

Section C I as creative educator

How does knowledge transformation manifest itself in my practice as a creative educator? How have I found connections between creative writer: creative educator roles?

Chapter Seven

Learning to change: knowledge transformation as educational process

My role as educator is to provide a rich environment that empowers learners to find and express their own voice.

This chapter illustrates the core value of **empowerment**. It aims to show how this value is realized, and fully embedded, within the educational process, and at the same time, how it connects and is congruent with my own experience of writing creatively and struggling with creative process, as described in Chapters Three to Six. The chapter also illustrates what *knowledge transformation* means in an educational context. It aims to trace the changes effected by learners when learning is taking place, and learner recognition of this through messages, diaries and evaluations.

These processes will be illustrated with reference to four narratives:

- 1) Transforming knowledge as an educator: steps on the journey
- 2) Finding a voice: developing creativity through criticality
- 3) Becoming visible: the process of turning personal classrooms into public statement: *Creative Poetry Writing* (Spiro 2004).
- 4) The neverending story: the process of planning, trialling and writing *Storybuilding* (Spiro 2007).

7.1 Transforming knowledge as an educator: steps on the journey

This section will illustrate stages in the journey towards empowering others through teaching. It will work with the broad notions of creativity explored in Chapter Three, and summarised by Pope (2005) as: “to make, do or become something fresh and valuable with respect to others as well as ourselves” (Pope, 2005: xvi). I am congruent here with my belief that creativity is teachable and the capacity of “the sane and healthy”, rather than the specially talented. The pedagogy in this chapter is also founded

on the belief that creative processes can be nurtured and developed, and that these processes need to take account of both inner drive, as well as fine-tuning to audience (Section 3.3). I am mindful that, for those who do not regard themselves as creative, this might be more accessibly expressed as a capacity to play - what Grainger calls “a kind of passionate and playful intensity with full cognitive and affective involvement” (Grainger, Gooch and Lambert 2005: 197). Boden describes two kinds of creativity - exploratory and transformational, or the owning, and then playing with, systems. Fostering this in learners means giving them “the chance not only to practise the relevant style of thinking, but also to analyse it, to play around with it, and even to transform certain aspects of it.” (Boden 2001: 96 – 98). It is this combination of understanding, analysing, playing, experimenting, and transforming ‘rules’ (poetic, linguistic and educational) that the examples below will illustrate.

My first post at Bedford College of Higher Education (1980 –1986) was one of multiple roles:

- teaching literature from O-level to BA Honours level
- teaching English as a foreign language to the international community in the area
- running a certificate programme for training teachers of English as a foreign language
- training volunteer English teachers for VSO, and setting up practice for them in language centres for newly arrived immigrant children

These roles were intended to be separate: in fact, before my arrival, had been performed by three different people. But from my early experience I began to experiment with ways of ‘crossing over’ between these categories. I recognised that each of these contexts yielded opportunities which I would like to offer within the other contexts too.

- the literature teaching gave my learners, from 16 to 70, the opportunity to engage with words, texts and images as expressions of human experience
- the EFL teaching gave my learners the opportunities to engage with and empathise with people from other cultures and world views

- the certificate programme gave learners the opportunity to make the transition from learning, to empowering others to learn
- the VSO programme gave learners the opportunity to prepare for travel, to anticipate and reflect on their imminent cultural displacement and acculturation

I was aware, subliminally at first, that these opportunities were less fully available, because of the expectations the learners brought to each class:

- the literature learners did not expect to engage with problems of personal and cultural identity, but only with texts and words
- the EFL learners did not expect to be given opportunities to *know* more than the teacher: they arrived vulnerable, with the expectation that they were there to receive, and not to give
- the trainee teachers, in preparing classrooms for effective learning, did not expect to be learners themselves
- the VSO trainee teachers expected to bring to their new classrooms a functional English that would serve instrumental purposes, and did not expect to make ‘use’ of their own experience of displacement and identity

This combination of experiences, opportunities and blocks became the melting pot from which much of my practice has since evolved. First tentatively, and then with increasing engagement in my task, I began to conquer the ‘blocks’ by evolving strategies for ‘crossing over’ from one context to the other.

- In the literature BA course, I evolved and then validated a new course in Cross-Cultural Literatures. In this course, we looked at poetry, story and testament from India, the Caribbean and Africa (Nigeria and Kenya). As the ‘crossover’ developed, I brought in poems from the language classes, letters and photos from my VSO teachers in these countries, and then my own artefacts too: and built into the assessment a ‘creative response’ in which the students ‘wrote back’ in any form they chose – poem, story, letter, with a commentary on their processes.

- In the EFL classes, I began to develop carefully controlled (and thus linguistically realistic) tasks by which the learners could share with me stories of their lives, their homes, how and why they came to be in Bedford, their journey here, what they had left behind, where their aspirations lay – here or there- and why. These tasks led to small texts or free poems: sometimes a single image, sometimes two sentences, sometimes a haiku-like poem. The lessons were not framed as ‘confessionals’: they were framed in the way learners expected – *present perfect*, *asking directions*, or *writing a recipe*: the activity itself sometimes lasted only five minutes, but they acquired an accumulative weight over a term. Added to their growing confidence in ‘speaking’, was the knowledge that, with their permission, their words and images were being shared with BA literature students, to help them understand literatures from their countries.
- With the trainee teachers, I opened these classes for observation. Towards the final year of my work at Bedford, there was hardly a class which was not observed. After the class, we would discuss events, and evolve together other plans and ideas, usually with roles reversed and this time with me observing. This stretched the expectations trainees had, of what could be done in a language classroom, and what could be done within the scope of the expected language syllabus. It also gave them the opportunity to observe the difference between mechanical and surface learning, and engaged and deep learning: and to observe what impact this had, too, on the teacher’s experience.
- When the VSO training courses began, I brought the trainees into the loop of observation and supported lesson planning; and once they were in post overseas, invited them to write with news of their classes and their experiences, and with poems or images generated by the activities.

Student images from language classes: Bedford, London and Switzerland

If clauses: If + past tense + --- would

*If love was wind
I'd move clouds when I'm worried.*

But love isn't wind

And my memories are pinned down.

(Japanese student)

I remember + verbs of the senses(see, hear, smell, taste)

*I smell you everywhere, I remember
Everytime I come here and see you
A lovely sun in summer I remember
A beach and a boat and a bird
On the beach, a child with white dog I remember
Walking along a beach
Below the boat a charming dolphin I
Remember
Swimming in the sea in a group
In the sky a nice bird I remember
Singing in the beautiful blue sky
I saw the ocean I smelt the ocean
I tasted the ocean I heard the ocean sounds
I will never forget how I saw you
Even today*

(Chinese student)

Whilst these cycles were highly effective modes of survival, for me as a newly qualified teacher, they had the following limitations: the cycles were indeed designed for survival, in an ‘ad hoc’ way, with many of the tasks emerging spontaneously from classroom contexts. Neither the activities, nor the student outcomes, were carefully recorded; nor did it ever occur to me to make these new programmes sustainable so other colleagues in my institution could continue them when and if I should leave. In fact, the training programme did indeed fold behind me when I moved onto my next post: and the Cross-Cultural literatures course continued but I learnt was something of a struggle for those who took it over. This was the era anyway of lecturer privacy and autonomy: minimal accountability, and random record-keeping. It was not a culture where colleagues learnt from one another, or ever questioned their mutual capacity to pick up a course and run it ‘in their own way’. So whilst I might have been doing something new, I was not aware of this, nor aware of its impact on the system as a whole. We each taught in watertight capsules, and what we did was no more publicly available than a personal diary.

In 1987, when I began work as course manager of teacher training programmes in Switzerland, this privacy was blown open. My more public role meant it was no longer enough to evolve ideas intuitively without making the rationale both explicit and available to others. My first invitation to speak to teachers from the canton came early in my posting. Here, I replicated the process for them, of moving from appreciation of a text (a poem or short extract of story), to creation of text: using identification with themes, or experimentation with language, as the bridge from one to the other. From these events, it was possible to evolve detailed and subject-specific rationale:

- appreciation of a text is more meaningful when readers have ‘entered into the shoes’ of the writer, and experimented themselves with the writer’s strategies and themes
- creating personal texts such as a poem or story engages the ‘whole’ learner in a way that other merely language-focused exercises will not:
- it provides them with an incentive to write for an audience: and thus to edit and reformulate their work, with an awareness of both the writer and the reader
- more importantly, it gives the learner the opportunity to share information which is unique and not replicable by the teacher or any other learner in the class: and thus alters the balance of informant: informee in a way that gives the learner power and autonomy
- it provides a context in which new language can be learnt in order to fill a perceived communicative need, rather than to meet the needs of the coursebook or syllabus

As the practice became refined and moulded by these more clearly stated values, new questions arose::

- What are the strategies and processes which have worked (or failed to work) for me as a writer, and are these generalisable or teachable?

- What processes, for me, characterise movement into linguistic adventure and change lived story into created story/text?
- How could these strategies be transformed into learning activities and with what effect on learners and learning?

With these questions, subliminal or otherwise, I began to formulate activities which were more carefully structured, theorised and recorded. Rather than ‘scraps’ of poems copied from student work at the end of class, I began to meticulously collect notes recording the full process by which these texts were arrived at. Below is an example of such a process, evolved over a number of years, and in a number of guises: with young newly-arrived Bedford refugees, Swiss trainee teachers, adult language learners in evening classes, Spanish school girls in a Catholic secondary school, adult pre-university international students in the UK.

Fundamentally, the activity draws on two powerful strategies which are part of my own practice: firstly, and in congruence with the value of *wellbeing*, is the activity of praise – contemplating what one admires, and shaping this admiration into a linguistic act of thanks; the second is the power of metaphor to make our thoughts capture the quintessential and the symbolic.

