

A case study exploring primary-age children's perspectives on writing and their use of written feedback

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Declaration

I hereby certify that this dissertation constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another. I declare that the dissertation describes original work that has not previously been presented for the award of any other degree of any institution.

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Glossary of Terms

Age-Related Expectation (ARE)	This term is used in schools to indicate average attainment for a year group and is the measure against which children's attainment is judged. Children are assessed as to whether they are working 'at', 'above' or 'below' the level expected for their age group.
Assessment for Learning (AFL)	'The process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there'. (Assessment Reform Group (ARG), 2002, p.3)
Big Write*	The term comes from Wilson (2012), but the children use it here to refer to free writing time.
Boxing up*	An original story is 'boxed up' or separated into different elements – introduction, character, build up etc. This plan is then used by the child to develop their own version of the story (DCSF, 2011).
Bullet Pointing*	At the beginning of Phase 1, the class switched from using boxing up sheets to writing their plans in bullet points. This gave children more space. Over the project, children's plans increased in length and complexity.
Changes*	The school was using a <i>Talk for Writing</i> (T4W) approach (DCSF, 2008). In the first plan of their stories, children would make one or two changes to the original story, and then make more significant changes in a second version.
Effect Size	Effect size is an alternative measure to statistical significance and is seen as a better measure of educational impact by many international journals (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). Put simply it is 'a way of quantifying the difference between two groups' i.e. the treatment group and the control (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p.617). It is calculated using the difference between the means of the two groups but there are alternative formulae used, making it difficult to compare effect sizes from different studies. An effect size usually lies between 0 and 1, but some formulae give an effect size >1.00. 0 - 0.20 = weak effect 0.21 - 0.50 = modest effect 0.51 - 1.00 = moderate effect >1.00 = strong effect Effect size designations (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p.617). Hattie sets the effect of 'typical schooling' as 0 and an effect-size of 1.0 indicates an increase of one standard deviation, typically associated with advancing children's achievement by one year (Hattie, 1999, pp.3-4)).
GPS	Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling.
Magpie-ing*	Drawing on previously learned or read ideas (DCSF, 2008. p.12)

Process Approach	Children are explicitly taught the stages of writing: planning, drafting, reviewing, revising and editing, within a supportive writing environment that encourages children to take risks (Graham and Harris, 2018).
Prosody	'The rhythm and intonation of language' (Cambridge Dictionary).
Pupil conferencing	Working with 3 or 4 children to discuss their writing (Graves 1983, p.32).
Scaffolding	'Scaffolding' was a term initially used by Wood, Bruner and Ross, 1976, p.90) and later by Bruner (Bruner, 1983 p.60) as a metaphor for the strategies and resources used by teachers to support children's learning.
Self - Regulation in Writing	Self-regulation refers to how the individual manages their writing. Graham and Harris identify four strategies: goal setting, self-monitoring, self-instruction and self-reinforcement, as ways in which the individual manages the writing process and their own writing behaviours (Graham and Harris, 2018, p.23).
Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD)	'Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) is an intervention designed to improve students' academic skills through a six-step process that teaches students specific academic strategies and self-regulation skills. The six steps involve the teacher providing background knowledge, discussing the strategy with the student, modelling the strategy, helping the student memorise the strategy, supporting the strategy, and then watching as the student independently implements the strategy. A key part of the process is teaching self-regulation skills, such as goal setting and self-monitoring, which aim to help students apply the strategy without guidance. The steps can be combined, changed, reordered, or repeated, depending on the needs of the student.' (What Works Clearinghouse Intervention Report. U.S. Department of Education (2017) p.1.).
Spider diagram*	A mind map of the elements of a story or factual piece used by children to compile ideas for their writing.
Story Mapping*	A story is mapped using pictures and symbols. During the project, some children began to add more words into their story maps.
Triple marking, deep marking or quality marking	A method of marking using coloured pens. One colour is used to provide feedback on what the child has done well, another to provide steps for improvement. The child uses a third colour to edit their work and respond to feedback. The three terms are used synonymously in the literature (Elliott <i>et al.</i> , 2016).
Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)	'The distance between the child's actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving, and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers' (Vygotsky, 1978 p.86).

*Terms used by the children.

Abstract

This case study focuses on six 8-9 year old children from one primary school classroom in southern England. It explores the children's perspectives on writing, and addresses the gap in existing research around written feedback to support writing. Much of the research in this area has been carried out with students in secondary, further, and higher education, and often concentrates on what teachers do rather than how children respond. The evidence is particularly limited on how primary school children respond to their teachers' comments.

The teacher gave separate written feedback, firstly on the compositional aspects (content and ideas) and then on transcriptional elements (technical skills) of the children's writing over two four-week phases. They then returned to their usual style of feedback for a final four-week phase. Individual interviews with three of the children, in which their writing books acted as a focus, explored how they used their teacher's comments on different elements of writing. A greater understanding of children's perspectives and the writing environment in which they were working was provided through group interviews with all six children.

Findings show that the children enjoyed writing their own stories and found topics set in school less interesting. They sometimes felt constrained by the school writing process. However, they felt that writing was important, requiring hard work and persistence. The children highlighted the importance of their relationship with their teacher, which appeared to have a direct influence on their writing confidence.

There was a consensus that reminders and corrections for spelling and punctuation were the most helpful types of written feedback. Although children rarely edited their

work in response to these comments, there is some evidence that repeated reminders supported children in consolidating their secretarial and organisational skills. When encouraged to use specific sentence constructions, children attempted to include these in their writing, whilst prompts to include more detail led to children adding in extra material. Despite reporting that feedback is more helpful for transcriptional skills, children appeared to be better motivated to develop their ideas. These insights will help teachers to consider how written feedback might be better tailored, and the benefits of paying greater attention to children's own ideas.

1 Introduction

Writing is a complex task, even for proficient writers, and is difficult to learn as it encompasses so many elements (Harmey, 2021). It requires not only a competent knowledge of language and the ability to generate ideas, but also the skills to transcribe them onto paper. Unlike spoken language, which is learned in a seemingly natural way through conversation, writing requires specific instruction, usually in formal educational settings (Vygotsky, 1978; Wyse, 2017). This case study considers children's perspectives on writing, the mediational relationship they have with their teacher, and how they use written feedback to develop their skills.

Written feedback is one of the oldest forms of writing instruction (Graham, Herbert and Harris, 2015); in which teachers provide written comments on children's work with the aim of helping them become competent writers. However, the value of teacher-time spent providing this has been questioned, not least by a review of written feedback for the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) (Elliott *et al.*, 2016), and the Independent Teacher Workload Review (ITWRG, 2016). Current practice in English primary schools is to use a form of the '*success and improvement*' model of feedback (Clarke, 2003, p.94), praising what children have done well and suggesting next steps for improvement. Yet much of the research into written feedback has been carried out in secondary, further, and higher education, and there is little research involving primary children (Elliott *et al.*, 2016). Research also tends to focus on what teachers do, rather than on how students respond, for example influential studies such as Black and Wiliam (1998a), Hattie and Timperley (2007), and Rooke (2013). This means that there is limited understanding of how helpful primary-age children find their teacher's

written comments and how they use them to improve their writing. This study aims to address this gap and enable the views of younger children to inform the debate.

This introduction will:

- Explain the origins and evolution of the project;
- Summarise a preliminary study;
- Define 'written feedback';
- Set out the research aims and questions.

1.1 Origins of the project

My interest in what makes effective feedback to support writing originated whilst working as a local authority inclusion consultant training teachers and teaching assistants for '*Write Away Together*', an intervention programme designed to improve children's writing (Taylor and Ayres, 2008/2017). A key feature of the programme is an *Assessment for Learning* (AfL) model of formative assessment and verbal feedback (Black and Wiliam, 1998a, 1998b). Assessment of the child's work is used to provide verbal feedback, praising what has been done well and suggesting where improvements might be made (Clarke, 2003). The AfL model also seeks to promote independent learning and encourage children to have confidence in their own decision making (Black and Wiliam, 1998a). An evaluation of the programme for '*What works for children with literacy difficulties*' states that it leads to 'a remarkable gain' (Brookes, 2016, p.210). This was reflected in my own work with schools, several of which adopted the approach more widely, using whole staff training to consider how classroom feedback practice might be improved.

I became increasingly curious about the mechanisms of feedback practices, but investigating verbal feedback in conjunction with a busy work schedule was problematic. However, questions were being asked in relation to teacher workload as to whether in-depth written feedback was of sufficient value to children (Elliott *et al.*, 2016; ITWRG, 2016). An investigation of the literature highlighted the lack of detailed research into how primary-age children use written feedback and how useful they find it (Elliott *et al.*, 2016). In addition, teachers' comments provide a helpful written record, which can act as a starting point for discussion with children about how they have used them to improve their writing. I therefore decided to focus on written feedback and seek the views of primary children to enable their voices to contribute to this important debate.

1.2 Preliminary study

A preliminary study in the first year of my Doctorate in Education (EdD) in which six children were interviewed about their teacher's feedback comments, indicated that children working at or above age-related expectation (ARE) were able to make use of their teacher's comments to improve their writing and to apply the learning in subsequent pieces of work (Falkner, 2017). Those working below ARE often required adult support to access and respond to comments. The feedback provided by the teacher in this study was detailed, but tended to address technical aspects of writing over compositional ones. The school had previously had higher results for grammar, punctuation and spelling (GPS) than for writing in Statutory Assessment Tests (SATs), and teachers were using feedback with the specific aim of helping children to apply GPS knowledge in their writing. There was therefore a strong focus on GPS

skills, although compositional aspects were not abandoned entirely. Although this was an extremely small study, children of all attainment levels seemed able to make better use of comments on technical skills than ones on composition (ideas and content), and this led me to reflect on how children might use written feedback for different elements of writing.

1.3 Written feedback

The model of 'written feedback' observed in the study evolved from the *Assessment for Learning* (AfL) initiative of the 1990s and the 'success and improvement' model developed by Clarke (2003, p.94). At the time of data collection, this model continued to be promoted by consultants in the local area in which the study took place, for example Clare Gadsby, who recommends 'what went well', 'even better if' and 'my response is' as a framework for feedback (Gadsby, 2012, p.64).

AfL emerged from the recommendations of an international review of assessment practices by Black and Wiliam (1998a), recommending that formative assessment should be at the heart of teaching. AfL aims to enable children to know where they are in their learning and what they need to do to improve (ARG 2002). Children are told where they have done well and met learning objectives, and are encouraged to actively respond to suggestions for improvement by editing their work. Although there are several labels used for this type of feedback, such as 'deep', 'dialogic' 'triple' or 'quality marking' (ITWRG, 2016, p.6), for clarity this thesis will employ the simpler term 'written feedback', to distinguish it from other types of marking and assessment, such as grade marking. The type of feedback seen in this study did not wholly reflect the models in the ITWRG guidance.

In practice observed during the study, different coloured pens were used to make the process explicit to children, with one colour used to indicate what children have done well, and another to provide next steps for improvement (ITWRG, 2016; Elliott *et al.*, 2016). Schools tend to summarise the system for children with catchy descriptions, such as ‘tickled pink and green for growth’, which was widely used across Oxfordshire at the time of the study. Some schools also use purple pens for children to ‘fix’, edit, or improve work that is already drafted. Encouraging children to respond to comments is intended to make the model ‘dialogic’ (ITWRG, 2016, p.6). Although feedback is often provided once a piece of work is completed, it is intended to be formative rather than summative, as it provides the student with guidance for improvement in both current and future work (Black and Wiliam, 1998b; Broadfoot *et al.* 1999; Clarke, 2003).

Black and Wiliam’s (1998a) large empirical review finds the grading of student’s work to be counterproductive and demotivating. Students tended to focus on grades and ignore qualitative feedback that might help them improve. Black and Wiliam therefore advocate a move away from summative grading towards a formative approach (Black and Wiliam, 1998b). Summative assessment is carried out at the end of a piece or unit of work and is used by teachers to measure children’s attainment, whereas formative assessment is used to decide on next steps in teaching and provide children with suggestions on how to improve their work (ARG, 2002). Strategies are recommended to inform classroom practice and make aspects of teaching more explicit, such as those recommended by the Assessment Reform Group (ARG) (2002):

- Planning should be informed by assessment;
- Learning objectives and success criteria should be made explicit;

- Learners should be encouraged to reflect on their learning through self and peer assessment;
- Learners should be given guidance on how to improve.

Through the King's-Medway-Oxfordshire-Formative Assessment Project (KMOFAP), Black and Wiliam (2005) developed a form of feedback that identified what students had done well and provided steps for improvement. This type of written feedback formed part of AfL (Broadfoot *et al.*, 1999). The ARG defined AfL as 'the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there' (ARG, 2002, p.3). Black and Wiliam suggest that AfL adheres to Ramaprasad's three key processes of learning and teaching and that feedback provides guidance to the child on:

- Where they are in their learning;
- Where they are going;
- What needs to be done to get them there? (Ramaprasad, 1983, cited in Black and Wiliam, 2009, p.4)?

AfL was also designed to pass the locus of control from teacher to child, making them active 'owners of their own learning' (Black and Wiliam, 1998, p.560).

Based on Black and Wiliam's findings, the *Gillingham Partnership Formative Assessment Project* (Clarke and McCullum, 2001) developed further guidance for teacher feedback in what Clarke calls the 'success and improvement model' (Clarke, 2003, p.94). In her model, verbal and written feedback shows the child where they have met learning objectives and provides guidance for improvement, enabling the

child to reflect on their own learning. Black and Wiliam (2018) promote five key strategies for teacher assessment:

1. Sharing clear learning intentions and success criteria with learners;
2. Using classroom discussion and learning tasks to elicit evidence of learning;
3. Providing feedback that moves learning forward;
4. Supporting learners to become an instructional resource for one another;
5. Helping learners to become owners of their own learning.

(Based on Figure 2, *Key strategies in teacher assessment*, Black and Wiliam, 2018, p.560)

They emphasise the importance of feedback that feeds forward, encouraging children to believe that ability can be improved and that feedback can support that improvement. However, the unknown factor is how feedback will be received and responded to by the learner. As Wiliam points out on social media as part of the wider public debate, learning is the 'mysterious process that happens inside an individual's head' (Twitter, 26 Mar, 2018).

Fletcher-Wood takes up Wiliam's term 'responsive teaching' (Fletcher-Wood, 2018, p.9) focussing on the principles of formative assessment rather than specific techniques. He purports that formative assessment, along with an understanding of how children learn based on cognitive science, is used to adapt teaching to children's needs. He proposes that responsive teaching focuses on:

- What students have learned and how they can learn more;
- How students acquire and organise knowledge and skill;

- The principles of formative assessment to support learning (Fletcher-Wood, 2018, p.10).

William (2022) aligns responsive teaching with points 2 and 3 in Table 1-1, but if this is successful it should promote students' ownership of their learning. Feedback provided by teachers is to no avail if it does not lead to beneficial learning for children, and if students do not respond we cannot be sure that they have benefited (Fletcher-Wood, 2018). However, Black and Wiliam (1998, 2012) propose that feedback should improve the child's learning, not necessarily the work. This makes researching children's response complex, as learning may not be immediately reflected in observable progress.

There are other difficulties in investigating the AfL model of feedback. The evidence gathered and strategies developed were both wide ranging and ambitious, making analysis of what makes a difference in children's learning difficult (Tan, 2013). One issue is that the assessment process and the feedback it informs are often viewed as a single process, and the quality of teacher assessment rarely considered. Feedback from formative assessment is important for both the teacher and the child. It informs the teacher of adjustments needed to their teaching, and informs the child on how to improve their work. However, research rarely considers the individual impact of the separate elements on improvement. Although these aspects are important considerations, the focus of this thesis is how children respond.

1.4 The evolution of the project

Having recruited children from two parallel classes, the original plan for the project was for a mixed methods comparison of two groups. However, the project had to change due to circumstances beyond my control, as one teacher was absent for much of the project, resulting in only one class receiving the planned feedback, which meant that data from the second group did not address my research question. In addition, the global pandemic prevented the collection of progress data. This thesis therefore treats the qualitative data from a group of six children from one class as a single case study. The children received feedback on composition, then transcription, and finally their teacher's usual feedback over three four-week blocks. Children were interviewed as a group at the beginning, after each four-week block, and at the end of the project, to explore their attitudes to writing and the writing context of the class. Three children were also interviewed individually after each block to discuss how they had responded to the written feedback they had received. The case study of six children explores their perspectives on writing and their response to written feedback within the context of their particular classroom.

1.5 Research aims

Having identified a gap in the research, the aim of the case study was to enable primary children to contribute to the debate on writing and written feedback. However, to understand why children respond to feedback in the ways they do, it is important to understand their wider perspectives on writing and the context in which they are working.

Children's '*perspectives*' are here taken to mean children's experiences, their 'life-worlds and subjective meaning making' (Hedegaard *et al.*, 2012, p.ix). It is used as an umbrella term to include children's perceptions, thoughts, feelings and attitudes. Some of the literature on how children think and feel about writing refers to children's '*perceptions*' rather than '*perspectives*', but the two terms are often used interchangeably. Moore (no date) suggests that perception is about interpretation, whilst perspective is a point of view. However, Hedegaard *et al.* cite Bruner in arguing that exploring perspectives is about understanding children's experience within social contexts. This 'participant perspective' (Hedegaard *et al.*, 2012, p.ix) enables the exploration of children's lived experience. This seems appropriate to a study investigating children's writing and use of written feedback within the classroom. As the research aim is to explore the children's viewpoint, thoughts, feelings and attitudes, *perspectives* will be used in the thesis to include all these things.

- What do children think about writing?
- How do they feel about it?
- What do they enjoy and what do they find difficult?
- What helps them to learn?

The following questions will be explored in relation to how children use written feedback on different elements of writing:

- Do they read feedback comments?
- Do they respond differently to the various aspects of writing?
- Do they respond by going back to edit their work?
- How do they say feedback comments help them?

The methodological design aims to reduce the power imbalance between children and the adult researcher, and to provide them with a safe space within which to contribute their views. Creative methods are used to give children time to reflect on their experience, and to make their ideas the focus of group interviews rather than the researcher's questions. Similarly, children's writing books are used as the focus for individual interviews to make the child and their work the central concern.

1.6 Research questions

Differences in the way children responded to comments on transcriptional and compositional elements in the preliminary study led me to consider whether this was a developmental issue. Were primary children at this age better able to concentrate on transcriptional skills or did they for some reason set more value on these elements? I also wondered whether their perceptions of writing and what they felt to be important led to this difference. Their feelings and attitudes towards writing more generally may also influence how they respond. I therefore formulated a research question to consider this:

What are children's perspectives on writing?

I was particularly intrigued as to how children use feedback to improve different elements in their writing, particularly in relation to transcriptional and compositional skills. However, the binary split between composition and transcription, seen in the *National Curriculum* (DfE, 2014) and other guidance for teachers, may be an artificial and over-simplistic one, and the reasons for this will be discussed later in the literature

review. A more nuanced picture emerges from the theory, and this led to my second research question:

How do children use written feedback comments on different elements of writing?

In answering the research questions, I felt that it was important to study them within the classroom context and to consider children's use of feedback in relation to their perceptions and attitudes towards writing.

1.7 Overview of thesis structure

The Introduction has described how the idea of the project originated from my work with schools, and a preliminary study looking at how helpful children find written feedback. It has provided a definition of written feedback as practised in schools at the time of the study, and has explained the evolution of the project. An overview will now provide a guide to the structure of the thesis.

The Literature Review takes a sociocultural perspective to explore how learning to write might be achieved through the mediational processes that occur between child and teacher. It considers how the teacher might scaffold the child's development of cognitive writing skills and how children might appropriate ideas and discourse knowledge from their wider experience of literacy (Part 1). The review examines how Western theorists have built on Vygotsky's concept of mediational support (Part 2), and explores cognitive models of writing development (Part 3), the curriculum context, particularly the division between composition and transcription in the *National Curriculum* (DfE, 2014) (Part 4), and the research on feedback (Part 5). It then considers research on children's perspectives of learning to write and the role of

written feedback (Part 6), and finally draws together sociocultural concepts and models of writing development to create a theoretical framework for how children learn to write, and considers how written feedback might sit within this (Part 7).

The Methodology explains the rationale and research design for the case study and creative methods used. It explains the group and individual interviews employed, and how changes made in response to the absence of one teacher led to the final study. The chapter also outlines how thematic analysis was used to explore semantic and latent meanings in the data. The Findings and Discussion chapter explains the rationale for the themes and subthemes (Part 1), then discusses the findings within each theme in relation to the literature. It uses the literature to consider why children might hold the perspectives on writing found in the data (Part 3) and respond in the ways they do to written feedback (Part 3). This chapter also discusses the limitations of the study (Part 4). The Conclusion ends the thesis by considering the contribution to knowledge, implications for practice, and possible areas for further research.

2 Literature Review Part 1: A Sociocultural Framework for Writing Development

2.1 Introduction

This section will provide an overview of the sociocultural framework of the thesis and of the theoretical concepts used. The elements of the framework will be explored in greater detail in Part 2, but Part 1 will consider the two main perspectives from which writing development has been studied in recent years: the neuropsychological and the sociocultural approaches. The former approach, on which key models of writing and writing development are built, is concerned with the individual's psychological acquisition of cognitive skills and knowledge. Whilst this is important in understanding the writing process, and will be drawn on in the thesis, sociocultural studies are concerned with the wider contexts in which teaching and learning take place. This is relevant to the classroom context for the research undertaken for this thesis. Wyse (2017) argues that studies of the cognitive acquisition of writing provide evidence of how the multiple elements, such as language, sound, hand coordination, working memory, interact psychologically to support the compositional and transcriptional aspects of the writing process. He also proposes that the writing process cannot be separated from the historical background of the writer or their physical, social or cultural context, and that this is much wider than the concept of the 'task environment' (Haynes, 1996, p.3) suggested in the cognitive models of writing. In considering how children learn within the classroom and from their teacher, the psychological, cognitive processes of learning cannot be separated from the sociocultural context and Wyse (2017) suggests that to fully evaluate the effectiveness of educational processes a

pragmatic approach is needed in which all aspects of learning are considered. Empirical research into writing has increasingly used sociocultural theories and methodologies to explore the learning of writing skills as a social activity (Scribner and Cole, 1981; Heath, 1983, Englert, Berry and Dunsmore, 2001). There already exists a body of research into the mediation of children's learning, which employs a sociocultural framework (Prior, 2006; Wyse, 2017). This is relevant to this thesis, which is largely concerned with how children learn from the guidance provided by their teacher through written feedback within the classroom context. Although the acquisition of cognitive skills will be considered, the theoretical framework chosen is a sociocultural one, and will therefore follow an established research tradition.

The central concern of this study is to understand how children use written feedback comments on different elements of writing. Due to the lack of existing research on written feedback with primary age children, it is currently not clear how this contributes to their learning. This section will develop a theoretical framework for how writing is learned within the classroom context of the study, which will then be used to investigate the role of written feedback. Written feedback is only a small part of the support provided by teachers. How children respond to it will depend on their individual perspectives and attitudes to writing and the context in which it is given. It is therefore important to explore written feedback within the context of the children's wider experience of writing and the classroom learning environment, including the teaching approaches taken, the curriculum, and the children's relationship with the teacher. The thesis will look at how written feedback might act as a mediational tool (Section 2.5) within these different elements of the children's sociocultural context.

2.2 Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theory (SCT) has a complex history, developing from the work of Russian psychologists in the early twentieth century, then being taken up and adapted by theorists in 1960s North America. It is a holistic perspective that seeks to recognise the influence of the social environment on the learning process. SCT focuses on how children learn through interaction with others, both adults and peers. It is concerned with how children learn through participation in the collective, social world as a means of developing individual cognitive capability. In addition to learning facilitated through explicit instruction, it also considers wider, implicit ways of learning through more general experience. It 'seeks to understand how culturally and historically situated meanings are constructed, reconstructed and transformed through social mediation' (Englert, Mariage and Dunsmore, 2006, p.208).

SCT places importance on the individual's agency to influence both their own learning and their cultural context. The individual is not only influenced by the world, but so too the world is influenced by the individual (Vygotsky, 1978). Learning is seen as 'a complex process of transmission, transformation and synthesis' in which children and adults co-construct knowledge through interdependent social and individual processes (John-Steiner and Mahn, 1996, p.197). Learning to write is dependent upon interdependent processes between the teacher and child, written feedback being one of them.

2.3 Sociocultural studies of writing and feedback

Sociocultural studies have been used to explore the use of writing within communities, such as Scribner and Cole's (1981) study of the use of different literacies within the Vai culture, and Heath's (1983) study of different groups within an Appalachian community, illustrating how writing is used and learned within particular social contexts. From a review of sociocultural studies of writing Bazerman concludes that:

'Writing is a social technology designed to communicate among people. It is learned and produced in social circumstances, establishes social relationships, changes the writer's social presence, creates shared meanings, and accomplishes social action. Writing partakes of and contributes to the social circumstances in which it arises and bears the characteristics of the cultures it participates in and the histories it carries forward.' (Bazerman, 2017, p.11)

SCT has also been used to explain how writing is learned. For example, Rogoff (1995) proposes that this occurs through participation in literacy activities and through an apprenticeship style of learning from supporting adults. Englert, Berry and Dunsmore (2001) suggest that the support teachers provide scaffolds writing for children within the apprenticeship model. Dyson (1997) also proposes that children appropriate ideas for writing from cultural experiences, such as reading, film and television, and that the appropriation and adaption of ideas is a key component of learning to write. These concepts are highly relevant to the data of this study, which provides illustrations of children learning in these ways. These will be discussed further in Part 2.

Regarding how formative assessment and written feedback may support writing, recent studies have also considered how *Assessment for Learning* (AfL) (Section 1.3) might be reinterpreted from a sociocultural perspective. The elements of teacher mediation have been likened to the scaffolding model (Wood, Ross and Bruner, 1976, p.90) by Sardareh and Saad (2012) and Rajendran (2022), whilst Willis (2011) uses a sociocultural framework to explore how AfL supports the development of the child's agency and autonomy through participation in a community of practice. Although not using an AfL context, Devrim (2014) also uses SCT to consider how written feedback might be theorised as a mediational tool based on a model of scaffolding.

2.4 Sociocultural perspectives on two modes of learning

Sociocultural perspectives consider both explicit and implicit aspects of children's learning. How explicit learning is facilitated is considered through concepts of the mediational relationship between child and teacher and models of scaffolding. Implicit learning is regarded from the perspective of cultural appropriation. In this study, the mediational relationship and scaffolding models are used to understand how writing is supported within the classroom and how children draw on the teacher's written feedback to support the writing process. Cultural appropriation is used to consider how children bring their implicitly acquired knowledge of literacy and other storytelling media to classroom writing tasks. It is also used to reflect on the influences that their sociocultural experience has on the children's perspectives and attitudes to writing.

Tolchinsky (2017) provides a model of learning to write, which, although she does not consider it a sociocultural one, considers both the explicit acquisition of cognitive skills and wider informal learning. She proposes that children develop the cognitive skills of

writing via a 'bottom-up' 'additive-cumulative' process, through which they learn the alphabetic code, firstly to build and spell words, and then create sentences (Tolchinsky, 2017, p.145). They progress from these lower order encoding skills to master higher order structural elements. She suggests that children also learn through a 'top-down' or 'mutually enhancing-interactive perspective' through social and environmental experiences with adults and peers, such as sharing books and hearing stories (Tolchinsky, 2017, p.147). In this way, children acquire knowledge about higher order writing skills, such as discourse knowledge, differences between genres, and text organisation. They begin to learn how text is structured on a macro-level, and Tolchinsky shows how even young children at the early stages of pre-writing differentiate between genres, producing emergent forms of lists and labels, and using long scribbled lines to emulate adult writing. She argues that if children are to produce coherent and cohesive writing, the cognitive and interactive aspects need to be brought together, and the systematic learning of orthographic transcription integrated with discourse knowledge acquired through literary experience. Figure 2-1 creates a diagrammatic representation of Tolchinsky's model.

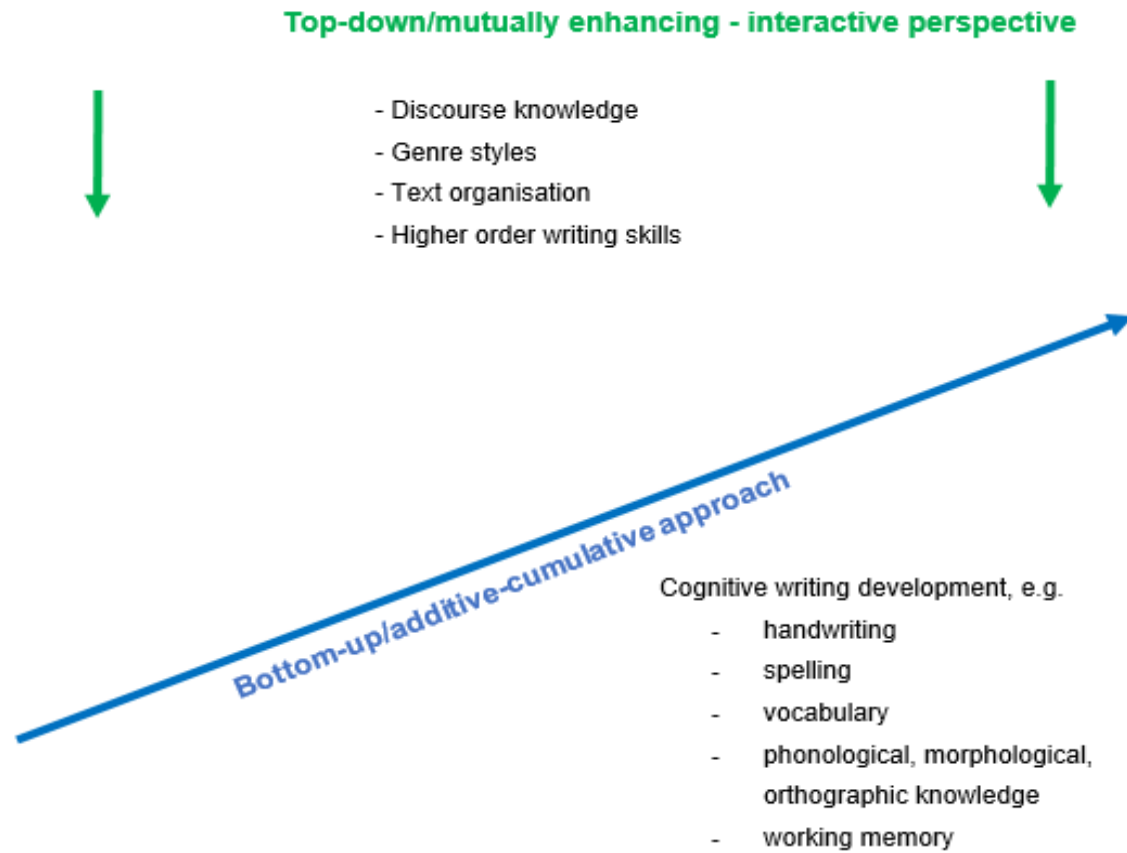


Figure 2-1: A pictorial representation of Tolchinsky's model, based on Tolchinsky 2017.

The cumulative approach aligns closely with more detailed cognitive models of writing development, such as that of Berninger and Swanson (1994), whilst the interactive perspective has affinities with Rogoff's sociocultural concept of 'participatory appropriation' (Rogoff 1995, p.143). The diagonal arrow indicates that the cumulative acquisition of skills is directional, in which higher order structural skills are built upon basic orthographic ones (Berninger and Swanson, 1994). The downward arrows indicate the more diffuse, informal nature of top-down learning. Tolchinsky suggests that discourse modes are 'socioculturally bounded' (p.147), but gives no indication that her model is anything other than a psychological, cognitive one. Whereas in a comparable model for reading acquisition, Compton-Lilly labels the bottom-up approach as 'cognitive' and the top-down as 'sociocultural' (Compton-Lilly 2013, p.5). She argues that cognitive skills cannot be considered independently from social literacy practice or isolated from what children bring to the task from their sociocultural background. Despite having proposed a cognitive model of writing development (Berninger and Swanson, 1994), Berninger later considers how cognitive skills might be learned from a sociocultural perspective through social interaction between children and adults, proposing that this is an important consideration in regard to the role of explicit instruction (Berninger and Winn, 2006). The relationship between the child and their teacher is central to the mediational, scaffolding model that will be used to understand children's learning within the case study classroom and through their use of written feedback.

2.5 The scaffolding of cognitive skills

Although Vygotsky did not use the term 'sociocultural', his work is widely cited by those working in the sociocultural tradition (Wyse, 2017), and was adopted as the basis for the development of theories about learning and the role of the teacher during the 1960s in North America (Dafermos, 2016). Vygotsky proposes that within an instructional relationship, learning is mediated for children by the 'more capable other' (MCO) (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86), either an adult or more capable peer. The MCO in the context of this thesis is the teacher and this mediational relationship underpins the delivery of and response to written feedback. Vygotsky argues that the adult continually assesses not only the child's current ability, but also their capacity to take the next step in learning under adult guidance. Vygotsky terms this the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978, p.84). Put simply, this is the difference between what the child can do alongside an adult and what they can do independently. The debate around the nature of the ZPD will be discussed in greater detail in Part 3.

Later theorists have built on Vygotsky's ideas, and one development has been the alignment of the model with scaffolding. The concept of teacher 'scaffolding' of children's learning was developed from Vygotsky's mediational model in relation to problem solving (Wood, Ross and Bruner, 1976, p.90). Wood *et al.* suggest that this goes further than simply the teacher modelling and the child imitating. They describe the interactional support provided by the teacher during the task, with 'the adult "controlling" those elements of the task that are initially beyond the learner's capacity, thus permitting him to concentrate upon and complete only those elements that are within his range of competence.' (Wood, Ross and Bruner, 1976, p.90). They argue that this leads to quicker development of task competence than were the child to work

unassisted. The level of scaffolding is gradually adjusted as the child develops competency and can take on greater responsibility for managing the task in what Bruner termed the 'handover principle' (Bruner, 1983, p.60). Scaffolding is therefore dependent on dynamic assessment of the child's capabilities in order to provide carefully adjusted support.

Originally conceived as largely verbal support, more recently the views on scaffolding have widened to include visual tools, such as cue cards, anchor charts, checklists, graphic organisers, models of completed tasks and technology. Mclesky *et al.* suggest that scaffolding includes 'powerful visual, verbal, and written supports' (Mclesky *et al.*, 2017, p.23), which is quoted by an EEF evidence review (Cullen *et al.*, 2020). The guidance resulting from the EEF review (EEF, 2021) proposes three types of scaffolding: verbal, through discussion with the child; visual, including task planners, examples of work, or images to support vocabulary; and written, such as word banks, writing frames, sentence starters, notes made during class discussion or the child's own previous work. These visual and written tools are used to support children during independent work time. There have been criticisms that a wider interpretation of scaffolding and the inclusion of such 'procedural facilitation tools' (Pea, 2004, p.48) moves too far from the original concept and intentions to be useful. However, others have noted the benefit of providing tools that act as scaffolding for independent work during class teaching, for example writing frames (Lewis and Wray, 2002), structured tasks, and collaborative activities (Dockrell, Marshall and Wyse, 2015). Devrim (2014) theorises online written feedback for second language learners as a scaffolding tool, but no research identifies written feedback used in primary schools in this way. If

written feedback does provide an element of scaffolding for primary school children, then it is likely to lie within the category of written tools.

The teacher in this thesis study was employing *Talk for Writing* (T4W) (DCSF, 2008), in which boxing up and story mapping strategies help to facilitate class discussion and children's independent writing processes, and are therefore viewed as scaffolding tools. Englert *et al.* (2006, p.211) propose that such tools can scaffold by 'reminding students of the procedural steps, perspectives, higher order strategies that they can self-employ to plan, monitor and revise their texts'. However, Myhill and Warren (2005) warn that it is easy for the guidance provided by such tools to become too tight and prescriptive, and that even verbal scaffolding can sometimes become more controlling than teachers intend. There were instances in the case study data where children seemed to view some scaffolding as over-prescriptive.

Berninger and Winn's (2006) adaption of 'the learning triangle' (Berninger *et al.*, 2001, p.197), is useful in considering how these instructional tools, as well pedagogical approaches and the curriculum, come together with the teacher's facilitation of learning through interaction with child. The three sides of the triangle represent:

1. the learner's brain-mind,
2. the teacher's instruction,
3. the instructional materials, tools and curriculum.

(Berninger and Winn, 2006, p.97).

This model is useful to this thesis in considering how children respond to their teacher's support and feedback within the classroom context. In this thesis study, the classroom context was influenced by:

- the *National Curriculum* (Dfe, 2014) and the school's implementation of this;
- the use of T4W as an approach to writing;
- the elements of AfL used by the teacher to set learning objectives, outline success criteria and provide feedback.

Berninger and Winn acknowledge that the neuropsychological perspective is built on the constructivist principle that individuals create knowledge for themselves by internalising learning acquired through their experience of the world, but they also build on Vygotsky's sociocultural model. They propose that the child's cognitive skills develop through the social interaction with their teacher and that their development is optimised when instruction is aimed within their ZPD. From this perspective the teacher scaffolds the child's learning through explicit guidance. They suggest that this model allows for children's individual cognitive differences, but that effective instruction will depend on the interaction between their external social context and internal psychology.

The type of support provided by the teacher is likely to be explicit, supporting the cumulative development of skills, whereas children's learning from their broader sociocultural experience will be influenced by the tacit messages they receive through participation in the classroom. This is likely to extend beyond the school gates and be influenced by their wider lived experience. This is considered in the next section.

2.6 Participatory appropriation

Rogoff (1990) proposes that through participating in sociocultural activity and interpersonal interaction, children appropriate skills and knowledge. She presents a

slightly different concept of the mediational role of the MCO through an apprenticeship model and a mode of learning that she terms 'guided participation' (Rogoff 1995, p.146). As in the scaffolding model, she proposes that the adult carefully calibrates support to enable the child to take on the parts of a task of which they are capable, gradually taking on greater responsibility for the management of the task until they can complete it alone. Compared to the scaffolding model, she places greater emphasis on the child's agency in seeking and demanding support and through taking responsibility for their own learning, arguing that learning in this context is not purely an internalisation process. She uses the term 'appropriation' or 'participatory appropriation' (Rogoff 1995, p.150) to distinguish it from internalisation.

Rogoff also explores how children appropriate skills through taking part in wider social and cultural activities within their communities, where skills and knowledge are acquired more implicitly, first through social activity and then on an individual basis. This type of broader appropriation is illustrated by Tolchinsky's (2017) findings, which suggest that even young children acquire discourse knowledge through their experience of different forms of literacy, and by Dyson (1997), who shows how children appropriate ideas from books and media that they adapt within their own writing. This type of learning will be considered further in Section 5.5.

Berninger and Winn (2006) argue that learning cannot be seen simply as a mental activity, but the interaction between the mind and the environment. They suggest that it is not possible to identify whether ideas for writing originate from the student, the environment, or the interaction of the two. They propose that 'the writing process is supported by a single system – the writer's internal brain-mind interacting with the external environment' (Berninger and Winn, 2006, p.108). The concept of

appropriation will be used in this thesis to explore how children take ideas from their wider experience and adapt them in their writing.

In addition to writing knowledge and ideas for their work, children's experience both in school and out will also affect their perspectives on writing. Lee (2019) finds that teachers often subconsciously communicate values and attitudes to children through subtle non-verbal signals. Children will absorb these implicit messages alongside the explicit teaching. They will also pick up attitudes to writing from their parents, peers and community. The thesis will explore children's perspectives on writing and how these might be affected by their sociocultural context.

Part 2 will consider aspects of sociocultural theory in greater depth. It will explore the how different interpretations of 'the zone of proximal development' (Vygotsky, 1978, p.84) create ontological differences that influence how teachers might conceptualise this, influencing the support and feedback that children receive. Both this and the idea of wider cultural appropriation will be considered in relation to the ways in which children's learning is mediated by their teacher.

3 Literature Review Part 2: The Nature of Mediational Support

3.1 Introduction

The sociocultural framework outlined in Part 1 forms the basis of the thesis, influencing the literature that is considered, the methodology, methods of data collection and analysis, and the way in which findings are explored in relation to the literature. It is used to explore the mediational relationship between child and teacher, and how cognitive skills, schematic discourse knowledge and compositional competency are developed through the response to written comments. How children respond to written feedback will depend on a whole range of factors, including their perspectives on writing, their attitudes and their relationship with their teacher. This section will explore nuanced differences in the way that Vygotsky's concept of mediation has been built on, and consider how these inform the debate about how learning is supported through feedback practices.

3.2 The mediational relationship and writing

Vygotsky (1934/1986) argues that children learn about writing through interaction with adults and collaboration with their peers. Unlike spoken language, which is largely acquired informally through social interaction, language for writing must be more precise and learned through study. Children also learn about writing through reading, but reading alone is insufficient and requires mediation through dialogue with their teachers or other adults (Wyse, 2017).

Vygotsky proposes that the child's learning is mediated through interaction with adults or 'more capable peers', first socially through spoken interaction, and then internally through psychological development (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86). In this way, 'interpersonal processes' are transformed into 'intrapersonal' ones (Vygotsky, 1978, p.57). He argues that in addition to spoken language the child develops 'inner speech' or 'egotistical speech' (Vygotsky, 1934/1986, pp.31-33), which is used for thinking. It is this inner speech that he proposes is used in the development of written language.

An important part of Vygotsky's concept is that mediation is underpinned by continuous dynamic assessment. He insists that assessment should be 'diagnostic', rather than 'symptomatic' (Vygotsky, 1987, cited in Kozulin and Gindis, 2007, p.354). That is, assessment should not be based solely on the child's developmental stage, but should also consider the child's ability to learn. In providing suggestions for improvement, the teacher not only needs to assess what steps are needed, but the size of steps the child can take at any particular time.

Differences in the interpretation of Vygotsky's ideas of mediation may be partly due to differences in the translation of his work. For example, there is no direct translation for the word 'obuchenie'. The 1978 version of *Mind in Society* translates it as 'learning', whereas Mitchell (Vygotsky/Mitchell, 2017) uses 'teaching', which highlights that Vygotsky's concern was to provide 'a more informed pedagogy' based on the teacher's knowledge and dynamic assessment of the child's capabilities (Barrs, 2017, p.346). Barrs suggests that 'learning' assumes a constructivist interpretation with the focus on how knowledge is constructed by the child, with the teacher as facilitator, whilst 'teaching' places greater emphasis on the instructional and mediational role of teacher. However, Sutton (1980, cited in Cole, 2009, p.292) proposes that mediation is a two-

way process, making both translations plausible. The mediational process is an important aspect of schooling, supporting the development and use of language for both speaking and writing (Englert, Berry and Dunsmore, 2001).

Vygotsky never used the term sociocultural, but an important aspect of his work is the notion of learning through 'mediated action' happening within a social, historical and cultural context (Wertsch, 1993, p.16). Although other theorists considered children's culture in terms of ethnic or racial groupings, it should be noted that Vygotsky's use of the word 'cultural' signifies culture more generically as the environment in which the child is learning, and so is more applicable to the concept of classroom culture rather than an ethnic sense (Dafermos, 2016). Within this thesis the cultural context considered is that of the classroom.

3.3 The zone of proximal development

Vygotsky conceives of the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978, p.84) or 'zone of proximate development' (Vygotsky/Mitchell, 2017, p.365) as a device for explaining the mechanisms through which learning translates into development. In promoting development, he contends that learning should be in advance of the child's development, with teacher mediation enabling them to perform above their current independent ability. He describes the ZPD as 'the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance' (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86). Interpreted simply, the ZPD describes the difference between what the child can do independently, and what they can do with the support of an adult or 'more capable other' (MCO) (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86).

This has been interpreted by some as suggesting that what the child can do with an adult today, they will do independently tomorrow, which Smagorinsky (2018) contends is a misinterpretation. He argues that interpreting Vygotsky's use of *tomorrow* as next day is in danger of reducing learning to isolated instances. This may be a particular difficulty in relation to writing, where skills cannot be mastered in isolation (Englert, 1992). Smagorinsky points out that Vygotsky was not a cognitivist, his thinking was much more about environments and social practices. He cites Vygotsky's elaboration upon the ZPD to suggest that it is a process of maturation over time.

'The zone of proximal development defines those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation, functions that will mature tomorrow but are currently in an embryonic state. These functions could be termed the 'buds' or 'flowers' of development rather than the 'fruits' of development.' (Vygotsky, 1978, pp.86-87).

Despite the credence given to the ZPD amongst teachers and academics, Vygotsky in fact only mentions it briefly towards the end of his life (Dafermos, 2016), but he did consider the concept revolutionary in explaining the relationship between learning and development (Vygotsky/Mitchell, 2017). Although his theory is relatively embryonic, it is how later theorists have built on his ideas that informs practice today, and is used as the theoretical framework of this thesis.

3.4 Different interpretations of Vygotsky's ideas

Several factors are likely to influence different interpretations of Vygotsky's theories. The context in which Vygotsky was working, in terms of time, place, political system and cultural values, and the nuances of different translations, lead to a lack of clarity

around Vygotsky's original ideas. He wrote prolifically, with rapidly changing ideas, and died young, leaving many of his ideas only partially realised (Daniels, Cole and Wertsch, 2007). There was fierce debate within the Soviet school of psychology, with Vygotsky, Leon'tiv and Luria developing divergent theories. Following his death in 1934, Vygotsky's work was suppressed for two decades, accused of being too eclectic and bourgeois. Eventual publication of his work was non-chronological and fragmentary, and when finally translated it was sanitised of Soviet references to suit Western sensibilities (Dafermos, 2016). Daniels, Cole and Wertsch (2007) suggest the breadth and holistic nature of Vygotsky's ideas, along with the debate they generate, act as a unifying basis for the work of other authors, but there is a danger of Vygotsky becoming 'all things to all people' (Smagorinsky, 2018, p.71). Views of Vygotsky's work in 1960s North America, where it was seen to support emerging ideas of learning and the role of the teacher, have coloured subsequent interpretations of his work (Dafermos, 2016).

Variations in the interpretation of the ZPD, from the concept of teachers providing guidance to move children incrementally along a linear concept of learning, to a more developmental view of longer-term maturation have resulted in nuanced differences in models of mediation. A linear interpretation of the ZPD, seen in Bruner's ideas on 'scaffolding' (Wood, Bruner and Ross, 1976, p.90), may lead to a narrower teaching approach of the cumulative learning of cognitive skills. A more holistic perspective reflecting the interactive approach (Tolchinsky, 2017) and the concept of 'participatory appropriation' (Rogoff, 1990, p.139) may take more account of children's informal learning, although taken to extremes this could lead to a lack of structure. This is not

a clear dichotomy, but a nuanced debate that will inform my discussion of the ways in which teachers support children's writing.

3.4.1 Scaffolding learning within the ZPD

Having played a key role in introducing Vygotsky to the Western world and writing the introduction to the first US translation of *'Thought and Language'*, Bruner used the idea of the ZPD to inform thinking around the concept of 'scaffolding' (Wood, Bruner and Ross, 1976, p.90). The concept was also rooted in the study of Vygotsky's contemporaries, Bernstein and Luria (Shvarts and Bakker, 2019). Wood *et al.* explain scaffolding as a way in which the teacher controls the task for the child, limiting the elements that the child has to tackle to those within their capability. They base their concept on a study of tutors supporting a physical block-building task, which is more straightforward than learning to write. Bruner develops the idea further, suggesting that as the child's mastery increases, adult control of the task is eased to give greater control to the child, in what he terms the 'handover principle' (Bruner, 1983, p.60). 'One sets the game, provides the scaffold to assure that the child's ineptitudes can be rescued or rectified by appropriate intervention, and then removes the scaffold part by part as the reciprocal structure can stand on its own' (Bruner, 1983, p.60). Smagorinsky (2018) argues that the conflation of the ZPD with scaffolding is unhelpful, and how scaffolding has been interpreted in recent practice has led to teachers taking tight control, with children's incremental learning being closely tracked through learning objectives. However, Bruner's suggestion that the child has agency in asking questions and engineering adult assistance does not necessarily suggest a narrow linear model.

A variation on this concept, promoted by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) (Bilton and Duff, 2021), is Pearson and Gallagher's model of 'the gradual release of responsibility' (Pearson and Gallagher, 1983, p.35). This presents a slightly different formula for the handover process, with the teacher initially taking the whole responsibility for the task through modelling. Children then move towards practising the task through 'guided practice' with decreasing adult support (Pearson and Gallagher, 1983, p.35). The presentation of this model seems a little more formulaic, and suggests the teacher fully controls the handover. Such subtly different models may lead to variations in classroom practice.

