

# What goes on inside my head when I'm writing? A case study of 8–9-year-old boys

Kate Ruttle

## Abstract

This article explores the idea that in order to improve the way we teach children to write, we need to improve our understanding of children as writers. Although developing their metacognitive skills can give us a clearer window into children's understanding, we must be wary of assuming that they ascribe the same meaning to their metacognitive metalanguage as we, their teachers, do. But we also need to beware of making assessments based just on the children's writing – children can use writing to hide from us what they do not know and cannot do. Through the presentation of three brief case studies of lower-attaining Year 4 (8–9-year-old boys) the article considers the implications of assessing writing without acknowledging the role of the writer.

**Key words:** metacognition, writing, boys, negotiating meaning

## Introduction and methodology

This article reports findings from the third year of an action research project partially funded through Best Practice Research Scholarships. The initial focus of my research was to explore practical ways of developing metacognition in my Key Stage 2 classroom and to evaluate whether promoting a metacognitive approach to teaching writing would have a positive impact on children's attainment. Since I started this research, overall attainment in writing has significantly improved in my class, but the writing of the lower-achieving children has not improved to nearly the same extent.

So my action research focus in the past year (2002–2003) has been to explore reasons for this discrepancy and to try to reduce it. During the year I have been working with a mixed ability class of Year 4 children (aged 8–9), some of whom live in private housing and others in local authority housing. All the children in the class completed all the writing and drawing tasks described, because these form part of the teaching and formative assessment procedures I use in the classroom. None of the activities described here was set up solely for the purpose of collecting research data, but each was introduced as part of my own ongoing endeavour to develop a more socio-cognitive approach to teaching. As I considered the data from one classroom activity,

questions would inevitably occur to me which I then explored through a different activity.

For the purposes of this research paper, I have had a particular focus on three lower achieving boys: Jack, Reece and Lee. Their writing, my observations of them and tape-recordings of conversations with them constitute the data presented here.

My focus here is only on their 'curriculum writing', that is on writing done as part of a curriculum-based task which has, broadly speaking, been defined by the teacher and which has the teacher as – at least part of – the intended audience. This is as opposed to the organisational lists, illicit notes, social invitations etc. that often characterise children's 'personal writing' in the classroom. This is not to denigrate the importance of personal writing, but is a pragmatic recognition that I have more legitimate and comprehensive access to their curriculum writing and that it is writing over which I have, at least nominally, greater control and understanding as to the intended audience and purpose.

## *Establishing a theoretical framework*

Writing does not happen in a vacuum – especially in a classroom. By the time they reach my Year 4 classroom, children have had four years of formal schooling (each of which has included the daily literacy hour) and eight or nine years of growing up in variously literate households. Their understanding and expectations of writing and the writing process are unique and individual. For this reason, I intend to consider their writing through a socio-cognitive lens in order to embrace a more holistic view of literacy, which recognises the importance of children's individual expectations and strategic knowledge about writing within the classroom writing community as well as acknowledging the extent of their procedural knowledge about how to *do* writing. The way in which we, as teachers, view the writing process inevitably shapes the way we teach and assess writing.

Flower (1994) suggests that a socio-cognitive approach to literacy regards 'literate acts' as contributions to discourses in which participants need to know enough of the conventions and expectations to enter the

discourse and in which each participant has “a repertoire of problem solving strategies for comprehending and composing that can deal with the task” (Flower, 1994, p. 22). This dialogic view of literacy is further developed by Wells (1999) who argues that writing should be treated as a ‘thinking device’ rather than a “univocal transmitter of the writer’s message” (Wells, 1999, p. 128). The socio-cognitive approach to writing thus recognises that a teacher’s role in developing skilled and thoughtful young writers extends beyond helping children to develop procedural knowledge – how to make their writing easier to read – and content knowledge – how to make their writing more interesting to read – but includes negotiating and constructing a shared understanding about what writing is for and why and how we engage in it.

