Whose Writing is it Anyway?

Issues of control in the teaching of writing

Ros Fisher
University of Exeter
R.J.Fisher@Exeter.ac.uk

Introduction

In England, the concern about literacy standards has shifted focus in recent years: from standards of reading to standards of writing. The UK government’s ambitious aim to have 80% of 11 year-olds achieve level 4 or above in English in the end of KS2 assessments backfired when progress in writing was disappointing, resulting in the targets not being met and the secretary of state for education resigning. On the other hand, in contrast to concerns about standards of writing and focused teaching, recent commentators have expressed the view that this emphasis on focused teaching has led to a suppression of creativity and enjoyment in writing. This paper considers evidence from a small scale study that may shed some light on how teachers cope with these opposing demands. It argues that, while teachers may use scaffolding in the teaching of writing, the important element of hand over was not evidenced in the work of this small group of teachers.

The context

English test results for the years 1996-2003 show that, at key stage two, while reading results have improved since the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) (DfEE, 1998) performance in writing, particularly for boys, continues to be disappointing. There is no agreement as to why achievement in writing has proved so resistant to growth. The reforms of the National Literacy Strategy are based on a belief that there was insufficient time given to teaching writing. The process approach as prescribed by the National Curriculum, in which children are encouraged to work on texts as authors revising and editing drafts of their work, was felt to encourage children to ‘rehearse their errors’ (Stannard, 2000).

The NLS draws on studies of teacher effectiveness that argue the need for more structured teaching with focused objectives and whole class interactive teaching. Also emphasised in the NLS is the importance of providing models of writing to scaffold young learners’ attempts to produce texts.
Drawing on genre theory, clear definitions of text types are given and writing frames provided to support children’s own compositions. In addition, materials and activities are developed to engage pupils in different writing tasks.

In their reports on the NLS, Ofsted (1999, 2000) expressed concerns about the teaching of writing. They identified weaknesses as being: 'unclear objectives; insufficient direct teaching including modelling through shared writing; and insufficient attention paid to the processes of writing, including planning, drafting and editing.' (2000, para 41). They singled out four factors that they found particularly significant in the best teaching. These were good planning; clear objectives; lessons with good pace controlled effectively by the teacher; and high expectations (2000, para 47). The review of the first four years (Ofsted, 2002) recognises improvement through the increased use of direct teaching. This is clearly seen by policy makers as an essential feature of successful teaching.

**Concern about lack of creativity and over-prescriptiveness**

On the other hand, in contrast to concerns about standards of writing and focused teaching, recent commentators have expressed the view that this emphasis on focused teaching has led to a suppression of creativity and enjoyment in writing. From various quarters the emphasis on direct teaching and prototypical models has given rise to criticism that children are being taught to write to a formula and the result is correct but lifeless prose. Respected authors, such as Philip Pullman, have criticised current approaches to writing as producing writing that is ‘empty, conventional and worthless’ (Guardian 30/9/03). Others have focused on the rigidity of the framework and the tendency to expect children to write short pieces of text to order rather than having time to reflect and polish their work. Hilton (2001) expresses the fear that children will see literacy as no more than ‘an arid game played at the behest of the teacher’ (p10). Similarly, the version of genre theory adopted by the NLS with a clearly defined structure and set of linguistic features for each type of text can result in formulaic writing (Barrs, 1994).

It is evident that there is merit in all these points of view. Society today needs a literate workforce who can read and write accurately for a range of purposes. Society also needs creative and individual thinkers who can express themselves effectively. Creativity can be considered the realm of the Arts and accessible only to the few but attention is turning to how creativity can be fostered in all. The National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE, 1999) argued ‘Creativity is possible in all areas of human activity and all young people and adults have creative capacities’ (p10). This view relates to what is often referred to as ‘little c creativity’ or ‘process creativity’ (Sternberg, 1988). Process creativity is described by Sternberg as ‘applying knowledge
inventively to a current situation and is common, in varying degrees, to all people’ (p13). Little c creativity is described by Craft (2000) as ‘the kind of creativity which guides choices and route finding in everyday life’ (p3). In the development of writing this concept of creativity would not result in the sort of formulaic writing criticised above.

