DYSLEXIA A_gk.qxd 25/11/08 11:44 Page 94

Wray, D. (2009) 'Extending Literacy Skills – Issues for Practice',
in Reid, G., Elbeheri, G., Knight, D., Everett, J., & Wearmouth, J. (Eds.)
The Routledge Companion to Dyslexia London: Routledge. pp. 94-112

8

Extending Literacy Skills

Issues for Practice

David Wray

This chapter is about:

- emphasises the need to think about extending literacy skills as well as developing basic literacy skills.
- looks at the nature of extended literacy skills.
- discusses some classroom strategies for teaching such skills.
- considers some common features of the effective teaching of these skills.

Introduction

The standard of literacy achieved by primary school children, in particular in reading, is an issue which attracts perennial media and professional attention. Current media reports in the UK (e.g. Curtis, 2008) draw attention to the fact that, in England around 20 per cent of children emerge from their primary school experience without the basic levels of attainment expected of them in literacy. This is in spite of a 10-year intensive focus on literacy teaching by the UK government, and what is termed 'the stubborn 20 per cent' are apparently resistant to the huge amount of effort and resource which has been poured into primary literacy teaching over this 10-year period. Interestingly, however, the bulk of the attention given to literacy teaching in the past few years, in the UK and in other countries, has been on initial literacy skills (currently, in many countries, the focus is on the teaching of reading through systematic, synthetic, phonics programmes). Yet the achievement scores which draw the attention tend to be those of 11- year-old children, at the conclusion of their primary or elementary school experience. It might be considered that, by the age of 11, attention in literacy might not be best placed simply on initial skills, but rather on the uses to which these skills are put in terms of wider learning, and on the nature of the skills that learners need to cope with the diversifying curriculum of the later primary years and of secondary schooling. Yet such 'extended literacy skills' have always, it seems, received less attention, in the literature as well as in classrooms, than initial literacy skills.

Concern about this area is not new. In their 1978 survey of primary schools in England (DES, 1978), Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) found "little evidence that more advanced reading skills were being taught" (para. 5.30). Their 1990 report on the teaching of reading in English primary schools made almost the identical statement.

DYSLEXIA A_gk.qxd 25/11/08 11:44 Page 95

Relating to the teaching of writing, the 1978 HMI report's comments again raised important issues in its identification of the lack of range of writing set by upper primary school teachers (para. 5.36) and the extensive use of copying rather than original composition (para. 5.33). Work in Australia (Martin, 1985; Littlefair, 1991) was suggesting that much more attention needed to be given to the issue of genre in children's reading and writing, and that there was a body of linguistic knowledge with which teachers needed to familiarise themselves if they were successfully to help children cope with the reading and writing demands of schooling and of the world beyond school.

Responding to these concerns, we began, in 1992, a major programme of research and curriculum development in the area of extending literacy skills (the EXEL project). The outcomes of this project (Wray and Lewis, 1997: Lewis and Wray, 1995) had a major impact on the 1998 National Literacy Strategy, implemented in England by an incoming government intent on making education one of its main priorities. Our main thrusts were, first, an emphasis upon strategies for developing comprehension in reading, especially of non-fiction texts, and, second, the development of pedagogic practices in extending and developing writing, again especially of non-fiction. For a few years, our two best known outcomes (an approach to developing extending literacy dubbed the EXIT (extending interactions with texts) model, and an approach to scaffolding children's writing through the use of 'writing frames') were widely used in both primary and secondary schools throughout the UK.

Times change, however, and the emphasis today in literacy teaching is very much back once again on initial skills. Yet this does not mean that the need to extend literacy skills has gone away. On the contrary, I would argue that it is precisely an over-emphasis on initial skills which might actually create some of the literacy problems that teachers later have to deal with. We know that, for many children, the problem they have with literacy is related more to their engagement with it (or lack of) than it is to their potential to learn the requisite skills (Baker *et al.*, 2000). One thing which is potentially extremely engaging for children (particularly the boys, whose literacy achievement always seems to lag behind that of the girls) is using literacy to engage with a whole series of interesting facts and ideas – in other words the use of literacy to encounter, react to and record "the stuff of the world", as Arthur Eddington termed it. Extending literacy is essential, therefore, partly because it is a crucial way (and maybe for some the only way) of giving children an insight into what literacy is good for. It is also, of course, functionally essential, since the reading and writing that most of us do every day tends to be done in order to get something done. Reading our newspapers, our information manuals, our market reports, our computer screens and writing our notes, our letters of application, our complaints, our reports – all of these are vital to our working lives and they all require a lot more than simply a knowledge of phonics to accomplish.

There is an imperative, therefore, for us to ensure that children are taught literacy beyond the basic skills. It may even be the case that a focus on extending literacy skills is something that might enable children who struggle with basic literacy to engage with it in real purposeful ways. I hope to give some examples of this later in the chapter.

