishing is boring, but the excitement of fighting a fish is something you must experience. I fish in competition for a club and in the competition you use very light line (4kg). Fighting a big fish on such small line is much more exciting than fighting that same fish on heavy.*

~~*With heavy line*~~

*With heavy line the fish has absolutely no chance of getting away. Most commercial fishermen use heavy line so they can get as many fish as possible.*

*With thin line it is much more of a fairer fight and takes a lot more skill from the angler to land the fish.*

*Fishing takes patients, but by using the right techniques you should pick up something.*

The enthusiasm and pace with which the writer began are evident in his initial disregard for conventional spelling and paragraphing (note the variable spelling of "competition"). He addresses me directly with the opening "you", and engages me in dialogue. However, my role as teacher-assessor quickly intrudes and excludes the reader-as-partner-in-dialogue. The editing shows the writer's increasing concern with paragraphing and correct spelling; he refers to himself in the generalised third person as "the angler"; and the use of the impersonal "you" in the final paragraph is addressed to a public audience. The writing has become mundane and lifeless by the end of the piece, where the writer attempts a conventional conclusion.

There is a number of possible reasons for the trend towards objective expository modes and the avoidance of the personal, which is evident especially among the less skilled writers:

- a view of writing primarily as an assessment process, with the teacher as examiner (the heading above one of the texts reads "S.A. (Essay)/English Test");
- a lack of trust between pupils and teacher-assessor, especially in the guarantee that only content would be considered;
- unwillingness to share experiences, owing to an experiential and cultural gap between writer and teacher-reader;
- society's and the school's emphasis on objective and rational modes of discourse;
- pupils' lack of confidence in their ability to communicate their own meanings in writing, and the difficulty of translating thought into text - problems which lead them to the relatively risk-free and relatively straightforward process of slavishly imitating "approved" texts and genres;
- the confidence generated by adopting the role of an expert writing to a less expert audience (as in the texts on sport and hobbies). Britton et al comment that where expertise is based on written sources, such as magazines, the writer tends to write for a public, rather than a personal, audience (Britton et al, 1975: 71);
- a lack of understanding of the task - perhaps owing to a lack of experience in using language to explore and communicate personal meaning. Writing is seen as a tedious foreign package, extraneous to personal experience, which the school requires pupils to acquire;
- the limited models of which these pupil-writers have experience. Textbooks, magazines and sports journals may be their only sources of reading matter.

There were some texts which primarily targeted a reader who was a partner in exploration, a partner in dialogue and/or a confidante. One of the most evident examples of the exploration of personal meaning was written by a pupil with poor writing skills. I quote some extracts below:

*The question that everyone asks, is there life after death? Well to put it frankly no one really knows, but then again people have said to have been in a place or country where they have never been before, but yet they have lived there as a nother person. Could this be true?... The thing is, is there actually a time when we die, or do we just move on in life, with new identities and bodies with no or very little memory of the past... So there might not actually be a thing known as death, just a metamorphosis that occurs every once in a while in life.... Death to some is merely a time to rest before moving on to our next life, and to some death is death. We all see life differently, and we all should enjoy what we have, after all life is a wonderful gift.*

This writer's text gives evidence that the ability to think abstractly is not dependent solely upon the development of writing skills, a viewpoint supported by the research findings of Scribner and Cole (1973: in Gee, 1990: 57 - 59). The reader is a partner in the exploration of meaning - so much so that the reader is expected to follow the writer's thoughts closely enough to be able to supply additional linkages and explications to provide the text with coherence and cohesion (see glossary page 117). The writer uses what Givon labels the "pragmatic mode" of discourse, where the speaker chains strings of clauses together loosely, and relies on the audience to draw inferences on the basis of mutual knowledge (as opposed to the "syntactic mode", where the speaker uses explicit syntactic structures)(Givon, 1979; in Gee, 1990: 59 - 60). The last two sentences therefore need to be expanded as follows:

*We all see death differently; death to some is merely a time to rest before moving on to our next life, and to some death is the final end. However, we also all see and experience life differently, and instead of being concerned about death we should enjoy what we have. After all, life is a wonderful gift.*

The omissions give the text the sense of a condensed conversation,

a series of disjointed utterances. The writer has not shaped and filled in his text for maximum comprehensibility; in addition, he can find no conventional textual framework within which to express his reflections, which causes the text to lack thematic development.

A number of writers who used "mixed modes" found ways of developing coherent text-structures and promoting reader-identification with their topics. Here is the abridged version of a fairly lengthy text written by one of the girls in the 8-C class:

*The topic homosexuality was brought up just the other day between a friend and myself. My friend seemed to know what he felt about this topic, but I was rather confused. So I figured that writting my views on the topic, down on paper, would make it more clear for me to understand.*

*My friend believes that it is not wrong to be gay, and people should feel free to act on their feelings.... He brought up this topic, after a sermon his priest gave, on homosexuality being wrong. He disagrees with this statement and made me wonder how I felt about it.*

*I, on the other hand, am not too clear on how I feel. I am a Christian and believe every word of the Bible and abide by it. I feel too that you should act on your feelings and not on other's words.*

*I have brought myself to believe that homosexuality is both wrong and right.... If one has fallen in love with another of the same sex then I believe homosexuality is not wrong. If, on the other hand, two homosexuals are only together for the sexual relationship, then I believe that it is wrong.... Sex is only for couples to express their love for each other, in deeper ways.... This is how I feel about homosexuality. Others have the right to different opinions.*

This writer is not highly skilled, and has not tried to employ a polished literary style. She has used a personal conversational voice; nevertheless, she has shaped and developed her text so that

it has coherence and cohesion. She has used personal narrative as a springboard for discursive writing; autobiographical writing was similarly, and successfully, networked with more public genres in a number of other pupil-texts. Katz (1995: 210 - 232) stresses the value of narrative as a basis for other genres in his description of a writing programme where students write narratives about their own lives, and then move into expository prose by reflecting on these experiences in writing. Bruner (1990: 43 - 65) postulates that narrative is our way of reflecting on and making sense of our experiences; personal narrative and reflective writing would therefore seem to be close partners. The writer has made it explicit here that she is using writing as a means of constructing a meaning from her experience. She develops an argument to convince both her reader and herself, and she has the confidence to reject the discourse of the Church in favour of her own meaning. In her concluding sentence she shows she is able to distance herself sufficiently from her standpoint to leave a space for the meaning-constructions of others.

***Pedagogical Considerations:***

This initial activity seemed to suggest that a school writing pedagogy, in addressing the problems associated with interpersonal writing, would have to focus on three main needs:

1. Pupils need to be made aware of **writing as an aid to articulating personal meanings and to negotiating these meanings with others** (the field, or functional aspect of interpersonal writing).

Opportunities should be found for pupil-writing to be made available to the writers' peers as reading matter. Sternglass emphasises that "the absence of a real audience from a writer's perspective has the potential to decrease substantially the commitment a writer puts into a piece of writing" (Sternglass, 1988: 144). Only if writing



fulfils a function will pupils regard it as a communicative activity rather than as a school evaluation process.

2. There is a need to **break the hierarchical pupil-teacher relationship**, where the teacher is automatically assumed (by pupils and teachers) to fill the role of **examiner and judge** (the tenor, or writer-reader-relation aspect of interpersonal writing). The following methods of making the writing process more democratic have been suggested by process writing theorists:

- On occasions, writing tasks should be negotiated with pupils, to allow maximum pupil choice (Campbell, 1996: 137).
- Teacher feedback needs to take the form of a response to meaning as well as, and sometimes instead of, a critical comment on style. Spack and Sadow, commenting on a journal-writing programme in which students and teachers carry on a journal correspondence, stress that when teachers become participants in the writing process, students come to see writing as a way of generating and sharing ideas (Spack and Sadow, 1983: 575).
- Alternative forms of assessment should be considered; and peer - consultation could provide an ongoing audience for giving feedback at various stages of the writing process (Zamel, 1982: 206).

However, it would appear that peer-assessment and peer-feedback are not always effective where inexperienced peer-groups are involved, as is evidenced by Peyton et al (1994: 479) in their comments on a writing workshop conducted with ESOL students.

3. Teachers need to find **suitable text frameworks for reflective writing**, and to provide pupils with models of these frameworks and with practice in the processes of organising their texts (the mode, or genre-based aspect of interpersonal writing). Methods of mixing genres coherently should be investigated; the use of autobiographical narrative seems especially significant as a linking

device.

The teaching of text frameworks which may lend coherence to personal reflective writing seems especially important in the light of the difficulties experienced by a number of writers who struggled to put their ideas and reflections into written form. Orna and Stevens point out that our personal knowledge frameworks are multi-dimensional, not sequential; and thinking is not necessarily a linear process, for conceptualisation takes place on a number of levels at the same time, and makes lateral as well as linear links (Orna and Stevens, 1993: 27). After initial conceptualisation, or idea-formulation, I suggest that there are three further possible stages to the production of a text: "inner speech", where the audience and respondent is the thinker herself; spoken conversation, constructed for, and with, a specific, known, immediate audience; and written text, designed for a wider, largely unknown, removed audience. Reid (1984: 9; cited in Sternglass, 1988: 6 - 7) has a similar view: "...Language and thought exist in separate domains: thought falls within the domain of the personal and the individual, whereas the semantic categories of language are part of a public social structure. It is to be expected then that moving from one domain to the other would involve a transformation. This disengagement of thought from language also allows for the possibility that certain thoughts exist in a non-linguistic state as complex as conceptual gestalts."

Vygotsky refers to the bridge between word and thought as "inner speech" - internal conversation which is "syntactically loosened and abbreviated and semantically individuated" (Britton, 1975: 39). The writer must then make her ideas more explicit, and structure them into sequential order, for the purpose of spoken conversation. When she creates a written text, she must explicate her ideas still further for a distanced audience, and reformulate those ideas into

- the hierarchical clausal structure of sentences;
- the topic + development structure of paragraphs; and
- the theme + development structure of the overall text.

As Kress points out, the development of the topic in conversation is by sequence; in writing by hierarchy (Kress, 1994: 28). This progressive restructuring and explication of ideas makes the process of translating thought into writing a difficult one. This is perhaps a reason for pupils' reliance on the familiar clichés of "public" genres, and their avoidance of reflective writing. Many of the pupils writing in reflective mode were unable to get past the "spoken conversation" stage.

At this early stage of the research project, two approaches seemed to offer possibilities for bridging the gap between thought and written text. The first is mind-mapping, which Angelil-Carter suggests may be used to represent the writer's "web of meaning", and to mediate between thought and the written word (Angell-Carter, 1994: 135). The second approach borrows from process writing theory, where composing is seen to take place in four stages: prewriting, drafting, redrafting/revising and editing. Although these stages overlap in the process of composing, it may help pupils to be given practice in constructing their texts in separate phases. Expecting pupil-writers to fulfil the requirements of writing for meaning, audience and genre at the same time may cause a cognitive overload (Protherough, 1983: 147 - 149), as this entails the creative generation and the critical monitoring of text content simultaneously - two processes which would seem to be mutually obstructive (Elbow, 1986: 55 - 63). In Elbow's words, "It's a matter of learning to work on opposites one at a time in a generous spirit of mutual reinforcement rather than in a spirit of restrictive combat" (ibid: 63).

### ***OBSERVATIONS OF PUPILS' WRITING BEHAVIOUR***

While the pupils in my two Standard Eight classes were engaged in the writing activity on which my previous study of pupil writing is based, I recorded my observations of their writing behaviour. The 8-C class started writing after about seven minutes; the 8-2 class took twelve to fifteen minutes to engage with the task, while some pupils took far longer to begin.

During the early stages of writing, there was evidence of anxiety in the questions that were asked. These questions concerned:

- Lack of ideas. Requests for ideas, which came mainly from the 8-2 class, could either be interpreted as a natural writing block at the beginning of a writing activity, or as anxiety about what pupil-writers are allowed or meant to say in a piece of "school" writing.
- The required genre. Pupils appeared to be trying to guess what genre I expected and would approve. Focused queries about specific genres and text-structures came largely from the 8-C class.
- Spelling and presentation. Pupils seemed concerned about accuracy and neatness, although I had emphasised that these were unimportant.
- Time limits within which the task was to be completed.

Many of the pupils seemed to engage in some kind of prewriting activity. Writing was spasmodic, with frequent pauses for thinking, and there was much re-reading of work by pupils, sometimes with lips moving. Some pupils appeared agitated during the writing process. There was intermittent quiet consultation with other pupils, and, towards the end of the lesson, exchanging of books.

The following day I talked briefly to the two classes about this dissertation, and about my interest in pupils' feelings and behaviour

about and during the process of writing. I then asked them to write some comments about their composing processes and attitudes to writing. Both classes started on this task far more quickly and enthusiastically than had been the case with the previous writing activity. There was no evidence of prewriting or rough work; pupils obviously were more comfortable and confident about plunging into this non-examinable and relatively risk-free task.

***Comparison with Process Writing Research:***

My observations of pupils' writing behaviour confirmed process writing research findings in a number of ways. Some of the "natural" composing stages identified by process theorists were evident here; for example, prewriting activities and initial drafting (Zamel 1982: 200 - 203), rereading (Perl, 1980; in Zamel, 1982: 198), and peer consultation (Trembley, 1993). Anxiety over correctness, and the difficulty of finding ideas while constrained by limited time, restricted space and the prospect of assessment, seemed to create a "writer's block" for a number of pupils (Perl, 1980; Sommers, 1980; Rose, 1984, 1985; Jones, 1985; Hildenbrand, 1985). The confident and enthusiastic response to the second activity - where pupils commented on their composing processes and attitudes - contrasted with their anxiety in embarking on the first task, and shows that pupil-writers respond differently to a purposeful and non-examinable task.

My observations did indicate some shortcomings in the process approach. Process pedagogies advocate a student-centred classroom in which the teacher relinquishes the controlling role, acts as manager rather than instructor, and allows writers to generate their own topics and to engage in exploratory, expressive writing (Raimes, 1983: 543, 548 - 549; Zamel, 1987: 701, 706; Campbell, 1996: 137). In this school writing event I had changed

the rules of the school writing event by requiring pupils to choose their own topics and to develop their own text structures; I had also declared that spelling and correctness would be disregarded in my assessment. I therefore had not specified topic, genre, purpose or evaluation criteria, and it became apparent that I had probably created even greater "writing anxiety" than usual. Protherough (1983: 104) comments that "Enquiries among children and even among university undergraduates found that they were frequently trying to fulfil requirements which they did not clearly comprehend because they had never been explained".

It is thus debatable whether the teacher should act as facilitator or instructor. It would seem that, in the school context, greater writer confidence would be generated by explicit teaching in the use of models and techniques by which pupils may link their personal experiences (what Vygotsky calls "everyday concepts") with universalised meanings (Vygotsky's "scientific concepts"). Vygotsky argued that in the teaching process, schooled (or scientific) and everyday concepts should be continually interrelated; therefore formal instruction in writing should focus writers on form as well as meaning, and should help them to develop a conscious control of language in their written texts (Moll, 1990: 8 - 10). In this view, which is strongly supported by the genre school (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993: 19), the teacher's role becomes a central one in the teaching of writing. Process theorists have recently started moving towards a position where they allow the teacher greater authority; in his book, "A Fresh Look at Writing", Graves comments, "I think we now know better when to step in, when to teach and when to expect more from our students" (Graves, 1994: xvi; cited in Campbell, 1996: 140).

***AN ANALYSIS OF PUPILS' COMMENTS ON THEIR WRITING BEHAVIOUR AND ATTITUDES***

Pupils' written comments on their writing processes, and on their attitudes towards and behaviour while composing, fell into six categories:

- Finding topics and generating ideas;
- The process of drafting and text construction;
- Writing environment;
- Assessment;
- Correctness;
- Motivation and self-image.

The two standard eight classes concurred in their opinions of most aspects of writing. However, the 8-2 class generally conveyed more negative feelings towards the writing process; words and comments such as "worried", "dread", "difficult/hard", "I didn't know what to do", "I hate writing", "I can't write essays" were repeated a number of times, and the pupils were focused largely on their own feelings of anxiety and inadequacy. Although certain pupils in the 8-C class also expressed anxieties and self-doubts, the pupils here were generally more confident about themselves as writers, more aware of their writing processes, more critical of school writing events and more prescriptive about how these writing events should be handled by the teacher.

***Finding Topics and Generating Ideas:***

Many pupils requested the following:

- Specific and structured topics. The topic for the first writing task was so general that in many cases it had aggravated the problem of "writer's block".
- A number of topic options: "I often enjoy it when there is about 3 topics in which you can choose, because then you can write about

the one you know best on."

- Subjects relating to their personal experience. The 8-2 pupils seemed to see composition-writing as a display of factual knowledge, and repeatedly affirmed that knowing a lot about the topic gave them confidence. Many of the 8-C pupil-writers saw writing rather as an exploration of their experiences and feelings: "I wrote on this topic because of personal experience, and I find that most of what I write I try and recall if I have experienced something similar before.... Family matters and customs sometimes influence what you write."

"I find it enjoyable writing about an interest which I can relate my experiences to and express personal feelings.... I like to write from the heart so it can be so much more meaningful."

The first paragraph was generally seen as the most difficult part of the writing process, after which ideas would start to flow - indicating that many pupil-writers saw little need to plan beforehand, and that their ideas, and the shape of the essay, grew out of the writing process itself. This confirms process writing theorists' claims that personal meaning is discovered during the process of writing (Zamel, 1983: 168). However, a number of writers commented on how they often ran out of ideas after a few paragraphs. Some pupils described their idea-generating and planning procedures; consultation with friends and family was seen as a useful way of gathering ideas. Pupil responses were mixed on the practice of pre-planning:

"...When a topic is given to me and I like it I start writing immediately."

"Before I write, I think, I do this to first make sure I know enough about the topic to write a fairly comprehensive essay."

Zamel's research study similarly found that writers use different strategies when approaching a writing task, strategies which need



not involve pre-writing activities (Zamel, 1983: 172).