There is, however, no need to conclude that a prescribed programme necessarily excludes enjoyment and creativity. The NACCCE report notes that the development of creativity requires a balance between teaching skills and understanding, and encouraging risk taking and new ideas. Craft (2000) recommends that teachers should stimulate and encourage non-conventionality at the same time as encouraging children to understand the nature of convention.

Although much of the National Literacy Strategy and other literacy programmes world wide are based on research into effective teaching, there is little evidence related specifically to the teaching of writing. Studies of effective teaching of literacy show some measure of agreement with the more general studies but also identify an interpersonal element in the ways in which the subject is mediated. Cato et al (1992) undertook a survey of the teaching of initial literacy by way of a questionnaire and case studies of a sub-sample of schools. At the time they found teachers' use of a variety of methods to be a consistent finding in all the main studies of literacy teaching in England (p41). They summarised the characteristics of those teachers who carried out their work most effectively as: having a kind caring manner; being able to prevent 'clamour' and give children autonomy within clear boundaries; using spare moments effectively for learning; extending children's language through questioning; combining discipline with informality. Here the importance of organisation and interpersonal relationships was seen to be more important than method. Medwell et al (1998) found that effective teaching of literacy shared many of the attributes identified in more general research but that in some areas there were differences, in particular, subject knowledge and how this knowledge is mediated. The effective teachers in this study tended to cover a broader range of writing activities, focus more on meaning than skills and, when they did teach skills, teach them in a contextualised way. Similarly, Boscolo and Ciscotto (1999) identified two distinct approaches to writing instruction from teachers' self report in year two classes: rule giving and creating meaningful text. Webster et al (1996) argue that the key to success is not about what children are asked to do but how they are asked to do it. These studies confirm that different teachers can mediate tasks in different ways and that the teacher’s attitude to literacy and learning is all important in what lesson children learn. The study reported here gives further detail of how these differences maybe evidenced in the writing classroom.
The studies of writing mentioned above took place before the introduction of the NLS which has gone some way to broadening the range of text types covered and increasing teachers’ subject knowledge (Fisher, 2002). However, there is also recorded a tendency for teachers to ‘a highly literal interpretation of what should be emphasised, and a fragmented approach to planning and teaching of English’ (Frater, 2000, p109). Frater also emphasises that many schools have implemented the NLS successfully. These schools are exemplified by a rich culture of language and literacy, where connections are constantly made between learning and experiences, where confident teachers introduced lively initiatives alongside the NLS. Thus the current criticisms of the teaching of writing in the NLS cannot only be laid at the door of the NLS.

Writing is bound by conventions but it is the task of the teacher to enable the child to learn these conventions without their losing the awareness of how writing can be used by the writer for their own purposes. Children need to understand that, whereas there are rules and conventions in writing, these are for the writer to use for their own purposes. Children need to have control over the conventions of writing without those conventions having control over them. Beginning writers need the confidence to develop an individual voice. For this they need confidence to use, or consciously misuse, the conventions; have fun with written language; and express their own ideas in their own ways as well as generically conventional ways. How this is achieved is a challenging question and one to which we do not yet appear to have the answer.

The question for teachers is how do they balance the potentially opposing demands of helping children reach high standards of technical accuracy and have a repertoire of text types to draw on at the same time as developing enthusiasm and creativity. They need to balance the potentially opposing demands of creativity and correctness; prescription and individuality.

The research

The research reported here arose from a small-scale project that looked at the teaching of writing of three primary school ‘leading literacy teachers’. These teachers were selected as ones who were judged by their Local Education Authority to be successful in their teaching of literacy and who responded to an invitation to join the project. The project was exploratory. The aim was to find out more about how successful teachers go about teaching writing. The research design was generated by a belief that a teacher’s practice is influenced by the way they think about teaching and learning and about how they perceive the subject being taught.
Particularly, in the case of writing, whether they see literacy as a series of skills to be learned or as a social practice whose prime purpose is for making and communicating meaning. This view is supported by the research cited above.

Three sources of data were collected:

- interviews with teachers about what they considered important in teaching writing;
- interviews with children about how their teacher helped them to become writers;
- observations and audio tapes of three literacy lessons with each teacher.

The interviews with teachers took place at a time chosen by the teacher and on a separate occasion before the first observation visit. The interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and were audiotaped. Two main questions were asked: Why do you think you were chosen as a leading literacy teacher? What do you think is the most important thing you do to teach children to write? Further questions were asked to follow up particular points or to clarify.

