An investigation of writing in a primary class using drama

Submitted by Christiana Christou to the University of Exeter
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ABSTRACT

The thesis explores issues in the writing development of primary school children where drama was used as a teaching and learning pedagogy. It is based on a case study carried out in 2005-2006 in a Greek primary school Y4 class in Cyprus where the author was teaching and investigates the nature and relationship of the two processes when used together.

The project involved twenty drama sessions (over six months), each followed by a writing task that stemmed from the contents and children’s participation in drama. The overall aim was to describe ‘what happens when drama is integrated in a writing classroom’. Informed by the Vygotskian theory of learning, it sought to investigate the impact of using drama on children’s: (a) attitudes and views towards writing, (b) engagement with writing tasks and (c) quality of writing.

A qualitative case study methodology and multi-method approach to the design of the study were adopted on the basis of what can best investigate the issues raised by the research questions. Questionnaires, interviews, observations, writing samples, video recordings and researcher’s log were used to collect data throughout the year, before (Sept-Dec) and after (Jan-Jun) drama integration in writing lessons.

The collected data were analysed by quantitative and qualitative methods. Findings indicated positive changes in children’s attitudes and views towards writing following the introduction of drama and progressively positive improvements in most children’s engagement in writing. Additionally, analysis of writing samples provided indications of positive contribution of drama towards children’s writing and insights into the interaction between drama and writing content.

On a theoretical level, this thesis suggests that the concept of mediation is central in interpreting the interactive relationship between drama and writing. It also indicates the impact of drama as a sociocultural setting on children’s agency in their development as writers and raises questions for further research.
### TABLE OF CONTENTS

**CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION** ....................................................................................................... 11
  **1.1 PREFACE** .......................................................................................................................... 11
  **1.2 STUDY CONTEXT** ........................................................................................................... 12
    1.2.1 The structure of Cyprus educational system & Curriculum ........................................ 13
    1.2.2 Language Curriculum .................................................................................................. 14
    1.2.3 Writing - Aim, Teaching and Assessment ................................................................. 14
    1.2.4 Language Curriculum and Drama ............................................................................. 15
  **1.3 OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS** ....................................................................................... 16

**CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW** ..................................................................................... 18
  **2.1 INTRODUCTION** ........................................................................................................... 18
  **2.2 THEORY OF LEARNING** ............................................................................................. 18
    2.2.1 Social constructivist view of learning .......................................................................... 18
    2.2.2 Vygotskian theory of learning and concepts that inform the present study ................. 20
      2.2.2.1 Social interaction and the internalisation process .................................................. 20
      2.2.2.2 Mediation ............................................................................................................. 21
      2.2.2.3 Language ............................................................................................................. 21
      2.2.2.4 Writing ............................................................................................................... 22
      2.2.2.5 Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) ................................................................. 23
      2.2.2.6 Scaffolding .......................................................................................................... 24
      2.2.2.7 Play .................................................................................................................... 24
      2.2.2.8 Imagination ....................................................................................................... 25
      2.2.2.9 Creativity ......................................................................................................... 25
      2.2.2.10 Motivation and learners’ agency in their learning .............................................. 26
    2.2.3 SUMMARY OF THE SECTION ................................................................................... 27
  **2.4 PERSPECTIVES ON WRITING** .................................................................................... 27
    2.4.1 Cognitive perspectives ............................................................................................... 27
      2.4.1.1 Hayes & Flower’s Model of the Writing Process ................................................ 29
      2.4.1.2 Hayes’s Model of the Writing Process (1996) ....................................................... 30
      2.4.1.3 Kellogg’s model (1996) ........................................................................................ 31
      2.4.1.4 A model for beginning and developing writing- Berminger & Swanson (1994) .... 31
      2.4.1.5 Two models of composition processes-Bereiter & Scardamalia (1987) ......... 32
      2.4.1.6 Learning, teaching and assessment of writing within a cognitive perspective .... 33
      2.4.1.7 Summary of cognitive perspectives ..................................................................... 34
    2.4.2 Sociocognitive perspectives ......................................................................................... 35
    2.4.3 Sociocultural perspectives ......................................................................................... 36
      2.4.3.1 Children’s writing development within a sociocultural perspective ................... 37
      2.4.3.2 Sociocultural view of relationships between talk and writing .............................. 39
      2.4.3.3 Learning, teaching and assessment of writing within a sociocultural perspective ... 40
      2.4.3.4 Summary of sociocultural perspectives ............................................................... 42
    2.4.4 Genre theory ................................................................................................................ 42
      2.4.4.1 The development of genre theory ...................................................................... 43
      2.4.4.2 Learning, teaching and assessment of writing within a genre theory perspective ... 44
      2.4.4.3 Summary of genre theory .................................................................................. 45
    2.4.5 SUMMARY OF THE SECTION ................................................................................... 46
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION..............................................................73

