Teacher knowledge and student learning: An examination of teacher pedagogies for the same writing topic across two consecutive grades

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ABSTRACT

The ability to write is central to students' success at school and beyond, and key to this success is the design and implementation of classroom learning experiences. Teachers' writing lessons are informed by their beliefs about learning, their writing content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. This knowledge supports their interpretation of curriculum documents and their ability to navigate resources for planning and implementing writing lessons. And for teachers who require further development of that content and pedagogical content knowledge, writing teaching becomes problematic. Media and government reports about the decline in writing performance in national and international assessments such as NAPLAN necessitates writing pedagogies research. Findings shared in this paper emerge from a larger project examining literacy demands in New South Wales classrooms across transition points of school. This paper examines two instances of classroom-based practice where students in two consecutive academic school years (Year 2 and 3) with two different teachers participated in a persuasive writing lesson about the same topic – Are cats better than dogs? *Analysis of the pedagogical interactions and use of resources provide insights into teacher content knowledge, pedagogical approaches and the subsequent impact on student learning. These findings point to the need for better understanding about the demands on teachers to support students' development of genuine and empowering writing skills. Consequently, the paper argues for professional development that deepens teacher content and pedagogical content knowledge for pedagogies that can better support student writing.*

Introduction

Writing is identified as the capstone skill for students (Graham, Hebert & Harris, 2015). In the Australian context, a focus on the teaching of writing has a long history that has established the understanding that writing is a process of creating meaning for particular purposes and audiences (e.g. Butler & Turbill, 1984; Calkins, 1983; Derewianka, 1990; Graves, 1975; Smith, 1983; Walshe, 1981). This concept remains evident in curriculum documents (NESA, 2012) and scholarly literature today. However, recent reviews of NAPLAN data (ACARA, 2017) report a decline in students' writing skills across the schooling years. Perhaps this decline reflects an ongoing focus on reading pedagogies that leave less time for writing. Perhaps it relates to recent pushes into the use of commercial programs or recipes for writing that teach skills in isolation from the act of composition, which includes significant activity prior to the recording of a message. Perhaps it relates to the pressure for 'success' on nationally mandated standardised tests that privilege the production of temporally bound one shot approaches over a more extended process.

Whatever the reasons, Myhill, Jones and Wilson

(2016) remind us of the foundational understanding that 'successful' writers make a range of effective choices about language and about the structure of a text in response to an intended audience, the text's purpose, topic and medium. Within a school context, then, teaching for successful writing requires from a teacher deep writing content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge informed by their own experiences, their theories about the purposes of writing, and how it is taught. And further, these knowledges must be enacted in compliance with school/system expectations and curriculum mandates. In short, what a teacher knows, what they believe about learning, and the demands for compliance are all reflected in classroom pedagogies.

Recent developments in writing pedagogies

Writing research for practitioner audiences has promoted pedagogical strategies for supporting students' writing. Strategies are varied and include: writers' workshop (e.g. Kissel & Millar, 2015), explicit and systematic daily instruction (e.g. Roth & Guinee, 2011), teacher modelling with scaffolding and shared discourse (e.g. Hill, 2010), use of stimulus texts (e.g. Wilson, Trainin, Laughridge, Brooks & Wickless, 2011) copying co-constructed texts (e.g. Dyson, 2010), and digital text creation (e.g. Worthington & van Oers, 2017), to name a few. Whatever the strategy, Fisher (2010) argues that its implementation is critical to student motivation and support. In motivating students, Myers and Kroeger (2011) observe that students need opportunities for active creation of texts that draw on their own experiences. And in offering support, Parry (2014) argues that teachers must develop in students the strategies that will help them interrogate and review texts. Of course, within any approach, there is some caution about the types of resources used. For example, Lynch and Redpath (2014) caution about the open and bound natures of different digital apps.