The interviews with children took place after the third observational visit at a time when the children knew the researcher well enough to feel confident to talk. The teacher chose six children: two above average, two average and two below average writers whom she thought would be able to talk about their writing. Children were asked to bring the piece of writing they had been doing that day and their writing books. An interview schedule had been prepared but this was followed only loosely as it was felt to be more important that children talked confidently and therefore their ideas were followed up when appropriate rather than following the interview schedule. As well as the interview questions children were shown a piece of writing done by a child of their age and asked what they would do to help the child and what they thought their teacher would do. Interviews lasted about 30 minutes and were audio-taped.

The observation visits with each teacher took place during a block of literacy work lasting two or three weeks in which the literacy lessons were focused on a particular text type or genre. Thus, although the focus in the early stages may have been more on reading, the block of lessons was leading up to a piece of writing based on the text type or genre. The third observed lesson was one in which a final piece of writing was being worked on. Two of the three lessons were audio-taped and, in addition, the observer made observation notes which indicated the main activity and teaching points made by the teacher and children during
lessons. The schedule also allowed the observer to record the phase of the two/three week block of literacy work – i.e. Experience of the text; Instruction about the text; Working with the text; Writing the text. These four headings reflect the NLS practice of working from shared reading, through working around aspects of the text to shared and individual writing.

**Analysis**

**Interviews**

The teacher interviews were analysed to give an initial idea of what these teachers thought to be important in the teaching of writing. In the first place the transcripts were taken line by line and key ideas were picked out, for example: confidence, constraints, personal factors. Secondly, each sentence (or separate idea as the teachers’ utterances were not usually expressed in sentences) was scrutinised for what was said about teaching content e.g. skill, knowledge, attitude and b) for the teaching strategies that were referred to as being useful e.g. scaffolding, planning etc. Finally, themes were identified from the key ideas.

The interviews with children were also examined. No detailed analysis is included here for the purposes of this paper but their responses are used to raise questions about the issues discussed below.

**Observation of teaching**

In the first stages of analysis of the observational data, the field notes were re-read and the teaching episodes were organised into separate moves of teaching in which a particular literacy focus was addressed by either teacher or child(ren). Each ‘move’ was then categorised by the literacy focus adopted by the teacher. This resulted in a set of 131 ‘moves’ of teaching from the nine lessons observed. The focus of these moves varied from a focus such as ‘spelling’, through, for example, ‘narrative features’ to a process such as ‘drafting’. These ‘moves were then categorised as to what teaching strategies were adopted. The tape recordings were used to check the accuracy and detail of the field notes.

Following the allocation of categories, a key dimension became clear: that of control.

i. The extent to which the writer has control (choice) over their writing, and

ii. The extent to which choice is allowed in what the child writes and how it is written.
Each move was then coded on the dimension of control/freedom. Here a teaching move was judged to be controlling if the child (or children) was/were told that there was only one way to do something or given the teacher’s answer. On the other hand, a teaching move was judged to be open if children were allowed to make their own decisions or if a child’s response was accepted as valid without condition. Those teaching moves that fell somewhere between the two were judged to be where the teacher was scaffolding the learning by restricting the choice in some way but without implying that there was only one way to do something.

Findings

Interviews

The interviews with the three teachers revealed more similarities than differences. All three claimed some uncertainty as to why they had been chosen as a leading literacy teacher. Not one said they felt confident about how to teach literacy. All three teachers used the literacy strategy, but all agreed that it should be used flexibly to suit the topic and the children.

The analysis of their responses to the questions about what they felt was important in the teaching of writing showed a fair amount of similarity. Two teachers stressed the importance of clarity, precision, and repetition. All three teachers talked of the importance of the child’s confidence and trying to foster enjoyment. The three teachers saw this as possible, difficult or impossible. All three teachers mentioned the theme of relevance and purpose, whether:

- the importance of purpose for the writing tasks;
- the relation of writing to real life or difficulty of relating writing to real life through lack of role models in the home;
- or the importance of children feeling like they were real writers.

All three teachers recognised the complexity of teaching writing successfully. They described aspects of writing as being in opposition so that their job is to counterbalance one element with another. They talked about how they strive to ensure their way of working overcomes these problems.

