Text World Theory as *cognitive grammatics*: a pedagogical application in the secondary classroom

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1. Introduction

In this chapter I explore how teachers can use Text World Theory as a pedagogical tool. Drawing on Halliday's (2002) notion of 'grammatics' as a way of using knowledge about language 'to think with', I argue that teachers can exploit Text World Theory's position as a cognitive discourse grammar to design meaningful tasks and activities that are mindful of the discourse strategies and resources that students use when reading. Since Text World Theory is fundamentally a reader response theory, I argue that it ought to sit comfortably within secondary teachers' own philosophical and pedagogical belief systems, and has the potential to provide a richer more nuanced perspective on how students engage in the process of reading texts. I exemplify my argument with detailed reference to a case study involving a secondary English teacher in a UK school, Laura, using Text World Theory to inform her teaching of the William Carlos Williams' poem 'The red wheelbarrow'.

2. Text World Theory, cognitive linguistics and pedagogy

Text World Theory has predominantly been used as an analytical framework within the field of cognitive poetics, where researchers have exploited its potential to account for a range of literary and non-literary discourse (see Giovanelli 2013: 5 for a recent summary of work in this area). However, some emergent work has suggested that Text World Theory can offer much to the classroom teacher. For example, researchers have demonstrated its versatility to support the teaching of different genres and text types, in a variety of different learning contexts (de Obregón *et al*. 2009; Giovanelli 2010; Scott 2013). These approaches are similar in that they are *student-oriented*,

promoting the value for the learner in using aspects of the theory – usually involving the notions of world-building and world-switching – to develop analyses of texts, and to support the planning and drafting of writing. The value of Text World Theory as *teacher-oriented*, as a resource for the teacher, has to my knowledge received no direct attention. In the rest of this chapter, I explore how Text World Theory can facilitate teachers' knowledge of what happens in classroom contexts, and help them to make decisions about how they might best support students' learning.

Giovanelli and Mason (2015) highlight how an understanding of the cognitive linguistic notions of figure-ground and narrative schemas can provide a foundation from which decisions about learning and teaching can be taken. In a discussion of the perils of imposing certain ways of interpreting and responding to texts, we argue that teachers can promote more authentic reading experiences by avoiding privileging their own knowledge of a text over that of their students. We emphasise the need for practitioners to significantly reconfigure their role from transmitters of linguistic knowledge to informed users of that knowledge to support their classroom practice. In doing so we highlight what Carter (1982: 8) defines as the difference between 'teaching linguistics' and 'having linguistics as a foundation for classroom language teaching' for the teacher. In the latter, ideas about language and communication become tools to inform a range of teacher practices including the planning and delivery of activities, assessment, and the analysis of and reflection on classroom practice.

The rich history of debates in the twentieth- and early twenty-first centuries on the value of grammar teaching in schools (see Locke 2010 for an overview) offers a striking example of why a teacher-oriented linguistics has much to offer. The wealth of evidence that exists against a certain kind of explicit grammar teaching in UK schools (see for example Andrews et al. 2006) is essentially evidence against a certain

kind of language pedagogy, namely a deficit model of language that emphasises prescription and correction with, as Carter describes:

> teachers fulfilling the role of a kind of linguistic dentist, polishing here and there, straightening out, removing decay, filling gaps and occasionally undertaking a necessary extraction.

(Carter 1990: 105-106)

In contrast, recent research has highlighted the value of a rhetorically-driven and contextually-sensitive model of language, underpinned by secure and confident teacher knowledge in developing students' writing (Myhill et al. 2012). Such work has stressed the potential for a teacher-oriented linguistics to act as a springboard for practitioners to develop their own knowledge through research, reading and other forms of continuous professional development.