Pedagogies that respond to students' needs

Writing curriculum must be responsive to students' needs (Dunn, Niens & McMillan, 2014) so that active participation can be encouraged through thoughtfully planned lessons (Sandvik, van Daal & Ader, 2014). In classrooms, students need time to write and then time to revisit and review their writing for greater clarity that moves them from emergent understandings to more stable ideas (Honig, 2010). Text production lessons that offer authenticity in purpose and are focused on developing critical thinking, provide powerful learning experiences (Silvers, Shorey & Crafton, 2010), as do classroom instructional teaching contexts that are inclusive of all students (McCloskey, 2011). Through shared inquiry amongst teachers and students, the potential exists for classrooms to become critical communities of practice as they develop critical identities and create texts that inspire social action (Silvers et al., 2010).

Alongside strategies and differentiation for all learners are pedagogical frameworks for the teaching of writing. For example, a multiliteracies map (Hill, 2010) and a framework of multimodal writing (Walsh, 2010) emphasise the importance of the construction of written text with other language modes. Donovan and Smolkin (2011) promote the role of developmental frameworks that focus on genres to support the teaching of writing. Scull, Nolan and Raban (2013) argue that writing skills and techniques must be taught within authentic contexts situated in social practice.

Pedagogies that respond to policy mandates

Evident in policy documents are approaches that break writing into its elements. For example, the National Literacy Learning Progressions (ACARA, 2018) identify the elements as: handwriting and keyboarding, spelling, punctuation, grammar, crafting ideas, vocabulary and understandings about a text's form and features. And this separation is evident in the NAPLAN where spelling, punctuation and grammar are assessed separately from the text creation component. It seems there is a view that these individually developed skills will come together in the writing process once learned in isolation.

The elements are then further delineated into a scope and sequence across the years of school, a developmental view of writing that positions students as becoming increasingly proficient at creating a range of texts over time (ACARA, 2017; NESA, 2012). However, there is some ambiguity in the curriculum expectations about writing as students move through the primary school grades. This ambiguity is intensified through the recontextualisation of the national curriculum documents into state mandates that have different agendas.

It is clear within this complex web of practices, mandates, frameworks and policies that there is much for teachers to know and continue to learn if they are to generate truly supportive learning environments. Professional development is well documented for achieving real change not only in the ways teaching happens, but also in the ways teachers think about subject content and learners' unique needs and interests (Comber, 2006). Quality professional development is identified as sustained, reflective, active and collaborative. It draws on responsive expertise within and beyond immediate settings. It is content focused

and student focused and underpinned by established models of effective practice (Darling-Hammond, Hyler & Gardner, 2017; Howell, Hunt-Barron, Kaminski & Sanders, 2017). Thus, teachers must develop content expertise, that is, knowledge about language and text structures and about the ways the text's purposes and intended audience inform a composition (Myhill & Newman, 2016). But teachers must also develop expert pedagogies that balance explicit teaching of individual skills with opportunities for exploration, approximation, conversation and reflection on the ways a text is coming together. The development of deep content knowledge and 'expansive and engaging' (Wohlwend, 2018, p. 162) pedagogical content knowledge informs teachers' beliefs and theories about writing, and so they are better equipped to support all learners.

Teachers' writing expertise is critical, yet there is scant research into how teachers' beliefs and knowledge inform deep conversations and metatalk about the relationships between meaning, form and function (Myhill & Newman, 2016). Teachers' own pedagogical content knowledge coupled with their control of metalanguage that supports purposeful conversations are imperative. Indeed, the need for further research about the connections between student learning and teacher expertise has been identified in the literature (Howell, et al., 2017; Wohlwend, 2018).

Therefore, this paper examines teacher and student activity during classroom writing time in two consecutive school years with a focus on the same writing topic. It explores the writing demands of two lessons by examining the interactions between teachers and students as they engage with teacher selected resources. The paper is framed by the research question:

> How do two teachers activate their beliefs and knowledge about writing as they shape pedagogical interactions and use of resources during writing time?

Theoretical framework

Our previous work has explicated four key interconnected areas to understand intricate classroom pedagogies (Mantei & Kervin, 2018):

- *interactions* between and among educators and students;
- *time structures* for the experience;
- *use of space* both inside and outside the physical classroom structures;
- *resources* selected and the ways they were used.

Figure 1 demonstrates the understanding that *interactions* form the overarching element through which *time structures*, *space* and *resources* are used. It also demonstrates that learning occurs through the interactions within certain spaces and times and with the resources on offer.