Another useful concept relating to how children respond to feedback is Tharp and Gallimore's interpretation of the ZPD as a 'recursive loop'. (Tharp and Gallimore, 1991, p.50). They break the ZPD into four stages to explain how children achieve automaticity in learning. Through interaction and collaboration with those around them, children develop and internalise learning (Stage 1), developing self-scaffolding strategies to become autonomous in their learning (Stage 2). Once learning is mastered, it can become automatic and mechanical, or what Vygotsky calls 'fossilised behaviour' (Stage 3) (Vygotsky, 1978, p.63). When learning needs to be applied in a new context the learner will return to previous stages of the ZPD (Stage 4). Automaticity, as will be discussed in Section 4.4, is important for some aspects of writing, such as basic transcriptional skills like handwriting and spelling. If basic skills are not mastered, then the child has no cognitive capacity to focus on compositional elements (MacArthur and Graham, 2017). It is therefore important to consider how written feedback might support children to become automatic in these skills.

3.4.2 The apprenticeship model

A more holistic view of learning, is presented by Rogoff's concept of 'participatory appropriation' (Rogoff, 1995, p.139) and 'apprenticeship' model (Rogoff, 1990, p.90. Rogoff, 1991). These provide an interpretation of learning in which development is socially mediated within a wider context. This has affinities with Tolchinsky's (2017, p.147) 'interactive' model. Rogoff (1990) bases her concept of apprenticeship on Vygotsky's ideas of mediation by a 'more capable other' (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86), as well as the mediational models of Leont'ev, Luria and others (Rogoff, 1990). She uses this to explore how children learn through 'guided participation', working under the guidance of skilled practitioners (Rogoff, 1991, p.164). Within guidance and feedback, the adult adjusts their support in response to the child's increasing ability, to ensure that they are 'comfortably challenged' (Rogoff, 1991, p.69). This adjustment of support suggests that the adult is engaged in constant assessment of what the child is capable and uses this to respond to provide the optimum level of support, i.e. the type of formative assessment discussed by Black and Wiliam (1998b), and reflective of 'responsive teaching' (Fletcher-Wood, 2018, p.9) (Section 1.3). As in Bruner's thinking, the child is proactive, seeking and demanding support. This can be observed when children ask for help, for instance in sticking together junk models for which they have conceived a mental image but lack the physical skills for construction.

Whilst in the scaffolded approach the teacher hands over responsibility, in Rogoff's model there is a greater sense of the child assuming responsibility as they gain competence. Through participation, the child acquires the 'cultural tools' for thinking and problem solving (Rogoff, 1990, p.14). She shows how, through the concept of the ZPD, children participate with guidance in social activity beyond their competence,

allowing cognitive processes to be shared on a social plane before being transformed internally onto the individual plane. Rogoff's concept of 'guided participation' is more inclusive of the development of cognitive skills than Vygotsky's thinking suggests (Rogoff, 1995). However, she is not only concerned with cognitive skills being aided through expert support, she also considers tacit knowledge acquired through participation in the sociocultural environment. She uses the term 'appropriation' rather than 'internalisation' to denote that learning is not the passage of knowledge across a boundary from the external to the internal, but a transformation of the individual. Her view is that individual learning occurs through both social interaction and environmental experience, and she contends that participating in interaction, events and activities leads to on-going development that changes how children engage in subsequent events.

The models considered so far provide nuanced explanations of how learning might be achieved, but do not consider the complexity of learning over a longer time frame, in which part of the learning might be lost. Bruner extends thinking around the ZPD to develop the concept of the 'spiral curriculum' in which learning is revisited and built upon over time at increasing levels of complexity (Bruner, 1960, p.52). He argues that knowledge and concepts needed in adulthood should be introduced in a simple form to younger children, for example introducing the idea of tragedy through Greek myths, and then revisiting and building on the concept as children mature (Bruner, 1960). This takes children repeatedly back through the recursive loop over a longer timeframe to achieve greater independent knowledge and skill as they mature. This is a much longer timeframe than concerns this thesis. Clay's 'literacy processing theory' (Clay, 2001, p.234) and concept of 'self-extending systems' (Clay, 2001, p.80), considered

in the next section, are helpful in developing Rogoff and Bruner's ideas further and in applying the theoretical framework discussed so far to the acquisition of literacy and writing skills. Clay's theory brings 'scaffolding' (Wood, Bruner and Ross, 1976, p.90) and 'participatory appropriation' (Rogoff, 1995, p.139) into a closer relationship with one another, and reflects the integration of cumulative and interactive learning processes proposed by Tolchinsky (2017, pp.145-147).

3.4.3 Self-extending systems

Clay's ideas are expounded largely in regard to reading, but can be equally applied to writing. Her 'literacy processing theory' (Clay, 2001, p.234) was developed through empirical teaching experience and close observation of how children learn. However, she has reconsidered her theory within a Vygotskian framework (Clay and Cazden, 1990). Clay's model of mediation reflects many aspects of scaffolding with the interactional support of the teacher being engineered to maximise the child's psychological development (Clay and Cazden, 1990). Clay and Cazden propose that the Reading Recovery (RR) programme also aims to integrate learning from multiple sources, (for example, semantics, syntax, orthography and text organisation), and coordinate these through crosschecking. They largely consider the scaffolding aspects of RR, but Sylva, Hurry and Peters (1997) suggest that research is needed to consider the sociocultural aspects of the approach. They argue that these have been underplayed, and that the programme is transformative with children becoming 'participants in a culture of literacy' (Sylva *et al.*, 1997, p.383); an idea closer to the notion of 'participatory appropriation' (Rogoff, 1995, p.139).

One aspect of Clay's theory, which indicates learning more akin to this, is her proposal that children develop 'self-extending systems' (Clay, 2001, p.80). She argues that in approaching new situations, readers need to be able to apply skills and knowledge for problem solving in a flexible way. This suggests that learning requires more than simple mechanical imitation or even the ability to complete a task independently. Clay (2001) proposes that the use of previous learning for problem-solving, brings about the construction of new neural networks into complex processing systems. She argues that through the development of these systems, children's capabilities grow independently. She likens this to 'the Matthew effect', a term used by Stanovich (1986, cited in Clay, 2001, p.224) to describe how acquiring some skills enables children to acquire further ones, i.e. the rich get richer. Clay proposes that in helping children learn to read, teachers should help them develop self-monitoring and evaluation skills in which they cross-check different strategies to verify their own accuracy (Clay, 1991, p.329), for instance, checking that phonic decoding makes sense in context. Through developing these skills, the child eventually reaches the point where they can continue to extend learning through their own efforts.

This is more than the handover of skills to perform a single task; this is supporting the child to scaffold their own learning in new situations and develop agency. Clay (1991) suggests that by the time they enter school, children have already acquired self-extending systems for oral language and the cognitive processes needed for understanding the world. She argues that the school system needs to build on these to help the child construct self-extending systems for literacy and acquire the process of 'self-regulation' through which goal-directed tasks are navigated (Karoly, 1993, cited in Clay, 2001, p.189). Self-regulation includes goal setting, self-monitoring, and

metacognition (Graham and Harris, 2018). In developing a self-extending system for writing, the child will need to learn to cross check different aspects of the task, for instance, that their writing expresses their ideas clearly, makes sense grammatically and is accurately transcribed. This approach may help to bridge the gap that Tolchinsky (2017) identifies between cumulatively developed cognitive skills and more environmentally acquired discourse knowledge.

3.4.4 Mediation and the ZPD

In developing an almost identical mediational model for reading, Dixon-Kraus (1996) makes a more explicit link between mediation and the ZPD. She describes her model as dynamic, in which 'the learning evolves through the teaching, and at the same time the teaching evolves through the learning,' (Dixon-Krauss, 1996, p.1). Her assertion is that the teacher learns about the child and their writing through continuous formative assessment, which informs their teaching and the feedback they give. In turn, feedback helps the child to understand what they need to do to develop their skills. This is close to the concepts of AfL and 'responsive teaching' (Fletcher-Wood, 2018, p.9) (Section 1.3). Whilst Dixon-Kraus argues that her model is a general one that provides a framework for teacher's decision-making, the model lacks detail about how teacher's decisions are to be made. This may also be an issue with feedback generally.

Theories of how children learn through interaction with their teacher are relevant to written feedback, but differences in the way learning is understood will influence the type of support that may be given. This will be considered in more detail in Part 5.

Feedback will also be affected by the teacher's understanding of how writing skills develop, and this will be considered next in Part 3.

4 Literature Review Part 3: Cognitive Approaches to Writing Development

4.1 Introduction

Even within a sociocultural framework, it is important to understand how the cognitive skills of writing develop. Part 1 considered how children learn to write through both a 'bottom-up/cumulative' process (Tolchinsky, 2017, p.145), and through a 'top down/interactive' route from their experience of literacy in environmental and social contexts (Tolchinsky, 2017, p.147). Most models of skilled writing and writing development are based on the first approach. This section explores some of the key cognitive models of skilled writing before considering Berninger and Swanson's (1994) model of writing development. Both this and Fayol's (1991) linguistic analysis of writing development will be used to explore how children acquire writing skills in more detail. How children learn about writing through social interaction will also be considered.

4.2 The sociocultural nature of writing

A sociocultural framework has been chosen through which to investigate how scaffolded guidance provided helps children to improve their writing. Writing has a sociocultural dimension, being both a social act of communication and an artefact that can be shared (Hayes, 1996). Even between readers and writers who never meet there is a social relationship in which both 'play reciprocal and respective roles in the mutual enterprise of written discourse,' with the reader interpreting the writer's words through the lens of their own experience (Nystrand and Himley, 1984, p.73). As seen

in Part 1, unlike spoken language, which is learned easily by children, mostly through conversation, written language requires specific instruction (Wyse, 2017). Whereas speech is transient and largely informal, writing has to adhere to formalised structures and language conventions. Developing these skills requires adult guidance through instruction and mediation. Children develop the cognitive processes required for writing through social interaction with adults and the scaffolding they provide, which occurs mostly through schooling.

Learning to write is often studied from a psychological-neuroscientific or cognitive angle, where research is concerned with the acquisition of cognitive skills and processes, such as in the models of Hayes and Flower (1980), Hayes (1996) and Berninger and Swanson's model of writing development (1994). However, there is also a strong tradition of research, exemplified by Englert (1992), Prior (2006) and Bazerman (2017), exploring social, cultural and historical influences on the acquisition of writing. Sociocultural theory contends that writing is situated and mediated by the writer's environment. Wyse (2017) argues for a pragmatic approach encompassing both cognitive and sociocultural perspectives. Before considering writing development in further detail, the next section will explore models of skilled writing, as these inform Berninger and Swanson's thinking about how writing skills are acquired.

4.3 Models of skilled writing

Most models of writing are based on research with skilled adult writers (McArthur and Graham, 2017). Hayes and Flower's (1980) highly influential model, developed to inform research, is clarified and adapted further by Hayes (1996). Berninger and Swanson's (1994) adaptation of the Hayes-Flower model explores the development

of writing skills in children (Berninger and Swanson, 1994) and this will be discussed in Section 4.4.

Hayes and Flower employ a think-aloud protocol with higher education students to explore the writing processes of skilled writers and use this to model the organisation of the writing process (Figure 4-1).

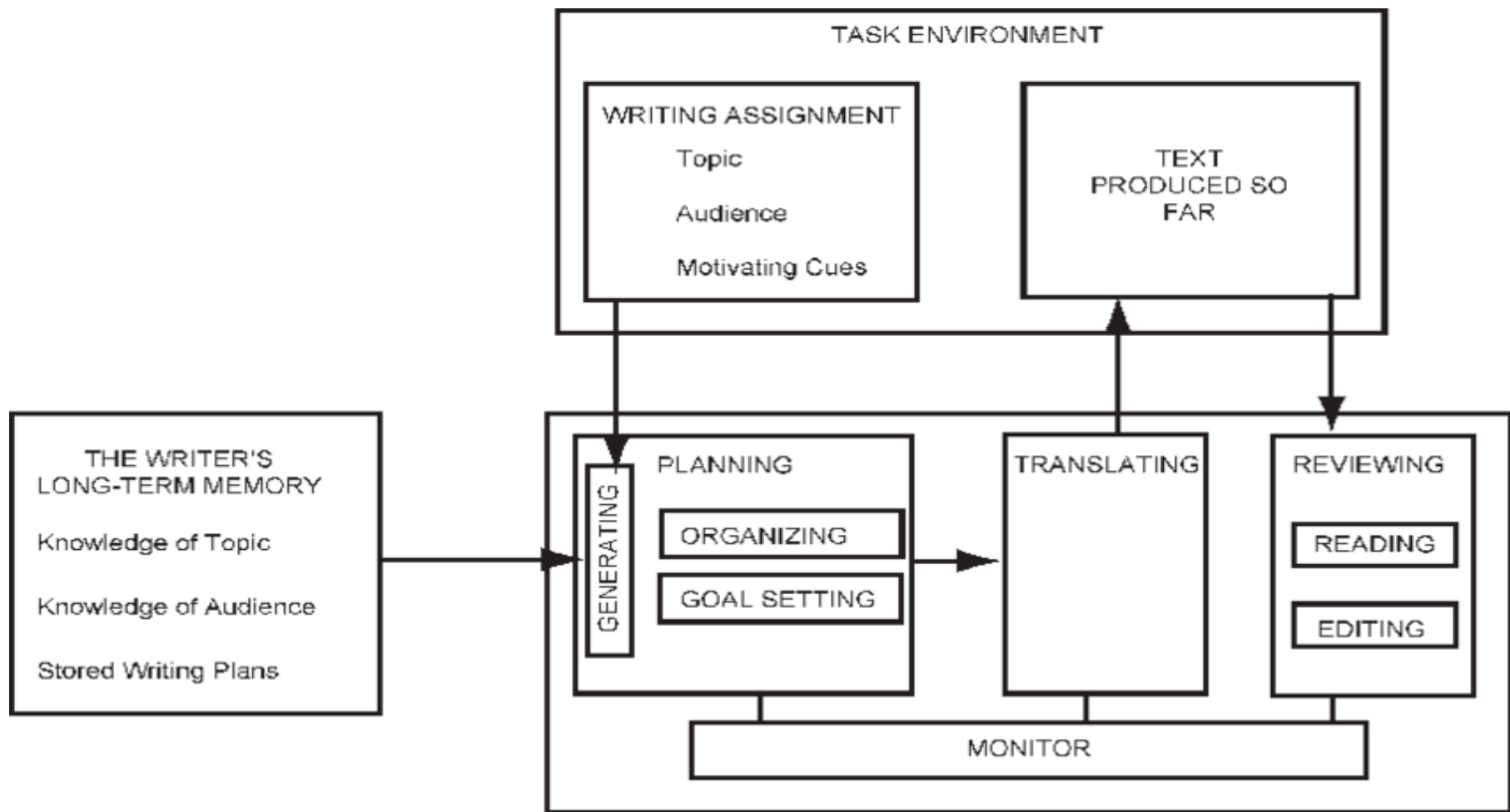


Figure 4-1: The structure of writing model (Hayes and Flower, 1980, p.11)

The model shows how long-term memory of topic knowledge, audience and the writer's mentally stored writing plans inform the act of writing. A major influence is the writing environment, which includes everything 'outside the writer's skin' (Flower and Hayes, 1981, p.369), for example, the set assignment, topic, audience, and motivating clues. As text is produced, it too becomes part of the external environment, and helps to determine what will be written next. 'Text produced so far' (Hayes and Flower, 1980, p.11) presumably also includes any written plans the writer has produced. The act of writing itself is broken into three elements:

- Planning – generating and organising ideas and setting goals;
- Translating – putting plans into text;
- Reviewing – evaluating and revising what is already written.

Hayes and Flower are at pains to point out that writing does not develop in stages, but that their model is a dynamic one, in which the writer constantly switches between processes as they write. The writer must manage the content of what they wish to say, how this is conveyed to their audience, and other writing goals, such as the nature of written discourse and genre employed. There is an on-going recursive process of self-monitoring throughout the writing task. One of the key differences between skilled and less skilled writers is their ability to switch between lower order word/sentence levels and higher order text levels, which enables them to organise their work into a meaningful structure (Flower and Hayes, 1981). This ability to monitor their own progress, to step away from the act of writing to view and evaluate the piece as a whole, and to manage the executive functions of writing, distinguish the skilled writer from the less skilled. Experienced writers are able to conceive of an initial, abstracted plan for the structure of their work, and are confident to write with the intention of

revising their work later, and this comparison of skilled and less skilled adult writers has implications for considering children's writing. As MacArthur and Graham (2017) suggest, the difficulty with the think-aloud protocol is that writers are unlikely to speak about processes in which they are fluent and automatic.

Hayes (1996) streamlines the model to indicate more clearly how the three domains influencing writing (task environment, long-term memory and cognitive writing processes), interrelate. Instead of representing the monitoring process in parallel with the act of writing, he now conceives it as an integral part, representing it as surrounding other processes. His adjustments more clearly define the individual's internal processes from the task environment. As a psychologist, Hayes is interested in the cognitive elements, but acknowledges the influence that the writer's social context and culture bring to bear on their writing. Within the cognitive elements, he now places working memory centrally, discussing how this draws together task management and information from the long-term memory.

An additional consideration in this model is motivation and affect (how the individual feels about writing). If students enjoy the writing task and are motivated and confident to write, they are more likely to write well (Hayes, 1996; Graham *et al.*, 2007). Conversely, being anxious about writing will hamper their ability. Hayes argues that motivation for specific writing assignments is largely driven by the writer's general attitudes and engagement with writing. Those who hold positive attitudes to writing and their own ability are likely to write better and enjoy the task more.

4.4 Models of writing development

As this thesis concerns children of 8-9 years old, who for the most part have mastered basic orthographic encoding and simple sentence writing, models of writing development will be discussed in the context of children of this age.

The model of writing developed by Bereiter and Scardamalia is a useful starting point for thinking about the difference between children's writing and that of skilled writers. They demonstrate how young children draw on long-term memory to write about what they know, in what they term a 'knowledge telling' mode of writing developed from spoken language (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987, p.5). In this mode children simply write what comes to mind, and teachers often comment that children write in the same way that they speak. The quality of knowledge telling writing improves with greater knowledge of discourse (i.e. how writing works), as well as increased knowledge of subject content. In more experienced writers Bereiter and Scardamalia observe what they call the 'knowledge transformation' mode, which encompasses the ability to re-order and re-organise material, and thus transform knowledge in the process (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987, p.6). They suggest that these two modes are not necessarily obvious in resulting texts, but that there are differences in the process by which text is generated. They cite differences in planning and editing strategies. For instance, novice writers' planning notes often closely mirror the final piece and editing is minimal, whereas for the experienced writer the process of writing is laborious, with text continually restructured and rewritten.

As MacArthur and Graham (2017) suggest, there is little explanation of how students move from one mode to another, and Hayes (2012) argues that the 'knowledge telling'

mode is too broad. He shows how, even within this mode, the ability to elaborate topics and introduce sub-topics increases as children progress. Bereiter and Scardamalia make no claims as to the implications of their model for teaching but suggest that instruction should move children towards 'knowledge transformation'. They suggest that teaching often fails to set sufficient goals for developing cognition. 8-9 year-olds are likely to be relatively early in their writing journey, and still acquiring basic skills. Children are unlikely to write in the knowledge transformation mode until secondary school. They will therefore largely be developing their writing within the narrative mode (Alamargot and Fayol, 2009). MacArthur and Graham (2017) suggest that children's writing processes are simpler than adult ones, as they are working at the more basic level of generating ideas and transcribing them onto paper. This may be the case, but it perhaps underplays the complexity of learning to write.

There is great diversity in the rates at which individual children develop the different elements of writing, dependent on cognitive, linguistic and physical development, personal characteristics and background (Clay, 1993; Berninger and Swanson, 1994). Children with dyslexic difficulties will struggle with encoding, transcription and spelling; whilst those with language difficulties are more likely to find composition challenging (Connolly *et al.*, 2012). All young children will have limited cognitive capacity for managing the complex processes of the writing task (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987; Graham and Harris, 2018) and the recursive switching between processes observed by Haynes and Flower (1980). Even at undergraduate level, some students still focus mainly on sentence level issues (Haynes, 1996). There will be wide variation in the skills of primary children, but 6-9 year-olds are unlikely to be able to pre-plan or revise their writing with any great sophistication (Berninger and Swanson, 1994).

Models of writing development are in danger of over-simplifying the process and ignoring individual differences, but the most comprehensive is that of Berninger and Swanson (1994), based on the original Hayes and Flower model. They use a cross-sectional assessment study of 900 6-15 year-olds in the US to identify the constraints to writing at different stages of development. Initially in primary grades (6-9 years old) children's ability in orthographic coding, orthographic integration (i.e. knowing, retrieving and using the alphabetic code) and fine motor skills prove the greatest influence on writing ability. As transcription skills become automated, the linguistic abilities of producing words, sentences and basic text structures constrain writing skills in the intermediate grades (9-12 years old). As these develop, writing ability becomes further determined by the cognitive abilities of the individual to plan, work within genres and revise their work (12-15 years old). Like Graham and Harris (2018), Berninger and Swanson find that there is a closer correlation between compositional fluency and handwriting than between compositional fluency and spelling at all levels. Working memory capacity is also important at all levels and individual differences in children's abilities will determine their progress through the model.

Table 4-1 summarises the constraints on writing of children within the primary and intermediate grades identified by Berninger and Swanson (1994), as these are of particular relevance to this study.

Primary (6-9 years old)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Orthographic coding, finger function and orthographic motor integration correlate with handwriting, compositional fluency and quality; ● Visual motor integration, orthographic motor integration and knowledge of letter-sound correspondence correlate to spelling accuracy; ● Verbal IQ influences the quality of composition but not fluency.
Intermediate (9-12 years old)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Abilities in sentence and text skills correlate with compositional quality; ● Sentence skills also correlated to the quality and fluency of composition; ● Verbal IQ correlates to quality but not fluency of composition; ● None of the language skills correlate with handwriting; ● Spelling plays a role in transcribing; ● Language skills are involved in text generation.

Table 4-1: Summary of constraints at different grade levels found by Berninger and Swanson (1994)

Berninger and Swanson's main critique of the Hayes-Flower model is that *translation* is not more fully defined, and that this overlooks the complexity of generating ideas, putting them into sentences and transcribing them on to paper by suggesting that it is a single process. This may be seen as a simpler process by Flower and Hayes (1981) due to skilled writers being proficient in this aspect of writing and therefore not consciously articulating it in the think-aloud protocol. Berninger and Swanson (1994) propose that translation (rendering ideas into text) is a combination of text generation (transforming ideas into language) and transcription (translating sentences into written symbols), arguing that these develop before the capability to plan and revise (Berninger and Swanson, 1994). Although Berninger, Cartwright and Yates (1994) find that idea generation comes before writing, with children able to verbalise and draw their ideas, Berninger and Swanson suggest that transcription skills need to start developing before text generation emerges. This may be surprising considering that children can often dictate ideas better than write them (Torrance and Galbraith, 2006),

and young children are often able to read back their *emergent writing* (Glossary of Terms, p.10). However, there is evidence that transcription skills need to be relatively automatic for children to be able to concentrate on text generation and other compositional elements (Graham and Harris, 2005). Handwriting and basic alphabetic encoding require so much cognitive demand that children have little attentional capacity for composition (MacArthur and Graham, 2017).

Table 4-2 summarises how skills develop across the three age groups in Berninger and Swanson's study (Berninger and Swanson, 1994).

Age group	Planning	Translation		Revision	Metacognition
		Transcription	Text Generation		
6-9 years	Planning occurs as children write	Basic transcription a major focus	Text generation at word, sentence and multi-clause level	Some revision of transcription of words during writing, occasional revision of a sentence	Metacognitive skills about writing generalised
9-12 years	Children begin to pre-plan, but advanced planning does not necessarily inform translation	Transcription automatised or becoming automatised	Text generation at word, sentence and paragraph levels Children are beginning to use discourse structures and genre features	Post-translation revision shows improvement at paragraph level, but less so at word and sentence level	Metacognitive skills about writing generalised, but metacognition about writing does not relate directly to the quality of writing level
12-15 years	Pre-planning informs translation	Transcription automatised	Children become increasingly aware of audience	Post-translation revision shows improvement at word, sentence and paragraph level	Metacognitive skills begin to relate to the quality of writing, but more so around translation and revision than around planning

Table 4-2: Summary of Berninger and Swanson's model of writing development across three age groups

The model divides translation into transcription and text generation, with the latter divided further into word, sentence and paragraph levels. This is a useful breakdown for considering how children's skills develop. Research over the last 30 years has demonstrated that children's translation skills evolve from word level, through increasingly complex sentences, to a more structural level as they become proficient

(Berninger and Swanson, 1994; Fayol, 2017; Connelly and Dockrell, 2016). It has also been shown that as novice writers, 6-9 year-olds are unable to effectively employ advanced planning strategies, nor revise other than at a local proofreading level (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987; Berninger and Swanson, 1994; Connelly and Dockrell, 2016) .

Berninger and Swanson suggest that during the intermediate grades, children's transcription skills become automated and text generation more fluent. They begin to generate abstract plans and engage in post-translation revision. However, advanced planning does not always inform translation, with children often resorting to a 'retrieve and write' model (Berninger and Swanson, 1994, p.70). De La Paz and McCutchen, (2016) suggest that at this stage children's planning is often pictorial. Both Berninger, Fuller and Whitaker (1996) and MacArthur and Graham (2017) find that the ability to plan emerges before that to revise, with children able to edit at word level before they are able to revise at a more structural level. In Junior High (12-15 years), skills become more automated, and children are beginning to move towards the Haynes and Flower's model for proficient writers, with pre-planning and post-translation revision now in place. Working memory becomes central to the process, as children have to manage complex processes simultaneously. The children in the case study were working between the primary and intermediate stages of Berninger and Swanson model, but as would be expected within a typical class, they demonstrated a diverse range of skills. Berninger and Swanson's model is reflected in more recent research, showing that children can meet the cognitive demands of text organisation and composition, only when they reach an adequate level of automaticity in transcription (MacArthur and Graham, 2017). Until that point, transcription skills will be children's

focus (Connolly and Dockrell, 2017), and less skilled writers will continue to make less use of planning support (Dockrell, Marshall and Wyse, 2015).

As children mature their knowledge, working memory and executive function increase, and they gain fluency in transcriptional skills, enabling them to focus on composition (Graham and Harris, 2018). Greater awareness of planning strategies enables them to structure their work and write with greater sophistication (MacArthur and Graham, 2017). De La Paz and McCutchen (2016) claim that even young children are able to plan, but anecdotally teachers observe that primary-age children struggle to produce summary plans in advance of writing and, as Fayol (1991) finds, often simply write the piece, making little change in their finished version. Fayol (2017) notes that the organisation of 6-8 year-olds' written text often reflects that of younger children's oral narratives, suggesting that grappling with transcription skills causes them to regress in this aspect. Rather than planning conceptually or for a specific audience, children tend to plan content, with 10 year-olds typically producing what is essentially a first draft (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987).

Detailed investigations at a linguistic level in both English and French shed further light on the developmental patterns in children's sentence and text construction. Young children write in disconnected, 'pre-narrative or pre-ordered' sentences (Graves, 1983, p.154), which Fayol (1991, p.234) likens to a series of individual 'announcements'. As children's writing progresses, sentences become linked around one event, and later develop into episodic writing, but it is only as children become more proficient that their writing develops a clear superstructure (Alamagot and Fayol, 2009).

Although studying how writing develops for children in the French system, Fayol's work has some interesting findings that may be relevant to establishing developmental stages of compositional skills and text generation not considered in Anglophone studies. Literacy is taught very differently in France, so Fayol's work cannot be directly applied to English settings, but it raises interesting points for consideration. Fayol (1991) analyses the narrative writing of 265 6 to 10 year-olds, and proposes five types of writing generally seen in children of different ages:

Type 1 is seen in 6/7 year-olds. Children write in a succession of unlinked sentences about their day-to-day experiences, which reflect their spoken language. In discussion they can explain the chronology and causal links, but although children at this age use connectives in their speech, they do not include them in their writing.

Type 2 is an extension of *Type 1* in which sentences are linked semantically, often with simple connectives, which begin to provide a chronology.

Type 3 emerges at about 8 years, with sentences becoming chronological and causal. At this stage children do not yet focus on a single event, and the superstructure of the text tends to be obscured by ordinary events. They also begin to use connectives to introduce more unexpected events, such as 'suddenly'.

Type 4 stories begin to centre on more extraordinary or interesting events. They become episodic with connectives used more regularly. A greater variety of punctuation is used, but this tends to disappear when stories become more complicated. Often children show greater understanding of punctuation than that which is used, so this may be an issue of implementation rather than knowledge.

Type 5 stories are told in the present tense, but with the author detached from the action. In contrast, Types 1-4 are written in past tense.

Types 1-4 reflect elements of writing progress observed in English schools, and Graves (1983) finds a similar pattern of development. Alamargot and Fayol (2009) suggest that Bereiter and Scardamalia's 'knowledge transformation' mode does not begin to emerge until the age of 14. The description of *Type 5* writing also seems at variance to how children write in English, but this later stage is less relevant to research with primary children.

Fayol's stages track how children develop episodic super-structures, with speech patterns giving way to the linguistic markers of written text. He hypothesises that children develop narrative style through three avenues. Firstly, they learn the conventions of linking events within a narrative; secondly, young children, regularly asked to elaborate on their simple texts, will begin to pre-empt questions and include more detail; and finally, through listening to and reading stories, (as well as discussing them with adults and peers), children learn to adopt the linguistic features of narrative style.

An important consideration of Berninger and Swanson's model is the development of metacognitive skills about writing. They find that 30% of the variance for 12-15 year-olds was explained by their knowledge about writing and awareness of audience (Berninger and Swanson, 1994). However, the metacognitive skills of 9-12 year-olds was not related to the quality of their writing. Graham and Harris's (2018) meta-analysis provides a quantitative indication that teaching metacognitive strategies are particularly helpful in supporting children's composition, for example Self-Regulated

Strategy Development (SRSD). SRSD teaches self-regulation and metacognition; an approach that may help children to develop their self-scaffolding and 'self-extending systems' (Clay, 2001, p.80). Strategies that help individuals manage the writing process and their own writing behaviours are 'goal setting, self-monitoring, self-instruction and self-reinforcement' (Graham and Harris, 2018, p.23). Teaching these strategies alongside the use of feedback to boost motivation is particularly positive for children struggling with literacy.

Part 3 has considered models of skilled writing and of writing development. Theories of writing development inform the analysis and interpretation of data about how children use feedback. However, children's learning to write is driven not only by theory, but also by the guidance teachers are given. Part 4 examines the division between 'transcription' (spelling and handwriting) and 'composition' (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech and writing) in the *National Curriculum* (NC) (DfE, 2014, p.16), and considers how this may shape how teachers address different writing elements and the feedback they provide.

5 Literature Part 4: The Curriculum Context - Composition and Transcription

5.1 Introduction

The *National Curriculum* (NC) (DfE, 2014) divides writing into composition and transcription. This section will explore the underlying assumptions behind this, and consider how alternative interpretations of the division may influence the way children's writing is supported. Guidance from the Educational Endowment Foundation (EEF) is also considered, as, although the EEF is an independent body set up by the Sutton Trust, it receives significant funding from the Department for Education (DfE) and its guidance is widely used in schools. This guidance presents a slightly different interpretation of the division. Theories about the teaching of punctuation and sentence constructions relevant to this thesis are discussed, as are ideas about the balance between the teaching of technical skills and composition.

5.2 The division of composition and transcription in the *National Curriculum*

There is no indication as to the research evidence that may have informed the NC (DfE, 2014) for writing, but it echoes Berninger and Swanson's model (1994) in stating that children should be taught to plan, evaluate, and revise their writing. It also recognises the need for children to become fluent in transcriptional skills in order to transcribe their ideas. Although broadly reflecting the models of writing development, both the NC and advice from the Education Endowment Foundation (Higgins *et al.*, 2017; Bilton and Duff, 2021), divide writing into composition and transcription. The

NC defines transcription as handwriting and spelling, and composition as the articulation and structuring of ideas in both speech and writing (NC, 2014). However, there are different interpretations of the parameters of each strand, which suggests that this division is not clear-cut, and the way in which skills are interpreted could have a bearing on how they are taught.

Referenced in the EEF guidance (Bilton and Duff, 2021), the simple view of writing (Berninger *et al.*, 2002; Berninger and Amtmann, 2003) was developed to provide a framework for assessment and teaching. A triangle represents long, short and working memory, with transcription (also defined by Berninger and Amtmann as handwriting and spelling) and executive function shown at the lower angles of the triangle, forming the basis for text generation at word, sentence and discourse level, placed at the apex. The development of this model into what has become termed the 'not-so-simple view of writing' (Berninger and Winn, 2006, p.97), recognises the complexity of interactions between cognitive processes. Executive function is the combination of the cognitive processes by which the task is managed (for example, planning, translation, reviewing and revising), and the self-regulation of writing behaviour. This becomes increasingly important as children mature and the writing task becomes more complex (Berninger and Amtmann, 2003). Berninger and Amtmann equate these skills with the monitor role, seen in Berninger and Swanson's model (1994), which they suggest is dependent on adult guidance to move the child from 'other regulation to self-regulation' (p.350). This may be a better model for teachers than the simple division of strands in the NC.

Although considering separate skills within the compositional and transcriptional strands may help teachers to a better understanding of children's individual differences and support the development of both types of skill, the division is far from clear. Smith

(1982, cited in Young and Ferguson, 2021, p.178) makes the analogy of the writer and the secretary, identifying the writer's role as one of generating ideas and putting them into words. The role involves the consideration of vocabulary, text cohesion and purpose, as well as making decisions about grammar, punctuation and linguistics. The secretarial role involves handwriting, spelling, capitalisation and adhering to punctuation conventions. Fayol (2009) uses the Hayes and Flower model (1980) to suggest that transcription comprises handwriting, spelling, punctuation, grammar, and text cohesion. In contrast, Smith includes grammar within composition, putting aspects of punctuation in both strands.

Guidance for teachers presents alternative interpretations of where grammar and punctuation fall within the two strands. The NC (DfE, 2014) includes grammar as part of composition, but includes punctuation separately, whereas the EEF (2017) includes sentence construction alongside transcription, suggesting that grammar and punctuation are basic skills in which children should become automatic in a similar way to spelling and handwriting.

How the nature of skills is interpreted may affect the way in which they are taught. For example, sentence construction may be taught differently depending on whether it is viewed as a transcriptional or linguistic skill. Punctuation is specific to writing, so might be seen as a purely transcriptional skill, but as Smith observes, decisions about it also relate to linguistic processes and, as Truss (2009) demonstrates humorously in *Eats shoots and leaves*, it is intrinsic to meaning. Punctuation, sentence construction and composition are considered below, as these writing elements are of particular relevance to the case study.

5.3 Punctuation

Generally, punctuation is under-considered in research on writing development, and hence there is poor understanding about how children learn to punctuate their work or how they can be taught to do so (Hall, 2009; Fayol, 2017). Punctuation is specific to writing, so children have no experience from spoken language to help them and it can therefore appear arbitrary to them (Hall, 2009). Added to this, instruction on punctuation is often presented as 'a set of rules imposed upon writers rather than a set of tools with which to make meaning clear' (Hall, 2009, p.272). Initially children are concentrating on getting words onto paper and see punctuation as less important, using what Hall terms 'graphic punctuation' to break up text visually rather than to designate units of meaning (Hall, 2009, p.274). Eventually they begin to use basic punctuation, such as full stops, capital letters, question, and exclamation marks, to segment blocks of meaning, before moving on to using commas (Fayol, 2017).

There is little understanding of how children gain knowledge of more complex punctuation, but it appears to develop as they acquire the linguistic patterns of written language through reading (Alamargot and Fayol, 2009). Although children are taught the rules of punctuation, they often struggle to implement them, and their approach is often experimental (Hall, 2009) and more likely to rely on graphic, semantic, or prosodic cues than adhere to grammatical principles (Wassouf, 2007). Hall (2009) finds that children's progress in punctuation does not reflect the linear way in which teaching materials are often designed, and beyond teaching the rules of punctuation, the main approach of teachers for encouraging punctuation usage appears to be repeated requests and admonishments. Such requests are relevant to this thesis, and

the following debate about grammatical principles versus prosody may determine how children respond to them.

Wassouf argues that the heavy reliance on prosody (the rhythm and intonation of language), with children trying to identify where breaths and pauses should be made, often leads to errors. Nevertheless, this approach is seen in teaching, with teachers demonstrating running out of breath when reading aloud. Chafe insists that most writing is punctuated in this way, and that in silent reading an 'auditory imagery intonation' is used to make sense of text (Chafe, 1988, p.24). He contends that the ability to do this is a sign of good writing. In contrast, Wassouf's claims that the link between prosody and punctuation has been broken, as modern texts are not necessarily intended to be read aloud, and Hall claims that it is now recognised that punctuation is governed by grammatical principles. Based on Wassouf's doctoral research of 96 children across four schools, both she and Hall (2009) contend that this is how children should be taught to punctuate, despite this being at odds with common practice. However, this is also at variance with the practice of established authors, who often use punctuation for emphasis and effect (Dawkins, 1995). Dawkins proposes that children should be taught that punctuation can be used flexibly and does not always follow grammatical rules. This variance in approaches may explain the confusion about punctuation that often persists into adulthood, and clearly there needs to be more research in this area.

If punctuation is taught as a set of rules based on grammatical principles, then it could well be considered a transcriptional skill: something that children learn to do with certainty and fluency. If as Dawkins suggests, children are taught to think about the

meaning and nuance of what they want to write, and to use punctuation creatively to enhance this, then it becomes much more embedded in the compositional process.

An added consideration is that when their writing becomes more complex or their stories more exciting, children forget to include punctuation (Fayol, 1991). This is often due to the complexity and cognitive load of the writing task rather than lack of knowledge, as children can often add the correct punctuation when reminded (Alamargot and Fayol, 2009). Children are therefore often encouraged to add punctuation once their writing is nearly complete. This is relevant to written feedback, as it is often at this stage that teacher's point out or correct errors, and children may or may not correct punctuation at the editing stage.

5.4 Sentence construction

In order to put their ideas into words, children need to achieve a degree of fluency in formulating sentences, an ability defined by Andrews *et al.* as 'syntactical maturity'. Large-scale reviews and meta-analyses conducted by Graham and Harris (2005, 2018) and Andrews *et al.* (2006) indicate that discrete grammar teaching, in which grammar is taught in isolation, has a negligible effect on the quality or accuracy of children's written language. There is evidence that helping children to apply their grammar and sentence skills within their writing is more effective (Myhill *et al.*, 2013). This may have particular relevance to the consideration of feedback.

In a study of 32 pair-matched classes across different English schools (Myhill *et al.*, 2013), grammatical devices were taught alongside writing in specific genres to half the classes in the study. Children in the intervention group achieved improved writing

outcomes in comparison to those who were taught the same units without the additional grammar content. The study demonstrates that where 12-13 year-olds are encouraged to experiment with grammatical construction and apply it directly to their writing, it enables them to develop a deeper understanding of language choices. It then becomes 'not a grammar of content, but a grammar of process' (Myhill *et al.*, 2013, p.109). This is about understanding how and why grammar is used, so that children begin to make conscious choices about the structure of the language they are using. Jones, Myhill and Bailey (2013) find that less skilled writers make more progress, although this may be due to a lack of challenge for writers that are more skilled. McCormack-Colbert, Ware and Jones (2018), who use this approach with 13-14 year-olds with persistent difficulties in writing, also observe this. Although students in these studies are of secondary school age, there may be some relevance for younger children working at a less developed level of skill. Not only do these studies indicate that considering grammatical issues during their own writing may be helpful, they also highlight the effects of grammar on linguistic expression.

The link between sentence construction and expression of ideas is made by the same team in the *Arvon* Project (Myhill and Cremin, 2019), which saw teachers and writers working together in writing workshops and then with groups of children. Although teachers were knowledgeable of curriculum goals, writers showed a more precise understanding of writing, and the teachers felt they benefited from these insights. This led to changes in their practice, with children given time to experiment. As one teacher put it, 'so different to what we teach most of the time, which almost doesn't allow for any sort of creative original response' (Myhill and Cremin, 2019, p.63). Children in the study also preferred the less rigid approach. 'I just like being free when I write ... I like

being in my head when I'm writing. I like writing what I'm thinking, whatever I want' (Cremin *et al.*, 2020, p.54). This greater experimentation with sentence structure helps children develop their expressive language (Myhill and Cremin 2019).

An approach observed in the thesis study is the use of feedback encouraging children to include particular sentence types, such as expanded noun phrases. Wyse (2017) questions the teaching of terminology for sentence grammar to primary-age children, highlighting the lack of research into the usefulness of this approach. Jones *et al.* (2013) find the use of metalinguistic terminology a barrier to learning for some pupils, and suggest the use of examples may be more helpful. More research is needed, but Wyse suggests that sentence grammar may be best taught at the teacher/child interaction level during the writing process and feedback.

Cremin (2017) argues that sentence construction is an integral part of the composition process and that children need to learn how to use language expressively to convey their ideas. She recommends that children are given extended time to experiment with ideas and language, with time to reflect and evaluate through dialogue with their teacher and peers. The EEF's inclusion of sentence construction within the transcription strand (Bilton and Duff, 2021) could lead to a lack of connection with compositional processes. Whereas a more holistic, experimental approach to composition and the development of language (Myhill and Cremin, 2019) would perhaps be closer to an 'apprenticeship' model of learning (Rogoff, 1990, p.90).

5.5 Compositional processes

The division of composition and transcription in the NC (DfE, 2014) may also be problematic if children are presented with a view that writing is a series of skills to be mastered, rather than a complex, integrated process. Perhaps even more concerning is that studies from the 1990s and 2017 (Englert, 1992; Cremin, 2017) have indicated that approaching writing as a toolkit of isolated skills, divorced from the writing context, could fail to foster engagement. Almargot and Fayol (2009) suggest that there is an assumption that composition happens naturally and progresses in conjunction with spoken language skills. To some extent this may be the case as Berninger and Swanson (1994) find a correlation between language development, compositional fluency and writing quality. However, Almargot and Fayol argue that this view fails to fully consider the development of the composition process. Myhill (2013) proposes that more attention needs to be paid to the composition process, and both Cremin (2017) and Young and Fergusson (2021) argue for a better balance between composition and transcription skills, maintaining that children are motivated by a creative approach.

Despite the wealth of evidence that transcriptional ability has a direct impact on compositional fluency and quality (Graham and Harris, 2018), some studies, for example De La Paz and Graham (1995) and Hayes and Berninger (2010), suggest that children produce more ideas when they dictate than when they write. This provides some evidence that compositional skills develop with children's spoken language. However, Tolchinsky (2017) purports that there is a gap between children's transcriptional skills and their mastery of macro-structural elements, arguing that

higher order text level choices must eventually drive lower order decision-making, such as word choice and sentence structure.

Children's ability to generate ideas also depends on their knowledge of the topic about which they are writing (Hayes and Berninger, 2014). However, fantasy accounts for a large proportion of their ideas on some topics, for example robots, making these less dependent on personal knowledge. Ideation will also be influenced by the ability to retrieve information from long-term memory and children's motivation for the subject. This may be problematic when teachers are setting the topics for assignments in areas that are outside children's experience.

Grainger *et al.* (2003) find that children prefer to develop their own ideas rather than being told what to do, and Cremin (2017) agrees that children need choice and freedom to develop their own agency. Dyson shows that the purpose of young children's writing does not always align with that of the teacher, and there is a lack of mutual understanding or 'intersubjectivity' (Dyson, 1990, p.203). This may result in children seeing little purpose in writing about topics set by their teacher. Children will often use ideas from their reading, popular culture and media, as illustrated by Dyson (1997). Dyson (1997) and Cremin (2017) both argue that this is an important aspect of children's writing development. Over time children move away from such appropriation towards greater confidence in generating their own ideas, as demonstrated through *The Ministry of Story* (MoS) project (Wyse, 2017). Over three years of free writing in an out of school context, 8-11 year-olds moved towards increased engagement and originality.

Recently there has been a renewed interest in the *Process Approach* developed through empirical research by Graves (1983) and promoted in EEF guidance (Higgins *et al.*, 2017; Bilton and Duff, 2021). This approach explicitly teaches the stages of writing: planning, drafting, reviewing, revising, and editing, within a supportive writing environment that encourages children to take risks. Graham and Harris (2018) find the *Process Approach* particularly helpful for 5-10 year-olds. Writing workshops are used to help children develop writing over time, and are seen by Wyse (2017) as a helpful way of developing composition and creativity. Children choose their own topics for writing and are supported through discussion with the teacher. Teaching of specific skills is done largely through *pupil conferencing* (Glossary of Terms, p.10), which addresses issues within the child's writing. Children work on each piece over several sessions until they and the teacher agree that it is finished, at which point it is published for sharing with classmates. Myhill (2013) finds this approach helpful, but suggests that greater discussion is needed about *how* children write. She proposes that greater discussion about the composition process would help to develop children's metacognitive ability to reflect on and adapt their writing processes. Combining the *Process Approach* with self-efficacy and metacognition may address this, as seen in the *Writing for Pleasure* project (WfP) (Young, 2019). However, many teachers taking the WfP approach self-identify as 'teacher-writers', and greater knowledge of writing alone may help these teachers support children more successfully. Moreover, Young (2019) does not interrogate what is helpful from children's point of view but investigates the WfP approach in terms of what teachers do.

An approach widely used in UK schools to break down the stages of writing, and which is relevant to the thesis study, is *Talk for Writing* (T4W) (DCSF, 2008). The programme

is built on the concept that talk is a precursor to writing, but this is integrated into a strategic process based on the development of writing skills through the sequence of 'imitation, innovation, invention' (3Is) (DCSF, 2008, p.7). Children are taught a story, which they rehearse orally and write in their own words (imitation). Planning strategies, such as actions, 'story maps' (DCSF, 2008, p.8), and 'boxing up' (DCSF, 2011, p.1) are used to help children create their own versions with modifications at word and content level (innovation). Finally, children use the structure of the prescribed story to develop their own original text (invention). Dockrell, Marshall and Wyse (2015) find that oral language and vocabulary work supports early writing, but find less evidence of this after the age of 7, when reading becomes a greater influence on writing, and children begin to use text and grammatical structures not found in spoken language. Neither do they find evidence that repeated daily recitation, actions or visual tools support language acquisition, although exposure to vocabulary is beneficial. The one aspect of T4W for which Dockrell *et al.* find evidence of positive impact is formative assessment. They suggest that T4W employs more protracted 'scaffolding' than that conceived by Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976, p.90), which may result in children remaining dependent on support for longer than necessary. They suggest that all 9-11 year-olds reach the 'invention' stage, where the expectation is that they write independently, yet anecdotal feedback from consultants working in schools suggests that children often struggle to reach this stage. Although teachers responding to the evaluation reported children's increased confidence, the objective writing data is less positive, showing no difference between the T4W and comparison schools in the first 6 months. After a year, children in the T4W schools wrote more words and writing was of a marginally higher quality, but the comparison schools showed greater gains in other areas and the differences were small. Schools in the

evaluation project used T4W in its prescribed form, but it should be noted that schools often adapt the approach or use only selected elements.

Dockrell *et al.*'s (2015) evaluation of T4W raises the question as to the helpfulness of such highly-scaffolded approaches when pre-planning and revision skills are only just emerging in 9-12 year-olds (Berninger and Swanson, 1994). The NC and EEF guidance recommend that children are explicitly taught to both pre-plan and revise their work, at least verbally, from the age of 6. Further research is needed to investigate whether this is helpful.

5.6 The influence of the classroom writing environment

A significant aspect of the writing context for children will be the classroom environment and how writing is taught in their particular setting. This will be partly determined by the teacher's knowledge of writing and influenced by National and school policy, but how these are interpreted and implemented will be very much dependent on the individual teacher. As already considered, the way in which compositional and transcriptional elements are interpreted will influence the way in which these are taught (Section 5.2). How writing is approached in individual schools and by individual teachers is likely to have a significant impact on how children feel and how motivated they are to write. Whilst skilled writers set their own writing goals, which may be implicit and revised during the writing process (Flower and Hayes, 1981), the teacher generally sets children's goals, including topic, genre and targets for specific skills, such as using speech marks.