The activity starts by discussing the notion of *praise song*. Whether or not learners have met this as a term, much can be unpacked from the two words: **praise** – something we love, value, admire, describe in words, an admiration made known, ‘flung to the heavens’: **song** – something chanted out loud, perhaps with musical instruments such as drums, perhaps accompanied by dance and movement. All of these are the case with traditional praise song from black Africa. Just a few lines capture their quality and impact:

You lime of the forest, honey among rocks,
Lemon of the cloister, grape in the savannah.
(*from an Amharic love song, highlands of Ethiopia*) (Heath 1993: 102)

My bull is white like the silver fish in the river,
White like the shimmering crane bird on the river bank
White like fresh milk! (*from a Dinka praise song, south of Sudan*) (ibid: 104)

Having introduced the topic of praise song, shared interpretations of what it might mean, and offered examples, the stages of the activity involve moving ever nearer to the learners generating songs of their own. The first example above is praising a lover; the second is praising a bull. But praise songs could be about anything we admire: Pablo Neruda, for example, writes in praise of ironing:

It wrinkles, and it piles up,
The skin of the planet must be stretched,
The sea of its whiteness must be ironed. (Neruda 1973: ii)

A moment of visualisation gives time for the group to conjure up something loved and admired, object, activity, human being, animal. In my own experience of this activity, I conjured up my violin, to which I have been monogamously attached since the age of 14. Other participants have chosen to praise: the hairdresser, the washing machine, new shoes, although more frequently, praise is for best friends and family members. Especially is this the case when the learners are distant from home, and my examples in this section will be from such a group - a group of adult international learners on a short course in the UK, away from home for three weeks during a cool English summer.

Our next stage is to form a collective list of the objects of praise, as in Column A below. Having done so, and allowed this to illustrate the shared values in the group, I offer to the class a second list of words describing the natural world, side by side with the first. The task is simply to choose the word from the 'natural' list that most exactly describes/compares with, the praise object; or to add a new one that suits better.

COLUMN A	COLUMN B
Husband	Shell
Wife	Rock
Sister	River

Brother	Lake
Mother	Stream
Father	Mountain
Aunt	Flower (rose, violet)
Friend	Fruit (lemon, lime, peach, fig)

Table 3: Blackboard plan for praise poems

With this choice, a simple first sentence is formulated. There are two choices here:

Simile: My _____ is like a _____
eg. my mother is like a lake, my father is like a rock

Metaphor: My _____ is a _____
eg. my friend is a shell, my wife is a rose

We have, in one move, leapt into the realm of linguistic adventure. However new the process of writing creatively in English, however great the blocks, there is no participant who has not been able to respond to this process.

From this point, the writers are asked to 'grow' their metaphor (or simile) by explaining in two or three short lines, why mother and lake (or father and rock, or wife and rose) are similar.

Poems from Oxford International Summer School class

My sister is a tree

She is tall and I look up at her
She is freshly green and she gives me oxygen.

When the wind blows at me, she sings for me through the leaves.
When the cloud comes, she cries for me through the rain.

She keeps growing and offers me bigger shelter,
Oh, how I love my sister!
And I hug her round with both my arms!

(Student from China)

My grandmother is now an orange

Her skin is no longer smooth
She's seen – not only – sun in her days
At 90 she's still full of juice.
(Student from Peru)

My brother is a tree.
While his roots burrow deep,
He grows up into a new world.
(Student from China)

My husband is a river
He flows quietly along
My daughters are flowers
Even their skin blooms
(Student from Switzerland)

In some ways, the poems are their own testimony. They reveal both the universal story - the common experience of life and loves, and the specificity of these stories; the lively 90-year-old grandmother, the brother just leaving home who 'grows up into a new world', the fresh skin of young daughters: 'even their skin blooms'. The poems also illustrate the balance between revealing self – 'Oh how I love my sister!' – and establishing a safe distance through metaphor – 'she is a tree'. Most of all, the poems also make clear that capturing feelings creatively and memorably is within the capacity of every language user and learner.

To be fully congruent with the process, I offer here a poem I wrote alongside my students, in response to this task. I began with the violin as my love object. The violin then became a metaphor for marriage: my violin is my husband/my husband is a violin. As the one became the other, the following poem evolved, and I add this to the mix. It will be apparent to the reader that I broke my own 'rules' – starting with the simple figurative sentence and proceeding to 'unpack' the metaphor. As a writer, I edited out this first opening line, making the poem something of a riddle, making the reader work at interpreting, and making both halves of the metaphor equally strong: is this about a husband, or is it about a violin? The process of editing, selecting, introducing further layers of ambiguity, is something my learners may have progressed to, had there been the purpose and objective to do so.

I knew from the first moment
we would find a voice, a way to sing,
you just wood and string
without me, and I a reaching
in space, a breath between notes
without you.

I knew how the singing
would be, like a kite on air,
a running like a wild child
into sea.

I wonder now about the mystery
in your wood, if you mourn the forest
where you were, if the wine-brown memory
in your grain holds all the singing
we have done, all the ways we have
reached for new notes,
all the ways we have found our place.

A version of this section was published as Spiro 2007b.

The next section will look at ways in which student writing was developed to more complex and sophisticated levels, and how critical appreciation of other texts can be a starting point for this.

7.2 Finding a voice: developing creativity through criticality

In Chapters Four and Five of this dissertation, I drew attention to the importance of *voice* in the notion of authorship, and connected this authorial voice with empowerment. The section above illustrates the connection between the two in an educational context, specifically exploring how learners new to the creative and critical process are guided towards authorship, and in so doing find a new voice for their feelings and values.

This section shall address the same questions and connections, but in a very different context. The group now described, are full-time MA Literature students at Oxford Brookes University, with a strong educational background in critical

response to texts. What they have not had, however, is the experience of connecting this critical response to their *own* authorship. In fact, each year of critical reading in secondary and tertiary education is likely to have decreased incrementally their sense of being able to contribute to the canon. With this awareness, I evolved a module which made explicit that criticality would be developed as a stepping stone towards creativity. Students who elected for this module thus were electing to reverse a long educational expectation of creative silence.

In the section above, I defined creativity as the connection between order and chaos, drawing on Boden's concept of exploratory and transformational creativity. (Boden: 2001). Whilst these processes will remain relevant in this second context, another approach to creativity more exactly defines the nature of what will be explored here. Cropley (2001) describes the 'phase' approach to creativity as involving four stages:

Information phase: "a person becomes thoroughly familiar with a content area"

Incubation phase: "the person churns through or stews over the information obtained in the previous phase"

Illumination: "marked by the emergence of a solution" – or in the case of creative self-expression, the learner/writer finds the words that express and transform the message

Verification: "the person tests the solution" - in a creative writing context, evaluates their own writing, tests the response of others, and verifies its power and acceptability. (Cropley 2001: 71- 72). He goes on to add two further levels, communication and validation (and in so doing, is summarising the work of Wallas 1926). These two phases will be explored in Chapter Eight, with reference to the evaluation and judgement of creative output.

Cropley, and Wallas acknowledge that the first two processes, information and incubation, are often bypassed by the creative personality. These four stages may be less a description of creative process, than a description of the 'scaffolding' or

guiding of creativity for the uninitiated. Specifically, for literature students, these four stages represent more nearly what they are familiar with in the critical process: encounter with a content area, revisiting of content, creative approach to content, checking of approach by reference to others. Because of this familiarity, it offers face validity for the students whom I discuss in this cycle of activity.

The students combined native English speakers and international students on scholarships and full-time leave from their own countries. These included: Peru, Nepal, Brazil. Thus the content area I selected took full cognisance of the nature of reading and writing in a second language. As with the ‘crossover’ examples described above, I aimed to ‘cross over’ issues of language, language learning, and the non-mainstream voice ‘writing back’ to the mainstream. This section will ‘walk’ the reader through our classroom process as learners/teachers: from critical reading and content analysis, to creative output

For the writer who chooses to write in a second/foreign language, the act of writing represents in itself a creative tension:

- my mother tongue is the language in which I evolved into childhood and adulthood, and with which I learnt to relate to my environment
- the foreign/second language is the one I have chosen, in this instance, to communicate to the outside world my inner messages; yet it is not the place in which I first received these inner messages.

In Chapter Four I cited the feelings of the Polish poet Milosz with respect to this tension:

Faithful mother tongue,

You were my native land; I lacked any other.

--without you, who am I?

*Only a scholar in a distance country,
a success, without fears and humiliations.*

Yes, who am I without you?

(Milosz 2002: 336)

This tension is echoed by, for example, black African writers such as Chinua Achebe who describes his identification with Robinson Crusoe rather than Man Friday as a child; as an adult coming to realise that Robinson Crusoe was the ‘other’, and Man Friday was in fact ‘self’; and then, as a writer, coming to realise that it is this ‘other’ man’s language that will bring him recognition and readership across the world. (Achebe 1986). In symbolic terms, every writer deals with the same tension between the personal, inner voice and the ‘voice’ of the ‘other’ culture. However we experience this, we are all somehow negotiating a ‘first language’ in a ‘second language’ culture: whether this ‘second language’ is another register, another community or culture, the discourse of the opposite gender, the culture of the company or academy. In other words, we all have domains in which we are ‘insiders’, and domains where we experience the conventions as outsiders.

What can the creative writer do with this tension, that the journalist, or literary critic, or advertising copywriter cannot do? Chapter Two explored the different options from my own perspective as author of this PhD. I reiterate these options here, in order to show congruence between my own decisions as a writer, and those I share with learners in educational settings. The creative writer can

- create a personally constructed ‘interlanguage’ that falls in between the personal, inner voice, and the dominant, outer one
- use the ‘insider’ voice of their community – the ‘nation-language’ - to reverse the power imbalance by making this voice the dominant and heard one
- juxtapose the dominant voice and the personal voice, to show the dialogue between them
- layer the personal voice and the dominant voice so, within the narrative, the reader slides between one sensibility and the other

The sections that follow will explore each of these strategies in turn.

