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**THINKING SKILLS
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Playing it safe: Teachers' views of creativity in poetry writing

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ABSTRACT

Discourses of creativity in education vary from the highly theoretical to more pragmatic views, based on observations of 'what works' in practice. This is especially true in the current global economic climate, where, in Anglophone countries, there is both a premium placed on creativity at the same time as there is a tendency towards high-stakes accountability. This has resulted in a discourse of 'barriers' to creativity (Sahlberg, 2011) in our schools. Unsurprisingly, teachers' views of creativity are concomitantly variable (Kampylis, Berki, & Saariluoma, 2009). In this context it is interesting to study the views of teachers who teach subjects, such as poetry, with an established tradition of creative endeavour, but which are nevertheless marginalised (Ofsted, 2007; Locke, 2010). This paper reports on the beliefs, attitudes and values revealed by a large scale study of English teachers in England. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining a randomised controlled trial (RCT) with lesson observations, teacher interviews and student interviews in the form of writing conversations. Underpinned by a socio-constructivist model of play as a vital precursor to creativity and mastery of language (Vygotsky, 1962) this paper finds that, while these teachers are enthusiastic about teaching poetry, their conceptualisations of creativity are not fully theorised. This is especially true of their views of about poetry as freedom from the constraints of 'normal' writing. This includes a stated reluctance towards evaluating the poetry written by pupils. We argue that these teachers are inculcating their pupils in a schooled version of creative language use, one which is divorced from the model of creativity as theorised by writers and creative writing practitioners alike.

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1. Introduction

Internationally, there is a tendency towards a common consensus in western educational jurisdictions that a curriculum which encourages creativity is 'a good thing' (Gibson, 2005; NESTA, 2002); and increasingly the same discourse is being taken up in eastern jurisdictions (Dello-Iacovo, 2009; Vong, 2008). In England, public and professional debate about creativity was re-ignited by the Robinson Report (*All Our Futures:* NACCCE, 1999). The emphasis in the report on the benefits of the cultural sector in terms of 'economic prosperity' (NACCCE, p. 4) was not lost on commentators (Banaji et al., 2007; Craft, 2003; Maisuria, 2005). Craft (2003) traces the development of the discourse of creativity in education to the 'globalisation of economic activity' and increased competition in the same. As Seltzer and Bentley argue (1999), small countries such as the UK, with finite natural resources, will increasingly depend in this globalised context on 'weightless' economic activity (e.g. service industries, e-commerce and communications). It follows that a 'well-educated' workforce will be judged on its ability to respond quickly to global market needs, for example creating new products which are both innovative and not at risk of obsolescence (Craft, 2003). It would be wrong, however, to categorise the Robinson Report as utilitarian in its view of

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creativity and of culture. Maisuria (2005) has argued that it is critical of a National Curriculum which serves children poorly in respect of developing their creativity and instead promotes a 'system that is in favour of conformity and standardisation' (Maisuria, 2005, p. 146).

Standardisation, which Maisuria (2005) is both anxious about and critical of, is now synonymous with the subject of English and the field of literacy in post-industrial English speaking nations (DfEE, 1998; No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002; NAPLAN, 2011). Furthermore, and in spite of critiques which range from statistical examinations of data for reading improvement (Loveless, 2012; Tymms & Merrell, 2007) to critiques of testing as a limited and negative agent of change (Dulfer, Polesel, & Rice, 2012; Polesel, Dulfer, & Turnnbull, 2012; Ravitch, 2011; Reese, 2013), many jurisdictions are increasing the testing of literacy (Common Core Standards, 2012; DfE, 2013; NAPLAN, 2011). The explicit rationales behind these interventions are increased public accountability on state funded education, and the need for an educated workforce who can respond to the pressures of a globalised economy (NAPLAN, 2011). Yet at the same time, literacy (also English or the Language Arts) is often also seen as a subject which provides a creative space in which learners can find their 'voice' (Dymoke and Hughes, 2009; Fraser, 2006; Misson & Sumara, 2006; Morgan, 2006; Obied, 2007; Schwalb, 2006; Sumara & Davis, 2006). Within this the writing of poetry is seen as a 'natural' activity for learners (Koch, 1970; Skelton, 2006; Styles, 1992), affording it an almost totemic position as a creative enterprise. Drawing on a large national study, this paper seeks to illustrate how, when considering the writing of poetry, teachers describe poetry writing as a creative endeavour but nevertheless promote it as a 'schooled' and therefore safe version of the real thing.