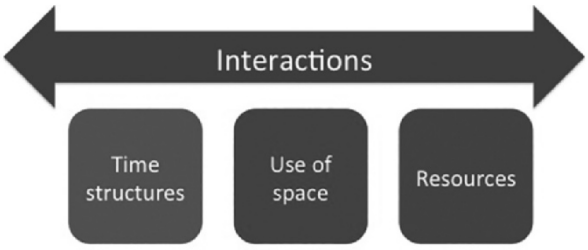

Figure 1. Theory to understand classroom pedagogies

This paper reports on an examination of teacher knowledge and key movements in two episodes of writing teaching. The findings focus on two elements of the theory (Figure 1) (Kervin, Turbill & Harden-Thew, 2017; Mantei & Kervin, 2018) – interactions and resources – in an effort to respond to the research question.

Interactions

Social control is a feature of interactions within any discourse (Bernstein, 1975), becoming evident through the interactions between participants. *Interactions* in this paper refer to *pedagogical* exchanges between and the teacher and students in the classroom, allowing an examination of levels of control and use of power. An examination of the pedagogical interactions between the teacher and students affords insights into the writing demands of the lessons teachers design. That is, it allows us to consider the knowledge required for planning and teaching writing.

Resources

Kervin and colleagues (2017) observe that much can be learned about the ways power and control feature in settings from an examination of who chooses the resources, the purpose for which they are chosen and how they are used. Whilst the term 'resources' is broad and includes human, material, emotional and social, to name a few, in this paper, resources are the physical objects used for teaching writing. An examination of the resources used to support a teaching focus (and by extension, the learning) provides insights into the ways the resources impact, enhance and/or inhibit learning.

Methodology

This paper reports data collected within a larger Australian longitudinal multiple-method study of the literacy experiences of 150–200 students across school settings. Following ethics approval, participants were recruited from three clusters representing diversity in

social and cultural backgrounds of a region in New South Wales, Australia. Each cluster comprises a prior-to-school setting, a primary and a high school. This paper draws data from two classrooms in one primary school located in one cluster. A key priority in this school was a focus on writing pedagogies and the two classroom teachers reported here self-identified as accomplished writing teachers.

The teachers scheduled times for the research team to observe classroom practice and conduct teacher interviews prior to and following the observations. Initial interviews focused on beliefs and practices, resources and routines within the school. Initial interviews also gathered information about the students, their perceived needs, and writing opportunities on offer. Post-observation interviews sought clarification of and elaboration about emerging points of interest, particularly about student and teacher interactions at different times, use of the learning space, and resources used. Data comprised field notes, audio and video recordings and still photographs of the writing experiences. Table 1 summarises the observation and interview data collected in the classroom sites reported in this paper.

The paper reports on two single lessons from consecutive years of school across consecutive time periods, Year 2 (Term 4 of one year) and Year 3 (Term 1 the following year). The chosen lessons are indicative of the structures and activities observed across the period of data collection, but were specifically selected for this paper because of their similarity in focus. Both lessons taught about persuasive text with the same topic, *Are cats better than dogs?*.

Year 2: Twenty-seven students (aged 6–7 years) and classroom teacher Milly (pseudonym), an experienced teacher with a leadership position at the school. Milly reported the purpose of her lesson was to 'extend these kids because they are a bright bunch'. The lesson would teach about the use of modality as a persuasive writing technique.

Year 3: Twenty-three students (aged 7–8 years) and early career teacher, Kath (pseudonym). At the time of the inquiry, Kath was in her second year of teaching Year 3. She reported that her mentor teacher (Milly) instructs her on the content, scope and sequence of her literacy lessons, which were characterised by daily routines focused on the ways words work.

It is important to note that 12 students were in the same Year 2 and Year 3 classroom, and so participated in both lessons. In terms of arguing the merits of cats over dogs or vice versa, a quick online search reveals a plethora of commercial and government resources and recommendations about using this topic in preparation for NAPLAN and/or for teaching about persuasive text. Perhaps for some children this is an authentic topic that they might use in an attempt to secure a new pet, but the students in this case were required to engage twice with a topic that held no discernible purpose aside from learning about grammatical structures in preparation for a test. The lessons themselves featured high levels of teacher control and the use of contrived resources, potentially twice limiting students' opportunities for interactions for collaboration and critical thinking.