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGMS AND THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS .........................73
  3.2.1 Scientific paradigm .......................................................74
  3.2.2 Interpretive paradigm ....................................................75
  3.2.3 Epistemology ...............................................................76
  3.2.4 Ontology .........................................................................76
  3.2.5 My position .................................................................77

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES AND RESEARCH METHODS ......................78
  3.3.1 Methodology ...............................................................78
  3.3.2 My research methodology ...........................................79
  3.3.3 Qualitative case study ..................................................81
  3.3.4 Considerations about using other research approaches .........................82
  3.3.5 Methods .....................................................................83
  3.3.6 My project’s methods ..................................................84

3.4 RESEARCH CONTEXT ...................................................84
  3.4.1 Setting and participants ..............................................84
  3.4.2 Aims and objectives ....................................................85
  3.4.3 Research questions ....................................................85

3.5 DESIGN ...........................................................................86
  3.5.1 Project design ............................................................86
  3.5.2 Time allocation and structure of drama-writing sessions .......................87
  3.5.3 Research Design .........................................................87
  3.5.4 Research process .......................................................90
  3.5.5 Selection procedures for the Focus Group Children .............................90

3.6 DATA COLLECTION METHODS ........................................91
  3.6.1 Questionnaires ..........................................................91
  3.6.2 Questionnaire in my research .......................................93
  3.6.3 Interviews .................................................................94
  3.6.4 My interviews ...........................................................96
  3.6.4.1 Limitations of interviews in the present study .......................98
  3.6.5 Observation ..............................................................98
  3.6.6 Observations in the present study ....................................100
5.3 RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN DRAMA CONTENT, WRITING SAMPLES AND CHILDREN’S VIEWS ................................................................................................................................................189

5.3.1 Qualitative analysis of writing samples within the context of drama lessons .................190
5.3.1.1 Lesson 1: The Selfish Giant – Episode A .................................................................191
5.3.1.2 Lesson 2: Children in resistance ...............................................................................194
5.3.1.3 Lesson 3: Blodin the Beast_Unit –Episode A .........................................................196

5.3.2 Drama contribution towards writing............................................................................198
5.3.2.1 Text Level .....................................................................................................................198
5.3.2.2 Sentence Level ..............................................................................................................201
5.3.2.3 Word Level ...................................................................................................................202

5.3.3 Relationships between drama, writing analysis and children’s views ......................202

5.4 CHILDREN’S PORTRAITS........................................................................................................203

5.4.1 Eliz’s Portrait .......................................................................................................................204
5.4.1.1 Eliz’s attitudes and views of writing .......................................................................204
5.4.1.2 Eliz’s participation in drama and her engagement in writing ....................................206

5.4.2 Chris’s Portrait .....................................................................................................................209
5.4.2.1 Chris’s attitudes and views of writing ...................................................................209
5.4.2.2 Chris’s participation in drama and her engagement in writing ..............................210
5.4.2.3 Chris’s writing ..............................................................................................................211

5.4.3 Nik’s Portrait .........................................................................................................................214
5.4.3.1 Nik’s attitudes and views of writing.........................................................................214
5.4.3.2 Nik’s participation in drama & engagement in writing .............................................215
5.4.3.3 Nik’s writing .................................................................................................................217