Certain pupils spoke about mental planning ("I kind of wright the essay in my head mainly all my main ideas"), and a number started with a written brainstorming activity. Many of the more experienced pupils felt there was a need for some kind of planning activity ("I also run out of ideas of what to write about, if I haven't already planned it"; "Did not know how to plan this essay"), and their concern with planning supports the approach of the "cognitivist" process theorists (see page 7).

***Drafting Process And Text Construction:***

Here pupils' responses generally confirmed process research findings (see page 8). The less confident pupils made very few observations on their methods of drafting the text; they appeared to lack a conscious awareness of this process - it just seemed to "happen". The more confident and experienced writers were far more conscious of their writing behaviour and of the problems of text-construction.

Many writers commented on their habit of pausing periodically. This was attributed to:

- the writer's running out of ideas;
- the need to plan out the next stage;
- "trying to think back to if I have experienced it before";
- "wondering if this topic offended some people" (the teacher-assessor?);
- the problem of trying to develop a conclusion, which a number of pupils said they found particularly difficult. One pupil felt she wrote a bad conclusion on occasions when she lost control of where her essay was going.

When pupils periodically re-read what they had written, they claimed they were doing the following:

- recalling what they had written, so as to "carry on the thought";
- "getting back on track" after switching off;
- preventing themselves from straying from the topic;
- checking if paragraphs were continuous instead of thoughts jotted down in random order;
- checking whether paragraphs "have substance".

Re-reading therefore appears to be a generating, focusing and monitoring device.

Editing and revision often took place concurrently with drafting. Those pupils who mentioned revision saw it as a reorganisation or elaboration of ideas ("now and again I would think of another sentence and I would try to fit it into gaps"), and redrafts tended to be longer than originals because of changes and additions. Peer consultation was seen as a useful tool in the revision process: "Halfway through my essay I swapped with Sam and we read each other's work so far and commented. That helped because she made some good comments on my work."

In the actual construction of the text, there was a strong awareness of the difficulty of breaching the gap between thought and written language: "The only problem is with writing an essay which me is expressing my ideas on to paper". Some pupils commented on the difficulty of developing a theme throughout a text: keeping to the topic, and "making sure all the paragraphs are continuous", were observed to be problematic. One pupil commented on the difficulty of "putting my feelings down without the essay becoming jumbled swapping from one sub-topic to another".

Some pupils made observations about the need for the writer to

change "voice" while writing. Two pupil-writers described how they tried to translate themselves into the character, time and place of their story. The writer was seen as adopting a particular role in narrative, but pupils seemed unaware that the adoption of a particular social role, or voice, in other genre forms was a useful writing technique. One very weak writer described the problem he experienced in adopting two different voices in discursive writing: "I battel to give bad points or to argue with yourself."

There was little commentary on writing for audience. Pupils seemed to have little conscious awareness of this aspect of the writing process. Only one writer saw a difference between writing for audience and writing as a school institutional practice:

"I find it hard to write what I am thinking and make it so it's readable. When it is going to be marked you have to make it so you are following rules and writing it in a certain way."

This writer seems to be making a distinction between writing for reader comprehension, and writing according to contrived institutional rules.

***Writing Environment:***

Pupils' responses differed as to the kind of writing environment they preferred: whether in silence or not, whether at home or in the classroom. Most of the pupils in the less proficient group, and a few in the more experienced class, opted for having background music while they wrote. Silence was found to be uncomfortable and boring; it was claimed that background music, and a background hum of talking, stimulated ideas.

A far greater proportion of the pupils in the 8-C class opted for writing in total silence. The 8-Cs' preference for silence may be a result of their greater powers of concentration, greater focus on the

task, and/or higher motivation for engaging with classroom writing events. Their greater confidence in themselves as writers also perhaps prevents them from perceiving the quietness of the classroom writing situation as threatening. Pupils' responses were, of course, also dependent on the noise and activity levels of the specific classroom and home.

The majority of the pupils opted for writing at home, mainly because of the comfort and the flexibility of this environment: "At home all the ideas kept flowing, probably because I was in my own environment where I could relax..."

"I can do it all in one go."

"I can stop and think and come back to it later if I want."

However, a number of pupils preferred writing in the classroom:

"...At home there are a lot of things that distract me."

"I always take a shorter time to write an essay at school because I seem to get into the topic a lot faster. At home I just want to get the essay finished, so I tend to rush."

Time limits in the classroom situation were generally felt to be a source of stress. Lofty, in his ethnographic study of the relationship between time and pupils' writing processes, points out that the time constraints of the school period encourage a product-based view of writing, as writers are pressurised into producing a complete text within a given time limit (Lofty, 1992: 198).

Despite the different preferences evident with regard to writing environment, pupils made it clear that they could write more productively in relaxed and unthreatening circumstances with flexible time-limits - that is, in circumstances which are far removed from typical examination conditions.

**Assessment:**

The more proficient pupils especially were strongly critical of the assessment process. They perceived assessment as concentrating on surface errors in form and largely ignoring meaning:

"All the time teachers only worry about spelling and gramma and aren't actually trying to understand what I'm trying to put across."

Swart comments on this common perception: "Far too frequently essays are marked merely as an exercise in correct grammar....

Small wonder then that students are generally under the impression that the main aim of a composition is to test grammatical proficiency" (Swart, 1995: 6). Assessment sometimes hindered the communication of meaning, as pupils tended to forget about the main issue in their concern for correctness. Some pupils explained how they found themselves adopting an artificial voice and style ("I don't really like the idea of a teacher marking my work, it kind of makes me write more complicated words to sound better, but it ends up sounding dumb").

Some writers pointed out that writing was a process, not an assessable product, as it concerned the communication of personal experiences, which could not be evaluated by others. The teacher's subjectivity was perceived as being problematic. A number of writers felt that teachers tended to award a poor rating if they did not agree with the point of view of the writer, if they were offended by the writer's opinions, and if they did not understand the content of the composition because of an experiential gap between writer and reader:

'I find sometimes I write about things that I have experienced before, and when the teacher reads it, because they have not had the experience they don't understand what I am writing about properly and so I get lower marks..."

Two pupils commented that teachers' editing sometimes changed

the meaning of what the writer was trying to say.

Certain pupils saw assessment practices as rewarding appropriacy and penalising nonconformity:

"When it is going to be marked you have to make it so you are following rules and writing it in a certain way."

One pupil criticised the practice of writing for assessment in that it "makes school writing boring and takes all the fun out of writing. Writing for marks also affects the quality of my writing." Writing for assessment was therefore generally seen as an institutional activity which creates pressure and anxiety, and hinders the expression and communication of personal meaning. Two pupil-writers found peer-assessment by the whole class an even more uncomfortable experience than teacher-assessment; one declared that only those people who really wanted to read his work should have access to it. This confirms my opinion that ways should be found of making school writing events more purposeful, and of finding "real" audiences for pupils' written texts.

***Correctness:***

Correctness was seen as applying largely to spelling, and also sometimes to punctuation and grammar. Pupils do not seem to regard correctness as being necessary for clear written communication of meaning; instead, they view it as a requirement for the purpose of assessment. Teacher preoccupation with correctness causes anxiety and demotivation, and obstructs the flow of ideas:

"...I can't spell. It depresses me when someone tells me I have to write an essay..."

"I think of grammar and spelling and I forget about the main issue..."

A number of pupils saw accurate spelling as being closely associated with neatness:

"In the essay I like it to be neat, all the words spelt correctly..."

"Even if the essay is not to be marked I still try my hardest to keep it correct and neat."

Pupils' association of accuracy with untidy work is an indication that writing is regarded by the school as part of formal public behaviour, where there are strong rules and taboos regarding public acceptability. The stress on neatness and accuracy discourages risk-taking and unconventional writing, and tries to inculcate socially acceptable forms of behaviour. Process theory, conversely, sees messiness as being "necessary for playful, exploratory writing.... It is limiting to see writing as only creating order" (Thesen and Volbrecht, 1994: 7). Although I had made it clear that correctness was unimportant in this writing task, a number of pupils claimed that trying to write neatly and correctly was a habit that was difficult to break:

"I always try to spell correctly, even if the teacher says you don't, I think it is just a habit."

"I found that when I was writing that even though spelling and grammar were not important I still found myself correcting errors instead of leaving them as though correcting errors was routine."

According to process writing research, editing for correctness quite naturally overlaps with the process of drafting (Zamel, 1982: 201); however, comments such as that about "forgetting the main issue" while attending to correctness seem to indicate that the excessive attention that teachers pay to these aspects of writing has negative results.

One pupil found that a disregard for grammar and spelling had a liberating effect:

"I find it easier writing when I don't have to worry about spelling

and grammar because I can just write what I am thinking about." Another comment seemed to support L2 process writing research (Krapels, 1990: 40), which shows that spelling and grammar skills regress in more difficult writing tasks, as pupils are focused on grappling with meaning rather than on correctness:

"My spelling and grammar aren't bad but when I am writing they take a back seat."

For less proficient L1 writers, generating written text seems to provide many of the same difficulties as for L2 writers. Too many writing skills and aspects of form are not automatic and demand their conscious attention. Therefore the process of translating thought into written text, and of attending to meaning and form simultaneously, creates a heavy cognitive burden. Many such writers may then put concern for correctness "on hold" while trying to formulate their meanings.

### ***Motivation and Self-Concept:***

With the exception of two pupils, the 8-2 class was definite about disliking essay-writing. On the other hand the 8-C class, with a few exceptions, generally enjoyed writing. Those pupils who were enthusiastic about essay writing gave widely differing reasons for their response:

- they had a topic they wanted to write about;
- they perceived their own writing as being interesting;
- "it relaxes me";
- "the harder the topic, the more challenged I feel".

Self-concept, and a degree of independence from the opinions of others, were clearly linked with motivation:

"...Occasionally I have a lesson that I really enjoy, and these lessons tend to be English lessons for essays. I find that I write wonderful essays, others may not agree to that, but I do."

Pupils such as this seem undisturbed by the threat of assessment,



and secure in their enjoyment of writing and reading their own work.

The dislike of writing expressed by certain pupils was not associated so much with assessment as with pupils' perceptions of themselves as poor writers; and these perceptions were not based only on their awareness of the surface errors in their work, but also on a sense of their creative inadequacy:

"I hate it when we have to write essays 'coz i can't write good storys anyway!

"...I know I'm really bad at writing essays..."

"...When she told us to write an essay I cringed!... I know that essays are not one of my strong points. My personal opinion is that normally people have to have an imagination to write a essay, story or poem."

The self-perception of being too unimaginative to write well was a persistent one:

"I hate writting essays. I have the worst imagination in the world."

"i dont like writing because i dont have a very good imagination."

"I don't really enjoy essays. I only do them because I have to. When writing them, I don't really use imagination because it doesn't excite me. I just choose a topic and write without actually using imagination. My conclusion is that I don't like essays."

Pupils' views of the concept of imagination, and what they mean by writing "without actually using imagination", need to be examined. I suggest that these views are derived from the way in which teachers of writing define imagination, and from the type of tasks and topics which they set for pupils. Maxine Greene cites various interpretations of "imagination", and describes how interpretations of the concept have changed from ancient to modern times. She

dismisses as superficial those interpretations which see imagination as "activities of make-believe" (Greene, 1970: 311), or as "fictionality" (ibid: 304). I would claim that these are the perceptions which many teachers have of the process of imagining: that is, engaging in flights of fancy which bear little relation to the world of personal experience.

Greene, conversely, sees imagination as relating directly to one's personal universe. She regards it as a reconstructive faculty by which the individual is enabled "to devise a language of symbols and apply them to the open, mysterious world of the present" (ibid: 313). In other words, imagination provides a way of making sense of one's universe, and of attaching meaning to experience. If this is the case, then all individuals possess the faculty of imagination. I suggest that the concept of imagination should include the capacity to reconstruct and extend one's own schemata, so that one may be enabled to hold different, and perhaps opposing, viewpoints simultaneously, to be open to the knowledge frameworks of others, and consciously to adopt and internalise different social roles. Imagination therefore provides the writer with a sense of audience awareness and a consciousness of writing as a social process; the writer is enabled to move from personal into interpersonal writing by developing many social "voices" in addition to a personal conversational "voice".

These are skills which can be developed in pupils. I would argue, then, that imagination is an innate faculty which needs to be cultivated by the teacher. The misinterpretation of the faculty of imagination as the ability to write "creative" stories or poetry - implies that imagination is a quality which a pupil inherently does or does not possess;

- encourages pupils to devalue their personal experiences, their own

worth, and their writing abilities;

- ignores the fact that young writers' fictional or poetic flights of fancy are invariably unoriginal, in that they are modelled on existing and teacher-approved texts, themes and genres. Kress argues this same point: "...What are the demands for originality which can legitimately be made of child writers, or indeed of any writer?... The function of the writer is not that of a **creator** of text, but of an assembler of text" (Kress, 1989: 47).

Pupils need to be shown that all types of communicative writing require the exercise of the imagination in the process of consciously constructing roles, relationships and meanings through the mediation of the text.

### ***FEEDBACK OF STAGE ONE RESEARCH FINDINGS***

The final whole-class activity in the first stage of the research process was a formal feedback session with each of the two classes. Ethnographic methodology stresses the importance of feedback, for the following reasons:

- Interactive research entails an ongoing dialogue between researcher and subjects. The researcher, in the process of analysis, provides certain representations of the data which need to be negotiated with her subjects (Cameron et al, 1992: 132). Feedback therefore helps to equalise the unequal power relations between researcher and researched.

- Feedback activities have an ethical aspect: the researcher is seeking informed consent from her subjects, for the possible dissemination of the conclusions she has reached (ibid: 57).

- Through feedback activities the research procedures are made explicit and the researcher's discoveries are shared - both of which may be empowering to the research subjects (ibid: 57; 134 - 135).

I restructured my conclusions into a list of thirty points (see Appendix Two), written in a fairly informal register to accommodate those pupils who are reluctant and relatively poor readers. After explaining each item, I invited the pupils to comment in writing on the points.

There was a majority agreement in the 8-C class on all the points. The majority of the 8-2 class disagreed with me on only one point - the suggestion that pupils should assess one another's writing. In a class of poor academic achievers, where one of the few methods of creating a power-position for oneself is through belittling other class members, most pupils seemed to find pupil-assessment a threatening procedure which would be diminishing to the self-concept. A high level of anxiety was also manifested by this less confident group in their responses to other feedback points. They were anxious about being given open topics, and about not being given enough guidelines; they found writing in the classroom stressful and uninspiring; and they felt inhibited when writing for assessment. The 8-C pupils generally showed less anxiety, and were more critical of teacher attitudes, assessment methods, and management of school writing events. These more confident pupils saw themselves as being relatively aware of their writing processes, writer roles, genre options and writing techniques. A strong majority wanted more time for drafting and revision, and asked for the provision of more models and for more extensive teaching of writing methods.

Almost all the 8-C pupils responded to all the points; many of the 8-2 pupils, on the other hand, frequently left blanks in lieu of responses, or wrote "Don't know" after certain points, especially those dealing with writing processes rather than attitudes. This seems to show that the less experienced writers are not

accustomed to thinking about or talking about their writing processes - they appear to lack a subjective awareness of their writing processes, and a metalanguage by which they may make the process of writing a conscious activity.

Although the 8-C pupils generally demonstrated more confidence in their writing ability, there was a sizeable group who aligned themselves with the 8-2 class in showing an unwillingness for mutual pupil assessment, and for having their writing displayed for others to read. The perception of being uncreative, unimaginative, and "bad" writers seems to be a deeply ingrained part of the writer-identities which a number of pupils have constructed for themselves - or which have been constructed for them in school discourse.

Writing is seen very strongly as a process of struggle and guesswork, in which the teacher is dominant and pupils' needs, interests and self-concepts are subordinated. Most pupils perceived school writing events as testing and selection procedures, and there was a general request for the negotiation of topics and for teachers to respond dialogically to the ideas expressed in their texts.

Although some pupils declared that they found writing challenging, and thought their own texts were interesting, other pupils condemned the management of school writing events by implication in comments such as:

"Don't like being forced to write."

"Writing is boring."

"Writing should be fun."

These remarks imply that only when school writing events are centred around pupil knowledge and interests, and only when they are structured with the purpose of developing a positive writer-identity in pupils, will the process of school writing become less of an empty chore and more of an interpersonal negotiation of meaning between writer and reader.

## ***REFLECTIONS ON STAGE ONE OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS***

In ethnographic research, themes emerge during the research process (Vulliamy, 1990: 37, 86). Given that, in Lofty's words, "ethnographic enquiries are designed to be issue-raising and exploratory in contrast to problem-solving" (Lofty, 1992: 226), I framed the themes which emerged from the first stage of this research project as questions which open potential avenues for further investigation:

1. School writing seems to follow a particular set of institutional discourse rules. What social and contextual factors influence pupils' writing attitudes, processes and products in the school writing event? How may the power-imbalance between pupil-writer and teacher-assessor be corrected? What forms of feedback and assessment are most productive? How may pupil-writers be provided with "real" audiences?
2. My observations of pupil writing behaviour, and pupils' descriptions of their writing processes, seem to bear out the findings of much process writing research. How may process writing methods facilitate pupil writing (i.e. in generating ideas, drafting, redrafting, revising and editing)?
3. Between the formulation of a thought or idea, and the production of a written text, a series of restructuring activities seems to take place. How do writers restructure thought into written text, and how may pupils be shown how to develop coherence and cohesion in their texts?
4. The less confident pupil-writers generally seem to lack a conscious awareness of their writing processes, and are exclusively

focused on their negative writer-identities. How may a writing pedagogy develop an awareness in pupil-writers of writer roles, audiences, genres and writing processes?

5. Writing seems to be a series of choices at many levels. What influences these choices, especially at the point where the personal becomes the public?

6. Certain models, and textual borrowings, are evident in pupil writing. How do models help to construct writers' roles, texts, and perceptions of reality?