Analysis of data

The two instances of 'writing time' in these classrooms are analysed as a curriculum genre, that is, they represent what Christie (2002) identifies as 'staged, goal-driven' activity 'devoted to the accomplishment of significant educational ends' (p. 22). It is a staged activity within which teachers engage in a number of phases orientated to achieving the purposes of the lesson. In this paper, the *pedagogical interactions* and use of *resources* within 'writing time' are explicated through Christie's (2002) Prelude, Expose and Consolidation phases because they allow a closer analysis of the different pedagogical decisions and approaches a teacher makes. Of course, a teacher may move between and among a range of phases as they work toward their goal, but the lessons reported here use the same sequence: Prelude – Expose – Consolidation.

The Prelude Phase

During the Prelude, the teacher prepares students for completing a task. It is usually brief, approximately 10 minutes (Jones, Kervin & McIntosh, 2011), teacher fronted and orientated locally to the next step in an instructional sequence rather than to the overall goals of the broader 'writing time' unit. A Prelude may comprise demonstrations by the teacher and observed

Table 1. Overview of data collected in Year 2 and Year 3

Classroom site	Total classroom observations	Average duration of observations	Total observation time	Total teacher interviews
Year 2	6	90 minutes	9 hours	4 (2 hours)
Year 3	5	90 minutes	7.5 hours	5 (3 hours)

by the students a set task or a set of oral instructions with the aim to motivate or engage. Interactions at the Prelude are often limited, requiring fairly simple responses from students. Resources in this phase might connect the planned learning to previous experiences. For example, the teacher might revise a previously class constructed text as a springboard to new learning.

The Expose Phase

In contrast to the local nature of the Prelude, an Expose is orientated to the lesson's broad instructional goals. It usually reveals the 'point' of the activity. Here, the conceptual terrain is more complex and thus the teacher's expertise in curriculum content becomes most evident. Interactions between and among teachers and students during the expose may broaden and invite collaboration and problem solving as new ideas are investigated. Resources are selected to support the specific needs of *these* learners and deepen their understandings by providing models and structures that promote complex understandings.

The Consolidation Phase

The Consolidation phase culminates key ideas from the lesson. It usually provides opportunities for students to independently apply their learning in new ways and to recontextualise the important ideas. Sharing is key to the interactions between and among teachers and students during the consolidation phase. Opportunities for reflection on learning, on resources, and on the creation of new texts will allow students to consolidate new knowledge into existing repertoires, and teachers to make observations about student take up of the teaching.

Year 2 writing lesson

Following is an account of Milly's thirty-minute writing lesson with Year 2 students. Summarised in Table 2 are the lesson phases, key movements and timing. Milly identified the learning objective was for students to learn about the ways modality could be used to persuade a reader. Culminating this account is a reflection on the writing demands evident in the lesson.

The Prelude Phase

The Prelude is brief, teacher driven, and usually used to motivate and orient learners to the immediate demands of a task.

Orientation to the writing topic

Milly used a scenario to generate interest, describing a discussion between herself and another teacher about the benefits and shortcomings of different pets, where

Table 2. Year 2 writing lesson

Lesson Phase	Key movements	Duration
Prelude	Orientation to the writing topic	1 minute
	Review of sample text	1 minute 10 seconds
Expose	Deconstruction of sample text	12 minutes 42 seconds
	Identifying and replacing key words	5 minutes 30 seconds
	Individual writing	6 minutes 53 seconds
Consolidation	Reflection on the learning intention	3 minutes 25 seconds

Milly argued that dogs make poor pets.

Review of sample text

She displayed a purchased web-based resource identified by its authors as suitable for teaching persuasive text structure. The resource was a poster entitled *Dogs make the best pets (TeacherStarter.com)*. Milly used a ladder graphic showing a vertical cline to revise the concept of modality. The word 'need' occupied the highest rung, hence highest modality, while 'might' sat on the lowest. The 'known' concept of modality was then linked to the new task of writing persuasive texts

The Expose Phase

The Expose orientates learners to the broader purpose of a task, requiring the teacher and learners to interact at the cutting edge of their learning to generate new knowledge.