5.4.4 Summary of portraits ...........................................................................................................219

5.5 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER.........................................................................................................219

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION.............................................................................................................221

6.1 INTRODUCTION.......................................................................................................................221

6.2 REVISITING THE SUB-RESEARCH QUESTIONS ..................................................................................................................221
6.2.1 Changes in children’s attitudes and views towards writing following drama .................222
6.2.2 Engagement in writing following participation in drama .................................................228
6.2.3 Drama contribution towards writing .............................................................................232

6.3 INTEGRATION AND CENTRAL CATEGORY ...........................................................................238

6.4 STUDY’S CONTRIBUTION TO THEORY...........................................................................241

6.5 REVISITING THE STUDY’S CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK..................................................249

6.6 EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS........................................................................................252

6.7 SUMMARY ..........................................................................................................................255

CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.......................................................................256

7.1 INTRODUCTION.......................................................................................................................256

7.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY ..................................................................................................256

7.3 LIMITATIONS OF FINDINGS ..................................................................................................260

7.4 CRITIQUE OF THE STUDY ..................................................................................................263

7.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND FINAL NOTES ......................................265

APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE..................................................................................................269
APPENDIX 2: RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS USED TO PREPARE QUESTIONNAIRE AND INTERVIEW AGENDA

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW AGENDA 1 & 2

APPENDIX 4: OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

APPENDIX 5: CLPE WRITING SCALE 2 (CLPE, 1997)

APPENDIX 6: WRITING CRITERIA AND SCALES

APPENDIX 7: WRITING ASSESSMENT SHEET

APPENDIX 8: RATERS CONSISTENCY CHECK

APPENDIX 9: ETHICAL APPROVAL & PARENTS’ CONSENT

APPENDIX 10: QUESTIONNAIRE (PART A) SPSS ANALYSIS

APPENDIX 11: QUESTIONNAIRE ANALYSIS - PART C

APPENDIX 12: SAMPLES OF TRANSLATED INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

APPENDIX 13: TRANSCRIPT OF DRAMA VIDEO ANALYSIS (SAMPLE)

APPENDIX 14: OBSERVATION SCHEDULE (SAMPLE)

APPENDIX 15: SAMPLE LESSON PLANS

APPENDIX 16: DRAMA ACTIVITIES & RESEARCHERS’S LOG EXTRACTS

APPENDIX 17: FOCAL CHILDREN’S WRITING SAMPLES

BIBLIOGRAPHY
## LIST OF FIGURES & TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure/Table Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.1 The present study’s conceptual framework</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.1: Data Collection – Chronology Table</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.1 - Analysis of Overall Attitude</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.2 - Writing Preferences</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.3 - What helps me most with my writing</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.4 - What causes me most difficulties when writing</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.5 - The thing I like most about writing</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.6 - The thing I dislike most about writing</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.7 - Ways to improve and become a better writer</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.8 - Statements about writing</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.9 - What children liked about writing</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.10 - What children did not like about writing</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.11: Deductive analysis - Coding frame of predetermined categories</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.12 - Do you like writing?</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.13 - Where do you like to write?</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.14 - When do you like to write?</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.15 - Apart from homework do you do any writing outside school?</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.16 - What helps you in your writing?</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.17 - What is good writing for you?</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.18 - Who is a good writer and how do you know that?</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.19: What can you do to become a better writer?</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.20 - What do you feel when teacher says “we’re going to write”?</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.21: Do you like reading out your writing to the rest of the class?</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.22 - What difficulties do you find when writing?</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.23: What do you like to write about at school?</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.24: What do you like writing about at home?</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.25: Coding Frame of 2nd Phase of Interview Analysis</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.26: Coding Frame of Analysis of Interview Set 3</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.27: Coding Frame of Video Analysis</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.28: Coding Frame of Observation Analysis</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.29 - Length of Writing</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.30 - Overall Change in Criteria Over Time</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.31 - Overall Change in Levels of Writing over Time</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.32: FGC’s Overall Change in Quality of Writing over Time</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6.1 Revised conceptual framework of the study</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>