However, there has been no consensus regarding the model of linguistic knowledge that might be useful for teachers. In UK schools, a functional model of language established in the late 1960s through the work of Michael Halliday (see for example Doughty et al. 1971) became the backdrop for official government policy documents from the 1970s to the 1990s. This included the *Language in the National Curriculum (LINC)* project, which the government of the time initially funded but then refused publication on ideological rather than pedagogical grounds (see Carter 1996a for discussion). In recent years, and in the face of a return to the explicit testing of the grammatical knowledge of primary school children, there has been a return to a 'name the parts pedagogy' (see Giovanelli 2014: 12-19 for discussion). Overseas, a resilient systemic functional linguistics still provides the conceptual template for language work in education in parts of Australia, particularly in genre-based literacy programmes (for example Rose and Martin 2012), and in the United States (for example Hancock 2005).

I have argued elsewhere (Giovanelli 2014) that some fundamental principles of cognitive science and linguistics that draw together the mental, the experiential and the social turn can provide a radical and welcome way for teachers to think about teaching aspects of structure and meaning to students. Indeed in the field of second-language acquisition, there is a significant and growing body of research centred on learning and teaching informed by cognitive linguistics (Holme 2009, 2012; Littlemore 2009), with empirical evidence that such pedagogies have greater impact on student learning than those based on generative and functional models of grammar (Tyler 2012).

It seems to me that cognitive linguistics and for the purposes of this discussion, specifically Text World Theory, is valuable in offering to the teacher a usable framework to reflect on learning and teaching. Current work focusing on real readers in non-educational contexts (for example Whiteley 2011; Gavins 2013) clearly has the potential to be replicated through considering the ways that students interact and position themselves in classroom activities, and project themselves into fictional worlds. Additionally, as Giovanelli and Mason (2015) demonstrate, Text World Theory has the potential to be a powerful tool for teachers to think about reading practices in their classrooms, in engaging in classroom interaction and the setting up of classroom activities.

I have discussed elsewhere (Giovanelli 2014: 36-37) that these potential uses represent a cognitively-oriented example of Halliday's term 'grammatics' (Halliday 2002: 386). Halliday makes the distinction between the *grammar* of a language, and the study of that phenomenon, *grammatics*. The relationship between the two, Halliday argues, is the same as that between a similar pair of terms: *language* (the phenomenon); and *linguistics* (the study of the phenomenon). While students acquire and are able to work within the parameters of their native language's grammar

unconsciously as part of their general linguistic development, grammatics is an explicit type of meta-reflection that becomes foregrounded and explored in educational contexts. In a teacher-oriented grammatics, a practitioner uses the best and most valuable insights from linguistics not simply to teach rules and notions of correctness (a *deficit* model) or descriptions of form, structure and meaning (a *descriptive* model), but rather, as Halliday (2002: 416) suggests, to 'to think with' (a *pedagogical* model).

The most detailed and developed application of Halliday's concept has unsurprisingly been within the systemic functional tradition. For example, Macken-Horarik (2009) explores how knowledge of the ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions of language can facilitate a more sensitive appreciation of children's writing and support the giving of constructive feedback. Here, a teacher moves away from a deficit pedagogy towards a practice informed by an understanding of how linguistic choice and form shape meanings in the context of designing classroom tasks, and engaging in dialogue with students about their own writing. In the case of a functional grammatics, the emphasis is on the value of 'meaning rather than form' (Macken-Horarik 2009: 63). A *cognitive grammatics* offers the potential to draw on concerns such as the embodied nature of meaning, the activation of schematic knowledge in reading, metaphorical mapping between concrete and abstract domains, and the relationship between grammatical construal and meaning. It prioritises exploring the 'how' as well as the 'what' and exploring interpretation, reading and writing as *process* in more expansive ways than simply as *product* (see Carter 1996b for further discussion of these terms).

As Werth argues, Text World Theory offers a more 'human level' of descriptive linguistic enquiry that acknowledges that 'language must be viewed as a phenomenon which is intimately bound up with human experience' (1999: 19). Since from a

pedagogical perspective this is very attractive, here are some ways that Text World Theory consequently appears ideally placed to support a teacher's thinking in the classroom.