One of the goals of this research has been to explore how children’s metacognitive knowledge can be developed in the classroom context and the impact this development has on their writing. Chang-Wells and Wells (1995) describe metacognition as “knowledge about one’s own mental processes and the control of those processes to achieve one’s intended goal” (Chang-Wells and Wells, 1995, p. 58). In her consideration of the place of metacognitive awareness in making meaning, Flower concludes that personal meanings constructed through a reflective approach to learning “transform abstract ideas into personal working knowledge” (Flower, 1994, p. 262). One of the issues arising from such a consideration, however, is the fact that the children’s developing metacognition is expressed through a metalanguage, which is itself developed through shared constructions of meaning developed through classroom discussions and reflections. But we also need to recognise that knowledge cannot be construed as an objective entity because “for each knower the propositions are embedded in a unique structure of personal knowing arrived at through a particular, socially situated learning biography” (Rommetviet, quoted by Wells 1995).

### *Recognising the ‘language gap’ in a metacognitive framework*

Hull (1985) acknowledges that in many classrooms there is a significant gap between the prior assumptions that children bring to a lesson and the prior assumptions that teachers bring to it. Although his research was undertaken in didactic teaching contexts in secondary schools, the language gap is no less significant when we explore younger children’s metacognitive development because teachers still have to be wary of assuming that we know what it is that children are communicating when they try to express what it is that they know and understand. Children’s developing metacognitive understanding needs to be expressed through metalanguage, but we cannot be sure that we all ascribe the same meaning to the

metalanguage! One of my epiphanies this year, when the language gap was made explicit, was with Jack.

Jack is eight. He enjoys writing; his writing is quite well presented and he prefers to write ‘action led’ rather than ‘character led’ or ‘motive led’ fiction. There is little difference between Jack’s plan of a story and the final fully developed story. For one particular piece of work, Jack wrote quickly and keenly. He enjoyed his story and was delighted to cover a whole page with writing. When he had finished, I worked with Jack for an afternoon, with me rewriting his original text and asking questions, him supplying further information and writing it down. At the end of the session Jack was very pleased with himself – possibly because his writing was even longer? Or because I was pleased with him? Because he was conscious of having achieved something ‘better’? Because the story was definitely finished now?

The dragon lots trick of him.  
 while Craig was in his tent he made a trick on the dragon  
 he got some cloths and got some hay and put them bergert  
 The next day Craig ran back to the water and into the sea  
 the dragon saw him and got his claw out Sgosh  
 Tomy ketchup came out he had been tricked. Then it looked  
 like there was blood in the water. The dragon ~~that~~ dragon  
 -blow fire out of his nose holl bangbang into yes he  
 is ~~the~~ help the boat come some on because it was amgg  
 and hugggy.  
 Craig went into town to buy a shotgun with some bullets  
 that came with fire in them. Then he heard a noise. It  
 was the dragon. He got his shotgun and went outside

Figure 1: Part of Jack’s redrafted text

With Jack’s permission, I used the combined text as basis for a shared writing session where all the children in the class were invited to comment on both versions. At the end of the session, I privately asked Jack how we could improve it even further. He gave me, as a knee jerk reaction, the oft-repeated mantra “add detail and description”. So I asked “what do you think we’ve done?” Jack read back some of the words he had written during the redrafting process, but had no overt recognition that what we had spent an afternoon doing was adding detail and description.

A number of possible hypotheses could account for this. One is that Jack has not assimilated a concept of what it might mean to ‘add detail and description’ but has simply learned the words; a second is that since I had not explicitly told him during the afternoon that what we were doing was adding detail and description, he did not have the confidence to assume that that was what we were doing; a third is that he was tired and wanted to go out to play; a fourth is that his understanding of ‘adding detail and description’ did not tally with mine, and he did not think that that was what had been achieved.

One question that I have with the whole metacognitive framework is that since it appears to pay no attention

to the wider sociocultural context of writing, and does not take into account each child's personal schemata about writing, it does not account for the fact that *some* children appear to receive and process the messages differently from how teachers intend. Metacognitive theorising does not always seem to help very much with explaining why these children can repeat metacognitive mantras but do not apply, cannot recognise the effects of, and cannot evaluate their own performance in the light of these 'taught' elements of metacognition. This may be due to the quality of evidence we require to determine that a child has acquired 'metacognitive understanding'; Jack has clearly acquired some of the mantras which, in my classroom, constitute the shared beliefs about good writing, but does not yet appear to ascribe to them the same meaning that I do in my personal constructs.