Deconstruction of sample text

Milly used the Expose phase to demonstrate the resource's persuasive structure, explaining 'I realised this poster was trying to persuade me as soon as I read the title because it uses **high** modality'. She used a teacher centred series of interactions to direct the students through the text, inviting one to read a section and others to identify specific language designed to persuade. The teacher labelled target words interchangeably as a 'high modal word', a 'strong word', and a 'powerful word'. The following excerpt captures one part of this discussion:

> **Dogs make the best pets.**
> When it comes to pets, dogs are most certainly the best choice.

Milly: What's the **powerful word** in that sentence?
Clare: Best

Milly: Best (affirming)
…
Milly: Can anyone see a powerful word that we've been talking about … that has really high modality, so it is **a strong word** …? Nate?
Nate: Certainly.
Milly: (agreeing) Certainly is a *high modality word*.

In their analysis of the remainder of that paragraph, Milly linked the concept of *emotional* power and modality.

They are loyal, affectionate and active companions.

Milly: Can anybody see any other powerful words, words **that have a really emotional power**. They start making you feel something. Kuper?
Chloe: Affectionate?
Milly: Affectionate (affirming). That is the kind of word that makes you feel something.
…
Harry: Loyal?
Milly: (disagreeing) Now, have a look. Loyal is a great word, it's a wow word, it's an adjective … but there's a really *high modal word* in there. Do you want to have another go, Harry?

The students continued to work within Milly's tightly controlled lesson to align themselves with her definitions of modality as being powerful, strong, emotive words, adding 'affectionate', 'incredibly', 'extremely', and 'always' to the list.

In the final paragraph, Milly noted the use of lower modality describing the attributes of other pets as having 'some good qualities'. In closing, Milly explained the task:

> *I can change these high modality words to low modality words so it's not nearly as convincing … instead of using* ***most certainly****, [I can write] … dogs are* ***definitely not*** *… I can change that word to make that sentence mean the complete opposite. So we can change this whole text so it's not being persuasive about the* ***good things*** *about dogs, it's being persuasive about the* ***bad things*** *about dogs.*

It appears in this explanation that Milly believes she is working with language as it relates to modality rather than appraisal (Martin & White, 2005). In fact, these learners are required to replace the positive emotions conveyed in the contrived text with words that will promote a negative affect, which is mainly achieved in this text through the use of antonyms (e.g. loyal/disloyal; best/worst).

Identifying and replacing key words

The task required the students to highlight and replace on their own copy 'the most important words' and then rewrite the text using these new words so dogs are considered 'bad'. Milly reminded the students to 'get really sneaky' and to 'make the message the complete opposite'.

Individual writing

Milly then moved around, reviewing words marked for change. If 'enough words' were highlighted, they were instructed to begin copying the text into their books. Vesna was invited to share her writing,

> Dogs are the worst pets. When it comes to pets they are obviously the worst choice. They're mean and messy.

Inviting the class to applaud Vesna's work, Milly acknowledged it as a 'great piece of writing'. She observed that Vesna was 'getting the hang of it' because she 'changed the complete message of that first paragraph'. There was no mention of modality.

The Consolidation Phase

Key ideas come together in the Consolidation phase and learners are usually required to apply and demonstrate their new understandings on a different, often independent, task.

Reflection on the learning intention

In a brief Consolidation, Milly invited the students to discuss 'whether we have been successful in our learning intention'. She explained the learning intention was to 'look at *strong and powerful* words' and asked if the students felt they were successful. They indicate in the affirmative. Milly finished by explaining they will now be better equipped to use 'those strong powerful words effectively'. Again, modality was not mentioned.

What writing demands are evident?

The demands on these students changed throughout the lesson. As the tightly controlled interactions and explicit teaching of curriculum content during the expose continued, Milly appeared to realise she was in fact not teaching about a move from high to low modality. Milly's new understanding about the nature of the task caused her to alter her language and the ways she articulated the content, requiring the students to broaden their understanding of the concept of modality. Her uncertainty is evidenced in her shift from the use of 'high modality words' to words that are 'strong', 'powerful', and 'emotional'. Indeed, the concept of modality, the teaching focus at the beginning of the lesson, is replaced with the notion of power and appraisal. While the students appeared to adapt to the concept and worked hard to understand what the

teacher wanted, it is unclear what they have learned about modality as a writing technique.