Creating a personal interlanguage/idiolect

Dear Jonathan

*I **hanker** for this letter to be good. Like you know, I am not first rate with English. In Russian my ideas are asserted abnormally well, but my second tongue is not so **premium**. I undertaked to input the things you counseled me to, and I fatigued the thesaurus you presented me, as you counseled me to, when my words appeared too petite, or not befitting. If you are not happy with what I have performed, I command you to return it back to me. I will persevere to toil on it until you are appeased.*

(Safran Foer 2001: 23)

Here the author Jonathan Safran Foer reflects on himself as language mentor, as seen through the eyes of his Ukrainian translator Alexander. Alexander, who is ‘premium’ in his mother tongue, is deprived of this fluency by having to mediate through his mentor’s language. He is, in this respect, the perfect student, clearly poring over the thesaurus, which the reader is able to see has failed him miserably. We can identify easily the words which Alexander picked from his new book: *hanker, asserted, premium, undertaked, input, fatigued*. What can we say about these words? Why did he choose them, and why are they incorrect?

A study of these ‘errors’, given that we ‘trust’ the author to be giving us reliable data, reveals several things:

- it may reveal to us ways in which the semantics of certain Ukrainian phrases do, or do not, map over those of the English language
- it will reveal to us the specific learning mechanisms of the speaker Alexander
- it will reveal to us the specific strategies of the author, who has ‘constructed’ Alexander’s voice in order to offer us a mirror of his character.

Word found in the thesaurus	Likely connotation in the mother tongue	Reason for the lack of synonymy
hanker	long for, greatly wish for	hanker carries the connotation of obsession, lust and appetite. It collocates with phrases such as: an absent lover, a dog with its bone
premium	first-class	premium as an adjective is most frequently collocated with words connected with money, insurance and financial bonds. In contemporary English the connotation of ‘first class’ has unfortunately fallen into second place

Table 4: Constructing an interlanguage: Alexander’s idiolect

In constructing Alexander’s voice, the author has ‘entered’ into the ‘other’ – become the language learner he once was or could have been as a second generation emigre from the Ukraine.

Singing out the nation-language

Braithwaite uses the term ‘nation-language’ to describe the voice of a community, and in contrast to the term ‘dialect’. Dialect defines itself by reference to the mainstream language, which it assumes to be the dominant or ‘standard’ one: whilst ‘nation-language’ defines itself by reference to the people that speak it. (Braithwaite 1999). Choosing the nation-language,

therefore, is a mark of connection and identity. It differs from the idiolect of Alexander/Safran Foer above, because in using the nation-language the writer speaks not only for him/herself but for all the language community. An analysis of the language, therefore, will reveal to us features of the shared community.

Half-caste

*Excuse me
standing on one leg
I'm half-caste*

*Explain yusef
wha yu mean
when yu say half-caste
yu mean when picasso
mix red an green
is half-caste canvas/
explain yusef
wha yu mean
when yu say half-caste
yu mean when light an shadow
mix in de sky
is a half-caste weather
nearly always half-caste
in fact some o dem cloud
half-caste till dem overcast **John Agard***

What are the features of this nation-language, and what do we learn by exploring it? We learn, by looking at Agard's example above, that the language is a uniquely oral one, and that spellings reflect the spoken idiom. The poem is one half of a dialogue, but the poet has silenced the other speaker. This time, it is the turn of the half-caste to reply, to be heard, and to be the dominant one. We sense the presence of the 'oppressor' as the other interlocutor, but we do not need to hear him/her to understand his/her attitudes and language.

Voices in dialogue

The author may choose to reverse imbalance by ‘singing out’ his/her own voice and silencing the other – as with the John Agard poem above: or he/she may choose to bring the two voices into open dialogue. Grace Nichols chooses this latter strategy in *i is a long memoried woman*. Her “skill at slipping in and out of modes of English is as good as any and she manages to make ‘nation-language’ seem not a duty, not a deliberate act of ‘rooting’ but a gift, joyfully received.” (Markham 1989: 37) Indeed, in her long poem she addresses directly the nature of losing and finding language: and of carrying contradictory languages within oneself.

*I have crossed an ocean
I have lost my tongue
from the root of the old
one
a new one has sprung* (Nichols 1993: 87)

She slides from this contemporary voice to her ancestral voice, which symbolises her memory of self as a slave amongst the sugar cane. Here, she literally ‘sings out’ her first sight of the the ‘massa’s wife arriving from the ‘cold countree’:

*O buckra woman she come over de sea
with she round blue eyes from she
cold countree
She walk straight, she head high
she too fenky
she better take care she don’t turn
zombie*

*O buckra man him come over de sea
with him pluck-chicken skin
from him cold countree* (ibid: 44)

The reader is swung between ‘voices’ in a patchwork of memory and time zones. Eagleton defines ‘defamiliarisation’ as a reversal of dominant and subordinate:

Jakobson and his colleague Yury Tynyanov saw the history of literature as itself forming a system, in which at any given point some forms and genres were ‘dominant’ while others were subordinate. Literary development took place by way of shifts within this hierarchical system, such that a previously dominant form became subordinate or vice versa.

The dynamic of this process was ‘defamiliarisation’: if a dominant literary form had grown stale and ‘imperceptible’ -----a previously subordinate form would emerge to ‘defamiliarize’ this situation. (Eagleton 1983: 111)

But Nichols has not reversed the roles of the two languages; she has done more than this, by rehabilitating both to speak for her. Yet all the examples we have explored above invite us to ‘renew our perception’ of language, and in doing so ‘politicise’ us into an understanding of which languages are being heard, and which silenced. Shklovsky describes the ‘renewal of our perception of everyday language’ as the essential quality of poetry, and was the first to define this as ‘defamiliarisation’ or ‘ostranie’. (Cited in Jefferson and Robey 1986)

Multiple voices are at their most interesting and intense, when the writer acknowledges their presence as internal as well as external dialogues: as dialogues which “not only exist between outsider (and) insider – two entities – (but) also at work *within* the outsider or the insider – a single entity”. (Minh-ha 1999: 217). Minh-ha asks whether ‘a superficial knowledge of the other, in terms of some stereotype, is not a way of preserving a superficial image of oneself’ since ‘one’s sense of self is always mediated by the image one has of the other’ (ibid: 217). It is thus part of what the writer does in ‘finding a voice’, to move from stereotypical to rounded views of both self and other, and to recognise that both these selves co-exist internally. Grace Nichols adopts the language of the Massa and his wife in order to speak to and about them more directly. Unlike them, she is able to shuttle between their language and her own nation-language in order to express different aspects of herself in time and space.

Experimenting with voices

This section will explore the phases of creativity Wallas/Cropley (2001) described as ‘illumination’ and ‘production’ or which Boden (2001) described as ‘transformational’ – when the field of learning, the analysed systems, are transformed into new output and a bridge is constructed between: *what I observe in other writers* and *what I can do in my own writing*. The experiments were

trialled, in modified form, with general English students at much earlier stages of the language learning process, before they were developed with the MA students. I thus offer examples from both communities in my discussion below.

The MA students started with discussion of the texts, in much the way that we have done within this section. Their own experiments were ‘knowing’ ones that drew on their experience of close reading and recognised the origin of their choices. They had also experimented with ‘textual intervention’ in which student writing becomes ‘rewriting’, ‘re-visioning’, ‘re-membering’ a source/stimulus text. (Pope 2002). Thus this group were a highly conscious one, accustomed to examining their own processes and those of other writers.

The general English students, in contrast, were not engaged in a response to other texts but drew on their own ‘voices’ as a starting point. Here myself as teacher asked another set of questions: which of the writer strategies explored above could be framed in order to represent an achievable challenge for my learners? I will present these experiments sequentially, and with reference to the texts and underlying principles that inform them.

Principle 1

THE CRITIC

A focus for the postcolonial writer, is the search to make heard the voice of self or community that has traditionally been silenced. For all of us, this is a metaphor for the ‘inner’ voice that has chosen, or is unable, to make itself visible to the outside world.

THE TEACHER

Is there something which you have wanted to say, but never been able to: either to a member of your family, a friend, a teacher, or anyone else?

THE STUDENTS

Students have shared the following examples of unsaid and unfinished conversations:

-a boy I played with every summer when we were little: one year I noticed he had begun to grow a beard- in fact he was growing up. I couldn't play with him, I was so upset – and I never saw him again. I'd like to explain and say sorry. (*a French-speaking English language teacher at a training workshop in France*)

-when I grew up, I was convinced I had been adopted, and that I wasn't living with my real parents. I'd like to tell my boyfriend about this, and how it has affected me. (*an English-speaking student in the MA class*)

-my father is very strict. Now I am away from home I am much happier. I would like to explain to my father why I am happier here. (*a Japanese student in a Creative English class*)

-after the evacuation was over, I was so excited to meet my real mother again, that I just ran to her and never said goodbye to the family that had looked after me for ten months. I sometimes think about that, and wish I could say goodbye now, but we lost touch. (*English teacher at a training workshop in London*)

Principle 2

THE CRITIC

The writer may choose to be distanced from his/her own experience; in order to articulate it more objectively, in order to see it from the outside, in order to widen its significance from the personal to the communal.

Jonathan Safran Foer created the character of Alexander, the Ukrainian interpreter, through whose eyes much of the action is seen.

Grace Nichols does not name her narrator in *i is a long memoried woman*, since she speaks as herself, her ancestors, her community.

THE TEACHER

Give the characters in your conversation fictional names. (Voice One and Voice Two)

They are no longer you and your interlocutor, but two fictional characters who can say, act, behave, in any way you choose.

Invent a third character, who overhears or accidentally becomes involved in your conversation. (Voice Three)

Jot down key words to help you define each character: age, gender, appearance, personality, favourite words and expressions.