1. It has a focus on the contextual aspects of communication as well as the textual. In recognising the interplay between the two, it promotes the recognition of both and the downplaying of neither.

2. It can account for textual elements and the ways in which readers engage with these in the process of reading. The experience that arises from such an enterprise provides opportunities for discussing a fully formed 'texture' (Stockwell 2009) of reading.

3. Its emphases on the dynamic nature of context as an interpersonal construct, and on the situational and social dimensions of reading sit comfortably with the theoretical and educational concerns of participatory theories of learning (Rogoff 2003). As a cognitive discourse grammar, Text World Theory is well placed to be mindful of the wider factors that shape literacy practices, and how 'real-world contexts influence the production of discourse' (Gavins 2013: 7). As a model of communication, it acknowledges the importance of the vast range of psychological, social and textual resources that readers bring to literary experiences.

4. Standard Text World Theory notation presents conceptual space in a visual and concrete way, and emphasises the visual nature of much mental operation (Werth 1999: 8). Used in learning activities, the diagrammatic aspect of Text World Theory emphasises how meanings are primarily derived from spatial and physical imagery (Holme 2012), and is a prototypical *virtual embodied learning activity* (Giovanelli 2014). Text World Theory's diagrams can support the teaching of the complexity that results from spatial, temporal and point of view world-switches in

texts (Giovanelli 2010). The emphasis on the visual can help students to make implicit learning explicit in a way that allows subsequent formative dialogue between teacher and student (Ainsworth et al 2011).

5. Finally, its emphases on textuality, context and negotiated meanings mean that Text World Theory is ideally placed to develop students' own process-driven thinking. The principled relationship that exists between the text and students' own schematic knowledge in the act of making meaning means that Text World Theory has the potential to develop students' metalinguistic skills and metacognition (Flavell 1976) in relation to the reading process more generally.

3. Poetry and reader response

Surveys of beginning and in-service English teachers have frequently highlighted that they value a personal response to literature, and subscribe to a 'personal growth model' (DESWO 1989: 60) emphasising the imaginative and aesthetic nature of the literary experience (Goodwyn 1992, 2011; Goodwyn and Findlay 1999). Free from the pressures of GCSE and A level examinations, where assessment and accountability can promote a mutual dislike of poetry amongst teachers and students (Xerri 2013), poetry teaching to lower age secondary students in the UK (Years 7-9) tends to allow teachers the freedom to be more creative and less transmissive in their approaches (Atherton et al. 2013).

However, curriculum reform and the shifting emphasis on the theory of literature at A level has filtered down to practice with younger students so that practitioners understand that the teaching of literature requires more than just an unqualified passion for reading books, or what Beavis (1997) terms 'the discourse of charismatic pedagogy'. Theoretical concerns particularly around the reception of literature have promoted specification requirements to focus on alternative

interpretations of texts by different groups of readers, highlighting the co-constructed nature of meaning and the importance of readers' backgrounds and experiences. However, official documentation still ensures that students' responses need to be accountable to the text itself. For example, the most recent National Curriculum programme of study for Key Stage 3 English states that students should be able to explore and articulate

> how language, including figurative language, vocabulary choice, grammar, text structure and organisational features, presents meaning.

> (DfE 2013: 4)

With this in mind, I would like to briefly draw attention to the way that Text World Theory complements Rosenblatt's *transactional theory* (Rosenblatt 1970, 1978), a reader-response theory that rests easily with the kinds of dynamic and personal models of meaning making that English teachers value.

Rosenblatt utilises a principle of transactional psychology that proposes that individuals make sense of incoming stimuli through past experiences. Mapped into a model of reading, she explains the reading process as a reciprocal 'coming together' (1978: 12) where the reader creates the text and simultaneously responds to it in a specific spatio-temporal context. The model rejects both at one extreme a formalist reification of the text at the expense of discussion of the situational aspect of reading, and at the other, recourse to personality-driven theories of the reader that pay little attention to the text itself. As Rosenblatt explains

> Through the medium of words, the text brings into the reader's consciousness certain concepts, certain sensuous experiences, certain images of things, people, actions, scenes. The special meanings and, more particularly, the submerged associations that these words and images have for the individual reader will largely determine what the work communicates to him.