The commercial resource used in this excerpt was contrived for developing understandings about a persuasive 'text type'. Photocopied versions of the resource provided individual copies for students to replicate the deconstruction activity on the board. The resource provided a tight structure for the lesson, reiterated by Milly's instructions not to 'make the task *too* big. Don't change *too* much'.

Year 3 writing lesson

Following is an account of Kath's twenty-three minute writing lesson in Year 3. Lesson phases, key movements and their duration are summarised in Table 3. Kath identified that this lesson's objective was for students to compose an opening statement of position for a persuasive text. As with the Year 2 case, this account finishes with a reflection on the evident writing demands.

Table 3. Year 3 writing lesson

Lesson Phase	Key movements	Duration
Prelude	• Orientation to the writing task • Review of example texts	1 min 30 secs 5 mins
Expose	• Individual composition of a text • Teacher – student conferencing	8 mins 30 secs 8 mins
Consolidation	• Transferring composed text to writing book	

The Prelude Phase

The lesson began with students assembled cross-legged on the floor facing an interactive whiteboard (IWB). Seated behind her desk to one side, Kath operated a laptop computer to move from the morning routine to set up the writing lesson, which she began by reflecting on the previous day's writing.

Orientation to the writing task

Kath briefly prepared the students by noting that some have demonstrated insufficient skills in composing statements of position (the opening paragraph), and therefore it is the focus for all learners in this lesson. Kath explained:

> *Yesterday we did our brainstorming. We talked about our statement of position, didn't we? Put your hand up if when you got your feedback from your persuasive text, statement of position was something that you needed to work on … There were a few people that needed to work on statement of position … Lots of people started to talk about their arguments, and talk about all of the reasons … What we need to do is just give the reader our points of view, what we believe, if we agree or we disagree with the statement.*

Kath revisited the success criteria for the lesson: a plan for the arguments, writing in full sentences and organising writing into paragraphs, using standard spelling and punctuation, word selection, use of persuasive devices and checking and editing work.

Review of example texts

Kath explained that statements of position articulate the author's stance on a topic about which they want to persuade their reader. To illustrate, she displayed on a single screen five examples of statements of position taken from five different commercial resources that focused on the topic of persuasive writing about cats and dogs. These statements related to the topic of pets (cats and dogs) and the notion of a favourable option. In tightly controlled interactions, Kath invited individual students to read one statement aloud and then summarised or deconstructed the author's approach. For example, following one reading, Kath asked '*… has the writer started to talk about that they're helpful? … When is the writer going to talk about that?'*. It appears here that Kath adopts a strong frame about the opening structures of the persuasive 'text type' as stating a position, previewing important arguments and capturing the reader's attention (Derewianka, 1990). As such, her interactions remained focused on teacher direction. Questions were asked with little opportunity or expectation of student interaction. In fact, of the seven questions Kath posed, responses to just three were sought. For example,

Kath: What's this writer's statement of position? What's this writer's – what's their point of view Evie?
Evie: That cats are better than dogs.
Kath: That cats are better than dogs. Good.

In this initiate, respond, evaluate (IRE) exchange, Kath's clarifying question evokes an accurate response from a carefully selected student, which is confirmed in her evaluation.

The Expose Phase

Contrasting the local nature of the Prelude, Kath's Expose is more aligned with the broad instructional goals as the lesson moves to the 'point' of the activity. The conceptual terrain becomes more challenging and

Kath's expertise in the curriculum content becomes most evident as she moves the students from models to independent construction.

Individual composition of text

The students must choose the stance either that dogs make better pets than cats or vice versa. Kath directs the students to use '*the words, the sentence starters that are really good for our opening statement, for our statement of position*'. These sentence starters are laminated words organised into rows on a static whiteboard at the side of the room, resources used to ensure the students follow the persuasive text type structure.