This distance from self has proved to be essential to the methodology of these experiments. My own experience, and that of other experienced facilitators such as my colleague Rob Pope, bear out the observation that

“the opportunity to express – indirectly, through the rewriting of another’s text, rather than directly through an unmediated confession ‘in one’s own voice’ proved particularly enabling. ---- The personal can be made public without being paraded, and acute issues can be broached with relative impunity.” (Pope 2002).

Principle 3

THE CRITIC

We may choose to silence the ‘other’ altogether, and command attention for our own voice/self, as John Agard does in *Half-Caste* (speaking not as *me*, but as *my community*)

THE TEACHER

Choose one of your three voices,(the one that wishes to speak the most urgently) and let him/her speak uninterrupted for 10 or more lines.

THE STUDENT

No
I have my pride
I will not make the first move
Definitely not
I will not apologise
At my age? To say sorry?
No
I have my pride

I can see him waiting for it though
I can see him triumphant and victorious
How much more pleasant it would be
To have me bent
To have me humiliated
To have me weakened
Naked
No
I have my pride
And I will not lower myself.

Aurelie (French MA Student)

Principle 4

THE CRITIC

Multiple voices are more fully realised when we see the ‘other’ in a rounded (not stereotypical) way. Thus we might, like Grace Nichols (or Lorna Sage as described in Chapter Two), imagine the language of our ‘other’ characters: the significance they attach to key words, pet phrases, idioms that ‘mark’ the character in time, place or value system.

THE TEACHER

Choose a phrase which is typical of each voice:

eg. “Can’t say fairer than that!” (Samad’s voice in Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth*).

Drop the phrase into your voice every 5, 10 or 15 lines, like a refrain.

THE STUDENT

Key phrases: *It’s As Simple As That!*

Although I do feel as I grow older how much like Dad I’ve become, in spite of ranting at him for all those years for being such a Victor Meldrew, self righteous and just as bald. “It’s As Simple As That!” used to conclude most of his tirades of sweeping generalisations about the world. It’s never as simple as that, Dad, but it does seem to shut them up, doesn’t it? *Charlotte (UK MA student)*

Principle 5

THE CRITIC

The writer can represent different voices and viewpoints, by embedding these into (what appears to be) a single narrative viewpoint. Yet

individual words, phrases, idioms will ‘float’ between the sensibilities of the main narrator and others in the text.

THE TEACHER

Choose a word which has a ‘heteroglossic’ meaning: ie. the same word, which means something quite different for each voice: eg. ‘bad blood’, ‘the old devil’ (grandmother’s voice in Lorna Sage’s *Bad Blood*).

Drop the word into each voice 3, 4 or 5 times, building up a context so the reader understands what the word means for each speaker.

THE STUDENT

collaboration:

to you collaboration is something positive, being co-operative, sharing ideas
to me it is quite the opposite: collaboration is what you did as an
informer, spying on one another, talking to the enemy.

*Oh yes, we collaborate now in the staffroom. Oh yes.
And we did before, in the old days.
There was always a collaborator then, watching you.*

(Hungarian MA student)

Principle 6

THE CRITIC

The extract from Jonathan Safran Foer’s novel revealed to us how much more we can learn of a character, when he/she is allowed to speak in his/her own idiolect. Yet, in relating to the character of Alexander, we also worked with the following assumptions:

- the author had tailored this language, with its revealing and eccentric language usage, intentionally
- the author had the option of many different voices, and in fact demonstrates this to us in the course of the novel
- we therefore trust that the author is capable of exact semantic matches between word and meaning, and that the mismatches are part of his strategy in order to ‘illuminate’ the character of Alexander

If none of these were true – if, for example, the novel had indeed been written by an incompetent translator throughout, and we as reader had no trust in the translator’s recognition of his own errors – would we tolerate the narrative in the same way? In other words, would it be equally fine, and equally fair, for a language learner to be permitted to write a poem or story, and generate errors of this kind?

Our answers lie in the intentions of our writers.

- Are our learners aware of the errors they are making?
- If so, is their preference that these errors remain?
- If these errors do remain, what will be their impact on the reader? – in other words, will they detract from our understanding? will they detract from the mood or intention of the writer?.

THE STUDENT

Below is a poem produced by a student in a beginners General English class. He was asked:

**Remember your first day at school.
Who do you remember?
What do you remember?
Finish the sentence: I remember -----**

I remember

*I remember football
I remember teacher
I remember tunnel
I remember my father
I remember sumo
I remember children
I remember school bus
I remember friend
I remember climbing frame
I remember my mother*

(Takao: Japanese student)

THE TEACHER

Were the missing articles significant? My decision was, that no, they were not. Firstly, the lack of articles did not in any way impair comprehension. In fact, the omission of the articles made the two possessive pronouns ‘my father/my mother’, all the more significant. It also contributed to the rhythmic pace of the poem. The lines without articles follow the pattern *I remember + noun* – setting up an iambic beat that is consistent in all but one line (I remember school bus). A smattering of definite, indefinite and zero articles would have broken up this pattern. In short, Takao has developed an ‘idiolect’ which expresses his message more successfully than a ‘sanitised’ version, and which at the same time provides a ‘snapshot’ of his language at an exact point in time.

Principle 7

THE CRITIC

In our discussion of Grace Nichols’ poem, we looked at the way two ‘languages’ provide a dialogue with one another: and the fact that these can be interpreted, not only as ‘inner/outer’ voices, but as both voices belonging to the poet: poet as contemporary woman, poet as the vehicle through which ancestral voices are articulated.

THE TEACHER

A class of general English intermediate level learners, was divided into two.

Group A were asked to write sentences about a party, using the structure

The music is playing

The people are talking

Group B were given a secret instruction:

You walk into a crowded room. You don’t know anyone. Write down what you feel.

After 5 minutes, the groups are asked to stop writing. Each student is asked to find a partner from the opposite group.

Now they must work in pairs, and make a 'sandwich' of the lines they have written down. They are encouraged to repeat the lines they like best.

What emerges is a meshing of voices:

the outer voice – classroom language, the language of drills and regulated structures

the inner voice: expressing vulnerability, often in short phrases, in first language utterances (this is acceptable)

The students recognise, reading their lines aloud, the commentary that emerges between the voices, in spite of them having been written and conceived separately.

THE STUDENTS

The music is playing.
The people are talking.

I don't like this.
I feel shy.

The people are dancing.
The people are laughing.

I want to go home,
I don't know anyone.

I am eating nice food.
I am drinking nice drinks.

I am smaller than the others.
The people are too big.

The music is playing,
The people are talking.

I don't like this.
I feel shy.

Creative English class, Plymouth

What if both halves spoke to one another? As an example of the creativity generated by such a concept, I include here a poem from a pre-intermediate Japanese student, describing a person and his mirror.

Today I met a friend.

I was so glad I was not alone.

*I waved and he waved back
I hugged him but he couldn't
I kissed him but his lips felt cold
I touched him but he felt smooth
I said hello but he didn't reply.*

*Today I met a friend
I was so sad I felt I was alone*

*I felt sad he looked sad
I got angry he got angry
I shouted he shouted
I cried he cried
I hit him he was broken*

(Junko: Japanese student)

Finding Voices and the learning process

We started this section with a quotation from Czeslaw Milosz, talking of his mother tongue:

*--without you, who am I?
Only a scholar in a distance country,*

and with the premise that the first: second language tension he describes is a metaphor for all the 'distance countries' which must be linguistically negotiated in the process of becoming communicatively competent.

The 'finding voices' exercises described above, aim to give learners opportunities to bridge this distance.

Language learners are given framed and achievable opportunities to record their memories and 'unspoken' dialogues

Students of literature are given the opportunity to bridge the divide between reading 'received' texts, and deriving from them insights for developing their own voices.

I will end with the words of these latter students, whose commentaries provide a support to the original texts they produced.

My entire family --- has instilled the belief in me that I could forego recognition from 'the system' all together for the sake of writing from the self. ----- My professors, especially Jane Spiro and Rob Pope, (are) -the providers of hope that criticism (the other) and creativity (the self) can indeed be harmonized. (*Kim: American MA student*)

I have taken a lot of pleasure in writing this collection. George Gomori said: "Only in my language can I find salvation/ For I can describe in English the mysteries/Of life, the universe in all its glory,/But only in my mother tongue can I compose/ The words that make a sunset glowing." It is true. But in my case I could never have written this collection in French, my language of truth, in which I am too vulnerable. English is a sort of shield I can hide myself behind; it allows me to say whatever I want without being compromised. Yet I hope I managed to touch you. (*Aurelie: French MA student*)

A version of this section combined with Chapter Two extracts, was published in 2004 and can be found in Appendix Reading 21: Finding Voices: Making Strange

7.3 Becoming visible : from privacy to publication

The two sections which follow will explore the process by which the many years of educational experiment described here, became honed and disciplined for publication. In the creative hierarchies we have discussed earlier, this final stage represents the ‘communication’ and ‘validation’ of my own educational story. The ‘validation’ process, inevitably, involves confronting the values and priorities of the validator, sometimes in stark contrast to one’s own. In this case, the new ‘values’ to be incorporated into the process of production, were those of the publisher: tried and valued house styles and commercial goals connected with known market trends and preferences.

My plan for *Creative Poetry Writing* was that it should represent a resolution of many of the issues described in the evolution of practice above.

- It would demonstrate to other teachers, systems and strategies for generating learner voices in the language classroom: thus dealing with the lack of sustainability and collegiate sharing I had experienced at Bedford College.
- It would show how these learner voices could be generated even in classrooms with highly structured language goals: thus dealing with the problem of marginalisation in traditional test or national curriculum driven contexts
- It would place learner voices side by side, rather than in hierarchies of success or failure

With these goals in mind, the proposal was floated to Oxford University Press (OUP). OUP editors applied a different kind of rigour to the plan. I summarise below, using their voice:

- You talk about learners’ voices through poetry, song and story: but how can you cover all of these effectively? If song is included, how can this be dealt with, without the

production of an audio-cassette that would be costly to produce?