2. Creativity, conformity and standardisation

Whilst early conceptualisations of creativity focused substantially upon the individual as a creative being, and upon identifying the traits of a creative person (Guilford, 1950; Torrance, 1998; Shallcross, 1981), more recent thinking has viewed creativity as a socio-culturally determined concept, framed by cultural values and specific social contexts (Craft, 2005; Kurtzberg & Amabile, 2001; Sternberg, 2006). Within this, socio-cultural pressures towards conformity and standardisation have been identified as 'barriers' to creativity in schools by more recent commentators (Au, 2008; Nichols & Berliner, 2007; Sahlberg, 2011). To standardisation of teaching and learning, Sahlberg (2011) adds 'competition as the main driver of educational improvement' and 'tougher test-based accountability' as key drivers of a situation in which curricula are narrowing and rote learning is on the increase. Claxton (2008), Robinson (2010), Godin (2012) and Sahlberg (2011) have all argued that the two dominant models of education in the twentieth century, closely linked and operationally serving each other (Sahlberg, 2011), have failed. These have been codified as the industrial and intellectual models. The former values rationalism and efficiency, and is based on the notion that the purpose of education is to serve the marketplace which decides on a fixed number of products that it requires. The latter is driven by the notion that intelligence is best measured by the ability to recall and reproduce information. Claxton has argued that this privileges those learners who can demonstrate aptitude in 'clerical mind' thinking (2008, p. 1): punctuality, rapid and accurate retrieval of information and respect for authority. A consensus is therefore beginning to emerge that these models of schooling can no longer serve a world in which the challenges prompted by technological and economic change are deemed to be, by definition, ahead of the capacity of systems of education to predict or keep pace with them.

Sahlberg (2011) maintains that accuracy 'is not enough' of a goal of systems of schooling: other kinds of thinking and behaviour, such as collaboration, risk-taking and learning to be wrong are seen as habits of mind which foster the creativity of learners. This is not new. Robinson (NACCCE, 1999) prefigures Sahlberg's conclusion when he says, in the first paragraph of his report, that 'raising standards in literacy and numeracy. . .will not be enough to meet the challenges that face education' (NACCCE, 1999, p. 4). This is interesting because Robinson was responding to a New Labour government White Paper (DfEE, 1997) which seemed to come to exactly the same conclusion. Maisuria (2005) is forensic in his analysis of the same. He details how three successive Secretaries of State for Education from the same administration each went on record encouraging schools to 'take risks and innovate' (Morris, 2002, p. 21): this was reported as schools being given 'freedom' (Lightfoot, 2002) to value creativity.

As both Lightfoot (2002) and Maisuria (2005) note, however, while some of the terms of reference in the discourse of education appeared to change, the language of public accountability remained firmly in place. Charles Clarke, the then Secretary of State, in a speech to mark the tenth anniversary of Ofsted, the school inspection service of England, said that while schools would not be 'blamed' or 'punished' for taking risks 'accountability [was] not an optional extra' (Lightfoot, 2002). This is ironic in that schools' capacity for innovation itself became a matter for scrutiny in inspections by Ofsted as a result. This bifurcated discourse has continued under the coalition government, with a promise to remove the 'straitjacket' of the National Curriculum, giving teachers more 'freedom' to 'innovate and inspire' (Telegraph, 2010). Thus, politicians in England in the last decade and a half have tried to bridge what Brehony & Kevin, 2005 calls an 'irreconcilable' contradiction, on the one hand promoting a discourse of creativity and innovation in schools, while on the other remaining in thrall to 'top-down habits and electoral pressures' (Brehony & Kevin, 2005, p. 41). Both of these arguments are framed within a discourse of economic utility, and take place at a time of high-stakes accountability which does not show signs of becoming less risk-averse (Sainsbury, 2009). When discussing teachers' conceptualisations of creativity, it is important to bear these narratives and discourses in mind, for they help to shape and influence the context out of which such views are formed.

3. Teachers' conceptualisations of creativity

Research into teachers' conceptualisations of creativity internationally presents a mixed picture. According to Kampylis et al. (2009), there have been no major/large-scale studies of teachers' conceptions of creativity since Fryer and Collings (1991). In Europe it has been reported (Kampylis et al., 2009) that there are only three cross-cultural studies of teachers' thinking about creativity (Runco & Johnson, 2002; Seng, Keung, & Cheng, 2008; Spiel & Korff, 1998) and only two concerning the views of pre-service teachers, from Cyprus (Diakidoy & Kanari, 1999) and Greece (Kampylis et al., 2009). Furthermore, there is also a background of competing 'rhetorics' of creativity in education in England (Banaji & Burn, 2007a, 2007b). These have been summarised by Banaji and Burn (2007b) as follows: Creative Genius: creativity belonging to only a few highly educated and disciplined individuals; Democratic Creativity and Cultural Re/Production: creativity is expressed via meanings made from and with references to popular culture; Ubiquitous Creativity: where creativity enables individuals to respond flexibly to the problems and challenges of the modern world; Creativity for Social Good: where creativity is seen as a tool for personal empowerment and social regeneration; Creativity as Economic Imperative: creativity is expressed through the problem-solving and skills of individuals (e.g. those working in 'creative industries'); Play and Creativity: creativity is modelled in childhood play and acts as a precursor to adult creativity and problem-solving; and Creativity and Cognition: where creativity is the product of both the individual mind (Gardner, 1993) and more culturally situated contexts (Vygotsky, 1998). Significantly, a final category identified by Banaji and Burn, is the rhetoric of the Creative Classroom, locating itself in pragmatic accounts of "the craft of the classroom", rather than in academic theories of mind or culture (Banaji & Burn, 2007b, p. 63). This may help to explain why there is little evidence to say which of these rhetorics is a view predominantly held by teachers.