There is a clear relationship between the communicative models proposed by Rosenblatt and Werth. They both draw attention to the importance of readers' background knowledge and life experiences, the 'personality traits, memories of past events, present needs and pre-occupations, a particular mood of the moment, and a particular physical condition' (Rosenblatt 1970: 30), and 'frames…whole chunks of experience and situations, codified and stored in memory' (Werth 1999: 20). And, they stress the way that the text acts as 'stimulus' (Rosenblatt 1978: 11) or provides 'referential information' (Werth 1999: 52), that activates idiosyncratic schematic knowledge and applies constraints on the degree of knowledge that is deemed to be useful and appropriate; in other words the text 'helps to regulate' (Rosenblatt 1978: 11) *what* and *how much* through the principle of 'text-drivenness' (Werth 1999: 151). Werth's concept of a text-world as a dynamic conceptual scenario reconfigures Rosenblatt's notion of reading 'as an event in the life of a reader, as embodied in a process resulting from the confluence of reader and the text' (1978: 16) from a cognitive perspective. As such, it can add a rich cognitive dimension to an established way that teachers think about the reading processes.

4. Teaching 'The red wheelbarrow'

4.1 Background

The case study detailed below involves an English teacher, Laura, in her third year of teaching at a comprehensive secondary school in the south of England. Laura had completed an undergraduate degree in English Literature but had taken a linguistics elective in her final year, and was interested in developing her subject knowledge and expertise in language work. Although the school she worked at had a large sixth form

with healthy numbers of students taking English Language at A level, Laura had not yet taught any post-16 classes herself. She was thus hopeful that developing her linguistic knowledge would be good preparation for A level teaching in the future.

Over the course of six months, Laura had completed some general reading in linguistics, and had read Gavins' *Text World Theory: An Introduction* (Gavins 2007). In meetings and e-mail exchanges that formed part of a larger research project, we discussed how the book and Text World Theory might be useful for a teacher in the classroom. We broadly planned a sequence of activities on 'The red wheelbarrow' for a Key Stage 3 Year 7 class (11-12 year olds), before Laura took ownership of the activities and resources, mediating them to best fit the needs of her students. She undertook all the teaching with the class. My approach was broadly ethnographic and interpretative, and my following discussion of her teaching is based on field notes, interviews and informal conversations, and observing students at work.

Laura decided to use William Carlos Williams 'The red wheelbarrow' since it was a short and accessible poem that evoked a rich scene in a striking way. The poem itself has minimal world-building detail; there are no specific spatial or temporal locators, and referential world-building is limited to the noun phrase 'a red wheelbarrow', post-modified by the adjectival phrase, 'glazed with rain water', and the prepositional phrase 'beside the white chickens'. However, the object-attribute-location pattern compensates to some extent for the lack of initial world-builders, and guides readers to construct a fictional world. These features made it ideal for some of the work that Laura wanted to do on knowledge activation and student reflection on that process. Originally published in Williams' collection *Spring and All* in 1923 under its original title *XXII* (poems were numbered sequentially using Roman numerals), 'The red wheelbarrow' has since been a staple of poetry anthologies (see

Rizzo 2005 for discussion of the production and reception of the poem) and had been used with Key Stage 3 students in Laura's school before.

The red wheelbarrow

so much depends

upon

a red wheel

barrow

glazed with rain

water

beside the white

chickens

(Williams 1923)

Laura's learning and teaching objectives and outcomes centred around two separate strands: an exploration of the role of knowledge in the reading process (the focus of this chapter); and developing complexity and layers in point of view when writing. A summary of Laura's plan for the first two lessons is below.