7. Certain genres and text structures seem to facilitate the articulation and communication of meaning - also the mixing of certain modes. How may certain "personal" and "public" modes be effectively blended to allow for successful interpersonal writing (for example, the blending of autobiographical narrative with the discursive or expository genre)? How may pupils be shown how to link Bernstein's "particularistic" and "universalistic" meanings in writing (Atkinson, 1985: 71)?

Stage One of the research design focused mainly on the context of the school writing classroom, and provided insights into how school writing processes influence pupils' attempts to communicate meaning in writing. Process writing theory appears to be a helpful, but limited, pedagogical approach, which throws little light on the majority of the questions above. The research project thus far did not fully explain what happens at the crucial point where meaning is translated into form - what personal, textual and contextual factors and restraints shape writers' expressed meanings, their writer-roles, their perceptions of audience, and their text structures.

I therefore decided that in subsequent research activities I needed to concentrate mainly on Questions 4, 5, 6, and 7 above. I re-articulated these questions into two main issues which I felt needed further investigation:

- The notion of **consciousness** in writing seemed significant. I needed to pursue the questions of whether pupils make conscious choices in structuring their texts, and whether they see themselves as conscious agents in the writing process. I also wished to investigate what contextual factors shaped their images of themselves as writers.
  
- The second issue derives from my discovery that many pupil writers produce "mixed mode" texts. I found my theoretical startingpoint in the concept of **intertextuality**. In Stage Two, my inquiry was to be directed at discovering what textual borrowings occurred in pupils' texts, how these borrowings affected the coherence and the meaning of the texts, and how they shaped reader and writer roles and relationships.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### STAGE TWO: A STUDY OF THE TEXTS AND INTERVIEW RESPONSES OF TWO KEY INFORMANTS

#### *PROCESS AND INFORMANTS*

##### *Process:*

The central themes which I wished to explore in Stage Two of the project - the notion of **consciousness** in writing, and the theme of **intertextuality** - indicated the need for research methods which were intensive and highly focused. I therefore selected two "key informants", one relatively proficient in writing and the other far less proficient, whose texts showed a combination of textual borrowings. I first examined their texts for evidence of intertextuality and its effects on meaning, textuality and writer/reader roles and relationships (Halliday's ideational, textual and interpersonal aspects of writing)( Halliday, 1985: xviii). I then conducted semi-structured interviews with the two interviewees.

I chose Brandon and Kathy (not their real names) as my key informants because they were in certain ways both representative and distinctive. Their texts showed them to be representative of certain aspects of their class (i.e. learning) groups. Kathy's texts (see Appendix Three) show that she lacks confidence, dislikes writing, feels herself to be an inadequate and unimaginative writer, has few resources on which to draw, and gravitates towards impersonal writing when she has to produce texts for assessment. These were trends evident in many texts produced by her class group. Brandon's writing is technically more varied and controlled, and shows him to be more assertive in taking subject positions and

in persuading the reader to his viewpoint. He has more resources from which to choose, combines these more imaginatively, and is more aware of his writing processes - typical characteristics of the more experienced writers in his class group. Brandon and Kathy also seem to represent gender stereotypes, in their different levels of assertiveness.

However, my interviewees also displayed distinctive characteristics. Brandon is coloured, and showed evidence of his bilingual background in his interview (see page 145); Kathy is white and monolingual. Yet Brandon has far greater confidence and fluency in writing and conversation than both Kathy and the majority of his cultural peer group; whereas Kathy is less literate than most of her white peers.

Ethnographic research methodology asserts that individuals create different realities for themselves, and that this individual construction of reality is negotiated in interpersonal communication with others (Harvey, 1992: 72). Research findings are therefore mediated as much by the particular context and by the researcher's contribution to the process as by the contributions of the research subjects (Briggs, 1986: 3, 25). I was aware that Brandon's and Kathy's interview responses would be affected by their individual personalities and experiences and by the nature and course of the interview itself. I selected them less for the purpose of generalising my findings than because they offered possibilities for testing emerging hypotheses (Vulliamy, 1990: 114). Their writing (see Appendix 2) demonstrated certain characteristics which I had noted in a number of examples of pupil writing, characteristics which puzzled me and about which I had generated tentative hypotheses. I therefore wished to explore these trends further.

Kathy had written in a number of different voices in her first text. She seemed to be drawing from, and trying to combine, certain popular genres which did not allow her to communicate her meaning coherently and confidently. Brandon had also employed a mixture of modes, but far more consciously, coherently and assertively. Both Kathy and Brandon had used quite different voices in their second texts. Here Kathy had seemed overwhelmingly concerned with her negative feelings and attitudes towards writing, whereas Brandon's complete focus was on writing as a flexible process of choices and decisions. Brandon and Kathy therefore seemed to be appropriate, and complementary, key informants who might help me to explore further the factors which shape young writers' meanings, writer-roles and text-structures.

In an ethnography, the ethnographer aims to paint a canvas depicting a particular and detailed sociocultural landscape. In my canvas, the data derived from whole-class activities fills in the background; the key informants are foregrounded as focal points, in certain ways representative of the sociocultural background, in certain ways unique, in certain ways recreated by the "painter's brush". The interview stage of the research process sought to highlight those aspects of similarity and difference, and to reflect, in greater detail than in Stage One, on my own contribution to the construction of meaning.

### ***AN EXAMINATION OF INTERTEXTUALITY IN KEY INFORMANTS' TEXTS***

#### ***Intertextuality and Coherence:***

Foucault uses the term "discursive formation" for the interrelated network of themes, theories and relationships that are developed to

give a particular discourse its coherence (Foucault, 1972: 31 - 39). He explains that a discursive formation is nonetheless filled with contradictions; it is "a space of multiple dissensions; a set of different oppositions". Disciplines and institutions try to construct principles of cohesion which reorganise these contradictory elements in order to unify the discourse (ibid: 149).

Texts reflect the diverse natures of the discourses to which they belong; in Fairclough's explanation of intertextuality (1992: 103 - 136), he points out that texts are usually heterogeneous, and made up of contradictory elements borrowed from other texts. Barthes speaks about the text as "a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (Barthes, 1992: 116). Both writers and readers attempt to impose coherence upon the heterogeneity of the text. The surface of the text may be smooth or uneven, and the meaning of the text coherent or incoherent, depending upon the following factors:

1. Borrowings may be "manifest" (made explicit, quoted verbatim, and often marked by the use of quotation marks and a reporting verb), or "constitutive" (integrated into the surrounding text without being explicitly cued) (Fairclough, 1992: 104).

2. Textual borrowings may "reaccentuate" (make obvious) their sources, or they may be incorporated into the prevailing tone of the surrounding text (ibid). Fairclough, in elaborating on the practice of reaccentuation, cites Bakhtin, who states that texts may "reaccentuate" other texts by, for example, being used in an ironic, parodic or reverent manner, or by the mixing of textual modes and elements in various ways (Bakhtin, 1986: 79 - 80; in Fairclough, 1992: 103).

3. Borrowings may or may not be merged into the background assumptions of the surrounding text through "presupposition". This term refers to the assumptions made by writer and reader while constructing and interpreting the text. Fairclough discusses the question of coherence (ibid: 104, 120 - 121, 133 - 136), and the fact that it largely depends on a network of assumptions by which writer and reader make connections between the different textual borrowings of the text. Fairclough points out that the intertextual nature of texts helps to set up subject positions for both writer and reader: for the writer, by virtue of the network of texts from which she borrows and whose elements she fits together as a coherent whole, thereby creating a coherent world view acceptable to her reader; for the reader, by virtue of the assumptions she makes in order to resolve the contradictions of a heterogeneous text and impose upon it a coherent framework. Thus the act of negotiating meaning impels writer and reader into accepting a certain set of discourse features as being coherent - a set in which reader and writer hold particular subject positions. Yet, Fairclough postulates, not all interpreters are compliant - some are resistant, especially when employing a capacity for critical reading.

4. Different textual borrowings may be juxtaposed in such a way in the text as to produce ambivalent meanings, so that different meanings co-exist (ibid: 105).

5. Different elements of a text may be designed to be interpreted in different ways by different audiences (ibid).

***Brandon's Texts:***

Brandon's first text shows some complex intertextual elements. He seems to be using the overall form of the press letter, which is flexible enough to draw from private and public modes, as it

addresses a public audience in intimate vein and seeks to generalise its cause. It is itself an intertextual genre, which integrates conversation, popular journalism, narrative, exposition and public debate.

Brandon makes use of both "constitutive" and "manifest" textual borrowings. His "constitutive" borrowings include personal narrative (paragraph one); popular journalism of the "YOU" magazine variety (indicated by the intimate conversational register, and the use of irony, colloquialisms and contractions, as in the second halves of paragraphs one, two and four); exposition (indicated by the impersonal generalising register of the first sentence of paragraph four); and demagogic public rhetoric (in the final paragraph). He also includes "manifest" intertextual borrowings, one from a popular magazine (paragraph one), and two from different types of television "soaps" (paragraph four). He deliberately does not attempt to integrate them, as it suits his purpose to make them explicit. The quotation from the "YOU" magazine states and reinforces his point of view, and establishes the tone of ironic intimacy which Brandon uses in paragraphs one, two and four - a tone which adds coherence to his argument. The quotes from American and Australian soaps "reaccentuate" their original sources by being used parodically, and by the deliberate juxtaposition of their contrasting registers, also for the purpose of adding weight to his argument.

Brandon therefore tries to create a coherent world view through textual borrowing, through subjecting alternative views to irony, and by relying on certain presuppositions which establish a particular writer/reader relationship. His text presupposes the following set of shared assumptions:

- Television is overwhelmingly important in the life of the family and

as a source of entertainment.

- Non-Western programmes are of inferior quality.
- Valued knowledge and stimulating entertainment are provided by current affairs and sports programmes rather than fiction - the former being associated with superior masculine interests, the latter with inferior and superficial feminine concerns.

Brandon seems to have accepted uncritically the masculine gender role which has been constructed for him in media discourse. His writer-persona is assertive, masculine, sport-oriented, discriminating, and in touch with current issues: a dominant personality, who operates with equal assurance in the private and public domains. The reader is inspanned to the writer's view by being addressed as a personal (and masculine) friend who sympathises with family attitudes and behaviour; the writer's intimate and ironic tone presupposes a sharing of views.

Brandon's text is, however, unable to sustain a coherent view and an even textuality throughout. Johns points out that "the writer attempts to appeal to the reader through a reality upon which the writer and reader can agree, and to convince the reader of a particular argument within this reality. However, if this appeal is unsuccessful, the reader will reject the truth value of the text; coherence will not be established" (Johns, 1990: 31 ). A lack of coherence is created in the following ways:

- Brandon has attempted to change gradually from a personal to a public mode in order to generalise - to assert that his view is the dominant one. The text moves from addressing the reader as intimate friend, to a direct attack on the cause of annoyance. Fairclough points out that the juxtaposition of contrasting text elements may lead to ambivalence (Fairclough, 1992; 105); the demagogic final paragraph which Brandon has chosen to use as a

climax to the text provides discordant changes in writer and reader roles. There is uncertainty in the identity of the subject from paragraph three onwards. In paragraph three, "we" acts as the agent in sentence one, and includes the reader. Brandon avoids using a personal subject in sentence two ("Being" is an unrelated participle), and he has moved to the impersonal "one" in sentence three. Paragraph four uses the impersonal mode throughout; and the generalised "we", which excludes the reader, appears in paragraph five. Benveniste (1971: 218; in Silverman, 1983: 196 - 197) distinguishes between the "speaking subject", and the "subject of the utterance": that is, between the identity of the person who generates the text, and the identity of the subject image (the "I") presented within the utterance. These dual subjects are not always completely identified. Brandon's inconsistency in his use of the sentence subject reflects his difficulty in changing his image from that of personal friend to that of public agitator. The role of the reader consequently also becomes ambivalent. In the first paragraph, the reader is a family friend; in the final paragraph he has become the S.A.B.C., being harangued by the writer who acts as spokesman for the general public - thus the reader is forced uncomfortably to change sides.

- Brandon's attitudes towards the R.D.P. are also ambivalent. He considers it a godsend; yet the irony in paragraph one, and his critical attitude in paragraph two, indicate a contradiction in assumptions - that the R.D.P. is to be approved as long as middle-class interests are not affected.

- Brandon has made a number of choices which have created a resistant reader. He is relying on presuppositions unshared by myself. Not only am I critical of his definition of valued knowledge and entertainment, but I am also alienated by his use of antifeminist



irony in paragraph four, and by being positioned as the opposition in paragraph five. Brandon has therefore failed to negotiate his viewpoint successfully with his chief reader.

Brandon's second text contains his reflections on his writing process. He sees his writing method as a series of choices, the most difficult one being his choice of topic. Once he has "entered" his topic, he finds numerous "doors" to open. He presents the writing process as a journey, an adventure into the unpredictable - and he is able to view writing in this way because he has so many resources - so many "doors" - at his command. In his first text he has attempted to combine a number of texts, registers and voices in order to persuade the reader into accepting his point of view. His degree of control over his writing tools gives him the assertiveness to try to present his view as a coherent picture of reality, the confidence necessary for risk-taking, and the flexibility to change course during his "journey" as he continually weighs up the options which he presents to himself. His first text, and his description of his writing process, provide good examples of Halliday and Hasan's description of a text as "a continuous process of semantic choice, a movement through the network of meaning potential, with each set of choices constituting the environment for a further set" (Halliday and Hasan, 1985: 10).

Brandon's second text also exemplifies Bakhtin's notion of a dialogic relationship between writer and text (see page 15). Although Brandon asserts that spontaneity is the key to his writing, the extended metaphor in this text is carefully and consciously developed, thus demonstrating that much successful writing incorporates a balance between the writer's direction of his content and an openness on his part to the directions offered by the emerging meanings of the text.

***Kathy's Texts:***

Brandon's texts, his writing process and his attitudes contrast sharply with those of Kathy. Her first piece of writing is relatively formless, and shows few signs of textual borrowing, which indicates a severe lack of textual resources at Kathy's disposal. Her view of her topic lacks coherence, she is tentative about using her own voice, and her inexperience and insecurity are borne out by her comments in her second text, where she seems to perceive writing as a process which is threatening, demotivating, and diminishing to her self-concept.

Evidence of intertextuality is more difficult to identify in Kathy's text than in Brandon's. I suggest that there are three kinds of textual influences:

1. Textbook exposition: this is characterised by an impersonal voice, and generalising categorical statements with agentless subjects. For example:

- "Sport is important in one's life."
- "There are many types of dancing like Jazz, Modern and ballroom etc."
- "Dancing is a very widespread sport and many people enjoy it, if not for participating but for watching."

Kathy possibly falls into this mode occasionally not to act as informed expert but to display to the teacher-assessor her knowledge of an approved style which she feels is a safe option, and because this is a genre with which she is familiar.

2. Popular journalism, especially women's magazines: this discourse engages in the designing of feminine role stereotypes and the promotion of consumable physical activities, such as aerobics and modern dance, which are depicted as quick remedies for stress, and the quick route to beauty, fame, travel and success.

3. Popular advertising: I would argue that from line six onwards, "you" is used, not as an impersonal pronoun but to indicate an address to the general public. Kathy tries to sell dancing by making a number of different, and disparate, claims: dancing releases stress and anger, brings fulfilment through achievement, gets you fit and flexible, makes you feel good about yourself, caters for male and female, takes you to many places, gives you stunning outfits to wear. The reader is also given practical information about lessons. The writer acts here as the seller; the reader is the potential consumer who fills multiple roles - male, female, the competitive, the stressed, the unfit, prospective travellers, prospective performers.

The fact that Kathy has presented her topic in so many ways has created coherence problems in her text; for, as Fairclough points out, designing different elements of a text to be interpreted in different ways by different audiences can cause a lack of coherence (Fairclough, 1992: 105). She seems to display a certain insecurity and defensiveness about her hobby, as she has reconstructed the image of dancing from that of a performing art into that of a sport on the possible presupposition that this image will be more acceptable to a diverse and largely sport-oriented public. As with Brandon's text, this presupposition - framed in her opening statement - creates coherence problems for her reader, as I do not share her basic assumption about the overriding significance of sport, or about the "sporting" connotations which she attaches to dancing.

Kathy's use of the advertising genre is unsuccessful because she has not defined her target audience clearly, and because she does not know how to market her "product". Fairclough uses the term "commodification" to describe how advertising discourse has

tended to colonise other domains, and he states that "Consumerism has been seen as entailing a shift in the relative power of producer and consumer in favour of the latter" (Fairclough, 1992: 117). The fact that Kathy presents her topic as a product to be consumed, instead of as a meaningful personal experience, forces her to present it in such a way as to make it attractive to the consumer, instead of describing what makes it attractive to her - her "meanings" must be subordinated to those of the public market. Kathy's text therefore establishes a different balance in writer/reader relationships from Brandon's text. The latter sets itself up as a preferred version of reality and truth, and uses various rhetorical devices to persuade readers of the validity of its view. The personal opening of Brandon's text establishes a balance in the negotiation of meaning between writer and reader; by the final paragraph, the writer as demagogue dominates the communicative exchange. The advertising text, on the other hand, must recast its product so that it is congruent with the schematic framework and value system of the target audience. The writer therefore often has to compromise or submerge her own framework of meanings and values. There is no evidence that the various connotations that Kathy attaches to dancing reflect her personal feelings and views.

Sentences two to six form a contrast to the rest of the text. Kathy moves into a more personal mode here, by introducing her own voice briefly, and then by describing the emotional relationship between dancer, music and dance. However, she is not secure in this personal mode, for she uses the generalised "you" as subject and a generalising tense, and she quickly withdraws from the personal mode to the safer, more public advertising mode. The "textbook" conclusion shows a complete withdrawal of self from the text.

I postulate that it is lack of resources, rather than lack of imagination (see Kathy's second text), that prevents Kathy from exploring the kinds of options with which Brandon experiments. Brandon first sets a target (his theme); then he "tries on" various text and voice options and combinations to discover what "fits". Kathy needs guidance in what models and writer roles are available to her, and in how to use and combine these effectively and coherently. Kathy cannot persuade because she does not have the skills, so she remains convinced that her views, her feelings and her writing abilities are inferior; and her negative writer-identity, in turn, discourages her from trying to communicate her meanings in writing.