My aims in this chapter are first to explore the nature of what we might term 'extended literacy skills' and second to draw out some principles for the teaching of such skills. I will try to achieve these aims through a presentation and analysis of some of the encounters with extended literacy that we observed during our EXEL project research. The chapter is centred around four classroom episodes, or cameos, each involving primary school children with some significant difficulties in basic literacy. I will try to show through these cameos that these literacy difficulties were not a bar to the exercise of extended literacy – they simply required some thoughtful and effective teaching.

DYSLEXIA A_gk.qxd 25/11/08 11:44 Page 96

Cameo 1: Zoe and the dolphins

Zoe is a 10-year-old with some reading problems. Her learning support teacher works individually with her for three lessons a week. On this occasion, the teacher arrives in the classroom to find that Zoe, along with the rest of the class, has been asked to 'find out about whales'. The child is working diligently. The outcome of her 'research' is the writing given in Figure 8.1.

She cannot read this work back to her support teacher and has only the vaguest understanding of what she has written. Of course, we all recognise what has happened. Zoe has copied, word for word, from a book. Why is this? Our research (Wray and Lewis, 1992) has suggested that most children are aware that they should not copy directly from books. Many can give sound educational reasons for this (e.g. "you learn more if you put it in your own words"), and yet they continue to do so. There appear to be several reasons underlying this but figuring largely amongst them must be the nature of the task the child has been given to do and the type of text with which they are asked to engage when reading for information.

Into The Blue
Of the thirty-odd spec ies of oceanic Dolphins
none makes a more striking entrance
stenella attenuata the spotted dolphin.
Under water spotted dolphins first appear
as white dots against the Blue. The
beaks of the adults are white
- tipped and distinctive blaze
viewed head-on makes a perfect
circle. When the vanguard of School
is "echolocating" on you - examining
you soncally - the beaks all swing
your way and each circular blaze
reflects light before any of the rest
of the animal dose. you see spots
Befor your eyes.

The word Bredanensis cames from
the name of the artist van Bra who
drew a portrate of the type spiee
wich was stranded a Brest
on the Brittany cost of france in 1823
the steno is in honour of the celebrated
seventeenth - century Danish anatomist
Prnilsolans steno.

Figure 8.1 Zoe's original dolphin writing

DYSLEXIA A_gk.qxd 25/11/08 11:44 Page 97

The purpose for 'finding out' may not be clear to the child and how to begin to 'find out' may seem difficult and daunting. Having located a book on the required topic the child might still find the text difficult to deal with. Children in primary classrooms tend to lack experience of the different genres of non-fiction and their organizational structures (Winograd and Bridge, 1986; Littlefair, 1991). They find the linguistic features (vocabulary, connectives, cohesion, register) more difficult to comprehend than those of the more familiar narrative texts (Halliday and Hasan, 1976; Perera, 1984; Anderson and Armbruster, 1981; Littlefair, 1991) and this textual inexperience affects their writing of non-fiction as well as their reading. In the case of Zoe, the problem was further compounded by the child's poor literacy skills (relative to her age). Her diligent copying was the only strategy she had for coping with the demands of the task.

Zoe's support teacher has been working with the EXEL project and she decided to introduce Zoe to a different way of approaching her task. At the end of their hour together Zoe had produced a different piece of writing about dolphins (see Figure 8.2).

How thay live.
Dolphins live in familys and oftern there is
about 7 in a family. There would Be about
3 femails in one family But only one
famail.

Dolphin live for about 25 years
But pillot wales can live for 50
years. Killer whales have Been known
to live longer.

Sometimes Dolphins get whashed
onto the Beach which means that
there Bodys get hot and
unless thay are helped Back
into the water thay Shall Die
even if thay are helped thay
make there way Back to
help other Dolphins. Thay make
there way Back to help Because
thay hear the Distresing cry
of other Dolphins. We Donot
know Why thay Do this.

Figure 8.2 Zoe's final dolphin writing

DYSLEXIA A_gk.qxd 25/11/08 11:44 Page 98

Let us examine how this support teacher moved Zoe on from passive copying to undertaking her own research.

The first step was to close Zoe's library book. Zoe was then taken through two of the stages in our EXIT model (see Wray and Lewis (1997) for a full description of this) and taught strategies to help her use these stages before she returned to looking for information in books. These stages were:

- activating prior knowledge
- establishing purposes.

There is considerable research underpinning each of these mental activities.

Activating Prior Knowledge (what do I know?)