Decision: the book would deal with poetry only, and a separate book, at a later stage, would deal with story.

- Are the ‘learners’ here children or adults? If children, there are other books on the market which have become classics in the field. Although these are designed for native-speaking children, and many in American settings, they still represent competition and make your proposal less attractive.

Decision: to focus on adult or older school learners

- Including complete texts by contemporary writers will open up many copyright issues and incur considerable extra expense. It may also skew the focus of the book towards reading and critical skills.

Decision: to limit the use of ‘stimulus’ texts, offering these only as alternative suggestions for more advanced classes

- Many of the activities are rather unconventional and may, for example, lead to noisy classes. How will you convince the traditional teacher to try these out?

Decision: each activity would discuss alternatives for large classes, or for different modes of interaction.

- The series in which this book would fit is to be relaunched in April 2004. To meet this deadline the manuscript would need to be delivered by May 1st 2003, six months from the issue of the contract.

Decision: I will write the book within the timescale and not attempt to gather new data.

The process was one I had been through before, writing stories for an educational market and working within constraints. Previous chapters have shown how these

constraints were empowering, and helped to originate creative processes. More complex, in this case, was the ‘packaging’ of a process already evolved, into a newly introduced constraint. With *Creative Poetry Writing*, the publisher’s concept entailed the following adaptations :

- I lose the breadth I had planned, of story: poem: song, basing it on poetry only. This, could, in fact, be an opportunity. The final version divided the poem into 70 components, moving from individual sounds and clusters of sounds, through to word-building, word-mixing, sentence patterns, sentence and clause connections, and text types. Parallel to each linguistic category, was a thematic and/or poetic category such as simile, metaphor, alliteration, rhyme, refrain and chorus, repetition.
- The decision to limit the scope at this stage, also meant that a second proposal would be a possibility. This second book would be dedicated to the use of story in the classroom, and would explore the notion of archetype and story principles overlapping from therapy, theatre, and folk tale (as described in Chapter Two).
- I would have to invent the cautious and cynical teacher, sitting on my shoulder and critiquing each activity. Whilst this teacher started out as a stern harridan I had to appease with more cautious alternatives and provisos to every activity, she gradually became a ‘critical friend’ who guided me towards clarity, balance, perspective and realism.
- I would have to find a linguistically recognisable category for every scrap of learner output I had collected over twenty years. The inclusion of each one would need to be justified in terms of where they fitted in the framework and what they illustrated about language.

- The book would need to be written retrospectively as a cumulation of experience: since the timescale made new trials impossible

I demonstrate my response to these decisions by considering four activities which have been effective in the classroom, and have been so, because they were informed by some aspect of my own life experience as a ‘creative’ writer. The activities and analysis that follow take account of these several frameworks: how did the activity evolve as an outcome of my own authentic struggles with the creative process? How did learners respond to the activity? And what can be learnt, as a result, about both learner creativity and the transition from writer process into classroom activity?

Within each example, I shall ask the following questions:

- How and why did the activity evolve, and how does it parallel my own questions and processes as a teacher and writer?
- What student outcome was intended or expected?
- How did the students’ response compare to these expectations?
- What can be learnt from these responses?

Example 1 Red, the money goddess: words and connotations

Summary of the activity

Students are asked to divide up the words in the box below, between those they associate positively, and those they associate negatively. They are then asked to compare their list with a neighbour, and notice similarities and differences.

Where possible, they are then invited to explain their choices.

A final stage asks them to choose one word from the box, and write a poem in which each member of the group describes/lists/defines /explains their association.

fountain	rose	dog	dove	crow
apple tree	island	thorn	wolf	fox
snake	dragon	wizard	witch	bird
spring red	seven	thirteen		
white	sun	moon	night	star

Table Five: Blackboard plan for word association activity

How and why did the activity evolve, and how does it parallel my own questions and processes as a teacher and writer?

My work in different cultures and contexts drew to my attention the assumptions embedded in words, and the importance of these assumptions.

During my work in Hungary, for example, I had occasion to revisit several meanings which acquired sinister and negative connotations in a Soviet surveillance culture:

- Collaboration (as in the example in Section 7. 2 above from a Hungarian student)
- Information

Working in India I was surprised and, initially shocked, to be introduced as follows at the opening of my literature workshop:

“Although she looks like a young and spritely girl, she is in fact 35 years old.”

I came to understand that *young* in the Tamil Nadu culture where I was, meant unschooled, green, naïve; whilst *old* meant authoritative, wise, impressive. To appear young before a distinguished gathering of academics, was not necessarily a

good thing. The experience caused me to review the powerfully invasive connotations a Western (American/British) culture gives to these terms. There are few contexts in which *old* can be used in English with a positive connotation – apart from old wine. Similarly, if one wishes *young* to attract any of the meanings suggested above, a new word entirely needs to be used.

I evolved this activity as an experiment to sensitise learners, in the same way, to the cultural values and assumptions embedded in words. I had hoped for issues such as the following to arise from the discussion:

- dragon to a Chinese person is the symbol of creation
- white to a Hindu is the colour of death
- red to a Hindu is the colour of marriage
- thirteen began in the pre-Christian symbolism, as an indivisible number that had mystic properties

What student outcome did I intend or expect? How did the students' response compare to these expectations?

However, with a monocultural group of Swiss learners, the key words revealed a snapshot of their own personal and collective cultures, without deconstructing or destabilising assumptions.

Thirteen

number of the house where I grew up
age to stay out late
age to change schools
beginning of teen years

(Swiss teachers)

Few in a contemporary Western culture would dispute that thirteen is the age when teenagers start to push for their own independence: there was discussion about whether this happens earlier still, what 'staying out late' might imply, whether children of all educational backgrounds 'change school' at thirteen: but

in essence, the exploration was of their own culture and little was revealed about other world views.

A mixed class of Indian learners generated the following lists, which also combined personal connotations – red is blood – and culturally understood ones: - red is the colour of the Hindu wedding sari.

Red

dangerous, like blood
beautiful like a wedding sari
wealth, it's the face of the money goddess

White

it is pure, a burial gown
the colour of ashes
the colour of the water lily
big on water

Group poems by Indian students in Chidambaran

What did I learn from these responses?

It emerged that, unless the activity was more carefully framed and with a culturally diverse group, the words might simply reinforce rather than extend stereotypes and assumptions. 'Careful framing' might involve unpacking the following possible associations with and between words:

- a story, myth, nursery tale connected with the word
- a visual or verbal memory
- the positive or negative *connotations* of words
- where our feelings about words come from
- what effect sound has, on our understanding of words
- whether or not these effects are culture-specific

What also emerged, is that few of the learners from India and Switzerland referred to stories as influencing their interpretation of words. 'Wizard' appeared to be a time- and place-specific word of high visibility to *Harry Potter*-reading British

teachers but less so elsewhere (and perhaps outside this specific time frame too). It would be interesting to replicate this activity, and see how far ‘dragon’, ‘apple’ or ‘wizard’ evoke stories modern, ancient, mythical, Biblical or other in more diverse groups.

Example 2 Words like sea shells: similes about language learning

Summary of the activity

The activity invites learners, first of all, to list in the –ing form, activities they enjoy doing: such as wind-surfing, swinging in a hammock, eating ice cream, holding a baby. These –ing phrases are listed on the board.

The following phrase is then written in front of all these phrases:

Learning a language is like

The resulting blackboard may look like the one below, generated by several classroom versions of this activity:

<p>Learning a language is like</p> <p>wind-surfing</p> <p>climbing a mountain</p> <p>playing the guitar</p> <p>listening to music</p> <p>sleeping</p> <p>surfing the internet</p> <p>mending a shoe</p> <p>swimming an ocean</p> <p>sitting in a white room</p> <p>collecting sea shells</p> <p>polishing stones</p>
--

Table 6: Blackboard plan for simile activity

The students are then asked to choose which contrast they most identify with, and to explain or expand their choice in a few lines or phrases.

How and why did the activity evolve, and how does it parallel my own questions and processes as a teacher and writer?

When I first arrived in Hungary with no knowledge of the language and little of the culture, I similarly searched for metaphors to describe my feelings of being encapsulated and contained inside my mother tongue. I worked with images of being a nut inside a case, a bird inside a cage, a changeling. The formulating of these images helped explain and, in some ways, resolve the experience. The images I ‘played with’ were these:

*I am a changeling plucked and wrongly placed,
my richness a caged nut, my history locked
like a prison door.
This is my rebirth, born
into a tunnel that is no perch
but a moving on to find where darkness leads,
to forget where from.*

In 1998, language learners were invited to send poems ‘on any subject’ to the first Poetry in a Foreign Language competition, organised by White Adder Press, with Donald Adamson, Martin Bates, John Daniel and myself Jane Spiro as judges. (See Bates 1999). Amongst the entries most enlightening as to the learner experience, where those in which learners sought metaphors for their learning:

*English is as interesting as
a trip to something you don't know (Ana Jimenez Martin –
Spain)*

*English is around me, every season that I see.
It's the snow that falls in winter. (Teodora Petrova Ivanona –
Bulgaria)*

*Learning a language
is like doing a jigsaw puzzle
of a million pieces (Olivia McMahan – Scotland)*

(Bates 1999).

I could see that an activity might guide learners towards creating and exploring metaphors like these. My reasoning was, that the second half of the metaphor would be elicited from the learners and thus within their language grasp: and that ideas would then be placed side by side, in effect, creating the ‘chaotic leap’ of the poet. The task left to the learner would simply be to ‘fill in the gaps’ by justifying and explaining how the leap had taken place: how IS language learning like wind-surfing? (or gathering shells? or doing a jigsaw puzzle?).

What student outcome did I intend or expect?