### ***INTERVIEW NUMBER ONE: KATHY***

#### ***Preparation:***

I decided on a relatively structured approach in the interview with Kathy, and opted for using pictures or written topics to be sorted into categories at various phases of the interview. I anticipated that there would be advantages and disadvantages attached to this method. As Kathy seemed shy, with low self-esteem, and very conscious of the status and authority gap between us, I felt that allowing her to focus on visual materials rather than on myself in face-to-face interaction might help her to relax and respond. Her treatment of the items would allow for questions from myself and encourage commentary from her, and I determined to use open questioning modes where possible. The use of material resources would also be advantageous to myself, as Kathy did not want the interview to be tape-recorded; the items were useful as a structuring framework for analysis, in that each item might help to trigger my memory of Kathy's reaction to it. I decided not to take

notes if possible during the interview, as this might prove disturbing and alienating to my respondent.

I anticipated that a relatively structured approach might also prove disadvantageous in the context of an ethnographic research framework. Hitchcock and Hughes warn of two possible negative results of this approach: firstly, that the interviewer might lead on and influence her respondent's responses; secondly, that responses should be "placed against the research focus and not the other way around which might lead to forcing the materials into the researcher's prearranged ideas and hypotheses" (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989: 88 - 89, 98). I was aware that, by selecting certain items, I was providing my own framework for responses; in addition, the selection would inevitably be influenced by my findings to date, so that I would be proceeding from my existing assumptions and conclusions instead of posing open questions and subsequently matching responses against my previous findings. As it transpired, I found myself modifying this structured framework during the course of the interview; in phases two and three, I attempted an open-ended questioning approach first, and used the visual materials only afterwards as a back-up measure when it became apparent that my respondent was floundering. I also tried to avoid basing my questions directly on my previous findings, and restrained myself from presenting to my respondent my prior analysis of her work.

***Process:***

As I approached both the process and the analysis of the interview, I tried to be aware continually of the ethnographic perspective that interviewing is not a transparent means of eliciting the "truth" from a respondent, but an interactive process in which knowledge is shaped not only by the respondent but also by the interviewer and

the context. The latter includes the physical and temporal context, and the developing form of the interview as it is constructed by the participants in the course of their interaction (Briggs, 1986: 12 - 13, 22). I therefore tried to be sensitive to the status-gap between myself and Kathy in the interview situation, to neutralise my own personality as far as possible, and to avoid presenting the interview as a formal, and forbidding, event.

I first showed Kathy the two texts which she had previously written, explaining that I was interested in finding out

- what affects the way pupils write, and where young writers get their ideas;
- what affects the way pupils feel about writing.

I then showed her the diagram depicting the concentric circles of the school writing event (see Appendix Four). This diagram is a simplified form of the diagram I have used as a structuring framework for the research process. I decided to leave the diagram incomplete in order to make it more comprehensible to Kathy; I therefore omitted the outer circle representing the wider social context of social institutions and dominant discourses. I elaborated on this diagram by explaining to Kathy that young people may find it difficult to write because of

- text difficulties (putting thoughts down on paper);
- difficulties with writing in the classroom;
- difficulties with writing at home.

Conversely, pupil-writers could get help and ideas from other texts, from classroom activities, and from their homes and friends.

Through this explanation I hoped to fulfil Briggs' requirement that the interviewer should provide a referential frame for the interview (Briggs, 1986: 51 - 54), before proceeding to specific questions.

***Contextual Influences:***

I introduced the first activity by explaining that I was working from the outer circle of the diagram towards the centre. I then produced twenty-six pictures, some showing general family activities, some specific reading and writing activities within the home (see Appendix Five). I asked Kathy to place them next to labels marked "yes" and "no", depending upon whether she associated the activity with her home life and her family. I then asked her to comment on her categorisation of each picture. I hoped in this way to avoid intrusive personal questioning, being mindful of Briggs' advice to be aware of "taboo" or sensitive areas (ibid: 45 - 46; 50).

A picture emerged of a middle-class family which included caring and stable parents, and two children, Kathy and an older brother. Despite the apparent stability of family life, there was little evidence of family interaction or communication. Kathy's home seems to be characterised by the solitary nature of the activities which take place there, and I would suggest that this may be a feature of many white middle-class homes. Pictures of family "braais", family gatherings and group conversations were assigned to the "no" category; the family sometimes watch television together, but more often in isolation, and they do not discuss programmes. The home context does not encourage family members consciously to adopt different subject positions through communication and debate. A picture of a father helping his daughter with homework was rejected; although Kathy occasionally does homework with friends, she usually works alone on her bed, and does not consult members of the family. When Kathy commented on the way in which she approaches homework writing tasks, she explained that when she writes she never spends time in thinking or planning; she starts with an opening sentence and works her way through to the end because "I just want to get it finished". Although she confirmed the



statement which she had made in her second text about hating the activity of writing, and asserted that she had disliked writing even at primary school level, evidence emerged at a later stage in the interview that Kathy **does** write spontaneously - but she was possibly unwilling to give me this information at this point.

Kathy kept insisting that her whole family read except for her; she placed pictures of adults reading the newspaper on the "yes" pile, but she rejected a picture of an adult male reading a book, and, in answer to a question, commented that large numbers of books were not kept at home. There is no group-reading or group-discussion of magazines. Kathy rejected a picture of a mother reading to her child; she could not remember being read to, and had never been a member of a library. Despite her prior repeated insistence that she never reads, she assigned pictures of certain magazines to the "yes" pile, explaining that she reads music magazines and teenage magazines such as "Blush". Her responses about "never reading" echoed what her parents had told me on two previous occasions ("Kathy never reads"), and seemed to be reflecting the perceptions of her parents and her teachers about what constitutes acceptable reading material. The popular reading matter of teenagers, reflecting their experiential world, is seen as worthless and irrelevant as against the media material, literary forms and discourse modes of the adult world.

When I directed Kathy's attention to her second text, where she had written about her writing attitudes, I tried to ascertain whether she saw any differences between the two texts. She replied immediately, and with certainty, that the second text was what she really felt but the first text was "for the teacher", and was written because she had been told to write it and because it was for marks. She described the second text as personal, the first one as more

general. This was despite the fact that she had been requested to write the first text on a topic of personal interest to her, and to give her feelings and ideas. This seems to confirm my previous finding that pupils gravitate towards "public" writing and a "public" voice, as they feel that this is the kind of writing which is exclusively valued, and highly rated, by teachers.

Kathy then mentioned that the second text was typical of the way she wrote in her diary. This seemed to be a slip of the tongue - she seemed self-conscious when I asked her about it. I pressed her a little to tell me the difference between diary-writing and school writing. She writes about her feelings easily and spontaneously in her diary because no one reads it except for herself, but hates to write for others, and hates her work to be read to the class. The notion of audience seems to be equated in Kathy's view with a public, and negative, evaluation of her worth and ability, instead of being perceived as co-respondent in a communication process.

Kathy seemed to see her writing difficulties as centred solely in herself and her inadequacies, and she continually repeated that she could not write essays. In an attempt to direct her attention to contextual factors which might possibly affect her writing processes and attitudes, I provided her with a set of labels relating to the school context to put in descending order of importance. She ranked these as follows:

Spelling and correctness

Your own feelings

Topics

Putting thoughts into words

Classroom atmosphere

Length of pieces

Teacher's attitudes and input

Not relevant:

Essay book

Marking Process

Time restraints

When Kathy spoke about the first factor, she showed excessive concern for accuracy and presentation, insisting that her work had to be correct and neat "or I'd rather get nought". I was reminded of a previous comment made by Kathy's parents to myself that she was a poor writer because she could not spell. The influence of home and school seem to overlap here in that both see writing as product, not process. The text - the object of production - is evaluated as an extension of the writer, according to the criteria of neatness, correctness and socially acceptable form; the communicative function of the text is generally considered as being of less significance. I began to feel that Kathy had accepted a subject position assigned to her by school and parental discourse and was oblivious of the possible negative influence of contextual factors, and/or she was avoiding assigning blame to myself and to the teaching situation. The classroom atmosphere was a negative factor because "I don't like my class"; the teacher's input was placed last as an influential factor, and other teacher-controlled aspects of the writing event - the essay book, the marking process, and time restraints - were perceived to be irrelevant. Her rating of the marking process as unimportant was contradicted by her repeated statement that she hated writing "for marks". I began to suspect at this point that Kathy may have agreed to the interview to please me, and would not make any statement detrimental to myself. She seemed to be following the pattern described by Hitchcock and Hughes, where "the respondent may feel that they have to give the researcher the kinds of answers and responses it is assumed the researcher wants"(Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989: 89).

***Intertextual Influences:***

In the final phase of the interview, I tried to elicit from Kathy information about the texts from which she had borrowed without revealing the conclusions I had drawn from my analysis of the first text. She seemed unaware that any textual borrowing had taken place, and kept reiterating that she had used no resources because she did not read. When I supplied her with a list of possible genres, she suddenly became clear about what resources she had used. Her responses are in brackets after each item in the following list.

Textbooks (no)

Novels/stories (no)

Letters: to a friend, business or newspaper (yes - to a friend)

Public speeches/debates (yes - the "fit and flexible" extract)

Advertisements/brochures (yes)

Newspaper reports/articles (no)

Magazine articles (yes - on women's fitness)

Play (no)

Poster (unsure - not so much)

Poem (no)

Diary (no)

Song (no)

Television programme: news, soaps, sport etc (no)

The spoken language of school assemblies or lessons (no)

Business reports (no)

Other people's conversation (unsure - could be)

She did not see the "textbook language" which I had previously identified as one of her sources (perhaps I should have used the more general term "factual reporting"). However, the evidence of textual borrowing which she perceived in her text supports my analysis. She had occasionally fallen into a more intimate key (as would be used in a letter to a friend), but had generally used the

public language of magazine journalism, and of salesmanship and persuasion.

***Post-Interview Activity:***

My final "process" phase was based on Briggs' advice to the interviewer to note down her impressions as soon as possible after the interview (Briggs, 1986: 104). I found it difficult to assess my own contributions to the interaction without the aid of a recording and transcript, as I had tended to become more exclusively focused on Kathy's responses as the interview progressed, and less conscious that I was monitoring my own performance as well.

***INTERVIEW NUMBER TWO: BRANDON***

In this interview, the use of the cassette recorder allowed for a much freer structure than in the interview with Kathy, where I was forced to keep to a fairly rigid outline in order to provide a framework for my subsequent analysis. The availability of a transcript of the interviews with Brandon permitted me to study my own participation objectively and to evaluate critically my own position in our mutual process of knowledge construction (see Appendix Six).

***Contextual Influences:***

After first explaining my frame of reference, using the diagram of the concentric circles of the school writing event, I encouraged Brandon to talk about his home and family. Brandon's home environment displays the pattern of an extended family, comprising three children, parents, an uncle and a grandmother. This pattern is more typical of coloured than of white middle class families. The social behaviour of Brandon's family differs from that of Kathy's

family, where members are relatively isolated, whereas in Brandon's home there is a great deal of social and verbal interaction. Brandon presented a view of family debates on current issues where all members, of all ages, participate on equal terms:

*Brandon: You see, you see, you get, you get - because of the - the - my - the old generation - older - my grandmother - you get the younger generation, my mother (laugh) - and then my sister, you're going to get three - three different viewpoints from the different generations - my viewpoint and my sister's and my brother's viewpoint - well, my brother's seven - you can't really count him (laugh) - then - um - so you can see three different generations' viewpoints - it's - it's - you know, you test something out like - um - like - you can take any topic and test it out - the death penalty - "What do you think of this?" - "Yes, I think they should hang" - "What do you think of this?" - "No, they shouldn't hang" - "What do you think of this?" - conflicting viewpoints of whatever.*

When asked about other resources, such as television, Brandon defended television and magazines as a source of input, explaining that different genres served different functions. He saw the popular media - television, magazines, the press - as giving information about current affairs and current gossip; while novels he regarded as the conveyors of human emotion (see transcript page 147). Brandon seems to have a highly developed conscious awareness of how texts are shaped by writers - and editors - to achieve an purpose. He is "critical" in the sense used by Fairclough (1992b; cited in The New London Group, 1996: 85) "as in the ability to critique a system and its relation to other systems on the basis of the working of power, politics, ideology and values". He sees the media as a collection of voices struggling to be heard:

*B: ... the whole thing what the media is, somebody's - somebody's viewpoint or collection of viewpoints - people trying to get their viewpoints across to you, trying to get*

*you to accept their viewpoints. Specially in advertising.*

He is also aware of how these voices are shaped to a particular value system:

*B: And just the - it's - any magazine is the opinion of the editor. It's the - the opinions only goes as far as the editor. If the editor doesn't like something, subconsciously he will - um - he will disagree with that and get it cut out most of the time. So it's just - it's one - basically - a collection of ideas, right, from - but one person's diverting the flow of ideas to his - sort of - to his kind of viewpoint.*

Brandon is sensitive to the use of language in the media to fulfil a "doublespeak" function:

*B: ... I can see right through it, you know. O.K., this person wants this and that and that, and he's just wording this nicely - "political correctness" for this when he actually means that - I can pick out what they - what they're trying to say...*

Brandon, like Kathy, engages in a certain kind of writing which is not designed for a public audience. Rainwater (1989; in Giddens, 1991: 72) suggests that personal journal-writing is a type of "autobiographical thinking" during which the writer develops a coherent sense of self. Kathy writes her private feelings and thoughts in her diary; Brandon writes songs which he accompanies on the guitar. These are, in his words, his "personal thing" and he warns others to "stay away from it". He makes a distinction between the outer words, and the inner meaning which is never fully available to an audience:

*B: ... Songwriters often have a deeper meaning behind the words. Can say - um - uh - "my brother died every night" - it's a line of, not one of my songs but a song. Now how*

*can - nobody knows what that means. But only the - only the songwriter can know what that means. It's just - like - gushing out of feelings and how he feels, his opinions - so - songwriting's completely different to - to - um...*

*Interviewer: Would you say that's very - very personal writing?*

*B: It is - it's - um - you can share - I can share the writing - it's mostly - you know, like - ironic - that kind of thing - and - um - but - I find it very hard to share the meaning behind it - it's like - poetry...*

Up to this point there was little evidence to explain why Brandon is so much more literate, and more aware of the effects of certain writing practices, than Kathy. Both Brandon and Kathy come from middle-class backgrounds; the difference between Brandon's and Kathy's levels of literacy cannot therefore be explained on the grounds of class, in terms of Bernstein's elaborated and restricted codes (Atkinson, 1985: 62 - 69). Moreover, Brandon's literacy level is superior to that of most of his peers at the school of a similar sociocultural group and a similar home background. Certain personal influences, such as his mother and his Standard Three teacher (see transcript pages 148, 156, 157), have affected his reading and writing behaviour. Nevertheless, these influences cannot adequately explain his early predilection for writing political satire, his first experiment in which took place at a very formal Catholic school in Standard Three (see transcript page 156).

Brandon himself attributes his enjoyment in, and facility with, writing to his early, and diverse, reading experiences. The authorial milestones in his progressive novel-reading experiences have been Enid Blyton, Susan Cooper, Terry Pratchett and George Orwell (see transcript page 157). In the works written by the latter two authors, a strong theme is a play on word-meanings: in the case of Orwell the play is darkly ironic; in the case of Pratchett, satirical-absurdist.



Both of these modes tend to expose, for the reader's appreciation, the speaker's voice and the stylistic techniques used in the text. Fairclough points out that irony is an utterance which echoes another utterance in order to express a negative attitude towards the latter (Fairclough, 1992: 123); Bakhtin notes that the use of irony and parody serves as a form of intertextuality, in that the original texts are made evident by being "reaccentuated" (1986: 79 - 80; cited in Fairclough, 1992: 103). Irony, satire and parody therefore function as a means of distancing the reader from the text, of making the unnoticed obvious, and of denaturalising the conventional. Brandon's affinity for satire (as is evident in his first written text) may therefore be a factor in developing his conscious awareness of the way in which language and texts work to construct meaning and influence the reader.

Brandon demonstrates that he is "multiliterate" - a term coined by The New London Group (1996: 63 - 64). They use the term "multiliterate" in the sense in which it is used by Kress (1995: 15 - 22), who argues the necessity for acquiring multiple modes of meaning-making, and including as resources as wide a range of texts as possible: texts which have traditionally been aesthetically valued; texts relevant to particular cultural groups; the informational texts of the everyday world; visual texts; and media texts, including those of our rapidly changing new communications media. This brand of literacy does not attach status differentials to different genres, and contrasts with "mere literacy" (The New London Group, 1996: 64), which remains centred on language only. Whereas Kathy has only the world of television, of textbooks and of teenage magazines to use as her resources, Brandon is multiliterate in that he moves in a social and textual communicative world of many voices which assert their viewpoints, and among which he asserts his own voice - critical or poetic, satirical or reflective, as suits his

purpose and audience.

As far as his writing environment is concerned, Brandon does not find writing in the classroom threatening. He prefers to write in a controlled situation where he can become totally involved in constructing his text (see transcript page 150). He commented that he feels limited by a restricted choice of topics, and claimed that open topics which can be developed into a variety of genres give the writer more control of the writing process and enable him to put more of himself in the text (see transcript page 149). He saw the examination situation as a situation where the writer's identity and meaning-making attempts become subordinated to the demands of the examiner:

*"...You're just writing for a good mark, you're just writing for the - for the teacher who's going to mark it, and so you're just writing for the - for what you think is going to be right, what this person's opinion that you know is going to mark it, what this person's opinion is, what you think this person will like and not like."*

***Process of Text-Production:***

When I referred Brandon to the two texts he had produced, I explained that they seemed to me to have been treated differently. He identified the first text as a light-hearted satire, which was "more of a test", whereas the second one he took "very seriously". In this latter text - which was not for assessment - Brandon has allowed himself to use a personal voice; whereas in the first text he adopts a series of roles and voices, and, as I concluded in my prior analysis of this text, weaves a network of genres together into the form of a press letter. Although Brandon struggled to identify his textual borrowings, when I tried to focus him on his intended audience he suddenly identified his text as "a sort of a letter to a magazine, probably - I only realise it now - um - and - er - probably like a - a sports magazine, or something - something which -

which - um - which a lot of men would read."