- Allow students to read poem individually for 2 minutes.
- Students identify three key words in the poem that they feel are the most striking.
- Students draw the scene depicted in the poem: this should be as detailed as possible, capturing as many of the senses as possible.
- In pairs, students compare each other's pictures and explain why they have constructed the world of the poem, thinking about similarities, differences and what might have influenced them to draw the scene as they have.

Teacher differentiation: teacher can intervene as necessary with questions, additional material (visuals, descriptions of a farm etc.)

- Show students authorial detail on PowerPoint. Explain who William Carlos Williams was.

- Show William Carlos Williams' description of how he came to write the poem.

- Ask students to reflect on what they have just read/seen and heard. Does this affect their reading of the poem? In what ways would they now update their imagined world?

- Ask students to think about what they have learnt about themselves as readers and how we read literature.

4.2 The use of drawings

Laura had decided to use drawings as a way of making students' initial implicit responses to the poem explicit in a way and to allow them to think about the kinds of resources and knowledge they brought to the reading experience. Two examples are shown in Figure 1 (James) and Figure 2 (Simon).
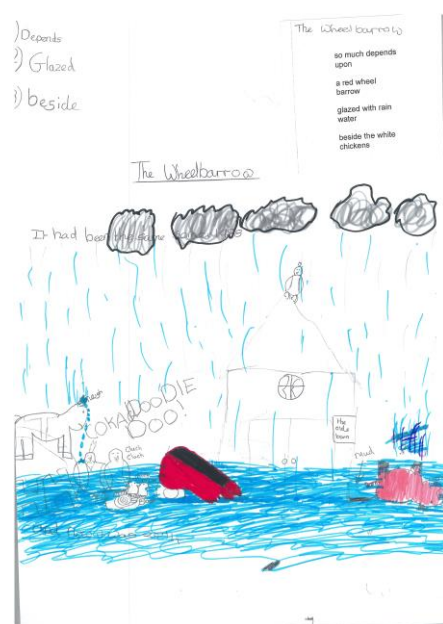

Figure 1

Figure 2

Although the drawings are crude, they are evidence of high-level participation, and present a genuine way of promoting discussion about the world-building process in explicit terms. The drawings offer a way for the students to represent conceptual space in a concrete way, analogous to the process of working with a 'blank space which gradually gets filled in and defined as one reads through it' (Werth 1999: 53). Although the drawings clearly do not offer direct evidence of students' mental operations, nonetheless they are an example of what Suhor (1984: 250) terms *transmediation*, a process by which one symbolic code (here the written language of the poem) becomes encoded in another (here the multimodal nature of drawing). Crucially, the shifting across media involves a process of generating meaning from the initial code. In other words, it offers an upfront act of meta-reflection on the process of reading itself.

James' drawing is arguably much richer than Simon's in its amount of detail. In his comments he remarked that he had spent a great deal of time on a farm when he was younger, and that this had informed his vision of the poem. In comparison, Simon's drawing focuses on a central image of the red wheelbarrow. Commenting on his vivid foregrounded image of the wheelbarrow, he was able to offer evidence of a more specific frame that must have been activated in the act of reading.

> *'I drew a wheelbarrow like that as I saw a wheelbarrow when I was little and*
>
> *my uncle was a builder'* (Simon)

In both instances Laura was able to ask questions to the students to probe them and get them thinking about their own knowledge activation in more detail. For example, when Simon read his reasons for his drawing out to the class, Laura encouraged him to build on his response as follows, finding out in the process that Simon's uncle as well as being a builder had also painted farm landscapes, and Simon had retained vivid memories of these.

> *Laura: what exactly did your uncle do?*
>
> *Simon: well he was a builder but he used to draw stuff as well and that's how*
>
> *he drew it (the wheelbarrow)*
>
> *Laura: so you must have seen your uncle draw one as well?*
>
> *Simon: yeh*

4.3 Knowledge

For Laura, asking the students to think about those aspects of frame knowledge that were both general and idiosyncratic became an important stage in the students' understanding of the relationship that exists between readers as active makers of meaning, and of the text as a stimulus and a constraint on the kinds of knowledge that can be drawn on.