There is a great deal of research which indicates the importance of children's prior knowledge in their understanding of new knowledge (e.g. Anderson and Pearson, 1984; Keene and Zimmerman, 2007)). Furthermore it appears to be important that this prior knowledge needs to be brought to the forefront of the learner's mind, that is, made explicit, if it is to be useful (Bransford, 1983). Schema theory suggests that our brains are not a random ragbag of knowledge but that knowledge is structured and categorised into schema, organised cognitive 'maps' of the parts of the world we know about. The concepts that constitute a schema can be said to 'provide slots that can be instantiated with specific information' (Wilson and Anderson, 1986). When we encounter new knowledge we incorporate it into our existing schema either by accretion (adding detail to the map) or restructuring (altering the map to fit the new information). If we have already activated our prior knowledge (schema) we are more ready to deal with new knowledge.

Many teachers already use discussion to activate prior knowledge, but research has shown that this can be an ineffective way of enhancing comprehension unless it is undertaken carefully (Alvermann *et al.*, 1987). If prior knowledge is to be made explicit, it may be helpful to record it in some way. This has the added advantage of giving the teacher some record of the child's knowledge and, importantly, access to gaps in that knowledge and any misconceptions the child may hold.

The KWL grid was developed as a teaching strategy in the USA (Ogle, 1986, 1989) and is a simple but effective strategy which both takes children through the steps of the research process and also records their learning. It gives children a logical structure for tackling research tasks in many areas of the curriculum and it is this combination of a simple but logical support scaffolding that seems to be so useful to children with learning difficulties. A KWL grid consists of three columns (see Figure 8.3).

What do I KNOW about this already?	What do I WANT to know?	What did I LEARN

Figure 8.3 KWL grid

DYSLEXIA A_gk.qxd 25/11/08 11:44 Page 99

Zoe's support teacher introduced her to the strategy by drawing a KWL as three columns in Zoe's jotter. She then asked Zoe what she already knew about whales and acted as a scribe to record Zoe's responses. What Zoe knew can be seen in the K column of Figure 8.4. In the introductory stages of teaching the strategy, as for most new strategies and skills, teacher modelling is very important. Only when the child is thoroughly familiar with the strategy should they be encouraged to attempt it independently.

Not only does the activation of prior knowledge have a vital role to play in helping Zoe comprehend the texts she was to read, but it also gave her an active personal engagement in the topic right from the beginning. By asking her what she knew, her self-esteem and sense of 'ownership' of knowledge was enhanced instead of her being faced instantly with the (for her) negative experience of tackling a text without knowing quite how she was to make sense of it.

The discussion between Zoe and her teacher was crucial at this stage and the activation of prior knowledge should always be an active social process. Some times we do not actually know what we know until it is triggered for us by discussion. This discussion could, of course, also take place in partnership with another child or in groups with other children rather than with a teacher.

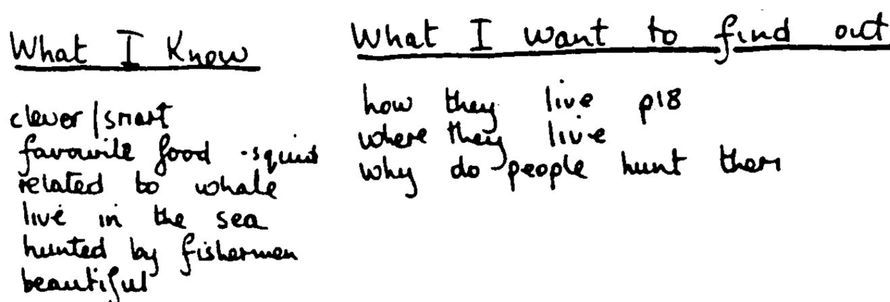


Figure 8.4 Zoe's KWL grid

Establishing purposes (what do I want to know?)

The next stage helps focus the subsequent research. The usual formulation of the task, as in 'find out about', is far too broad to be useful and can be read as requiring enough information to fill a postcard or to fill a book. Discussing and recording what she already knew was enough to generate further questions for Zoe – questions which she would be interested in researching. These were again scribed by the teacher (see the L column of Figure 8.4). It is tempting here to talk about giving the child some ownership of the work she is to undertake.

It might sometimes be necessary for the teacher to set questions at this stage. If, for example, there was incorrect information in the 'what I know' column then the teacher would wish to direct a question to lead to further investigation in that area. There may be content details that the teacher regards as vital to include and these could form the focus of questions. There is the opportunity at this stage for the teacher to intervene as little or as much as their professional judgement deems appropriate.

On this occasion Zoe and her teacher decided to focus on just one question (they had only one hour together) and she was encouraged to brainstorm around her 'How do they live?' question. Again her teacher scribed and the resultant concept map can be seen in Figure 8.5.