We need, therefore, to be wary of equating children's appropriate use of metalanguage with our assumptions about the extent of their metacognition. By the same token, we need to be wary of equating the writing that children achieve with their understanding and expectations of the writing experience.

### Negotiating meaning with an orally articulate child

Alexander describes classrooms as places "where, depending on the mode of pedagogy adopted, meanings are transmitted, negotiated and/or created" (Alexander, 2000, p. 563). My own classroom research has taught me that, in spite of the caveat mentioned above, if meanings and values about writing are negotiated and if that process is developed to create a shared perception of what 'good writing' is, then children write with a greater sense of purpose. I use 'write' in quite a loose way here insofar as I am

So the Nith with shining  
Edric did away on shadow sak  
but ~~and~~ Dos, tres he sed  
so he got to of army  
and the Dragon got angry to  
so they sed ~~sharad~~ crazy mas  
dnt then. bump, bump, the, biggest Drag  
of all but then the Nith with shi  
ammer thrashed the and mas shadow  
and then a' ramdel. He took at the  
Dragon to avel, ~~boos~~ as quick  
as a flash to the big Dragon  
bisapeard. So that was the  
legend of the Nith with shining  
ammer and the Dragon.  
The End

Figure 2: An extract of Reece's writing

including the oral narration of a text with the specific intention that it should be transcribed as a form of writing, in addition to the conventional meaning.

Reece is nearly nine. Since he started school he has been on the Special Educational Needs (SEN) register with global mild learning difficulties. In writing, these manifest themselves as uncertain letter formation used partly to disguise insecure spelling and incomplete sentences. He writes very reluctantly; "I don't know what to write" is his constant complaint.

When you talk to Reece, he talks fluently, easily and charmingly and always about what he has *seen*. He spends a lot of time watching films with his mum and he clearly watches with a very active interest; he will discuss not just actions but motivation, characterisation and setting. Reece also draws very well.

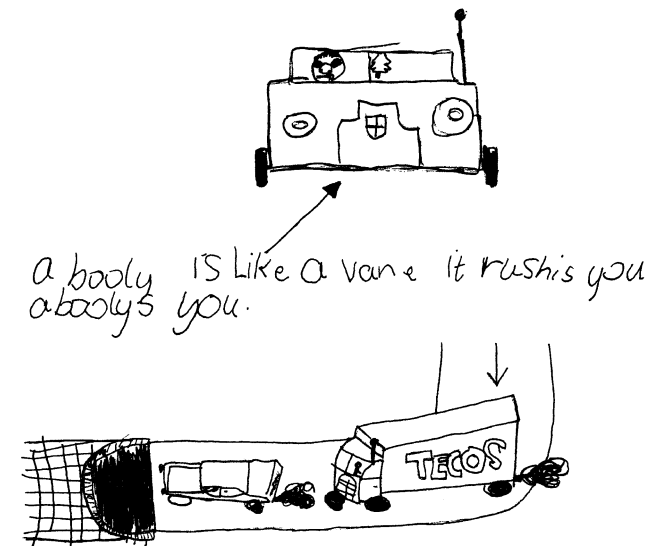


Figure 3: Reece's drawing: A bully is like a van. It rushes you and bully's you

If you begin to characterise Reece as a visual learner you can easily recognise why his own writing is so unsatisfactory for him, reinforcing as it does a very dismal visual picture.

But put Reece in front of a microphone . . . and he is in his element as a storyteller. He creates and spins yarns drawing on influences from film, TV and stories he has heard; he does accents; he modulates his voice to control the pace and atmosphere; he varies sentence structure and makes conscious use of repetition and patterning; he makes careful vocabulary choices; he shapes his stories well; he consciously adopts an authorial voice and stance. When other children interrupt his taping he comes out of character and chats to them, then says into the microphone "sorry about that, Mrs Ruttle. Now back to the story. . . ." and continues.