I expected this framework to generate a rich new resource of potential metaphors, each one of which might raise some interesting perspective on the learning process. What I also expected, was to generate the readers’ natural desire to find meanings: to find connections between disparate items, if they are placed side by side in a text. Swanson summarises this process of creating and interpreting metaphor: “It preempts our attention and propels us on a quest for the underlying truth. We are launched into a creative, inventive, pleasurable act.-- A metaphor is a peremptory invitation to discovery.” (Swanson: 1994: 162). Is this what happened, however, in the classroom?

How did the students’ response compare to these expectations?

The activity was trialled with two groups of multilingual adult learners, and one group of Cypriot teachers, since 1998. Their more challenging responses are as follows:

- learners in the first half of the activity, suggest activities which at first appear uninteresting when compared with language learning:

eg. reading a book, surfing the internet

However, on revisiting, and when learners and I work hard on the connections, these do emerge:

*reading a book:
but the pages are empty and you must fill them
you understand the words but not what the whole book means
you never know what will happen on each page
each page is a lifetime*

After three trials, in the end it appears that almost any phrase can be fruitfully compared to the learning process. After some practice, I became more adept at helping learners to recognise these for themselves.

*Learning new words
is like climbing a mountain
collecting stones on the way
polishing them
putting them in your pocket
so your journey is slow
the stones are heavy
but when you reach home
some of the mountain is still with you*

*I collect words like sea shells.
Each one is different.
They are
white, pink, grey,
many colours.
I remember places I have visited.*

(Classroom notes)

What did I learn from these responses?

What arose from the experiences of these activities, was a further question: Is it the case that some cultures are more deeply oriented to the notion of metaphor than others? Some learners and learner groups responded with particular warmth and ease to his activity: others not at all. Was this culture-driven? For example, learners from India and Sri Lanka adapted to this framework as if it was part of their very thinking process.

Swiss teachers were resistant to the notion of using poetry at all – initially: but responded with warmth when they realised how easily learners could be led towards these outcomes, and how rich the outcomes could be.

Example 3 I remember climbing frame: Talking about the past

Summary of the activity

The activity is simple, and yet acts as a window to memory. The learner is asked to write as many sentences as they like, beginning

I remember.

The ‘title’ of their memory is suggested by the teacher and could include:

- rites of passage, such as the first day at school, the last day at school, the day I left home for the first time
- moments of joy: the peaks
- moments of disappointment and despair: the troughs
- archetypal plot moments: separation, reunion, reconciliation

The learner is then asked to describe the activity through the five senses:

I remember + smells, sights, sounds, tastes, touch.

I remember + objects, people, colours, places

How and why did the activity evolve, and how does it parallel my own questions and processes as a teacher and writer?

In preparing initial notes for my novel, *Nothing I Touch Stands Still*, diary notes relating to my visit to northern Poland were of particular importance. (See Chapter Four). I had visited a wall, standing at the centre of a field on the edge of the town, which, on closer encounter, revealed itself as formed from a mosaic of broken tombstones with Hebrew lettering. This memorial wall became the catalyst for the novel. However, what made the notes compelling, were sensory descriptions of how I reached the wall: the sounds (squelching through loose snow), the touch (freezing water around my badly waterproofed boots), the sight

(pitch black icy water), the taste (snowflakes falling into my mouth and melting). It was the potency of this description that caused me to revisit and revisit the moment and turn it eventually into a story and then a 78,000 word novel.

What student outcome did I intend or expect?

I hoped the learner would be able to use the structure to say as much or as little as they chose or were able. Structurally, *I remember* can be completed:

- simply with a noun: a place, a person, an object
- a noun phrase using the five senses: the smell of--, the sight of ---the
- an -ing phrase to introduce action
- a complete subordinate clause, introduced by when/where/how

How did the students' response compare to these expectations? What did I learn from these responses?

The main surprise in setting up this activity, was to discover how powerful the 'titles' were in evoking memory. When setting up 'peak and trough moments', some learners were overwhelmed by the sudden impact of memory, unprepared for in a language class.

For example: exploring the plot archetype of 'separation', one participant refused to continue, complaining that I had not appreciated that a group in the class had experienced the Berlin Wall (pre- 1989), and that she did not wish to think about this issue in class.

I understood that, in any class I was meeting for the first time, this topic was certainly too potent: that I would need to choose themes that were 'safe' and did not lead to vulnerability, unless I was entirely sure of the class, and they of one another.

The topics were derived from therapeutic contexts where the emotional framework was carefully prepared, the 'client' received individual attention, and there was a controlled 'climbing down' period (Rogers: 1990). To drop these powerful contexts into a language class without these frameworks was irresponsible, and I learnt from my error.

In future versions of the activity, I worked only with the ‘rites of passage’ theme.

On quite another level, I also found that, the more specific the memory, the more interesting and precise were the outcomes.

Your first day at school

suggested more to learners than:

A memory of childhood

for example: and the guidance of the five senses also helped the process, for learners who needed this.

the smell of ---

the taste of ----- etc.

I remember crying

I remember roundabout

I remember laughing teacher

There were many children

There were many teachers

There were many textbooks

I remember decorations

I remember swim

I remember embarrassed mom

I ate school lunch

There was a lot of food

I remember everybody looked happy

I remember I felt happy

I remember I felt nervous

But

I remember the sight of nothing

I remember the smell of nothing

I remember the taste of nothing

I remember the sound of nothing.

*(Kaori, Yumiko, Adel: Japanese, Korean
and Omani students)*

I remember the sight of nothing

I remember the smell of nothing

I remember the taste of nothing

I remember the sound of nothing

(Junko: Japanese)

Example 4 A visualisation poem: Go and open the door

Summary of the activity

The activity involves the teacher reading a short visualisation, in which the learners imagine a secret and hidden door appearing in the classroom: they open the door and enter it. Inside is a room, full of objects from their past life until that moment. They walk around the room, remembering and thinking about each object, picking up and touching

each object. Then they choose one object they would like to take away with them. They pick it up, leave the room, close the door, and return to the desk where they are now sitting. During the visualisation, the speaker stops at various points and asks the learner to write:

- what they think will be behind the door
- when they enter the room, what objects they see there
- which object they choose
- why they have chosen it.

How and why did the activity evolve, and how does it parallel my own questions and processes as a teacher and writer?

The inspiration for this activity, was my experience of a visualisation exercise in which the learner imagines a journey to a ‘wise person’, the question he/she would ask, and the answer he/she might receive. (Hall and Hall 1990). The visualisation helped me in concrete ways as a newly arrived teacher in Hungary. When I was overwhelmed by the alienness of my circumstances, I took myself through this journey again, lying on the floor of an orange-painted apartment on the 11th floor of a Soviet high-rise. The wise person in this journey reminded me that a few yards from the Soviet high-rise, were cherry trees, vineyards, and views over cathedral spires and domes.

As a more specific linguistic incentive, the poem ‘The Door’ by Miroslav Holub offered a further catalyst. The poem is divided into five sections, each beginning with the incantatory command: *Go and open the door*. Each stanza then goes on to speculate what might be behind the door, mingling the concrete and feasible – a tree, a dog, a garden, - with the surreal and magical: a magic city, a picture of a picture.

I found the repetition of the line, *Go and Open the Door*, haunting: and symbolic too, of every writer’s journey into the imagination. I liked the fact that the poem never quite tells the reader what is behind the door, but only offers possibilities. I liked too, the strangeness and arbitrariness, of what might be there; that it is likely to combine the entirely trivial with the cosmic, as so many of our hopes do.

At first, I used the poem as a model for learners to work with. Their task was to complete the line *Go and open the Door*, with possibilities of their own. But as the activity

evolved, I realised that I was not taking this as far as it could travel: that working with a visualised journey would release the imagination more fully.

The activity evolved in the way it did, because I wanted my learners to have the same opportunities to be comforted by the answers from their past lives: using the artefacts they found and chose, as a symbol of the comfort we receive from our own histories.

What student outcome did I intend or expect? How did the students' response compare to these expectations?

The outcomes from the 'first version' of the activity were revealing. Learners, as I had hoped, used the open door as a symbol of where they wanted to go, or what they wanted to know. In a way, the process was loose enough for them to move in any direction, and they did so, enjoying the freedom of the form.

However, when I moved into the second, visualisation, version, something else took place. My own 'script' generated a trance-like calm in the group, the writing seemed to be intensely private, and the paired exchange of ideas was animated. However, the outcomes were not pieces that learners wanted to share, or to 'publish'. I understood, from the first trial of this version, that the exercise opened up a private dialogue – just as it had done for me: and that authenticity meant that these should remain private. I have data from the first, more mechanical version of this activity: and quote it here; while conceding that the real 'open door' may be into the secret interiors or the 'inner chaos' which actually are not subject to the crafting and socialising of the first stage.

*Go and open the door.
You fear it?
Go, don't hesitate!
Go and open the door, even if there's an
enemy.
Go and open the door, even if the
weather is bad.
Go and open the door, maybe there's
your friend
Waiting for you.*

*Go and open the door, maybe there's
bright sunshine outside.

Go and open the door.
Don't hesitate,
Maybe there's someone waiting for your
smile.

(Nicholas)*

Go and open the door.
Maybe there is my past surroundings
Maybe my friend is there.
Then I can change what I did do,

If there's no freedom from my parents
I will be free.

Even if there's only me
Even if there's only powerlessness

Even if there's only boredom
Go and open the door.

At least there'll be a happy life for me.

(Miho)

Please see Appendix Readings 11 and 12 for further examples of student poetry in response to these activities.

Please see Appendix Reading 13 for student evaluations of their creative writing experience.