DYSLEXIA A_gk.qxd 25/11/08 11:44 Page 100

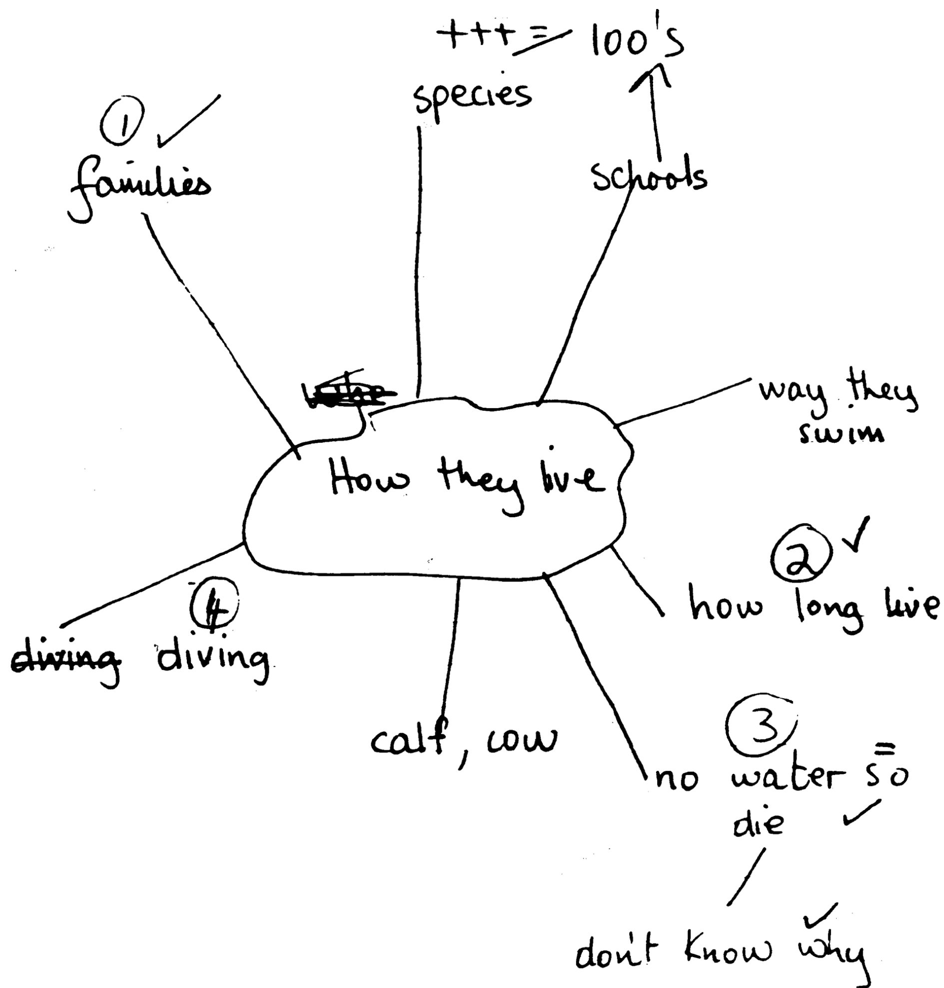


Figure 8.5 Zoe's concept map

The sub-questions generated by this procedure were numbered to keep the process clear and manageable and at this point Zoe was ready to return to her library books to try to find the answers to her questions. Now Zoe also had key words which she could use to search the index and list of contents, etc. Sometimes her teacher wrote the word on a piece of card for her so that she could run it down the index/page and match the word. This gave her practice in scanning. We can see from the writing she had completed by the end of the session (Figure 8.2) that she was working her way logically through the questions (she had completed 1 and 2) and not only had she learnt something about dolphins but she had also had a powerful lesson on how to begin research.

Cameo 2: James and the Ancient Greeks

Perhaps the effectiveness of making such strategies as the KWL accessible to less able children can be judged by whether the children, having been introduced to it by their support teacher,

DYSLEXIA A_gk.qxd 25/11/08 11:44 Page 101

choose to use it spontaneously when their support teacher is not with them. Baker and Brown (1984) have suggested that students do not gain any long term benefits from study strategies until they start to incorporate these strategies spontanteously for themselves, signalling that they understand how and why they work.

An example of this happening is the case of James. He, like Zoe, was introduced to the two process stages and the use of KWL by his support teacher. This time the context was some work on the topic of Ancient Greece. Notice how his listing of what he knows (Figure 8.6) also enables his teacher to see his misconceptions (medals were not given at the Olympic Games in Ancient Greece) as well as things he does know. His KWL grid, scribed by his teacher, then acted as the basis for his subsequent writing on the topic (see Figure 8.7) which was a very extensive piece of work for James.