Reece and I have now come to an agreement. He writes the first paragraph – or few sentences – of a story on paper in order to satisfy my traditional inner voice which feels the need to insist that he makes some attempt at conventional writing. I then give him the microphone and tape recorder and he takes himself off into the corridor, haltingly and expressionlessly reads his first paragraph aloud, sighs deeply, relaxes and gets on with his story. I transcribe his story on a computer and give him a transcription and disk. I 'mark' the transcription in the same way as I mark all the children's written work, with suggestions for places they may wish to redraft for clarity or effect. He then edits the transcription and we end up with a text that he is proud of. One of the filmic features of Reece's writing is that he changes time, scene and person unthinkingly and without markers. His most frequent editorial task is to insert adverbials of time and place in order to give his writing more cohesion.

"did you see That!" ~~said~~ TJ. ~~not~~ ~~said~~  
 TJ saw eyes moving ~~the~~ ~~teach~~ didn't believe him.  
 After ~~the~~ ~~eyes~~ closed a  
 arms and legs shrink into egg.  
 eggs rolled. cracked. creature ~~emerged~~  
 when he got home he was very tired  
 Then he went to sleep

Figure 4: Extract of Reece's unedited written work

"Hey! Did you see that? The eyes moved!" TJ was looking at an egg. The egg was in a cage. It was big and rusty. It was there for quite a long time. TJ's class was on a field trip to the museum. They were learning about ancient statues. TJ was looking at an egg - a big, ugly, horrible creature. The egg had these peculiar hands and feet. He had no face, but he had two eyes: one was big and the other was small. "Come on TJ!" called his teacher. "The museum's about to close.." But TJ hid in the museum - he wanted to know more about that egg!

Figure 5: The transcribed version of the beginning of the same story

Wells (1999) argues that all meaning making involves intertextuality; not simply between texts in the same mode but also between texts in different modes, for example speech and writing (Wells, 1999, p. 130). The DfES acknowledges this – to a degree – in *Developing Early Writing* (DfES, 2001) through the insertion into the writing process of 'talk for writing', which is intended to take away from the writer the cognitive burden of thinking about what to say, in order that when she is writing she can concentrate more on the secretarial aspects. What Reece and I achieve is, arguably, simply a step beyond this.

### Negotiating meaning with an orally inarticulate child

Lee is the same age as Reece and his SEN profile is very similar in many ways. When he writes, he has similar issues to Reece with regard to spelling, handwriting, missing words in sentences and enthusiasm to write.

One ~~a~~ ~~up~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~shop~~ was  
 a dragon ~~lived~~ in the  
 village in the shop.  
 he had sharp ~~as~~ ~~nails~~  
 and he sharp ~~snake~~  
 tongue ~~at~~ ~~the~~ ~~end~~  
 The dragon ~~that~~ liked  
 people and a little dogs  
 because the dogs ~~bring~~  
~~at~~ the moon and wake  
 him up. he ~~just~~ did like  
 people because they eat  
 sweet corn and the dragon  
 sweet corn.

Figure 6: Lee's writing

The main difference between Reece and Lee as writers is that whereas Reece is orally confident, Lee is generally shy and less articulate in the classroom. In spite of this, I thought it would be worth giving Lee the chance to make a tape recording of a story. However, suspecting that Lee was likely to be too shy to talk much into the tape recorder, and perhaps would be too shy with me, I decided to let Reece help Lee to tell his story.

- R: Now, L—, what's your story gonna? + Now + start your story now.  
 L: It ++ starts like (indistinct) ?happy ++ happy ++ after ++ afternoon. The monsters are asleep.  
 R: Good start. When...? (Whispered as a prompt)  
 L: When ++ a person (R whispering ideas in the background) woke them up ++.  
 R: Then...? (Whispered as prompt)  
 L: then the ++monsters + chased him + away ++ and + when he was out of breath ++  
 R: Just think, OK?  
 L: ++ they killed him ++ And that's the end of my story.  
 R: Is that all?  
 L: Yep.  
 R: You can stop. (instruction to stop taping)  
 R: Okay. Because L— done a short story, Mrs Ruttle, it's good ++ I should + I have to do a little bit for him. OK. So..o (into story telling voice) the monsters killed the hunter. But the hunter was the best hunter in the whole world and he had a son. And he was a hunter too. And one day, that hunter saw a really big bear. Wow! That bear was big!