This section has offered examples of activities connecting teacher and writer, and which are congruent with authentic life/writing experiences. As an indicator of the activities' effectiveness, students were able to respond to the activities with texts that appeared to access both the 'chaos' and the 'order' aspects of creativity: – the free association of ideas, such as a beautiful island, desert, little sound, star, dead leaf in the *go and open the door* activities: the spontaneous and individual, such as memories of “embarrassed mom”, teachers and textbooks of the *I remember* activities, or the responses to key words such as ‘thirteen’: “number of the house where I grew up”. At the same time, ‘rules’ and patterns appear to have provided a support and springboard for invention. The *I remember + five senses* pattern yielded effective imitation/subversions, as in “I remember the sight/the smell/the sound of nothing”; the *go and open the door* pattern appeared to unlock the free association of ideas that followed. Some used the pattern to generate a concrete world: a field, a bench, a desert: others to generate an abstract, hypothetical or fantasy world – powerlessness, a happy life, freedom. However, the activities also revealed the complexities of individual creative process. For some, the activities set up blocks rather than ‘release’ - such as the student who blocked the *I remember* activity because of her Berlin wall memories. On other occasions, the activity allowed retreat into the familiar rather than challenging this – as in some responses to the ‘cultural words’ activity. Some processes involved resistance – as with the metaphor activity, where the elicited ‘second half’ of the metaphor was too literal, limited or prosaic; others involved

so deep an engagement, that the shaping of the experience into crafted writing appeared inappropriate, as with the visualisation exercise.

It is thus not sufficient to say: *I learnt this way, so it will work for others* - but it is sufficient to learn from one's own turning points, and to ask pedagogic questions about these. Would it work with learners? How would it need to be prepared or modified? What would be the specific learning goals? How will I know if it has worked or not? Most interestingly, learner responses reveal the complexity of the creative process: the nature of blocks, the balance between the chaotic and ordered minds, the effectiveness or otherwise of specific stimuli, the role of cultural frames and values. Some language teachers have been sceptical of the value of expressive/literary approaches to poetry production in class, on the basis that these are "likely to be most successful in the hands of teachers who themselves write creatively" (Hyland: 2003: 10). We can conclude that this may certainly be true, but that all teachers are engaged in creative processes both in and outside the classroom. They simply need to recognise these, reflect on them, reconstruct them pedagogically, and bring them to class as vehicles for authentic learning. However positive or negative the outcomes, the experimentation with 'real-life' processes is one that makes the classroom a crucible in which learning and 'creating' can authentically take place. **A shorter form of this section was published in Spiro 2007a.**

Finding a voice

Creative Poetry Writing represents answers to each of the questions posed at the start of this chapter, which have formed a structure for my career in education/creative writing:

- What are the strategies and processes which have worked (or failed to work) for me as a writer, and are these generalisable or teachable?
- How can these strategies be transformed into learning activities and with what effect on learners and learning?

Part of the process of compiling the book, involved contacting students to ask their permission to publish their work, often from many years ago. I quote below one response to this request for permission:

Dear Jane,

Firstly, really thank you for your e - mail. To be honest it was indeed suprising for me the news that you send me. I had forgotten the poems that i wrote at Marjons 4 years ago in our poetic class.

The clear answer to that you ask me is tottaly YES. I am indeed positive in establishing our poems in the Oxford University press. Actually Iam very glad for the think that they will established and please led me know what will happen. To be honest really thank youu of trying and doing that for us. Iam really proud of you and I hope yor work is going well.

If the thinks go well, of coarse I am able to come there and celebrate with all our class of us, indeed including all the people hat urge us to that. The celebration is the most appropriated for us.

I hope that God is gonna bless you forever for that nice things you do for us.

Best wishes
Miranda!

See **Appendix Reading 14** for extracts from *Creative Poetry Writing* (Spiro 2004).

7.4 The neverending story: building *Storybuilding*

The poetry book paved the way for a second, written in 2005/6 and published in 2007, representing a similar 'retrospective' on story writing activities developed over many years. A similar process of compromise, loss and gain was involved as in the first book. Specifically, my aim in the story book was to move away from a close affiliation between language goal: creative output, and to look more directly at the connection between lived story: created story. Topics in the original proposal included:

Living stories: writing stories – making links

Inner and outer self: talking to your selves

Where you are comfortable: place as self

Potions and lotions – looking for instant solutions

This angle on the book was resoundingly rejected by the publishers’ readers, with quite visceral responses ranging from ‘pretentious’, ‘therapeutic rather than educational’ ‘unuseable for language teachers’.

Since I had evidence, both from my own writing experience and from learner responses, that the activities themselves were entirely useable and educational, my understanding was that the way they were ‘packaged’ needed to be changed. The topics thus needed to be bedded within clear and discernable linguistic and narrative objectives that would make sense to teacher, reader and publisher.

Living stories: writing stories – making links became:

3.2 Story stars: people in stories, people in life	Elementary to advanced	10 – 40 minutes	vocabulary to describe people: jobs, descriptive labels, nicknames adjectives to describe personal qualities short phrases: someone who---, someone with--- - adverbs: always --	developing a character through typical features To consider the link between story characters and real life characters
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Inner self and outer self; talking to your selves became:

3.8 Inner and outer animals: the toad and the giraffe	Pre intermediate to advanced	30 minutes	Animal vocabulary. Adjectives to describe personal qualities.	Stories about conflict between two characters.
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Where you are comfortable: place as self became:

4.1 Comfort and discomfort zones: the elephant in the bus station	Elementary to advanced	10 – 20 minutes	Nouns to describe people Descriptions of places: nouns, adverbs of place, adjectives of shape, size and colour	Looking at how places tell us about people Looking at how people are affected by places:
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Potions and lotions – looking for instant solutions became:

7.3 Advertisements: magical medicines	Intermediate to advanced	30 minutes	superlative adjectives It can..... to describe abilities	Features of an advertisement Key information in an advertisement
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The second incarnation of the proposal was received encouragingly, and the reworking of the topics formed a support rather than a constraint in the developing of materials. The final manuscript was sent to one of the readers, whose comments had evolved from ‘disappointing’ to ‘promising’ to this final report, posted on receipt of the final draft:

Reader’ report: Oxford Resource Books for Teachers – Creative Story Writing by Jane Spiro - samples of text

Generally I cannot do anything but reiterate my earlier comments: this is a book which I shall both use and recommend, and I am certain that a great number of teachers worldwide will value it. It offers enormous potential for using story writing for language acquisition, for the improving of writing skills and for best practice in the classroom. In detail it is even better than in outline and the work clearly shows how this has been developed over years in the classroom. It has all the markings of a tried and tested resource book, developed by a creative and talented teacher who incorporates the work of her students. This has come a long way since the first outline and now can be used not only for teaching creative short story writing, but also for encouraging creativity in the language classroom. I can’t wait till it comes out, so I can start using it!

See Appendix Reading 15 for extracts from *Storybuilding*, Spiro 2007.

Storybuilding in process

During the process of developing, trialling and refining the activities for the book, I ran a workshop for 400 teachers at Cecil Sharp House in London. I was able to video and then analyse this workshop, as part of my own development in the writing of *Storybuilding*.

This section will comment on the video recording of this event by asking:

- How can evaluating and analysing this event take me forward as an educator?
- where and how did ‘knowledge transformation’ take place, and what was my evidence for this?

Audio-Visual files 1. Story workshop Clips 1 - 11

The messages of the talk:

Overt messages: In order to ‘start where the learners are’, I open with a poem that caricatures the ‘bad’ creative writing lesson: “Now children, let your mind go blank. Now start writing”, and the question -“How many of you remember lessons like that?”

(Clip 1). A show of hands in response to this question was intended, to give participants a sense of solidarity with others in the audience; but the group, not quite yet having formed trust, took this as a rhetorical question and instead, laughed (somewhat nervously).

I then progress to the difference between ‘letting your mind go blank’ as a starting point for creativity, and the reverse: trawling life, the world, dreams and experiences, as a starting point. The ‘presentation’ of these story sources/resources is an opening device to encourage the audience to think; “what sources of story are there within me? what does, or would, inspire me to speak out, to tell my story?”. I lead from my own list of story sources, to the question: “Is there anything I have missed out?”**(See Clip 2)**. The audience are invited to share the sources that may, or do, drive them: inner dialogues, life experiences, memories, fantasy, dreams and nightmares, other art forms. In essence, I am suggesting that creativity is not an *ex nihilo* act; that creation ‘is never from nothing; it is always creation from something’ (Pope 2005: 84) .

The second message is the demystifying of creativity as an aspect of human potential, by anatomising it, looking at it in components, changing the vocabulary. The talk focuses on creativity as “something that can be honed, developed and nurtured”, using

frameworks which are familiar, a linguistic ‘scaffold’ that is recognisable to the language teacher: moving from sound/phoneme to whole texts. In other words, the talk reinforces the ‘something’ that is the source of creation: what one brings to the creative act in combination with what one knows about, and can already do, with language.

Covert messages: the covert aim was to address the criticisms of the sceptic teacher whose response I anticipate as: “creative writing is woolly and does not, cannot have, clear learning goals”, and “I am not creative/imaginative. I hated ‘creative writing’ at school, so how and why should I put my students through this?”, and to convince them of the view that: creativity is an aspect of psychic and intellectual health, it can be honed and developed, and we all have the potential to be creative.

In terms of workshop ‘architecture’, I was planning and designing a transition from passive to active, from recipient to participant, from sceptic and resistant to empowered and engaged; and with the covert message:

“If this process of empowerment has been true for you during this talk, then you have a strategy for giving the same empowerment to your learners.” This transition was designed to happen, both in small cycles throughout the session within each topic/activity, and in a larger cycle from start to finish.

My roles in the talk

In Chapter One Section 1.5 I identified some of the several metaphors for the teacher - for example,

- teacher as releaser and midwife
- teacher as co-ordinator, conductor and democrat
- teaching as positive identity development
- teacher as demonstrating empathy, or responsibility to other
- teaching as an ushering in of opportunity

and in this workshop context I specifically recognise the co-ordinator/conductor role - literally ‘beating time’ from the front of the room; and the ‘usher’ role - standing at the side and allowing learner voices to take over.