It would appear from research conducted with a range of populations in the European context that the notion of creativity, how it is to be taught, taught for and measured in schools, are not stable constructs. Sahlberg (2011) has commented that the need to demonstrate conformity is a very strong motivation in school populations. This might be categorised, with those outlined above, as one of many peripheral pressures on teachers' creative practice. It is therefore possible to detect in some populations of teachers a disconnect in their views, in that they self-report as valuing creativity but dislike characteristics associated with it, such as risk-taking, independence and impulsivity (Westby & Dawson, 1995). Earlier research by Torrance and Safter (1986) and Mack (1987) suggests that some teachers' focus on maintaining discipline and order in the classroom has a negative bearing on their ability to foster individual students' creativity. The research of Thomson, Hall, & Russell (2006) and Hall, Thomson, & Russell (2007) on the complex pressures facing schools who work with creative practitioners, is a good example of how it is possible for teachers to 'minimise risk', including the setting of achievable and 'safe' goals for such work (Kress et al., 2005). This can result in the accomplishment of tangible outcomes, but without a redefinition of longer-term goals for learning (Hall et al., 2007).

Alongside these peripheral pressures, Runco, Johnson, & Bear (1993) show that some teachers' idiosyncratic implicit theories of creativity act as prototypes against which students' creative behaviour is measured, whether or not this is found to be of use to either party. Beghetto (2006) shows that these implicit theories can be seen in the way that some teachers organise their classrooms, with the result that some learners' creative behaviour is advanced and others' inhibited. In their work on the gap between researchers' and teachers' conceptualisations of creativity, Davies et al. (2004) speculate that some teachers' uncritical views of creativity might arise from a lack of time given to it in initial teacher education courses. This results in an unhappy situation whereby teachers' contradictory notions of the nature of creativity and how far it can be promoted in the classroom (Kampylis et al., 2009) can be witnessed in what Alencar (2002, p. 15) calls their 'inhibiting practices'. These include: emphasising the need for correct responses; an overstated emphasis on reproducing information; and scant emphasis on students' capabilities to engage in imaginative thinking (Kampylis et al., 2009, p. 15).

To these findings one can add the summaries of Fryer (2011) and Csikzentmihalyi (2011). In a summary of several studies on teachers' conceptualisations of creativity (Fryer, 1994, 1996, 2006), Fryer (2011) notes that female teachers are more likely than their male counterparts to describe creativity in personal terms. They are also more likely to notice depth of thinking and feeling in the work of students, identifying these as signs of originality. She also notes that teachers of arts subjects and early years' learners are more likely to describe creativity in terms of self-expression. Fryer is critical of 'permissive' education in the UK in the 1960s (Fryer, 2011, p. 331), especially the assumption that promoting creativity in the classroom amounted to little more than a provision of resources. This scepticism is shared by Csikzentmihalyi (2011), who notes that teachers show interest in creativity but nevertheless lack vision and leadership in implementing policies in schools which will promote it in a systematic fashion. Notably, he is critical of the argument that creativity matters in schools because of wider failures in the world economy. Even more seriously, he identifies the lack of a clear theoretical framing of creativity ('a post hoc social attribution to new ideas and objects': 2011, p. 408) as a fundamental issue facing the profession.

4. Poetry and inner speech

Taking a social-constructivist view of learning and thinking, this paper aims, therefore, to explore the intellectual lives of teachers (Bruner, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978) through the lens of their views of creativity in their teaching of poetry writing in the neo-liberal, risk-averse and high-stakes context described above, in which poetry has been found to be marginalised within the writing curriculum as a whole (Wilson, 2013; Locke, 2010; Ofsted, 2007). This paper views language from a Vygotskian perspective (1962), as a tool which integrates learners into the wider culture at the same time as transforming

individuals' minds. Drawing on Banaji and Burn's (2007b) reading of Vygotsky's work on adolescents' creativity (1998) it also sees playfulness with language 'as a necessary precursor to creativity proper' (Banaji & Burn, 2007b, p. 64). This paper therefore takes the view that poetry writing in school is potentially a very creative space in which 'the imaginative work of play is complemented by processes of rational thought' (Banaji and Burn, 2007, p. 65).