The Olympics Long Ago

What I Know	What I want to find out	what I learnt and need to learn
Greece ✓	1 when it started + why	
No clothes	2 Where in Greece	
No women	3 How many countries	
Medals ? ✓	4 Prizes	
	5 Kinds of ~~races~~ things they did events	
	6 Did they have medals	

1. 776 B.C started because temple to Go Zeus and an athletic festival, became the Olympic Games
2 City of Olympia
34 Gold crowns, money, jars of olive oil
5. Boxing, racing, long jump, javelin disc throwing wrestling, chariot racing, racing wearing armour 200 metre sprint 2500 metre race
6.x No medals

3 - Only Greece

Figure 8.6 James' KWL about the Ancient Greek Olympic Games

DYSLEXIA A_gk.qxd 25/11/08 11:44 Page 102

James core

The olympics Long ago

It started a long time ago. It started in 776 B.C Greece. because there was a temple of Goods Zeus and an athletic festival that became the olympic Games. only Greece take plays in the olympic Games. The prizes they had where Gold crowns, mony: jars of olive oil. the events that toke plase where Boxing, racing, long jump, javelin disc throwing wrestling, chariot race wearing racing armour 200 metre sprint 2500 metre race.

summer 1896–1984 winter 1904–1988

	Gold	Silver	Brons
U.S.A	750	575	478
U.S.S.R	408	340	303
G.B	175	216	207
Germany	170	215	203

Figure 8.7 James' writing about the Ancient Greek Olympic Games

James had obviously found the strategy useful because the following week his support teacher returned to find that he had spontaneously used it again in his next piece of topic work. This time the class was finding out about the home life of Athenians. James had drawn three columns in his jotter and although he hadn't labelled them – why give yourself extra writing if writing is a problem? – he had used the middle column to set himself four questions and was ticking these off as he gathered the information to answer them (see Figure 8.8). His subsequent writing indicates how the questions may also have suggested the structure of the finished piece (Figure 8.9)

Cameo 3: Kim and the cress seeds

One of the major issues which has been identified in terms of children's writing of non-fiction (Wray and Lewis, 1997) is the tendency to write in recount style when another form of writing

DYSLEXIA A_gk.qxd 25/11/08 11:44 Page 103

Figure 8.8
James' questions about Ancient Greek home life

the way they live.

what they eat out of.

what they ate.

the close they where.

Everyday life.

The greek homes where built with bricks and mud. The Greeks eat out of bowls. Girls where not allowowed out of the houes very often the womon where never at dinner unles it was a family party they spend there time at a womons party. The close they wore were tunics many of the women wore tunics called chitons

Figure 8.9 James' writing about Ancient Greek home life

DYSLEXIA A_gk.qxd 25/11/08 11:44 Page 104

might help them achieve their purpose more effectively. This was a major claim of the group of Australian researchers who became known as 'genre theorists' (e.g. Kress, 1988; Johns, 2001). The writing of 6-year-old Kim (Figure 8.10) is a very good example of this. Having planted some cress seeds in class, Kim had made her own packet of cress seeds in order to take some seeds home to sow for herself. She had looked at some examples of seed packets and discussed the kind of information that was written on the back of these and the ways in which it was written. However, on her own packet she wrote a straightforward recount of the planting activity she had just completed. The inclusion of other factual information shows she had

Figure 8.10 Kim's original instructions for planting cress seeds

DYSLEXIA A_gk.qxd 25/11/08 11:44 Page 105

studied the backs of the seeds packets carefully but she had not adopted the most appropriate written form for conveying sowing instructions.

In this case Kim had been asked to write the instructions she would need to follow when she took the seeds home. It would seem that Kim had failed to recognise the appropriate generic form (procedural) that would have made her writing more effective in achieving its aim of giving directions for planting. She is not alone in this. Most teachers will recognise occasions when children write a recount of what they did rather than offer an explanation or give instructions or write a report. This response springs from the well established, well-understood and important tradition of offering children 'real experiences' and then asking them to write about them. Such a request invites a personal retelling. It is of course very important that children write in this way but we also need to encourage children to move from always giving a personal recount to the more formal and abstract writing demanded to write a report, an explanation, a procedure, an argument and a discussion.

Kim's teacher responded to her inappropriate genre use by offering a more structured approach to the writing. She presented Kim with a writing grid to encourage awareness of the structure of the text Kim was trying to write. She also did some direct modelling of language form by dictating the first few words of the 'How to sow' section of the grid – "get a plate". With these two forms of support, Kim was then able to go on to produce the text shown in Figure 8.11, which is clearly much more like instructional writing than was her first attempt.

Cameo 4: Scott and the Egyptians

As we have seen, some children appear to find non-fiction writing problematic compared to writing narrative. Children, it is claimed, lack experience of the different genres of non-fiction and their organizational structures (Winograd and Bridge, 1986; Littlefair, 1991). They find the linguistic features (vocabulary, connectives, cohesion, register) more difficult to comprehend and write than those of the more familiar narrative texts (Halliday and Hasan, 1976; Perera, 1984; Anderson and Armbruster, 1981). This textual inexperience affects their writing (Gallagher, 2000). One of the main strategies we have developed to support the writing of such children is the scaffolding technique known as the writing frame.