Facilitator as chameleon

I would extend this metaphor into a further dimension: teacher as chameleon, not only standing aside in order to usher in, but also blending in to the environment so he/she becomes part of it and no longer distinct. In **Clip 3**, for example, the teacher has disappeared and the large audience have now taken over the dialogue for themselves. They have been invited to look at two sets of sentences, and decide which is most like a 'story'. The aim of the task is to share assumptions and beliefs about story ingredients - what needs essentially to be there (eg. characters), and what is optional.(eg. suspense). They feed back the outcome of their conversation in **Clip 4**, where teacher again becomes the conductor, orchestrating responses. The roles that emanate from this sensibility, include: eliciting audience ideas, listening where their 'turns' change in length and quality, focusing on individuals in the crowd as if they were my only interlocutor and encouraging others to listen in the same way.

I am a chameleon, where members of the audience suggest an aspect I had not considered, or critique something I have done so my view of it begins to reshuffle and reformulate. In one activity, we build poems about members of the family; this is critiqued at length by a member of the audience who says: *the whole area of family is problematic for my students, because they are from broken or problematic families*. Yes, I need to reformulate so this activity can equally be about friends, teachers, pets and others; and/or I need to consider when and if it is appropriate to invite students to talk about their families. I am a chameleon where there are opportunities to learn with and from the audience. One member of the audience asks: "*What is the difference between stone and rock?*" (**See Clip 9**). And here, not quite sure where the experiment will lead, the audience and I work out the differences through metaphor: "*My father is a rock: kind? stable? strong?*" "*My father is a stone: kind? stable? strong?*" The discovery takes on a new twist, when a further member of the audience suggests that 'stone' can be positive if connected, for example, with the stone of St. Peter and the founding of the church; but then, of course, with the *translation* of the Greek into stone, rather than rock. But what was the connotation of the original?; and so the dialogue becomes a real learning journey.

Teaching as delight

A further observation on viewing the video, was the recognition of delight/wellbeing driving forward the process; the drive, possibly, which informs and explains all the others. I identify moments of delight when the audience opens up and emerges as a cluster of individuals; the nicknames of pets, teachers and librarians (**Clip 5**), poems about mothers, cousins and nieces (**Clips 7 and 8**), show of hands to show standpoint and positioning in a debate, formulation of personal myths (**Clip 10**).

There is delight, when the audience ‘leap out’ of an idea I have presented, to generate new ones of their own; the unpredictable (eg. the chain of human beings who formed a link between sky and earth in the creation myth), the unique (eg. the dog called Bombi who didn’t like being washed), the aesthetically exciting (eg. my daughter is like a shell; she is like mother of pearl).

There is delight where the size of the audience becomes an actual resource for learning: as in the task where the audience is asked to choose which of two texts are most ‘story like’. The show of hands as a result of this gives us real quantitative information about how readers perceive story, and what they see as its central ingredient. (**Clip 4**).

Teacher as conductor

The chameleon role involves sublimating the self and becoming a part of the ‘other’; being guided and led by it, changing into the other. In contrast, there were moments in the talk where the strong sense of self was in control.

- beating time and keeping a brisk pace with the audience, almost like conducting an orchestra
- co-ordinating responses after a group/pair discussion, so key points and threads are highlighted
- acting and improvising the poems and stories, being the performer
- controlling the ‘turn taking’ of the audience as a collective, by raising my hand, waiting for silence, and drawing up groundrules for finishing tasks.
- drawing threads together by returning to my own frameworks, summaries and story examples

The body language of leadership

It is interesting to notice the changing body language that accompanies each of the roles: chameleon/conductor. Sinclair suggests that body language is an essential element of leadership; through body language the leader reveals his/her style of leadership, and stresses that we should develop our “capacity to understand what is going on when people inhabit and display their bodies in organisational settings.” (Sinclair 2005: 387) As a ‘somebody’, in control of the group, responding as leader and to the audience as collective, I speak at a faster pace, almost giving myself a ‘beat’ to orchestrate my own activity. When reading the poems and modelling student examples, I exaggerate my intonation and appear to ‘play’ facially, standing at the front of the audience and in the middle. It is only in this ‘somebody’ role that I actually inhabit the central space at the front of the room. Otherwise, I am pacing from right to left, at times walking down the central aisle, and working ‘off centre’. My arms are also in almost constant activity, beating, demonstrating ‘show of hands’, holding a text, holding the microphone, turning over transparencies. Where they do not have a function, I am using my arms to sweep my hair back; a sign that I am slightly uncomfortable with this role, and have a fear of being hidden. Sweeping away hair is my own psychic reminder that I need to be fully present in order to hold my position; and the activity of the arms seems also to reflect my sense that as leader one needs to be constantly *doing*.

As a ‘chameleon’ my pace changes tangibly. I intuitively adjust the body language of control, so the learner can take over that space. Explicitly that means; periods of silence as the facilitator, a direct focus of attention on the speaker so they are not discouraged by glazing over, disinterest, a sense of being hurried or being silently judged. When the audience are working on their task, I seem to act as if I wish physically to disappear: moving backwards away from the group rather than into the group. When they are speaking to me, telling a story or raising a point, I hold eye contact with them for surprisingly long periods of time, without a restless anxiety about ‘what the rest of the class are doing’. Similarly, it is at these moments, when hearing their responses, that there seems to be most delight in my role, most manifestation of the ‘transformation’ I am aiming for.

The architecture of the talk:

Although there is a shuttling between *chameleon/conductor*, the reality is that every stage, its purpose, its time scale, and its desired outcomes, have in fact been planned. I aim for participants to experience both the unpredictability of a journey somewhere new, combined with the safety of knowing the journey has been expertly planned.

In parallel, as facilitator I aim to plan the journey with a clear sense of direction and purpose; but giving opportunity for participants to take us on a cycle of diversions, to select where the stations are and what sites we discover en route.

The planned journey/unplanned journey are built up through a series of cycles:

- presenting an idea
- experimenting with it in practice, the audience now in control
- eliciting responses, with a shared control between audience: facilitator
- returning to the primary idea with the additional layers now provided by the audience
- adding a new slant to these ideas by opening into the next point, when the cycle begins again.

Since these cycles are accumulative, it also means that more audience contributions are included at each stage, until the final activity, where I aimed to elicit a complete story from the participants' contributions: characters, their names, plots, places, and the language to describe them. (See **Clip 10**) This cycle leads to the final message of the talk; that learning activities which derive from our own intuitive and authentic ways of building story, are empowering. (See **Clip 11**). In the participants' own experience during this workshop, they have moved forward from nervous response to the opening poem, to the building of stories using their own character names, plot formations and notions of story itself.

How can evaluating and analysing this event take me forward as an educator?

The video analysis allowed me to recognise:

- The role of **delight** in driving my energies as a teacher. To take this realisation forward as enquiry, I would ask: is delight/enjoyment in the multiple roles of the teacher, central to the sustainability of a career in education? In my own case, viewing of this video made it clear to me that delight/wellbeing had indeed been the sustaining force. Evolution of other educational principles had emerged later, and only as a result of this initial drive: I like teaching. (Chapter Nine will explore this further in the context of a teacher education programme).
- To be specific about the nature of this ‘delight in teaching’, I/the teacher would also need to be able to affirm: “I appreciate and have the capacity to stand back and be absorbed and changed by my learners” (the chameleon) AND “I appreciate and have the capacity to orchestrate, monitor and control” (the conductor). In addition to this, I/the teacher would need to have the discernment to recognise which of these is needed, when, and why.
- In terms of the evolution of the book *Storybuilding*, I learnt that every task needs to take account of the unpredictable, rather than to be presented as a watertight ‘unit’ of learning; in other words, to offer starting points, rather than conclusions.

Where and how did ‘knowledge transformation’ take place, and what was my evidence for this?

The evidence I was able to identify from this event was:

- the change in audience response, from passive and non participatory, to ‘buzzing’ with energy and responsiveness, initiating highly engaged questions and offering responses to activities
- the examples of activity and story at each stage: nicknames such as Red Baron (the bad tempered librarian), Bombi (the dog who did not like being washed); myths of the beginnings of the human race (men and women on separate planets, human beings forming a chain to reach from heaven to earth), story beginnings from first lines (One day Baldilocks woke up and found he had been transformed into Rapunzel; one day Bombi woke up and

found he had been transformed into Franz Kafka); the metaphors and lines of poetry generated (my niece is a shell; she is like mother of pearl); the creative thinking that was evidenced through questions: (what is the difference between rock and stone?; could stone ever be positive?)

For me this was the very happening of ‘knowledge transformation’. We started with less than half the audience ‘admitting’ to writing for themselves of any kind: diary, journal, poetry, story. We ended with all engaged in the development of myth, metaphor and poetry, and with a revealing of the mechanisms whereby this experience could be replicated in their own classrooms.

To conclude, this chapter has aimed to illustrate the value of *empowerment*:

- By showing how learners are encouraged to express thoughts, memories, values more clearly and powerfully through a process of exploratory/transformational creativity
- By showing learners that the processes of criticality and creativity are, and can be, connected, where content familiarity is a starting point for creative departure
- By showing the process by which my own voice as a writer became expressed in my roles as an educator and materials writer
- By exploring the process of becoming visible through the negotiation of values between validator: validated, publisher: educator.

I have also aimed to show how a process of change, or knowledge transformation, took place in educational contexts: in these specific cases, by starting with what is known by the learner, and by introducing the opportunity for, and practice of ‘linguistic adventure’ through focused practice, modelling and framing -what can be called *scaffolded creativity*. The next chapter will explore *scaffolded creativity* as a framework for learning, and consider the issues which emerge when ‘creativity’ is evaluated and judged within the academy.

Shorter/revised aspects of this chapter have been published: see Appendix Readings 20, 21 and 22