Also of interest in this study is Vygotsky's notion of private speech (1962) as a kind of utterance which is directed at and regulated by the self when facing tasks that are challenging. These constructs of language use are pertinent to a study of teachers' views of creativity in poetry writing because, as has been argued by Wilson (2009), poetic composition in the context of other writing in schools is both personal and especially challenging. In part this is due to the nature of poetic composition itself, for poetry offers the challenge and capacity for language play, where meaning can be stretched to its limit, within forms which are themselves a challenge to the writer. Therefore poetry makes demands upon learners' writing in schools because at some level it requires a subversion or 'unlearning' of the normal rules of writing (Wilson, 2009). This makes poetry both a demanding and a potentially creative space in the writing curriculum. For learners the challenge on one level is to adapt inner speech to the extent that it become more than the mapping or re-rehearsing of established structures of language (Khatib, 2011; Levine & Munsch, 2011). This is a challenge for teachers because as Wood has said (1998), teachers help learners to draw on their experiences and knowledge of language based on what they understand, as experts, to be relevant to them. This begs two questions relevant to our study: one concerns teacher knowledge, about what is relevant for learners to know, understand and practise in poetry writing in school; and secondly, how far teachers can be trusted by learners to aid them in this difficult task. As Kozulin (1990) has noted, children produce more playful speech in the company of adults they perceive as interested in helping them.

5. Methodology

The findings reported here draw on a larger national study, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), which investigated whether embedding a functionally-oriented approach to grammar within the teaching of writing improved students' writing attainment (Myhill, Jones, Lines, & Watson, 2012; Jones, Myhill, & Bailey, 2013) and developed their metalinguistic understanding of authorial crafting (Myhill, 2011). A brief summary of the larger study will be presented in order to contextualise the data for this article. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining a randomised controlled trial (RCT) with lesson observations, teacher interviews and student interviews in the form of writing conversations. 32 comprehensive schools in England, representing social and cultural diversity took part in the study: this comprised 32 classes of students aged 12–13 ($n = 744$). Following an initial test of grammatical subject knowledge, teachers were ranked according to their test scores and randomly allocated to the intervention or comparison groups. The intervention involved the teachers teaching three units of work, each focussing on a different written genre, and in which grammar relevant to the genre being studied was embedded.

Of specific relevance to this paper, one of the three units of work developed for the intervention addressed poetry writing. This was a deliberate decision because so little research in writing addresses the writing of poetry. Moreover, the development of the teaching materials for the intervention were founded upon a set of pedagogical principles (Wilson, 2013) which included the use of 'creative imitation' as a strategy for enabling young writers to appropriate new constructions or patterning in their writing, and it also advocated playfulness, risk-taking and experimentation as a critical element of supporting the development of conscious control of authorial craft.

The lesson observations provided insights into how the comparison and intervention teachers addressed the teaching of these genres, and also provided a stimulus for the post hoc teacher interviews which probed teachers' pedagogical decision-making in the lesson observed and their conceptualisations of grammar and its role in the teaching of writing. One lesson was observed per unit of work, followed by one interview, giving 3 lesson observations and 3 interviews per teacher (total number of observations and interviews = 96 of each). This article draws on the 32 interviews which were collected during the teaching of the poetry unit of work.

The interviews were analysed inductively, making use of the affordances of NViVo. The first stage involved open coding, in which the interview data was labelled and classified, using the process of 'constant comparison', as advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1967). In order to ensure the trustworthiness (Guba & Lincoln, 1981) of the data, the research team met after initial coding of one interview to compare codes and to agree common definitions of codes, where appropriate. Subsequently, the research team coded independently, with an iterative re-visiting collectively of codes and their definitions to ensure consistency. When the process of open coding was complete, the definition of each code was checked for clarity, and each segment of data attributed to a code was checked for coherence with its definition. The next stage of data analysis involved axial coding (Corbin and Strauss, 2008): a process of analysing the codes and their inter-relationships to cluster them into over-arching themes. The over-arching themes drawn from the interviews with teachers during the teaching of the poetry unit were:

- Attitude to poetry: Responses relating to teachers' and pupils' attitudes towards poetry
- Language: Responses relating to teachers' subject knowledge of grammatical, poetic and linguistic terminology
- Engagement: Responses relating to pupils' enjoyment of poetry, including their emotional and creative responses using it

An analysis of the second of these codes, concerning findings about teachers' ambivalent personal epistemologies of metalanguage can be found in Wilson and Myhill (2012). The data presented in this article relate to comments coded under the theme of 'Engagement'.

6. Findings

Four codes were categorised under this theme: Creativity; Enjoyment; Feelings and Emotions; and Freedom. This article focuses upon the teachers' thinking represented by the 'Freedom' and 'Creativity' codes.