Although Brandon deliberately chose satire as his genre framework, and sees writing as a series of choices in which "each choice will lead you on a completely different path", he stated that the combination of genres within his text "happened subconsciously". This may explain why he did not notice the contradictory change in reader role which I identified in my analysis of the first text, and which resulted in a lack of textual coherence. He sees the element of conscious choice as being confined to the selection of ideas, a selection which will lead the writer to explore one of a number of potential meaning-routes. He is not aware that a progressive selection of writer-roles and genres during the writing process may also serve to construct and communicate meaning. This lends support to my earlier contention that teachers of writing need to explore the use of mixed modes, and to familiarise pupil-writers with how to combine various modes and voices effectively and coherently.

***The Interview as Process of Meaning-Construction:***

Although I used different interviewing methods with Kathy and Brandon, I was not overly concerned with keeping the procedural variables constant. From an ethnographic perspective, all interviews are interpretive activities where meanings are constructed interactively in the course of the interview. These meanings are influenced not only by the relationship of the participants, the roles they assume and the nature of the situational context, but also by the changing nature of the interview "text" itself - by the form of the participants' conversation, and by the signals which they provide each other in their utterances and interactional behaviour (Briggs, 1986: 13). According to this view, all interviews, even highly structured ones, are unique experiences which cannot be

closely compared.

As in the interview with Kathy, the dual relationship of interviewer-respondent and teacher-pupil created an unequal power balance between Brandon and myself. The causes and effects of this imbalance may be made clearer by examining the ways in which interview discourse and school discourse may have impacted on the content of the interview.

Conversation analysis provides insights into how the interview, as speech event, may serve to create a power imbalance. Schiffrin claims that conversation analysis offers "very close and detailed analysis of the workings of specific devices or structures in the construction of talk", by which we can "discover our ordinary, everyday procedures for constructing a sense of social and personal reality" (Schiffrin, 1994: 409). Fairclough (1992: 152 - 158) points out that there are certain features of conversation which offer participants interactional control: for example, turn-taking, topic control, the setting and policing of agendas, and "formulation" (the characterisation or summarisation of part of the conversation by one of the participants). In the interview situation, these features are almost entirely in the hands of the interviewer. She decides when the respondent has completed his "turn"; she introduces new topics or further probes the topic under discussion; she has a pre-existing agenda of which the respondent is often unaware; and she may exert the right to clarify ambiguous responses to questions. I attempted to redress this power imbalance somewhat by making my agenda clear at each new phase of the interview, by allowing the respondent to speak freely until a lengthy pause indicated that he had completed a response, and to ask open questions where possible. Brandon showed himself to be far more assertive than Kathy in picking up cues, in taking the initiative by moving the

interview into new areas of discussion, and in changing "key" by making humorous comments.

It is possible that Brandon may, at times, have been providing a selective and biased interpretation of his life-experiences. Bruner asserts that human beings seem to have an inherent readiness for narrative, which causes us to convert our worlds of visual input into an organised and meaningful form - that is, we impose a "plot" on the discrete constituents of our experience (Bruner, 1990: 45). In Brandon's case, this unconscious process might have been further influenced by his conception of the speech event in which he was engaging as a testing process, characteristic of school discourse. Briggs points out that the interview, as speech event, follows some of the same rules as testing procedures: "Interviewers provide clear and interesting questions that enable respondents to exhibit their knowledge" (Briggs, 1986: 56). The ethnographic interview, where the interviewer aims to engage with the respondent in a mutual negotiation of meaning, may easily be misinterpreted by the respondent, who may feel the need to present himself in a favourable light to the interviewer.

This kind of behaviour was evident where, on occasions when I posed a "closed" question which seemed to place a value on a certain answer, Brandon usually produced the "desired" response. He was also quick to attach value judgments to questions which I felt were neutral, and to defend the theme of his first written text:

*I: Do you do a lot of television viewing?*

*B: We watch - it's a sort of modern day society as well.  
It's a T.V. culture and - um - if you - you can't - you can't  
escape T.V.*

The generalised "you" appeared frequently enough to strengthen my

impression that Brandon saw the interview as a test of general knowledge, rather than as a personal encounter between his views and mine:

*B: So you're going to get - the editor's viewpoint is - er - he's not doing the actual work, just making his viewpoint known, so to speak...*

*I: And are you always aware you are getting a viewpoint then?*

*B: No, you don't. You're not -*

*I: You, yourself.*

*B: (unintelligible) - Could you please rephrase that?*

*I: When you - I'm not talking generally, I'm talking about you specifically - if you read articles in - um - the newspaper or magazine, are you often aware that you're getting somebody's viewpoint that you don't agree with, perhaps?*

*B: Yes, you - you're always aware of that. I mean, I'm always aware of that...*

The use of the impersonal "you" may also be a reflection of Brandon's process of constructing an identity, a persona which he may have perceived as a partially external protagonist in his narrative. Paxton, Garraway and Murray (1994: 79) argue that individuals have multiple identities which are constructed in social interaction and are affected by the power relations inherent in social situations and institutions, so that in the interview situation "students might try to tailor their discourses to the more powerful ones of the institution". In the above interchange, Brandon is representing himself as a critical reader - a perspective in line with the discourse of the English language classroom. In his first written text, ironically, he has uncritically assumed the masculine identity constructed for him in media discourse.

Brandon described his relationships with family members, and with previous teachers, as being unproblematic. He represented female figures as being dominant in his home and school experiences: his grandmother is "the rock of the family" who "keeps the whole ship floating"; his mother has been the main force in the home who has encouraged his reading and writing development; and a key figure in his primary schooling experiences of writing was his female Standard Three teacher who "was also a very good English teacher" (see transcript page 156). In these biographical comments, his version of his experiences again seems to be constructed to fit the interview context. Paxton et al comment that, in their own interview experiences of students' biographical accounts, "these constructions had as much to do with us interviewers as they did with the broader institutions we were working in" (ibid: 80). It is interesting to speculate whether Brandon's biographical account would have taken on a different slant if his interviewer had been male.

Although Brandon and Kathy both seemed to tailor their discourse to that of the schooling institution, which they saw represented in myself, they adopted different subject positions within that discourse. Kathy saw herself as marginalised - a non-reader, a weak writer, and an unimaginative individual. Brandon, on the other hand, centred himself as a promising young writer ripe for development, and a focus of maternal and teacher attention. His family is presented in his first written text as highly literate. However, this written representation of his family life, as he admitted in the interview, was exaggerated (see transcript page 153); the depiction of his family playing Scrabble as an alternative to television viewing was constructed in order to strengthen the argument in his written text. Similar misrepresentation could have taken place in the spoken "text" of the interview, in order for Brandon to strengthen his

position as respondent and as a character in his family narrative.

It appears that, both in spoken and written "texts", the meanings which the speaker/writer negotiates with an audience are at least partially constructed by the roles which the speaker/writer either consciously chooses to assume, or passively accepts as subject positions. The conscious choice and coherent combination of assertive roles would seem to be an important aspect of negotiating one's meaning with an audience from a position of strength.

### ***REFLECTIONS ON STAGE TWO OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS***

Ethnographic research encourages the researcher to consider each research subject individually. Kathy and Brandon seem to represent their respective gender groups in their textual borrowings, writer-roles, writer-identities, and differing degrees of assertiveness. However, the differences between Kathy and Brandon cannot be attributed to the influence of class or culture. Both respondents belong to middle class families, but demonstrate different levels of writing skill. Their cultural environments differ; yet Brandon is more proficient than many other pupils from the same sociocultural background as himself. The differences between Brandon and Kathy seem to be due to a combination of the following factors:

- the gender roles they are playing out;
- the range of textual resources available to them;
- opportunities for talk, debate, and the taking up of subject positions, which may create critical readers and confident writers;
- the influence of home and school - supportive or otherwise - which may be a major factor in creating a centred or a marginalised writer identity.

As a result of my Stage Two investigations, I found that my original



conception of the writer had changed. Instead of the integrated writer-identity which I had initially conceptualised, I began to think in terms of multiple identities in a state of flux. Instead of the writer being empowered to express her meanings through what I had identified as the "interpersonal" genres, I now saw the writer as using in her text an interplay of genres, and their accompanying writer-roles, which help to construct the way in which the writer comes to perceive her experiential world, and her position in that world, as she negotiates her perceptions with her reader.

According to Bruner (1990: 100 - 114), theorists in the field of psychology pose a number of views of identity, which fall into three broad categories (see pages 17 - 18):

- the self as integrated and self-constructed;
- the self as multiple, non-agentive and socioculturally constructed;
- the self as actively negotiated in interaction with others, a process during which the self, in an ongoing self-narrative, continually reconstructs itself and the meanings it attaches to its experiences.

The interviews with the two key informants, and their written texts, provided mutual support for theories of the self as multiple and as constructed in discourse. Kathy seems a good example of the non-agentive writer-self: she assumes, apparently without negotiation, the writer-identity and the marginalised subject position assigned to her in home and school discourse - that of the "Poor and Unimaginative Writer" - and she adopts a subordinate position in her written text. Her position is further weakened by the scarcity of textual resources at her disposal, and she is unpractised in negotiating a subject position in conversation or debate. Her non-agentive writer-self blocks her ability to develop a conscious awareness of process in writing.

Brandon seems to exemplify the agentive narrator-self. He presented himself in the interview as the "Nurtured Writer" and the "Critical Reader" - identities which allow him a position of power in his personal narrative. One of the genres which he incorporated into his text similarly provided for a "Critical Audience" role, and his multiple writer-roles permit him to dominate his reader. He has a wide range of multi-modal resources from which to borrow - visual, literary, media, conversational - and he takes up strong subject positions in his negotiation of meaning within these discourses. Like the more skilled writers in Stage One, he shows a considerable degree of writing-awareness, and is sufficiently confident to regard writing as a flexible and challenging process of choices.

When I fed back my interview findings to the two respondents, Kathy typically accepted wholesale my reflections on the interview without contesting my conclusions (see Appendix Seven). Here she again demonstrated her unassertive self-concept, in either her unwillingness to contradict my findings, or her automatic acceptance of these conclusions as an unarguably "correct" part of school discourse.

Brandon accepted as valid all the points I had made (see Appendix Eight), but was concerned lest his free flow of ideas might be blocked by an overly "conscious" approach to writing in which the writer deliberately considers his choice of roles and genres. Brandon seems to subscribe to the myth of the writer as inspired creator. Perhaps this is another identity which he has constructed for himself - that of the "Creative Writer". I contest the notion of the author as inspired creator of original text, but I disagree with Barthes that "the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings..." (Barthes, 1992: 117). The New London Group (1996: 76) sees the

writer as capable of recombining and rearticulating old materials so as to produce new representations of reality (see page 18). The creativity of the writer therefore lies in the selection and reconstruction of his textual resources; and a higher level of consciousness of this process should allow him a more dominant and coherent voice in the text.

However, it seems that a consciousness of process can be cultivated only on the basis of a positive writer-identity. In my analysis of Kathy's writing, I concluded that her negative writer-identity is a result of her lack of skills. The interview with Kathy suggests that the converse may be the case. Kathy has assumed the subject position of "bad writer", and she finds it difficult to view writing as a conscious process. Instruction in writing techniques may therefore be ineffective unless it is based on the writer's perception of herself, her experiences, her reading resources and her communicated message as being important and valued.

The two central ideas which emerge from Stage Two of the research project indicate a paradox:

- effective communicative writing is a conscious process which can be learned through explicit teaching;
- however, pupils with negative writer-identities do not regard writing as a conscious and learned process, and are therefore unlikely to benefit from such teaching.

In this view, ineffective writing and poor self-concept are mutually reinforcing. The problem of how to cultivate confidence and positive attitudes to writing in unconfident and inexperienced writers seems to be a central one for theorists and practitioners in the field of writing.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSIONS

#### ***RESEARCH FINDINGS***

The following research findings seemed particularly significant:

***1. The majority of pupils opt for conventional "public" genres.***

There was evidence that, irrespective of the task set, many pupils imitate public discourses without including a personal voice or taking up a particular subject position. This trend seems to be a response to the teaching emphasis on socially valued "public" genres. The New London Group (1996: 76) claim that in designing a text, the writer "will never simply reproduce Available Designs. Designing transforms knowledge in producing new constructions and representations of reality". There seemed to be little evidence in many pupil-texts of conscious designing, of the transformation (as opposed to the reproduction) of their textual borrowings, and of their personal constructions of meaning.

***2. School writing seems to function as a form of social behaviour.***

In the school writing process, the negotiation of meaning appears to be of less importance than the reinforcement of correctness and neatness. The image of school writing which has emerged from my investigations is that of an oppressive institutional process whose primary goal is that of assessment and grading, with the teacher dominating the process as critical reader and assessor.

***3. A writing pedagogy should be a process through which the teacher progressively transfers power to pupil-writers.***

In the first research stage, pupil responses showed that the

dominating position of the teacher impacts negatively on pupils' writing processes and attitudes. Process writing theory proposes the solution of placing the processes surrounding classroom writing as far as possible in pupil hands, with topic negotiation, peer consultation and peer assessment taking place. Pupil feedback, however, showed the less confident writers opposing this proposal; they made it evident that they find their peers more threatening as readers and assessors than the teacher. It therefore seems that there should be no sudden abdication of power by the teacher. It should be borne in mind that power may be a positive force if used to maximise the control of pupil-writers over their writing, and to assist them in learning to assert their identities and find the writer-voices which allow them control. The notion of "authority" then assumes the connotation of "authorising", or empowering, instead of that of "authoritarianism".

***4. Pupils need to develop a conscious awareness of their writing processes.***

Because genres "carry" meanings, roles and relationships, pupils need to become critically aware that their choices of genre help to construct writers' and readers' relationships, their perceptions of "reality", and their subject positions, or roles, in such a reality. Pupil-writers can learn to assert themselves by consciously selecting textual borrowings which allow them control, or by resisting powerful genres through mixing genres, modifying them, parodying them, or adopting a dominant writer voice.

***5. Less confident pupil-writers internalise negative writer-identities which act as a block to the conscious exploration of writing processes.*** Instruction in writing would seem to have little effect unless writing pedagogies attended first to engendering writer confidence and positive self-concepts.

**6. *The writer's concepts of self are central to the writing process.***

This is the most significant insight which I derived from this research project. The writer's self-concepts include the writer-identity which the pupil-writer brings to the writing process, and the writer-roles which she constructs in the text through her choice of genres. My research has shown that "meaning" - the interpretation of our physical, temporal, social and cultural environment, and our position in that environment - is continually reconstructed and renegotiated in discourse, spoken and written, and especially in narrative. Our constructed meanings are closely associated with our concepts of self; Bruner points out that as we construct and reconstruct our experiences, we place ourselves at the centre of our narrative as protagonists whom we continually reshape in response to changing audiences and contexts (Bruner, 1990: 121).

Our writer-identity may be constructed as passive and marginalised, or as a controlling agent. The discourses of the school and the home appear to be highly influential in shaping writer-identity, which in turn seems to relate to the positions and the roles which the writer takes in negotiating her meanings with her reader in her text. The genres which the writer selects and interweaves similarly help to construct both the text meanings and the subject positions of writer and reader. It would appear that the writer's choices and combinations of genres, and their accompanying writer-roles, may strengthen or weaken her position as she negotiates her meanings with those which powerful social discourses may attempt to impose upon her.

***VALUE FOR TEACHERS OF WRITING***

As a result of my research, I find the notion of identity to be the

core concept around which to build an approach to the teaching of writing. I suggest that such an approach should aim at developing three writer-identities in pupil-writers:

- the Confident Writer;
- the Conscious Writer;
- the Critical Writer.

***The Confident Writer:***

This writer-identity is a key self concept, as my research findings suggest that it is only possible for pupils to develop a conscious awareness of process and critical attitudes when they have become confident writers. In addressing the needs of the unconfident and unskilled writer, the teacher has a high degree of control and responsibility:

- She **creates a writing environment** which is as supportive and as stress-free as possible.
- She **generates the writing process**. The difficulty of engaging fearful writers in a writing act which is an "act of meaning", to use Bruner's term (1990), may be handled in a paradoxical manner: by encouraging copying and imitation in the initial stages. Elsewhere in this dissertation I was concerned about the evidence I saw in pupil texts of imitation and a lack of personal construction of meaning. But my concerns related to the situation where pupils chose to imitate teacher-approved genres, not those in which they found voices with which they could identify. Britton et al (1975: 46) speculate that, when using resources, writers may pass through various stages. Copying texts because one identifies with them is ranked as the second stage; the sixth, and final, stage involves synthesising the works of others into a new project of one's own. Britton et al comment that "It may well be that a writer has to pass

through most of the stages mentioned before he can reach the last." Appropriating the voices of others - an action which Bakhtin terms "ventriloquation" (cited in Wertsch, 1990: 117) - may be a necessary preliminary to finding one's own voice. During the process of developing a confident writer-identity, copying may be followed by imitating preferred texts, then by narrating personal experiences, and finally by reflecting on the meanings one attributes to one's experiences and text resources.

- The teacher **acts as a respondent** rather than as a critical assessor. She assumes the reader-roles set up for her in the text, and responds to the writer's message.

- The teacher **dissolves the boundaries and status-gaps between genres**. She affirms pupil-writers' interests and identities by implementing writing events which use pupils' life experiences, existing writing skills and familiar text resources.

- She introduces the **notion of voice** and the idea of writing as a **series of choices**, as writers learn to select those voices which allow them to assert themselves, and with which they feel most comfortable.