Like Flower and Hayes (1981), Berninger and Swanson (1994) include the influence of social context, affect and motivation in their model. Although social context may include other people, only Hayes (1996, p.4) includes 'collaborators' as part of his model, and this is an important consideration in thinking about children's relationship with their teacher. Hayes and Berninger (2014, p.9) suggest that within the control level, the teacher may act as a 'task initiator' in specifying the topics, features to be included and audience, whilst Wray (1993) argues that through the setting of assignments and writing goals, the teacher is in effect co-author of children's work and often the sole reader. The teacher therefore influence what children perceive to be good writing.

Teachers' goal setting may have a direct influence on how children approach the writing task. Since revisions in the NC (DfE, 2014), this has included additional goals in terms of specific sentence structures, for example, fronted adverbials and expanded noun phrases. Wyse argues that the NC encapsulates the knowledge that is valued by wider society and suggests that some content of the curriculum has been determined by 'the Minister's ideology at the expense of evidence', for example the requirement for children to know the technical terms for grammatical structures and devices. No research has yet evaluated the teaching of this terminology as a means of improving children's writing (Wyse, 2017). This type of goal setting may help children to understand the requirements of the writing task, but too many goals may also add to their cognitive load and detract from elements that are more creative.

Surveys of primary schools in the US (Cutler and Graham, 2008) and England (Dockrell, Marshall and Wyse, 2016) show that teachers address basic technical skills more frequently than writing process (planning, drafting, and revising) and higher-level

text skills. Myhill suggests that there is a 'washback effect' on the teaching of writing, with time spent on discrete grammar taking time away from writing, and children encouraged to believe that writing is good only if it includes specific grammatical features (Myhill, 2021, p.273). The introduction of statutory tests of grammar, punctuation and spelling (GPS) for 11 year-olds in 2013 has further strengthened the focus on technical skills. The use of these tests, not only for assessing pupil attainment and progress, but also for holding schools to account, has placed greater importance on these skills (Alexander, 2012). The assessment framework encourages teachers to prioritise GPS over other aspects of writing (Lee, 2019). Lee's ethnographic vignettes demonstrate how teachers provide positive feedback for such grammatical devices through subtle signals, such as 'a warm tone of voice and a smile' (Lee, 2019, p.9). Lee argues that such implicit rewards encourage children to believe that these are things which teachers value.

Even in relation to compositional and revision processes, Harmey's study of lesson videos indicates that teachers tend to maintain control, often acting as 'composer and editor for the child' (Harmey, 2021, p.416), and make transcriptional skills the focus for children. She argues that if children are expected to develop ideas presented by the teacher within narrow constraints, and not then encouraged to evaluate and revise their work, they will not develop these skills. Cremin emphasises that the teacher should also be creatively involved in supporting children to develop their ideas throughout the writing process, and act as a 'response partner' to help them evaluate and reflect on their writing (Cremin, 2017, p.138). The Write Away Together (WAT) programme interprets this as 'responding as a reader' (Ayres and Taylor 2008/2017, p.17), suggesting that the initial response to a child's writing should be a personal

response to the content of their work, so as to encourage children to view themselves as writers. Through responding to their teacher's guidance, children need to learn to mediate their own activity and develop self-support strategies for independence (Black and William, 2009; Willis, 2009). They are less likely to do this if they are over-supported.

Discussion with their teacher plays an important role in helping children to develop their metacognition (Cremin, 2017; Graham and Harris, 2018) and what is called the 'monitor' process in the writing models (Berninger and Swanson, 1994). When contemplating children's writing development, the role of the teacher cannot be ignored, yet this is not fully explored in Berninger and Swanson's model (1994). Nevertheless, the child's relationship with the teacher is seen as a central tenet of mediational teaching and as will be seen in the findings of this study, has a critical influence on how children respond to written feedback.

The exploration of models of writing and writing development show that children need to develop transcriptional fluency in order to have cognitive capacity to concentrate on composition. However, the division of composition and transcription in the *National Curriculum* (DfE, 2014) may be problematic, as varied interpretations of this may influence the way some skills are taught, and there may be a lack of linkage between the two strands. There is evidence that a more creative, experimental approach helps children develop their use of language and compositional skills (Section 5.5). The curriculum context is filtered through to the child in part via feedback offered by the teacher. This will be considered further in Part 5, which will investigate the research around feedback, focusing on feedback on writing and written feedback.

6 Literature Review Part 5: Feedback

6.1 Introduction

So far, the Literature Review has considered how children's writing develops and how teachers mediate and scaffold their learning. Feedback has come into sharper focus in UK schools since the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) Teaching and Learning Toolkit (first published in 2011) suggested that it is a high impact/low-cost educational intervention, accelerating progress by an additional 8 months over a year. More recently this figure has been revised to 6 months per year, and the figure of 5 months for written feedback added, based on a systematic review of 155 studies, which were mostly experiments with randomly allocated groups (Newman *et al.*, 2021). This section looks briefly at the quantitative evidence for the effectiveness of feedback, and the types of feedback considered beneficial, before considering qualitative research on how feedback is provided.

A number of meta-analyses have been used in the attempt to calculate impact by using *effect size* (Glossary of Terms, p.10). There is not always clarity around what precisely is being measured or the measurement criteria being used, so they can perhaps only be taken as a general indication of the positive benefits of feedback. Nevertheless, such studies have been influential, and so this section will explore the evaluations and debate around feedback generally, before looking in closer detail at the impact of feedback on writing and written feedback. More detailed studies on the feedback process will then be considered. What children think about feedback is under-researched, particularly in younger children, but studies that touch on this will be discussed.

6.2 Quantitative evidence for the impact of feedback

A number of large-scale studies and meta-analyses, from a range of international contexts, have reviewed the quantitative evidence for formative assessment and feedback, and used *effect size* (Glossary of Terms, p.10), to calculate the impact. The value of such review is in the quantity of studies included (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). However, a number of issues create inconsistencies within such reviews. Firstly, there is a lack of clear definition of what is being studied (Bennett, 2011), so although formative assessment is generally viewed as assessment used during teaching to adjust instruction and provide feedback (Graham, Herbert and Harris, 2015), the idea that any assessment tool used to inform teaching can be considered formative, confuses and oversimplifies the concept (Bennett, 2011). Formative assessment and feedback are viewed synonymously as a single process, making it difficult to distinguish whether it is the teacher assessment, the adjustment of teaching, the feedback provided, or the student response that makes the most difference (Tan, 2013).

The selection of studies to be included in reviews is also questioned. Hattie and Timperley (2007) claim that size rather than selection criteria leads to rigour, but both Bennett (2011) and Kingston and Nash (2011) counter this. They question the selection of studies for the Black and William (1998a) review, suggesting that this has led to a few small-scale student studies becoming disproportionately influential despite their limited or dubious methodologies (Bennett, 2011). They also argue that no meta-analytical techniques were employed. Kingston and Nash (2011) claim that their own selection of studies, though smaller, was more robust.

An additional difficulty in making comparisons of such studies is the variation in methodology for calculating effect size. *Effect size* is a measure of statistical significance (Glossary of Terms, p.10), used to compare a treatment group with a control (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011), but different formulae can be employed. Hattie and Timperley compare student achievement against the effect of 'typical schooling' (Hattie, 1999, p.3), but fail to define what typical schooling might mean. Hattie and Timperley (2007) find an average effect-size of 0.4 for feedback overall, though the findings of the original studies vary widely. Black and Wiliam (1998a) arrive at an effect size of 0.7 for formative assessment, and Kingston and Nash (2011) calculate one of only 0.32 for formative assessment in English and the Arts, a higher figure than they find for other curriculum areas.

Hattie and Timperley's analysis suggests that different types of feedback vary in their effect on learning. Cues on how to complete a task, feedback, and reinforcement have the highest impact, whilst reward, punishment and praise have the lowest (Hattie and Timperley, 2007, pp.83-84). They find that praise has little impact, particularly where it is general and vague, for example *Well done!* Praise for meeting specific objectives is considered more effective, but Hattie and Timperley suggest that either students disregard this or it reduces self-reliance. They note that feedback is often most beneficial when aimed at improvement, particularly where pupils have misinterpreted a concept rather than completely misunderstood it. Hattie's recent online ranking puts feedback generally at 0.70 (Hattie, 2022). Despite these inconsistencies, feedback is generally accepted as a positive influence in improving learning, and these studies have been highly influential on the use of feedback in schools, as seen through the introduction of AfL and continuing promotion by the EEF.

6.3 Feedback to support writing

Studies that look at specific types of feedback to support writing may be more helpful. A meta-analysis by Graham, Herbert and Harris (2015) calculates the effect size of different types of feedback with a little more clarity (Table 6-1), although it should be noted that these figures are not calculated as a comparison. The studies reviewed are American, and therefore a different educational context to the one for this thesis, but the meta-analysis suggests that feedback might be particularly helpful in supporting children to improve their writing. The studies reviewed were based on children in US Grades 1-8 (6-13 year-olds) but include both verbal and written feedback. The impact of feedback was strong compared to the effects of other writing treatments, such as process writing, sentence combining, teaching transcription skills, and increasing how much children wrote. Graham *et al.* calculate an overall *effect size* (Glossary of Terms, p.10), of 0.61 for feedback on writing, but they also calculate the effect size of separate types of feedback:

Type of Feedback	Description	Number of studies	Average Effect Size
All studies involving feedback			0.61
Adult feedback	Teacher or parent provided feedback on writing or teacher provided feedback on progress in learning strategies.	8	0.87
Self-assessment	Students were taught to self-assess.	10	0.62
Peer feedback	Students gave and received feedback from classmates or peers gave feedback on writing.	8	0.58
Computer feedback	Feedback provided by computer, but feedback not always formative. Result tentative.	4	0.38
Progress monitoring	Progress in spelling tracked weekly (4 studies) or variety of measures over 3 months (1 study)	5	0.18

Table 6-1: Average weighted effect sizes for writing assessment treatments (Graham, Herbert and Harris, 2015, p.535)

The findings for the different types of feedback are more tentative than the overall figure due to being based on a small number of studies (n=10 or fewer), many of which do not meet all the quality criteria set for the analysis or provide clear evidence of reliability (Graham, Herbert and Harris, 2015). As can be seen from Table 6-1, adult feedback is found to have the greatest effect size. However, these studies included both teacher and parent feedback, and only one study involved teachers providing feedback directly on students' written text. Graham *et al.* note that this is surprising considering that written feedback is one of the oldest and most common forms of writing instruction.

A study in which feedback was given directly on written text that has had a seminal influence in UK schools is the *Transforming Writing Project* (Rooke, 2013), an action research project with 12 English primary schools in areas of 'social challenge'. Teachers were trained in two distinct approaches: *Talk for Writing* (T4W) (DCSF, 2008) and AfL-based formative assessment (Clarke, 2003). Although teachers felt the different elements of the study had an impact and children gained confidence, the findings do not clearly separate the impact of the two approaches. Even within the formative assessment strand a plethora of AfL strategies were used, including goal setting, critical thinking, and peer assessment, in addition to 'marking and oral feedback' (Rooke, 2013, p.9). As with so many studies into formative assessment and feedback, it is impossible to determine the impact of individual strategies. Despite this, the findings show that the project had an impact on children's writing progress. Rooke concludes that children's improved confidence and engagement with writing had positive effects on their progress, and puts this largely down to the impact of the training teachers received during the project. As a result, the teaching elements included in this study are now widely adopted within English schools.

6.4 Written feedback

The quantitative studies considered so far show *what* the impact of feedback may be, but they fail to provide any real understanding of *how* feedback aids learning. The remainder of this section explores qualitative research that considers *how* the feedback process works in practice. There continues to be little focused research on the type of in-depth written feedback being currently employed in English schools (Elliott *et al.*, 2016), and concerns about the value of the teacher time involved have

persisted over many years. As seen with the surveys on the teaching of writing (Cutler and Graham, 2008; Dockrell, Marshall and Wyse, 2016), there is evidence that there is a similar imbalance in written feedback. This appears to be a long term issue, as Searle and Dillon (1980, p.237) find that although teachers respond to both 'content' and 'form', there is an overwhelming focus on form (i.e. style, structure and mechanics), with almost all teachers correcting every mechanical mistake. On the other hand, comments evaluating content are vague. When asked about their criteria for good quality writing, teachers identified:

- 'Mechanics' – e.g. spelling, punctuation, and handwriting;
- 'Language structure' – e.g. correct sentence construction and use of grammar;
- 'Style' – e.g. variety of sentences, paragraphing, use of dialogue and connectives, accurate and imaginative use of vocabulary and individual style.

Only one participant commented on 'content to share with a reader/listener' (Searle and Dillon, 1980, p.238).

Elliott *et al.*'s (2016) review of marking practices finds a similar imbalance, and also that there is not enough robust, high-quality research for a meta-analysis or systematic review. Their report is therefore based on a broad review of relevant studies, including randomised controlled trials carried out in higher education, doctoral theses, and small studies by classroom practitioners. A survey conducted across the maintained sector in England, including 1,382 teachers from 1,012 schools, with an almost even split between primary (51%) and secondary (49%) (Elliott *et al.*, 2016, p.7) also forms part of the review. The review shows many schools employing a system of 'deep marking' (ITWRG, 2016, p.6), or 'triple-impact marking' (Elliott *et al.*, 2016, p.17), often using

different coloured pens to give feedback on what children had done well and their next steps for improvement. However, the report suggests that there is a particular lack of research into this kind of feedback from primary schools, and that most research looks only at short-term impacts. The report questions whether there is sufficient impact on children's learning to warrant the teacher time involved and concludes that further investigation is needed. It concludes that teachers need to 'mark lessbut mark better' (Elliott *et al.*, 2016, p.5). If this is so, then they will need to be clear about what 'mark better' means.

Elliott *et al.* (2016) find that there is little evidence of a positive effect from acknowledgement marking, i.e. ticking. Highlighting errors for students to correct themselves is found to be more beneficial than teachers making corrections. There is evidence that targeting specific errors is of value and that short-term targets are more constructive than longer term ones. The report finds a tendency for teachers to focus on spelling, punctuation, and vocabulary rather than content, organisation or constructing an argument. With the recent focus on grammar, punctuation and spelling (GPS) in the curriculum, the report recommends that more research is needed to look at the impact of this on both GPS and subject content. The recommendations of the report are somewhat circumspect, as much of the research informing the review is based on very different contexts, i.e. higher education and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching.

This focus on technical aspects of writing is also reflected in examples of teacher's written comments provided by Peacock (2016). Although they praise aspects of children's composition, most next steps address transcription skills or targeted sentence construction. Only one example advises an able writer to consider the

rhythm of their poem and the effectiveness of every word, in response to which the child redrafts the poem to great effect. Armstrong, (2016, p.70) suggests that there is a danger of teachers being so focused on the 'predetermined standard' that they 'miss the value of the individual work'.

Clarke's work has perhaps been one of the strongest influences on written feedback in UK schools, and, as already noted, her 'success and improvement model' (Clarke, 2003, p.95) was widely used in the local area of the school in the case study at the time of data collection (Section 1.3), with teachers basing feedback on NC learning intentions. Clarke (2003) demonstrates that young children can write more imaginatively and improve the structure and content of their writing in response to feedback. Through vignettes, Clarke shows how teachers use questioning to help children develop ideas, and from analysis of teachers' written feedback, she identifies three frequently used prompts:

1. 'Reminder prompt (reiterates learning intention);
2. Scaffold prompt (teacher hands writing back to child for improvement);
3. Example prompt (teacher provides model)' (Clarke, 2003, p.83).

Within these types of prompts she finds that teachers' comments generally sit within the following categories:

1. 'Elaborating and extending (tell us more);
2. Adding a word or sentence (add one word);
3. Changing the text (find a better word);
4. Justifying (why...?),' (Clarke, 2003, p.95).

Even where teachers ask for the use of specific grammatical devices, such as adjectives, adverbs, rhyme, the comments quoted by Clarke relate to the content of children's writing, encouraging them to clarify or elaborate their ideas. The examples show how children have responded by adding to their work in response to their teachers' comments or questions. However, despite the development of children's ideas being an important element of Clarke's model (2003), the imbalance noted by Searle and Dillon (1980) appears to persist today (Dockrell, Marshall and Wyse, 2016). It may be that this balance fluctuates over time, and this is something to bear in mind when researching this area.

6.5 The role of individual teachers

As discussed in Section 5.6, there are complex influences on the teaching of writing, which are orchestrated by individual teachers (Kervin, Comber and Woods, 2020). It is therefore important to study the feedback process both within the social and cultural context of the classroom, and the way in which writing is taught by the individual teacher.

It is worth bearing in mind that *Assessment for Learning* (AfL) and Clarke's (2003) model of feedback were introduced to run alongside existing linear assessment systems that tracked progress against *National Curriculum* (NC) levels. This caused some confusion for teachers about how assessment relates to learning and how it should be carried out (Fletcher-Wood, 2018). Despite the Commission on Assessment without Levels (AWL) (McIntosh, 2015) recommending the discontinuation of this in favour of formative assessment, many schools retain some form of tracking system (Poet *et al.*, 2018). Peacock (2016) claims that an

apprenticeship-style is used for the teaching of writing in the majority of English primary schools, but it is questionable whether Rogoff's (1995) original concept of apprenticeship can be fully compatible with tight linear tracking systems. Recent EEF guidance (Bilton and Duff, 2021, p.41) specifies a 'scaffolding' approach, and although scaffolding can be flexible, an approach that supports children through NC learning objectives is likely to be more linear.

Gipps *et al.* (1996) suggest that teachers' educational ideologies affect the style of assessments they employ, whilst Hargreaves (2005) argues that attitudes to assessment reflect different ontologies of learning. However, teachers rarely articulate such clear-cut philosophical ideals and, particularly since the introduction of AWL, teachers generally employ assessment systems designed at school level. Nevertheless, divergent views and interpretations are likely to lead to variations in the way written feedback is implemented.

Hargreaves' (2005) study explores teachers' attitude to formative assessment and what they hope is achieved through it. She concludes that their attitudes are dependent on their underlying concept of learning, although she presents a dichotomy that is unlikely to reflect the complexity found in practice. Those who view learning as being about the attainment of goals monitor performance against objectives, and use assessment to set next steps. Hargreaves argues that this objective-led approach leads to a predominance of a measurement-driven style of assessment, such as those seen in the close tracking of NC objectives. In contrast, teachers who consider learning to be the construction of knowledge use assessment to identify children's learning needs in order to provide feedback for improvement (Hargreaves 2005). These teachers tend to give more control to children over their own learning. Critics of the

systematic tracking through objectives argue that this assumes learning to be linear (Swaffield, 2009), leading to a culture of 'criteria compliance' (Torrance, 2007, p.282), in which there is a danger that learning is seen as an 'acquisition of commodities' rather than a 'continually developing capacity' (Swaffield, 2009, p.5). This can prevent teachers recognising children's wider achievements (Swaffield, 2011). Sadler contends that coaching pupils over the line to meet curriculum objectives can fail to secure learning, suggesting that learning is only truly obtained when it can be applied 'on demand, independently and well' (Sadler, 2007, p.390). Willis (2011) argues that the focus on closing the gap between children's actual and expected attainment also marginalises the role of feedback in promoting learner autonomy.

Yet the *Gillingham Project* (Clarke and McCullum, 2001) finds that children and teachers view the setting of specific learning objectives as helpful in improving writing. Teachers feel that targets give children a deeper understanding of their learning, while children agree that they are clearer about what they need to learn. However, Clarke finds that the use of short-term individual targets can be problematic, in that children do not always understand them or have sufficient opportunity to practise them, and teachers find them time-consuming to track and manage. She feels a more helpful approach is for children to have a list of targets that they practise over several weeks.

Even when using similar models, there will be significant variations in the way schools and individual teachers implement written feedback. Devrim (2014), considering online written feedback in the teaching of English as a second language, found both purely corrective feedback and a 'mediational' approach based on the concepts of the zone of proximal development and scaffolding. Similar differences are found in the way primary schools use feedback, with different levels of response expected from

children. In those that employ 'triple marking', children are expected to edit their work and write a response to the teacher's comments, with the teacher then responding further so that a written conversation develops over time (Elliott *et al.*, 2016, p.17). This model is likely to be closer to Devrim's model but this is seen in very few schools and the evidence for its effectiveness is sketchy (Elliott *et al.*, 2020). This model was not seen in the case study for this thesis.

Whatever the approach, the child's successful use of feedback will depend on the 'intersubjectivity' or alignment of understanding about writing between themselves and their teacher (Dyson, 1990, p.203; Rogoff, 1990; Bazerman, 2017). It is the teacher's role to provide support which brings the child's goals in line with their own and those of the school curriculum (Dyson, 1990). In studying written feedback, it will be important to consider how the teacher and child's schematic understanding of writing align. Teachers cannot help but present children with a view of the world through the lens of their own acquired social and cultural values, and so these in turn influence children. Teacher's views may differ from those of other adults in children's lives, but will be perhaps the most influential in relation to their academic studies. The instruction and feedback teachers give to children will shape the way their writing develops. This will also be shaped by the child's own cultural experience, which may be at variance to the teachers and lead them to interpret their teacher's guidance in unexpected ways.

Part 5 has shown that feedback generally has a positive effect on children's learning and writing development, but that there is limited evidence about the use of detailed written feedback in primary schools. Asking children to elaborate and justify their ideas appears to be a helpful way of developing their writing, but there is often an imbalance

in feedback, with a greater focus on technical issues. Individual teachers, influenced by their own understanding of writing, policy guidance, and ontological viewpoint, will determine the feedback children receive. Part 6 will consider child voice and children's perspectives on writing and feedback.

7 Literature Review Part 6: Children's Perspectives

7.1 Introduction

According to Chamberlain *et al.* (2011) and Hojholt (2012), educational debate is dominated by adults and children's views too infrequently sought. As this review of literature has highlighted, the debate around writing and written feedback is no exception. Without the child's perspective the evidence is incomplete, and processes only partially understood. Appreciating how children develop skills and use written feedback will enable practice to be improved, and schools taking the decision to move away from written feedback can do so from an informed position. An important aim of this project is to collect and represent children's views to enable their voice to contribute to the debate. This section will discuss pupil voice and issues around capturing children's views, and will then explore children's perspectives on writing and their views about feedback.

7.2 Capturing the views of children and the concept of pupil voice

Hojholt conceptualises children's perspectives as 'an analytical concept in relation to anchoring personal meaning in social practice' (Hojholt, 2012, p.200). This aligns with the theoretical framework in which children's views are explored from a sociocultural perspective. Although there is strength in data that draws directly on children's views (Davis, 2015), capturing these is fraught with pitfalls. Children and adults see the world differently because they exist in different cultural environments with dissimilarities in status and power (Burke, 2008). Changes in practice make it difficult

for adults and children to compare their educational experiences (Rudduck and Flutter, 2000). Hence the need to find ways to capture children's viewpoint accurately.

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Article 12 (Unicef, 1990), every child has the right to express their views and contribute to decisions that involve them. The UNCRC is designed not only to protect children from abuse and exploitation, but also to give them the civil and political rights to express their opinion on decisions that affect them. The UNCRC applies to all children (Article 2), including disabled children (Article 23), and Article 12 stipulates that children's views are afforded consideration in relation to their age and maturity. In seeking children's viewpoints, the primary consideration should be their best interest (Article 3) (Lundy, 2007). If issues affect all children, it is important to collect a wide range of children's voices, including those who struggle to articulate them (Flutter and Rudduck, 2004).

Adults often underestimate the capability of young children to give their views, whereas research has shown that they are able to provide testimony about their experience and learning (Thomson, 2008). Lundy suggests four factors should be considered: 'space, voice, audience and influence' (Lundy, 2007, p.32). Children should not be coerced but should be given the space to express their views, if they wish to do so, in a child-friendly manner, and be listened to by an adult audience. Adults may not always act on children's views, but they should be given due consideration in accordance with UNCRC Article 12 (Unicef, 1990). However, this does not mean they should be taken on uncritically. Flutter and Rudduck (2004) suggest that child voice has become something of a bandwagon in education, and that there is a tendency for researchers to see children's views as absolute truth. Instead,

researchers need to acknowledge that child voice is a construct created in collaboration with adults. In searching for the 'authentic' child voice (i.e. seeing children's voice as truth), there is a danger of unifying children's views into a single perspective, rather than reflecting the diverse and conflicting views that may be held (Facca, Gladstone and Teachman, 2020).

Thomson (2008) defines the concept of voice as the coming together of the capability to express an opinion, and the right to do so. There is a good deal in the literature about different types of voice, for instance Hadfield and Haw (2001, pp.488-490) propose three types of 'voice', the most relevant to this project being 'authoritative' (where the views expressed represent that of the majority), and 'critical' (where a minority group hold critical views). The authoritative voice is likely to come from a majority of children, and the critical voice may come from children who face the greatest challenges. However, this latter assumption may be incorrect or may be too narrow a view, and if research is to be inclusive and equitable, then the voices of all groups must be heard.

Arnot and Reay (2007) caution against giving all voices equal weight, suggesting that minority groups may be over-romanticised. However, these groups perhaps require greatest representation. There will naturally be some voices that dominate, for instance girls tend to engage with research better than boys (Bragg, 2010), and, as Gilson points out, some voices are easier to listen to than others. It is therefore important for researchers to represent the balance of voices and to understand why some children might choose to remain silent (Gilson, 2013).

Facca *et al.* (2020) caution that research often ignores the sociocultural context of child voice, and an important consideration in this study is the 'pedagogic' voice (Arnot and Reay, 2007, p.311). Arnot and Reay (2007, p.317) argue that 'pupil voice' and 'child voice' are not the same and that voice is not fixed, but changes depending on the context, time, place, and on who is listening (Alcoff, 1991/92). Through education, children become schooled to speak in certain ways. Some rules for participating in discussion with adults are taught explicitly, for instance, turn-taking and listening, but 'tacit knowledge' is also learned implicitly through observing and participating in pedagogic dialogue (Eraut, 2000, p.113).

With adults normally in a position of power, it is difficult for children contributing to research in an educational setting not to give the responses they think adults want to hear, and they may believe that they are being helpful by giving the answers they perceive to be desired (Hadfield and Haw, 2001; Drake and Heath, 2008). Bagnoli and Clark (2010) suggest that giving children greater control over the research can help to redress the balance of power. They provide the following scale for differing levels of collaboration with young people:

- 'Contractual – participants are contracted to give information;
- Consultative – participants' opinions are sought;
- Collaborative – participants work with the researcher on projects devised and led by the researcher;
- Collegiate – participants work alongside the researcher' (Bagnoli and Clark, 2010, p.102).

Working more collaboratively with children can make the balance of power more equitable, for example, Mannay's work with children in the care system (Mannay *et al.*, 2017), in which creative methods are used to give children autonomy over the evidence they present to researchers.

Part of redressing this balance is also for researchers to listen without judgement and to avoid prior assumptions colouring their interpretation of children's words. Coe (2012, p.46) proposes that researchers should be purely objective by '*bracketing*' their own concerns. He argues that the researcher should identify and set aside their ontological, epistemological and theoretical positions, assumptions, beliefs, values and experience, in order to be objective. This seems extremely difficult to achieve in practice, and may not be helpful or even desirable within a sociocultural study in which the researcher becomes a central part of the study (Ravitch and Carl 2016) (Section 9.2.1).

It can be argued that prior knowledge and experience of the subject area are necessary for investigating complex issues (Thomson, 2008). There is a fine line between using professional 'insider knowledge' to understand educational issues being discussed (Drake and Heath, 2008, p.131), and interpreting what children say without distortion through a professional lens. Thomson argues that identifying and acknowledging researcher biases is more important than nullifying them (Thomson, 2000). Reflexivity is required to recognise the role the researcher plays in the construction and representation of child voice (Facca *et al.*, 2020). Alcoff (1991/92) questions whether it is even valid for researchers to speak for less privileged groups, arguing that representing others involves mediation and interpretation, and that the researcher participates in the construction of the participant's position. She does

however concede that groups often require a ‘messenger’ to enable their voices to be heard (Alcoff, 1991/92, p.29). Primary children’s voices are needed in the debate around written feedback, and therefore it is important to find ways to represent their views accurately and equitably.

7.3 Children’s perceptions of writing

With these considerations about the challenges of capturing and interpreting children’s views in mind, the next section investigates children’s perceptions of writing and the process of learning to write.

As noted (Section 1.5), much of the literature exploring children’s views of writing uses the term *perceptions*, and therefore this term is used predominantly in this section. The most recent National Literacy Trust (NLT) research reports (Clark, Best and Picton, 2021; Clark, Lant and Reid, 2022) indicate that children’s enjoyment of writing across England, Scotland and Wales has decreased in recent years. The Covid pandemic may have impacted on this, but according to figures quoted in Clark, Best and Picton (2021) there was already a fall in 2019 (the year data was collected for this thesis). Only 35.8% of children and young people (CYP) said they enjoyed writing very much or quite a lot, whereas previously this had remained between 44% and 50.7% (2010-2018). The figures since have remained lower. The 2022 survey, the largest to date, indicates that children in the 5-8 age group (72.9%) enjoy writing, but that this decreases with age (52% in the 8-11 age group). Currently 1 in 5 children report writing on a daily basis and this tends to align with how much they enjoy writing. Half of CYP say they write to use their imagination, be creative and express ideas, whilst 2 in 5 say that writing makes them feel better.

Graham *et al.* define children's attitude to writing as 'affective disposition', that is, how children feel along a continuum between happy and unhappy (Graham *et al.*, 2007, p.518). Affect and motivation play an important part in the Hayes-Flower model (1980), Hayes (1996), and particularly in the developmental model proposed by Beringer and Swanson (1994) (Section 4.4). Graham *et al.* propose that attitudes to writing, although not as stable as personality traits, are relatively consistent over time. Although their study is by no means definitive, they find that children's attitude to writing influences writing achievement, rather than vice versa or a reciprocal relationship existing between the two. Their sample of children, from US grades 1 (6-7 year-olds.) and 3 (8-9 year-old), were 'relatively good writers' from 'well-educated families' (Graham *et al.*, 2007, pp.532-533), so the relationship may be different in those from different backgrounds. In contrast, children included in this thesis were from a wider variation of backgrounds and demonstrated a range of writing attainment. Nevertheless, Graham *et al.*'s study highlights the importance of children's attitudes to writing as a predictor of achievement.

Graham *et al.* (2007) found no significant difference in attitude between the two year groups, but the changing levels of engagement seen in the NLT surveys is reflected in Grainger Gooch and Lambirth (2003). This UK study across eight schools finds that 4-7 year-olds are generally more enthusiastic about writing, and hold a more positive view of themselves as writers, than 7-9 year-olds. They are also more aware of writing for an audience, for instance in making cards for family members. In contrast, 7-9 year-olds complain that writing is 'boring' and makes their hands ache, and that they dislike spelling and punctuation (Grainger *et al.*, 2003, p.7). Fewer children in this age group view themselves as good writers. This rises slightly in 9-11

year-olds, but here attitudes are more mixed. Grainger *et al.* find some children at this age have an ambivalent, disengaged attitude, but generally, the older children express enjoyment in writing stories in which they have freedom to use their imagination and pursue their own ideas. Grainger *et al.* suggest that the decrease in enthusiasm of 7-9 year-olds may be due to their growing awareness of the complexity and difficulty of the writing task, to the 'lack of choice, ownership and freedom' afforded them by the curriculum or to the greater focus on transcriptional skills at this age (Grainger *et al.*, 2003, p.5).

Wray's (1993) study of 475 7-11 year-olds observes a similar pattern. He finds that 7-9 year-olds place greater importance on transcriptional skills than on developing ideas, with the focus shifting as children become older towards a greater concern with composition. Wray suggests one reason for the lack of focus on ideas may be that children have a limited view of the purposes of literacy, meaning that they focus on decoding in reading and transcription in writing. This could be due to their stage of development, or may reflect their teachers' preoccupation with technical issues. As shown in the discussion of writing development, children need to acquire a degree of automaticity and fluency in transcription before they are able to focus on developing the compositional elements (Connolly and Dockrell, 2017). This may therefore be the main focus for 7-9 year-olds. However, Kervin *et al.* (2020) suggest the way children view writing, and their concept of themselves as writers, will reflect their teacher's professional discourse. The greater focus on technical elements in the curriculum found in surveys on either side of the Atlantic (Cutler and Graham, 2008; Dockrell, Marshall and Wyse, 2016) (Section 5.6), as well as a technical bias in the assessment framework for this age group (Lee, 2019), may determine this discourse (Grainger *et*

al., 2003). However, in addition to technical skills, Bearne *et al.* (2011) find that 8-9 year-olds also identify the use of imagination, adventurous vocabulary, hard work and teamwork as elements of good writing.

Children's perceptions of writing and learning to write may be instilled early in their school careers. Bradford and Wyse (2012) find that young children are more likely to view themselves as writers when their parents focus on the meaning of their early writing. In relation to writing in school, children see writing as a relational activity that they need to learn from their teacher and other adults (Woods *et al.*, 2017). A study of children from Foundation to Year 3 in two Australian schools (Baroutsis *et al.*, 2019) asked children to draw themselves writing or learning to write. No distinction is made between children of different ages in this study, but Baroutsis *et al.* suggest children largely have a 'traditional' view of writing being classroom based (p.190). Many of the drawings represent writing within the school context, with children sitting at desks. Children tend to draw desks and writing equipment on a larger scale than themselves, which Baroutsis *et al.* suggest indicates that they see writing as a challenging task. About a third of children show themselves and peers smiling, suggesting that they enjoy writing, although a small number also indicate feeling unhappy about it.

Considering this view of the classroom as the place in which they learn to write, it is interesting to note the differences in children's attitudes to writing at school and at home. At home, children value the freedom to choose what they write about and to write in different places, such as in bed. They express greater satisfaction in their writing and say that it is fun. In school, they complain of having to do what the teacher tells them, and appear to have less purpose and independence in their writing (Grainger *et al.*, 2003). This appreciation of freedom to make their own decisions is

reflected in the *Ministry of Story* project (Wyse, 2017) in which children were given the opportunity to write in an environment away from the restrictions and stipulations of the classroom. Greater engagement and motivation was observed in children taking part in voluntary writing workshops. Of course, it may be that participants were already motivated to write, but Wyse argues that the freedom led to more creative and original writing.

7.4 What children think about written feedback

Children's perspectives on writing in general are integrally connected to how they perceive written feedback. However, their views on feedback are rarely recorded in the research evidence. Although there is research aiming to quantify the impact of feedback on children's writing progress (Section 6.2, 6.3), much of the qualitative evidence concentrates on the actions and attitudes of teachers. There are very few studies that consider the viewpoint of the child or how they feel about the written feedback they receive.

Bristol University's *Learn Project* (Weeden *et al.*, 1999) is one of the few studies that records children's reflections. The project finds there is some confusion for children between comments on effort and those on achievement, and that children are not always able to read them. Primary-age children said that stickers, stars, and positive comments about what they have done well make them feel more confident. However, they view suggestions for improvement negatively, interpreting these as meaning that their work is 'bad' (Weeden *et al.*, 1999, p.11). Secondary age children find suggestions more helpful, but unspecific critical comments, such as 'try harder' or 'always stay focused', are not seen as helpful (Weeden *et al.*, 1999, p.13). Weeden

et al. find that primary-age children are dependent on their teacher to guide their learning and often do as they are told without gaining a deeper understanding. Teachers tend to reward limited assessment criteria, focusing on effort, accuracy and presentation. As a result, 7 year-olds in the study focus largely on neatness and accuracy, with spelling and punctuation also a concern for 10 to 11 year-olds.

Clarke (2003) briefly addresses the views of primary-age children, suggesting that they believe the main purpose of marking is for the teacher to find out what they have got right and wrong. She too finds that they cannot always understand comments or read the teacher's handwriting, and are rarely given time to make improvements. However, some quoted comments from the children show that they view written feedback more positively than those in the *Learn Project*. They like having things they have done well highlighted, and say that suggestions for improvement help them to learn from mistakes and know where they need to improve. They feel that written comments are more helpful than verbal ones because these give them time to think and can be reread, which helps them to remember what they need to do.

Dann (2015) finds that children's priorities differ from those they perceive to be held by their teacher. When asked to prioritise their targets, 9 year-olds tend to put consolidating existing skills before engaging with the more recent learning. She finds that this is equally true for children achieving below age-related expectations, and suggests that these children are failing to internalise the targets set by the teacher. Dann argues that although children are engaged, they do not understand the level at which they should be learning, and concludes that the feedback process is teacher-led with children interpreting learning in their own way.

Marrs *et al.* (2016) report on an online survey of 867 children across four elementary schools in the US investigating how children feel about feedback on their writing, although they do not specify whether this is verbal or written. As might be expected, they find mixed reactions, but 88% are positive, saying that it is important to know whether their writing is good or not. Children generally feel that feedback is useful, although they do not specify how it helps them, and they feel affirmation in their teacher paying attention to their work. Marrs *et al.* find that children value having their mistakes corrected and feel this can help them avoid the same errors in future. Of children who disliked feedback, 30% seemed disinterested or indifferent, with the remainder having negative feelings, finding feedback hurtful or embarrassing. Although this is a US context, there are some similarities with English studies, although few ask children how they feel about feedback so specifically.

Like Marrs *et al.*, a small UK study by Feil (2021) finds that primary-age children value reminders that act as prompts and help them to remember. They also value explanations and challenges. Teachers in this study provided choices for children, which gave the children a sense of empowerment, for instance, options for ways to proceed in a story, or a choice of adverbs. As in other studies, children are motivated to do well, but tend to focus on accuracy. Dann (2015) and Feil (2021) both find a lack of shared understanding between children and teachers about what constitutes good quality writing. This lack of 'intersubjectivity', identified by Dyson (1990, p.203) is a barrier to children's ability to use feedback (Section 5.5, 6.5). However, Dann, Feil and Weeden *et al.* (1999) all find that children have confidence in their teachers to know best, and believe that following their directions will make their work better.

These studies provide some insight into children's feelings about written feedback, but as Elliott *et al.* (2016) propose, more research is needed into how useful written feedback practices are for primary children. At the time of writing, some schools are beginning to move away from extensive written feedback in preference for verbal feedback, either individually or to the whole class. Having a clearer understanding of the use children make of feedback, and which aspects of writing are best supported through written comments, will help teachers to make better use of it and inform decisions about feedback practices.

Part 6 has demonstrated the need to seek children's perspectives on educational issues that affect them (UNCRC Article 12), and the difficulties of capturing their views. The research shows that enjoyment in writing decreases in the middle years of primary school, which may be due to an emphasis on transcriptional skills. Children find feedback on their writing helpful, but there is often a mismatch between the priorities of children and teachers.

8 Literature Review Part 7: Summary

8.1 Theoretical framework

Having discussed diverse bodies of literature, this section draws together different elements to clarify the theoretical framework for the study and provide an overall summary. This thesis uses a sociocultural theoretical framework to consider children's writing development and how their teacher's written feedback supports this. Within the framework, the teacher is seen as a 'more capable other' (MCO) providing carefully adjusted support through 'scaffolding', which helps to manage the cognitive load of the writing task until the child is able to take on elements independently. This helps to manage the child's cognitive load and allow them to focus on the specific skills they need to develop at any one time. For example, children need to master basic transcriptional skills in order to have the cognitive capacity to concentrate on composition and higher order structural skills (Berninger and Swanson, 1994; Connolly and Dockrell, 2017).

This 'cumulative/bottom up' (Tolchinsky, 2017, p.145) acquisition of cognitive skills is found in the cognitive models of writing development (Berninger and Swanson, 1994; Fayol, 1991). These models support the notion that children acquire writing skills incrementally and that the teacher helps to 'nudge the child along their zone of proximal development' (ZPD) (Graham and Harris, 2005 p.303). A sociocultural perspective suggests that this carefully calibrated support aids the child's psychological development of the cognitive skills of writing in the context of teacher instruction and curriculum approaches (Berninger and Winn, 2006).

Children also learn about writing in an 'interactive/top down' approach (Tolchinsky, 2017, p.147). Within a sociocultural framework this type of learning is viewed as happening through 'participatory appropriation', by taking part in writing activities alongside their teachers and peers (Rogoff, 1995, p.139). Children acquire schematic knowledge about writing through reading and experiencing literature within their sociocultural environment, and through social interaction. In this model, the ZPD is viewed more holistically as a maturation in development (Barrs, 2017; Smagorinsky, 2018). Tolchinsky's (2017) argument that cumulative and interactive approaches need to be integrated to address the gap between children's transcriptional skills and their ability to use macro-structural elements would still seem viable within the sociocultural perspective.

One way in which the MCO might aid this integration is through encouraging 'self-extending systems' (Clay, 2001, p.80). This is the development of self-regulation, for example, setting their own goals, self-monitoring and metacognitive skills (Graham and Harris, 2018). These skills enable the child to cross-check elements of their work to ensure coherence and apply their skills in new, problem-solving situations, thus progressing their own learning independently of the teacher.

Figure 8-1 develops the diagram used in Figure 2-1 to consider how writing skills might develop from a sociocultural perspective. The diagram again uses the two modes of learning identified by Tolchinsky (2017). Berninger and Swanson's (1994) cognitive model of writing development, with some additional elements from Fayol's model (1991), is used to indicate how writing skills might develop in a cumulative/bottom up mode of learning. Berninger and Swanson show how skills develop from lower order alphabetic and word skills through to higher order skills at a macro-level. Learning is

complex and is unlikely to be purely linear, but the arrow indicates the general direction in which skills might be acquired. The middle line indicates how the teacher might scaffold this cognitive acquisition for each child within their ZPD, based on elements from Wood, Ross and Bruner (1976) and Bruner (1983). The concept of scaffolding provides a sociocultural mechanism through which cognitive learning may occur. In contrast, the way in which children appropriate discourse knowledge from their sociocultural experience is shown as a top-down mode based on Tolchinsky (2017) but uses the concept of 'participatory appropriation' (Rogoff 1995, p.143) to suggest the sociocultural mechanism through which this learning might be acquired.

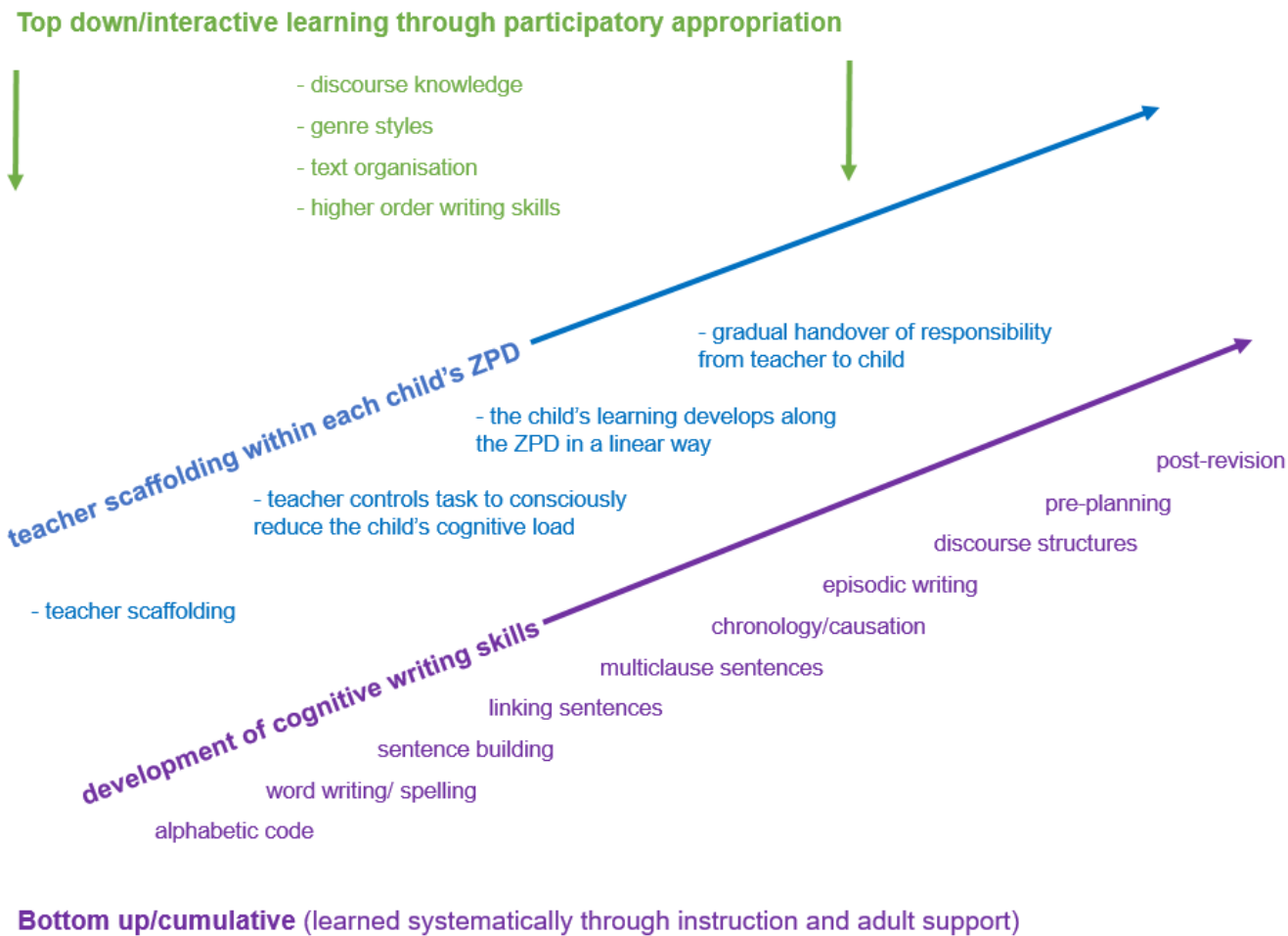


Figure 8-1: Diagram to illustrate how writing development occurs through both cumulative and interactive learning as viewed from a sociocultural perspective

The diagram is revisited in Section 12.5 and Figure 12-1 to reflect on how the teacher in the case study appeared to scaffold children's learning and how children's use of written feedback might supplement this during the independent writing process. The collection and analysis of data on children's perspectives on writing and the use of written feedback takes account of the features of cognitive literacy acquisition and the influence of the sociocultural context, both within and beyond the classroom. This informs the interpretation of how the instructional approaches used in the particular case study classroom and the children's broader experience of literacy shape their perspectives and attitudes to writing.

8.2 Summary of literature

8.2.1 *Writing development*

Children in the middle years of primary school tend to be preoccupied with mastering the technical skills of writing, and there is evidence that these skills need to become automatic and fluent to give them the cognitive space to concentrate on composition. There is also evidence that teachers prioritise technical skills, which may be due to their individual understanding of writing, or policy and curriculum guidance. Whatever the reasons, there is evidence that both teachers and children have a tendency to pay less attention to composition.

Models of writing development are generally built on cumulative, cognitive models, which suggest that support should be carefully scaffolded. However, there is a counter argument, which suggests that greater experimentation with language and sentence structure may help children to enhance the expression and meaning of their writing.

The advocates of this approach suggest that learning to apply grammar within their writing is more beneficial than discrete grammar teaching and the use of technical terms. Having greater freedom and choice over what and how to write appears to promote motivation and engagement. Whichever way writing is taught, there is evidence that learning about the whole process may help children develop their ideas, especially if combined with strategies for developing metacognition.

There is also evidence that children learn about writing from their wider sociocultural environment through social interaction and their experience of literature. An approach that integrates this wider learning with the cumulative development of skills may be beneficial, and may resolve some of the difficulties presented by the division of composition and transcription in the *National Curriculum*. This division creates uncertainty about how some writing elements should be taught. For example, there is some confusion about whether punctuation should be taught through grammatical principles or prosody, and whether sentence construction is viewed as a transcriptional or language skill. Teacher's concepts about writing will affect the way they teach these different elements.

8.2.2 Feedback

Feedback has been shown to have a generally positive effect on children's learning and writing development, but there is a gap in the research around how primary children respond to written feedback. As with the teaching of writing generally, the literature suggests that there is also an imbalance in feedback, with a bias towards technical issues, despite asking children to elaborate their ideas appearing to be helpful. Teachers' individual understanding of writing, their ontological views, and how

they are influenced by policy guidance is likely to determine the kind of feedback that children receive.

8.2.3 *Children's perspectives*

Children's enjoyment of writing tends to decrease during the middle primary years, which is likely to be due to them having to grapple with the mastery of difficult technical skills. This may be partly because of their stage of development, or may be due to the curriculum focus for children at this age. Children's perceptions of writing are formed early in their schooling and influence their engagement and motivation to write. Children's attitude to writing is a direct predictor of writing achievement, but a greater focus on creativity and more freedom to follow their own ideas may increase children's engagement.