Observations

Each of the teaching moves were coded as to whether they implied a control of the teacher or the rules of writing over the writer; whether they implied an openness of choice for the writer; and whether the teacher took a middle way and scaffolded children’s learning through the
way they dealt with a topic. The findings from the observational data show that open teaching moves are the most unusual with scaffolding and closed teaching being found in almost the same amount.

**Figure One: Distribution of the three types of moves**

![Pie chart showing distribution of three types of moves](image)

Figure One shows the distribution of the three types of teacher moves. From this it can be seen that less than a quarter of the moves made by teachers in this small scale study allowed children freedom of choice in their use of literacy. If we look at more detail to consider which aspects of literacy it is that teachers control, figures two and three show us the distribution between reading and writing. Here the difference is quite marked with far more freedom of interpretation being allowed in reading than in writing. The difference here is in the amount of scaffolding, as the proportion of controlling moves is similar for both reading and writing. In other words, these three teachers controlled how children used literacy in about one third of the moves observed. However, in reading children were allowed more open responses than in writing. In writing, teachers used a middle way by limiting the freedom with the presumed intention of scaffolding children’s learning. In the observed lessons, when the focus was on reading, most of the interaction was about response and interpretation rather than about decoding. Had the focus been on decoding, it is likely that there would have been more controlling moves.

Analysis also investigated the distribution between word, sentence and text level. It was found that, in the observed lessons teachers spent more time teaching about text level than about sentence or word. There is no implication here that this pattern is typical. Three lessons were observed over a two or three week period. Since teachers knew the topic of research was the
teaching of writing they were more likely to focus on topics that they felt relevant to writing. These teachers taught handwriting outside the hour long literacy lesson. However, it is perhaps surprising that there was not more focus on spelling.

Analysis also explored the distribution of the different types of moves as a percentage at word, sentence and text level. This showed that teachers responded in an open way when working at text level and exerted the greatest control at sentence level. Nevertheless, the number of open responses was small compared to the other two (closed or scaffolded). This seems to belie the teachers’ own perceptions which indicated that they worked hard to a balance the freedom to allow an individual response with the need to teach the agreed conventions of writing. It does, however, reflect their view that this was a difficult endeavour.

What children said

Interviewing any subject in research is problematic, as the researcher can never know how true a picture the interview reveals. These problems are magnified when interviewing children in school, where they are influenced by their interpretation of what they think the adult wants
to hear, of what they should say in school and what their peers think. However, some interesting insights were gained from the interviews about the children’s perspectives.

Firstly children in all three classes responded about surface or mechanical features of writing more than about meaning and expression. They referred to handwriting: joining letters, writing straight, keeping to the lines, being neat, ascenders and descenders (in fact 30% of their comments were about handwriting and presentation). They also expressed concern about capital letters, full stops, writing in sentences, spelling and so on (23% were about spelling and punctuation). Only a few in each group talked about how to express ideas, making sense, being coherent, being funny, description, adding detail, using different words. For these children, getting the conventions right was clearly a major concern.

All children talked about the teacher modelling writing. In Class Three a child said, ‘If we have to write a story, she will go over it first and make us make up ideas. So she writes it on the board so we, like, get the hang of getting our ideas’. A child in Class Two said, ‘Sometimes she writes on the board and gives us some ideas and we see how she writes.’ A child in Class One, who were older, said, ‘She’ll start off. Hers is, like, way better than any of ours and hers is, like, off the top of her head. She’s amazing when she thinks like that.’ Children in each class were also very clear about what their teachers liked them to do in writing and what she did not like. For example, one child said (and they all joined in with the chant), ‘most of the teachers in this school do not like this type [of writing] - then we went home, then we cleaned our teeth, then we went to bed - cause it’s got too many ‘then’s. It’s not very interesting.’ This certainty about what their teachers liked on the whole seemed to give them a confidence about what they were trying to achieve.