6.1. Creativity

Respondents were not asked to give definitions of creativity per se. The comments made by teachers relating to creativity in the heading of that name were revealing in that they presented a relatively limited conceptualisation of what creativity entails. Nevertheless we infer from their comments in relation to learners' poetry writing their conceptualisations and work-ing assumptions concerning it. Many of the comments relating to creativity indicated a deficit model of creative processes and habits of mind. For example, some teachers referred to a lack of creativity in their pupils, confident that they 'struggled' with it and that it was not something they saw 'flowing'. This recalls and is perhaps an echo of the work of Csikszentmihalyi (1996). There are also hints of a nuanced view of creativity in two metaphors used to describe it: as a 'festering process'; and that language is 'malleable' capable of being 'moulded into whatever [poetic] form they want'.

However, while some respondents were confident that they recognised learners' creativity when they saw it ('[the poetry scheme] has really brought out their creative side'), there was also evidence in their remarks of a kind of binary concep-tualisation of creativity. This appeared in three different ways in their remarks. Firstly there was a small group of remarks which appeared to place the concept of creativity in a kind of judgement-free limbo. For example, it is possible to detect in the following remarks a sense of opposition to critiquing creative work presented by learners:

> 'I think it's highly unlikely that a teacher would ever say, oh it's good, but the commas are in the wrong place, or you need a comma there dear, you just can't get away with saying that to a child can you really? You can't knock them for creativity';

> 'How do you break it to them it's not quite right but it's great? It's hard, because how can you stand in judgement of somebody else's creativity?'

It could be inferred from these remarks that the model of creativity that has been internalised by these teachers is one where assessment of creative work is either not permitted to intrude, or one where the language of such evaluation has yet to be constructed and applied. And yet, as the following remarks imply, evaluation of students' work did take place. It is important to note that the first of these remarks is in response to work the speaker felt positive about, in contrast to the remarks above:

> 'It's lovely to mark something that just hits the creativity mark and you don't have to think about technical accuracy and, and sentence length [or] structure and all the rest of it';

> 'Their finished kennings were not as creative and not as free as I would've liked them to have been. It's always surprising I think with children how constrained they are.'

Firstly, these remarks are interesting from the point of view of what they tell us about their speakers' conceptualisations of the place of assessment in creative endeavours. These can be interpreted as binary in their worldview because they appear to promote, unconsciously or otherwise, a model of creativity which is cautious towards making judgements about value. This caution may stem from a lack of subject knowledge and/or lack of an agreed language about what constitutes progress in this field. And yet the very notion of hitting the 'creativity mark' and pupils' poetry writing not matching the ideal of creativity of the speaker both communicate a sense of knowing when something is of value. Secondly these remarks are striking because of what they tell us about conceptualisations regarding the importance of 'formal constraints' in the creation of new and original work. The first remark appears to speak of joy at not having to assess, in the context of poetry writing, aspects of 'everyday' writing such as use of syntax. There is, perhaps, a sense of freedom here, and a sense of relish at having time to concentrate on other aspects of language use. There is a striking gap here between the model of creativity held by these teachers and teachers of creative writing working in Higher Education, where assessment is central to the language describing the subject (NAWE, 2008; O'Rourke, 2008). It is possible, therefore, to see this as a schooled model of creativity, where learners' creative work is protected and 'safe' from the demands of assessment.

What both remarks share is a concern for 'accuracy' and what the second speaker calls constraints. This is the second notable aspect of remarks in the creativity sub-code: the teachers' consistent linking of the constraints of writing poetry to 'rules' and concomitant lack of 'freedom of expression'. Again, there is a striking metaphor used by one of the teachers which gives insight into conceptualisations about poetic language and form:

> 'You say let yourself go, just think of. . .anything you like and..try and be as original as possible but. . .they find it very difficult to. . . The language itself is a. . .shackle. . .to people other than those who. . .are really confident with it.'

Elsewhere, 'rules' of poetry are referred to on five different occasions, in terms of a 'system' to follow, a form (e.g. sonnet, kenning) to 'conform to', or an expectation (using rhyme) to live up to. It is possible to detect a level of anxiety in these remarks, partly about the point of poetic form and partly about the pedagogic approaches taken to teach them. On the one hand there is a desire for freedom, and on the other an acknowledgement that all language contained in sentences is, as one teacher puts it 'slightly constraining in terms of creativity'. It is therefore possible to interpret these remarks as revealing a binary worldview of poetic composition, which sees the rules and conventions of poetic forms as constraining, not a source of potential 'freedom of expression'.

The third and final binary remark regarding creativity offered by these teachers concerns the teaching of creativity itself. One teacher revealed:

> 'Although you can teach them certain techniques, you just can't teach creativity. . .You can prompt it, but I don't know if you can teach it.'

This remark suggests that creativity resides in the temperament of the individual and cannot be taught. This implicitly questions the purpose of teaching poetry writing in schools, and by extension all creative endeavour, if it is to be found only in the range of 'ability' of a lucky few who either show talent for or disposition towards it.