Children feel that written feedback is valuable, although there is little evidence about how they use it. They find it useful to have things they have done well highlighted, and they value reminders and suggestions that help them to correct mistakes. However, there often appears to be a mismatch between the priorities of children and teachers.

It is important that teaching methods are useful to children, and they have a right to give their opinion on educational issues that affect them (UNCRC Article 12). In seeking to capture children's views on written feedback, it is important to mitigate for the adult/child power imbalance found in schools, and against researcher bias influencing the interpretation of what children say. Nevertheless, professional knowledge of the teaching of writing is needed to understand the context of children's learning. In addition, researcher reflexivity is needed to ensure that the complexity of

the process is not misrepresented. The development of the methodology in the next section aims to address these issues.

9 Methodology

9.1 Introduction

Quantitative evaluations have indicated that teacher's written feedback helps to increase children's writing progress (Sections 6.2, 6.3). Having reviewed the literature and considered issues raised by a preliminary study, two areas where there is a gap in the research were chosen to investigate during the empirical part of this study. There is limited literature about children's perspectives on writing, especially from the age range of the children in the study, and there is a particular lack of research around primary children's use of written feedback (Elliot *et al.*, 2016). How children use feedback is likely to be influenced by how they feel about writing, as research shows that their 'affective disposition' to writing has a direct impact on achievement (Graham *et al.*, 2007, p.518). It was therefore important to also explore children's perspectives on writing. These will include their perceptions of writing, in school and at home, their feelings about the process and their work, and their attitudes to it. It is important to consider how they use written feedback in light of these factors.

The aims of the research are to understand children's views on writing and how they use written feedback to develop different elements of their writing. The focus is therefore on what children say and do. The research questions addressed are:

What are children's perspectives on writing?

How do children use written feedback comments on different elements of writing?

This chapter explains the rationale for adopting an interpretivist epistemology within a sociocultural framework, and the thinking behind the methodological choices. These include the use of a case study approach involving individual interviews to explore how children respond to feedback comments, and group interviews to gather information about their views and the writing environment in which they were working.

9.2 Epistemological standpoint

A sociocultural perspective provides a lens through which to consider children's writing development and how they learn from written interactions with their teacher. Socioculturalism considers that learning is co-produced through social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978; Rogoff, 1990). The child is an active agent in their own learning, so when working with an adult, or 'more capable other' (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86), they construct their learning within the physical, historical, and cultural context in which they find themselves (Rogoff, 1990; Wyse, 2017). Instead of seeking to demonstrate the cause and effect within a scientific paradigm, the sociocultural approach uses detailed investigation to provide explanation and interpretation (John-Steiner and Mahn, 1996). Studies of schooling within this framework focus on analysis of specific classroom practices, with those taking a Vygotskian stance concentrating on how social interaction leads to the internal psychological development of the child (Prior, 2006). Vygotsky advocates that educational phenomena should be studied as dynamic processes within the classroom context, and that researchers should concentrate on understanding those processes in action rather than focusing on any resultant product (Vygotsky, 1978). This stance made it important that my study explored written feedback within the real-life classroom setting, and that a holistic picture of that context

was formed (Vygotsky, 1978; Brown, 1992). To this end, it was necessary to find out what the children thought about the process as it actually occurs in their classroom.

Data from such studies is by nature subjective and qualitative, and therefore falls within an interpretive paradigm (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). An interpretivist epistemology considers that reality is not absolute and therefore open to multiple interpretations (Assalahi, 2015). This is a relativist position in which knowledge is specific to context (Braun and Clarke, 2022), with the aim of seeing and understanding things from the perspective of those involved. Qualitative methods use detailed, in-depth data to develop theories to explain human experience (Assalahi, 2015). As researchers, we cannot fully understand the motivations and lived experience of others, so care is needed when representing their views (Alcoff, 1991/92). Interpretations are subjective and open to reinterpretation, so data collection and analysis need to be transparent to enable alternative readings and explanations. Such studies do not lead to generalisable results, but provide explanations of processes within specific contexts (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). Small-scale qualitative case studies, such as mine, aim to create detailed pictures and gain 'analytical insights' through the use of clear theoretical and analytical frameworks (Thomas and Myers, 2015, p.15).

9.2.1 Researcher positionality

Ravitch and Carl (2016) describe how the researcher becomes an instrument, with their identity, positionality and interpretation central to the inquiry. As such, it was essential that I examine my own positionality, assumptions, and location within the project. Researcher reflexivity (see Section 7.2) is required in carrying out qualitative research that seeks to capture children's views (Spyrou, 2016; Facca *et al.*, 2020).

There is a fundamental imbalance of power between adults and children, particularly in educational settings (Hadfield and Haw, 2001; Drake and Heath, 2008). Bagnoli and Clark (2010) suggest that this imbalance can be mitigated to some extent through more collaborative approaches, and later sections of this chapter will explain the methods I used to hand over a degree of control to the children. Nevertheless, I have to recognise that as an adult, I ultimately held control of the research process.

As I worked as a consultant for the local authority, I chose a school in which I did not usually work, but teachers within the school were aware of my role. In meeting the teacher taking part, I was clear that I was there as a researcher and was primarily interested in the children's views. Discussion prior to the project was around the teacher's usual written feedback methods, the division of transcription and composition in the NC (DfE, 2014), and how these might be separated within feedback. I shared some ideas from literature and although I was instigating this change as a researcher, I sought their views on how this might be done. Decisions were therefore made collaboratively (Section 9.6.3). As a researcher, I was an outsider to the school, but my professional background made me an insider to the teaching and learning process. A degree of insider knowledge was crucial to understanding the aspects of learning to write and the written feedback process. This was particularly the case around the terminology used (Drake and Heath, 2008; Ravitch and Carl, 2016).

Having been an educator for nearly thirty years it was difficult to lay aside my professional behaviours, but by introducing myself as a researcher and letting children use my first name, I hoped to foster a less teacher-like relationship. Wherever possible, I avoided using overt behaviour management strategies, for example, letting

children move around during the practical activity. To ensure that recordings were clear, talk was managed with the use of a wooden spoon passed between speakers. Nevertheless, I was acutely conscious that children would be likely to adopt the 'pedagogic voice' (Arnot and Reay, 2007, p.311) (Section 7.2). By suggesting that children question each other, keeping my own questioning non-judgemental, and encouraging children to give their honest opinions, I hoped to mitigate for this where I could (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). However, in working with children I have to recognise the impact of my own presence, and that my data will be the result of my subjective interpretation of the children's experience of the world. Later in this chapter I will discuss how the data collection and analysis methods were developed to capture and understand children's views.

9.3 The Case Study

This section provides an overview of the case study with six 8-9 year-old children from one class. Many of the decisions about methodology were taken in the context of the original design of a project with groups from two parallel classes. An overview of this can be seen in Appendix A. Some of these decisions might have been different had a small case study with one class been planned from the start.

Following initial information gathering about the class demographic, approaches used to teach writing, and the written feedback process, the six children were interviewed as a group at the start of the study to discuss what they liked about writing and what they found difficult. They then received written feedback in three four-week blocks, on composition (Phase 1), on transcription (Phase 2) and their teacher's usual feedback (Phase 3). After each phase, they were interviewed again as a group to explore what

they had learned and how their writing had improved. Three children from the group were also interviewed individually to discuss how they had responded to the feedback comments in their writing books. At the end of the project the group were interviewed for a final time to discuss what they felt helped them develop their compositional and transcriptional skills. Figure 9-1 shows the design of the case study.

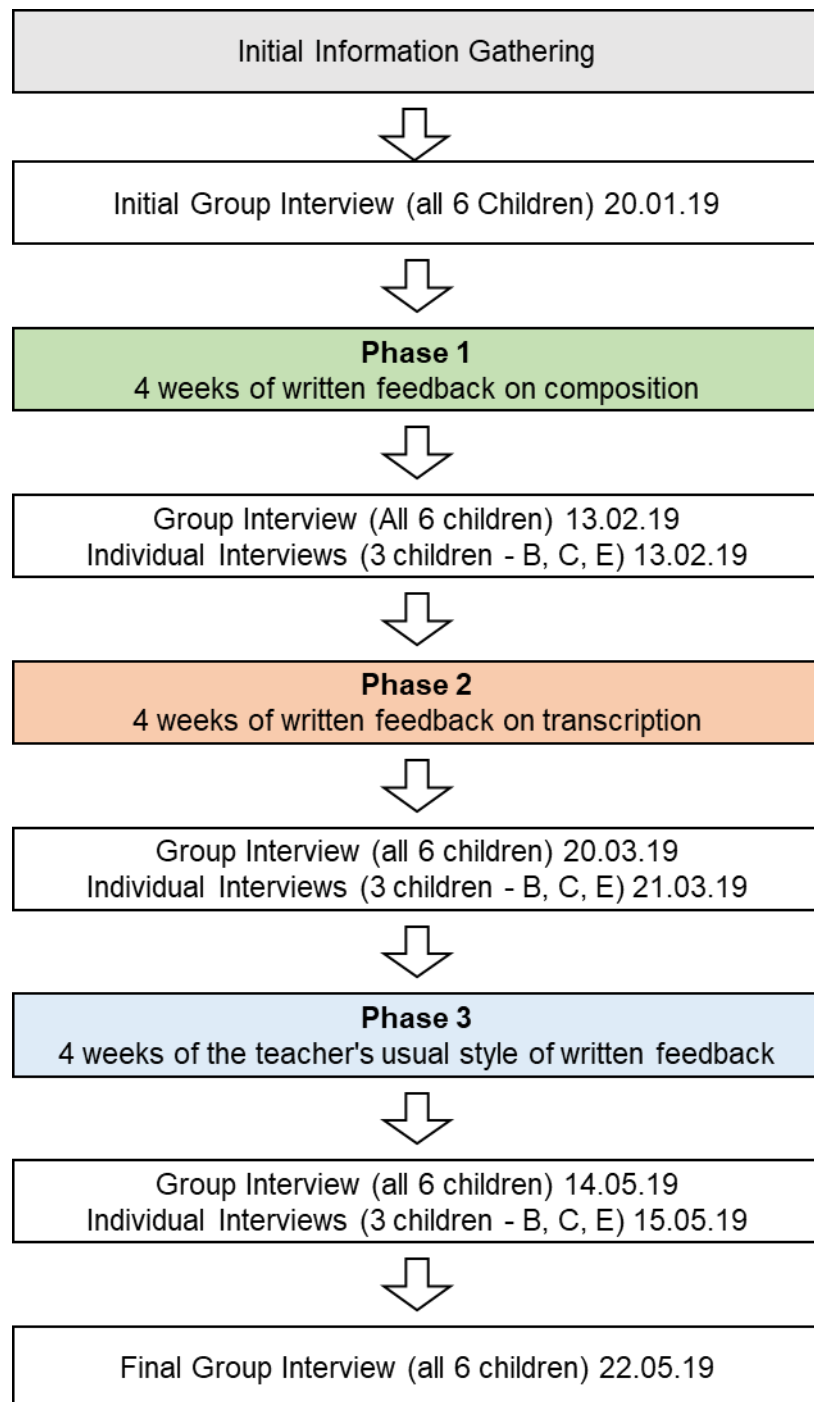


Figure 9-1: Design of the final case study

9.3.1 Typology of the case study

It should be noted that methodological choices were made in the context of the original project design, but later adapted to respond to circumstance and are reported in the context of the single case study.

Within a Vygotskian framework, it was important to study the feedback process within the classroom context, and to gain an understanding of the mechanisms by which children learn through a research approach capable of capturing children's own thoughts and explanations. A case study approach facilitates this through the gathering of rich, detailed data. Many definitions of case study approach suggest it is a way of observing or illuminating a particular case or 'bounded system' (Cresswell, 2007, p.73). Although Yin (2014) argues that the boundaries of a phenomenon or context may not be clear, proponents of case study approaches, such as Stake (1995), Thomas and Myers (2015) and Tight (2017) concur that the defining feature is the clarity of the boundaries around the people, place and time span involved. Cases can comprise any particular, bounded group, from individuals to nation states (Gerring, 2017). In reviewing a range of definitions of case study, Tight (2017) concludes that case study involves:

- Bounded and complex cases;
- Study which captures the complexity;
- Analysis that seeks to be holistic.

Thomas and Myers (2015, p.94) stress the importance of identifying the 'subject' and 'object' of any case study. The 'subject or *explanandum*' comprises the lens through which the object is viewed, whilst the 'object or *explanans*' is the phenomenon being

analysed. In this thesis study, six children from one class who received written feedback on their writing were the subject, whilst the object of analysis was their perspectives on writing and how they respond to written feedback. The time frame of the project was 12 weeks, but to fit around school breaks the project ran from January to May. Thomas and Myer's analysis of typology for case studies is useful in defining the aims and type of case study employed.

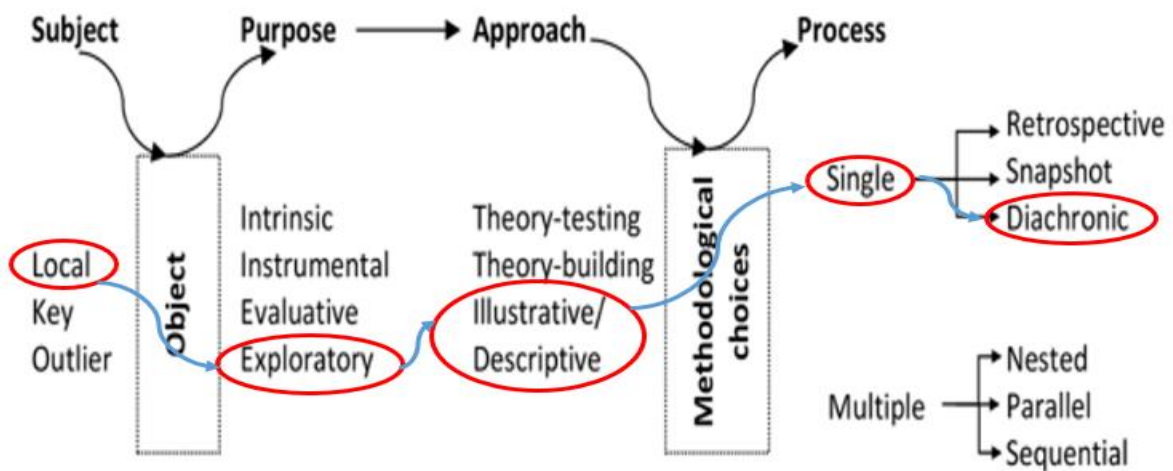


Figure 9-2: Typology of the case study using the analytical diagram from Thomas and Myers, 2015, p.64

Figure 9-2 shows the typology of the study using Thomas and Myers analysis tool, and Table 9-1 explains the elements of this.

Aspect of case study	How this applies to this study
Subject	Six children from one class who receive written feedback on their writing.
Object	Both the children's perspectives on writing and how they respond to written feedback are viewed from the sociocultural perspective of how children learn through interaction with their teacher.
Local	The school was selected using local knowledge. Though not identified as a key case, neither was it an outlier. The school used approaches to writing and feedback common across many local schools, although there was variation in how individual schools and teachers implemented these. The school's local reputation and a recent Ofsted inspection suggested that practice would be good. A Year 4 teacher volunteered to take part and six children from the class were recruited. Therefore, this is a study of how feedback is provided in one particular classroom at the time of the study.
Exploratory	The study is exploratory in addressing a research gap to consider children's perspectives on writing and written feedback.
Illustrative	The study's aim to shed light on how children respond to feedback also makes it illustrative.
Single case study	A group of six children from one primary school class.
Diachronic	Although seeking to examine written feedback in one classroom, the case study looks at changes in children's writing in response to feedback over time between multiple collection points. The study ran across 12 weeks, but due to school holidays there were five data collection points between January and May.

Table 9-1: Explanation of the typology of the case study

The purpose of this study is to explore children's perspectives on writing and to illuminate the use they make of written feedback. Data is specific to the context of the case, and generalisability is not the goal of qualitative research. However, it is possible to achieve some level of transferability by creating 'thick' or detailed description of the data and context, so that readers are given as much information as possible with which to make comparisons to other contexts (Ravitch and Carl, 2016, p.189). The illumination provided by this case study may aid understanding of how children

respond to feedback in other contexts. The case study is not intended to provide definitive answers but seek to provide a rich, deep analysis of participants' subjective meanings (Braun and Clarke, 2022). This enables the complexity of phenomenon to be explored and different interpretations to be considered. Data from case studies should be presented in a transparent and detailed way, with alternative explanations considered to enable the reader to make their own judgements (Cohen *et al.*, 2018).

9.3.2 Participant selection

These considerations applied in practice in selecting a school for this research study. In recruiting for small educational case studies, it is impossible to identify a 'typical' case, and, as will be discussed later, findings cannot be generalised (Thomas and Myers, 2015, p.57). There is no such thing as a typical school and demographics vary hugely. However, in a large city primary school, there are likely to be children working across a range of attainment levels, and this would avoid the skewed demographics sometimes found in small, rural schools. Therefore, findings are more likely to be helpful for readers to make comparisons with other settings (Ravitch and Carl, 2016).

Recruitment to the project was opportunistic, but the criteria for selection were:

- A large school with children working at different levels of attainment, rather than a smaller school where the distribution of children's attainment levels may be more variable.
- A school with a recent good Ofsted judgement, to guard against the project being affected by poor practice. There was also the ethical consideration of not asking teachers in an already challenging situation to undergo additional work or scrutiny.

- A school in which I did not work regularly, so that teachers and children would know me only as a researcher. It was important to differentiate the role of consultant from that of researcher (Robson, 2002).
- Children in Year 4 or 5. Most children in these year groups would be writing at length and addressing all aspects of writing. Year 6 was avoided as teacher and pupil time and attention would be focussed on statutory tests.

Informal conversations were held with headteachers and senior leaders from several schools, but the school selected had a good reputation with local professionals, had recently received a good Ofsted judgement, and had a particular interest in participating in research.

Two Year 4 teachers were recruited. Children from their two classes were then invited to take part. Six children from one class and fourteen from the other volunteered to participate. However, the teacher of the larger group was ill during the project, so these children did not receive feedback as intended. This thesis therefore reports on the group of six 8-9 year old children from one class. Section 9.5.1 explains how consent was obtained from the headteacher, teachers, parent/carers and children. The next section provides more detail about the case study group.

9.3.3 *The case study group*

Although the school was selected to avoid atypical cohorts, the class particular class involved in the research had a gender imbalance and high ratios of pupils identified with Special Educational Needs (SEN) (21.4% compared to 14% nationally in state funded primary schools at the time of the study) and in receipt of Free School Meals

(FSM) and Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) (25% compared to 15.8% nationally in state funded primary schools at the time) (DfE figures January 2019). Table 9-2 gives an overview of the demographic of the class.

No. in class	Boys	Girls	SEN	FSM/PPG
28	22	6	6	7

Table 9-2: Demographic of the class

The headteacher reported that a number of children were classified as having English as an additional language, but said that most were in the second or third generation of settled families and that by the age of seven they spoke good English, so this was no longer a barrier to their learning. PPG is provided by the Department for Education to improve educational outcomes for disadvantaged children in state-funded schools. This group's educational performance is below that of their peers and they are more likely to have SEN difficulties (DfE, 2015). Although having an SEN or receiving PPG make literacy difficulties statistically more likely, this does not necessarily mean that this will be the case for individuals. Despite these figures, there were children working across the attainment spectrum. In using a case study approach there is no aim to be representative, so these details are provided only for context. Six children from the class agreed to participate. The following pen portraits of the children provide background information on the individuals in the group.

Child A did not generally seem to like writing but said they enjoyed writing their own stories, and spoke about how they enjoyed writing about fantasy ideas from their imagination. The class teacher assessed them as working at age-related-expectation (ARE), but they did not always appear particularly confident about their writing. They talked about having previously used a tablet and finding that this helped them to remember what they wanted to write, but said they were not often able to use one. Child A was in receipt of PPG and the teacher reported that their home life was particularly unsettled at the time of the project. They appeared to find the group interviews challenging and concentrating difficult. They sometimes made quite negative remarks about other children's ideas. In Phase 2, they asked not to be recorded, but still wanted to make a mind map. They then agreed to talk through this whilst I made notes, but did not want other children asking questions. This kept within the stipulations of the ethical approval, in respecting the child's wish not to be recorded, but enabled the child to continue to participate. Child A was happy to be recorded in Phase 3 and the final group interview, but I made doubly sure to check this with them each time.

Child B was motivated by competition with their younger sister to want to improve their writing. Having moved from another school they said that they had some catching up to do and were doing work at home with their mum, who was a TA in another school. The teacher assessed them as working below ARE, they had EAL, and were identified with special educational needs (SEN). However, they were able to read their teacher's comments and write at reasonable length. In interviews they were able to talk about how they had used comments to remind them to use capital letters and full stops, and leave finger spaces. Learning to plan in paragraphs and use subheadings was also

something they talked about. They could point out where they had added further details and ideas and described how they had taken ideas from TV shows. On one occasion they described asking their teacher not to help them, which perhaps indicates increasing confidence, independence and agency. In Phase 3, Child B said they were pleased to get new glasses, as they really helped with reading and writing.

Child C was assessed as working at ARE and received PPG, but spoke more confidently about writing than most of the other children. They were able to articulate the ways in which their teacher helped them. They were able to talk about the ideas they had added to their writing, how they were learning to use extended noun phrases, and how they were developing their planning process. They felt strongly that they could learn from their mistakes and use them to make improvements. They often questioned other children about this and about the need for perseverance and also complimented them on their work. A number of Child C's comments related to their relationship with the teacher, describing not only how the teacher had helped them, but also how they had criticised their use of ideas. Their comments to other children, both in questions and compliments, sometimes sounded as if they were echoing ideas the teacher had discussed with the class.

Child D was eager to take part in the project, but often had difficulty understanding and responding to what was asked. They were working significantly below ARE. They were identified with SEN, had English as an additional language and received PPG. Their spoken language was poor, but the teacher attributed some of their difficulties to trauma and the resulting social, emotional and mental health issues (SEMH). Child D needed support from me to take part in group interviews. I scribed for them on mind maps and read back what was written for them to comment on during interviews. I

had to be very careful not to put words into their mouth, so only provided the most basic of prompts and simply repeated what they needed to think about and ask if there was anything else to add. Child D often picked up ideas from others in the group, but their comments could sometimes be difficult to relate to the context of what others had said.

Child E was the most confident writer in the group, working above ARE. They were designated EAL and received PPG, but they were developing more complex sentence structures than other children and were able to describe how embedded clauses improved their writing. They commented that improvement was about quality rather than quantity. Child E sometimes omitted punctuation and their book showed that they did not respond as readily to the teacher's suggestions to add further detail and ideas as the other children interviewed. However, they were able to reflect on their own writing, learning, and what the teacher did to help them improve.

Child F was also designated EAL and received PPG. They were working at ARE and were able to talk about their learning, although they appeared not to be very confident about their writing. They said they hated writing and found spelling difficult. They described themselves as a slow writer and sometimes felt nervous about writing. They did not like having their mistakes pointed out, but there were instances when they recognised that they had done well, and they were particularly pleased when their teacher recognised this. Child F was sometimes restless in the group, but the other children tended to ignore it. Their comments to other children suggest that they were still following the discussion. Child F's confidence seemed to fluctuate throughout the project, increasing when they had been praised and dipping when they felt they had

not done so well. Like Child C, they complimented other children when they thought they had done well, learned from their mistakes or been confident.

9.3.4 Separation of composition and transcription in written feedback

The decision to separate the written feedback children received into composition and transcription was made within the original design for the study. I anticipated that children would find it difficult to distinguish between composition and transcription, and that discussing how they developed these skills from feedback would therefore be challenging. I reasoned that separating the strands of feedback artificially would make it easier to analyse emerging patterns, as children would be able to comment on the feedback they had received over a given period without the need to distinguish which strand of writing was being addressed.

Within the case study this vestige of the original design did facilitate a degree of theoretical clarity. Brown suggests that separating different teaching approaches in qualitative methodologies helps to 'unconfound the variables' (Brown, 1992, p.173), enabling the researcher to consider each approach individually within the social context. She uses this approach for a study on the teaching of reading, whilst gathering data using ethnographic methods and clinical interviews. She argues that this provides theoretical clarity for both explanation and dissemination, and opportunities to elucidate mechanisms of learning in new ways. Without the deliberate inclusion of compositional and transcriptional feedback in the research design, some types of feedback might not have been observed, and might not have been noticeable in the children's views.

As discussed in Section 5.2, the division between composition and transcription in the *National Curriculum* (NC) (DfE, 2014) is interpreted in different ways. Prior to the start of the study, I met with the teacher to discuss what feedback would be provided within each strand. The school had adapted NC objectives into a single Assessment Continuum (Appendix B), which incorporated the different strands. To facilitate the discussion, I shared additional criteria taken from *Write Away Together* (Taylor and Ayres, 2017) (Appendix C) to aid discussion about composition, as these provide a wider context than the NC objectives. The order in which the different feedback would be given was decided by a coin-toss to avoid researcher or teacher bias.

9.4 Data Collection

This next part of the chapter sets out the rationale for the data collection methods designed to answer my research questions.

9.4.1 Group and individual interviews

Scribner and Cole (1981, cited in Prior, 2006, pp.58-59) argue that literacy knowledge is applied in context for specific purposes, and that in sociocultural research the context is a relevant consideration. To understand in detail how children respond to written feedback it was necessary to interview children individually, but it was also helpful to explore the writing context of the class and perspectives on writing with a larger number of children. Including group interviews facilitated the gathering of evidence from a wider range of viewpoints. Children are likely to feel less pressured in a group than in one to one interviews, and the group format helps to redress the adult/child power imbalance (Bragg, 2010). Although there is a danger that such

groups generate 'groupthink' in which certain voices dominate, they can also lead to a robust collective consensus (Ravitch and Carl, 2016, p.167). Despite wanting to hand a level of control to the children, I felt the dynamics of a focus group, in which participants discuss a topic presented by the researcher rather than the researcher directing the discussion, may be difficult for young children to manage. This might lead to a collective voice rather than allowing individual voices to be heard (Cohen *et al.*, 2011, Gibbs, 2012). I therefore decided to do group interviews with all participants to explore the writing context of the class, and selected a smaller number for individual interviews to explore their use of written feedback.

9.4.2 Group interviews

Cohen *et al.* suggest basing group interviews on the format of a familiar 'show-and-tell' or 'circle time' to put children at ease (Cohen *et al.*, 2011, p.433). This form of structured approach would help the management of the group and allow less confident children to contribute more equitably. Bagnoli and Clark (2010) found that teenagers did not like being put on the spot to answer questions, and found having time to think helpful. Inspired by Mannay and colleagues' use of creative methods (Mannay *et al.*, 2017), I began to consider how a practical activity might be used to provide thinking time for younger children before participation in group discussion.

Children's short attention span and immature cognitive and linguistic skills mean that researchers need to consider how best to gather as much information as possible in a short space of time (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). This seemed particularly pertinent to group interviews where children may distract each other. Cohen *et al.* make several points I considered in planning this part of the project, which are addressed in Table 9-3.

Point to consider	How I addressed each point
Researcher should not be seen as too much of an authority figure	Letting children use my first name and allowing a greater level of freedom than I would in a teaching situation.
Fair division of attention between all children	Taking turns gave everyone time to speak.
Being non-judgemental	Responding in interested but non-judgemental way and treating everyone's views as equally valid.
Encouraging children to give honest views	Using open questions to initiate longer responses. Using mind maps as focus.
How to stop children talking without sounding too much like a teacher	Using a wooden spoon for children to hold when speaking and using recording as a reason not to talk over one another.
Be vigilant to pick up on children who want to speak	Asking children to signal their wish to speak and adhering to controlled turn taking.
Overcoming children's reluctance to contradict adults	Paraphrasing back to children what they had said for checking and giving a choice of responses where the meaning was not clear, e.g. Did you mean...or....?

Table 9-3: Points to consider when conducting group interviews based on Cohen *et al.*, 2011, p.434

9.4.3 Creative and visual methods

I hoped to reduce the natural power imbalance that exists when working with children in a school setting by making the process a little more collaborative (Bagnoli and Clark, 2010). Creative and visual methods are an attempt to reduce the power imbalance between researcher and participants and empower children's voices to contribute to development of policy (Burke, 2008). Mannay and Morgan (2015) claim that employing these methods goes beyond traditional methods in engaging participants in a collaborative process. Mannay *et al.* (2017) argue that using activities, such as sand boxes, drawings or emoticon stickers, empower children to take a lead and

create a neutral space in which they can engage on their own terms. Children of primary-age tend to be descriptive when asked about their school experience and less reflective than older pupils, so using a combination of drawing and emoticon stickers helps younger children to reflect on how events have made them feel.

Giving children the opportunity to represent their ideas on paper before speaking would give them thinking time. Interpreting images and visual representations can be problematic (Banks, 2001; Thomson, 2008; Rose, 2016), but ideas about visual methods inspired me to think about how some form of visual representation might help children formulate their ideas. Concept or mind maps, promoted by Buzan (2005), are often used in schools for children to plan work or present their knowledge, and have increasingly been used in qualitative research (Wheeldon and Faubert, 2009).

In research, concept maps have mostly been created by researchers as a means of transcribing and analysing data, but have been used less often as a method of data collection (Canas, Leake and Wilson, 1999; Kinchin, Streatfield and Hay, 2010). Where they have been used it is usually the researcher who creates the map as a way of recording interview data (Wheeldon and Faubert, 2009). Asking research participants to create concept maps is a relatively novel approach, but Wheeldon and Faubert find that they provide a better prompt for recollection than more traditional methods. However, data analysis and interpretation can be problematic. Wheeldon and Faubert suggest that they can be analysed as text or as visual data, but as this is not particularly robust they used them only to plan follow up interviews.

A solution to this is to use artefacts created as part of the research process as 'tools of elicitation' to support children's reflections (Mannay, 2017, p.6). Discussion of the

artefact leads to child-led dialogue, with the artefact as the focus rather than the researcher's questions (Mannay, 2010). 'Elicitation interviews' (Mannay, 2017, p.6) allow children to explain their artefact, and it is this description that becomes the data. I felt this approach would work well with mind maps, but that collecting the children's own explanation would be essential to avoid difficulties with interpretation. I decided to ask children to make mind maps as the basis for discussion within 'show and tell' style group interviews (Cohen *et al.*, 2011, p.433). Analysing interview transcripts using verbal data analysis would bypass the need for newer, less well-tested methods.

9.4.4 Group interview format

I based the format of the group interviews on the three-step process suggested by Leitch and Mitchell (2007):

- Introduction to explain the task and to obtain consent;
- Practical task;
- Follow up discussion, where children talk about their mind maps.

The turn-taking format allowed individuals to participate on an equal footing, although some children were naturally more forthcoming than others. The children in the group were encouraged to question each other, and the focus on mind maps and the interactions between children moved the agenda away from my preconceptions as a researcher, enabling the children's views and opinions to emerge more authentically.

Group interviews were carried out at 4-week intervals. These had to fit around my work schedule but were mostly during afternoons. Different rooms had to be used, which was not ideal, but this was the reality of a busy school.

9.4.5 Initial group interviews

The initial group interview acted as an icebreaker, introducing the children to the project and the interview format. These were used to explore what children liked and what they found difficult about writing. The children were asked to complete mind maps, as seen in the example in Figure 9-3 showing:

- What I like about writing;
- What I find difficult about writing.

Emoji stickers were used to help children reflect on how they felt about the various aspects of writing.

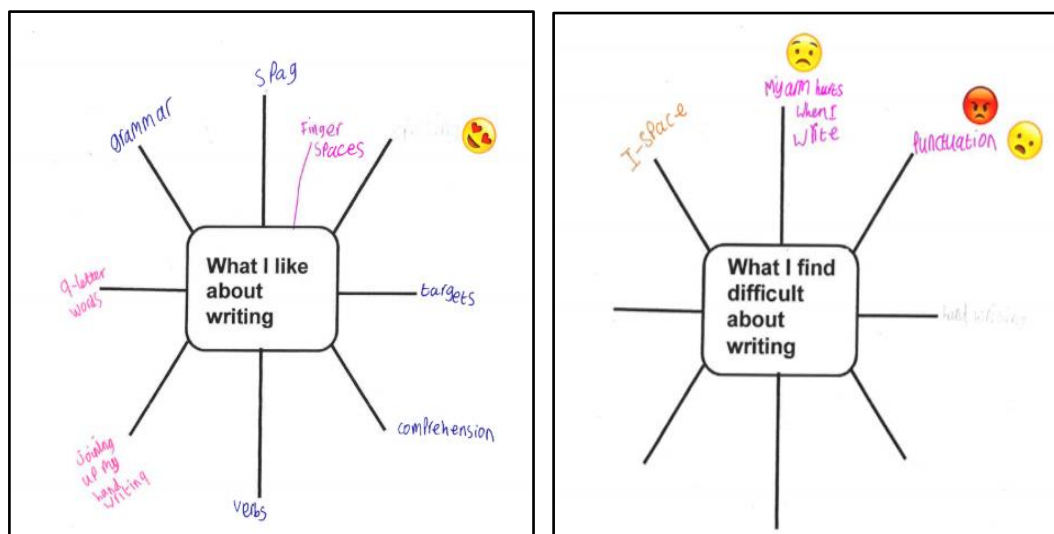


Figure 9-3: Example of mind maps from the initial group interviews

Children then took turns to talk through their mind maps, with other children and myself asking questions for clarification. This part of the group interview was audio-recorded. Listening back to the recording of the first interview, I realised that I was driving the agenda too much. This was partly to model the process, but in subsequent sessions

I encouraged the children to ask questions first and then used my own questions to clarify views or pursue interesting points that had been raised.

9.4.6 Group interviews in Phases 1, 2 and 3

After each feedback phase of the study, a group interview was used to consider the questions:

- What have I learned about writing in the last four weeks?
- How has my writing improved in the last four weeks?

Again, mind maps were used, as in the example in Figure 9-4. This was to get a sense of how children had used their teacher's guidance to develop their work, and in what ways they felt their work had improved.

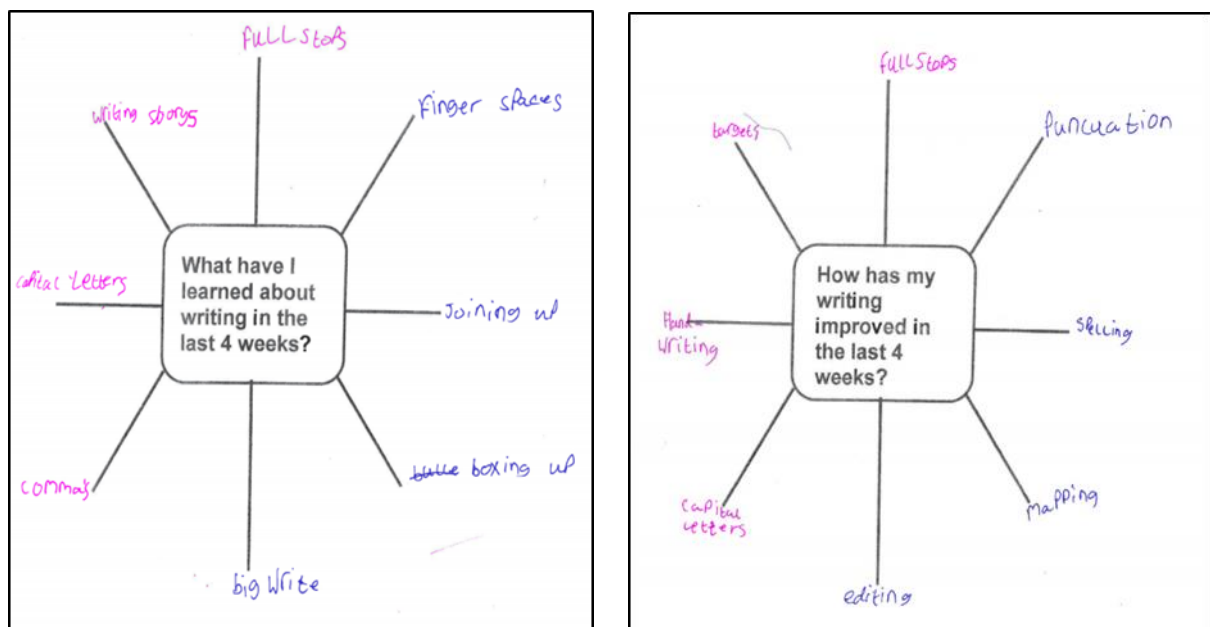


Figure 9-4: Example of mind maps from Phase 3

Although group interviews were not looking specifically at how children had responded to their teacher's comments, they provided information about writing in the class and a context in which to interpret individual interview data.

9.4.7 Final group interviews

The final group interview was used to bring the project to a close. The original intention had been to repeat the same format as the initial group interview, but by the end of Phase 3 the children were repeating much of what they had said throughout the project, and I felt that the data was reaching 'saturation' (Ravitch and Carl, 2016, p.266), i.e. no new insights were emerging. Instead, a Carroll diagram (Figure 9-5) was used to enable children to categorise what they had found helpful/not helpful in supporting them for composition and transcription. I chose this as a simple form of graphic organiser with which children would be familiar.





	Helps me improve 	Does not help me improve 
Composition 	by washing viduose Bolle pants StBoy making teachurs comens SPiXer diXgram acting out Big rite ajectives turqits	<u>Distracted</u>
Transcription 	Magpieing	

Figure 9-5: Example of Carroll diagram from final group interviews

9.4.8 Individual interviews

Group interviews captured a range of children's voices, and facilitated the exploration of their perspectives and the class writing context, but individual interviews seemed the best vehicle with which to obtain rich and accurate data about their use of feedback (Ravitch and Carl, 2016). Interviews are 'purposeful interactions' in which the researcher aims to discover what the interviewee has experienced, and what they think and feel about it (Mears, 2012, p.23). Interviewing individuals means that responses are likely to be more detailed, as discussion is seen as more personal and private (Bragg, 2010). The skill of a good interviewer is to journey into another's perspective and understand the meaning and significance of what they say. Murray (2019) warns that it is easy for researchers who do not know child participants to misrepresent their words, and that it is important to take time to understand what matters to them. However, interviews are not just a data collection exercise; they are also a social encounter within a sociocultural context (Cohen *et al.*, 2011) in which meaning is negotiated between the researcher and interviewee (Pring, 2015). Multiple interviews are more likely than single interviews to lead to in-depth reflections, as topics will emerge over the course of several sessions (Cohen *et al.*, 2011; Mears, 2012).

As in the group interviews, I hoped to redress the power imbalance between the children and myself. Interviews can have varying levels of structure. Highly structured interviews would give me greater control over the evidence collected, but I was concerned that in this scenario children would give conventional answers (Robson, 2002, p.269). A semi-structured approach, in which children's writing books were used as the focus, had been successful in my preliminary study (Section 1.2). Discussing

their teacher's written feedback had enabled children to explain how they had responded to comments and how they felt about them. Dann (2015) also used writing books for children to discuss their work and their teacher's feedback comments as part of a larger project. I decided a similar approach would afford children greater autonomy, and that this would lead to a better understanding of their concerns. Work in their books also helped to corroborate interview data, as children were able to illustrate what they said with examples from their writing.

Using writing books as the focus meant that the structure of interviews was dictated by this. This meant that there was a danger of interviews lacking rigour and becoming too informal. Patton (2002, p.343) proposes using an 'interview guide' to maintain focus. I devised a set of probe questions for use at appropriate times:

- Tell me what you have been doing here....
- Tell me about this story/ piece of writing...
- What is this piece of work about?
- What has your teacher written here?
- Did you do anything when you read that comment?
- Did you go back and correct anything?
- Did you go back and change anything?
- Did you go back and add anything in?

9.4.9 Individual interview format

As individual interviews were looking specifically at how children had responded to feedback comments, the data generated was important to my second research

question. Three children were interviewed individually at the end of each of the three phases. Individuals were selected to reflect a range of viewpoints, and the teacher helped to identify children with the confidence and resilience to take part.

The structure of interviews was provided by talking through the work children had done during each phase and discussing how they had used their teacher's written feedback comments. The focus on the children's books helped to give them ownership of the process, rather than questions alone driving the conversation. The three children interviewed were able to discuss the comments they had received and talk about how they had responded in their work. Interviewing children three times over the course of the project, in addition to group interviews, meant that they became more confident and discussed their work in greater depth. This also allowed time for children's ideas to be explored and for themes to emerge more strongly (Cohen *et al.*, 2011; Mears, 2012).

Questioning was kept open and non-judgemental, allowing children to present their own thoughts and ideas and mitigate for researcher bias (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). Where there was any ambiguity in what children said, it was important to clarify their meaning through paraphrasing and further questioning. My professional knowledge helped me to understand the teaching and learning processes children discussed, but it was equally important to challenge my own assumptions in interpreting what children said and search for the underlying meanings of participants' intentions (Woolfe and Dryden, 1996, cited in Drake and Heath, 2008, p.131). For instance, my preconception that children made little use of feedback comments had already been challenged in my preliminary study. Using children's writing books as a focus also provided evidence that they were altering their work in response to comments. Some teachers'

comments and quotes from the children's writing were read aloud, either by the children or myself, so although books were not a direct data source, these were included in the data.

9.4.10 Summary of methods

Group interviews collected data on children's perspectives on writing and the writing context of the classroom. Data from individual interviews related directly to how children responded to written feedback. Although individual interviews were carried out three times after each 4-week phase, group interviews were done five times. An initial group interview was carried out at the beginning of the project and was useful in introducing children to the research process and finding out how they felt about writing. After each 4-week phase of feedback, a group interview was used to find out how children thought their writing had improved, and at the end of the project a final group interview was used as a summary activity. Table 9-4 summarises how the different methods used contribute to the data.

Research method	How methods were used in the study	How methods contributed to data
Repeated measures model	Group alternately received feedback on composition and transcription, and then their teacher's usual feedback.	Writing strands were separated to enable children to comment on each separately. As the teacher did not include improvement prompts for composition in their usual feedback, this enabled these to be observed.
Visual Methods	Children drew mind maps about their attitudes to writing and what they had learned.	This provided time for children to think and gave them control over their contribution to the research.
Group Interviews	Each child presented their mind map to the group. Other children and the researcher then asked questions for greater detail and clarification.	Group interviews were initially used to explore the writing context of the classroom and children's perceptions of writing. During the project they provided data about what children thought they were learning and how their writing was improving.
Individual Interviews	Individual interviews after each phase used the children's books as a focus for discussion about how they had responded to their teacher's feedback comments.	Using the children's books provided a focus rather than my researcher's questions. This gave the children greater agency. Work in the books provided evidence of what the children discussed.

Table 9-4: How methods used in the study contributed to data

9.5 Ethical Considerations

9.5.1 Consent and assent

The University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) granted ethical approval before any data collection commenced. The approval letter can be found in Appendix D. The process included scrutiny of all associated paperwork, such as participant information sheets, consent forms, GDPR notices (Appendix E) and research instruments. As already discussed, I chose a school in which I did not normally work. All information

and consent forms were on university headed paper and identified me only as a doctoral student (Appendix E). All correspondence was via my student email account.

Consent was initially sought from the headteacher and teacher, and then from the parents/carers and children in the selected class. Although parent/carer's consent is required for children under 16 in the UK, the World Medical Association's *Declaration of Helsinki* states that:

When a potential research subject who is deemed incapable of giving informed consent is able to give assent to decisions about participation in research, the physician must seek that assent in addition to the consent of the legally authorised representative. The potential subject's dissent should be respected (WMA, 2013 para. 29).

As this principle also applies to educational research, positive consent was sought from the children themselves. The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) website differentiates between *assent* and *consent*, assent being defined as the ability not to refuse, whereas consent is the giving of a positive affirmation of willingness to participate, so advises that consent should be sought from children and their parents/carers. The ethical codes of ESRC, the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and the European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA) (Bertram *et al.*, 2015) suggest that obtaining informed consent from children should be done in a way that is child-friendly and meaningful to them. This should be an ongoing process where participants have the right to withdraw at any point. A child-friendly consent form and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) notice were checked for age-appropriate readability (Appendix E) and all participants were given a 48 hour 'cooling off' period.

Ethical considerations continued to be observed throughout the project. As the children did not know me, I was reliant on the teacher to introduce the idea of the project to them. At our first meeting, I was careful to introduce myself as a researcher and explain the project clearly. At every data collection point, the teacher and I checked verbally with children that they were happy to continue. During the group interview in Phase 2, Child A did not want to be recorded. However, they were still keen to make a mind map and agreed to talk through it whilst I made notes. In later groups, they were happy to be recorded again. Also in Phase 2, Child D was upset after a break-time dispute but asked if they could join another group later in the day. For Phase 3 and the final group interview they asked if they could remain in this alternate group, as they felt more comfortable contributing in this one. Although these adjustments were not ideal in terms of the integrity of the methodology, they considered children's feelings and enabled the two children to continue to contribute to the study.

The subject matter of the study was potentially not as sensitive as some projects might be, but children who struggle with writing may find it difficult to talk about their work. Leitch (2008) argues that all researchers working in schools should be prepared for children's views to go beyond the borders of normal teaching, and that such conversations should take place within the safe context of a supportive school where children have access to trusted adults. Working with children in their familiar environment, with school staff on hand should children become upset was a basic precaution to ensure they felt safe.

9.5.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

To maintain confidentiality, the school is not named and participants anonymised. Children interviewed were allocated letters, so that no names were included in the data collection. A list of letters and names was kept securely for my own reference until data was processed, but children were referred to by letter, e.g. Child A, during audio recordings, in order that no names feature in interview transcripts.

All data, including audio recordings, was stored on my university Google Drive. As there was a large amount of material to transcribe, I used a professional transcriber, who signed a confidentiality agreement. Although children occasionally used their teacher's surname, the transcriber was not locally based and had no knowledge of the school. Where slips occurred, these were removed from transcripts.

9.5.3 Time for interviews

There was an obvious risk of children missing classroom learning by taking part in the study. The time taken for each of the five group interviews was about 20-30 minutes, including the mind mapping task (2.5 hours), and for pupils interviewed individually, there was an additional time of three 10-15 minute interview sessions (approx 40 minutes) (3.25 hours). This was a significant amount of time, but was spread over two school terms. Metacognition, self-regulation and cognitive task analysis are skills that have been shown to be beneficial (Graham and Harris, 2018; Young, 2019; Hattie, 2022), so taking part in interviews to talk about their learning may have some benefits for children. It may enable them to think more reflectively about their writing. For this reason, the University Ethics Committee (UREC) (Appendix D) approved the study.

9.6 Data analysis

9.6.1 Summary of data

The qualitative nature of this study means that there is a rich data set, including the transcripts of five group interviews and nine individual interviews:

- An initial group interview in which children were asked to identify what they like about writing and what they find difficult;
- A group interview after each of the three phases of the project, in which the teacher gave feedback on composition (Phase 1), transcription (Phase 2), and finally their usual mode of feedback (Phase 3);
- Individual interviews with three children at the end of each phase;
- A final group interview in which children were asked to identify the strategies that help them with composition and transcription.

9.6.2 Rationale for thematic analysis methods

Working within a sociocultural, case study approach, it was important to capture the complexity of the data and enable a holistic analysis (Tight, 2017) of the children's perspectives on writing and their experience of responding to their teacher's written feedback. The methodological approaches were selected to capture children's thoughts as accurately as possible, and the data analysis needed to remain true to these. It is difficult for adults to see things from a child's perspective (Fielding, 2004), or to understand their psychological dispositions and motivations (Ravitch and Carl, 2016), and there is a possibility that children's views are misinterpreted and misrepresented through the reframing of language or bias in data selection (Thomson, 2008) (Section 7.2).

Analysis within qualitative methodologies is about identifying patterns and emerging themes within the data (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Thematic analysis requires researcher reflexivity (Braun and Clarke, 2021; Finlay, 2021) (Section 7.2). The researcher needs to self-question continually, to recognise their positionality, values and assumptions, and acknowledge that their decisions are made in light of these (Spyrou, 2016; Facca *et al.*, 2020; Braun and Clarke, 2022). However, qualitative data analysis is at risk of lacking rigour, particularly where there is only one researcher and multiple coding with several researchers not possible (Ravitch and Carl, 2016), but following a systematic process makes the analysis more robust (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The case study needed to consider patterns across the group of individuals, both in their perceptions of writing and how they used feedback. I therefore chose to use thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2022). The theoretical concerns about how children learn to write may suggest that a thematic analysis, based on theoretical, deductive categories for analysis derived *a priori* from literature, might be a helpful approach (Ravitch and Carl, 2016). Although this might offer explanations about the feedback process, I felt that to understand the views of younger children, and to address their lack of voice in the debate around written feedback, an exploratory approach was preferable.