***The Conscious Writer:***

In order to develop a conscious writer-identity in pupil-writers, the teacher instructs them in the application of a **metalanguage** which relates to the writing process. Key terms would include the following:

- **text;**
- **reader and writer roles;**
- **multiliteracy;**
- **textual borrowings and "mixed modes";**



- the principle of **textual networking** - combining texts in such a way as to create **coherence**.

***The Critical Writer:***

Here the teacher and pupils engage in critique of writing as a social process. The terms **context**, **discourse** and **genre** would form the Critical Writer's conceptual tools, and special emphasis would be placed on the role of genres as status markers in discourse.

Initially, in developing pupils' Confident Writer identities, the teacher encourages pupils to **assume** voices from familiar texts and popular genres, and she **dissolves the boundaries between genres**.

However, it is possible that pupil-writers may become locked into roles and genres which allow them a narrow vision and little control. In developing the Critical Writer identity, the teacher's task is now, conversely, to **reinstate an awareness of the status-gap between genres**, to **distance** young writers from familiar roles, and gradually to supply them with new voices which may enable them to denaturalise their constructed identities and to view their customary and "common-sense" writer-roles as partial and limited. Classroom conversation, where pupil-writers negotiate perspectives and positions, and come to critique their preferred voices and text-genres, seems an indispensable part of the pedagogical process of developing critical awareness.

The goal of this writing pedagogy should be "self **control**" in a new sense - where the writer designs her text so as to allow her self maximum control over the process of negotiating her meanings with individuals or social groups. The self concept which is the desired end result is Bruner's Agentive Self (Bruner, 1990: 109 - 110), who continually reflects on and transforms her experiences in her writing, and can envisage alternative ways of being and acting.

In the limited scope of this dissertation I do not pretend to provide a comprehensive view of the factors impacting on the process of school writing; nor do I presume to formulate a writing pedagogy which may address every feature of writing and every writer need. In the second stage of the research process I used only two key informants; my conclusions from this stage particularly are therefore to be regarded as partial and provisional, requiring to be tested both in further research and in pedagogical practice. Nevertheless, the findings of my research do indicate that the concept of identity should be a central one in a writing pedagogy. While this project has dealt with English first language pupils, I would suggest that my conclusions may be highly relevant in the case of second language writers in the culturally diverse class. The need to affirm the significance of young writers' expressed meanings, cultural identities, experiences and knowledge applies equally in first language and second language composition teaching, as does the possibility that writing instruction may be ineffective without such affirmation.

### ***SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH***

I suggested at the end of Stage One several general aspects of the writing process which might provide fruitful avenues for research. The second stage indicates that the following elements of writing need to be further explored:

- the factors that help to shape pupil-writers' identities;
- the roles which pupil-writers construct for themselves and their readers, and the reasons why they construct these roles;
- the notion of intertextuality, and pupils' textual borrowings;
- the use of autobiographical narrative in networking with other genres;
- the relationship between writer-identity and writing awareness.

- In the middle-class context of this research project, the discourses of school and home reinforce each other in constructing certain types of writer-identity for pupil-writers. In those contexts where the differing classes or cultures of home and school may affirm different types and levels of literacy and different concepts of identity, research needs to be done on what writer-identities come to be constructed, and what writer-roles and textual borrowings are used in young writers' texts.

The meanings and identities which pupil-writers bring to the school writing event may be largely constructed by powerful social discourses; however, they may also be reconstructed by these young writers during the writing process, as they attempt to take control of their symbolic universes. This dissertation hopes to suggest routes along which young writers may be guided towards the construction of positive writer-identities and the acquisition of the conceptual tools by which they may be empowered to negotiate their identities and meanings effectively in writing.

## **GLOSSARY OF DISCOURSE TERMS**

**coherence:** the way in which the text "hangs together" so that a particular reader in a particular social context is able to construct its meaning (Halliday and Hasan, 1985: 48)

**cohesion:** the use of linguistic cues which make links between the different elements in the text (Luckett, 1995: 36)

**constitutive textual borrowing:** a textual borrowing which is integrated into the surrounding text (Fairclough, 1992: 104)

**Conversation Analysis:** the study of the conversational structures, procedures and cues through which we construct our perceptions of social and personal reality (Schiffrin, 1994: 409)

**Cooperative Principle:** H. P. Grice's principle that speaker and audience strive respectively to produce and to discover common meaning in the communicative exchange through their assumption of common knowledge (Leech and Thomas, 1990: 179 - 184)

**discourse:** 1. different types of language used in different social situations (Halliday and Hasan, 1985: 5) 2. different ways of structuring areas of knowledge, constructing social entities and relations, and positioning people as social subjects (Foucault, 1972)

**discourse communities:** groups of people with distinctive ways of "behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing" (Gee, 1990: 5)

**discourse practices:** the way in which particular institutions, organisations and societies shape the "**discursive practice**", i.e. the

processes of text production and interpretation (Fairclough, 1992: 5)

**discursive formation:** the interrelated network of themes, theories and relationships that are developed to give a particular discourse its coherence (Foucault, 1972: 31 - 39)

**field, tenor and mode of discourse:** the referential content, the relationship of the participants, and the text organisation in a particular communicative event (Halliday and Hasan, 1985: 12)

**genre:** conventionalised forms of texts which encode the meanings of specific social contexts (Kress, 1989: 19). Genres may act both as social codes - functional indicators of social context - and as social levers - power-laden indicators of social status and difference (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993: 7)

**ideational, interpersonal and textual functions of discourse:** the use of language to convey meaning, to construct relationships, and to provide "texture" through the organisation of the text elements (Halliday and Hasan, 1985: 15 - 29)

**intertextuality:** the notion that all texts are constituted by elements of other texts (Fairclough, 1992: 102)

**manifest textual borrowings:** textual borrowings which are made obvious, e.g. by the use of quotation marks (ibid: 104)

**multiliteracy:** having recourse to, and being familiar with, diverse textual resources (Kress, 1995: 15 - 22)

**presupposition:** the writer's attempt to create coherence through depending upon a general set of assumptions which she attributes to her reading audience (Fairclough, 1992: 104, 120 - 121)

**reaccentuation:** the practice of making the original source of a borrowed text explicit, e.g. through irony or parody (ibid: 103)

**secondary discourses:** those modes of speaking and knowing which are used in social institutions beyond the family (the latter being the domain of one's "primary discourse") (Gee, 1990: 151)

**subject position:** a mode of thinking and behaving constructed in discourse (Kress, 1989: 37)

**text:** 1. the written or spoken **product** of a discursive act (Fairclough, 1992: 3) 2. "a continuous **process** of semantic choice, a movement through a network of meaning potential, with each set of choices constituting the environment for a further set" (Halliday and Hasan, 1985: 10)

**textuality:** the way in which the elements of the text are organised to fulfil a function in a particular social context (ibid: 34)

**utterances:** "spoken units of language which may or may not conform to grammatical principles" (Schiffrin, 1994: 40)

**ventriloquation:** the appropriation of the voice of another in order to express one's own meaning and intention (Wertsch, 1990: 116 - 117)

**voice:** the expression of a particular intention, role or subject position through an utterance (ibid)

**writer-identity:** the way in which the writer represents her Writer-Self to herself

**writer-role:** the way in which the writer represents her Self to her

reader; the persona she adopts in her text

**writing (literacy) event:** a particular social activity in which writing has a role (Barton and Ivanic, 1991: 5)

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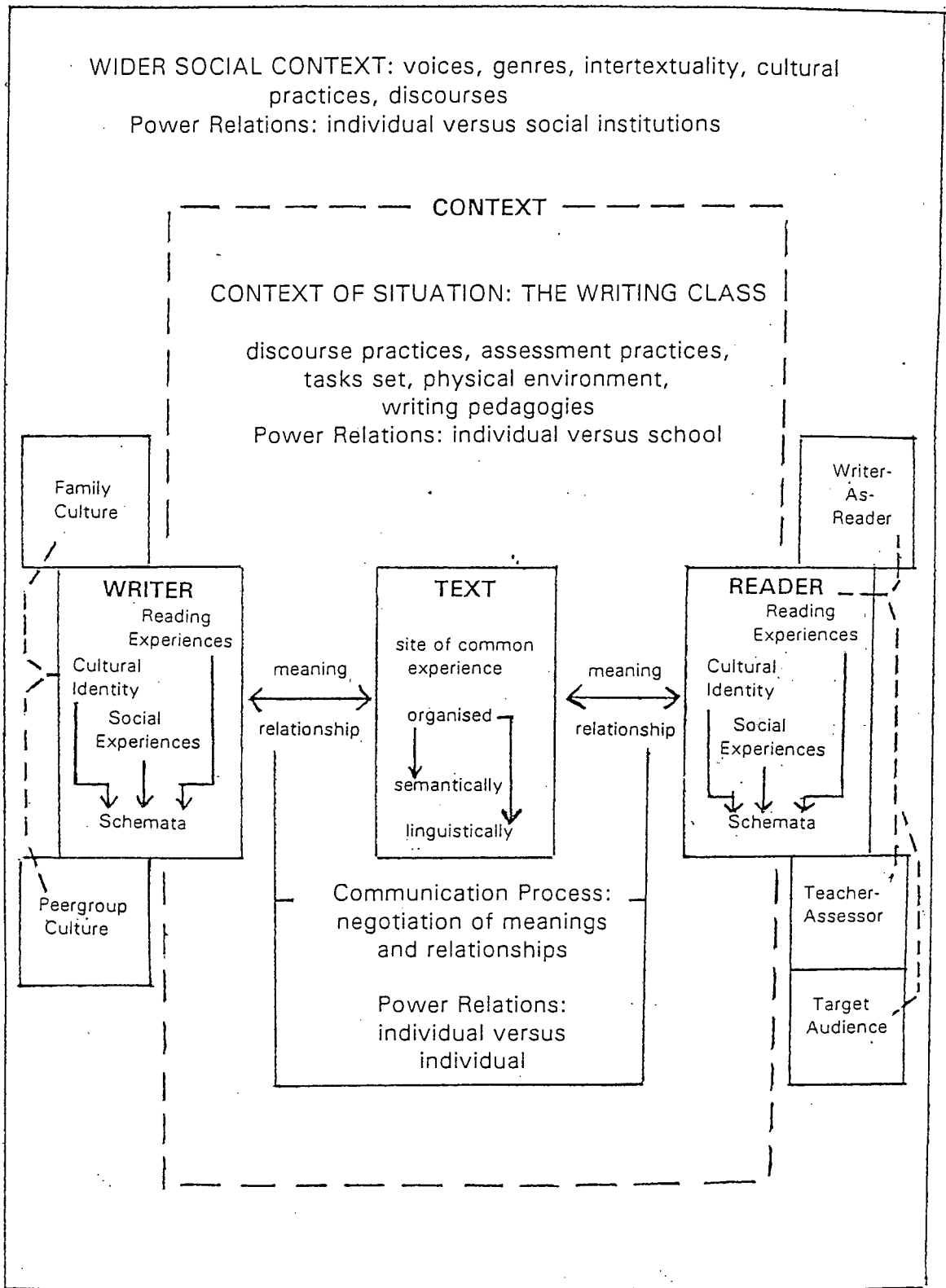
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APPENDIX ONE



THE DISCOURSE FRAMEWORK OF THE SCHOOL WRITING EVENT :

## APPENDIX TWO

### THIS IS WHAT YOU'VE SHOWN ME ABOUT WRITING

I MAY BE GETTING THINGS WRONG, AND I MAY BE JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS SOMETIMES. I NEED YOU TO TELL ME IF AND WHERE I'M REFLECTING ACCURATELY WHAT YOU SAID AND WHAT YOU FEEL ABOUT WRITING.

IT WILL HELP ME IF YOU FILL IN THIS SHEET, BUT YOU DON'T HAVE TO FILL IT IN IF YOU DON'T WANT TO. IF YOU DO, PLEASE WRITE "YES" OR "NO" AFTER EACH QUESTION AND/OR WRITE A COMMENT ABOVE THE POINT, OR THE PART OF THE POINT, ABOUT WHICH YOU WANT TO SAY SOMETHING. YOU MAY ALSO WRITE COMMENTS ON THE ATTACHED SHEET OF FOOLSCAP - INCLUDE THE NUMBER OF THE POINT ON WHICH YOU ARE COMMENTING.

1. Teachers and pupils generally see writing essays etc at school as a way of testing what pupils have learned from teachers about writing - not as a way of communicating ideas and feelings. Do you think this is so? Most writers didn't write as though they felt they were addressing a "real" audience - it was just a test.

2. Teachers don't consider writing which expresses your personal feelings as being as important or worthwhile as "formal" writing for a public audience (e.g. business letters and debate-type essays). So most pupil-writers opt for "formal" topics when given a choice, as long as they know the "rules" of writing the piece, because they think

- they will get more marks, and
- the teacher won't understand their personal point of view anyway, and will mark them down if she doesn't agree with them.

3. Writers who are more confident of their writing ability are braver about opting for "personal" writing than those pupils who think they are not good writers. More confident writers used "I" a lot, and gave their personal opinions about the topic. Less confident writers tended to use the impersonal "you", often didn't give their opinions, and usually wrote more in the style of a textbook.

4. Girls found it easier to write personally to me. Boys' writing was more impersonal. Why? Because I'm female? And/or because men are meant to produce reports and other formal pieces in the business world? And/or because men are not meant to show their feelings like women? What do you think?

5. Most writers tried to think of the types of writing they had read,

and chose a type, or a mixture of types (e.g. textbooks, magazines, debates, stories). Everyone does this. Writers almost never write in an "original way, because readers would have no clues to help them to understand what they are reading.

6. Some writers found it hard to put their thoughts into words, so that "joining" bits were left out. The reader wasn't given enough information in some of your sentences to make complete sense of your ideas, although in your minds YOU may have understood your ideas perfectly. Often the "gaps" needed filling in more.

7. Some writers wrote as though they were talking. In conversation, we often don't use full sentences, we leave words out and repeat words, we tend to ramble a bit, and we use lots of "ands". In a written piece this makes the ideas difficult to understand. Sentences need to be put together clearly and logically.

8. Some writers said that they found it hard to develop a theme or topic throughout the piece, or to make the paragraphs continuous.

9. The pieces produced by those writers who used bits of story to introduce ideas and arguments generally worked well.

10. Pupils think of "good" writing as being produced "first time" - they don't realise that successful writers struggle to produce pieces. Perhaps they need to see the teacher trying to write with her pupils.

11. Topics should sometimes be negotiated with pupils, and a choice of topics should be given.

12. Teachers need to reply to pupil-writers' pieces, instead of just criticising them. Writers don't always know if the teacher has thought about the ideas and feelings which they have expressed in their pieces.

13. Sometimes pupils should assess each other's writing. (How do you feel about this?)

14. Group-writing can help ideas and skills to be shared. (Or do you prefer to write alone? Why?)

15. Writing at school could be used instead of/as well as marked e.g. plays performed, stories read by younger pupils, magazines displayed in the library.

16. Pupil writers need to have more chance - and more time - to think of a topic, to do some roughwork first, to redraft their piece, and to change/correct it in consultation with their friends. (Would

you like/be prepared to go through this process?)

17. Teachers need to give you a lot of different models (examples) of writing, and teach you writing techniques (methods), with which you can experiment.

18. Many writers were anxious about being given an "open" topic, and wanted more guidelines. I told you I was going to mark your piece, but I didn't give you enough clues about the criteria I was going to apply.

19. A lot of you had "writer's block", and couldn't start. Teachers need to teach techniques you can use to "trigger" ideas. Some writers felt they needed to plan - others didn't. Brainstorming, consulting friends and family, and thinking out the shape of the essay beforehand, all featured as triggering mechanisms.

20. Most of you started on "roughwork" paper, and you did a "trial run" before trying to produce your final piece of writing.

21. Many of you paused sometimes. You said that this was because you had run out of ideas, or were planning the next stage, or were thinking about past experiences to use, or were wondering if you would offend the reader (me), or because you didn't know how to write your conclusion.

22. Some of you re-read your work to get back on track, or to carry on your train of thought, or to check if the paragraphs were continuous and made sense. But some pupils didn't stop to re-read because they didn't want to stop the flood of ideas.

23. Some of you revised your work after writing the first draft by moving sentences or paragraphs around or by fitting in new points.

24. Most of you preferred writing at home, with soft background music; others liked writing at school. Why? - Family size? Opportunities for consultation? Noise levels? Is the classroom environment stressful/disturbing/uninspiring/peaceful/structured etc?

25. You were more comfortable writing about your writing processes and attitudes, and started more quickly, than when you wrote the first piece. Was this because I wasn't going to mark it? Or because you knew very clearly what you felt and did when you wrote? Was it because I gave you more guidelines?

26. Teachers seem to be concerned with details which have little to do with writing, or which may get in the way of the writing process. E.g. neatness (writing is a messy process, and a first draft should be messy) and correctness. Does spelling matter? Or just

your ideas? Can writers attend to correctness and to getting ideas down on paper at the same time? Should ideas come first, and correctness be attended to later?

27. Many writers saw correctness as important for getting good marks, not for making their writing clearer for their readers to understand.

28. Most writers didn't seem to be aware that writers adopt a "voice", or role, as a particular kind of writer writing to a particular reader.

29. The more skilled writers generally understood how they were writing and what they were doing. They deliberately chose types of writing and techniques which they thought would work. For less skilled writers, writing seems to be a process of struggle, guesswork, and muddling along. (Not their fault! - Due to lack of teaching about how to write.)

30. Some writers said they enjoyed writing, found it challenging, and saw their own writing as being interesting. Other writers disliked writing, found it difficult, and saw themselves as bad writers and as having no imagination. But imagination isn't just making things up, as many teachers think. I think it includes the ability to stand in the shoes of your reader, and to see what she/he sees, knows and understands (or doesn't), so that you can communicate your ideas clearly and effectively to her/him. What do you think?