**Discussion**

Social constructivist views of learning involve an important role for the adult in supporting the child through scaffolding. Interchanges between teacher and child provide the opportunities for teachers to provide the scaffolding that will enable the child to build the bridge from what she already knows to what she is learning. However, an underlying premise of scaffolding is that the support is only temporary and that, ultimately, responsibility is transferred to the learner. This is what Edwards and Mercer (1987) refer to as the ‘hand over of independence’. They argue that this rarely occurs. More usual is a unidirectional model where the adult provides the next step.
Evidence of the unidirectional nature of the scaffolding comes in analysis of the different kinds of observed moves in each of the three sessions. If scaffolding had been used to ‘hand over’ independence to the child, it is arguable that the third lesson in the sequence would have the greatest proportion of open moves. In this part of the sequence children should be trying out what they have learned in independent writing. Table One shows how the three types of moves were distributed among the three lessons. These are represented as percentages of all the moves in each of the first, second or third lessons in the sequence. It can be seen that although there were less moves in the third lesson (due to the fact that more time was spent with children working individually on a piece of writing) there were proportionally fewer open moves and a greater number of closed moves observed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Session One</th>
<th>Session Two</th>
<th>Session Three</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% open</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% scaffolded</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% closed</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Wilkinson and Silliman (1994) identify two different styles of scaffolding: directive and supportive. Directive scaffolding is the most commonly found and reflects the type of classroom discourse in which teachers control the discourse and acceptable answers are predetermined in the teacher’s mind. In contrast, Wilkinson and Silliman suggest that supportive scaffolds directly mirror Vygotsky’s views. The idea of supportive scaffolds derive from initial work by Palinscar and Brown (1984) on reciprocal teaching: a dialogue based, active learning approach in which an attempt was made to bring about classroom interaction that avoided closing down the interaction.

Many (2002) argues that scaffolded instruction underscores both the role of the teacher and the role of the child as ‘co-participants in negotiating meaning and in informing the nature of the instructional conversations’ (p379). In Australia, the work of Brian Cambourne and others has closely analysed the teaching of teachers who use talk to help children think more effectively about specific aspects of literacy. In these interactions, even if only a few minutes in length,
both teacher and child have their best opportunities to engage in genuine negotiations of meaning. The teacher, by responding contingently to the children, can gain insights into what they know and how they are thinking. And the children not only become aware of the limits of their competence and knowledge but they also develop their competence and fine-tune their knowledge by using the teacher’s competence and consciousness to complement their own’ (Geekie et al, 1999 p147).

In the study reported here scaffolding played an important part in the interaction between teacher and children. However, close analysis of the moves made by each teacher in the teaching of writing show that those moves which were identified as involving scaffolding were more directive than supportive. For example, Teacher Two, who used more controlling moves than the other two, was very focused on the learning objectives and reminded children frequently about what they were learning. When doing shared reading she kept her objectives clearly in mind and emphasised the different parts of a story: a setting and characters. Her sentence level objective was to learn to use connectives so she drew children’s attention to these while reading the story. In the second lesson at the start of a shared writing session, she reviewed these objectives by questioning children’s memory of the features of a story. She asked question such as, ‘How could I start?’ ‘How do I tell them about the setting?’ ‘Where is it going to happen?’ In the final session she again reminded children of the elements of a story by closed, focused questions to elicit the response that a story is made up of a setting – where, when, weather. She then asked what else do we need in a story and children knew the answer was ‘characters’. She then asked, ‘what job do characters do in a story?’ She also reviewed the use of connectives and before sending the class to go and start writing reminded them to think about the structure of the story, their use of connectives and (also) how the characters felt. She also allowed children a little freedom to choose in both the shared and independent writing but it was quite clear where this choice lay. They could choose the names of the characters and some aspects of the setting such as what day of the week it was and what the weather was like. The text was chosen for its link to work in PSE and was relevant because there had been a spate of bullying in the playground. Teacher Two used this very effectively to relate the content of the story (in shared reading) to children’s own experiences.
Teacher Three was teaching a class of seven to nine year olds. They were very enthusiastic writers – on one of my visits there was a fire alarm and they had to stop writing to go outside. There were noisy and disappointed groans at having to leave the writing. The block of work I observed was focused on poetry and involved both reading and writing poems. This teacher was also clear about the lesson objectives and made her expectations clear. The lesson objectives focused on the use of similes in lesson one and other literary techniques in lesson two such as onomatopoeia and alliteration. Here again there was a clear line between what was allowed and what was not. In the lesson on similes, Teacher Three made sure children understood what a simile was by asking *why* a certain phrase was a simile. When one child answered, ‘because it has *like* in it’, Teacher Three probed for more until she got the word ‘compare’. Like Teacher Two she allowed any content in the simile as long as the offering was a simile. She allowed the trite, ‘a house like a dolls house’ as well as the unpleasant ‘sticky like earwax’. Rather than reject an idea she pushed children to explain the image they had in their mind as in ‘brick like a building’ which the child justified by explaining the comparison and the teacher accepted (albeit without enthusiasm) by saying ‘it’s your simile’. Teacher Three also used praise a good deal. She praised children’s good ideas and choice of words but also challenged them to think of better words and different ideas. In this class there was a sense that, although there were constraints, the children themselves would be able to think of a different way of doing something. In the final observed lesson the children were writing poems based on Kit Wright’s poem The Magic Box which they had started the day before. The lesson started by the teacher showing the class a poem based on the Magic Box that had been written by other children. She had printed and cut out phrases from this poem and they discussed the wording and the order. All the time the teacher pushed children to say what they liked about the phrases and the poem but also encouraged them to think that *they* could write one that was better. In this case the teacher clearly had high expectations of her class. However, even here, there was no sense of a gradual withdrawal of support. Her aspirations clearly led toward and pre-specified outcome.