While the students remained on the floor, Kath moved to a low chair, directing them to individually compose statements of position that articulate their stance. The students composed on small whiteboards with the expectation they will later copy their composition to their writing books. They are reminded about the structure, '*remember we're not starting to list lots and lots of information. Two or three sentences, you need to think about …*'

As the students identified their stance and wrote for the next eight minutes, Kath remained on the low chair calling on individual students to show their whiteboards. For example, '*show me what you've got [name]. Good keep going*' and '*[Name] show me. Keep going then quickly*'. Also during this writing time, Kath asked students seated in different locations to lift their whiteboards to show their writing. For example, '*Back row. Boards up. Back row boards up*'. She read each board and offered a commentary. For example, '*Yep. Keep going please. Good boy. Can you take that capital letter off dogs please, only for proper nouns. Read that, you've got a missing word …*'.

Teacher-student conferencing

Students with drafted statements of position queued across the front of the classroom for individual conferencing and editing with their teacher. The interactions during conferencing remained consistent for all seventeen students in line. Each passed Kath their whiteboard, she read the text aloud, often rubbing out words with her thumb and replacing them with others. She then responded with further instruction or affirmation and new instructions. For example, Kath said to the next in line, '*Let me have a look*'. Reading aloud, she edits, '*Cats are better than dogs – full stop. Of course, cats are better than dogs because they're cute, cuddly – comma, give me one more reason*'. The student returns to the floor to make the requested change. In another instance Kath took the whiteboard, began reading and said, '*You disagree. Okay. Cats are better than dogs, of course cats make much better pet – you need your plural – better pets because they – you need a different reason because this reason is supporting dogs. Do you need to have a look at the other side of the board? Right, go and look*'.

The Consolidation Phase

The Consolidation phase draws together key ideas and provides opportunities for the application of new learning in different tasks using the same key ideas. In Kath's lesson, consolidation was activated at different times for individual students and not all were invited to participate.

Transferring composed text to writing book

Once a student's opening statement was satisfactory (i.e. it had the required structure and Kath has edited it), they were sent to their tables to copy what is on their whiteboard into their writing book, '*go and write it, new page, margin*'. This continued until it was time for Kath to conclude writing time by moving the focus to another curriculum area.

What writing demands are evident in this lesson?

As their teacher, Kath controlled all opportunities for interactions during all stages of writing time. The careful use of model resources on the IWB ensured the structure of the persuasive text type was achieved. Connections to writing time from the previous day and to the 'success criteria' against which their writing would be assessed confirm Kath's focus on the goal.

The students could choose their stance to support dogs or cats, however, it seemed there were few opportunities for other variation (or creativity) in their compositions. Kath's beliefs about the content and structure of the persuasive text type are set and the findings show considerable persistence in ensuring each student's whiteboard resembled her intention. The final text produced in writing books (copied from their whiteboard) is heavily scaffolded and even edited by Kath so that it contains the required structure.

Reflections on the two writing experiences

The pedagogies observed in these lessons were strongly teacher led, whole class explicit teaching experiences focused on skill development and replication that drew heavily on teacher content knowledge, specific resources (contrived texts) and pre-planned interactions between teacher and student. While the importance of explicit instruction is well established (e.g. Hill, 2010; Roth & Guinee, 2011), also key to developing writing repertoires is authenticity in the task (Scull et al., 2013;

Silvers et al., 2010), opportunities for connecting to personal experiences (Myers & Kroeger, 2011), and extended writing time (Honig, 2010). The students' activity during the lessons was observed to be compliant and genial as they engaged with the teacher-led interactions and teacher-selected resources in an effort to meet the set criteria. Important insights can be gained by reflecting on teacher and student perspectives in these cases in connection with the research question – *How do teachers activate their beliefs and knowledge about writing as they shape pedagogical interactions and use of resources during writing time?*

Teacher knowledge and beliefs influence classroom pedagogies

The teachers' decisions in this study shaped the pedagogical interactions, the time structures, use of space and of resources in the writing lessons. The *interactions* in these lessons were characterised by high levels of teacher control (Bernstein, 1975) that limited fluidity of exchanges between and among classroom members because teacher feedback was critical to progression through the lessons. Using the confined floor *space* allowed teachers to closely monitor and track the learning. Much of the lesson *time* was spent in the Expose phase, where collaboration between students could be expected. However, this is where both teachers struggled as each lesson's purpose broadened, the concepts became more complex, and they grappled with the demand to develop student knowledge about the relationships between meaning, form and function (Myhill & Newman, 2016). The *resources* – fundamental to any learning experience (Kervin, Danby & Mantei, 2019; Lynch & Redpath, 2014)– were limited and limiting for the students, and in many ways their inadequacies contributed to the direction of each lesson.