MANY THANKS FOR YOUR HELP

## APPENDIX THREE

### TEXT ONE: BRANDON

#### THE NEW S.A.B.C. (AS IF IT'S NOT BAD ENOUGH ALREADY)

Recently I read a letter in "YOU" magazine. It simply stated "The S.A.B.C. firmly supports redistribution of wealth. They put absolute trash on the box so that you can spend the evening out and allow your house to be completely cleaned out by burglars." I can't say whether this is true or not since our families "wealth" has not been "redistributed" as yet, but I must say that more often than not, the scrabble board has been in use on rainy nights whilst the telly would stand sulking in the corner.

The Reconstruction and Development Programme was initially a good idea, in fact a godsend for this country, but (until) the moment they started to fiddle around with my programmes i.e. translate good enjoyable shows into Afrikaans. Thankfully the English soundtrack is on the radio. However, the picture and the sound are hap-hazardly co-ordinated thus producing what I'd like to refer to as the "Japanese fighting movie effect" (one guy pronounces about twenty four syllables and the English translation is "Hello").

Thankfully we can always turn to M.N.E.T. for great entertainment. Being punished by the S.A.B.C. with sub-standard local "entertainment" for so long, a good t.v. channel was a breath of fresh air (and unheard of). Unfortunately one has to dig deep into one's pocket for this privilege.

One thing which is encouraging about the new S.A.B.C. is that all soapies are being placed on what is now NNTV, a far flung channel which is not easily received. Hopefully this will snap about twenty million South African women back to reality. All of the characters on these soaps are unbelievable, e.g. "Oh no! That means I'll have to take my red private jet instead on my blue one." The believable ones are too plain, too boring and too Australian, e.g. "Well I'll take the van out for a spin, mate. Cheerio then." RIVETING STUFF!

All we as the public want are shows that you could find remotely enjoyable. Interesting current affairs programmes with presenters who at least have heard about the topic under discussion should be one of the priorities. We want sports programmes with commentators who at least watch the sport occasionally. Leave our programmes alone and improve the standard.



**TEXT TWO: BRANDON**

Most People before they write, make notes on what they are going to do, paragraph by paragraph. When I write, I tend to be more spontaneous in my approach. Choosing my heading is probably the part which I find hardest. I can't start writing unless I have a title for the piece. I've always thought starting an essay is like standing on a street with many buildings around you. You have to choose a building before you can choose which room to enter, therefore I habitually choose my title first before setting my scenario.

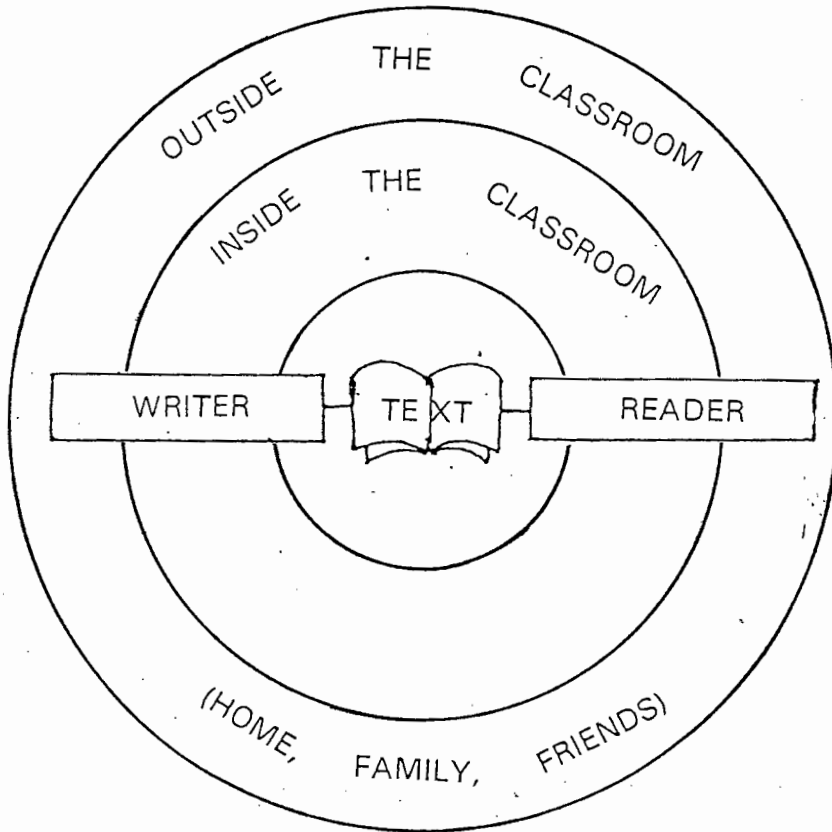
The actual body of the story is like the choice of many doors to open. Once you choose a door you can't go back and you find yourself in a corridor with many doors. These doors open to more corridors with more doors and so forth. Most people stand outside "the house" with a map and plan their route through. This effectively closes off many options when they get a better idea during the writing of the story as they can't adapt it to what they've written before. I choose "a door" and look at the "doors" available to me, and choose the one which suit(s) the circumstances which precede it and could lead to other interesting scenarios.

To me spontaneity is the key to my writing.

**TEXT ONE: KATHY****DANCING**

Sport is important in one's life. For me dancing is important. It is a way of expressing your emotions and feelings. Not many people understand what is meant by expressing your feelings. For example if you are happy you would use loud and lively music and if you would be depressed you would use soft, gentle and slow music with slow, gentle movements. Dancing is a good way of releasing your stress and anger. It also gives fulfilment when you do exams and competitions, when you receive your result. All your hard work and dedication is shown. Dancing gets you fit and flexible and making you feel good about yourself. There are many types of dancing like Jazz, Modern and ballroom etc. What I do is modern dancing. It is best to go twice a week if you want to get somewhere. That is for the people who are very dedicated, but for those who just want to do dancing just for fun can go once a week for forty-five minutes. So dancing caters for all people male and female. Dancing, if you want to can take you many places. You also get some very stunning outfits to wear. Dancing is a very widespread sport and many people enjoy it, if not for participating but for

APPENDIX FOUR



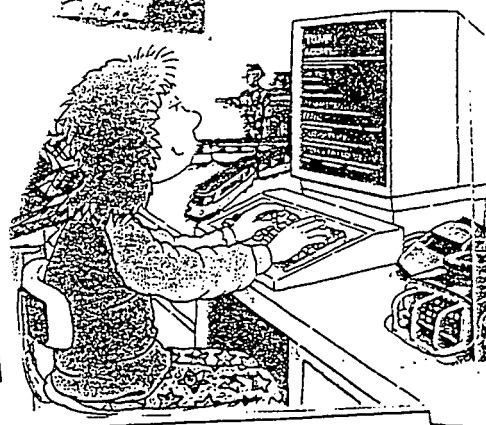
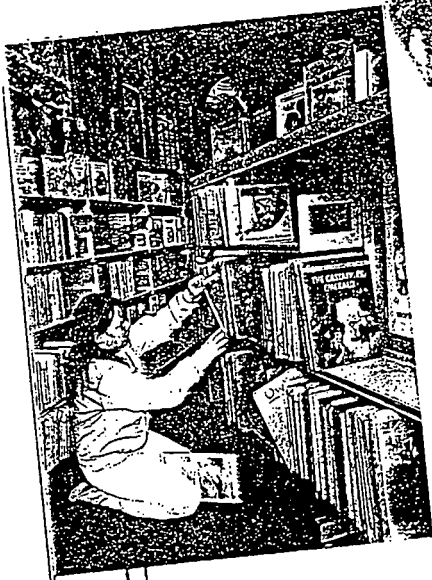
THE SCHOOL WRITING EVENT

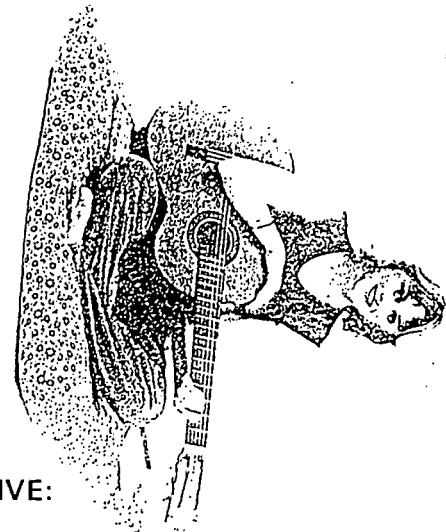
APPENDIX FIVE: "YES" PICTURES



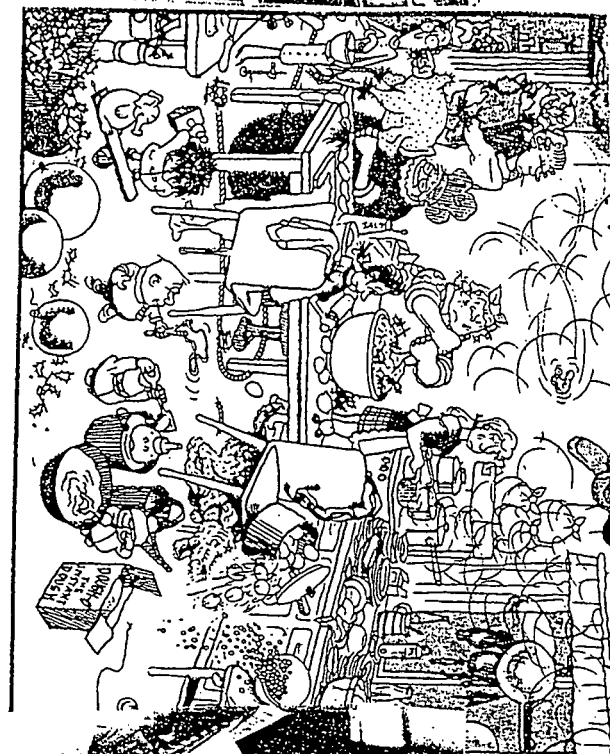


APPENDIX FIVE: "NO" PICTURES





APPENDIX FIVE:  
"NO" PICTURES



**APPENDIX SIX*****INTERVIEW TWO: BRANDON: TRANSCRIPT EXTRACTS***

Symbols:

- I. = Interviewer
- R. = Respondent
- = a break between utterances; a brief pause
- ... = a longer, more marked pause
- ( ) = an action or sound; an explanatory comment
- \*\*\* = interview material omitted

INTERVIEWER: Now, first I think I'd better show you - this - and then - that - (showing R his two texts)

RESPONDENT: Oh yes -

I: Remember it?

R: Mmm.

I: O.K. Now, most of the questions I'm going to ask are going to be on that - all nicely typed out - but not all of them -

R: O.K.

I: - and I think it may help if I just show you this first of all, just to put things in perspective (showing R the diagram of the concentric circles of the school writing event).

R: O.K.

I: Now, this is a kind of diagram of the kind of writing I see happening at school, and I see it in three circles of activity that affect the way you write, and what you write, and how you feel about writing.

R: Right.

I: So this (indicating the inner circle of the diagram) - I've called it by the very fancy name of "the text" -

R: It's the work that the -

I: - the actual thing thing that you write. There's you (indicating

"writer") -

R: Mmm.

I: -and there's the person that usually reads your work - it's usually me (indicating "reader") -

R: O.K.

I: - and when you write it can be affected by this - text - in other words, the kind of piece you are asked to write, - um - whether you can think of ideas, whether you can get those ideas into words, whether you can think of ideas from other things you've read, any other resources you have. But you can also have problems because of where you write maybe (indicating the intermediate circle) -

R: Ja.

I: - because of the way it happens inside a classroom. It will also be affected by what happens in this outer circle, which happens outside the classroom - home, family, friends - all have influences on your writing, and perhaps give you ideas for writing.

R: 'K., understand.

I: So I'm going to start working at this circle (indicating the outer circle), and then I'm going to work from the outside in.

R: Yes, O.K.

I: Right. So I'm just going to ask you to tell me a couple of things about the outer circle - there (indicating the outer circle) - um - I'm not sure at this stage what's going to be important or what isn't going to be important. So, just to start off, can you just tell me something about your family - um - perhaps the size of your family, their interests, their occupations, anything you can think of.

R: O.K. I live in a big family. There's - er - my parents and three children, myself and a younger sister and younger brother. Um - I've - there also my uncle lives with us, and in a room my grandmother lives with us, so everybody gets in other's way, so to speak.

I: Ja (laugh).

R: Um - you have to - you have to - no matter - you can't completely shut yourself out. You're always getting input from - um - from everybody, five-year-old brother to - you know - eighty-year-old granny, about how they think you should write. Um - they - O.K., they - er - er - what was I going to say - O.K., they maar - my

mother works half-days, so she's at home when I do my homework, and my father works normal nine-to-five hours. Um - my uncle just keeps to himself really - I don't know - he's a quiet person. My grandmother's sort of like the rock of the family - keeps the whole thing - keeps the whole ship floating - and - um - I'm on very good terms with my siblings.

I: Would you say that there's a lot of talk that happens in your family?

R: Talk - what do you mean?

I: Um - about family activities. Would you tend to pursue interests and hobbies and work activities on your own, would you consult a lot?

R: See, when I write - um - I write - my mother enjoys reading what I write - and so I subconsciously, I write for her - (unintelligible). But - um - there's - I work on my own - I write on my own and - um - it's better that way because you've got too many - if - the more ideas you have, the more likely chance of conflicting viewpoints and conflicting ideas in the house when it should come from yourself. So...

I: Do you ever test those conflicting ideas in your family?

R: No, I - I haven't tried - in my writing?

I: No, I mean that if you have ideas that you want to put into a piece of writing -

R: Oh, yes. ja -

I: - would you go and talk to other members of the family about those ideas and allow for an argument to develop, or a debate -

R: You see, you see, you get, you get - because of the - the - my - the old generation - older - my grandmother - you get the younger generation, my mother (laugh) - and then my sister, you're going to get three - three different viewpoints from the different generations - my viewpoint and my sister's and my brother's viewpoint - well, my brother's seven - you can't really count him (laugh) - then - um - so you can see three different generations' viewpoints - it's - it's - you know, you test something out like - um - like - you can take any topic and test it out - the death penalty - "What do you think of this?" - "Yes, I think they should hang" - "What do you think of this?" - "No, they shouldn't hang" - "What do you think of this?" - conflicting viewpoints of whatever. But I don't - I don't test it out as far as write - I'm pretty much by myself.



I: Mmm.

R: It's quite interesting starting an argument...

I: And would you have that kind of discussion - um - about television programmes? Do you do a lot of television viewing?

R: We watch - it's sort of modern day society as well. It's a T.V. culture and - um - if you - you can't - you can't escape T.V. You gonna get - and magazines as such - you find you get input from the magazines - you're gonna get - I was speaking to my grandmother the day that they launched the new S.A.B.C. - we thought it would be a whole lot of trash, and I spoke to - my mother commented on it - so you get a few viewpoints. It is - sort of - ja...

I: Um - what about books? Um - would you tend to get more input from media like magazines and television than from novels, for instance?

R: Um - current affairs, yes. From magazines you get more - but, um, like - other things, academic things, you get - um - specially - especially human emotion and - and feelings and things, you get more from novels, whereas magazines just deal with the gossip and the tabloid kind of things. And just the - it's - any magazine is the opinion of the editor. It's the - the opinions only goes as far as the editor. If the editor doesn't like something, subconsciously he will - um - he will disagree with that and get it cut out most of the time. So it's just - it's one - basically - a collection of ideas, right, from - but one person's diverting the flow of ideas to his - sort of - to his kind of viewpoint. So if you - um - different novels - it's the - it's the writer's, on its own - um - there is no editor to edit - er - the work as such, just a couple of grammar errors. So you're going to get - the editor's viewpoint is - er - he's not doing the actual work, just making his viewpoint known, so to speak. More from - I don't know - more from - current affairs more from magazines. The Argus and things like that.

I: And are you always aware you are getting a viewpoint then?

R: No, you don't. You're not -

I: You, yourself.

R. Me?

I: Ja.

R: (unintelligible) - Could you please rephrase that?

I: When you - I'm not talking generally, I'm not talking about you specifically - if you read articles in - um - the newspaper or a magazine, are you often aware that you're getting somebody's viewpoint that you don't agree with, perhaps?

R: Yes, you - you're always aware of that. I mean, I'm always aware of that because - um - it has to come from a person, their viewpoint has to come - the whole - the whole thing what the media is, somebody's - somebody's viewpoint or collection of viewpoints - people trying to get their viewpoints across to you, trying to get you to accept their viewpoints. Specially in advertising. So - er - that's - you - you can - you can - I can see right through it, you know. O.K., this person wants this and that and that, and he's just wording this nicely - "political correctness" for this when he actually means that - I can pick out what they - what they're trying to say - so...

I: Can we talk a bit about your writing at home? You've spoken about your mother's particular interest in your writing. She's a teacher, isn't she?

R: No, she's a secretary.

I: Oh, she's a secretary. I thought she was a teacher. Um - do so you tend to show her a lot of your writing, or all of it?

R: I don't - I don't like showing my writing, to be honest, especially, like, the - O.K. I - I enjoy getting praise for my writing; anyone does that - um - but - um - no - um - she - obviously at school you've got a literature (writing?) book - she'll page through it now and then when it's at home to see if there's anything new and she - she'll - most of it - she likes most of my writing. Recently I've taken to song-writing because I've got a new guitar. Now, that's - that's my personal thing. Those are like, you know, stay away from it. It's like my little box of -

I: So - wouldn't you see yourself as singing those songs to -

R: I would, I would -

I: - to your family?

R: Um - they have to pay for it.

(R. and I. laugh)

R: It's - um - it's sort of - when you write - when you're writing a book you - you're not trying to be too - um - critic; when write a song, you know what that means. You can see what that - you can

see behind the words, what it means; whereas in descriptive writing, you have to - um - say, fact, fact, fact; this is that, this that; but there's a - songwriters often have a deeper meaning behind the words. Can say - um - um - uh - "my brother died every night" - it's a line of, not one of my songs but a song. Now how can - nobody knows what that means. But only the - only the songwriter can know what that means. It's just - like - gushing out of feelings and how he feels, his opinions - so - songwriting's completely different to - to - um ...

I: Would you say that's very - very personal writing?

R: It is - it's - um - you can share - I can share the writing - it's mostly - you know, like - ironic - that kind of thing - and - um - but - I find it very hard to share the meaning behind it - it's like - poetry..