**Conclusion**

Whether we take what Street (1984) describes as an autonomous view of literacy or a more socio-cultural perspective, there is no doubt that there are conventions in the use of language – both written and spoken. Arguably, in order to use and even subvert conventional forms, the language user needs to know these forms. Whereas some advocate more development of self expression (e.g. Barrs, 2001; King, 2000) by advocating ‘a writing pedagogy that would
enable children to articulate themselves as writers, so that they could recognise writing as a means of both constructing and conveying meaning in their lives’ (King, 2000, p40), Black et al (2002) are emphatic about the importance of learning goals. Black et al’s view clearly reflects the current dogma. They argue that children can only achieve a goal if they know what the goal is and understand how to achieve it. The children in this study seemed to have a clear idea of what they are trying to achieve. However, Black et al (ibid) acknowledge that, in a subject such as English, there is difficulty in making a task sufficiently structured to scaffold learning but not so tightly defined as to limit thinking. Teacher Two controlled the structure and linguistic features of the story but gave children only limited choice, mainly about the content. This cannot be enough. Writers must be able to make choices about how they will express their ideas as well as about the ideas themselves.

The thing that struck me most while conducting this study was the confidence and enjoyment with which the children in Class Three engaged in writing. My first impression of this teacher was that she was very clear in what she expected the children to do. Children seemed to like this in that they knew what to expect by way of response. They felt they knew how to do a good piece of writing. I tried to probe whether they felt constrained by this. One child said, ‘Well, if you wanted ideas and you couldn’t think of any, she just would give you ideas. Or if you, like, couldn’t think of anything to, like, write down she’ll tell you what to write down. But if you thought of something else you could write that down.’

These children were confident writers but I am uncertain the extent to which they were independent writers. They were able to produce pieces of writing that would help them achieve good levels in national assessments. They mostly seemed clear about what they had to do to achieve this. A real strength of their teachers was that they gave children the confidence to write. Children learned in lessons which were fun and each class played around with language and laughed at the effects they achieved. There was a real sense that they knew about language enough to produce what the teacher wanted. And the teachers knew what was wanted.

The question ‘whose writing is it anyway?’ is moot. From these data, my impression is that these children were being taught successfully to write school writing. Teachers had a clear idea of the model of writing required and they taught it well. Most of the children I observed seemed happy to adopt this form of writing in school. However, children live in a world
where there are many different forms of representation. Increasingly written communication is multi-modal. The sort of written language that is represented by the National Literacy Strategy and in national assessments is a particular form of writing that does not look much like the sort of written language children encounter in their daily lives.

Nevertheless, I am not convinced that the answer is to allow children unlimited self expression as a way of learning and of ‘finding their voice’. Writing is not only school’s writing but neither is it only an individual child’s writing. It represents the different and constantly changing ways in which our culture represents and communicates meaning. Young writers need to learn about and be confident to exploit current modes of expression. Schooled literacy may be too finite but neither is the writer’s choice totally open. Furthermore, if scaffolding is used to help young writers learn about using writing conventions, it must be followed by handing over the control to allow them to develop independence.

References
Boscotto, P. and Ciscotto, L (1999) Instructional Strategies for teaching to write: a Q sort analysis in Learning and Instruction, 9, 2009-221


NACCCE (1999) *All our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education* London: DfEE


Pullman. P (2003) Lost the Plot in *The Education Guardian* 30/09/03