6.2. Freedom

The chief trope used by teachers in set of remarks coded under the Freedom heading was that of poetry as 'play'. Of the twenty-nine separate remarks made by teachers using this term, seventeen were concerned with poetry as 'playing with words' or 'playing with language'. A further four mentioned playing with the forms, structures and rules of poetry. Remarks such as the following summarise the concept of poetry as play, presenting poetry writing as 'newness', as experiment, as 'fun' and as 'deliberate choice':

> '[Poetry] is an opportunity to. . .play about with language and to. . .use language. . . in new ways really. Poetry very much is about that playfulness with language.'

> 'Experimenting with words is important in order to create something original, and I like them to think that their ideas are worthy that. . .they don't have to follow a set format when they're writing a poem.'

> 'The three poetry lessons we've done have been quite fun; they've been quite light-hearted, they have literally been playing with words.'

> 'I really like the kennings that. . .are funny [and] playful, that try to deliberately play with language. Some of their kennings rhymed and I actually set that as something when I was away, and therefore had much less input and they were naturally playful with them.'

The final remark above recalls Coleridge's dictum about poetry being born out of the 'ordeal of deliberate choice', but one can only speculate how far that construct was in the speaker's mind when being interviewed. This is interesting because two further respondents made the connection between poetry as an opportunity to 'choose words' and 'freedom'. In keeping with remarks made elsewhere in this code, the tone communicates positivity towards poetry that is shaped more by the opportunity it affords learners and less by the constraints it imposes upon them. Thus, when the tropes of 'rules' and 'constraints' are used, it is to denote the distinctive contribution that poetry can make to learners' knowledge about the possibilities of language and language use. To develop the metaphor above of poetry as experiment, poetry in this sense is seen as a special case, a petri dish of experiment and freedom where the 'rules' and 'boundaries' of 'normal' writing either do not apply or do not need to apply. To extend that metaphor for a moment, it is as though poetry acts as a kind of catalyst in the writing curriculum for seeing what is possible when certain conditions are brought together, for example writing a poem of kennings using rhyme. This is a very different view of the notion of 'constraint' which predominates in the 'Creativity' code of responses.

There were 14 mentions of the construct of following rules within the 'Freedom' code of responses. Five of these explicitly spoke of 'rules' being broken.

> 'Poetry breaks down the rules of the English language.'

> 'I think actually poetry is almost the opposite [of prose], and it's breaking down the boundaries that actually there are, [there's] very few rules. . .poetry allows you to break those or just play with words.'

> 'Once you've learnt the structure you can then learn how to. . .break structures and play around.'

> 'One of the things that I try to emphasise is this idea that we know the rules and now we're going to break them or at least play with them. . .using words in an unusual way.'

> 'When you're writing a poem you can break out of those rules. . .and make different word and sentence choices.'

In contrast to the way 'rules' and 'constraints' are spoken of in the 'Creativity' code of responses, just two responses in this code spoke of rules 'deadening what [pupils] try to do with language' and not being constrained to 'writing in sentences'.

Just as the notion of poetry as play gives a sense of possibility and excitement, the notion of 'rules' in language and poetic form is not presented here as a hindrance to creativity, rather as an challenge to 'play with language in a more interesting way'. In this way constraints of language and poetic form are viewed as a route into creativity rather than a blockage to it. Drawing on the work of Sharples (1999), Wilson (2009) has argued that progress in this area of writing is difficult to define but is nevertheless characterised by moments when learners outstrip given constraints, either through narrowing or relaxing them. In an analysis of Chukovsky's theory of subversion of reality through language play (1963), Whitehead (1995) has argued that this is a critical phase of language development which is observable in all young learners. Bruner (1979, p. 25) describes this kind of process as vital to mature artists, who consciously use them in their art-making, enabling them to find a 'second wind'. This is when it is as though the object, or in this case poetic form, 'takes over'. Some of these teachers' responses show evidence of a similar understanding of the potential of poetic form to act as an impetus to creativity. At the same time, many of them take a rather more negative view of the same. This suggests the notion of playing with language in the context of making poems in the classroom remains under-theorised for teachers in the research sample.

Wilson (2010) has reported on the literature which describes how mature poets deliberately seek out to take risks with poetic form as a way of testing themselves as it were against the constraints of the art-form (Brown & Paterson, 2003; Brown, 2004; Crawford, Hart, Kinloch, & Price, 1995; Curtis, 1996; Hughes, 1994; Wilmer, 1994; Wilson & Somerville-Arjat, 1990). In this way they achieve freedom. To achieve this confidently requires deep knowledge of the art-form in question, but it also requires the spark of Vygotsky's inner or private speech to ignite and sustain such interrogations. As former US Poet Laureate Robert Pinksy has said 'an artist needs not so much an audience, as to feel a need to answer, a promise to respond' (Pinsky, 1988, p. 85). This paradigm of freedom, even if it sets out only to satisfy the private self, has more to do with outstripping the demands of a given subject or form than it is a subversion of the rules of language altogether. How far the teachers in this survey share the same conception is not clear. It is therefore possible to argue that the model of creativity learners are inculcated with by these teachers is indeed a safe one, suitable for school but not matched by the qualities of deep play refined by evaluation found in mature artists.