A writing frame consists of a skeleton outline to scaffold children's non-fiction writing. The skeleton framework consists of different key words or phrases, according to the particular generic form. The template of starters, connectives and sentence modifiers which constitute a writing frame gives children a structure within which they can concentrate on communicating what they want to say, rather than getting lost in the form. However, by using the form, children become increasingly familiar with it.

With some children, a writing frame not only helps them write in an appropriate forms and style, it helps them write, full stop. In addition to the problem of knowing about writing structures, we have identified three other problems in writing which are significant for many children, especially those with learning difficulties.

a) The blank page

Most writers will agree that the most difficult part of writing is the first line or two. Getting started can be so difficult, even for experienced writers, that they invent a number of 'delaying tactics' (sharpening pencils, making coffee, etc.) to put off the awful moment. A blank page can be very daunting and for many less experienced writers it can result in abandoning the writing task.

DYSLEXIA A_gk.qxd 25/11/08 11:44 Page 106

When to sow	any time in the year
Where to sow	inside
How to sow	get a Plate, Three tissues, a Jug of water and seeds. fold Tissues in half ontop of each over Put on the Plate and Put on water. sprinckle seeds on. cover with Paper when it is acm long take Paper off and when it is ready cut off.
When to eat	When it is about 5cm high. it takes about 6 days

Figure 8.11 Kim's final instructions for planting cress seeds

DYSLEXIA A_gk.qxd 25/11/08 11:44 Page 107

b) Writing and talking

When talking to another person, the language user receives constant support for his/her language. In a dialogue one person says something, prompting the other person to say something, which in turn prompts the first person to reply, and so on. Talkers receive continual prompts for their language. Writers, on the other hand, get no such prompts. They are alone, forced to produce language without support from another.

c) The 'and then' syndrome

Inexperienced writers tend to have a limited range of ways of joining together ideas in writing. Most teachers will recognise this by the prevalence of 'and then' in their pupil's writing, as if this were the only way of linking ideas. Young writers need support to broaden their range of connectives.

Nine year old Scott was a writer just like those we have described. When asked to write, his response would usually be active avoidance. Writing was clearly a chore for him, and it was rare that he would produce more than a line or two in response to any request to compose.

On this occasion, however, something different happened. Scott's class had watched a video about the Ancient Egyptians. This time, instead of asking Scott to write his responses to the video on a blank sheet of paper, the teacher gave him a writing frame to guide him. The frame she used was the following:

Before I began this topic I thought that
But when I read about it I found out that
I also learnt that
Furthermore I learnt that
Finally I learnt that

As well as simply presenting Scott with the writing frame, the teacher also, and this is important, began by talking him though the sequence of sentence starters, and discussing together the kinds of things he might write in response to each. His final piece of writing can be seen in Figure 8.12. Without personal knowledge of Scott it is difficult to realise how significant this piece of writing was to him. He was asked to read it aloud to his classmates, who responded with spontaneous applause. Perhaps for the first time in his school career so far, Scott saw himself as a successful writer.

Features of effective teaching

The four cameos just described have a number of elements in common, which, I would argue, are characteristic of effective teaching, particularly of children with learning difficulties. These can briefly be summarised as:

1 Engaging content
2 Teacher modelling
3 Scaffolding
4 Expectation of success

I will try to unpick each of these features a little more.

DYSLEXIA A_gk.qxd 25/11/08 11:44 Page 108

Before I began this topic I thought that

But when I read about it I found out that

I also learnt that

Furthermore I learnt that

Finally I learnt that

Figure 8.12 Scott's framed writing

Crib sheet

Before I began this topic I thought that I didn't know nothing.

But when I read about it I found out that the river Nile flooded for three seasons.

I also learnt that the mummies go in boxes.

Furthermore I learnt that the Egyptian people used to wear masks.

Finally I learnt that

DYSLEXIA A_gk.qxd 25/11/08 11:44 Page 109

Engaging content

In each of the cameos, the material which formed the focus of the reading and writing shown by these children was interesting in its own right. It concerned aspects of the world which the children would have wanted to explore even had they not been within a classroom context. It was relatively easy to engage them with the content about which they were reading and writing, because that content was intrinsically engaging.

One of the main findings to emerge from research into reading achievement has been that engaged readers tend to be achieving readers (Baker *et al.*, 2000). This link is not surprising at all – most adults can think of activities that engage them, and at which they make much more effort. And the opposite is also true. I find gardening rather an uninteresting activity. Consequently the garden at my house would never be assessed as of high quality. I don't enjoy the activity enough to do much of it. This is not too serious for me (except when neighbours begin to comment adversely about the unkempt nature of my garden), but if I were to substitute reading or literacy in the above statements, the significance of engagement becomes much greater. Children who are not engaged are reluctant to take part in these activities: because they avoid taking part they do not get the levels of practice which might help them improve; because they do not improve, they carry on struggling. The only way to break into this vicious circle is to try to ensure that children do find the reading activities they are asked to participate in engaging. The ability to do this is a strong characteristic of effective teachers. As Baker *et al.* (2000) put it: "children in the classrooms of outstanding teachers experience classroom environments that facilitate intense literacy engagement" (p. 12).