Thematic analysis is not a single method, but a 'family of methods' (Finlay, 2021, p.104) and can be used flexibly. It endeavours to identify patterns within the data and allows both explicit and latent meanings to be explored. Finlay discusses differences in how it is used, ranging from a 'scientifically descriptive' approach, where thematic categories are inductively generated through a systematic procedural method, to the

'artfully interpretive' (Finlay, 2021, p.105). The latter uses a more interpretive and reflexive approach to discover latent meanings. As Finlay says, most thematic analysis employs elements of both. The analysis used in this thesis began systematically with coding in NVivo, but a more organic process was later used to distil and shape themes to draw out deeper meanings.

Semantic coding of language used by children avoids adult misinterpretation of their meaning, and in semantic analysis, it is less important to have indications of non-verbal signals than for other analytical methods, for example, discourse analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Therefore, due to time constraints and the large amount of data in the overall project, audio recordings were professionally transcribed. However, the audio recording illustrated how dialogue had evolved. Listening back to recordings, with and without the transcripts, was a way of becoming familiar with the data and aided the initial identification of possible codes.

Data was initially analysed using NVivo software, which enables large quantities of data to be coded and organised easily, but care needs to be taken as the system is extremely fluid (Welsh, 2002). Welsh uses the metaphor of a 'loom' that can be used to sort the 'rich tapestry' of data with the researcher determining the pattern (Welsh, 2002, no page no.). Using inductive, descriptive categories, derived from language within the data, stayed truer to the participants' meaning (Ravitch and Carl, 2016; Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2020).

Group data was analysed first to obtain an overview of responses from all children, which informed the analysis of individual interviews, but as Saldana (2021) suggests, coding is only the initial step in the analysis. Having completed an initial semantic

analysis, themes were drawn together in NVivo, and an initial thematic map created. It was then clear that children's perspectives on writing influenced both their attitudes and how they responded to feedback. A second cycle of analysis in NVivo, and a more organic process of refining the thematic map was therefore used to look at the data from the perspective of my sociocultural framework and research questions. Themes were distilled and shaped to consider the underlying latent meaning of what children had said. Latent analysis looks at data on a conceptual level, but this can become more abstracted. Returning to the children's own word for naming subthemes helped to keep closely to their ideas.

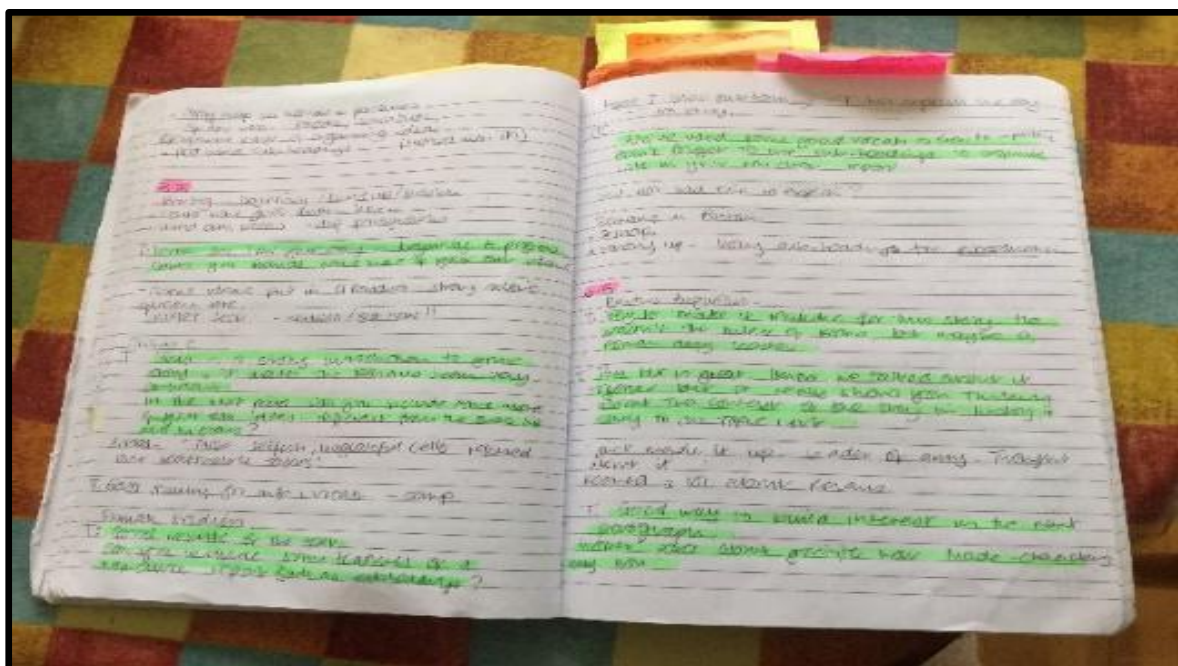
9.6.3 *The analysis process*

I followed the model outlined in Braun and Clarke, as this provides a clear framework for analysis. This next section uses the phases they suggest as headings to outline the analytical process (Braun and Clarke, 2022, pp.35-36).

Phase 1: Familiarisation

Listening to recordings as soon as possible after data collection allowed me to note down the main points and my immediate thoughts. Transcriptions were checked against the recordings, and once transcriptions were accurate, I listened to interviews several times, making further notes. I also took note of the teacher's feedback comments (highlighted in green in Figure 9-6) and of how children had responded.

Figure 9-6: Initial analysis of responses to teacher comments



I then created colour-coded summaries of the type of feedback given: composition (green), transcription (pink), and information on how children had responded (yellow). An example is shown in Figure 9-7.

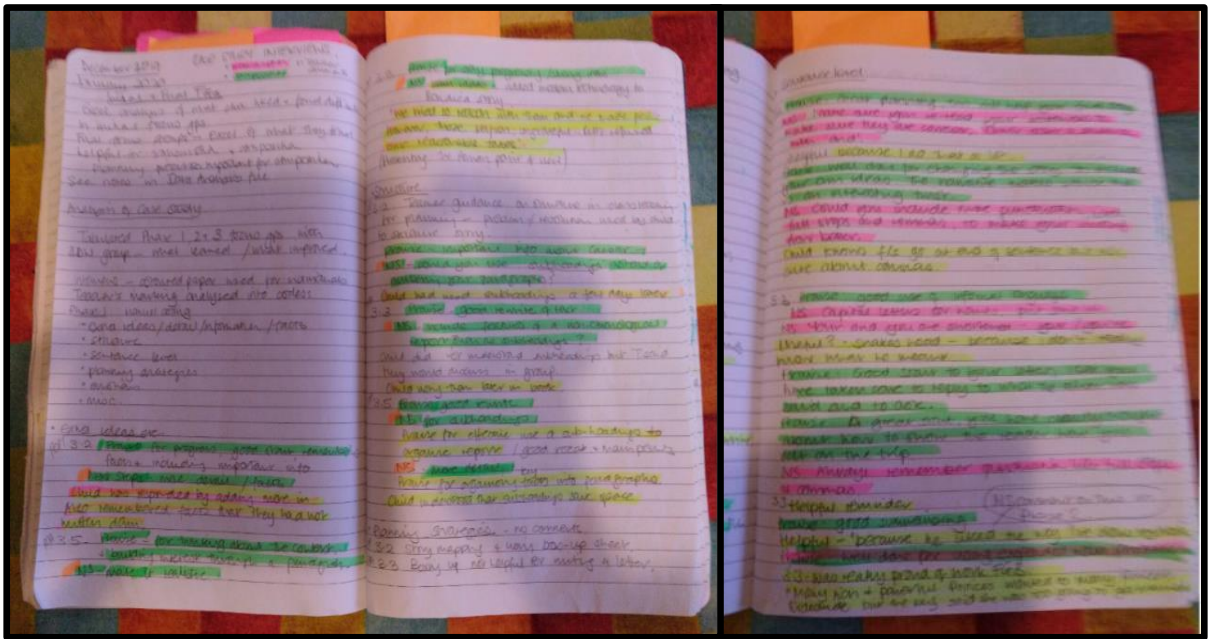


Figure 9-7: Example of colour coded summaries

Phase 2: Coding

This initial exploration was used to generate initial codes in NVivo. Reflecting the format of the group interviews, codes for the initial group interview were divided into categories of like/difficult, and those for group interviews for Phases 1,2 and 3 into improved/learned, and then sub-divided within these into composition and transcription (Figure 9-8). Within this broad framework, further subdivisions and child codes developed iteratively. Further parent codes were added to include children's feelings and attitudes.

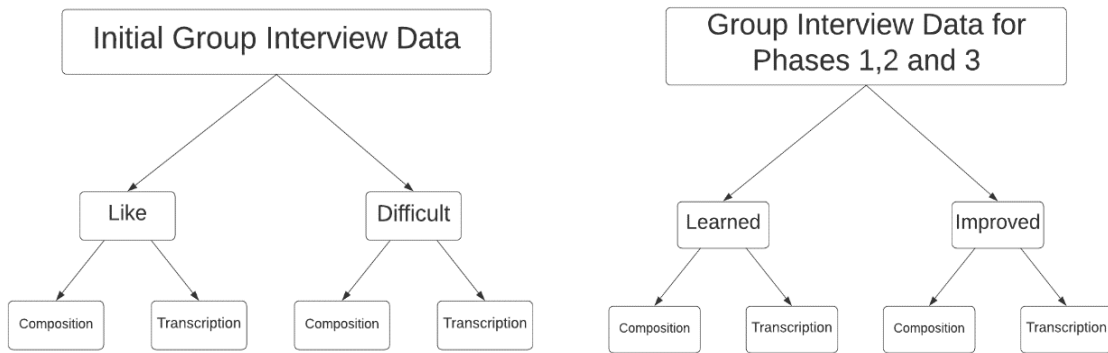


Figure 9-8: Diagrams to show categories into which data from group interviews was organised

Parent codes for the individual interviews emerged iteratively during coding, and were informed by the coding of group interviews. A high degree of granularity was used to create a fine level of detail in the initial analysis (Westmeyer, 2018). A few segments of data were coded to more than one code where relevant, but codes were crosschecked across categories to ensure that no data was excluded. The initial NVivo codebooks for the initial group interview and individual interviews can be seen in Appendix F.

Phase 3: Generating initial themes

At this stage, coding reflected the aspects of writing that children talked about, but did not give a precise reflection of how children had used feedback on the different elements. A 'second cycle' of coding used an iterative process to reorganise and recategorise codes in relation to the research questions and in light of the theoretical framework (Saldana, 2021, p.10). This looked more deeply at how children responded to feedback comments. At this stage there was a notable difference between feedback that children appeared to be using to consolidate their writing skills, and that which

helped them to develop the language and content of their work. There were also some clear patterns about how children felt about writing, and how they responded to their teacher. Figure 9-9 shows the NVivo codebook for individual interviews in the second cycle of analysis. Second cycle codebooks for group interviews can be found in Appendix G.

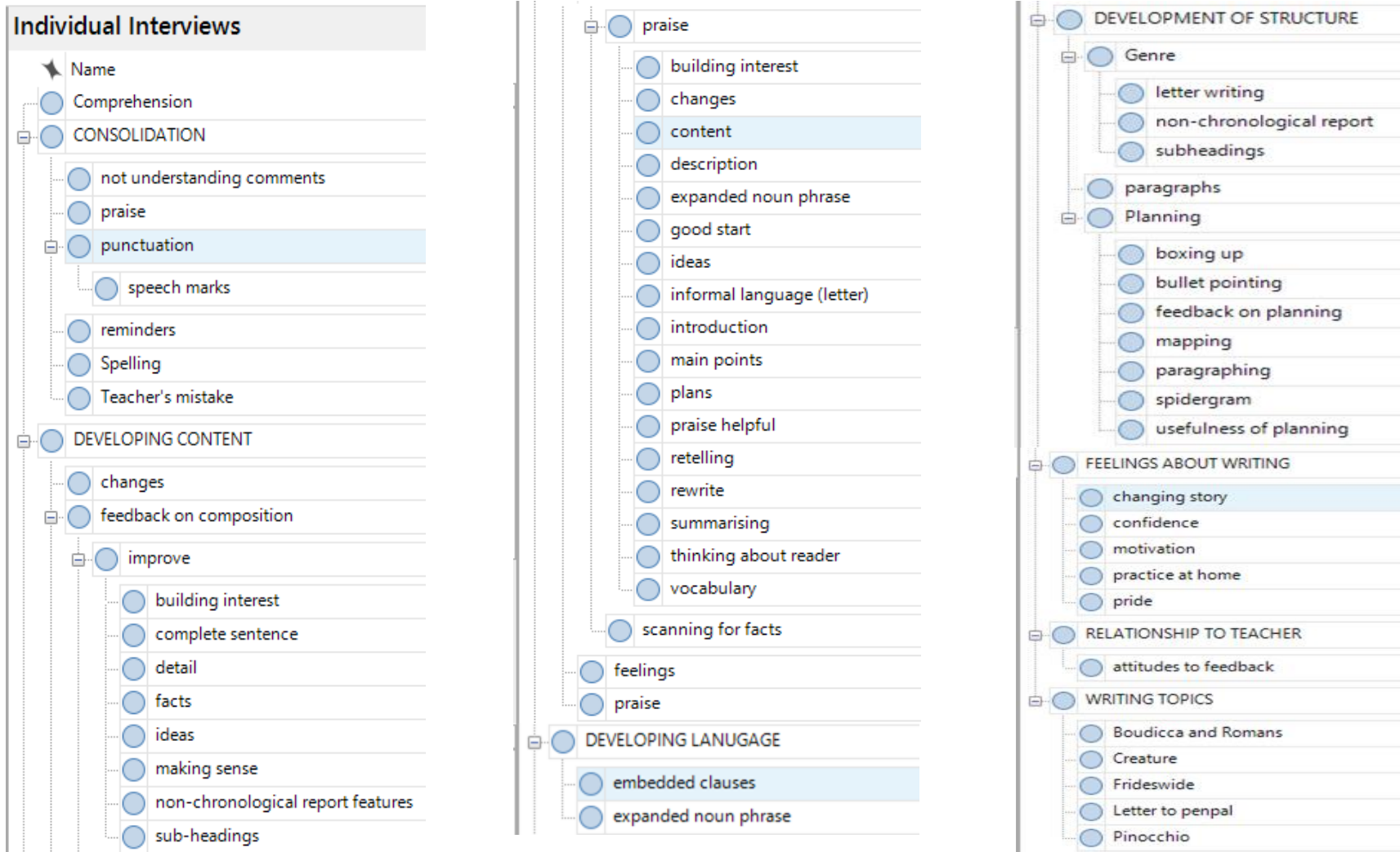


Figure 9-9: Second cycle codebook for individual interviews

Phase 4: Developing and reviewing themes

The regrouping of codes led to the initial identification of key themes. Data were then tabulated within themes to explore patterns within categories, and a thematic map was created. My initial analysis had followed a systematic inductive process, but once I had begun identifying themes, a more interpretive and reflexive process was used to distil and refine the themes within my theoretical framework (Finlay, 2021).

Phase 5: Refining, defining, and naming themes

Themes were reviewed in further maps in a process of clarification and distillation. Appendix H shows the evolution of thematic maps. The final thematic map appears in the next chapter in Figure 10-1. Finally, the key themes were defined and mapped. Selecting quotes from the children that typified their views was a helpful way of defining subthemes and provided a sense of the essence of each theme, whilst keeping close to ideas as they were expressed in the data (Braun and Clarke, 2022). Summaries were created for themes and subthemes, which were used in planning the presentation of the findings.

9.7 Summary

This chapter has articulated epistemological and positionality issues, has discussed the rationale for methodological decisions and actions taken in the research design and data collection, including ethical considerations, and has outlined the data analysis process. The resulting study in which six 8-9 year-olds from one class received different styles of feedback over a 12-week period, captured a rich body of data on the children's perspectives on both writing and written feedback. These data

were analysed thematically at semantic and latent levels. The results of the data collection and analysis follow in the next chapter.

10 Findings and Discussion Part 1: Introduction

This study set out to enable the views of primary school children to inform the debate surrounding the use of written feedback. The lack of evidence from younger children was identified as a gap in the research, which has mostly been carried out in secondary, further and higher education (Elliott *et al.*, 2016). The case study explored the perspectives on writing of six 8-9 year-olds and looked at how they responded to written feedback comments. This chapter reviews the findings in relation to the literature and the theoretical framework, and considers how children's perspectives on writing influence their use of feedback.

As stated previously, the two research questions addressed are:

What are children's perspectives on writing?

How do children respond to written feedback comments on different elements of writing?

A cumulative model of writing development is drawn on to understand how children learn to write and respond to written feedback. However, a sociocultural perspective is central to the study and this is used to explore the learning context of the classroom and consider the reasons why children might respond to feedback comments in the ways that they do. This is also used to explore how children's wider experience of literature and media influences their writing, and how their sociocultural environment determines their perspectives on and attitudes to writing.

10.1.1 Summary of data

Data from the case study was gathered through group interviews with all six children, as well as individual interviews with three of them (Section 9.4.1). The group as a whole were interviewed five times throughout the project:

- An initial group interview to discuss what they liked about writing and what they found difficult;
- Group interviews after each 4-week phase of the project, during which the children received written feedback on composition, then transcription, and finally their teacher's usual feedback;
- A final group interview to discuss what helped them with composition and transcription.

Individual interviews were carried out after each phase of feedback.

10.1.2 Rationale for the chosen themes

The sociocultural framework demands a holistic approach to data analysis, which suggests that educational approaches, such as written feedback, should be studied in context and as dynamically changing processes rather than as static products (Vygotsky, 1978). To explore the sociocultural background, data analysis explored the writing context of the classroom and children's socially appropriated ideas about writing. Theories about the cumulative acquisition of cognitive writing skills were also drawn on to understand how writing was scaffolded for children by the teacher and how children responded to written feedback.

Data analysis employed a combination of systematic inductive and semantic coding, followed by a more interpretive refinement of themes (Section 9.6.3). Semantic coding adhered closely to the children's own words, identifying ways in which children had responded to different aspects of writing. A second cycle of coding and further distillation of themes was used to draw out more latent meanings behind what they said. This aimed to inform a greater understanding of their motivations and attitudes. Returning to the children's own words, by using quotes to describe the subthemes, was an attempt to ensure that the way in which children narrated their views and experiences remained central to the analysis. This process focused upon areas where the data was strongest, and drew on the theoretical framework in relation to my research questions and the models of writing development. Four main themes were identified. The first two address the first research question, exploring children's perspectives on writing, but also their relationship with the teacher, which the data showed was an important influence on both their attitudes and how they approached the task of writing. The third and fourth themes relate to the second research question and the ways in which they responded to written feedback.

The first theme explores children's perspectives, perceptions, feelings and attitudes towards writing. It is termed *children's perspectives on writing* to include all these elements. These are important because children's attitudes to writing influence their attainment (Graham, Berninger and Fan, 2007), and therefore how they are likely to respond to feedback. Children's perceptions also reflect the wider social context in which they view writing – for example the influence on future prospects or writing at home. There was also a shared feeling amongst the children that although writing is difficult, persistence is necessary, and that writing is an important skill to master.

The data shows that the *children's relationship with the teacher* has a strong impact on how confident children feel about writing and the level of 'intersubjectivity' between them affects how children respond to feedback (Dyson, 1990, p.203). Children talked about being pleased when the teacher was impressed with their work, or praised what they had done well, but also feeling less confident when their errors were highlighted. They also expressed frustrations around not being able to pursue their own stories and ideas.

Two themes are drawn out of the ways in which children responded to written feedback. Firstly, *consolidating skills* considers how the children used some feedback comments, such as reminders and corrections, to help them apply their skills and knowledge in their writing. Increased consolidation and implementation were particularly observed in relation to punctuation. This reflects research that shows children at this age are automatising transcriptional skills (Berninger and Swanson, 1994; Connolly and Dockrell, 2017).

Children also used feedback prompts to extend or elaborate their ideas and to use different sentence structures. This forms the fourth theme: *developing content and language*. Prompts for additional detail, ideas or facts, often led to children adding extra material into their writing. In response to prompts for specific sentence structures, children attempted to include these in subsequent work. Quotes taken from the data are used to describe subthemes within these four themes as shown in Table 10-1. The table also summarises how the themes relate to the theoretical framework. The thematic map in Figure 10-1 shows interrelationships between the themes and subtheme.

Theme	Subthemes	Summary of subtheme
Children's perspectives on writing	'If you write good you're going to become a better person in life' (Child B, GP2)	Children said that writing was important for their future life chances.
	'When we write our own things I enjoy it' (Child A, GP2)	Children said they preferred to write their own stories over writing about some of the topics set by their teacher.
	'When my teacher does the ideas all the time' (Child E, FGI)	Children said that they did not like having to use the teacher's ideas all the time.
	'The worse (<i>sic</i>) part of writing is they take so long' (Child A, GP2)	Children said writing took a long time and could be boring.
	'You should never give up' (Child C, IGI)	Children said that it was important to persist when writing was difficult.
	'We can learn from our mistakes' (Child B, IGI)	Children said that they could learn from their mistakes.
Children's relationship with the teacher	'I really like what you said about what you've improved and how you impressed our teacher' (Child F to Child D, GP2)	Children valued their teacher's praise and talked about when this made them feel more confident.
	'I really like it when...' (Child C and Child F, GP2)	Children paid each other compliments on having confidence, doing well with their writing and learning from their mistakes.
Developing content and language	'I've put in a new idea' (Child B, IP1)	Children pointed out where they had added in new ideas in response to prompts for more detail.
	'It adds more detail and more information about it' (Child E, IP1)	Children pointed out where they had used specific sentence types in response to prompts from their teacher.
Consolidating skills	'They give me a reminder' (Child C, IP2)	Children said that prompts for punctuation and spelling acted as reminders.
	'The most helpful comments are the ones when I make mistakes' (Child A, GP3)	Children said that the most helpful comments were those that corrected their mistakes.
	'The beginning, the problem, the solution' (Child B, IP3)	Children said that reminders about the structure of paragraphs helped them plan their next piece of work.

Table 10-1: Summary of the four main themes and subthemes within them

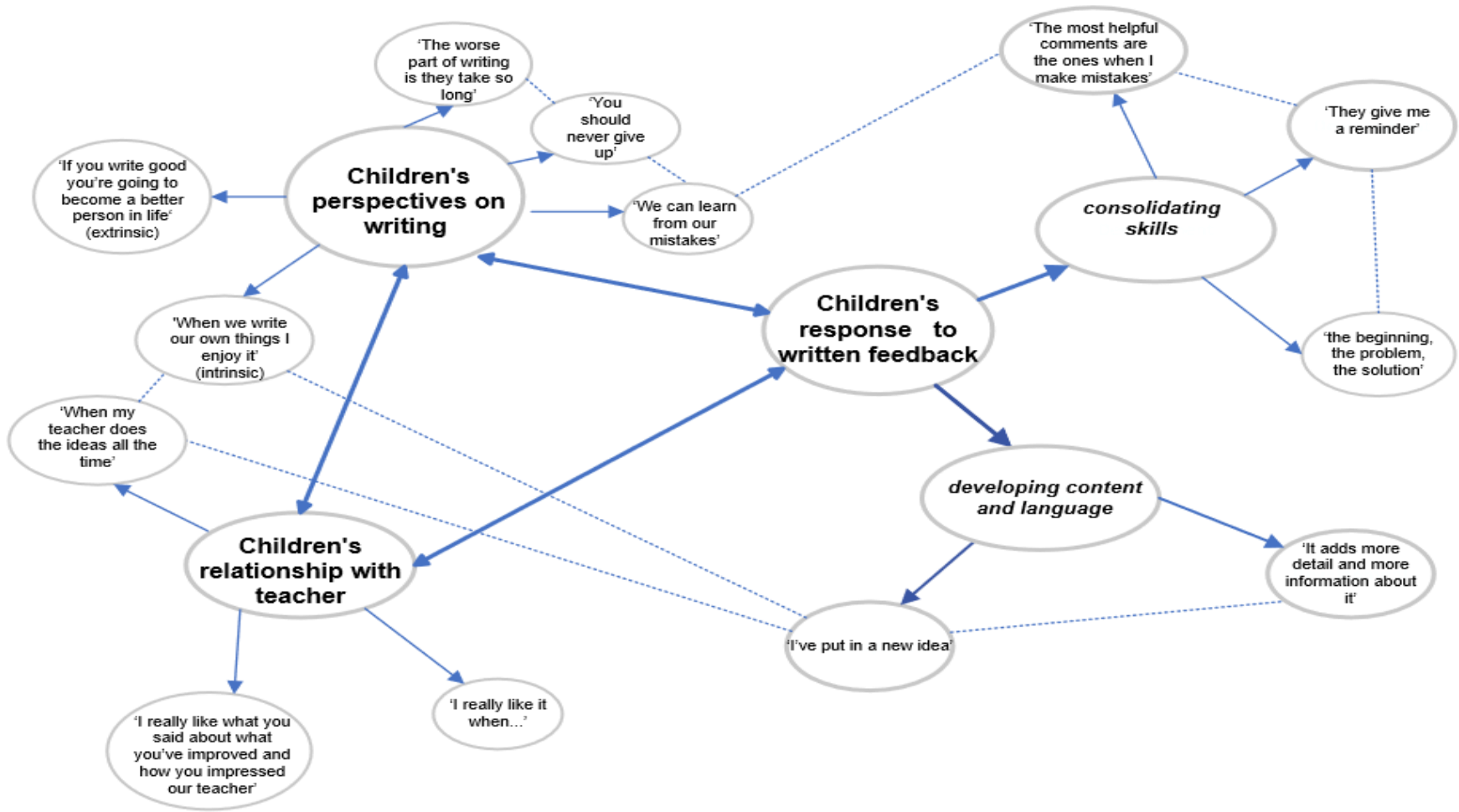


Figure 10-1: Thematic map

The map indicates the relationships between the themes. As will be shown, the children's perspectives on writing and their relationship with their teacher influenced both their attitude to writing in school, and how they responded to written feedback. Their teacher's feedback directly affected their confidence for writing.

10.2 The writing context of the class

In a sociocultural study, it is important to consider written feedback within the classroom context. This section provides background information on the writing context within the class, the approach to writing used, and what children were working on during each phase. The school used a writing process based on *Talk for Writing* (T4W) (DCSF, 2008). This provided a framework in which children developed the ideas for stories through a structured drafting process. In the prescribed approach, the teacher tells a story orally, which children retell with the teacher and then map out graphically before writing it in their own words ('imitation'). They then write a version with some changes to 'innovate' it, and then create their own story using the same structure for the 'invention' stage (DCSF, 2008, p.7). This approach builds on the theory that oral language is a precursor to writing and that writing is shaped by reading (Dockrell, Marshall and Wyse, 2015).

The teacher in the study did not adhere strictly to this sequence and adapted it for specific pieces of work. Generally, pieces of writing would start with the teacher telling a story, and children making a spider diagram of the main points before creating a story-map. In some topic-based pieces, a reading comprehension replaced the spider diagram. Stories were then 'boxed up' (DCSF, 2011, p.1) (Glossary of Terms, p.10), to produce a full plan. Often at this stage, children would make some minor changes

to the story, and write a first version. They then planned and wrote an adapted version of the story. For example, they wrote up the original story of Pinocchio, but then adapted it to produce a futuristic story about a robot. Although the sequence of planning and the introduction of an increasing number of changes varied from piece to piece, it still adhered to the stages of the T4W approach (DCSF, 2008, p.7).

From a sociocultural perspective, the T4W approach may help to scaffold the writing process for the children. What they thought of this will be considered during the discussion of the data. Dockrell, Marshall and Wyse (2015) suggest that in its prescribed form T4W provides more protracted scaffolding than that conceived by Wood, Ross and Bruner (1976), which may encourage children to be dependent on teacher support for longer. The teacher in the study was not adhering to a pure model of T4W, so it is difficult to establish whether this assertion applied to this particular class. Dockrell *et al.* (2015) find that the oral rehearsal of stories and visual planning strategies support early language acquisition, and that the formative assessment involved is particularly helpful (Section 5.5).

In Phase 1 of the project, the class moved from the use of boxing up sheets to bullet points. This gave children more room for their ideas, and without exception, they said they preferred this. The resulting plans were much more detailed, but perhaps more of a preliminary draft than an abstract plan. Whilst working on non-chronological reports, children also began to use subheadings within their planning, and for stories began to label paragraphs, for example, beginning, build up, ending. This seemed to provide better support for their writing.

During Phase 1, the class was studying the Romans. Children wrote non-chronological reports based on the story of Boudicca. Some children turned the story around, so that the Celts rather than the Romans were victorious. One child in the research group updated it to give the Celts modern, smart technology. In Phase 2, the children also began stories based on Pinocchio, with some of them modernising the story and turning Pinocchio into a robot. They also wrote letters to an imaginary alien pen pal. For Phase 3, work was based on the story of a local saint. In adapting this story, some children drew on ideas they had encountered in film and television, such as *Horrible Histories* and *Spiderman*.

In tracking children's progress, the school used an assessment continuum based on *National Curriculum* (DfE, 2014) objectives (Appendix B). This was designed to focus on formative assessment and avoid targets for particular year groups, but children's progress was tracked on a points system.

10.3 The derivation of data

The initial group interview provided an icebreaker activity to introduce the children to the project and the protocols of the group interview format. The data from this interview was particularly valuable in gaining an insight into children's attitudes to writing and information about the writing context of the class. Four of the children said they enjoyed writing their own stories and two said they enjoyed handwriting. Other things children liked were capital letters, drawing, sharing ideas and writing independently. They identified story mapping, making mistakes, spelling, handwriting and getting tired as difficulties.

Further data on children's perceptions of writing emerged through other group and individual interviews. Data is reported within themes using data from all interviews. Quotes from the data are therefore labelled to indicate the interview from which they are derived by phase and type of interview:

- IGI = initial group interview
- FGI = final group interview
- GP1 = group interview Phase 1
- IP3 = individual interview Phase 3

10.4 Organisation of chapter

The discussion of findings is split into two sections to address the research questions. Part 2 looks at children's perspectives on writing and Part 3 at their response to written feedback. The chapter ends with a section reflecting on the context of the study and its limitations (Part 4).

11 Findings and Discussion Part 2: Children's Perspectives on Writing

11.1 Introduction

This section explores children's perspectives in response to the first research question. Children in the case study saw writing as an important skill for their future life and career prospects, but there was something of a mismatch between their professed desire to write their own stories and the writing tasks they were asked to undertake in school.

11.2 Children's perspectives on writing

11.2.1 *'If you write good you're going to become a better person in life'*

The children felt strongly that it is important to be able to write well and saw this as important for their future life chances. They discussed extrinsic motivations for this. Child C saw being a good writer as a way of improving their future job prospects:

Because if you don't improve in your writing, so say if you're older, then your manager for your job, you're going to have to explain on a board or something. And then if you write messy, they won't know what you're writing (GP2).

Whilst Child B saw even wider advantages:

If you write good (sic), that's how you're going to learn and you're going to become a better person in life. You will have a better job, better wife, better kids and better life (GP2).

Child A disagreed. 'Being smart won't change your wife,' but Child C agreed 'with everything you said and that's true, that you work hard, you get money and you buy good things for your children, buy some stuff for your house,' whilst Child F felt they 'should have summed it up and said that if you do good stuff, you'll get better stuff in return' (GP2).

There is little research into the importance young children place on writing for their future career prospects, but the ability to write well provides wider job prospects and greater access to social and cultural life (Wyse 2017). As most adults would concur with this view, it seems likely that this attitude has been appropriated from the children's wider social community rather than just the school. Child B's assertions particularly may reflect home attitudes, as they talked about the additional work they had been doing with their mum. Child F also mentioned their mum commenting on improvements in their writing, which may again indicate parental encouragement and value of writing, whereas Child A's home life was less settled, which may account for their more negative comments. The children's perception of the importance of writing is reflected in their view that they should therefore work hard and be persistent in their acquisition of skills. This is discussed in Section 11.2.5.

11.2.2 'When we write our own things I enjoy it'

What emerged very clearly throughout the project was the children's enjoyment of writing their own stories. This concurs with the findings of Grainger, Gooch and

Lambirth (2003), the *Arvon* (Cremin *et al.*, 2020) and *Ministry of Story* (MoS) (Wyse, 2017) projects, that children enjoy freedom to use their imaginations and develop their own ideas. Children A, B, C and E particularly enjoyed writing their own stories. Child C said they loved writing and Child B that 'it's very fun and really good' (IGI). Child E felt they wrote better in Big Write (Wilson, 2012): 'I can use more of my imagination.... I just write, write, write' (IP3). They felt they wrote 'not longer, but better' (GP1). Child B and Child C also enjoyed sharing stories with their friends. Child C explained that 'you can read out the story and see if they like it' (IGI). In the final group interview, when asked to summarise what they found helpful for composition, five of the children (B, C, D, E and F) identified using their imagination, and Child A and Child C both valued having time to think.

Using their imagination was seen as important for writing. Child A had a somewhat ambivalent attitude to writing, complaining that writing took a long time and that set topics, such as the Romans, could be boring. However, they said, 'I like writing stories, (smiley face). I like writing independently' (IGI). 'I like drawing to my writing. I like to write about fake things. Crazy things from my imagination, aliens, dragons, trolls, monsters. When we write our own things I enjoy it' (GP2). Child C and Child E also expressed a preference for using their own ideas over those set by the teacher. Child E said they liked writing about things to do with the past and their future life, but 'I don't like doing different things' (IGI).

The children's preference for imaginative writing may in part be due to the difficulty of writing on unfamiliar topics set as part of the school curriculum. Children tend to write in a 'knowledge telling' mode (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987, p.5), recalling what they know from their long-term memory (Section 4.4). Their ability to write on a set

topic will therefore depend on their prior knowledge and ability to retrieve information (Haynes and Berninger, 2014). A lack of prior knowledge about topics set in school may inhibit the way children are able to respond. As Hayes and Berninger find, a large proportion of what children write tends to be based on fantasy, which is less reliant on subject knowledge, and to some extent this may account for the children's preference (Section 5.5).

A strategy that was specifically taught through the *Talk for Writing* (T4W) (DCSF, 2008, p.12) approach to help the children develop ideas for writing was 'magpieing'. This involved taking ideas from books and other media to adapt in their writing. It was interesting to see where children sourced ideas and how they used them. For example, when developing a story based on that of a local saint who disobeyed their father, Child B wrote a story about a rat whose father wanted him to be a sewer rat, but who preferred to be a cheesemaker. An idea they said had come from the *Horrible Histories* television series. Similarly, Child C included ideas from a *Spiderman* movie. Many ideas that children included in their writing had derivations in films and television programmes, suggesting the kind of cultural appropriation discussed by Rogoff (1995) in which children acquire ideas about writing from the sociocultural environment. Dyson (1997) illustrates vividly how children take ideas from books and other media and adapt them in their writing. Both she and Cremin (2017) see this as an essential and important step in the process of learning to write. The *Ministry of Story* project (Wyse 2017) demonstrates how 8-11 year-olds use ideas in this way, but over time become more confident to generate their own ideas and so become more original.

In contrast, Child F did not like magpieing. They said, 'Magpie-ing is bad, because when I magpie I copy everything, but I'm really happy when (I get) stuff from my

beautiful mind' (FGI). Child F clearly valued using their imagination, and they talked about improving their narrative writing through an imaginative process: 'I've improved my narrative writing because I was pretending I was the narrator for Pinocchio P4NO' (GP2). It may be that Child F has not understood that adapting ideas from other sources is a natural and important part of learning to write in the way Dyson (1990) and Cremin (2017) suggest, or that this is viewed by the teacher as a learning intention. Dyson argues that it is the teacher's role to help children understand the learning intentions, and it may be that Child F needs additional support to understand this. Child F was the only child in the group to report a difficulty with thinking up ideas, so this lack of understanding may have been hindering their compositional process.

The development of ideas for composition is not considered in the cognitive models of writing development, but is the foundation of the *Talk for Writing* (T4W) 3Is approach: imitation, innovation and invention (DCSF, 2008, p.7)(Section 5.5). The approach is built on the concept that spoken language is a precursor to writing, with greater originality developing through the three stages. The imitation stage enables children to build their skills through a process similar to the 'knowledge telling' mode of writing proposed by Bereiter and Scardamalia, (1987, p.5). It helps children to write about what they know before developing their own interpretations and ideas. Data shows that three of the children (B, C and D) saw magpieing as a source of ideas and the T4W approach perhaps encouraged them to bring their sociocultural experience to the writing task through this. Being specifically taught to adapt ideas appropriated from their experience seemed to enable them to access what they already knew and use their imaginations to adapt ideas to their current purpose.

11.2.3 'When my teacher does the ideas all the time'

The children expressed some frustration at what they saw as the teacher putting limits on their writing, by stipulating the process where stories were changed incrementally rather than all at once. For example, Child C showed frustration about the teacher wanting to limit the number of changes they made in one piece of work. The teacher had written 'Does this stick to the structure we have been working with? Think about the story of (local saint) and make one change,' but Child C said they wanted 'to add more to the story that I'm working on, instead of [the teacher's] changes' (IP3). In this instance, they felt they could miss out some of the rewriting stages of the T4W (DCSF, 2008) process and plan changes straight into bullet points before writing their own version of the story. On the other hand, the teacher may have considered ideas about 'Thanos in the Spiderverse' from *Spiderman* inappropriate in the story of a local saint. Child C also showed something of an independent spirit, as in their comment in the initial group interview seen in Section 11.2.5 about not caring about what other people think. It may be that the T4W approach works better for some children than others.

This example perhaps indicates that some limitations were placed on the ideas the children were encouraged to bring to their writing. It also raises the issue of 'intersubjectivity' between the children and their teacher (Dyson, 1990, p.203). Dyson proposes that unless children's understanding of writing aligns with that of the teacher, they will struggle to respond appropriately to instruction. There seemed to be a lack of understanding by the children on a number of levels. There were the misunderstandings already discussed about the benefits of magpieing and the appropriateness of ideas, but the children perhaps also had misconceptions about the overall purpose of what they were being asked to do, such as the example discussed

later (Section 12.4.3), in which Child C's showed a lack of understanding of non-chronological report writing. Dann (2015) and Feil (2015) find that there is often a lack of shared understanding between children and their teachers, and as Dyson (1990) shows, young children may have different concepts about the purpose of writing for developmental reasons.

Children in the case study were able to talk about the requirements of writing in school, but their frustration at having to follow topics and ideas set by the teacher created some tension between the teacher's intent and the children's desire to follow their own ideas. Child A said that they did not enjoy either the Romans or Pinocchio, with Child C and Child F agreeing that topics could sometimes be boring, and Child E saying they did not like it when 'the teacher does the ideas all the time' (FGI). Child E also commented on this in a later interview, saying 'my teacher said we could make our own story but we still have to use the ideas they make up' (IP2). Child F had challenged the teacher on this. 'I'm like, why can't I do my own work? And they're like, because you have to do more, and I'm really sad' (FGI).

Grainger *et al.*, (2003) find that children find greater freedom and satisfaction in writing at home and this is reflected by a comment from Child B: 'What we learnt about writing is that we can write our own story at home, we can write our own songs... or... make stuff up. But at school we do like the story [set by the teacher]' (GP2). The phrasing here suggests this was something that had been discussed in class. The findings of the *Ministry of Story* project indicate that freedom to write without the restrictions and stipulations of the classroom leads to greater engagement and motivation for story writing (Wyse, 2017). Myhill (2013) and Cremin (2017) propose that encouragement to experiment with both ideas and language is helpful to children's development of

composition, and helps them to apply their linguistic and grammar skills in their writing. This may also engender greater engagement, and an 'affective disposition', or positive attitude to writing, which as Graham *et al.* (2007, p.518) assert is predictive of achievement as discussed in Section 7.3. The case study children's preference for using their own imagination and ideas suggests that the creative aspects of writing help to engage their interest and create a positive attitude to writing.

The children's frustrations with writing in school may also be indicative of the decline in children's enjoyment of writing shown more generally by this age group in regular surveys by the National Literacy Trust (NLT). The percentage of 8-18 year-olds who enjoy writing either very much or quite a lot fell in 2019, the year of the study, compared with figures for 2010-2018 (Clark, Best and Picton, 2021). Further analysis in the 2022 survey (Clark, Lant and Reid, 2022) shows that 8-11 year-olds are the age group who enjoy writing least. Grainger *et al.* (2003) propose that this may be due to the focus on technical skills within the curriculum, in which case greater freedom to pursue their own ideas may help to maintain children's interest and engagement. Myhill (2013) argues that this freedom needs to be combined with greater attention to helping children develop metacognitive skills about *how* they compose. As, for instance, in the conjunction of metacognition with the *Process Approach* (Graves, 1983) (Section 5.5), advocated by Young (2019) for encouraging children to write for pleasure. Teaching the compositional process more explicitly might help children to a better understanding of how this works, and further engage them in the creativity that those in the case study said they enjoyed.

11.2.4 'The worse (sic) part of writing is they take so long'

Although children liked writing their own stories, they also complained that writing is difficult, boring and takes a long time. Four children identified transcriptional skills as tedious, whilst two felt that planning took too long. This may reflect the areas they were currently developing. The attitude that transcription, particularly handwriting and spelling, is difficult correlates with the findings of Grainger, Gooch and Lambirth (2003) that 7-9 year-olds dislike spelling and punctuation, and complain that writing is boring and makes their hands ache.

The children's comments about the difficulty of writing were mostly around transcriptional skills. Child F did not appear confident about their writing. They said that they liked handwriting but felt 'happy when I finish because... I'm relieved that I've done so much work and now I've completed it' (IGI). They said they were slow at writing but that if they wrote quickly they made spelling errors. They also said that they sometimes felt 'nervous' when they wrote (IGI). Child A and Child B also said writing was difficult. Child D, who was working at a much lower level of literacy than the rest of the group, discussed working on capital letters and handwriting. They said that 'because I can't write very well...it's making me bored. It's like a too long sentence' (GP2). Child C and Child E, who spoke more confidently about their writing did not refer to any difficulty with transcription, perhaps reflecting a greater level of technical proficiency. As will be shown later (Section 12.4.2) this was reflected in the teacher's written feedback to them.

The children's feelings about the difficulties of writing may be explained by the models of writing development, which indicate that children at the age of those in the study (8-

9 years), are developing and consolidating their transcriptional skills (Connolly and Dockrell, 2017). In relation to Berninger and Swanson's (1994) model the children in the study fall towards the older end of the primary grades (6-9 years). Writing for children at this age is influenced by their ability to retrieve and use the alphabetic code and to handwrite fluently. Difficulty with these skills will demand concentration that allows less cognitive capacity for compositional skills (MacArthur and Graham, 2017).

Child A and Child E also complained that the planning process of story mapping before writing took too long, and said they often preferred just to write. De La Paz and McCutchen (2016) suggest that young children's planning is often pictorial, but Child A and Child E may have been moving beyond the stage of needing to plan in this way and therefore saw story mapping as unhelpful. Child E was working above age-related-expectation (ARE) and may have been moving towards Berninger and Swanson's (1994) intermediate category (9-12 years). At this stage, children's transcriptional skills become automated, therefore their writing will be less constrained by orthographic coding, and the constraining influences will be their linguistic abilities in producing words, sentences, and text structures. Children aged 9-12, according to Berninger and Swanson, begin to plan their writing in advance, and this was something the children in the case study were being taught to do through the *Talk for Writing* (T4W) (DCSF, 2008) approach. This will be discussed further in Section 12.4.3.

11.2.5 'You should never give up'

The children's (B, C, D, E and F) view that writing is an important skill to master is perhaps the reason that there was agreement in some of the group that learning to

write needed persistence and hard work. This was addressed in some of the questions children asked of each other and their exchanges, as the following ones exemplify:

Child B: If you don't get it right, do you give up?

Child C: No, I keep on trying. So I never give up, I keep on trying.

Child B: If you don't, if you get it right, and then if you get it wrong and then somebody else says that you got it right, do you feel good or bad?

Child C : I would feel good because I don't care what other people say, I just worry about myself, not them, because they're not in my life, they don't tell me what to do. I just keep on doing what I do (IGI).

Child C particularly seemed to adhere to this view, raising it several times over the course of the project, whilst Child B reported working hard on their writing and doing extra work at home.

Child C: Do you like say, I can't do it, let me give up, or do you actually say, no, instead of giving up, let me try and try and never give up?

Child E: My answer is, never give up.

Child C: Yes, that's true because, you never know, you might get it right (IGI).

The need to work hard was reflective of the importance the children placed on writing as a necessary skill for their future prospects and the impact it would have on their life-

chances. As suggested earlier, this may be an attitude they have acquired from home as well as school.

11.2.6 'We can learn from our mistakes'

This attitude was also aligned to the children's views about how they might improve their writing. Four children particularly stressed the importance of learning from their mistakes. Again, an exchange between children illustrates their thinking.

Child A: The thing is, if you don't get something wrong you can't improve.

Child B: I know if we don't improve, we can't improve either, we can learn from our mistakes and just, it's going to be good (IGI).

They said that feedback was most helpful when their mistakes were highlighted or corrected. Both Weeden *et al.* (1999) and Marrs *et al.* (2016) find that children think that it is helpful to learn from their mistakes. The discussion of mistakes and the teacher's corrections arose a number of times, and will be discussed further in Section 12.4.2 in relation to how children viewed feedback in which their errors were corrected. Suffice it to say here, having their mistakes pointed out may be an area where the teacher is helping them to understand what is needed and this may improve the 'intersubjectivity' between them (Dyson, 1990, p.203). As will also be discussed in Section 12.4.1, the teacher often picked up children's misunderstandings and addressed these through additional work with small groups. This reflects the teacher's use of formative assessment through the feedback process to plan classroom support.

11.3 Children's relationship with the teacher

11.3.1 *'I really like what you said about what you've improved and how you impressed our teacher'*

One important finding of the case study was the impact that feedback from the teacher, either in written comments or verbally in the classroom, had on children's confidence for writing. Hattie and Timperley (2007) find that praise has a low impact on improving children's work, especially where it is unspecific, and suggest that either students ignore it or it reduces self-reliance (Section 6.2). However, the children in the case study appeared to value their teacher's praise. Child F perhaps best exemplifies this. Despite working at ARE, they did not appear particularly confident about their writing, describing how writing made them feel nervous, 'Because I don't know what to write sometimes, I feel happy when I finish' (IGI). Praise seemed to boost their confidence, for example, when they learned to spell 'auxiliary', they said, 'I've improved my writing. I used to write really bad (*sic*) and it was the worst handwriting you've ever seen. Now, mine is super good. My mum thinks it's super good too' (GP1). They seemed particularly keen to please the teacher and when the teacher was more positive, their confidence was boosted. 'I really like it when they do like stars and stuff like that. The stars look cool' (GP3). In contrast they reported a dislike for having all their errors highlighted, and like some of the children in the Marrs *et al.* (2016) study, appeared to find this hurtful. For example, they said that they did not like it when the teacher told them about their mistakes, 'because like I really like my work and then they say that's really bad' (FGI). Asked by Child C if they read through their work before showing the teacher, Child F said 'I just show them to see what's wrong or right' (IGI). This suggests that they did not have confidence in their own evaluation, and looked to the

teacher for guidance. Child F's low self-confidence may have led to a lack of self-dependence and overreliance on the teacher's praise (Hattie and Timperley, 2007).

Inevitably, some children were more able writers than others, yet whatever their writing ability, the children's confidence often appeared to be influenced by the feedback they received. Child E appeared to be the most confident writer and was working above ARE. They were learning to include subordinate clauses and more advanced punctuation, such as speech marks, and their book reflected increased usage of features such as subheadings and speech marks over the time of the project. In Phase 2, the teacher praised Child E for including the features of a non-chronological report. Child E said they now felt 'very confident' (IP3) about this genre. In contrast, Child D was working well below ARE, and was still consolidating the use of finger spaces, capital letters and full stops. They reported that they were particularly pleased when the teacher was 'impressed' with the neatness of their handwriting (GP1).

Child B's confidence seemed to increase the most over the course of the project. They became more consistent in their use of full stops and capital letters, and discussed how practising at home was helping them to improve. In Phase 3, new glasses boosted their confidence further. 'I have learnt an awful lot. I have got new glasses, so I can do it more properly.....it's very good, I love that' (GP3). In one instance, Child B also talked about wanting to work independently without the teacher's help.

My teacher writes like sentences for some children. They copy it but then I just have more ideas, like I rush through, I just know all of it. I just say, and I even asked them, like if I don't need help, can I just go on the other tables? Because the other tables don't need that much work? And they say, you can if you want to (IP2).