The activity also allowed Laura herself to reflect carefully about the types of frame knowledge her students brought to the classroom. The students were largely drawing on autobiographical memories to make sense of the scene depicted in the poem. For example, other students were able to recount vividly and enthusiastically

stories of visits to farms with their families or whilst at primary school. One student, Ali, was able to talk in great detail about how his grandfather's farm in Pakistan had influenced his reading of the poem; his drawing included a landscape that was distinctly Asian with carefully drawn indigenous trees and plants. Another girl, Sarah, remembered reading the novel *Charlotte's Web* (White 1952) at primary school, and explained how this had impacted on her reading and imaginative construction of the scene. When they expanded on these memories in their groups, they were able to explain in rich detail the sights, sounds and smells associated with the places that they had remembered. It was evident that the students were paying attention not only to referents of words but to emotions, memories and experiences associated with them; that is, their knowledge was clearly embodied.

Of course, there are problems inherent in trying to capture any sense of student response through introspective recall, and in particular, difficulties in students being able gain access to and account for in any accurate way the vast amount of cognitive processing that occurs during the reading process (Gibbs 2006). However, I would argue that the students' drawings represent a starting point, and a concrete mark for them to engage in some inwards-looking reflection in an attempt to explore the strategic resources that they bring to the reading experience. In turn Laura was able to monitor, assess and strategically steer the direction of the lesson through a series of inferences based on what the students had completed. The drawings and subsequent discussion represented in this instance 'visible surfaces…to ' fix' moments of learning' (Franks 2014: 201).

4.4 Incrementation and world-replacement

In the act of reading the poem, the students and Williams share a split discourse-world since they are separated both spatially and temporally. Of course, Laura too was a

discourse-world participant, although her position as a teacher and a figure of authority and academic knowledge meant that she had a privileged role. Indeed this privilege, which includes knowledge of biographical, historical, and literary-critical matters relating to the poem, meant that the text-world that Laura had herself built was likely to be much richer than those of her students. There is a danger that this kind of knowledge can in itself be used to downplay or over-ride students' initial responses to a poem so that these responses are marginalised in favour of the stronger teacher reading (Giovanelli and Mason 2015).

To avoid this, Laura initially kept contextual information, including the title of the poem, from the students. In the second part of the lesson, she began by giving them some brief information about the poet. This included some biographical detail, a summary of the conventions of imagist poetry, and the following extract from 'Seventy years deep', an article that Williams had written for *Holiday* magazine (Williams 1954), in which he had provided a context for the writing of 'The red wheelbarrow'. In the version given to the students, the word 'negro' was replaced with 'man'.

> 'The Red Wheelbarrow' sprang from affection for an old negro named Marshall. He had been a fisherman, caught porgies off Gloucester. He used to tell me how he had to work in the cold in freezing weather, standing ankle deep in cracked ice packing down the fish. He said he didn't feel cold. He never felt cold in his life until just recently. I liked that man, and his son Milton almost as much. In his back yard I saw the red wheelbarrow surrounded by the white chickens. I suppose my affection for the old man somehow got into the writing.

> (Williams 1954: 78)

In Text World Theory, the passing of private knowledge into the common ground is known as the process of incrementation (Werth 1999: 95). When Laura revealed this information to the students and got them to reflect on how they now imagined the scene, the results were striking. The majority of the students drew on various AMERICA frames, and reshaped their response by utilising the biographical detail about Williams, considering how their drawing/text-world might be updated on the basis of this information. Some students had specifically picked up on the American English lexis 'back yard' in the 'Seventy years deep' extract. These students used knowledge gained from either visiting America, or more commonly, having watched television shows set in the United States. For other students, the updating of the common ground resulted in a more radical *world replacement* (Gavins 2007: 142). For example, Kevin, who had originally drawn a picture that depicted a late summer quintessentially English farm scene, spoke enthusiastically about how he now imagined the poem within the cramped space of a run-down ghetto in an American city.