Figure 7: Transcript of part of the tape made by Lee and Reece

The transcription shows that both boys have some understanding about the basic construction of a story,

but whereas for Lee the simple plan – the monsters are asleep; the hunter wakes them up; they chase the hunter and kill him – is the story, Reece recognises that this is not enough.

Helping Lee to progress in writing is quite a different process from helping Reece. Lee needs more than just a scribe. Writing with Lee is a matter of planning what is going to happen through talk, then helping him to construct his text orally, building it slowly, sentence by sentence. The scribe needs to write the sentence too in order that one person is aware of the developing text, because Lee's hand/brain/eye coordination is insecure and what he writes is not usually consistent with what he thinks he has written, so he cannot read back his own writing as a visual check to remind himself of where his sentence is heading. Interestingly, but perhaps unsurprisingly, when Lee returns to a text that was begun in a previous writing session, he will always continue to write under the scribed text rather than under his own.

Once upon a time there was a dragon who lived in a village in a shop. He had sharp nails and a sharp snake-like tongue.

The dragon didn't like people or little dogs because the dogs barked at the moon and woke him up. He didn't like people because they ate sweetcorn and the dragon wanted all the sweetcorn. The Super market run at out of sweetcorn he put fire with ginger he killed the people <sup>so they</sup> didn't by sweetcorn:

Figure 8: Lee's writing under the scribed writing

For Lee, the writing experience must be a baffling one. A possible insight into his interpretation of *why* we write came in the following interchange. All the members of the class had been undertaking independent/paired research into some aspect of the town in which the school is situated. The children all chose their focus topic, and had access to a variety of books, guidebooks, photographs and tourist information brochures, as well as easy access to the Internet for their research. We were doing a shared update, with each child reporting on what they were finding out about and how far they had got when the following exchange (transcribed immediately afterwards) occurred:

Lee: I've been finding out about the Horseracing museum.

KR: Well done. What have you found out?

Lee: I don't know. But I've written it down.

KR: What have you written?

Lee: Look. (Turns book round to show recorded information)

What does Lee's own internal construct of the writing process consist of? Writing is something you *do* and the teacher *looks at*? I think we can probably assume that making marks on paper plays a significant role. But what else is involved?

In an informal taped interview with two other boys in June, Lee asserted that he likes writing. When asked what he likes writing about he cast around the classroom for inspiration and came up with "Clothes!" Whatever else Lee has or has not learned in his time at school, he knows how to be a good pupil! He offers answers that he thinks will please his teacher and he knows the kind of thing that teachers expect people to write about.

As part of a whole class activity before Easter Lee drew a picture of "what goes on inside my head when I'm writing".

what goes on inside my head when I'm writing

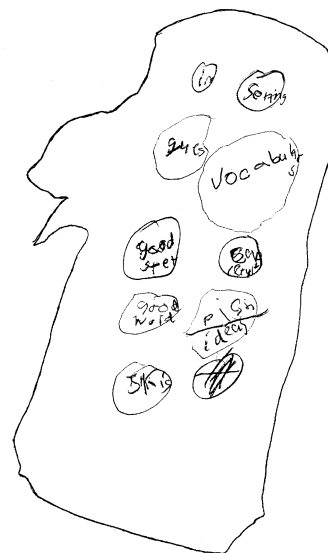


Figure 9: Lee's drawing of 'What goes on inside my head when I'm writing'

In the unconnected circles inside his head he mentions: setting, vocabulary, good words, ideas, good start, capitals, guessing, spelling. He has clearly been listening to some of what the literacy hour prescribes for Year 4, Term 2, which includes setting, the importance of good and accurate word choice and a strong beginning. I wonder how he interprets each of those words? How contingent is the metacognition being given by me, the teacher, to inexperienced writers like Lee? Could my preconceived learning objectives, however well intentioned and metacognitively 'pure' get in the way of actually working with how some individual children think about their own writing?