This seems to be a sign of the child's growing confidence and agency rather than a frustration, and reflects a reciprocal relationship in the teacher's positive response. By allowing Child B to work independently, the teacher is employing Bruner's 'handover principle', handing the child responsibility for managing their own writing task and beginning to reduce the scaffold of support previously provided (Bruner, 1983, p.60). Child B's agency here illustrates Rogoff's (1990) point that children demand greater responsibility as they gain competence. Child B seemed pleased by the teacher's positive response.

Although appearing generally confident about their writing, there were instances where Child C was less certain about some features requested by the teacher. For example, in Phase 1, they were asked to use subheadings and in Phase 2 to include expanded noun phrases, but at the time they were not sure about either of these (IP2). When children do not understand what the teacher is asking for they are unable to respond appropriately (Bazerman, 2017), and this seems to have been the case for Child C. However, following small group work with the teacher, they were able to use both features in their writing in Phase 3. 'I have been using vocabulary, expanded noun phrases, always using capital letters, better handwriting. Neat handwriting, full stops and I've done good (*sic*) and I'm proud of myself' (GP3).

Child A's confidence also seemed variable. Child A did not seem particularly confident, but their motivation seemed to depend on what they were writing about. They enjoyed writing their own stories, but found school topics less interesting. Of story mapping they said, 'I don't find mind maps boring but sometimes I do, it depends how I'm feeling....I think it's more of just I can't be bothered to take so long on it' (IG1).

The case study reflected Marrs *et al.*'s (2016) study in finding that most children feel that the attention paid to their writing by their teacher is a positive affirmation. The children were eager to please and said that they were proud of themselves when the teacher was impressed with their work. This helped to build their confidence and foster an 'affective disposition' (Graham *et al.*, 2007, p.518). Affect and motivation are important components within models of writing (Hayes and Flower, 1980; Hayes, 1996), and particularly in Berninger and Swanson's (1994) model of writing development. Teacher approval through feedback appeared to play a large part in this for the case study children. As found in other studies (Weeden *et al.*, 1999; Dann, 2015; Feil, 2021), it seems that despite some negative feelings about feedback, the children valued their teacher as the expert and trusted them to know best, looking to them as a 'more capable other' (MCO) (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86).

11.3.2 'I really like it when....'

The children's ideas and attitudes often emerged through the exchanges between them. Child C and Child F often complimented other children for their responses during group interviews. These comments seemed to reflect children's values, for example they appeared to value confidence in speaking out in class about their work:

Child C to Child D (GP1): I really like the way you feel confident when you're speaking and like when you sometimes, in the classroom I see you and you're confident telling the teacher about your story.

Child F to Child C (GP2): You have a very good sense of speaking and I really like how you talk.

Some comments reflected attitudes seen elsewhere in the data, for example, the view that they could learn from their mistakes discussed in Section 11.2.6 was reflected in the following comment.

Child F to Child E (GP3): I really like it when you said that you like your mistakes and like you learnt from them. And like if you don't get mistakes, you will just like try and improve yourself and try and like look over your work and do cool stuff like that.

The children also valued each other's' ability to work on improving their work:

Child C to Child E (GP1): I like the way that you're being confident and saying you're using different targets to help you, and the one you've got, you're going to be doing different things. So instead of only doing one thing, you're actually doing something else different and I like that.

Child F to Child D (GP2): I really like what you said about what you've improved and how you impressed our teacher.

It is interesting that Child C and Child F made these types of comment. In contrast, as seen in the interaction about life chances in Section 11.2.1, Child A sometimes countered or challenged other children's comments. On one occasion they questioned a similar compliment. Child C had listed a number of things they had improved in their writing and said that they were proud of themselves, and Child F had complimented them on what they had said. However, Child A pushed Child C to be more specific. 'Why are you proud of yourself? What did you mainly do to make yourself proud of yourself? Child C responded that they had got better at making expanded noun phrases (GP3). There is too little evidence in the data to surmise anything specific

about the relationships between the children, or what sometimes appeared as Child A's oppositional response to others, but it perhaps indicates differences in attitudes. It should perhaps also be noted that although Child B occasionally asked questions of other children, they were generally less involved in group exchanges except when it was their turn to present their mind map. As discussed in Section 9.5.1, Child D took part in alternative group interviews for Phase 2 and 3.

The compliments discussed above may reflect praise given by the teacher, as phrasing used on different occasions seems somewhat formulaic, for example, 'I really like it when...' This may be an instance of children using the 'pedagogic voice' (Arnot and Reay, 2007, p.311) and may indicate that Child C and Child F are assuming values implied by their teacher, either through praise or other implicit signals about what they value (Lee, 2019). Teaching will be influenced by the *National Curriculum* (Wyse, 2017) and testing regimes (Lee, 2019), and by the teacher's own understanding and sociocultural experience of writing (Section 5.6). These findings highlight that in addition to appropriating ideas and knowledge, children's views and attitudes are also formed by their classroom experience, and this may differ for individuals.

Hayes (1996, p.4) includes 'collaborators' as part of the social environment in his writing model, and in setting topics and goals for writing the teacher is in effect co-author of the child's work and often the only reader (Wray, 1993). The case study demonstrates the important role the teacher played in the development of the children's writing. They set the topics, told the initial story, discussed ways of planning, supported technical skills through small group work, read and responded to the children's writing, and influenced the children's confidence with their feedback. The teacher's role is not considered in Berninger and Swanson's (1994) model of writing

development (Section 5.6) as this is concerned with how children's cognitive writing skills develop, but Berninger later considered the importance of 'the teacher's instruction' (Berninger and Winn, 2006, p.97) through the adaptation of 'the learning triangle' (Berninger *et al.*, 2001, p.197) (Section 2.5). Teacher instruction and the instructional approaches used make up two sides of the triangle, with the learner's brain on the other. The case study suggests that the style of instruction may be a useful consideration in relation to models of writing development. Children's relationship with their teacher will influence how they respond to feedback, so it is important to note that that children in the case study expressed some negativity and frustration, as well as being keen to please. It is also important to be aware that children might pick up implicit values that may or may not be intentionally communicated by the teacher.

11.4 Summary

The children in the case study enjoyed writing their own stories and using their imagination, but were not always interested in topics set in school. This may indicate a difference in understanding about the purposes of writing between the children and their teacher, or a lack of prior knowledge may make it harder for children to respond to some curriculum topics. Children were encouraged to 'magpie' ideas from things they had read, heard or seen that helped them to develop the compositional ideas of their work (DCSF, 2008, p.12). This may help them to bring learning appropriated through their broader experience to their writing (Tolchinsky, 2017). The children's comments about developing their own ideas suggest that some additional freedom may enable them to write on topics of greater interest to them.

The children saw writing as important for their future life prospects and that it is therefore important to be persistent, work hard and learn from their mistakes. These values may have been derived from their teacher, but it is likely that they are also influenced by their experience beyond school. There are small indications of the influence that home background played in some of the children's perceptions of writing. Those who mentioned parental support shared the attitude that writing well would improve their life chances. The case study illustrates the influence of the children's relationship with their teacher and the impact of the teacher's instruction in shaping the writing task. The teacher made use of the T4W approach and class discussion to scaffold the writing process. This was seen in the use of the 3Is structure, and the use of story maps, boxing up and bullet pointing. The teacher's response to children's writing often appeared to determine how confident they felt. The children's perspectives on writing are clearly dependent on their individual experiences, the approaches used within the class teaching, and the teacher's response to their writing. These will influence their response to written feedback discussed in the next section.

12 Findings and Discussion Part 3: Children's Response to Written Feedback

12.1 Introduction

The teacher's written comments, recorded during interviews, are collated for the three phases in Appendix I. During Phase 1, the teacher gave feedback for composition. Their comments focused on praise for content and text organisation, and suggested next steps asked children to include more details, facts or original ideas, as well as features of a non-chronological report, such as sub-headings (Appendix Table I-1).

In Phase 2 the focus was on transcription. Praise was given for the use of speech marks, finger spaces, and features of a non-chronological report. Although the *National Curriculum* (NC) (DfE, 2014) suggests that transcription comprises handwriting and spelling, punctuation formed the focus for many of the next steps suggested by the teacher, with a small number on spelling. (Appendix Table I-2).

In Phase 3 the teacher returned to their usual feedback style, commenting on both composition and transcription skills. The teacher praised children for their ideas and textual features, for example expanded noun phrases and use of informal language for a letter, but did not ask for additional ideas. One next step comment related to the structure of the story and the child was asked to 'make one change', but many next steps related to proofreading and punctuation (Appendix Table I-3).

The two school terms over which the project ran provide a short snapshot of written feedback in which only some aspects of writing were addressed. The most plentiful

data, both in the teacher's feedback comments and in what children said, particularly in individual interviews, was on punctuation, sentence structure, the use of paragraphs and subheadings, and prompts on ideas and content. These are therefore the areas reported in this thesis. Although feedback was separated into compositional and transcriptional strands, as has been discussed (Section 5.2), the division between the two is not clear. Nor were children's comments confined to the separate phases and they often continued to discuss learning covered in a previous phase. Therefore, the findings are reported here in relation to the ways in which children viewed and responded to comments. Data from group and individual interviews throughout the project are combined to present a complete picture of each theme. Within each theme there is evidence of how children have responded to comments, and how they think this has helped them to apply their skills and knowledge in their writing.

12.2 Children's response to written feedback

For the most part, children spoke positively of written feedback, which contrasts to children in some previous studies (Weeden *et al.*, 1999). Unlike children in Weeden *et al.*'s study, all children interviewed individually were able to read their teacher's comments. However, the pattern of feedback differed, in that the teacher gave specific suggestions for improvement rather than focusing on effort in a general way, for example, 'Try harder' (Weeden *et al.*, 1999, p.13). Clarke finds that children are more positive where the 'success and improvement' model is adopted (Clarke, 2003, p.94), as it was in the case study, and this is reflected in the findings.

Children found it helpful to know what they could improve. The children interviewed individually could discuss how they had responded to specific comments in their

writing, for example by pointing out where they had added extra detail or included specific sentence constructions. As Child B stated, 'My teacher's comments give me ideas for me to improve my writing' (IP2). Child B also said they liked the use of coloured pens because 'the pink one shows me that I've screwed up kind of, and the green one shows me that's a bit like wrong' (IP3). Although they seemed somewhat confused about what the colours signified, they said it was helpful to know where they had gone wrong. Child C said it was also helpful to know what they had done well (IP3) and, as seen in Section 11.3.1, the children enjoyed receiving praise from their teacher, which had a positive effect on their confidence.

One of the key findings was that the children consistently said that they found feedback comments on transcription more helpful than those on composition. This exchange from the group interview at the end of Phase 2 typifies this assertion. At this point in the study, the group had received separate feedback on both composition and transcription. I asked them which type of feedback had helped them improve the most:

Child F: Transcription because I think that when [the teacher] does transcription, I think that like it's a reminder for me to use my capital letters.

Child E: I think transcription because like, because I've been learning like to remember using my capital letters, punctuation and like other stuff.

Child C: Transcription.

Child B: I have improved after half term (GP2).

It is possible that children's answers were influenced by the feedback they had experienced most recently, but Child C and Child E also reflected this view in individual interviews and the final group interview.

This view reflects attitudes noted by Dann (2015), and there was considerably more data relating to technical elements. This was partly due to children receiving prompts for improving compositional elements only during Phase 1, as when the teacher returned to their usual style of feedback in Phase 3 they did not include these. Dockrell, Marshall and Wyse (2016) identified a similar focus on technical issues by teachers. This will be discussed more fully later.

Given feedback on transcriptional elements, children did not go back to amend their work. Child C explained this was partly a time issue 'because after English we have to like tidy up... and line up for lunch' (IP2), but the children said that these comments and teacher's corrections acted as reminders for later work. In contrast, where children were asked to add extra compositional detail to their work, they often went back to put in additional sentences. As will be seen, there is evidence that children were taking note of feedback and using it to consolidate their skills in subsequent work.

Data on how children responded to feedback mostly came from the individual interviews in which they discussed feedback in their writing books. They appeared to respond to comments in two ways. In response to prompts for more detail and specific types of sentence children tended to add in extra material, whereas in response to reminders and corrections they took no immediate action, but tried to include the suggestions in their next piece of writing. There was a good deal more data on this second type.

12.3 Developing content and language

Prompts for ideas and specific sentences encouraged children to make additions to their work, thus developing the content and language of their writing (Section 10.1.2).

12.3.1 'I've put in a new idea'

Participants' preference for writing their own stories and developing their own ideas may explain their response to feedback comments on the content of their work. Whilst they viewed comments on other writing elements as reminders for future work, they seemed more inclined to act on prompts asking for more detail, facts or further ideas. One reason for this may be that ideas are specific to each piece of work. As prompts are less likely to feedforward into their next piece, this may encourage children to respond more directly within the current work. For example, being asked to add facts on the Romans will have little relevance to a story about Pinocchio. These comments therefore need to be dealt with immediately.

Clarke (2003) suggests that asking children to elaborate and extend their ideas is a helpful way of encouraging them to make improvements. In their written feedback on composition, the teacher praised children on what they had done well, such as making a good start or including good information. In the next steps, they encouraged children to use more of their own ideas or add more detail. The children interviewed had generally responded to such comments by making additions to their work. When asked about a comment asking for 'more ideas of your own' Child B said, 'So I wrote a bit of it out and I've put another, I changed the ideas, I've put in a new idea' (IP1). Likewise, in response to 'A very good start, I would like to see some more of your own ideas in the next part.' They had added in, 'I am a good and strict Roman' (IP1).

Child C had also made additions in response to comments, for example:

Comment: This is a strong introduction to your story, and it makes the Romans seem very confident. In the next paragraph could you try to include more of your own ideas, different to the ones we did in class?

Child C added: We tried to reason with them, and we made peace. However, those selfish, ungrateful Celts refused our reasonable taxes (IP1).

In response to another comment asking for more of their own ideas, Child C had developed the idea of the Celts having smart technology 'like sat navs': 'As they [the Romans] didn't have smart technology. So, then that's why they came to invade Britain, Queen Boudicca's land, because they were the ones who had smart technology' (IP1).

Child E's writing already demonstrated a greater degree of detail and organisation than their classmates', but the teacher continued to prompt them for more elaboration. However, Child E made less additions to already completed work than others in the group.

Comment: Try to make it realistic for this story. He wasn't the ruler of Rome, but maybe a Roman Army Leader.

Child E: I changed it to leader (IP1).

It is difficult to judge the impact feedback comments have on children's writing when they have taken no action, but as with comments that children said acted as reminders, feedback comments on their ideas may still help children to reflect on their writing.

Comment: This bit is great. I know we thought of it together, but it really shows you thinking about the context of the story in history and linking to our topic work.

Child E: And then I just really thought (*sic*) about it, I really didn't concentrate, I just thought about it (IP1).

Later the teacher had commented 'good way to build interest in the next paragraph' when Child E had written about the Romans going to war. 'I made that one, like my army, like my character's army one. And then they had peace for like only five years and then the next five years they had another war' (IP1).

The fact that some comments were responded to and not others may be due to how specific they were. For example, the comment to Child E. 'Can you add some more detail about Brutus and why Caesar gave up fighting?' (IP1) elicited further elaboration, but comments which were of a more general nature, such as 'Could you include some more of your own ideas?' (Child B, IP1) did not. Children may have been less certain in how to respond to this kind of guidance. As Bazerman (2017) argues, where children do not understand what feedback is asking for, they will be unable to respond. Clarke (2003) suggests four types of prompt to encourage children to develop the content of their work (Section 6.4), and provides examples that demonstrate how successful these can be. Her examples are specific about what they ask children to do, either to elaborate or extend an idea, add a word or sentence, find

a better word, or justify an idea. There is a danger that comments that are too specific restrict children's ideas, but where the teacher was specific the children were able to respond appropriately and this perhaps helped them to understand the learning intentions.

Comments during the composition phase asking children to elaborate on what they had written particularly appeared to help them to develop their ideas and add detail to their work. They seemed to reinforce the *Talk for Writing* (T4W) (DCSF, 2008) approach the teacher was using to scaffold the compositional process for children, helping the children to develop their ideas in more detail. This corroborates Clarke's (2003) assertion that this type of prompting is beneficial. It is therefore significant that this type of prompt is used so sparingly in the teacher's usual feedback style during the final phase of the study.

Fayol (1991) suggests that through regular questioning about the content of their writing, children will begin to pre-empt what might be asked and learn to include more detail without being prompted. Within the short case study it is difficult to ascertain whether children are beginning to pre-empt such comments, although feedback comments to Child B and Child C in Phase 3 suggest that they may be including more detail in their work.

Well done for changing the story to include your own ideas. The narrative makes sense and there is an interesting twist (Child B, IP3).

I see you have taken care to reply to what the alien said and to ask (questions). You have clearly thought about how to show the reader how you felt on the trip (Child C, IP3).

In terms of Fayol's (1991) analysis of linguistic development (Section 4.4), encouragement to expand ideas may help children of this age progress more quickly to create more episodic writing by building detail around events. Being able to preempt their teacher's prompts is a metacognitive skill that may lead to 'self-extending systems' in terms of ideation, through which children are able to develop their ideas with greater independence (Clay, 1993, p.15).

In Phase 2 there were no comments asking for additional detail, as the teacher was giving feedback on transcription skills. As already noted, in Phase 3, when the teacher returned to their usual feedback style, there were comments praising the ideas children had used, such as: 'Well done for changing the story to include your own ideas. The narrative makes sense and there is an interesting twist' (Child B, IP3). However, there were no next step comments encouraging children to add more ideas or detail. This led to an imbalance in the overall data as the children received more feedback on technical skills than on composition.

An imbalance between composition and transcription is common in primary teaching, as shown by surveys in both England (Dockrell, Marshall and Wyse, 2016) and the US (Cutler and Graham, 2008) (Section 5.6). A similar imbalance has been noted over time in teacher's written feedback by Searle and Dillon (1980) and Elliott *et al.* (2016) (Section 6.4). This may not only place less emphasis on the compositional process but encourage children to believe that technical issues are of more importance. Elliott *et al.* (2016) suggest that more research is needed on the impact of the recent focus on grammar, punctuation and spelling (GPS) in the NC (DfE 2014) on both the technical elements and content of children's writing. Further research might clarify

whether a more balanced approach between composition and transcription in written feedback helps children to value compositional prompts more highly.

Another explanation for the imbalance in written feedback might be that teachers find it more difficult to respond to the content of children's work. Judgements around content are subjective and individuals respond to texts differently, each reader bringing their own sociocultural and historical background to what they read (Nystrand and Himley, 1984). This may make it more difficult for teachers to provide supportive feedback. Young (2019) finds that teachers who are more confident as teacher-writers appear to provide better support, so it may be that some teachers lack experience of writing themselves, and therefore find the more objective aspects of writing easier to address. It is not known if this applied to the teacher in the study, but it is important to note the lack of compositional prompts in their usual feedback during Phase 3.

Like teachers, children may also find it easier to respond to aspects of writing that are either correct or incorrect, and the children's assertion that technical feedback was the most useful may be due to this being more understandable and easier to address. However, the children's more immediate response to comments on their ideas suggests that this may not have been the case. In individual interviews, children often seemed pleased to talk about the ideas that they had added in response to their teacher's comments and saw these as improvements. Four children (A, B, C and E) said that writing their own stories was what they most enjoyed about writing (IGI), suggesting that developing ideas may be more intrinsically interesting to them than developing technical skills. Encouraging children to develop the content of their work may tap into their enthusiasm for creativity and make them more likely to respond (Young and Fergusson, 2021). Feedback encouraging the development of ideas

enabled the children interviewed individually to improve the content of their writing, particularly where prompts were specific. However, this may not be the case for all children, for instance, Child F described struggling to think of ideas for their writing and Child D enjoyed practising their handwriting. Support for these children may need to be different.

Parts of the case study data, particularly in Phase 1, suggest that by taking on the role of reader or critical friend to address compositional elements, the teacher can use their greater knowledge of writing to act as the 'more capable other' (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86) in a more meaningful way to children than if they correct only technical elements. Comments encouraging children's ideas come closest to the teacher in the case study acting as a 'response partner' (Cremin, 2017, p.138). Cremin argues that this gives children a sense of audience, helps them to understand how others perceive their writing, and see where they may need to communicate more clearly. Importantly it provides positive affirmation for their ideas and for themselves as writers, which may also encourage their response.

12.3.2 'It adds more detail and more information about it'

Since the revision of the NC (DfE, 2014), there has been more emphasis on encouraging children to use specific sentence types as a means of helping them to develop the linguistic content of their writing. Although there were very few examples in the case study, this type of prompt helped some children to elaborate their writing using expanded noun phrases and embedded clauses. However, children need to attain a fluent level of transcriptional skills before they are able to concentrate on the development of more complex translation skills (Section 4.4), and this is likely to be

the reason that, of the children interviewed individually, only Child C and Child E received prompts for more complex sentences. Child B, who was working below age-related-expectation (ARE) received more feedback on capital letters, full stops and finger spaces. This suggests that the teacher was adjusting the feedback given to match children's level of skill within their individual 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978, p.84).

In Phase 2, the teacher asked Child C, who was working at ARE, if they could 'add some description by using expanded noun phrases' (1P2). The teacher recognised that they may need reminding about these, 'Come and see me if you would like a reminder about them'. Child C suggested that they would use a noun phrase 'in my next story or next time,' (IP2). However, at this point, Child C did not understand what expanded noun phrases were, but in Phase 3 the teacher praised Child C for using them where they had written, 'Many rich, powerful Princes wanted to marry [the princess] but the King said she was too young to get married' (IP3). Child C said they were especially proud of themselves because, 'I've got better at making expanded noun phrases' (GP3).

Child E, who was working above ARE, was starting to use embedded clauses and had included several examples, for instance, 'So, Caesar, the best leader in Rome, brought an end to the Roman Republic' (IP1). Subordinate clauses, of which embedded clauses are an example, are set as a NC requirement for Year 5. When asked if they thought embedded clauses improved their writing, they said 'It's made it very different and better....It adds more detail and more information about it' (IP1). This type of feedback appeared to be reinforcing children's understanding of how they might enrich their writing with more complex sentence structures.

Facility with sentence construction is an important skill to develop, as it helps to reduce the cognitive load that children experience when dealing with the complexities of writing (Graham, 2019). Achieving 'syntactical maturity' helps children to generate sentences fluently, enabling them to concentrate on the ideas they wish to convey and express them more meaningfully (Andrews *et al.*, 2006, p.50). However, asking children to include specific constructions is an artificial approach to writing, although it should be noted that the teacher in the case study linked the use of noun phrases to adding description rather than just asking for the sentence type. Experienced writers do not set out to use specific sentence constructions, but instead use the constructions that best communicate their intended meaning. In typical development, 8 year-olds are only just beginning to create text that shows causal relationships and chronology (Fayol, 1991). This suggests that such constructions, for example, noun phrases and subordinate clauses set as statutory NC requirements for Year 4 and Year 5 respectively, may be beyond those expected of children of this age in the models of writing development. It could be argued that the inclusion of such grammatical devices improves the quality of writing, but Hayes and Flower suggest that 'pushing students to use expert strategies too early may be like encouraging acrobats to start with the high wire' (Hayes and Flower, 1986, p.1112). They argue that good teaching depends on a sound understanding of both writing development, and where each child is within that process. This view aligns with both the theoretical framework and the principle of *Assessment for Learning* (AfL) that feedback should be based on close assessment of children's learning to provide support and challenge at the most appropriate level (Black and Wiliam, 1998b). So although the teacher was adjusting their feedback to individual attainment and ZPD, they were nevertheless doing so within the framework

of the NC (DfE, 2014), a framework that may be out of line with the expectations of writing development highlighted in research studies.

Myhill and Cremin (2019) suggest that encouraging experimentation with language and sentence construction may be a more beneficial approach to helping children apply their grammar and sentence knowledge in their work (Section 5.4). The use of technical metalanguage may also be a barrier for some children (Jones *et al.*, 2013). Their research is with secondary children, but technical language is likely to be equally difficult for primary children. For example, Child C needed additional support to understand expanded noun phrases. A more experimental approach would perhaps be more beneficial at primary level too.

Despite children's more immediate response to prompts on ideas and sentence structures, it was harder to chart children's development in ideation and linguistic skills than in lower order technical ones in response to written feedback. Children develop linguistically over time, but this is only likely to be observed over a longer timeframe than this study. Children's language for writing is built upon and develops in line with their spoken language (Berninger and Swanson, 1994). Children also develop their ideas and language for writing from reading, social interaction and their sociocultural environment (Wyse, 2017) (Sections 5.5, 5.6). The development of these is therefore likely to be complex, and not as linear as the development of technical skills. Vygotsky's conception of the ZPD as 'the 'buds' or 'flowers' of development' (Vygotsky, 1978, pp.86-87) is perhaps an appropriate way of thinking about these elements. They may also be more directly influenced by children's experience within their sociocultural environment, so it may be helpful for future research to consider how written feedback might nurture the wider appropriation of discourse knowledge and language for writing.

12.4 Consolidating skills

As already discussed, children in the case study often added new material into their work in response to prompts for ideas, whereas they said prompts for other elements, such as punctuation and spelling, acted as reminders. Prompts for subheadings and paragraphs acted as reminders that the children discussed acting on. Their books illustrated how these prompts were feeding forward into their next pieces of work. Feil (2021) finds that children particularly value reminders to help them remember the skills they need to apply in their writing, and this may help them to manage the cognitive load of the task. This also appeared to be true for children interviewed individually in the case study.

12.4.1 *'They give me a reminder'*

Children used prompts and corrections to help them consolidate their writing knowledge and apply it in their writing. This was particularly seen with the children interviewed individually (B, C and E) in relation to punctuation and genre features. Children did not appear to go back to edit, but instead saw comments as reminders. When asked to identify the most helpful types of comment, Child C explained:

Child C: They give me a reminder.

RF: Reminders about anything or reminders about...?

Child C: Spellings, capital letters, full stops (IP2).

Child C reiterated on repeated occasions that reminders about punctuation were helpful. For instance, when the teacher wrote, 'When do we use capital letters?' They said, 'It gives me a reminder' (IP2). In Phase 3, the teacher wrote, 'Don't forget to use

capital letters for names,' and had corrected a few. Child C again thought this was a useful comment. 'They're reminding me to always use a capital at the beginning of someone's name' (IP3). Again, when the teacher commented, 'Always remember punctuation like full stops and commas,' Child C said this was helpful. 'Yes, they're reminding me.'

All three children's writing books demonstrate increased usage of punctuation about which they had been reminded. Child B was praised for remembering finger spaces but was repeatedly reminded to remember full stops (IP3). Comments from Phase 2 show how Child B had used reminders by remembering to include full stops, and later still, they had used both full stops and question marks. In Phase 3, the teacher again reminded Child B about punctuation. 'Could you include more punctuation, like full stops and commas, to make your writing flow better?' Child B said, 'I don't know where commas go but I do know where full stops go, they go at the end of a word, not at the end of a word, they go on the end of a sentence.'

Such reminders may have been helpful as 'procedural facilitators' (Pea, 2004, p.48). Feil (2021) finds that children value such comments for helping them to remember what they need to do and that this helps to manage their cognitive load. Reminders seemed to encourage children towards greater automaticity, and this was seen particularly clearly in the case of Child B, who, following consistent reminders, was praised for their use of full stops and then encouraged to use commas. This suggests the teacher's comments were supporting the child through their ZPD towards automaticity (Tharp and Gallimore, 1991). This acquisition and automatising of transcriptional skills reflects the incremental models of writing development (Berninger and Swanson, 1994; Tolchinsky, 2017), and Graham and Harris' notion that teachers

'nudge emerging writers along their ZPD' (Graham and Harris, 2005, p.303). This seems particularly relevant to the way in which the children responded to reminders and corrections for punctuation. The teacher's carefully adjusted support and challenge appeared to move children towards independent and automatic implementation of skills (Rogoff, 1990).

Child E also agreed that prompts for punctuation were helpful, saying, 'It's like a little reminder and then I know what to do now. It tells me if like something's wrong. I'll know how like a different time that I will do it correctly' (IP2). However, they continued to omit punctuation despite repeated reminders. One difficulty may have been that the prompts were sometimes vague, for instance, 'Could you use a wider range of punctuation to enhance your writing?' There was also one instance where Child E had not understood how to use speech marks. The teacher had written, 'A good retelling, could you use some speech punctuation to show what they said, for example, "If you bury those gold coins you will get more", said the cat and the fox.' Following small group work in class, the teacher then praised them for 'remembering new speaker and new line for speech' (IP2).

Another explanation for some of Child E's lack of punctuation may be due to difficulty with implementation rather than knowledge (Alamargot and Fayol, 2009). Fayol (1991) finds that as children's writing becomes more complicated, with better-developed episodes and more complex sentence structures, punctuation becomes scarcer. Similarly, as their stories become more exciting, punctuation tends to be omitted. Alamargot and Fayol (2009) suggest that this may be due to children having difficulty carrying out all writing tasks simultaneously. The increase in the cognitive load in using more complex writing patterns may have caused Child E to omit

punctuation. The teacher's comment, 'This is one long sentence. Don't forget punctuation', suggests that they see this as a problem with remembering rather than understanding. In this instance, the comment acted as a reminder, as Child E said, 'After they said that I did the comma here because I remembered they did another comment before' (IP3). Therefore, reminders about punctuation may be reinforcing what children already understand but have failed to implement due to the cognitive overload of carrying out transcriptional tasks whilst focusing on text and sentence generation (Alamargot and Fayol, 2009).

Children in the case study received feedback on punctuation within the transcriptional phase of the project. Punctuation is often considered a transcriptional skill (Bilton and Duff, 2021), but it is not included as such within the NC (DfE, 2014) (Sections 5.2 and 5.3). The opposing arguments over whether punctuation should be taught solely on grammatical principles (Wassouf, 2007; Hall, 2009) or based on prosody and expression (Chaffe, 1988; Dawkins, 1995) may create confusion for teachers. It is not clear from the feedback the children received which of these approaches the teacher was taking, and the lack of clarity may have contributed to Child E's lack of response. Fayol (2017) claims that there is little understanding of how children acquire punctuation knowledge beyond the use of basic marks, such as full stops, exclamation and question marks, so despite the apparent helpfulness of reminders for Child B's use of basic punctuation, the case study data did not clarify whether reminders were beneficial for complex punctuation. However, reminders were only viewed as useful by the children if they understood them. For example, Child C said a comment asking them to check 'your and you're' was not helpful as they did not understand the difference. Reminders for skills they already understand are more likely to help

children manage the cognitive load (Alamargot and Fayol, 2009). As with work on sentence structure, small group work helped children to understand aspects of punctuation, and the repetition of reminders helped them develop these elements of writing over time.

12.4.2 'The most helpful comments are the ones when I make mistakes'

Children felt it was particularly helpful to have their work corrected when they made errors, and were of the view that they could learn from their mistakes (Section 11.2.6). Child A explained, 'Like when I make mistakes and the teacher marks it and then I figure out what my mistakes are, then I can make it different and then it makes it easier' (GP3) and this was corroborated by Child B and Child E:

Child B: I've learnt that if I learn from my mistakes, I will get better (GP1).

Child E: What I've learnt from the past four weeks, is that I learnt from my mistakes. The comments are the most helpful because then next when I do writing I know what to do (GP1).

In response to a similar comment by Child E, Child F said 'I really like it when you said that you like your mistakes and like you learnt from them. And like if you don't get mistakes, you will just like try and improve yourself and try and like look over your work and do cool stuff like that' (GP3). They agreed that they could learn from having their mistakes corrected, although they later said 'I don't like it when (the teacher) always tells me about my mistakes' (FGI). They said they liked their work, but that the teacher saying it was bad made them feel sad. In contrast, Child C seemed to feel particularly strongly about the importance of learning from mistakes, asking other children about

mistakes on several occasions. They explained, ‘If you get it wrong again and again and again you’re going to realise the mistake you’ve done. You’re not going to carry on doing that’ (GP1).

Yet the evidence within the case study for corrections supporting punctuation or spellings is unclear, as the teacher actually corrected very few errors. On two occasions, the teacher corrected capital letters for Child C, and they added a comma for Child E. Table 12-1 shows the spellings corrected in the feedback seen during interviews.

Child	Spellings corrected
Child B:	little book flower
Child C:	your / you’re cold for could carpenter

Table 12-1: Spellings corrected by the teacher

Child C said that having ‘carpenter’ and ‘could’ corrected would ‘make it easier next time’ (IP2), but Child B was unsure whether they would remember (IP2). Unlike repeated reminders for punctuation, there were no repeated corrections for the same words, although Child B said they had been learning ‘little’ in spelling work. The lack of corrections means it is impossible to make any conjecture as to their usefulness beyond the children’s view that this was the case. However, Marrs *et al.* (2016) find that many students appreciate feedback that shows where they had gone wrong, and that they feel this will help them to learn and avoid the errors in future. Elliott *et al.* (2016) suggest that highlighting errors for children to correct for themselves is more

beneficial. An additional requirement for children to make corrections would employ the 'handover principle' by giving them responsibility (Bruner, 1983, p.60), which may help to build their agency, as well as providing additional practice. As children in the case study were not required to correct their mistakes, the data does not allow for the comparison of the two approaches.

An important question is raised by the children's claim that feedback on spelling and punctuation is most helpful, considering their professed interest in writing their own stories and the positive actions they took in response to prompts for content. It may be simply that spelling and punctuation align more closely with the need for children of this age to develop fluency in transcription skills before they can focus on composition (Section 4.4). Several studies suggest that this is a priority for children in this age group. For example, Wray (1993) finds that children's concerns change at different stages of development, with younger children focusing on secretarial skills and a focus on composition increasing from 9-years onwards. Dockrell *et al.* (2016) concur that at this age children are grappling with transcriptional skills and that the emphasis will move to higher-level skills as children become more proficient. This is certainly borne out by findings from the present study, which show that some children (B and D), were focusing on basic skills, whilst more confident writers (C and E), were developing more complex sentences and punctuation. As seen in the difference in feedback to different children, the teacher appeared to differentiate feedback on punctuation more clearly than for other aspects of writing. This suggests that feedback is matched to children's individual ZPD, which may also help to make it more relevant for them.

As already discussed, children may also value feedback on transcription because it helps them to consolidate skills of which they already have a reasonable understanding. Some comments in the case study bear this out, for example the teacher's praise for Child B's use of finger spaces (IP3) and Child E's use of speech marks (IP2) after previous reminders. Wray's (1993) work indicates that children might value feedback on transcription because they perceive that teachers consider accuracy highly important. The current NC (DfE, 2014) and double testing of grammar, punctuation and spelling (GPS) at age 11, in both the discrete GPS and writing tests, may encourage teachers to focus on these elements and implicitly convey to children that GPS knowledge is important (Lee, 2019). In taking a sociocultural standpoint, it is important to recognise the influences of the socio-historical and cultural context. The teacher's feedback is likely to be influenced by curriculum guidance, their experience and expertise, and their ontological viewpoint (Sections 5.6, 6.5). These values might be implicitly passed on to children (Kervin *et al.*, 2020). Yet considering participants' desire to write their own stories, the view that feedback on transcriptional skills was the most useful, would suggest a mismatch between the purpose children see in writing and the usefulness of the support provided by feedback.

12.4.3 'The beginning, the problem, the solution'

Reminders also helped children remember to use genre features, and appeared to reinforce the scaffolding provided by the T4W (DCSF, 2008) planning processes used in class. Together these helped children to plan in more detail (Section 10.2). Child F explained the process:

We've written Pinocchio and our teacher made up a story and we had to make it, our teacher made a story map of the story, and then we had to write it into boxing up, and we had to write it into a story, and that was P4NO (GP2).

The children said that story maps were particularly useful, which may be explained by the suggestion that children's planning may initially be pictorial (De La Paz and McCutchen, 2016). Children of 9-12 years-old are only just beginning to develop their pre-planning skills, but can only do so once their transcription and text generation are sufficiently fluent (Berninger and Swanson, 1994). This suggests that the 8-9 year-olds in the study would be in the earliest stages of developing this skill.

During the study the children moved from using boxing up sheets to planning in bullet points in their books. They said this gave them more space to plan in detail and that they were now able to write more, for example, 'I only did about one paragraph, but now I'm doing five' (Child F, GP2). This was also borne out by plans in the books of children interviewed individually. All three children found labelling paragraphs within their bullet-pointed plans helpful for organising their writing. For example, Child B had initially numbered paragraphs, but following a feedback comment from their teacher had labelled the different paragraphs in their story plan: 'the beginning, the problem, the solution' (IP3).

In Phase 1, the teacher had praised the organisation of Child E's work on a non-chronological report. 'You've effectively used subheadings to organise your report on Caesar... and thought about the main points to show how important he was' (IP1). Child E explained how they had planned the paragraphs of their report.

It's like a real person from history or like any other subject. And like you write about basic info, like when he was born, when he died and like what he did. And then like he did, and then you do like childhood, early career or like a murder, if he has been murdered, or like becoming a Roman General or something like that (IP1).

By Phase 3, Child E was using features of a non-chronological report well: 'You have included lots of features of a non-chronological report, headings, sub-headings, and well-organised paragraphs' (IP3), and said they were feeling 'very confident' about report writing. Prompts for subheadings appeared to have helped Child E to a better understanding of the genre.

Child C found non-chronological report writing more difficult to master. The teacher asked them to include subheadings during Phase 1. Child C had been proactive in asking the teacher to explain. 'I asked [the teacher] and they said, one day I'll show you and I'll get a group to help you' (IP1), but was still not totally confident about them. By Phase 2, Child C was using sub-headings to plan a story, labelling their paragraphs with the parts of the story: the beginning, the build-up, the problem. They commented that, 'If I didn't have a paragraph here and say if I skip a line, sometimes I get muddled up when there's a paragraph' (IP2). Although Child C said using paragraphs and subheadings helped them to organise their writing, the way they explained a non-chronological report suggests that they may not have had a fully formed schema for the genre. They still appeared to be conceiving of a report in the same way as a story:

You just start at the beginning of the story, then the build-up, the part in the middle where it builds up to something, and then, like say, the war started

in the build-up, then the problem was the Romans have demanded land for tax, they wanted our people to be slaves (IP1).

The teacher also commented on another piece of report writing in Phase 3: 'This is an interesting paragraph but has more features of a story than a non-chronological report' (IP3). Like the example of where they had wanted to include ideas from *Spiderman* in their story of a local saint, this may be an instance where Child C has not fully understood the learning intentions.

In discussions about the T4W planning process more generally, the children said it was useful to plan and write the original story before planning their own version. Child E also felt the different steps of planning were useful, 'because then I have like lots of other ideas in my head and then I do like more writing' (IP3). However, there were occasions when children said they enjoyed writing without planning first, such as in 'Big Write' (Wilson, 2012). The children used this term to suggest free writing time, but no work was seen from such a session during the study.

Child C: I like doing Big Write because like, so I can use more of my imagination.

RF: And does it matter that you don't plan those stories? That you just write?

Child C: It doesn't matter, I just write, write, write (IP3).

Child C was less clear about how helpful planning was for letter writing and said they could have 'just written a letter' (IP1). On the other hand, Child B had wanted to plan their letter and Child E had also planned. Primary teachers find that children often struggle to plan in an abstract, summary form and models of writing development

suggest that 9-12 year-olds are just beginning to plan their writing in advance (Berninger and Swanson, 1994). Fayol (1991) notes that children's plans at this age differ little from their final work, and Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) suggest that rather than planning conceptually, even 10 year-olds often produce what is essentially a first draft. This seems to be the case with Child E's plan of a letter:

Hello, my name is Crystallise the Ultimate. I live at Planet Crystal with my dad, mum, little brother and little sister. I am a crystal. I'm ages old and live in a huge hut (IP1).

Planning in greater detail in bullet points, may in fact reduce the summary nature of the children's plans, even as it helps them to develop their macro-structural skills. The T4W approach may therefore be encouraging children to plan before the age at which this is indicated by the research evidence. On one occasion, Child B had produced a 'plan of changes', which the teacher praised for including the key parts of the story (IP3). Providing feedback at the planning stage was helpful for Child B, and this was the only instance of this seen in the case study, but experience would suggest that teachers often only provide feedback on finished pieces of work.

The findings on children's planning reflect the models of writing development (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987; Berninger and Swanson, 1994; Connelly and Dockrell, 2016), which suggest that children at this age are at the early stages of being able to pre-plan. However, the T4W approach appeared to be useful in helping the children to develop these skills and think about them in a metacognitive manner and reminders in written feedback helped to facilitate better text organisation during independent writing time.

12.5 Written feedback as a procedural facilitation tool

Overall, written feedback provided some support for children's independent writing process, largely through reminders for technical issues or prompts for enhanced detail. This could be considered to be either acting as a 'procedural facilitation tool' (Pea, 2004, p.48), or within wider interpretations of scaffolding might be viewed as visual or written scaffolding (EEF, 2021). It certainly seemed to reinforce the scaffolding provided through the T4W approach in the classroom.

Figure 12-1 develops part of the diagram seen in Figure 8-1 (Section 8.1) to reflect on how the children's use of written feedback might support their cumulative development of writing within a scaffolding model. Again, the arrows indicate the general order in which writing skills develop from basic orthographic skills to macro-level structural features (Berninger and Swanson, 1994). As in Figure 8-1 the bottom line uses models of writing development (Fayol, 1991; Berninger and Swanson, 1994) to show the cumulative acquisition of cognitive writing skills. Figure 12-1, then draws on the data to indicate how the teacher in the case study scaffolded different elements of writing for the children through the T4W approach within their individual ZPDs. The middle line shows how the elements of this map against the model of writing development. Above this, the top line maps the ways in which the children used written feedback comments. The alignment of the teacher's scaffolding and the children's responses to feedback suggests that written feedback is reinforcing classroom scaffolding.

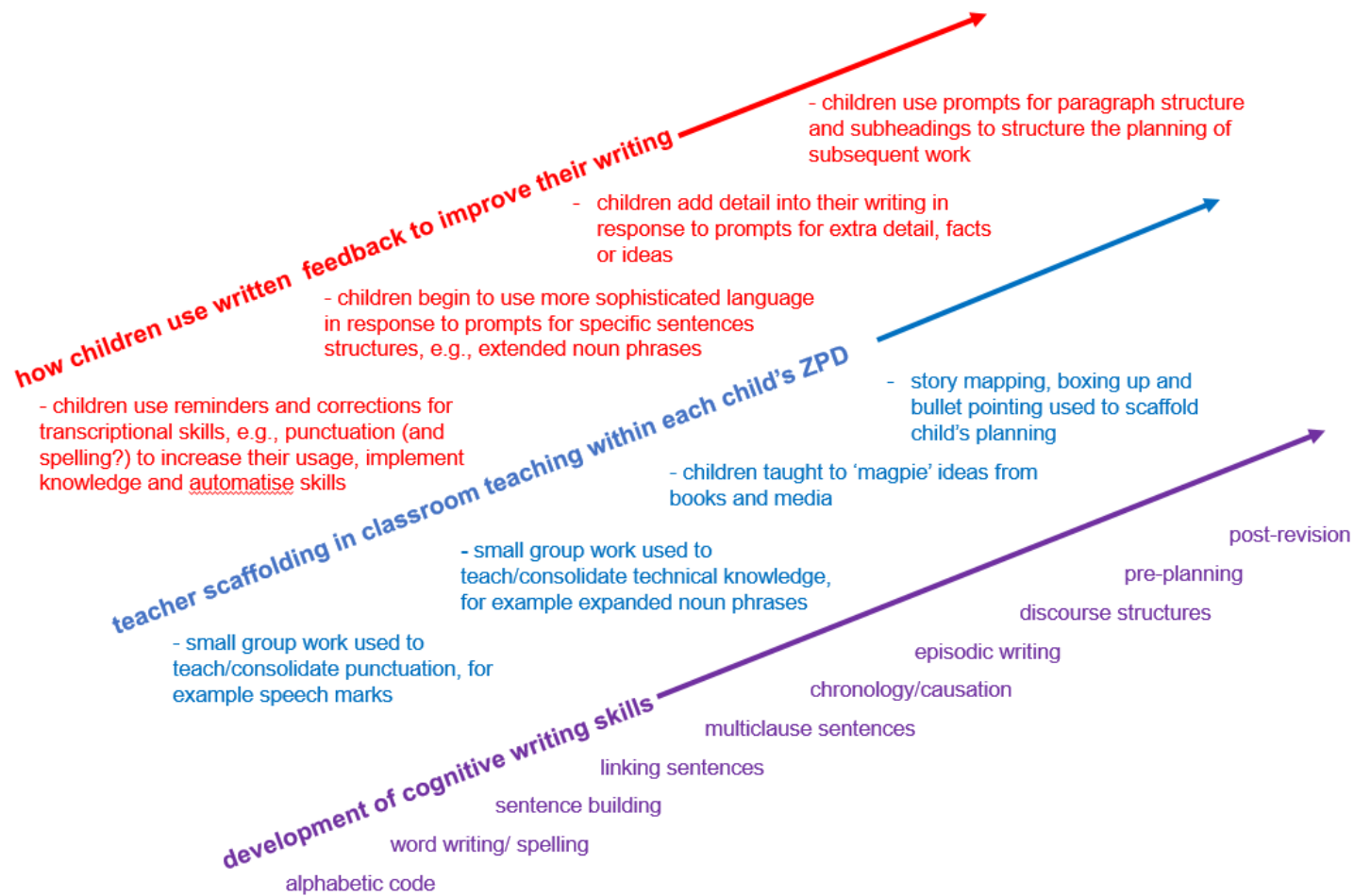


Figure 12-1: Diagram to show how the teacher's scaffolding supported the children's writing development and how the children's use of written feedback may have reinforced this.

The children's use of reminders appeared to support their transcription skills through encouraging greater usage of punctuation, capital letters and finger spaces. Prompts for specific sentence structures supported the development of more complex and multclause sentences. Comments asking for the elaboration of ideas moved children towards the development of more episodic writing, whereas they used reminders for subheadings and paragraphs to feed forward into their future planning. Feedback comments appeared to be most successful when they were specific and built on what children already knew.

A study of longer duration would be needed to investigate how much written feedback might support the children's development of greater self-scaffolding and 'self-extending systems' (Clay, 2001, p.80), as progress towards full independence clearly takes time. However, the children were able to talk about how they had used feedback, which suggests that they were developing metacognitive skills and the self-monitoring element of the writing models, although they were still reliant on the teacher to evaluate their work. Encouraging children to take responsibility for their work helps them to develop their metacognitive skills and agency. Further research would show whether the use of a wider range of prompts for compositional elements and the expectation for children to edit their work encourages greater self-reliance.

12.6 Summary

Children in the study said that feedback on transcriptional skills was more useful than that on composition, but this is not necessarily borne out by data from individual interviews, which showed that the children responded more directly to comments addressing the content of their work. Children responded to prompts for further detail and additional ideas by adding material into their writing. Prompts for more specific detail appeared to be more successfully responded to than vaguer prompts that simply asked for more ideas. Written feedback encouraging children to develop the detail of their work may eventually lead them to develop more sophisticated, episodic writing (Fayol, 1991). However, prompts on children's ideas were only seen in Phase 1, as they were not included in the teacher's usual feedback in Phase 3. This raises questions about the balance of compositional and transcriptional skills addressed in written feedback.

Children working at and above ARE (C and E) were encouraged to use more complex sentence constructions. The children attempted to use these, but often required further support in the classroom to do so successfully. The requirement for children to learn specific sentence constructions within the *National Curriculum* (DfE, 2014) does not necessarily align with models of writing development based on research evidence and this may make it more difficult for children to respond appropriately.

Reminders seemed to facilitate greater usage of punctuation, particularly at a basic level. Where children's writing was more linguistically complex this was less clearly helpful, but this may be due to the greater demand of the cognitive load or lack of understanding of how to punctuate more complex sentences. The teacher's feedback

on both punctuation and sentence structures appeared to be adjusted to individual capability, with clear differences between children, suggesting that the support was aligned to their ZPDs.

The T4W process provided a systematic approach, in which class activities at the beginning of a piece of work enabled the children to retell stories they had heard and plan ideas for their own versions. Story mapping and then planning in bullet-pointed paragraphs with subheadings provided a scaffold on which children could build their writing. Prompts in the written feedback helped to remind the children what was expected, and helped them at a procedural level during independent work.

This small case study has only been able to look at a limited number of writing skills, but the findings indicate that written feedback made some contribution to supporting the children's independent writing processes. The next section discusses the limitations of the study.