7. Discussion

Wilson (2010) has argued that teachers responding to questions about their beliefs about and practices of teaching poetry writing demonstrated a Janus-like capacity (Rothenberg, 1976) to look two ways at once. It was found that they demonstrated a strong allegiance to the 'personal growth' model of English teaching, while at the same time showing a lack of consciousness (Goodwyn, 2001) about some of the pedagogical practices they said they used to promote that model. It could be argued that the teachers in this study display a similar ability to look two ways at once, resulting in their giving conflicting responses in two areas: their reactions to the notion of making judgements about quality of learners' poetic composition and to the notion of constraints and rules within poetic composition. It could be argued that in both of these areas teachers are unconsciously using a 'safety first' model of poetry writing pedagogy, which in the long run is sufficient neither for learners nor themselves as teachers of creative writing.

This can be called a 'safety first' approach for a variety of reasons. On one level, teaching poetry writing is 'safe' because it is peripheral within the writing and creative writing curriculum in schools (Benton, 1986, 1999; O'Neill, 2006; Dymoke, 2007; Locke, 2009, 2010). While this denotes a lowly status to poetry writing (Wilson, 2009, 2010), the untested writing that is produced and parallel low stakes can appeal to teachers as a potentially fertile and creative space (Wilson, 2010, 2013). On another level, because the writing that is made within this space is untested, it can lead to a situation in which assumptions and beliefs about poetry and how to teach it creatively also remain under-examined. Poetry's lowly status in the curriculum can therefore be seen as double-edged. It is at once a space of so-called 'freedom' and one where the possibilities of that freedom are not fully explored. It is therefore possible to argue that some core beliefs and theories underpinning practice in this area, based on these data, remain undeveloped in terms of placing poetry creativity. This especially applies to making judgements about creative work, and the notion of using constraints in creative writing.

There is good cause to speculate why teachers might feel nervous about assessing creative writing of this kind. As has been noted by O'Rourke (2005, 2008) while an increasingly instrumentalised system of measuring quality in writing was developed in mainstream education in England in the nineties and 2000s, via National Tests and reporting measures, creative writing practitioners working in community and higher education developed an alternative culture of benchmarking quality (Wilson & Metcalfe, 2011; NAWE, 2008). O'Rourke argues (2008) this language has not permeated the school system. Furthermore, since the introduction of Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) materials (DCSF, 2008) teachers in mainstream schools in England have monitored development in pupils' writing using a microscopic range of instruments. It is not difficult to imagine, therefore, why teachers might be apprehensive about the notion of judging learners' creative work. On one level, contrary to higher education, there is not a strong tradition of assessment of poetry writing in schools; on another, the system does not reward it. In the sense that they are subjective and based on knowledge of individual pupils there are echoes, in some of the responses above, of Ted Hughes's comment that writers make progress when they 'manage to outwit [their] own inner police system' (1982, p. 7). One could therefore add that working out a model of progression with which to discuss pupils' poetry writing is seen as too difficult, impossible, even, and therefore not worth spending time over.

One could speculate further that these responses represent a 'safety first' approach to teaching poetry writing because of the risks involved in terms of explaining 'progress' to pupils and other teachers alike. Wilson (2009) has argued that progress in poetry writing by pupils is not always linear, does not always appear in measurable steps and cannot be measured in

the same way as prose. For example, for some pupils, an observable mark of progress could be seen in the way they choose to play with language by writing 'nonsense' which bears none of the marks of 'normal' prose composition (Wilson, 2009). One can therefore imagine a situation where a teacher who is confident with their subject knowledge of poetry and whose reading of and about it is wide being more at ease in their judgements about what constitutes progress than those with little reading or interest in it. However, one can also understand that the necessary effort of persuasion required to explain how even snap judgements about progress have been arrived at may be too daunting. This has the potential to relegate the teaching of poetry writing to a private pleasure, reserved mainly for enthusiasts. The issue of subject knowledge is important here, because if teachers require pupils to 'go beyond' the poetic form they are given to work with, the success of pupils attempting to execute that in their writing can only be measured in terms of the repertoire of the teacher. This would include knowledge of strategies pupils might employ to subvert a given form. This has implications for teachers' subject and pedagogic knowledge. We argue that teachers need to be conversant not only with the poetic forms they are teaching but also with a 'web of tactics' (Sharples, 1999) of how they might be used playfully. We speculate that these teachers claim they want to see playful language in their pupils' writing at the same time as lacking a fully theorised model of evaluating such work because their personal knowledge and experience of writing poetry is limited. In terms of truly developing a Vygotskian model of poetry as language-play, this results in a situation where teachers would rather see pupils playing within the safe parameters that they set them and no further.