4.5 Perspectives

This added information also allowed Laura and her students to begin a more detailed exploration of point of view in the poem. The extract from 'Seventy years deep' led most students to believe that the 'voice' in the poem was either Williams himself or Marshall, the old man, whose voice and perspective were filtered through Williams' verse. In this way they began to position themselves as either an implied reader and/or implied narratee in relationship to an implied author (Williams) and an implied narrator (Williams/Marshall). Laura and I had previously discussed how the heavily attitudinal nature of the clause 'so much depends' suggested that a reader would enter

the poem at a level below that of the normally expected text world since the language to describe the scene, whether perceived as direct speech or not, is clearly from a particular perspective. We therefore acknowledged that in Text World Theory terms, there was an *empty text-world*, defined by Lahey (2004: 26) as a minimal deictic space built from inference and containing only basic knowledge about enactors and their relationships. Consequently, we reconfigured the entire poem as an enactor-accessible epistemic modal focalised world since the entry point for the reader is the deictic centre of the speaking voice. Although Laura did not want to introduce students to unnecessarily complex terminology, she was keen nonetheless to exploit the potential for students to understand that the poem might represent one perspective on a scene. This offered Laura an important teaching point and avenue for future work. As their discussions of the poem in groups became more developed, students were clearly able to think about how and why they were engaged in various types of perspective-taking projection (Whiteley 2014: 398), fleshing out enactors and exploring their various connections with them.

The direction of the lesson, and of the learning, had moved on from students reflecting on transactional nature of the reading process to exploring the encoding of point of view. In the process of considering focalisation in Williams' poem, Laura was able to lead the students onto a discussion of the perspectival nature of language drawing on simple interventionist activities (Pope 1995) to ask students to think about re-centring the events of the poem through different perceptual, spatial and temporal lenses. Here Laura made use of Text World Theory's standard diagrammatic notation as a template for supporting students' writing. Although there is not the space here to discuss the students' reactions to this and the work that followed, this opened up a vast amount of possibilities that students were able to enthusiastically explore in their own writing.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explained how one teacher used her reading about and of Text World Theory to support teaching and learning in the classroom and consequently I hope to have demonstrated the value of Text World Theory as a teacher-oriented 'tool for thinking with'. Text World Theory offers a psychologically plausible and pedagogically sensitive way of promoting an understanding of the transactional nature of reading, and of viewing the types of cultural, personal social knowledge that students bring to reading as a valuable set of resources. As such, it offers an enabling and research-informed approach to teaching. I have also shown how for students, such an approach opens up their capacity for metacognitive and metalinguistic awareness in providing opportunities for an exploration of the linguistic, the contextual, and the embodied knowledge in generating meaning. Such an approach offers an opportunity to explore the process of reading poetry as one of personal projection and response rather than a simple decoding of linguistic form, or an appeal to some authorial or teacher's interpretation.

In the course of her journey with Text World Theory, Laura of course understood this. In an interview with me after the sequence of lessons, she said that the experience had been informative, enabling and enjoyable, and had opened up a range of possibilities that she wanted to explore further.

> *'I think they (the students) found a huge amount of value in it. If finely-tuned enough that would help them with literature and the understanding of context, and eventually, or probably before, it would help them with seeing different viewpoints, where they are as readers and where they are as writers. I know it's not completely there yet, but that's where I see it as being valuable'*
> (Laura)

The students also found the activities stimulating and revealing. The lessons facilitated extended periods of debate about the nature of poetic form, representation, point of view and the relationship between reader and text in the shaping of meaning, and opened up a space for genuine metacognitive reflection, evident in the students' comments afterwards. Indeed, one student, Paul, when asked by me what he thought the lessons had taught him, paused for a moment and then simply replied 'well, they were lessons about thinking weren't they'.

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