13 Findings and Discussion Part 4: Limitations of the Study

13.1 Introduction

Case study research is by nature limited to the examination of a single phenomenon within a small bounded group (Thomas and Myers, 2015) and the use of qualitative data is dependent on the transparent reporting to enable the reader to reach their own conclusions about the implications of the findings (Braun and Clarke, 2022). Therefore it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the case study, some of which arose from difficulties with the original project.

13.2 Difficulties with the original project

The study was conceived as a larger project with two groups of children from parallel classes. This was to be treated as a comparative case study and children's response to feedback observed through a repeated measures design (Appendix A). In addition to the six children who took part in the reported case study, a further 14 children were recruited from the parallel class. Unfortunately, the teacher of this second class was absent for much of the duration of the project, meaning that there was insufficient data from this group. Although the children continued to be interviewed in groups, and 11 of them were also interviewed individually, the data was insufficient to answer the research questions. Hence, this thesis reports a single, qualitative case study.

13.3 Impact on the case study

Had the project been conceived as a single case study from the start, different decisions would have been taken. For example, due to the original design, only three of the children in the group were interviewed individually. Individual interviews with all six children would have provided evidence on how a wider range of children responded to written feedback comments. As it is, the more specific data on how children responded to written feedback is based on only three children.

In a multiple case study, the focus is on the comparison between cases rather than the 'nature and shape of relationships' within the single case (Thomas and Myers, 2015, p.62). The comparison of the two groups and the plan to do cross-case analysis had been my original focus. In case study research the aim is to collect rich, 'thick' detail. (Ravitch and Carl, 2016, p.189) and the aim was always to consider children's response to feedback within the classroom context. Returning to the data analysis to focus on a smaller group enabled a deeper exploration of the children's perspectives on writing. However, had a smaller case study been the original intention, there would have been an even stronger focus on background information, both of classroom context and individual children, during the data collection.

In a case study of children from only one class, there were instances where not knowing the teacher's perspectives or intentions was problematic to interpreting the data. Interviewing the teacher would have been a possibility, but the focus was to explore children's perspectives, so taking the teacher's views into consideration may have diluted this emphasis.

13.4 Separating feedback on composition and transcription

The separation of feedback into composition and transcription was illuminating in some respects, but problematic in others. As I had predicted, children had some difficulty thinking about different elements of writing, as was indicated in the final group interview. The intention was to help children think about the different elements more distinctly, and although the separation provided clarity when it came to coding the data, particularly in the first cycle of coding (Section 9.6.3), in hindsight this separation could have been done at the analysis stage. As the second cycle of coding and further analysis showed, the data was more nuanced than a simple division of the two strands.

The main issue of separating feedback in the small case study was that it limited the range of written feedback that the children received on each piece of work. However, there was an unforeseen benefit of this, in that the teacher only provided improvement comments for content during the composition phase, and not in their usual feedback style. Without this separation in the study, this type of prompt would not have been observed. The teacher was asked to provide their 'usual feedback' in Phase 3, but this may not have reflected their typical style outside the period covered.

Before the study began, the teacher and I discussed the division within the NC (DfE, 2014) and the school's own assessment continuum (Appendix B), which both define transcription as handwriting and spelling. However, the teacher's feedback on transcription did not reflect this and included comments on sentence construction and punctuation. Conflicting views around what constitute transcription in both research and guidance for teachers suggests that there is a general lack of clarity around this (Section 5.2). To divide writing in a binary way is artificial and oversimplifies the

complexity of the task. Teachers' conceptions about writing have a strong influence on how they teach it, but viewing grammar, sentence construction and punctuation as technical skills, divorces them from compositional language processes. Skills may need to be taught separately, but the integration of composition and transcription within their creative writing is more likely to help children engage in writing as an artistic craft and to use technical features as tools to aid communication and expression. Attempting to separate feedback into these strands highlighted the complexity and misconceptions around elements of writing. In future research, it will be important to get a clearer representation of children's response to the range of feedback typically provided by teachers.

14 Conclusion

14.1 Introduction

In this study, I explored children's perspectives on writing and investigated how they responded to written feedback, with the aim of enabling the voices of primary-age children to inform the debate on this aspect of teaching. My research questions were:

What are children's perspectives on writing?

How do children use written feedback comments on different elements of writing?

This was a small case study, and as such the findings cannot be generalised (Ravitch and Carl, 2016). However, the illumination provided through the detailed, transparent reporting of data and the analysis of participants' subjective meanings (Braun and Clarke, 2022), may contribute insights that might aid greater understanding of the written feedback process and prompt further research. All classroom contexts are unique, but the level of detail within the case study findings will enable readers to reflect on how these compare to their experience in other settings (Day Ashley, 2012; Ravitch and Carl, 2016).

This final chapter considers the contribution to knowledge that the case study makes in terms of both the findings and the use of innovative methods to enable young children to participate in research. Implications for practice are considered in relation to all stakeholders: children, teachers, and policy makers, and the chapter ends by identifying areas for further investigation.

14.2 Contribution to knowledge

The contribution that a small case study can make to knowledge is limited and there can be no attempt to generalise findings. The study was based on six children from one class, but others may be able to draw on the issues highlighted to consider how these might apply to other contexts.

14.2.1 Child voice

My case study has enabled the views of an under-researched age group to be considered in relation to written feedback. Research into written feedback has generally focused on older students or concentrated on what teachers do rather than how children respond, but it is also important to consider the views of younger children. The case study enabled feedback to be investigated within the context of the children's classroom experience of the *Talk for Writing* T4W (DCSF, 2008) approach. The methodological approaches enabled children to discuss their views on writing more generally as well as explain in detail how they responded to written feedback comments. This has shown that children of 8-9 years old are capable of providing testimony about their experience of writing and use of written feedback and that their views may have implications for the decisions that educators take. The study indicates that further investigation of primary children's views of writing and feedback would be of value.

14.2.2 Written feedback

The study provides a detailed analysis of how three of the group of 8-9 year-olds used written feedback. Although only a few aspects of writing were addressed during the

study, written feedback appeared to play a role in supporting the children's independent writing process. Some prompts reinforced the scaffolding of the T4W approach used in the classroom and provided reminders during independent worktime. More recent interpretations of scaffolding include visual or written scaffolds (Mclesky *et al.*, 2017) or 'procedural facilitation' tools Pea (2004, p.48). Written feedback might be considered in this category, particularly where it works well.

The case study concurs with other research showing that children find reminders (Feil, 2021) and learning from mistakes helpful (Marrs *et al.*, 2016). Reminders seemed particularly helpful when children understood what they needed to do. When this was not the case they were less able to respond. Reminders were successful in supporting basic punctuation, with the possible exception of the child assessed by the teacher as working above ARE, who was using more complex sentence structures. Reminders for paragraphs and subheadings fed forward into children's planning for their next pieces of work and seemed to support them in using the planning systems provided by T4W and the teacher. Reminders here perhaps helped them to manage their cognitive load and the complexity of the task.

Written feedback elicited the most immediate response when comments asked for more details and ideas. Children often added further material into their work. Specific comments often drew greater response than vaguer ones that simply asked for more ideas, which corroborates previous research by Clarke (2003). The alacrity with which children responded to this type of feedback suggests that it engages their interest in developing the content of their writing, as supported by their desire to use their own ideas. However, this type of prompt did not feature in their teacher's usual style of feedback, in which next steps only contained prompts for technical issues. This is a

pattern observed in both feedback (Elliott *et al.*, 2016) and the teaching of writing more generally (Dockrell, Marshall and Wyse, 2016). As will be discussed in Section 14.2.3, the case study suggests that, for these children at least, a greater focus on the content of children's ideas and the compositional process might increase children's engagement with writing for this age group.

The way in which children could describe how they had used written feedback suggests that it was supporting the development of their metacognitive skills, which if it is the case, will lead them to greater self-regulation, agency and independence. Therefore, in the longer term, feedback may help them to develop 'self-extending systems' (Clay, 2001, p.80) and allow them to apply their skills independently in new, problem-solving situations. A study of longer duration than this case study would be needed to examine this.

14.2.3 Engagement with writing

Some of the children talked enthusiastically about writing their own stories, but said they were not always interested in topics set in school. A greater degree of freedom to choose their own subjects, as proposed by Cremin (2017), may have helped to increase their engagement in writing. There is evidence that enjoyment of writing decreases in this age group (Clark, Lant and Reid, 2022), and the study corroborates previous research that at this age children appear to focus on mastering transcriptional skills, either as a developmental step or because it is emphasised in the curriculum (Wray, 1993; Grainger *et al.*, 2003). It is necessary for children to develop the technical skills of transcription in order that they are able to focus on composition and the content of their writing, but this should not be at the expense of their engagement.

The children believed that writing is important for their prospects in terms of job opportunities and life chances, so were invested in developing their skills. Despite finding writing difficult and tiring, they said that it was important to persist and learn from their mistakes. A positive attitude is predictive of attainment in writing, and so it is important that this is maintained alongside the development of technical skills. The value that the children placed on freedom to write their own stories and use their imaginations suggests that enjoyment encouraged them to have a positive attitude to writing, and this corroborates the findings of previous research (Grainger *et al.*, 2003; Graham *et al.*, 2007).

The children sometimes felt constrained by the requirements of set writing tasks and having to adhere to ideas suggested by their teacher. The misalignment of the children's interests with set tasks sometimes led to a misunderstanding of what was required, and made it difficult for children to respond to what was being asked of them. This was seen on several levels, with children including ideas that the teacher considered inappropriate to the subject, misunderstanding the genre, or not understanding aspects of grammar that were being requested.

On several occasions children explained how they had 'magpie'd' ideas from things they had seen in films or on television, which concurs with Dyson's (1997) research, and their books showed how they had adapted these. This use of ideas appropriated from the world around them is a normal and important part of writing development that should be encouraged. However, on occasions children were discouraged from including certain ideas or asked to make only a few changes where they wanted to make more. One child also disliked magpie-ing, but had difficulty thinking of their own ideas. Greater discussion around the compositional process may lead children to a

better understanding of how writing develops and the teacher's learning intentions for them. That the children responded well to written feedback on the content of their work, suggests that a greater focus on this is likely to engender greater engagement.

14.2.4 Importance of the child-teacher relationship

The study illustrates the importance of the role the teacher played in directing the children's writing. The children in the study clearly valued their teacher's good opinion and the support they provided, but they also felt some frustration at their own lack of agency. The teacher's role in setting topics, supporting children to develop ideas through the T4W planning process, and asking for specific technical features, suggests that they were acting as a collaborator or co-author of the children's writing. This accords with previous research by Hayes and Berninger (2014) and Harme, (2021). Teachers clearly need to manage children's learning, but children also need to take responsibility for their own writing. Curriculum guidance and the teacher's own experience and knowledge of writing will influence the way in which writing is taught in individual classrooms (Section 5.6). The case study highlights that there is a fine balance to be made between teacher management and child agency, and also between the teaching of technical writing skills and the child's compositional contribution.

The findings also show that the teacher played a significant role in building the children's confidence for writing. Despite previous evaluations suggesting that praise is either ignored by children or leads to a lack of self-dependence (Hattie and Timperley, 2007), children in the study were shown to value their teacher's good opinion and respond with greater confidence where they felt that they had it. There

may be an argument for models of writing development to reflect the role of the teacher and instructional methods more strongly as part of the writing environment.

14.2.5 Theoretical framework

Findings from the case study provide some evidence that written feedback acts as a tool for supporting children's independent writing. This reinforces the scaffolding of a cumulative model of cognitive writing development, enabling children to improve their skills within their zone of proximal development. Figure 12-1 may be a crude representation of this, but it provides a reflection of where written feedback might fit within a scaffolding model.

The case study also illustrates how children appropriate knowledge and ideas for writing from their wider sociocultural environment (Rogoff, 1990). Further investigation is needed, but within the case study Tolchinsky's 'top-down, interactive model' of learning (Tolchinsky, 2017, p.147) appeared to occur through the children's appropriation of ideas from media, and the development of ideas through participation in interactions with their teacher and peers.

A framework aligning the models of writing development (Berninger and Swanson, 1994; Fayol, 1991) against the scaffolding model of teacher support has proved useful for exploring the approach to writing and written feedback in this particular case study and classroom context. Although Wyse's (2017) recommendation for a totally pragmatic approach combining sociocultural and cognitive models of learning has not been followed completely, the inclusion of models of writing development has been useful for considering how cognitive skills are learned within a sociocultural context.

14.2.6 Methodological contribution

The study also contributes to knowledge in terms of the methodology and the capture of children's perspectives. As a small case study this can only provide an initial indication that these may be useful methods to develop further. However, the novel use of mind maps and children's writing books in the data collection process supported children's reflections and facilitated the capture of their views. Although researchers use mind mapping extensively as a tool to support their thinking, data analysis and planning, it has rarely been used as a data collection method. Combining mind maps with a circle time approach to group interviews gave children time to think before speaking and encouraged them to express their own views rather than be influenced by researcher questions. Asking children to take turns to present their mind maps to the group, and then questioning each other, also helped discussion to centre on their concerns rather than my questioning. The analysis of mind map data as images or text can be problematic (Section 9.4.3). The use mind maps as the basis for group interviews meant that interview transcripts could be analysed through semantic, thematic analysis. Similarly, the way in which children's writing books were used to support individual interviews was also unusual. Workbooks were used in interviews about writing and feedback by Dann (2015), but not to focus on how children have responded to specific comments. Using workbooks enabled a direct discussion of teacher's feedback comments, and children were able to point out where they had edited their work in response. This helped to guide discussion and enhanced my understanding of what children were saying. The focus on children's work, rather than interview questions, allowed children's concerns to be foregrounded. Semantic, thematic analysis of group and individual interview transcripts maintained the focus on

children's voices through analysis that prioritised the children's own words. If developed further, these approaches may prove useful in research with young children in providing practical ways to explore their perspectives.

14.3 Implications for practice

Written feedback is demanding of teacher time and therefore understanding how children might respond will help teachers to make the best use of it. Many schools are moving toward providing whole class rather than individual feedback, but greater understanding of how improvement prompts help children develop the different elements of writing might still inform practice.

14.3.1 Implications for children

Children in my case study were highly motivated to write their own stories and develop their own imaginative ideas. Greater emphasis on compositional aspects of writing and a more experimental approach to both composition and language development might encourage greater engagement of children at an age where interest in writing has been shown to decrease. The study provides evidence that including more suggestions to support composition in written feedback along the lines suggested by Clarke (2003) may be beneficial.

Consistent, individually adjusted prompts appear to increase children's usage of basic skills, but there is a question as to whether being expected to correct and edit their own work would provide additional consolidation of skills and encourage greater agency. This has the implication that children would need more time to respond.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Article 12 (Unicef, 1990) stipulates that children have the right to express their views and contribute to decisions that involve them. Children's views should therefore be taken into consideration in the development of educational policy and practice. The case study has shown that primary-age children are able to provide insights into their experience of learning to write that might help educators to develop improved feedback practices.

14.3.2 Implications for teachers

There are implications for teachers in the way they address the teaching of writing and the feedback they provide. Paying attention to the content of children's work and finding further ways to encourage children to develop their ideas, rather than simply asking for more detail, may help children to improve the compositional elements of their work. This study indicates that this might also engender greater engagement with writing. Developing agency and a positive attitude to writing have been shown to enhance writing achievement (Graham, 2019). Teachers might therefore consider how they can hand greater responsibility to children for their own writing, not only in the expectation to edit and correct their work, but in providing more opportunities for children to have greater freedom and choice in what they write about.

The study highlights the direct influence the teacher has on children's writing. It illustrates the importance of teachers observing how children respond to instruction and feedback. It seems particularly useful to note where children have not fully understood the requirements of the task, such as grammatical features or the genre, and to work to bring children's understanding in line with their own expectations

(Dyson, 1990). Being aware of the influence they have on children's confidence for writing is important in promoting positive attitudes.

An improved understanding of research evidence is important for teachers. For example, my own increased understanding through undertaking this study, has informed my own practice as an inclusion consultant and university lecturer. It has helped me to reflect on the feedback I provide to university students, and sharing my learning has enabled me to support the teachers I work with to consider their practices around writing and feedback.

14.3.3 Implications for senior leaders and policy makers

The lack of improvement prompts for content in the case study teacher's usual style of feedback raises important questions about the current emphasis on technical skills in policy guidance. The current National Curriculum (DfE, 2014) and statutory testing continue to place greater focus on technical skills. The data from this case study suggests that this has an influence on how writing is taught and the value that teachers and children place on different elements of writing.

There is therefore the implication for policy makers that some readjustment might be needed to the balance of the curriculum, and clarification provided about how transcriptional and compositional skills might be taught in closer conjunction. The data from the case study suggests that bringing composition and transcription into a more integrated approach would have been beneficial within the general classroom context.

14.4 Possible further research

Several areas highlighted by this study would benefit from further research. Following this small case study, it is important to investigate whether the children's responses and the teacher's feedback practices are reflective of those in other schools. Studies with multiple schools and of longer duration are needed to canvas the views of a wider group of children, and to observe responses to feedback on other aspects of writing over a longer timeframe.

Although children said they found reminders and corrections helpful, Elliott *et al.* (2016) suggest it is more beneficial to hand responsibility back to children for editing and correcting their work. This would adhere more closely to Bruner's 'handover principle' (Bruner, 1983, p.60) and help children to build their own agency. It would therefore be valuable to investigate how these two approaches compare in promoting children's learning.

Although small, the study suggested that there may be some confusion for children around punctuating more complex sentences, and the conflicting views around the teaching of punctuation warrant further enquiry. Should punctuation be taught purely on grammatical principles as Wassouf (2007) and Hall (2009) assert, through prosody, as advocated by Chafe (1988), or via discussion about how professional authors punctuate for effect (Dawkins, 1995)? How children learn to punctuate is an under-researched area where greater clarity would be helpful.

The study also raises questions about how able children are to respond to requests for prescribed sentence constructions in their writing, and particularly whether the use of grammatical terminology is beneficial. There is a need for further work to ascertain

whether other approaches to developing children's written language and syntax might be more helpful.

Considering that the teacher's usual style of feedback focused on improvements in technical skills, whereas the children's main interest lay in developing their ideas, perhaps the most pressing need for further research is around the balance of different writing elements within teacher feedback. This may also have implications for the teaching of writing more generally. Researchers have noted an imbalance between technical skills and composition over time, but current policy and curriculum guidance has not redressed this. The reasons for the lack of feedback on children's ideas requires particular investigation. Teachers may feel that composition is best addressed through verbal discussion, but Clarke's (2003) model indicates that it is possible to support this more helpfully through written feedback as well.

Since carrying out the empirical research for this study, the Covid-19 pandemic has negatively impacted children's learning and put additional pressure on teacher workload. It is therefore important that teachers use their time efficiently to support children's learning and that time spent providing written feedback is beneficial. Elliott *et al.* exhort teachers to 'mark lessbut mark better' (2016, p.5). This small case study provides some initial thoughts on how this might be achieved.

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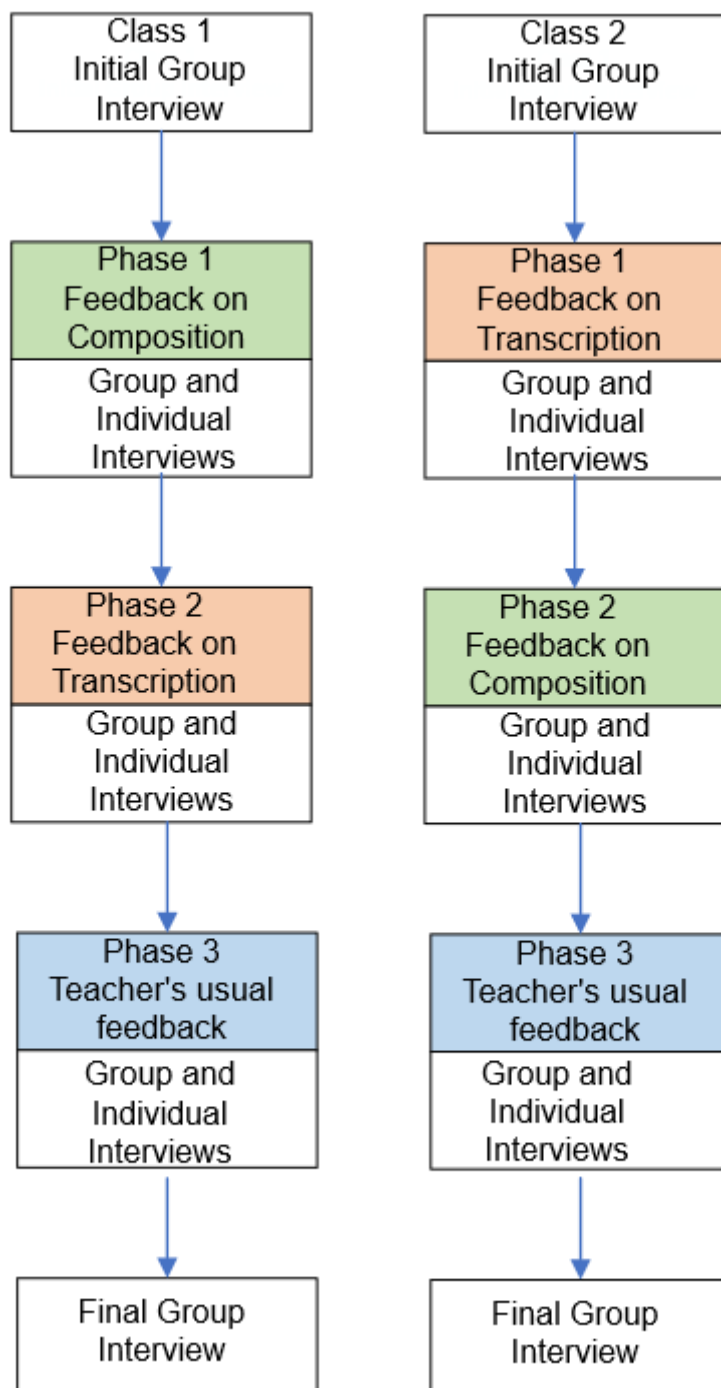
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16 Appendices

Appendix A. Overview of the original research design



Appendix Figure A-1: The original repeated measures design for the 2-class model

Appendix Figure A-1 summarises the original design for the project. This used a repeated measure design to provide children in two classes alternately with two types of feedback (composition and transcription), within the first two phases, with both groups receiving their teacher's usual style of feedback for the third phase. Each phase was to last four weeks. The plan was to compare how children had responded to each type of feedback and make comparisons between the two groups. However, the teacher of Class 2 was absent for Phases 2 and 3, so these children only received feedback on transcription. This meant that the three types of feedback were only received by the group in Class 1, which reduced the robustness of the multi-case design and removed the possibility of comparing any difference made by the order in which the two strands of feedback were given. In addition to qualitative data from group and individual interviews, school progress data was to be used to compare children's progress through the different phases. The Covid pandemic prevented the collection of this data. This thesis therefore focuses on the six children in Class 1, who received the full feedback planned, as a single, qualitative case study.

Appendix B. **School assessment continuum for writing**

Transcription - Handwriting

I can hold a pencil correctly

I can form some recognisable letters

I can sit correctly at a table, holding a pencil comfortably and correctly

I can form lower case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place

I can form capital letters and digits 0-9

I can form lower-case letters of the correct size relative to one another

I can begin to use some of the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters

I use capital letters and digits of the correct size, orientation and relationship to one another and to lower case letters

I use spacing between words that reflects the size of the letters

I use the diagonal and horizontal strokes that are needed to join letters

I understand which letters should be left unjoined

I make sure my handwriting is legible and consistent - including appropriately sized ascenders and descenders

I can maintain legibility, fluency and speed over a sustained piece of writing

I can choose the style of handwriting to use when given a choice

I can choose the handwriting that is best suited for a specific task

Transcription- Spelling

I can spell words containing each of the 40+ phonemes taught*

I can spell common exception words and the days of the week - Y1*

I can name the letters of the alphabet in order

I can use the letter names to distinguish between alternative spellings of the same sound

I can follow the rule for adding -s or -es for nouns and the third person singular marker for verbs

I can use the prefix -un

I can use -er, -ing, -ed, -est where no change is needed to the root word*

I can segment spoken words into phonemes and represent these by graphemes

I can spell some common homophones* - Y2*

I can spell common exception words

I can spell words with contracted forms*

I can apply the possessive plural (singular)

I can distinguish between homophones and near homophones*

I can add suffixes to spell longer words -ness, -ment, -less, -ful, -ly*

I can use further prefixes and suffixes*

I can spell further homophones*

I can spell words that often misspelt - word list 1*

I can place the possessive apostrophe accurately in words with regular and irregular plurals

I can use the first two or three letters to check spelling in a dictionary

I can use further prefixes and suffixes and understand the guidance for adding them*

I can spell some words with 'silent' letters*

I can distinguish between homophones and other words which are often confused*

I understand that the spelling of some words needs to be learnt specifically, as listed - word list 2*

I can use dictionaries to check the spelling and meaning of words

Punctuation

I can leave spaces between words

I can show an awareness of full stops and capital letters

I can use capital letters to start a sentence

I consistently use full stops to demarcate sentences

I can use a question mark

I can use an exclamation mark

I can use capital letters for proper nouns and for the personal pronoun 'I'

I can use a question mark and exclamation mark accurately within writing

I can use a speech bubble to show what a character might say

I can use bullet points to make simple notes

I can use commas to separate items in a list

I can use commas after an -ly opener

I can use apostrophes to show contracted forms in spelling

I can use apostrophes to mark singular possession

I can use inverted commas for direct speech

I can use a colon to introduce a list

I can use ellipses to keep the reader hanging on

I can use apostrophes to mark singular and plural possession

I can use commas after fronted adverbials

I can use commas to mark clauses

I can use inverted commas and other punctuation to indicate direct speech -
including split speech -

I can use brackets, dashes and commas to indicate parenthesis

I can use commas to clarify meaning or avoid ambiguity

I can use a semi-colon, colon and dash to indicate a stronger subdivision of a sentence than a comma

I can use a colon to introduce a list and semi-colons within lists

I can use bullet points to list information

I can use hyphens to avoid ambiguity

I can use a range of punctuation across a range of text types

I can use a verb and adverb within dialogue

I can develop complex sentences using main and subordinate clauses with full range of conjunctions

I can move sentence chunks (how, when, where) around for different effects

I can use a range of clause structures, sometimes varying their position within the sentence

I can use developed adverbial phrases as sentence starters within sustained writing

I can convey information about a character through developed dialogue, including direction (speech + verb + action)

I can use active and passive verbs to create effect and to affect presentation of information

Sentence Construction

I can write simple sentences

I can say a sentence, write it and read it back to check it makes sense

I can write a compound sentence using connectives

I can write a statement or command

I can write questions and exclamations

I can choose and use coordinating conjunctions

I can choose and use subordinating conjunctions

I can use some connectives as starters

I can write embellished sentences using adjectives

I can use -ly starters

I can add adjectives and adverbs to my sentences

I can use write expanded noun phrases

I can add a relative clause using: who/which/that

I can use a wider range of subordinating conjunctions and explore the position of the subordinate clause in a sentence

I can use long and short sentences for effect in narrative

I can use adverb starters to add detail – including a complex sentence

I can use fronted adverbial phrases used as a -‘where’, ‘when’ or ‘how’ starter

I can develop more complex sentences (subordination), with a wide range of conjunctions

I can use ‘ing’ words as starters

I can use ‘ed’ words as starters

I can use an appropriate choice of pronoun or noun within a sentence to avoid ambiguity and repetition

I can use relative clauses (including embedded) using: who, whom, which, whose, that and an omitted relative pronoun

I can use a range of sentences openers - ISPACE

I can use powerful verbs including for speech/dialogue

I can use expanded -ing clauses as starters

I can use expanded -ed clauses as starters

I can drop in an -‘ing’ clause (embedded clause)

I can use drop in -ed’ clauses (embedded clause)

Composition

I can compose a sentence orally before writing it

I can re-read what I have written to check it makes sense (simple sentences)

I can read aloud my writing to my peers and teachers

I can orally plan and rehearse the content of my writing before I begin - more than two sentences

I can write down ideas and key words including new vocabulary when planning - using a story map

I can re-read what I have written to check it makes sense and compare it with my plan

I can use the correct and consistent choice of present and past tense in my writing

I can re-read my work to check it makes sense and ensure verbs are used accurately

I can create a narrative with a setting, plot and characters - using a story map for planning, rehearsal

I can write for different purposes

I can proofread my work to check for errors in spelling and punctuation

I can discuss different models of writing, noting its structure, grammatical features and use of vocabulary

I can organise paragraphs around a theme

I can use some organisational devices such as subheadings and headings in non-fiction texts

I can consistently proofread for spelling, grammar and punctuation errors

I can read aloud my writing - to a group or the whole class, using intonation and tone/volume control

I can identify the audience and purpose for writing and select the appropriate form

I can note make and develop ideas based on research and reading

I can consider how authors have developed characters and settings and use this to inform my writing

I can select grammar and vocabulary to change and enhance writing and suit the style of writing

I can use a wide range of devices to build cohesion within and across paragraphs

I can use further organisational and presentational devices to structure and guide the reader

I can use the correct tense consistently throughout a piece of writing

I can use the correct subject and verb agreement when using singular and plural (using the appropriate register)

I can perform my own compositions, using appropriate intonation, volume and movement so that the meaning is clear

I can sustain writing with rich and varied vocabulary using a range of sentence structures across a range of text types:

- Narrative
- Report
- Instruction
- Persuasion
- Discussion
- Explanation
- Letter
- Argument
- Personal and Formal letter

Appendix C. **Criteria from 'Write Away Together'**

Purpose and Audience

I can write for an identifiable purpose - e.g. to inform or entertains

I can engage the reader's interest

I can communicates meaning, experiences, events or ideas

Content

I can develop the content of my writing, e.g. plot, setting, characters, ideas (fiction) or topic (non-fiction)

I can write clear openings and endings

Text Structure

I can use paragraphs to organise my writing

I can use headings, subheadings, bullet points and diagrams etc in non-fiction

I can structure my writing to help the reader's understanding e.g. instructions are in the appropriate order.

Sentence Structure

I can use simple sentences for effect

I can us compound sentences to improve the fluency of my writing

I can use complex sentences to express relationships between ideas, e.g. time, place, cause/effect etc.

I can use different sentences (statements, questions, exclamations, commands) speech, varying sentence openings to avoid monotonous repetition.

Vocabulary

I can use precise nouns – e.g. poodle rather than dog, peoples' names and technical or specific vocabulary

I can use a variety of descriptive/appropriate verbs

I can use consistent and appropriate tense

I can use adjectives thoughtfully to add detail

I tell the reader *when*, *where*, and *how* things/events happen

I can use pronouns accurately to avoid needless repetition and improve fluency

I can use pronouns consistently

Appendix D. University ethics approval



Mrs Mary Briggs
Director of Studies
School of Education
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Oxford Brookes University
Haverhill Hill

8 January 2019

Dear Mary

UREC Registration No: 181230 - Resubmission
A comparative case study looking at how pupils respond to written feedback on a) transcriptional and b) compositional aspects of writing

Thank you for the email of 7 January 2019 outlining the response to the points raised in my previous letter about the EdD study of your research student Rachael Falkner and attaching the revised documents. I am pleased to inform you that, on this basis, I have given Chair's Approval for the study to begin.

The UREC approval period for the data collection phase of the study is two years from the date of this letter, so 8 January 2021. If you need the approval to be extended please do contact me nearer the time of expiry.

Should the recruitment, methodology or data storage change from your original plans, or should any study participants experience adverse physical, psychological, social, legal or economic benefits from the research, please inform me with full details as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "S Quinton".

Dr Sarah Quinton
Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee

cc Rachael Falkner, Research Student
Carol Brown, Research Ethics Officer
Jill Organ, Research Degrees Team
Louise Wood, UREC Administrator

Appendix E. Information sheets and consent forms

Information Sheet (Headteacher)



Study title

A comparative case study looking at how children respond to written feedback on composition strategies* (content and ideas) and transcription skills* (grammar, spelling, punctuation and sentence construction) to improve their writing.

For fuller definitions see strand 4 and 5 of *Improving Literacy in Key Stage 2* (EEF, 2017)

https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Campaigns/Literacy/KS2_Literacy_Guidance_2017.pdf

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

The study is to look at how children use the written comments they receive from their teacher to improve their work and develop their writing skills. It will compare how they respond to feedback on **composition (content and ideas)** and **transcription (mechanics of writing)**. I have a particular interest in children who find literacy and writing difficult, but the study will include all children (who consent) in the two classes (ideally Year 5).

Why have I been invited to participate?

Your school has been chosen because it is a typical city primary school and is large enough to have parallel, single year group classes. The study will involve two classes, their teachers and

teaching assistants. This would ideally be Year 5, as children at this age are likely to be able to articulate their thoughts on writing, but do not have the pressure of SATs in this year group.

Do I have to take part?

Taking part in the research is entirely voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not your staff and pupils take part in this research study. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet along with a privacy notice that will explain how data will be collected and used and be asked to give your consent. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Choosing to either take part or not take part in the study will have no impact on your pupils' marks, assessments, or future studies.

What will happen to me if I take part?

In early January, the researcher will meet with teachers and TAs to explain the project and gain their informed consent. Parents of children in these classes will be asked to consent to their children participating, and the children will also be asked to consent, as it is **their** responses that will form the reported findings of the study.

For 4 weeks during the Spring term, one Year 5 teacher will mark children's writing with comments on composition (making up stories/ and putting ideas together) and the other teacher will focus on transcription (the mechanics of writing). They will then swap over for another 4 weeks. There will be a final 4 weeks when teachers return to giving their usual way of marking.

At the beginning of the study, after each 4-week period, and at the end of the study, children will take part in focus groups of about half an hour.

At the beginning and end of the study they will be asked to comment on:

- What I like about writing
- What I find difficult

At the end of each of the three 4-week blocks, children will be asked to comment on:

- What have I learned about writing?
- How has my writing improved?

A smaller group of children, (4-6 from each class) will be selected from those who consent for individual interviews. Each child will be asked to identify which of their teacher's comments have been helpful and talk about how they have responded to comments in their writing.

Focus groups and interviews will need to take place during the school day, in a familiar, quiet space close to the children's class room, such as the library, staff room or an intervention room.* tbc

Audio recordings will be made of the group discussions and individual interviews for the benefit of the researcher and to enable transcription. This will be done either by the researcher or a professional transcriber and kept in strictest confidence (see below).

School tracking data for the children will also be collected, to see if what the children say about their writing is reflected in their progress.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

Teachers will be asked to modify the written feedback they give to children on their writing for two 4-week periods. This may have an impact on their time, as it may take slightly longer to focus on the separate aspects of writing. The researcher will also need to work with small groups and individuals from your classes, over 1-2 days at various points during the study. Having children going in and out of lessons will have implications for how teachers organise children's learning on those days.

Although classroom teaching will remain unchanged, there is some risk that children will miss out on written feedback on the strand of writing not being focused on each half term. However, classroom practice and verbal feedback will remain unchanged.

Taking part in individual interviews may be more difficult for some children. Teachers will be asked to advise on which children, who have given consent for this, would be able to cope with the process and be able to articulate their views. Children will be selected who can present a range

of views. In the unlikely event of a child becoming upset during any part of the process the focus group or interview will be paused to discuss the problem. The child will not be asked to continue unless the issue can be resolved and will be able to opt out if they wish. School staff with whom the child is familiar may be best placed to provide further support if needed.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The study aims to find out what kind of written feedback helps children to learn best, so the findings of the study may help your staff, and other teachers more generally, to understand how children respond to feedback. This may help teachers to improve the feedback they give to children.

For the children, taking part in the study may help them to reflect on their writing in a way that is beneficial to their learning.

Will what my pupils say in this study be kept confidential?

All comments will be kept confidential and anonymised. Neither the school, staff or children will be named in the final thesis report or any subsequent article about the study. All audio recordings and other information about the project will be kept securely at all times. The laptop used will be password protected with secure encryption and data will be stored in Google Drive, for which the University has a security agreement.

Data from the study must be retained in accordance with the University's policy on Academic Integrity. As the study is for doctoral studies, data must be kept securely for a period of ten years after the completion of a research project.

What should I do if I want to take part?

If you agree to be part of the study, you need to give your positive consent, by signing the consent form sent with this information sheet. Please return this to Rachael Falkner at 15097320@brookes.ac.uk. You will be given a 48 hour 'cooling off' period after returning the consent form, but you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The findings of the study will be used in a thesis for a Doctorate in Education, and also submitted as articles for academic and professional publications. A copy of the findings will be sent to you once the study is completed.

Who is organising and funding the research?

Rachael Falkner is doing this study as part of the Doctorate in Education course.

Who has reviewed the study?

The research has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee, Oxford Brookes University and will be supervised by the university.

Contact for Further Information

For further information, please contact Rachael Falkner at 15097320@brookes.ac.uk. Should you have any concerns about the way in which the study is conducted, you should contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee on ethics@brookes.ac.uk.

Thank you for your time reading this information sheet and considering participating in the study.

Privacy Notice

Oxford Brookes University (OBU) will usually be the Data Controller of any data that you supply for this research. This means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it properly. The exception to this is joint research projects where you would be informed on the participant information sheet as to the other partner institution or institutions. This means that they will make the decisions on how your data is used and for what reasons. You can contact the University's Information Management Team on 01865 485420 or email info.sec@brookes.ac.uk.

Why do we need your data?

A comparative case study looking at how pupils respond to written feedback from their teacher on a) transcriptional and b) compositional aspects of writing

The study is exploring how children respond to their teacher's written comments to improve their work and develop their writing skills.

OBU's legal basis for collecting this data is:

You are consenting to providing it to us; and / or,

Processing is necessary for the performance of a task in the public interest such as research

If the university asks you for sensitive data such as; racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade-union membership, data concerning health or sexual life, genetic/biometric data or criminal records OBU will use these data because:

You have given OBU explicit consent to do so; and / or

Processing is necessary for scientific or research in the public interest.

What type of data will Oxford Brookes University use?

OBU will use children's responses from focus groups and 1:1 interviews. Audio recordings will be made and transcribed for analysis. The feedback comments teachers have written in children's books may also be quoted during interviews. The school's progress tracking of the children's writing will also be collected at the beginning of the study and each data collection point. All data will be anonymised.

Who will OBU share your data with?

This data will be saved on an OBU google drive. **Due to the quantity of data, the bulk of the transcription will need to be carried out by a professional transcriber. It will therefore be shared with the transcriber via an Oxford Brookes University google drive or emailed via an OBU account. The transcriber will be asked to complete a Data Compliance form.**

Will OBU transfer my data outside of the UK?

No

What rights do I have regarding my data that OBU holds?

You have the right to be informed about what data will be collected and how this will be used

You have the right of access to your data

You have the right to correct data if it is wrong

You have the right to ask for your data to be deleted

You have the right to restrict use of the data we hold about you

You have the right to data portability

You have the right to object to the university using your data

You have rights in relation to using your data automated decision making and profiling.

Where did OBU source my data from?

Audio recordings will be made of participants (children) taking part in focus group discussions and individual interviews. The feedback comments teachers have written in children's books may be quoted in the interviews.

The school tracking data of the children's writing progress will be obtained from the school.

Are there any consequences of not providing the requested data?

There are no legal consequences of not providing data for this research. It is purely voluntary.

Will there be any automated decision making using my data?

There will be no use of automated decision making in scope of UK Data Protection and Privacy legislation."

How long will OBU keep your data?

In line with Oxford Brookes policies data generated in the course of research must be kept securely in paper or electronic form for a period of time in accordance with the research funder or University policy.

Who can I contact if I have concerns?

You can contact the Information Management team.

Postal Address: Information Management Team, IT Services, Room 2.12, Gibbs Building, Headington Campus, Gipsy Lane, Oxford, OX3 0BP

Email: info.sec@brookes.ac.uk

Tel: 01865 485420 in UK

+44 1865 485420 outside the UK.

CONSENT FORM (Headteacher)

**A comparative case study looking at how pupils respond to written feedback on
a) transcriptional and b) compositional aspects of writing**

Rachael Falkner, student (Doctorate in Education), 15097320@brookes.ac.uk

	Please initial box	
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.		
I understand that the participation of my school is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.		
I agree to take part in the above study and for the members of staff and pupils at the school to take part subject to their own consent		
	Please initial box	
	Yes	No
I agree for teachers in the study to give written feedback to children on a.) composition and b.) transcription separately for two periods of 4 weeks.		
I agree to my pupils taking part in focus groups and interviews and to these being audio recorded		
I agree to the use of anonymised quotes from what pupils say and teachers written feedback comments in publications		
I agree for the school's tracking of children's progress to be used in an anonymised form		
I agree that an anonymised data set, gathered for this study may be stored in a specialist data centre/repository relevant to this subject area for future research		

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Rachael Falkner

26.10.18

Rachael Falkner

Name of Researcher

Date

Signature

Study title

A comparative case study looking at how children respond to written feedback on **composition strategies* (content and ideas)** and **transcription skills* (grammar, spelling, punctuation and sentence construction)** to improve their writing.

For fuller definitions see strand 4 and 5 of *Improving Literacy in Key Stage 2* (EEF, 2017)

https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Campaigns/Literacy/KS2_Literacy_Guidance_2017.pdf

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

The study is to look at how children use the written comments they receive from their teacher to improve their work and develop their writing skills. It will compare how they respond to feedback on **composition (content and ideas)** and **transcription (mechanics of writing)**. The researcher has a particular interest in children who find literacy and writing difficult, but the study will include all children (who consent) in the two Year 4 classes.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been chosen to take part in the study because you teach in Year 4 in a school with parallel classes. Year 4 has been chosen because children are old enough to be able to articulate their thoughts on writing, but do not have the pressure of SATs in this year group.

Do I have to take part?

Taking part in the research is entirely voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this research study. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet along with a privacy notice that will explain how data will be collected and used, and be asked to give your consent. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

Choosing to either take part or not take part in the study will have no impact on your pupils' marks, assessments or future studies.

What will happen to me if I take part?

Towards the end of the autumn term or early January, the researcher will meet with you to explain the project and gain your informed consent. Parents of children in your class will be asked to consent to their children participating, and the children will also be asked to consent, as it is **their** responses that will form the reported findings of the study.

For 4 weeks during the Spring term, one Year 4 teacher will mark children's writing with comments on composition (making up stories/ and putting ideas together) and the other teacher will focus on transcription (the mechanics of writing). They will then swap over for another 4 weeks. There will be a final 4 weeks when teachers return to their usual way of marking.

At the beginning of the study, after each 4-week period, and at the end of the study, children will take part in focus groups of about half an hour.

At the beginning and end of the study they will be asked to comment on:

- What I like about writing
- What I find difficult

At the end of each of the three 4-week blocks, children will be asked to comment on:

- What did I learn about writing?

- How has my writing improved?

At the end of each 4-week block, a smaller group of children, (4-6 from each class) will be selected from those who consent for individual interviews to discuss how they have responded to written feedback in their writing. Each child will be asked to identify which of their teacher's comments have been helpful and talk about how they have responded to comments in their writing.

Focus groups and interviews will need to take place during the school day, in a familiar, quiet space close to the children's class room, such as the library, staff room or an intervention room.* tbc

Audio recordings will be made of the focus group discussions and individual interviews for the benefit of the researcher and to enable transcription. This will be done either by the researcher or a professional transcriber and kept in strictest confidence (see below).

School tracking data for the children will also be collected, to see if what the children say about their writing and use of feedback is reflected in their progress.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

You will be asked to modify the written feedback you give to children on their writing for two 4-week periods. This may have an impact on your pupils' learning, but classroom practice and verbal feedback will remain unchanged. It may also take slightly longer to focus on the separate aspects of writing in your marking.

The researcher will also need to work with small groups and individuals from your class, over 1-2 days at the various points in the study. Having children going in and out of your lessons will have implications for how you organise their learning on those days.

Taking part in individual interviews may be more difficult for some children. You will be asked to advise on which children, from those who have given consent for this, would be able to cope with the process and be able to articulate their views. Children will be selected who can present a

range of views. In the unlikely event of a child becoming upset during any part of the process the focus group or interview will be paused to discuss the problem. The child will not be asked to continue unless the issue can be resolved and will be able to opt out if they wish. School staff with whom the child is familiar may be best placed to provide further support if needed.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The findings of the study may help you, and other teachers more generally, to understand how children respond to feedback and what is most helpful to them. This may help teachers to improve the feedback they give to children.

Taking part in the study may help children to reflect on their writing in a way that is beneficial to their learning.

Will what my pupils say in this study be kept confidential?

All comments will be kept confidential and anonymised. Neither the school, staff or children will be named in the final thesis report or any subsequent article about the study. All audio recordings and other information about the project will be kept securely at all times. The laptop used will be password protected with secure encryption and data will be stored in Google Drive, for which the University has a security agreement.

Data from the study must be retained in accordance with the University's policy on Academic Integrity. As the study is for doctoral studies, data must be kept securely for a period of ten years after the completion of a research project.

What should I do if I want to take part?

If you agree to be part of the study, you need to give your positive consent, by signing the consent form and returning it directly to Rachael Falkner or sending it to 15097320@brookes.ac.uk. You will be given a 48 hour 'cooling off' period after returning the consent form, but you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The findings of the study will be used in a thesis for a Doctorate in Education, and also submitted as articles for academic and professional publications. A copy of the findings will be sent to you once the study is completed.

Who is organising and funding the research?

Rachael Falkner is doing this study as part of the Doctorate in Education course.

Who has reviewed the study?

The research has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee, Oxford Brookes University and will be supervised by the university.

Contact for Further Information

For further information, please contact Rachael Falkner at 15097320@brookes.ac.uk. Should you have any concerns about the way in which the study is conducted, you should contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee on ethics@brookes.ac.uk.

Thank you for your time reading this information sheet and considering participating in the study.

Privacy Notice

Oxford Brookes University (OBU) will usually be the Data Controller of any data that you supply for this research. This means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it properly. The exception to this is joint research projects where you would be informed on the participant information sheet as to the other partner institution or institutions. This means that they will make the decisions on how your data is used and for what reasons. You can contact the University's Information Management Team on 01865 485420 or email info.sec@brookes.ac.uk.

Why do we need your data?

A research project is being carried out at your school to compare how children respond to written feedback from their teacher on transcriptional (mechanics of writing) and compositional (ideas) aspects of writing. The study is exploring how children respond to their teacher's written comments to improve their work and develop their writing skills.

OBU's legal basis for collecting this data is:

You and your pupils are consenting to providing it to us; and,

The research project is in the public interest.

What type of data will Oxford Brookes University use?

OBU will use your pupils' responses from focus groups and 1:1 interviews. This will be their thoughts about their writing and how they have used their teacher's marking. Audio recordings will be made of their comments. The feedback comments their teacher has written in their book may also be quoted during interviews. The school's progress tracking of pupils' writing will also be collected during the project. This will be used to compare what pupils say about their writing, with their teacher's assessment of their progress. All data will be anonymised before it is analysed and stored.

Who will OBU share your data with?

This data will be saved on an OBU google drive. Due to the quantity of data, the bulk of the transcription will need to be carried out by a professional transcriber. It will therefore be shared with the transcriber via an Oxford Brookes University google drive or emailed via an OBU account. The transcriber will be asked to complete a Data Compliance form.

Will OBU transfer my data outside of the UK?

No

What rights do I have regarding my data that OBU holds?

You have the right to be informed about what data will be collected and how this will be used

You have the right of access to your data

You have the right to correct data if it is wrong

You have the right to ask for your data to be deleted

You have the right to restrict use of the data we hold about you

You have the right to data portability

You have the right to object to the university using your data

You have rights in relation to using your data automated decision making and profiling.

Where did OBU source my data from?

Audio recordings will be made of pupils' comments in focus group discussions and individual interviews.

The feedback comments teachers have written in children's books may be quoted in the interviews.

The school tracking data of pupils' writing progress will be obtained from class teachers.

Are there any consequences of not providing the requested data?

There are no legal consequences of not providing data for this research. It is purely voluntary.

Will there be any automated decision making using my data?

There will be no use of automated decision making in scope of UK Data Protection and Privacy legislation.”

How long will OBU keep your data?

In line with Oxford Brookes policies data generated in the course of research must be kept securely in paper or electronic form for 10 years.

Who can I contact if I have concerns?

You can contact the Information Management team.

Postal Address: Information Management Team, IT Services, Room 2.12, Gibbs Building, Headington Campus, Gypsy Lane, Oxford, OX3 0BP

Email: info.sec@brookes.ac.uk

Tel: 01865 485420 in UK

+44 1865 485420 outside the UK.