This can be seen in statements praising learners when evidence of the ideal of creativity carried in the mind of the teachers appears in their written work. This occurs either serendipitously or, as one teacher put it, when she was away, by implication increasing the pupils' sense of freedom. The lack of proper theorising of personal creativity and what it might mean in terms of tackling the challenge of constraints (e.g. of form, language) does pupils no favours, for it leads them unwittingly into a game of guess-what-is-in-the-teacher's-head. This has implications both for the creative written work that might be produced, as well as for assessment. It is possible to envisage a scenario following on from this in which pupils 'play safe' in their poetry writing. Furthermore, it is possible to see this resulting in a safety first model of assessment of creative writing, one which is not adhered to by teachers and practitioners of creative writing in Higher Education (NAWE, 2008). This has implications for teachers of English when they consider what they mean by terms used in this survey such as 'experimenting' and 'playing with language'. This is a model of creativity which teachers are inducting their learners into is one of encouraging and promoting risk on the surface but which carries a hidden message of safety first beneath it.

We therefore argue that these teachers are inculcating their pupils in a schooled version of creative language use, one which is divorced from the model of creativity as theorised by writers and creative writing practitioners alike. The 'hands-off' model of pedagogy, so clearly nervous of evaluation, but semi-conscious of moments of progress at the same time, has led to situation where learners are inducted not into a community of practising writers but a community of safety first writing, characterised by language which is playful, but only up to a point. This schooled version of creativity is divorced from the real-world evaluations, tensions and constraints that writers need and choose to live with, and which is shown in the literature to be one writers actively participate in (Ash, 1995; Dunn, 2001; Gunn, 1994; O'Hara, 2000).

8. Conclusion

For Vygotsky (1962) the ability to play with language was crucial to the development of inner speech, through which the individual gains mastery of the world. This has much in common with the Aristotelian idea of mimesis, through which the reader and writer discover what is 'out there' 'in here'. As Vygotsky would have it, the tool of language gives life to the symbols we encounter, in the world, in literature and in learning. Reflecting on how this happens in the sphere of poetry, Heaney has stated that poetry's first obedience is to 'its joy in being a process of language *as well as* a representation of things in the world' (Heaney, 1995, p. 5, our italics): 'The movement is from delight to wisdom and not vice versa' (1995, p. 5). What Heaney asserts in prose, W.H. Auden declares in a poem. In 'New Year Letter' he depicts the tension between poetry as mimesis, which delights in itself, and claims made upon it to have a social responsibility:

Art in intention is mimesis;
But, realised, the resemblance ceases;
Art is not life and cannot be;
A midwife to society (Auden, in Mendelson, 2007, p. 199).

These poets' implicit response to the rhetorics of creativity in this context (Banaji & Burn, 2007a; Banaji & Burn, 2007b; NACCCE, 1999) is, as it were, to refute the notion of art as a 'midwife' to social cohesion and prosperity, however noble those intentions are. Vygotsky, from a psychologist's perspective, and Heaney and Auden, from a poet's, agree that taking control of language is not idle fancy, or the 'optional extra' of cabinet ministers in thrall to a high-stakes discourse of accountability, masked by notions of 'freedom'. It is therefore possible to see parallels between these teachers' Janusian conceptualisations of creativity and politicians' bifurcated discourse.

As seen in their comments about freedom and evaluation in particular, these teachers 'play it safe' discussing the merits of teaching poetry writing to young people. They are positive towards poetry teaching because it appeals to their sense of what their subject is about, for example developing learners' personal growth; but they have not developed a fully theorised vocabulary with which to analyse assessment and creativity. It needs to be remembered that these teachers are

speaking from within a context that has seen an increase in 'stringent regimes of performativity' (Kress et al., 2005, p. 172) and accountability (Sainsbury, 2009). One can speculate that this has perhaps caused some to be cautious when making pronouncements on the measurability of work that is at its core imaginative and to a degree the opposite of what is required in other parts of the writing curriculum. However, as argued by O'Rourke (2008), while accountability of teachers within mainstream schooling has increased the language of assessment within Higher and Further Education regarding Creative Writing as a discipline has grown ever more refined. Ironically, she argues, this has occurred at the same time as cultural policy in England 'was redefining its practice to make education central to the experience' (2008), with an emphasis on widening participation and re-evaluation of excellence. In this sense the 'schooled' version of creativity, as seen in these statements about teaching poetry, has not kept up with and no longer mirrors the world beyond it.

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