Teacher modelling

Another feature of the cameos described above is the role the teacher takes within them. Zoe, James, Kim and Scott each experienced a teacher who not only told them what they had to do but also joined in and did it with them. By doing this, the teacher not only offered each child support, but she also provided them with a direct model of how to act like an expert in reading and writing.

What these teachers were doing was teaching in a very similar way to what Palincsar and Brown (1984) described as 'reciprocal teaching'. This teaching procedure is based upon the twin ideas of 'expert scaffolding' and what Palincsar and Brown refer to as 'proleptic' teaching: that is, teaching in anticipation of competence (Oczkus, 2006). This model arises from the ideas of Vygotsky (1978), who put forward the notion that children first experience a particular cognitive activity in collaboration with expert practitioners. The child is first a spectator as the majority of the cognitive work is done by the expert (parent or teacher), then a novice as he/she starts to take over some of the work under the close supervision of the expert. As the child grows in experience and capability of performing the task, the expert passes over greater and greater responsibility but still acts as a guide, assisting the child at problematic points. Eventually, the child assumes full responsibility for the task with the expert still present in the role of a supportive audience. Using this approach to teaching, children learn about the task at their own pace, joining in only at a level at which they are capable – or perhaps a little beyond this level so that the task continually provides sufficient challenge to be interesting. The approach is often referred to as an apprenticeship approach, and there is a substantial research literature which suggests it is a very effective means of developing skills (see Braunger *et al.* (2004) for applications of the apprenticeship approach to extending literacy).

DYSLEXIA A_gk.qxd 25/11/08 11:44 Page 110

Scaffolding

An essential corollary to teacher modelling is the concept of scaffolding. The modelling of an activity or skill by an expert practitioner (teacher) is a crucial element in successful teaching and learning, but by itself it does not guarantee that the learner takes over the activity independently. What is needed is an intervening period in which the learner can be offered support but in which this support, is gradually reduced as independence is gained.

Lawson (2002) describes scaffolding as 'a process by which a teacher provides students with a temporary framework for learning. Done correctly, such structuring encourages a student to develop his or her own initiative, motivation and resourcefulness. Once students build knowledge and develop skills on their own, elements of the framework are dismantled. Eventually, the initial scaffolding is removed altogether; students no longer need it.'

In the cameos described above, both the KWL grids and the writing frames used were forms of scaffolding. These devices acted to support the children in their literacy activities, making it possible that each child could achieve more than he/she would have done without the support. In our work on the Exel project (Wray and Lewis, 1997), we have always made the point strongly that scaffolding devices such as writing frames are not intended to be static teaching supports. We have argued that the use of a writing frame should always begin with discussion and teacher modelling before moving on to joint construction (teacher and learner(s) together) and then to the child undertaking writing supported by the frame. This oral–teacher–modelling, joint construction pattern of teaching is vital for it not only models the generic form and teaches the words that signal connections and transitions but it also provides opportunities for developing children's oral language and their thinking. Some students, especially those with learning difficulties may need many oral sessions and sessions in which their teacher acts as a scribe before they are ready to attempt their own writing.

Later, when children are becoming familiar with the writing structures with which frames provide them, the teacher needs to begin deliberately to 'wean them off' the frames. At this stage, when children begin to show evidence of independent usage, the teacher may need only to have a master copy of the frames available as help cards for those occasions when children need a prompt. A box of such help cards could be a part of the writing area in which children are encouraged to refer to many different aids to their writing. Such a support fits with the general 'procedural facilitation' strategy for students' writing suggested by Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987). It also seems to be a way into encouraging children to begin to make independent decisions about their own learning.

Expectation of success

The final common feature of all the cameos described is that in every case the teacher made her interactions with each child in the confident expectation that a successful outcome would result. Beginning with *Pygmalion in the Classroom* (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968), an extensive body of research has described how teachers' expectations can influence their learners' performance. While it would be misleading to state that teacher expectations determine a child's success, the research clearly establishes that teacher expectations do play a significant role in determining how well and how much children learn.

For all four of the children described in these cameos, it would have been almost forgivable for their teachers to have fairly low expectations about their likely success. Yet in each case, the teacher not only expected success to come, she also put in sufficient support to ensure it did. Such a positive approach to children with learning difficulties seems essential if these difficulties are ever to be overcome.