CONSENT FORM (Teacher)

**A comparative case study looking at how pupils respond to written feedback on
a) transcriptional and b) compositional aspects of writing**

Rachael Falkner, student (Doctorate in Education), 15097320@brookes.ac.uk

	Please initial box	
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.		
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.		
I agree to take part in the above study.		
	Please initial box	
	Yes	No
I agree to give written feedback to children on a.) composition and b.) transcription separately for two periods of 4 weeks.		
I agree to my pupils taking part in focus groups and interviews and to these being audio recorded		
I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications, both from what pupils say and from my written comments in their books		
I agree for the school's tracking of children's progress to be used in an anonymised form		

I agree that an anonymised data set, gathered for this study may be stored in a specialist data centre/repository relevant to this subject area for future research		
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Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Rachael Falkner

26.10.18

Rachael Falkner

Name of Researcher

Date

Signature

Information Sheet for Parent/Carer



Study title

A study to look at how children respond to written comments from their teacher to improve their writing. The study will compare how children use comments on grammar, spelling and punctuation to how they use comments on content and ideas.

Dear Parent/Carer,

Your child is being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not they should take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Your child will also receive an information sheet and be asked to give consent for themselves.

What is the purpose of the study?

The study is to look at how children use the written comments they receive from their teacher to improve their work and develop their writing skills. It will compare how they respond to feedback on **content and ideas** and **grammar, spelling and punctuation**. I have a particular interest in children who find writing difficult, but the study will include all children (who consent) in the two Year 4 classes.

Why have I been invited to participate?

The school has been chosen because it is large enough to have two classes per year. The study will involve the Year 4 classes. Children at this age are able to talk meaningfully about their writing, but do not have the pressure of SATs in this year group.

Do I have to take part?

Taking part in the research is entirely voluntary. It is up to you and your child to decide whether or not they take part. If you do decide to let your child take part, please sign and return the consent form. Your child will also need to sign a consent form. **If you choose for your child to take part, you and/or your child are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.** Choosing to either take part or not take part in the study will have no impact on your child's marks, assessments or future studies.

What will happen to my child if they take part?

For 4 weeks during the Spring term, one Year 4 teacher will mark children's writing with comments on content (making up stories/ and putting ideas together) and the other teacher will focus on the grammar, spelling and punctuation. They will then swap over for another 4 weeks. There will be a final 4 weeks when teachers return to giving their usual way of marking.

At the beginning of the study, after each 4-week period, and at the end of the study, children will take part in focus groups of about half an hour.

At the beginning and end of the study they will be asked to comment on:

- What I like about writing
- What I find difficult

At the end of each of the three 4-week blocks, children will be asked to comment on:

- What did I learn about writing?
- How has my writing improved?

A small number of children will also be selected to meet the researcher 1:1 for about, 20 minutes at the end of each of the three 4-week blocks to discuss how they have used their teacher's written comments to improve their writing over each period.

Focus groups and interviews will take place during the school day, in a familiar, quiet space close to the children's classroom, such as the library, staff room or an intervention room.

Audio recordings will be made of the focus group discussions and individual interviews for the benefit of the researcher and to enable transcription. Transcription will be done either by the researcher or a professional transcriber and kept in strictest confidence (see below).

The teacher's assessment of children's progress during the project will also be collected, to see if what the children say about their writing and use of feedback is reflected in their progress. Like all data from the study, this will be anonymised so that it cannot be traced back to your child.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

As your child will receive comments on content and grammar, spelling and punctuation separately for two 4-week blocks, there is the potential for them to miss out on feedback on the other aspect of writing at this time. However, classroom teaching will not be changed, and every effort will be made to ensure that children get all the feedback they need over the course of the whole term. Your child will also miss parts of their normal lessons to take part in focus groups and interviews (if selected for this).

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The findings of the study may help your child's teacher, and teachers more generally, improve the feedback they give to children. We also know that thinking about their learning is helpful to children, so there may be some benefit to taking part in this reflection time.

Will what my child says in this study be kept confidential?

All information collected from individual children will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations). Children's comments will be kept confidential and anonymised. Neither the school, staff nor children will be named in the final thesis report or any subsequent article about the study.

All audio recordings and other information about the project will be kept securely at all times. The laptop used will be password protected with secure encryption and data will be stored in Google Drive, for which the University has a security agreement.

Data from the study must be retained in accordance with the University's policy on Academic Integrity. As the study is for doctoral studies, data must be kept securely for a period of ten years after the completion of a research project.

What should I do if I want to take part?

If you would like your child to take part in the study, you and your child need to give your positive consent by signing the consent forms and returning them to school. You will be given a 48 hour 'cooling off' period after returning the consent forms, but if for any reason you do not wish to continue, you can drop out of the study at any point.

If you choose for your child NOT to be part of the study their learning will not be disrupted in any way. They will remain in their normal lessons, receive normal written feedback, and their progress data will not be used.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The findings of the study will be used in a thesis for a Doctorate in Education, and also submitted as articles for academic and professional publications. A copy of the findings will be sent to you once the study is completed.

Who is organising and funding the research?

Rachael Falkner is doing this study as part of the Doctorate in Education course.

Who has reviewed the study?

The research has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee, Oxford Brookes University and will be supervised by the university.

Contact for Further Information

For further information, please contact Rachael Falkner at 15097320@brookes.ac.uk. Should you have any concerns about the way in which the study is conducted, you should contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee on ethics@brookes.ac.uk. **Thank you for your time reading this information sheet and considering participating in the study.**

Privacy Notice for Parent/Carer

Oxford Brookes University (OBU) will usually be the Data Controller of any data that your child and their school supply for this research. This means that we are responsible for looking after your child's information and using it properly. The exception to this is joint research projects where you would be informed on the participant information sheet as to the other partner institution or institutions. This means that they will make the decisions on how your data is used and for what reasons. You can contact the University's Information Management Team on 01865 485420 or email info.sec@brookes.ac.uk.

Why do we need your child's data?

We will be doing research that involves asking your child about their school experience of learning to write.

OBU's legal basis for collecting this data is:

You are consenting to providing it to us; and / or,

Processing is necessary for the performance of a task in the public interest such as research

If the university asks you for sensitive data (now called special category data) such as; racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade-union membership, data concerning health or sexual life, genetic/biometric data or criminal records OBU will use these data because:

You have given OBU explicit consent to do so; and / or

Processing is necessary for scientific or research in the public interest.

What type of data will Oxford Brookes University use?

We may collect information that involves your child's name and information on how well they are doing in writing at school and any difficulties they may have. Usually names will be taken out when we write our results so your child will not be identified. If this is not the case we will tell you and you will be able to agree whether or not we can keep this information.

Who will OBU share your child's data with?

Your child's data will not be shared with any third parties.

Will OBU transfer my child's data outside of the UK?

No

What rights do I have regarding my child's data that OBU holds?

You have the right to be informed about what data will be collected and how this will be used

You have the right of access to your child's data

You have the right to correct data if it is wrong

You have the right to ask for your child's data to be deleted

You have the right to restrict use of the data we hold about your child

You have the right to data portability

You have the right to object to the university using your child's data

You have rights in relation to using your child's data automated decision making and profiling.

Are there any consequences of not providing the requested data?

There are no legal consequences of not providing data for this research. It is purely voluntary.

Will there be any automated decision making using my child's data?

No

How long will OBU keep your child's data?

In line with Oxford Brookes policies data generated in the course of research must be kept securely in paper or electronic form for 10 years.

Who can I contact if I have concerns?

You can contact the Information Management team.

Postal Address: Information Management Team, IT Services, Room 2.12, Gibbs Building, Headington
Campus, Gypsy Lane, Oxford, OX3 0BP

Email: info.sec@brookes.ac.uk

Tel: 01865 485420 in UK

+44 1865 485420 outside the UK.

CONSENT FORM (Parent)

A comparative case study looking at how pupils respond to written feedback on the transcription (grammar, punctuation and spelling) and composition (the content of their writing).

Rachael Falkner, student (Doctorate in Education), 15097320@brookes.ac.uk

	Please initial box <input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/>
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	
I understand that my child's participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw consent at any time, without giving reason.	<input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/>
I agree for my child to take part in the above study and understand that my child will also be asked to consent.	<input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/>
	Please initial box Yes No
I agree for my child to receive written feedback from their teacher on composition and transcription separately for two periods of 4 weeks.	<input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/> <input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/>
I agree to my child taking part in the focus groups and to these being audio recorded	<input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/> <input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/>

If selected, I agree to my child taking part in interviews and to these being audio recorded	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to the use of anonymised quotes from my child in publications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree for the school's tracking of my child's progress to be used in an anonymised form	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree that an anonymised data set, gathered for this study may be stored in a specialist data centre/repository relevant to this subject area for future research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Rachael Falkner

26.10.18

Rachael Falkner

Name of Researcher

Date

Signature

Information Sheet for Children



Dear Children,

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Read this sheet with your parent or carer. Then decide if you would like to take part.

I want to find out how you use the comments that your teacher writes in your book. How do they help you learn to write?

What will happen to me if I take part?

The two Year 4 classes will take part in the study for about 12 weeks. For 4 weeks one teacher will write comments about your grammar, punctuation, and spelling. The other teacher will write comments about the ideas you have used. They will then swap over for another 4 weeks. For the last 4 weeks they will mark your work in the normal way.

You will be asked to work in a small group five times during the study. In the group you will make mind maps about your writing. The group will take turns to tell each other about their mind maps. Each group time will last for about 30 minutes. What you say will be recorded. These groups will meet during lesson times, in a quiet area close to your classroom.

You might also be chosen to work with me on your own three times for about, 20 minutes. We will talk about the comments your teacher has written in your book, and how they have helped you learn to write. What you say will be recorded.

What happens to all the information?

What you and other children say will be compared. I will also ask your teacher how they think you are getting on with your writing. This will show whether you and your teacher think the same thing about your writing.

Information from the study must be kept for 10 years on a safe university Google Drive. The results of the study will be written up, so that people at the university can read about it. Names will be changed, so no one will know that it is you or your school that took part.

What do I do if I would like to take part?

If you would like to take part in the study, sign the consent form and return it to school. You will be given 2 days to change your mind, but **you can drop out of the study at any point without giving a reason.** If you have any questions, ask your parents, carers or teacher to email me. Please tell your teacher if you are ever worried about the study.

Thank you for reading this information sheet and thinking about taking part in the study.

Privacy Notice for Children

Oxford Brookes University (OBU) will usually be the Data Controller of any data that your child and their school supply for this research. This means that we are responsible for looking after your child's information and using it properly. The exception to this is joint research projects where you would be informed on the participant information sheet as to the other partner institution or institutions. This means that they will make the decisions on how your data is used and for what reasons. You can contact the University's Information Management Team on 01865 485420 or email info.sec@brookes.ac.uk.

Why do we need your data?

We will be doing a research study at your school. We are looking at how children use the comments that teachers write in their books to help them learn to write.

OBU's legal basis for collecting this data is:

You are consenting to providing it to us; and / or,

Processing is necessary for the performance of a task in the public interest such as research

If the university asks you for sensitive data (now called special category data) such as; racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade-union membership, data concerning health or sexual life, genetic/biometric data or criminal records OBU will use these data because:

You have given OBU explicit consent to do so; and / or

Processing is necessary for scientific or research in the public interest.

What type of data will Oxford Brookes University use?

We may collect information that includes your name and information about how well you are doing in writing at school. Usually, names will be taken out when we write our results, so you will not be identified. If this is not the case, we will tell you and you will be able to agree whether or not we can keep this information.

Who will OBU share your data with?

Your data will not be shared with any third parties.

Will OBU transfer my child's data outside of the UK?

No

What rights do I have regarding my child's data that OBU holds?

You have the right to be informed about what data will be collected and how this will be used

You have the right of access to your child's data

You have the right to correct data if it is wrong

You have the right to ask for your child's data to be deleted

You have the right to restrict use of the data we hold about your child

You have the right to data portability

You have the right to object to the university using your child's data

You have rights in relation to using your child's data automated decision making and profiling.

Are there any consequences of not providing the requested data?

There are no legal consequences of not providing data for this research. It is purely voluntary.

Will there be any automated decision making using my child's data?

No

How long will OBU keep your child's data?

In line with Oxford Brookes policies data generated in the course of research must be kept securely in paper or electronic form for 10 years.

Who can I contact if I have concerns?

You can contact the Information Management team.

Postal Address: Information Management Team, IT Services, Room 2.12, Gibbs Building, Headington Campus, Gypsy Lane, Oxford, OX3 0BP

Email: info.sec@brookes.ac.uk

Tel: 01865 485420 in UK

+44 1865 485420 outside the UK.

CONSENT FORM (Child)

A study looking at how children respond to written feedback on grammar, punctuation and spelling and the content of their writing.

Rachael Falkner, student (Doctorate in Education), 15097320@brookes.ac.uk

	Please initial box	
I have read and understand the information sheet for the study and have been able to ask questions.		
I understand that it is up to me whether I take part or not, and that I can drop out at any time, without giving a reason.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I agree to take part in the study.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Please initial box	
	Yes	No
I agree that my teacher can give me written comments on the content of my writing for 4 weeks, and the grammar, spelling and punctuation for another 4 weeks.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to taking part in focus groups and that these can be recorded	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If I am chosen, I agree to taking part in interviews, and that these can be recorded	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree that things I say in the focus group sessions or interviews can be quoted, but I will not named.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree for the school's tracking of my progress to be used without me being named.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree that a data set that has had my name taken off it, may be stored on the university Google Drive for 10 years after the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Rachael Falkner

26.10.18

Name of Researcher

Date

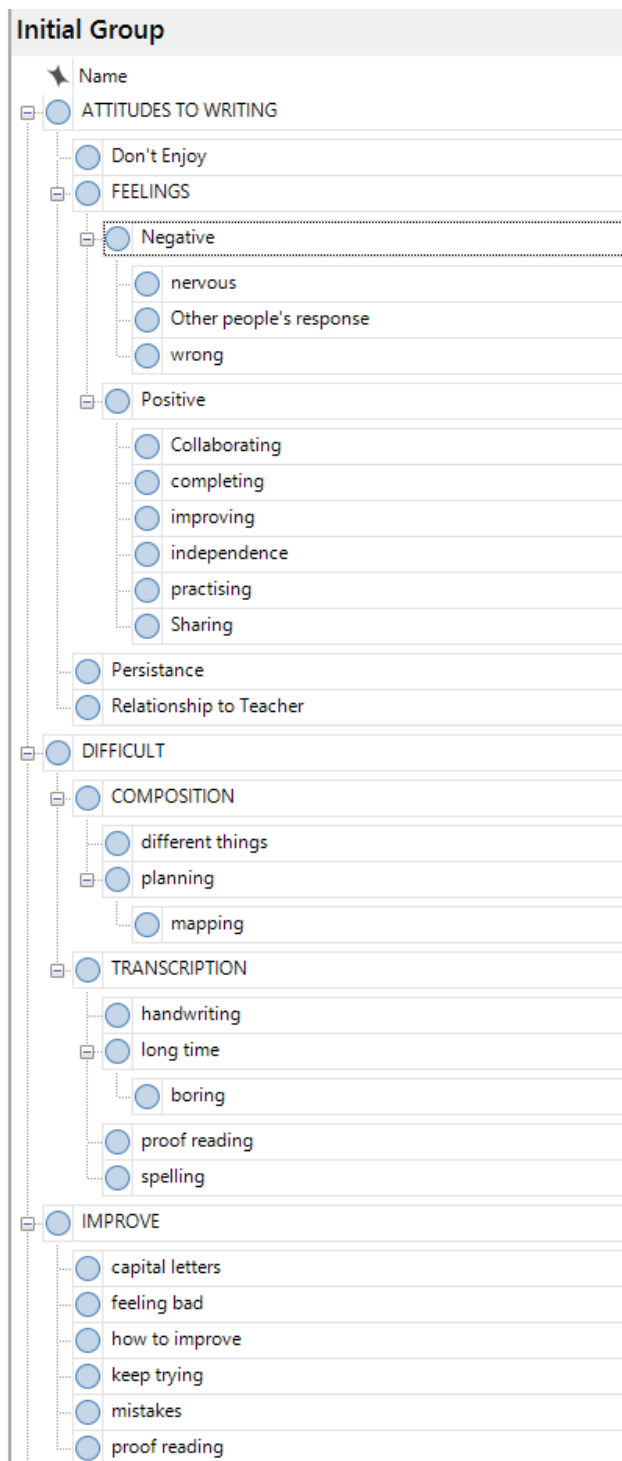
Signature

Readability Indices for Child Information Sheet

Readability Test	Score
Flesch Kincaid Reading Ease	77.7
Flesch Kincaid Grade Level	6
Gunning Fog Score	7.3
SMOG Index	4.8
Coleman Liau Index	9
Automated Readability Index	5.6

The Privacy Notice was developed for children by Oxford Brookes University Ethic Committee.

Appendix F. Examples of initial NVivo codebooks



Appendix Figure F-1: Initial codebook for initial group interview

Individual Interviews		Files	Referen
Name			
Attitudes to Feedbac		4	4
not understandin		3	5
COMPOSITION		0	0
Changes		5	8
Feedback on Co		0	0
Improve		0	0
building i		1	1
complete		1	1
detail		1	1
embedde		1	1
expanded		1	3
facts		2	2
ideas		2	5
making s		2	2
non-chro		2	4
plans		1	1
start of se		1	1
sub-headi		2	2
Praise		0	0
building i		1	1
changes		1	1
content		1	1
descriptio		1	1
expanded		1	1
good star		1	1
ideas		1	1
informal l		2	2
introducti		2	2
main poin		2	3
plans		1	2
Praise hel		1	1
retelling		1	1
rewrite		2	2
subheadi		1	3
numb		1	1
summaris		1	1
thinking a		2	2
vocabular		2	2
scanning for f		1	1
Genre		0	0
letter writing		3	3
non-chronolo		1	1
subheadings		2	4
Planning		0	0
boxing up		3	4
bullet pointin		3	3
feedback on		1	1
letter plan		2	2
mapping		7	8
paragraphing		4	6
spidergram		1	2
sub-headings		1	1
usefulness of		4	4
Target		0	0
feelings		1	1
Comprehension		6	6
FEELINGS ABOUT W		0	0
Changing story		1	1
confidence		2	2
Improved		1	1
Motivation		1	2
TRANSCRIPTION		0	0
Feedback on Tran		0	0
reminders		4	6
Teacher's mist		1	1
Handwriting		0	0
finger spaces		1	1
Paragraphs		2	2
Punctuation		6	12
speech marks		1	2
Spelling		4	5
WRITING TOPICS		0	0
Boudicca and Ro		3	5
Creature		1	1
Frideswide		2	3
Letter to penpal		2	3
Pinocchio		3	4

Appendix Figure F-2: Initial codebook for individual interviews after Phase 1

Appendix G. Second cycle NVivo codebooks

Initial Group Search Project

Name	Files	Referen
ATTITUDES TO WRITI	0	0
FEELINGS	0	0
Negative	0	0
difficult	1	3
don't Enjo	1	3
feeling ba	1	1
nervous	1	1
Other peo	1	1
too long o	1	4
mappi	1	5
wrong	1	7
Positive	1	3
collaborati	1	3
completin	1	2
enjoy	0	0
improving	1	1
independ	1	1
like to imp	1	2
practising	1	1
sharing	1	2
Persistence	1	5
TOPIC CHOICE	0	0
different thin	1	3
stories	1	1
CONSOLIDATION	0	0
capital letters	1	2
mistakes	1	3
proof reading	1	1
RELATIONSHIP TO TE	0	0
Sharing work with	1	2

Appendix Figure G-1: Second cycle codebook for the initial group interview

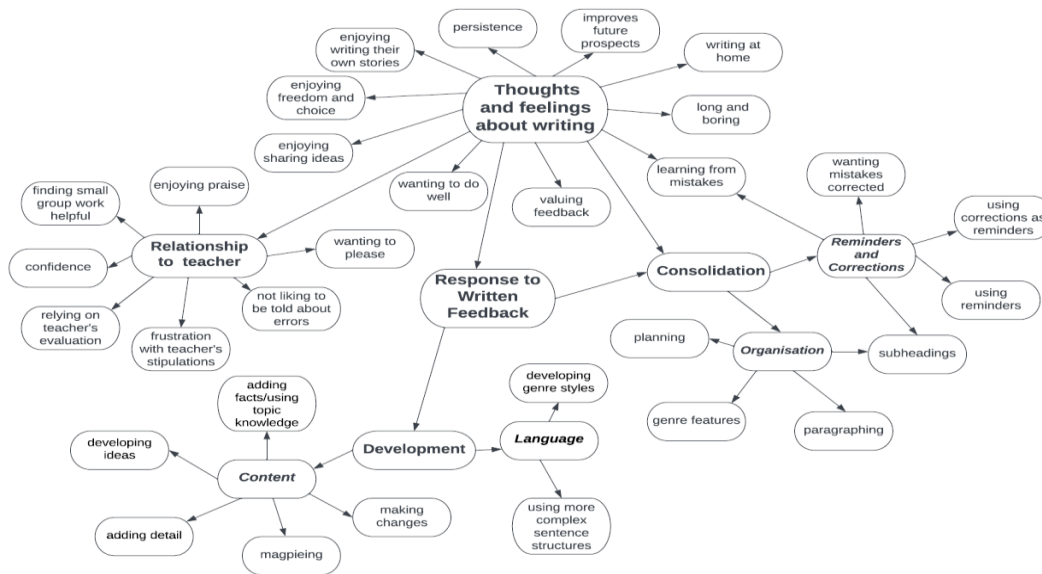
Phase Groups			
Name	Files	References	
POSSIBLE THEMES		0	0
CONSOLIDATION AND APPLICA		1	2
Feedback from the teacher		4	7
Improvement		2	3
how improved		0	0
Checking		1	1
competing		1	2
handwriting		1	1
listening to the teac		1	1
mapping		1	4
mistakes		2	8
motivation		2	3
Neat		1	1
no improvement		2	2
not improved		1	1
persevered		1	1
persistence		1	1
subheadings		2	4
targets		1	1
embedded claus		2	7
using targets		2	2
teacher comments		1	5
Transcription		0	0
Teacher making mistakes		1	1
writing more		3	3
wrong		1	1
DEVELOPING CONTENT		0	0
Big Write		2	4
Changes		2	6
Content		5	16
detail		1	1
Feedback from the teacher		1	1
imagination		1	1
introductions		1	2
narrative writing		1	1
report writing		1	1
vocabulary		2	8
RELATIONSHIP TO TEACHER		0	0
Feedback from teacher		4	7
letters		1	1
Relationship to teacher		1	3
Teacher's choice of topic		1	2
re-writes		1	2
STRUCTURING		0	0
Bullet Points (Boxing Up)		1	1
Mapping		3	9
own stories		1	2
planning steps		0	0
Spider diagrams		0	0
THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS		0	0
Confidence		2	7
Compliments		3	9
new glasses		1	1
enjoyment		0	0
enjoy		1	2
choice of topic		1	1
own stories		1	1
not enjoyed		2	3
Not being able to p		1	1
too long		1	1
proud of myself		1	2
TOPICS		0	0
own stories		1	2
set topics		3	3
Transcription v Composition		1	1
wanting to improve		1	3
Writing at home		1	1
Writing for future life		1	6
Talking English		1	2

Appendix Figure G-2: Second cycle codebook for group interviews after each phase of feedback

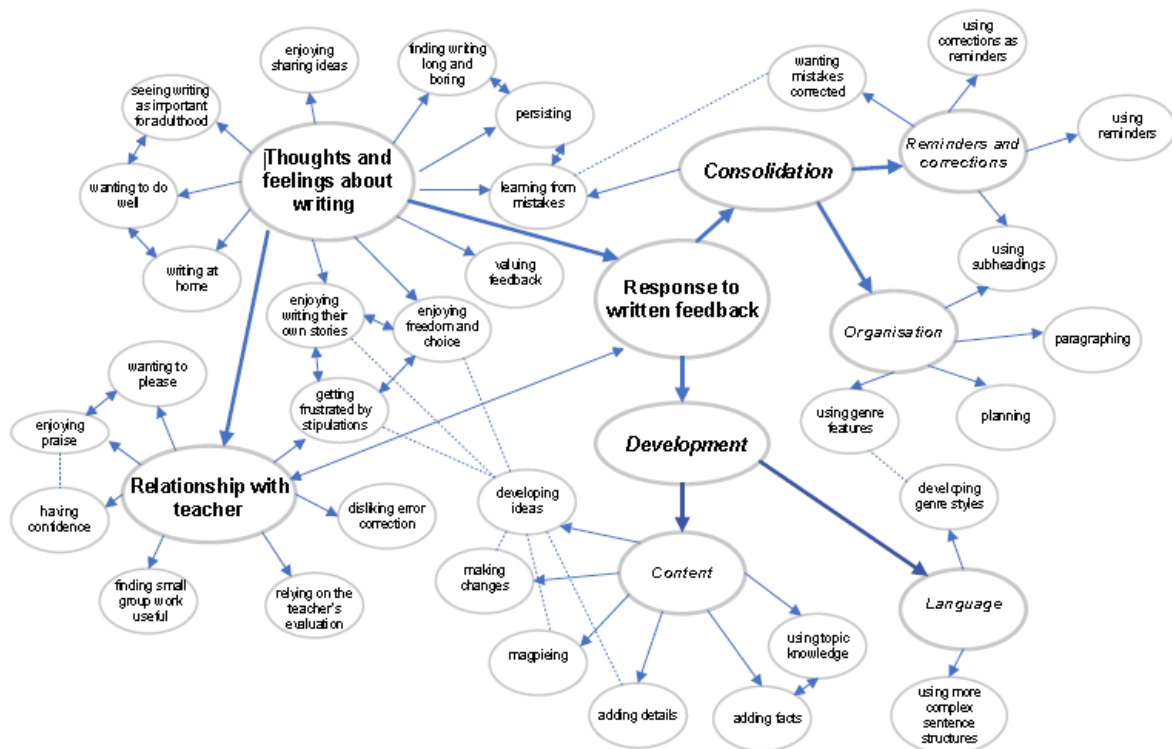
Final Group				
Name	Files	References		
POSSIBLE THEMES		0		0
CONSOLIDATION		0		0
Helpful		1		6
Teacher feedback		1		3
Unhelpful		1		5
DEVELOPING CONTENT		0		0
Helpful		1		7
Unhelpful		1		6
FEELINGS		0		0
Proud		1		1
RELATIONSHIP TO TEACHER		1		1

Appendix Figure G-3: Second cycle codebook for the final group interview

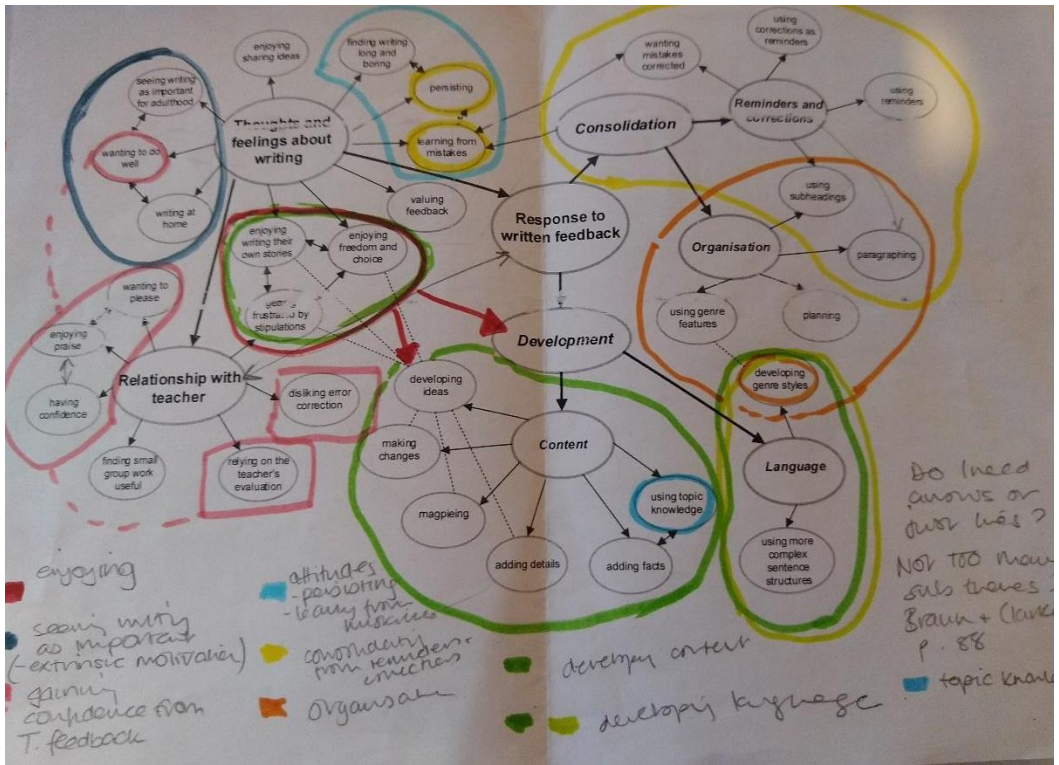
Appendix H. Evolution of thematic maps



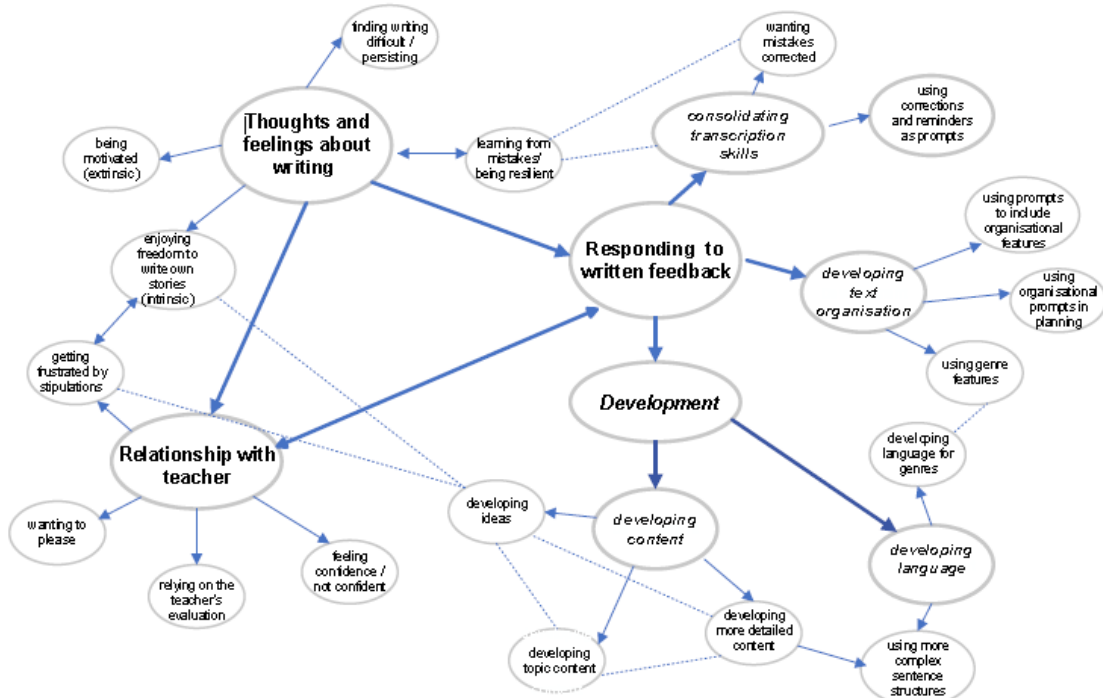
Appendix Figure H-1: Initial thematic map



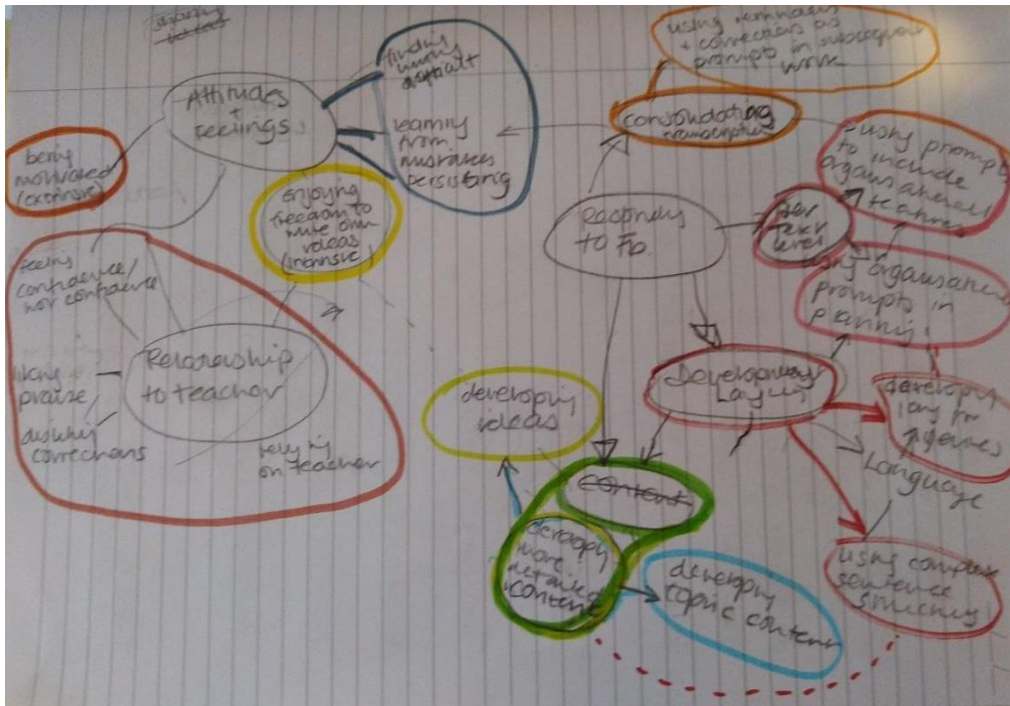
Appendix Figure H-2: Second thematic map



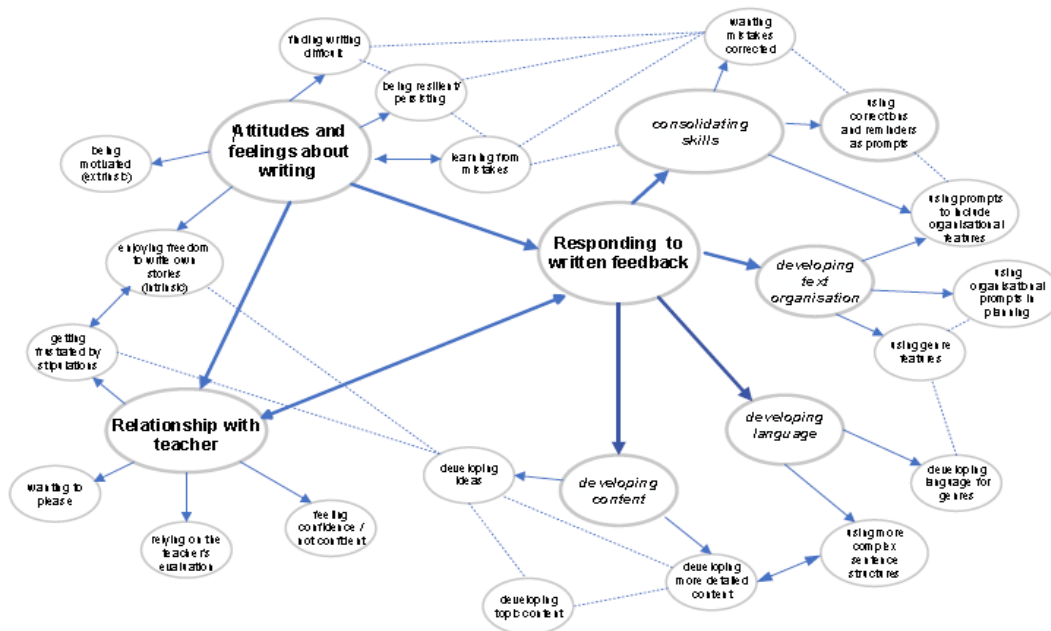
Appendix Figure H-3: Third thematic map



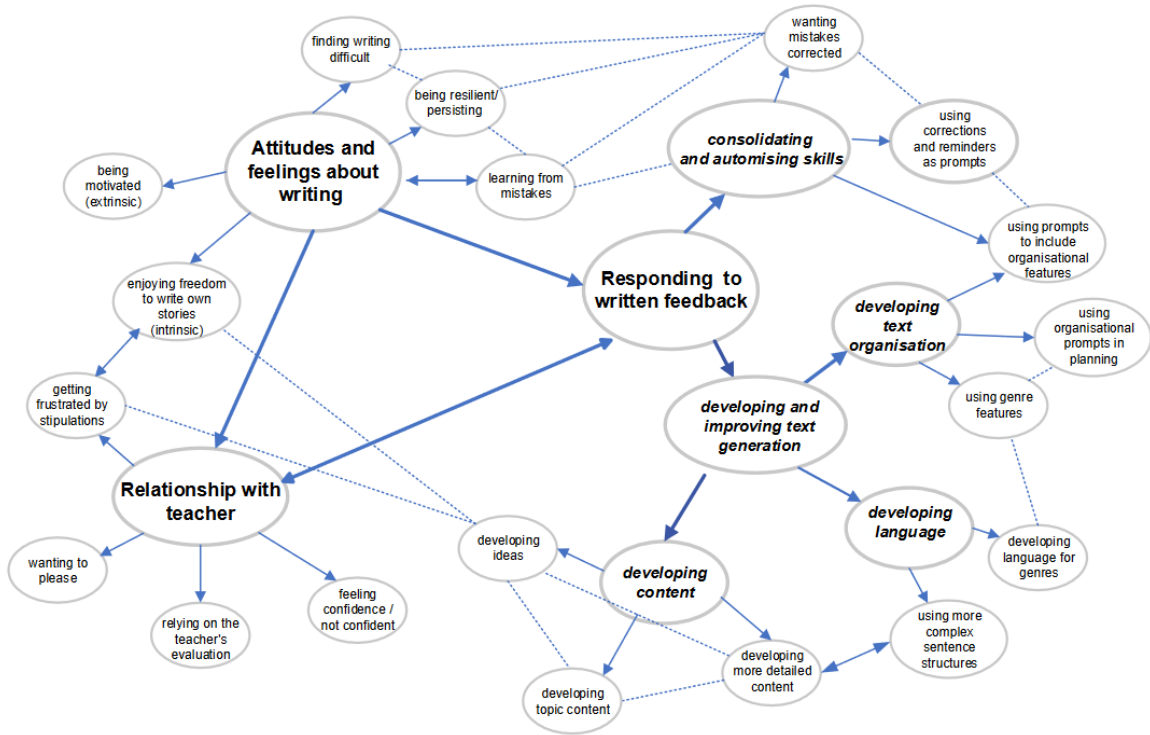
Appendix Figure H-4: Fourth thematic map



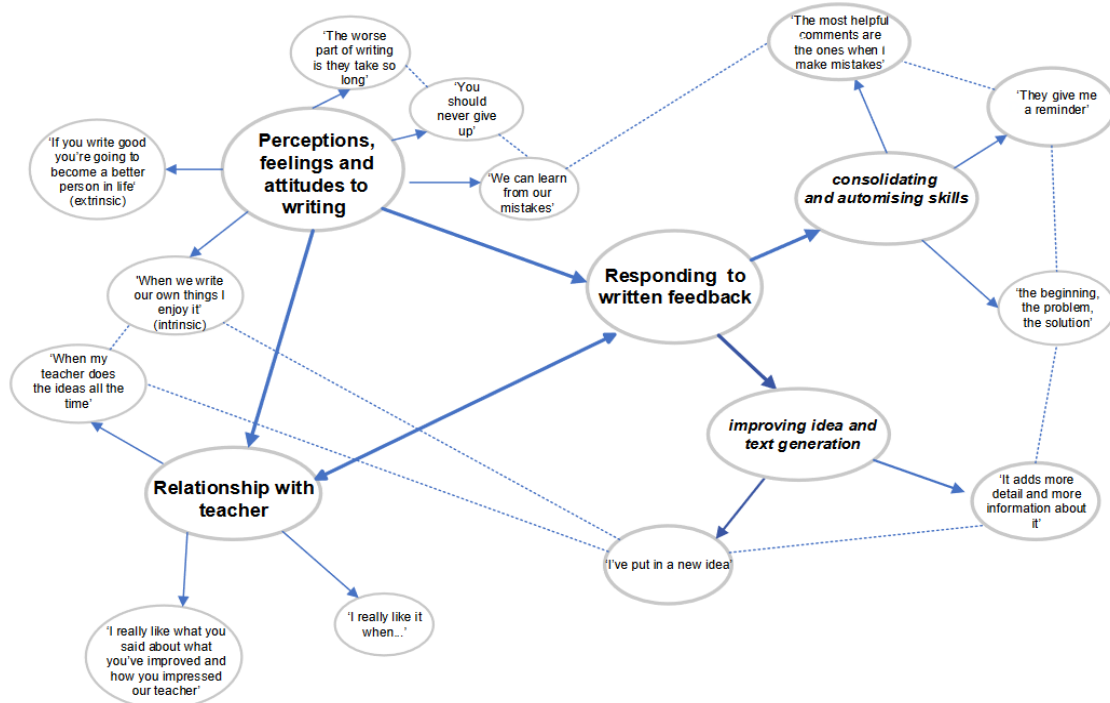
Appendix Figure H-5: Fifth thematic map



Appendix Figure H-6: Sixth thematic map



Appendix Figure H-7: Seventh thematic map



Appendix Figure H-8: Eighth thematic map

Appendix I. Analysis of the teacher's feedback comments

Phase 1 Composition

When the teacher gave feedback on composition there was a balance between praise and next steps. Praise generally commented on the writing so far, with comments about content and text organisation. Next steps comments focused on including more detail and original ideas and features of a non-chronological report. (Appendix Table I-1)

	Composition	
	Praise	Next steps
Work so far	<p>This bit is great. I know we thought of it together, but it really shows you thinking about the context of the story in history and linking to our topic work.</p> <p>Good way to build interest in the next paragraph.</p> <p>I can see how your story is beginning to progress.</p> <p>This is a strong introduction to your story, and it makes the Romans seem very confident.</p> <p>Good re-write of text.</p> <p>I can see how your story progresses a very good start</p> <p>A good start.</p>	
Vocabulary	You've used some good vocabulary to show the importance of Caesar.	
Including facts	<p>Well done for remembering some main facts about Caesar.</p> <p>You have included some important information about Caesar</p>	Try to make it realistic for this story. He wasn't the ruler of Rome, but maybe a Roman army leader.

<p>Including ideas</p>		<p>Could you include some more of your own ideas?</p> <p>In the next paragraph, could you try to include more of your own ideas, different to the ones we did in class?</p> <p>Could you include some more of your own ideas?</p> <p>I would like to see some more of your own ideas in the next part.</p>
<p>Including details</p>		<p>Could you expand some of your paragraphs to add detail or description?</p> <p>Can you add some more detail about Brutus and why Caesar gave up fighting?</p> <p>Could you add extra detail to give me more information, such as where he was born and died?</p> <p>Could you add some extra details, like where he was born?</p>
<p>Text structure and organisation</p>	<p>Good re-write of the text and well done for including features of a non-chronological report, such as sub-headings.</p> <p>You've effectively used subheadings to organise your report on Caesar. You have also used good vocabulary and thought about your main points to show how important he was.</p> <p>Good work organising key facts into paragraphs.</p>	<p>Could you expand some of your paragraphs to add detail or description?</p> <p>Can you include some features of a non-chronological report, such as sub-headings?</p> <p>Don't forget to use sub-headings to organise information in your non-chronological report.</p> <p>Could you think of some subheadings instead of using numbers for your paragraphs?</p>
<p>Child B, Child C, Child E</p>		

Appendix Table I-1: Analysis of the teacher's feedback comments during Phase 1. Analysis based on Searle and Dillon, 1980, p.235

Phase 2: Feedback on Transcription

During Phase 2 there was praise for the use of speech marks, finger spaces, and features of a non-chronological report, as well as some comments on writing so far. These areas were also covered in the next steps. Punctuation formed the focus for many of the next steps given, with some also on spelling. (Appendix Table I-2)

	Transcription	
	Praise	Next steps
Grammar	Well done for remembering new speaker and new line for speech, excellent.	
Sentence construction		<p>Could you add some description by using expanded noun phrases? Come and see me if you would like a reminder about them.</p> <p>Your paragraph starts out as one very long sentence. Could you switch it around and break it down to make it a little bit easier for the reader?</p>
Spelling		<p>Teacher had corrected 'carpenter' and 'cold' for 'could'.</p> <p>Teacher wrote 'carpenter'. Teacher has corrected spelling of 'little'.</p> <p>Teacher has corrected 'flower' and 'book'.</p>
Punctuation		<p>Could you divide this into smaller sentences? (Teacher has also added a comma.)</p> <p>Could you use some speech punctuation to show what they said, e.g. if you bury those gold coins you will get more, said the cat and the fox. Could you use punctuation to avoid repetition of 'and'?</p> <p>This is one long sentence. Don't forget to use punctuation</p>

		<p>When do we use capital letters? Teacher has added capital letters as a reminder. Remember to finish one paragraph before starting the next and remember capital letters at the start of your sentence.</p> <p>Don't forget to end sentences with full stops.</p>
Handwriting	Well done for remembering finger spaces.	
Text structure and organisation	You have included lots of features of a non-chronological report, headings, sub-headings and well-organised paragraphs. (Has labelled heading and sub-headings)	This is an interesting paragraph but has more features of the story than a non-chronological report.
Writing so far	<p>A good retelling</p> <p>Good description</p> <p>Good start to your story with a great sentence.</p> <p>Good start.</p> <p>A good start to your story.</p>	You ended mid-sentence here.
<p>Child B, Child C, Child E</p>		

Appendix Table I-2: Analysis of the teacher's feedback comments during Phase 2. Analysis based on Searle and Dillon, 1980, p.235

Phase 3: Usual Feedback Style

In Phase 3, all praise except one comment on expanded noun phrases was for compositional elements and writing so far, whilst next steps were largely for transcriptional skills. (Appendix Table I-3)

	Composition and Transcription	
	Praise	Next steps
Writing so far	<p>Good summarising. A good start to your letter. I see you have taken care to reply to what the alien said and to ask.</p> <p>A great start. You have clearly thought about how to show the reader how you felt on the trip.</p>	
Vocabulary		
Including facts		
Including ideas	Well done for changing the story to include your own ideas. The narrative makes sense and there is an interesting twist.	
Including details		
Text structure and organisation	<p>Good use of informal writing. Good use of informal language.</p>	Does this stick to the structure we have been working with? Think about the story of Frideswide and make one change.
Planning	Great planning, this will help you with your final story.	
Grammar	Well done for using expanded noun phrases.	
Sentence construction		Make sure you re-read your sentences and make sure they are correct. Never start a sentence with 'and'.
Spelling		<p>Your and you're</p> <p>Remember to sound out words if you are unsure, especially if they end in 'ing'.</p>
Punctuation		<p>Could you use punctuation to avoid the repetition of 'and'?</p> <p>This is one long sentence, don't forget punctuation.</p> <p>Could you use a wider range of punctuation to enhance your writing?</p>

		<p>Don't forget to use capital letters for names. (Teacher put some in.) Always remember punctuation like full stops and commas.</p> <p>Could you include more punctuation, like full stops and commas to make your writing flow better?</p>
Handwriting		
<p>Child B, Child C, Child E</p>		

Appendix Table I-3: Analysis of the teacher's feedback comments during Phase 3. Analysis based on Searle and Dillon, 1980, p.235.

The pattern of giving praise for composition and next steps for transcription skills made me wonder if this is pattern might be found more generally amongst teachers, or whether this pattern was specific to this teacher during Phase 3 of this study. However, I had seen a similar emphasis on technical skills in the preliminary study.

Appendix J. **Published articles**

Falkner, R. (2017) 'Effective marking strategies for learners: what helps, what hinders?' *Impact: Journal of the Chartered College of Teaching*, 1, pp.64-65. Available at: https://my.chartered.college/impact_article/effective-marking-strategies-for-learners-what-helps-what-hinders/

Falkner, R. (2022) 'Could teachers' written feedback be used more effectively to help children to develop their ideas for writing?' *Impact: Journal of the Chartered College of Teaching*, (14), online at: https://my.chartered.college/impact_article/could-teachers-written-feedback-be-used-more-effectively-to-help-children-to-develop-their-ideas-for-writing/