### Negotiating meaning about why we write

In my writing field diary in November, I wrote to myself: "How can I teach the children what writing is for? To communicate, rather than to burble on, filling pages". Scribbles and overwriting around this patch in my diary indicate that I recognised fairly quickly the issue with the word 'teach'. These children have been taught to write for four years, and teachers' assumptions around what writing is *about* and *for* have underpinned the teaching. But how much, I wondered, had the children taken on about those assumptions? I realised that *teaching* the underlying assumptions might not be productive – but that *finding out* about children's understanding and knowledge of writing, *negotiating* a shared understanding and *creating* our own classroom beliefs may help to resolve the issue.

That diary marked the beginning of some focused dialogic talk in the classroom as we began to explore writing as a concept, to consider the distinction between 'having to write about something' and 'having something to write about'. My class and I discussed writing (unfortunately, but unavoidably, at a time when Lee was withdrawn for a literacy intervention strategy!), acknowledging the importance of both

curriculum and personal writing; recognising the importance of different kinds of writing; discussing why we write and for whom; what is hard about writing and what is easier; what is interesting about writing and what is boring.

Through this process I was consciously trying to engage the children in what Hull (1985, p. 180) calls 'constitutive involvement', i.e. the extent to which children participate in their own education through observing, speculating, thinking and writing. I have to acknowledge that children in Year 4 are still young enough to see 'pleasing the teacher' as a major motivator for developing an interest in writing. But most of the children have now got a clearer understanding about themselves as writers and about *why* we write, and are beginning to recognise that writing can be dialogic. Through negotiation, we are managing to create a classroom culture in which meaning – the content of the writing – and procedural knowledge – knowing *about* writing – are seen as being intertwined. Many of them can recognise and talk about the interaction between the two and are beginning to redraft original writing to explore how changing the language can impact on the meaning. The following extracts were redrafted spontaneously, without intervention from me:

<p>In front of me was a/ stone dragon. It had green eyes. It looked hungary. I stepped in a little further and then I felt a / chill. I felt Ower's hand slip off my shoulder and with a wizz he stepp out of the door/.</p> <p>The dragons wings startid to move and I saw black rings of smok comeing out of his nostril's. Hes wings started to turn green in one or two minutes he / turned completely green.</p>	<p>Giant emerald green eyes which looked as hungary as if it could eat me.</p> <p>cold chill creeping down my spine. sigh stepped and click! I was locked in.</p> <p>I saw black rings of smoke coming out of the dragons nostrils. His wings started to move. They started began to turn green.</p> <p>had</p>
<p>The dragon seized him by the neck and bit down hard/. Beowulf tried to get free, remembering his sharp little knife. He pulled it out of his pocket and slit the dragon's throat. The dragon dropped him at once. and fell to the ground, dead. / Beowulf/ begged his companions to bring him some of the treasure so he could see it before he died.</p>	<p>with the venemous sword blades that were its teeth.</p> <p>remembered his sharp little knife, renched it from his pocket and</p> <p>it</p> <p>Beowulf, exhausted from the battle, slumped on a big boulder. He was completely covered in blood. He</p>

Figure 10: 'before' and 'after' texts in the redrafting process

## Assessing writing

According to the recently published QCA criteria (DfES, 2003), Reece and Lee merit very similar scores for writing. If I re-examine extracts from individual pieces and consider sentence structure and punctuation, text structure and organisation, composition and effect, handwriting and spelling – they both attain similarly low scores (2C for their Y4 writing SATs). But is this a true reflection of what they can do? Can I use this information to make constructive ‘notes for next step with child’ (as suggested on the helpful ‘writing task analysis sheet’ (QCA, 2003))?

All the socio-cognitive information I have about these boys as writers suggests to me that their ‘next steps’ are completely different, but the positivistic lens through which I am obliged to assess their performance would indicate that their needs are very similar. The simplistic notion that you can take a single contrived sample of behaviour from an individual and use that to gain information about a wide range of knowledge, skill and understanding belies the complexity of the classroom and the learning process.

Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (1998) propose that assessment should be by means of a portfolio of ‘pedagogical documentation’, as in the Reggio Emilia schools. The core belief of this group of schools lies in the belief that “reciprocity, exchange and dialogue lie at the heart of successful education” (Edwards, Gardini and Foman, 1998, p. 10). There is always, of course, the issue of deciding what evidence to keep in the portfolio, and those decisions in themselves reflect the co-construction that teachers and children make. But this approach has advantages of transparency and can lead to reflection and reconstruction and, most importantly, can throw some light on children as writers. Level 2C does not offer the same opportunities! The opposing assessment approaches of the ‘one-off’ SATs on the one hand and, on the other, the Reggio Emilia portfolio of experiences built up over time, underline the way that the competing images of, and beliefs about, literacy shape all the decisions we make about what and how we teach, assess and plan for development.

## Conclusion

During the time that I have been reflecting about children as learners and writers in my own classroom, I have come to believe that the process of dialogic talk underpins all their learning – not just their learning as writers. Wells (1999) writes that “acts of meaning do not occur in isolation but as dialogic contributions to discourse . . . That is to say, they occur in the course of an exchange of meaning between participants in order

to perform some actions in a specific situation” (Wells, 1999, p. 235). My own belief is that promoting and encouraging dialogic talk helps children to understand and express their own ‘personal constructs’. Through this, they begin to understand their learning, which in turn helps teachers to understand the children as writers and so to undertake purposeful assessment for learning. Finding ways of accessing the children’s understanding is particularly important when we remember that each child has to construct not just their own meaning of a text, but also the meaning they ascribe to my instructions and its place within their own working theories of writing.

## References

- ALEXANDER, R. (2000) *Culture and Pedagogy*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- CHANG-WELLS, G. and WELLS, G. (1995) ‘Dynamics of Discourse: Literacy and the construction of knowledge’ in Forman, E. A., Minick, N. and Addison Stone, C. (eds.) (1995) *Contexts for Learning: Sociocultural dynamics in children’s development*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- DAHLBERG, G., MOSS, P. and PENCE, A. (1999) *Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care*. London: Falmer.
- DfES (2001) *Developing Early Writing*. London: DfES.
- DfES (2003) *Excellence and Enjoyment in Primary Education*. London: DfES.
- EDWARDS, C., GANDINI, L. and FORMAN, G. (1998) *The Hundred Languages of Children. The Reggio Emilia Approach*. London: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- FISHER, R., BROOKS, G. and LEWIS, M. (eds.) (2002) *Raising Standards in Literacy*. London: Routledge & Falmer.
- FLOWER, L. (1994) *The Construction of Negotiated Meaning – a social cognitive theory of writing*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- FORMAN, E. A., MINICK, N. and ADDISON STONE, C. (eds.) (1995) *Contexts for Learning: Sociocultural dynamics in children’s development*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- HART, S. (1996) *Beyond Special Needs. Enhancing children’s learning through innovative thinking*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.
- HULL, R. (1985) *The Language Gap: How classroom dialogue fails*. London: Methuen.
- RUTTLE, K. (2002) *Targets – the way to raise standards in writing?* Unpublished MED thesis. University of Cambridge.
- SAINSBURY, M. (2002) ‘Validity in Literacy Tests’ in Fisher, R., Brooks, G. and Lewis, M. (eds.) *Raising Standards in Literacy*. London: Routledge & Falmer.
- QCA (2003) *Optional English SATS. Teacher’s Guide*. London: DfES.
- WELLS, G. and CHANG-WELLS, G. L. (1992) *Constructing Knowledge Together. Classrooms as centres of inquiry and literacy*. Portsmouth NH: Heinemann.
- WELLS, G. (1999) *Dialogic Inquiry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

### CONTACT THE AUTHOR:

Kate Ruttle, Literacy Coordinator, Ditton Lodge  
First School, St John’s Avenue, Newmarket,  
Cams CB8 8BL.  
e-mail: kateruttle@lineone.net

Copyright of Literacy is the property of Blackwell Publishing Limited and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.