DYSLEXIA A_gk.qxd 25/11/08 11:44 Page 111

Conclusion

I have tried in this chapter to do a number of things. My main aim has been to make, and exemplify, the case that children with literacy difficulties do not always just need more initial literacy teaching – they need this literacy extending, that is, they need guided opportunities to use and apply their literacy to achieve something which both they and their teachers consider worthwhile. Literacy in itself is not much use: it is what it enables you to do that is the crucial thing.

I have also tried, through the classroom episodes I have presented, to elaborate a little on the nature of extended literacy skills, and, along the way, to present some classroom strategies for teaching such skills. Finally I have tried to unpick some common features in the effective teaching of these skills.

References

Alvermann, D., O'Brien, D. and Dillon, D. (1987) *Using Discussion to Promote Reading Comprehension*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association

Anderson, R.C. and Pearson, P.D. (1984) 'A schema-theoretical view of basic processes in reading comprehension' in P.D. Pearson (ed.) *Handbook of Reading Research*. New York: Longman.

Anderson, T.H. and Armbruster, B.B. (1981) *Content Area Textbooks*. (Reading Education Report no. 24). University of Illinois: Center for the Study of Reading.

Baker, L. and Brown, A. (1984) 'Metacognitive skills and reading', in D. Pearson (ed.) *Handbook of Reading Research*. New York: Longman

Baker, J., Dreher, M. and Guthrie, J. (2000) *Engaging Young Readers*. New York: Guilford

Bereiter, C. and Scardamalia, M. (1987) *The Psychology of Written Composition*. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Bransford, J. (1983) 'Schema Activation – Schema Acquisition.' in R.C. Anderson, J. Osborn and R.J. Tierney (eds) *Learning to Read in American Schools*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Braunger, J., Donahue, D., Evans, K. and Galguera, T. (2004) *Rethinking Preparation for Content Area Teaching: The Reading Apprenticeship Approach*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Curtis, P. (2008) 'Education: Primary pupils without basic skills highlight Labour's biggest failure, says schools minister', *Guardian*, Thursday 21 August (http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/aug/21/primaryschools.earlyyearseducation).

Department of Education and Science (DES) (1978) *Primary Education in England*. London: HMSO.

Gallagher, C. (2000) 'Writing across genres', *The Language Teacher*, 24 (7), 14.

Halliday, M.A.K. and Hasan, R. (1976) *Cohesion in English*. London: Longman.

Johns, A. (2001) (Ed.) *Genre in the Classroom: Multiple Perspectives*. London: Routledge.

Keene, E. and Zimmerman, S. (2007) *Mosaic of Thought: The Power of Comprehension Strategy Instruction*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Kress, G. (1988) *Communication and Culture: An Introduction*. Kensington, NSW: New South Wales University Press.

Lawson, L. (2002) 'Scaffolding as a Teaching Strategy', paper available on the *Scaffolding Website*, http://condor.admin.ccny.cuny.edu/~group4/, accessed 14 July 2008.

Lewis, M. and Wray, D. (1995) *Developing Children's Non-fiction Writing*. Leamington Spa: Scholastic.

Littlefair, A. (1991) *Reading all Types of Writing* Milton Keynes. Open University Press.

Martin, J. (1985) *Factual Writing: Exploring and Challenging Social Reality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Oczkus, L. (2006) *Reciprocal Teaching at Work*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Ogle, D.M. (1989) 'The Know, Want to Know, Learn strategy' in K.D. Muth (ed.) *Children's Comprehension of Text*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

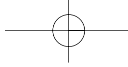
Ogle, D.M. (1986) 'A teaching model that develops active reading of expository text'. *The Reading Teacher*, 39 (6), 564–571.

Palincsar, A. and Brown, A. (1984) 'Reciprocal teaching of comprehension-fostering and comprehension-monitoring activities', *Cognition and Instruction*, 1 (2), 117–175.

Perera, K. (1984) *Children's Reading and Writing*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Rosenthal, R. and Jacobson, L. (1968) *Pygmalion in the Classroom*. New York: Rinehart and Winston.

DYSLEXIA A_gk.qxd 25/11/08 11:44 Page 112



Vygotsky, L. (1978) *Mind in Society: The development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge MA.: Harvard University Press.

Wilson P.T. and Anderson R.C. (1986) 'What they don't know will hurt them: the role of Prior Knowledge in Comprehension' in J. Orasanu (ed.) *Reading Comprehension: from Research into Practice*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Winograd, P. and Bridge, C. (1986) 'The comprehension of important information in written prose' in J. Baumann (ed.) *Teaching Main Idea Comprehension*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Wray, D. and Lewis, M. (1992) 'Primary children's use of information books', *Reading*, 26 (3), 19–24.

Wray, D. and Lewis, M. (1997) *Extending Literacy: Reading and Writing Non-fiction in the Primary School*. London: Routledge.