I: If you were to go to the completely other ex - extreme, do you ever feel as though you're writing just for a public audience, and that you haven't put very much of yourself in your writing?

R: Ja, it's - um - I suppose with - er - in a kind of a - say - exam situation, where you - you're not writing for yourself, you're not writing for anyone else, you're just writing for that eighty per cent, whatever, you're just writing for a good mark, you're just writing for the - for the teacher who's going to mark it, and so you're just writing for the - for what you think is going to be right, what this person's opinion that you know is going to mark it, what this person's opinion is, what you think this person will like and not like. So you - you're in an essay exam situation - so - that's the case...

I: As the writer, would you feel pretty powerless in that situation, or do you feel as though you've got a lot of control over the whole writing situation, over your writing piece?

R: See - um - most of the people who write are like trapped by the - by the - limited choice. They find it limited, you know. It's - er - 'cause most of the things aren't what they can relate to. Almost every essay exam there's - there's like - er - titles, and then there's this one - which is good - "It was it was a dark night" - dot, dot, dot - like an ellipse - and you can - they - they like that - people - people tend to like that. They have more control over the story and feel more confident because they can turn it into - into a horror, turn it into, like, a comedy - they can do anything they can with that, with that opening line. So if you - if it gets more diversified and you can - and you can give the - the writer more control of the essay you are going to get a lot more of the writer - um - the writer's actual - a lot more of the writer, him or herself in the essay.

I: Would you feel that the fact that it's going to be marked would

have an impact on the amount the writer gives of themselves, and the control the writer has?

R: Um -

I: Or would it worry you - you particularly - not generally?

R: Er - I would want a lot of my essays that I wrote at the school that were marked for - like - exams, I would actually - I would have liked those back because I felt that - it was - like - some of - um - my best work.

I: Do you get stimulated by that?

R: Ja. I do, actually, because it's - um - er - I work good under pressure - but - a lot of pressure and I crack - like any - any other person - and - I got - um - what was the question?

I: Er - about the effect of the fact that you're being marked.

R: It's - it doesn't - personally it doesn't concern me. But just - I would like - I wouldn't mind some of the other - that I wrote in the exam situation.

I: Now we've actually moved in here (indicating the intermediate circle), so let's just go on for a bit talking about inside the classroom. If you were to write a piece inside any English classroom, um - a piece that is going to be marked - not in the exam situation, um - how do you feel about that classroom environment? Is there anything there that worries you, or does it affect you at all, to write in the classroom?

R: Um - if you get into it, like, you know what you're going to do and you get stuck in, you become oblivious to everything around you. So - but - it depends on the individual. Personally sometimes I - I can get involved, get really stuck in, get into that groove and just, like, write. And I don't want that - um - sequence to be stopped, like - the bell will ring and you have to break off or something, or the idiot next to you or behind you touches you on the shoulder and starts talking to you. But - um - inside the - I prefer to write - um - inside the classroom as opposed to at home because it's a more - it's a controlled environment and it's - it's a pressure - sort of a pressure-controlled situation where - um - you are being watched, you are being - um - um - put in a - put in a situation where you - where you have to write, or plan the story or something...

I: Can you just go on then (indicating the inner circle) into the - the central area seeing you're talking about planning? Time's not quite up yet. Um - I thought we might look at these texts now and the

way you seem to have gone about them. Right? And the first thing I was interested in - now, of course I've got my perspectives of these texts and they may not be accurate, but it seems to me as though - these text - texts - pieces of writing - were handled very differently. In fact, they seem to me to be written by a different person, almost, in a different kind of voice. Can you see any differences between them?

R: I think this is more of a satire (indicating the first text). This I wrote like - Oh! - no, I didn't write - oh, this was more of a test, and - er - this (indicating the second text) - er - um - I took it - um - I found it hard to actually evaluate how - um - how I plan, because it's second nature - um - to most people - and - including myself. So (indicating the first text) I was - I had a good id- I just started out, what could I do, the first one, what could I do here, - um - and I came up with a title that I liked and I enjoyed. I like - um - writing open thing, writing on anything you want - um - and the new S.A.B.C. because there was a lot of criticism for the - for the old S.A.B.C. and the way - what I read, I pictured the new S.A.B.C. to be a drop in standards. So I - like - um - I wrote off - um - authority in a way, you know they've, if anyone has the most power in the country it's Nelson Mandela and then the S.A.B.C., because they both have - um - influence over the masses. So I just - um - I don't know...

I: Now -

R: This (indicating the second text) I took seriously - the second one - very seriously. This (indicating the first text) - this light-hearted.

I: Mmm. The thing that most struck me about this one (indicating the second text) is that you spoke about spontaneity as the key to your writing -

R: Ja.

I: - but this appeared to me to be quite planned. Planned in the sense that it was developed.

R: Ja. I was quite - quite - um - um - when I came to - um - um - it was stop-start, very, when I wrote this. "Most people.... when I write I tend to be more spontaneous in my approach." I stopped there for about five minutes - "Choosing my heading is probably what I find the hardest" - I stopped, and I thought about it, which is - which is - er - it's - er - the whole thing is stop-start, because - "...choosing my heading" - stop. "I can't start writing unless I have a title for my piece" - stop. New idea - "I've always thought writing"... you know.

I: Now, when you got onto this building metaphor, did you think it out?

R: The building?

I: The whole idea that the -

R: 'Cause that's - that's the way that I write, the - um - you know, it's like a - a computer game, one of these new computer games. You go and you have a number of choices, and each choice is as important as the next one. But each choice will lead you on a completely different path. So it would branch out, and each one will branch out. So it's - it's kind of the way - if you write, you can change the whole outcome of how the - of what - what's going to happen at the end, by changing the start, changing - changing the - changing any small detail. It can affect the whole outcome. Like - um - like Cluedo.

I: Ja.

R: The - it's - any small thing can change the whole outline again...

I: Do you think like that about individual sentences, or just about the content of what's happening in your piece?

R: Just the ideas.

I: Just the ideas?

R: Yes. Not the sentences.

I: So you wouldn't think about choosing words in a certain order, perhaps? Or is it just the ideas that could branch off in any direction?

R: Just the ideas. Say, now, um - if - this one, the S.A.B.C., um - I've tried to - um - O.K., here, used - "Reconstruction and Development Programme... good idea", right - and then - um - I could either go - I could - I - you know - "initially a good idea, until the moment they started to fiddle around with my programmes...translate good shows into Afrikaans", right. Then I went into - um - I - I - I could have branched off and said - and compared the different S.A.B.C. channels, you know. And then I went to M-NET, right - um....

I: It did seem to me that when you - each time you got a new idea, your whole writing style moved into a new gear. For instance -

R: When starting a new paragraph?

I: Yes, maybe. Even inside the paragraphs sometimes, as though you were writing as a different kind of person, or as though sometimes you had borrowed ideas, which everyone does, from a certain kind of other source, somewhere -

R: Ja.

I: - and so with the idea came a kind of writing as well: a genre.

R: Ja, ja.

I: O.K. What I'd like you to do is to try - we don't have too much time - about five minutes - what I'd like you to do is to try to identify, if you can, any genres which you can see you've used.

R: Mmm! O.K. Um... I - it happened subconsciously -

I: Does it happen subconsciously?

R: It does.

I: Ja.

R: But - um... This is - er... This is the - the scrabble board is not a true fact (R and I laugh) - it was just sort of like a metaphor.

I: Yes, yes.

R: Um... Sort of what - what - I - um - I'm noticing a pattern - um - this is - first couple of sentences are - you know, like - fairly serious, O.K. "...Redistribution of wealth", right; "Reconstruction and Development Programme... until they translated my shows into...", you know?

I: So, yes, you've changed then to what?

R: To - um - to more - sort of a... Dare I say cynical?

I: Yes...

R: To - um -

I: Um - it seemed to me that you did this here as well (indicating the end of the first paragraph) -

R: Ja.

I: - because you've changed into -

R: Ja, the same thing. So - er - I - I mean - would you - would you seriously rather play Scrabble on the - on - instead of watching T.V.? But - um - it's sort of - er - it's - er - it's degrading to Scrabble since I'm joining a Scrabble Club soon, actually. (R and I laugh)

I: Let me just give you this, because - as - as a help (showing the list of possible genres). Now, this is a list of kinds of writing and speaking -

R: O.K.

I: - and I'm quite interested in identifying what elements go into people's writing. I don't know if you can find any of those elements in your writing -

R: There's "Factual Report" - the "You" magazine thing -

I: - Mmm -

R: -and now - um...

I: - in the way you have written. As though you were writing in some of these voices.

R: That's what - this happens (unintelligible) - um - "Magazine Article" as well - er - um - then it turns into this - um - humorous sort of thing - and this is - this - this - I think this whole paragraph is - er - it's a satire -

I: A satire, mmm.

R: - stereotypes as well - er - the "Japanese fighting movie" thing - it's - Japan is notorious for - um... mmm... (laugh) I'm - I'm not - er - this is - this sort of promotes M-NET in a way.

I: Mmm.

R: ...Um - I don't know - 'cause - seems to be the only channel but - um... This is a stereotype, this "twenty million South African women" so - I'm - not too -

I: Also a satire?

R: Ja, it's...

I: What about the last paragraph?

R: This is my opinion. This is what I spoke about earlier on - this - factor - um - me trying to get my opinion across that - um - that



everybody should - er... that - you know, that - interesting current affairs programmes - um - that - I'm saying here that the presenters of our current affairs programmes don't know what they're talking about. Um -

I: You say you're trying to get your opinions across. Who're you getting them - who're you speaking to there?... Are you speaking to me?

R: I wasn't - I think when I wrote this I didn't have you in mind.

I: O.K. Who did you have in mind?

R: I had - um - I was - I was actually writing this as a sort - I think as a sort of a letter to a magazine, probably (laugh) - I only realise it now - um - and - er - probably like a - a sports magazine, or something - something which - which - um - which a lot of men would read. Like - not a girlie mag but - um - say "...would snap twenty million women..." I mean, husbands come home, and their women are glued to the T.V., like - "Hello, love - go away" (laugh), you know, that kind of thing - they're glued to their soopies, so it's this stereotype, and - um - to be aimed at - at men who would laugh at a situation like this and... I think more - more - more upper-class kind - middle-upper-class coloured and white - er - readers - 'cause - you know... 'Cause the whole system has changed now towards - um - towards black - um - more - it's been more - um - based on the population thing, so obviously there's more of a black population, so there are more black programmes on -

I: Mmm.

R: - programmes geared to black viewers..

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I: I wondered perhaps if you could say something about your primary school - I thought that might also have some kind of influence on your writing. Anything that you can think of - about writing at primary school, whether you enjoyed it, or what kinds of writing you did.

R: Mmm. Primary school...

I: Tell me something about your primary schools first -

R: 'K.

I: - because I remember you said something in class about them.

R: First of all I went to St A-'s, it's a Catholic school - um - in H- - it was - um - they did away with the nuns when I was in Sub A - but - it was still - it was still - Catholic - um - the teacher had - the first essay I can remember - it was in Std Three, and - um - it was on - yes, it was on the - a political meeting - of people - er - it was F.W. de Klerk, all the world leaders meeting at - um - what's that - what's that - um - the safest thing in the world, guarded, they say the phrase, guarded like - um - some building in India or somehow -

I: In India?

R: Or some...

I: The only Indian building I know is the Taj Mahal, and it isn't guarded (laugh) - and Fort Knox in America -

R: Fort Knox! Ja, Fort Knox. And they met at Fort Knox or something, and there was this whole sort of a - I don't know (laugh) - slapstick kind of comedy, sort of thing - the teacher thought it was good, I know - then - er - about a month after that I left for S-V- - and - my Std Three teacher, English teacher there was Miss - um - I don't know, she died (laugh) - um - she looked a bit like you, actually -

I: Oh, goodness. (R and I laugh)

R: Um - she - Miss R- - she was also a very - a very good English teacher. She - um - sort of encouraged me to write. It was - it was more - the schooling there was more laid back, more - like - relaxed, less strict, less - it was less religious, say - because that other school had - um - morning assemble on the quad, and say Hail Mary, Our Father, um, We Give Thanks or something - and go back to school, stand up, say "Good morning, Teacher" - "Good morning, class" - "Morning, teacher, and how are you today?" (I. laughs) "I'm very well, thank you. And how are you?" "We are very well, thank you" - kind of - very formal, lots of - formality... But S-V- was a lot less formal.

I: And did you do a lot of writing at primary school? Or not?

R: Only - as it went on - in Standard Three I started, you know - it was when I really remember - I just got more and more as the year go - Standard Five I was doing something like - two every month, at S-V-.

I: And did you enjoy writing at that stage?

R: Ja. 'Cause I - I was one of the few people who liked writing, enjoyed writing, 'cause I read a lot - from - um - I was in a bad

habit of reading Enid Blyton (R. and I. laugh). Standard - Standard Two, Three, and then I sort of extended onto - Standard Five I read Susan Cooper - a series of five - and then I got onto fantasy, extended my vocabulary, and - um - learnt - I just diversified, later, in primary school.

I: And how did you get into reading then? Was it through school or through home or friends or...

R: Um - mainly through home - um - the first - you know - first - you know - you read these picture books. One - one day my mother brought home a big book with no picture in and the writing small - "Read it" - like - it was a "Famous Five" book, Enid Blyton, and I - like - put it aside and - I was bored, I gave it a chance when I - when I was sick, and I read it, I thought - "This is good, the best book I've ever read, compared to Noddy and all that" (t. laughs), and - um - then I was on Enid Blyton, and I was on - um - my favourite authors - um - Terry Pratchett -

I: Yes.

R: - Susan Cooper...

\* \* \* \* \*

(During a discussion about remaking as opposed to reporting past events)

R: "Remaking past events". (laugh) It's something like "1984".

I: Yes, yes, well, can you talk about that? Because - would you say - would you see English as being the kind of language that is suitable for you - for reporting past events, or for remaking past events?... It doesn't matter if you can't -

R: Even if - even if - if - um - the - say, the event "The French Revolu- - Revolution", right - you - you can't - you can't put it into words - like - you can't put everything into words - like - the - feeling of the bourgeoisie and the - and the other - third class, and the - um - the - you know, it's - it would be more - it's more - each - every bit of history is actually remade to the author's own - um - to - you - you can never be a hundred per cent accurate about what happened. So it's - it's - being - with each textbook or article written on it, it's remade all the time.

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## APPENDIX SEVEN

### *INTERVIEW FEEDBACK: KATHY*

KATHY, THIS IS WHAT I THINK YOU SAID, AND I HAVE DRAWN SOME CONCLUSIONS. I NEED TO KNOW IF YOU THINK I'M ON THE RIGHT TRACK.

I wanted to find out if Kathy's family life had any influence on her writing, and on where she gets her ideas. Kathy's family seems to be a caring and stable one. Family members seem to pursue individual activities. Kathy does her homework alone; the family watch television but do not discuss programmes, and "issues" aren't generally discussed. Kathy reads teenage magazines; the rest of her family read the newspaper.

Kathy sees herself as:

- a non-reader (this is not accurate - she reads teen magazines);
- hating writing (also not accurate - she writes spontaneously in her diary. Perhaps she only feels like this about "school" writing).

I feel that she has got the idea, from what people at school and at home say, that she is a non-reader and a bad writer because she doesn't read "approved" material (e.g. novels and newspapers) and because she is not very skilled at spelling and at writing "school" essays. She doesn't like people reading her writing. I think she is anxious that they will be critical.

Kathy knew that her first piece had been a "public" piece of writing specially for marking, and that the second was a more "personal" piece. At first she couldn't identify what genres (types of writing) she had used in her first piece of writing until she consulted the list of genres I gave her. Then she identified a number of "borrowings" from different genres (friendly letter, advertisement, public speech, magazine).

What does this show about how teachers should teach writing?

- Teachers should not just criticise pupils' writing - they should answer pupils' ideas and comments, and try to find ways in which pupil-writing can be used.
- Teachers should frame the kinds of writing they ask pupils to write around the kind of material pupils read (e.g. teenage magazines), and use these reading resources as a basis for teaching writing.
- Pupils may not have the chance to get involved in discussions about "issues" at home. Teachers need to organise group-discussions in class around possible writing topics so that young writers can both get ideas and develop their own opinions on such topics.

## APPENDIX EIGHT

### *INTERVIEW FEEDBACK: BRANDON*

BRANDON, THIS IS WHAT I THINK YOU SAID, AND I HAVE DRAWN SOME CONCLUSIONS. I NEED TO KNOW IF YOU THINK I'M ON THE RIGHT TRACK.

#### Home Influences on Brandon's Writing:

Brandon's home has supported him as a writer in two ways:

- his mother has encouraged him;
- his home provides him with a lot of input from different sources:
  - conversation and debate
  - magazines/newspapers
  - television
  - novels.

Brandon has a critical attitude to manipulation by the media - he is used to "seeing through" the words in order to get at the real meaning.

#### Classroom Influences:

His primary schooling has also been supportive (i.e. his standard three teacher).

He finds structured classroom writing conditions challenging rather than threatening because he is a confident writer - but sees the writer as having least control over his writing in the examination situation.

#### Influences of Text (the Nature of the Written Piece):

Brandon sees his writing as a journey through a network of choices. But these choices he sees as choices of topics and ideas - not choices of genres, writer-roles and audiences (this happens subconsciously).

Brandon doesn't know yet that the genres and the writer-roles you choose can help to shape the meaning of what you write.

#### What This Interview Shows About Teaching Needs:

- Teachers need to encourage pupils consciously to use a wide range of resources in their writing: resources drawn from their everyday lives and which have meaning for them (e.g. popular media and conversation), as well as traditional literary resources (e.g. novels).
- BUT all resources should be looked at critically and not just unthinkingly used in writing. Pupils should therefore discuss these

resources critically in class.

- Pupils should be taught how to combine different genres and different writer "voices" so as to communicate meaning effectively and to persuade the reader of the writer's point of view.