The writing demands evident in these lessons were quite different, not necessarily aligned to curriculum expectations, but very much aligned with teacher expertise. The movements within the lessons, particularly during the Expose phase, show how intent does not necessarily align with activity (nor accuracy in content knowledge). The design and facilitation of these lessons required deep teacher content and pedagogical knowledge so that students could develop their own repertoires for persuasion through critical thinking about language choices and text structures that could engage and influence their readers. But each teacher's actual content knowledge became unclear as their pedagogic moves were constrained by variables such as the quality of the resources selected as exemplars, and the expectations related to working within their school and the broader schooling system.

Targeted professional development influences classroom pedagogies

When teachers have limited opportunities for professional development that builds substantial content and pedagogical knowledge, they lack expertise to facilitate logical and supportive lessons that generate increasingly sophisticated understandings (Myhill & Newman, 2016). This creates at least two problems:

- For students, the message becomes confused and confusing as the teacher attempts to maintain a teaching focus that is not necessarily fully thought through.
- For the teacher, it is frustrating and demoralising because they are working with limited knowledge and restrictive resources that don't do what they promise. The teacher is left not knowing how to help their students to sort their confusions, or to extend their understanding.

Without support that develops the considerable expertise required in both content and pedagogy, the teacher and the teaching is limited. We know that professional development needs to be student-outcomes centred, ongoing, collaborative and focused on developing teacher content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Howell et al., 2017). For the teachers in our study, Milly and Kath's mentoring relationship was insufficient in meeting either of their needs. Like the participants in Howell and colleagues' (2017) study, it seems they would benefit from expertise external to their relationship where ongoing feedback and reflection could have facilitated the development of deeper knowledge. For example, opportunities to build their existing content knowledge about the elements of writing (in this case, knowledge about language for Milly and text structures for Kath) could have given both teachers greater confidence to embrace pedagogies that allow freer interactions for collaboration and creativity between and among teacher and students within which the explicit teaching of selected skills could have been embedded.

We also know that resources are only effective when they offer opportunities for creative thinking and a range of solutions in connection with a clear pedagogical intent. Co-constructed resources that directly relate to the knowledge, experiences and purposes for writing will always be more supportive of this type of work (Dyson, 2010). A single resource rarely meets the needs of all students, and it rarely captures the complex nuances of a text. 'Quick fix' recipe style lessons with pre-made resources that contrive the complexity of text into simplified versions prevent teachers from exploring and teaching about real writing. It is little

wonder students struggle with writing demands when a resource is limited in meeting their needs, or when their teachers lack the content knowledge to critique them.

It is through professional development in content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge that teachers can become more confident and discerning in their critique and selection of a range of resources (Kervin, et al., 2019; Mantei & Kervin, 2018). Professional development that challenges and broadens existing concepts of writing can support teachers to harness more comprehensive exemplars from which students can learn about all of the elements of writing within the context of creating unique and powerful texts.

In conclusion

The cases of Kath and Milly provide a unique opportunity to examine the ways two teachers activated their knowledge to teach the same writing topic with the common purpose of persuasion. There is no doubt these teachers are working hard with the best of intentions for their learners. It is unfortunate that they have not had the ongoing expert-driven content focused professional development they need to deepen their knowledge for building students' increasingly sophisticated understandings about writing.

But we must also consider the student experience, especially when we remember that the lessons were designed to meet different year level outcomes and a core group of students were present for both. Our call for future research focuses on student learning: What are writing experiences like for students learning to write? How are their interests, skills and abilities being developed? And how might teachers be better supported to meet these needs?

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