Sociomaterial Dimensions of Early Literacy Learning Spaces: Moving Through Classrooms with Teacher and Children

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Abstract Classroom spaces are complex social worlds where people interact in multifaceted ways with spaces and materials. Classrooms are carefully designed agents for socialisation; however, the complexity and richness of learning experiences are partly determined by the teacher. This chapter draws from sociocultural perspectives to consider processes of thinking and learning as distributed and mediated across people and resources within the learning space. We argue that learning and well-being cannot be separated as students activate their social and emotional literacies when navigating the classroom environment. Drawing on data drawn from an ethnographic study of classrooms located in a community of high poverty, we critique how teachers describe their classroom spaces and selection of resources to facilitate their teaching of writing. We illustrate how geographies of place, movement and resources, interact with, and expand the social dimensions of classroom spaces.

Introduction

Classrooms are taken for granted as sites of learning; yet school built environments are often interpreted and reinterpreted in ways which are contingent upon context and the availability of financial resources (Blackmore, Bateman, O'Mara, Loughlin, & Aranda, 2011). Current education reforms in Australia tend to focus on increasing teacher accountability and transparency so as to improve literacy standards. In an education climate focused on results, the social and material dimensions of schooling and of different school communities are often overlooked. In this context, it is perhaps less surprising that in 2017, 24% of Australian children reported feeling like outsiders in their schools and 28% feeling like they do not belong (OECD, 2017, p. 345). This

represents an increase of approximately 16% from 2003, emphasising the importance of a focus on the sociomaterial dimensions of schooling.

Classroom spaces are complex social worlds where people interact in multifaceted ways with spaces and materials. This highlights the complexity and dynamism of learning spaces and the experiences enacted within, which are in part determined by the teachers' and schools' philosophies of education in interplay with the lives of children. As such, classrooms are spaces where events unfold and ultimately shape the social and academic experiences of the learner (Warf & Arias, 2009).

This chapter investigates the social and material dimensions of learning spaces; that is, we undertake a sociomaterial analysis and argue that the geographies of place, movement and resources, interact with, and expand classroom spaces. Therefore, the classroom becomes the object of our study, an active element of belonging and learning. The chapter starts by outlining our theoretical understandings of wellbeing, space and literacy. Here, we take Leander's (2004) argument that space organises individuals, hence we look to the ways that teachers and students interact, or appropriate, classroom spaces to facilitate teaching and learning (Gee, 2008). We acknowledge that learning and wellbeing are intertwined (OECD, 2017); that is, children activate social and emotional literacies as they navigate the classroom environment. Next, we discuss our research methods, outlining our data sets and illustrate how a sociomaterial analysis allows us to explore the social, material, spatial and pedagogical relationships in a writing classroom. Specifically, we look to how materials, ideas, practices and pedagogies are brought together in ways that are always active and interrelated to investigate everyday teaching and learning practices. We then discuss our findings, drawing on a video analysis of a teacher's tour of his classroom, children's perceptions of writing as expressed in their drawing and talking, and researcher observations. Combined, these data form the basis of our discussion demonstrating a classroom in action. We conclude by summarising the importance of the social, material, spatial and pedagogical dimensions of learning.

Theoretical Understandings of Space, Wellbeing and Literacy

Critical scholars of architecture and urban planning argue that buildings, cities, malls and all built environments need to be understood not as empty containers that just anyone can inhabit for any purpose at any time (Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 2010). Rather, such structures, including schools, playgrounds, universities and so on are designed and constructed in particular places to house specific populations and to enable and constrain activities therein (Foucault, 1979). Hence, the spatial politics of purpose-built institutions always require negotiation and interrogation in terms of the occupants for whom they were designed.

Intertwined with the elements of the spatial dimension of classrooms is children's sense of wellbeing. While *wellbeing* is a ubiquitous term that has variable interpretations (Anderson & Graham, 2016; Gillett-Swan & Sargeant, 2015; McLeod & Wright, 2015), it is frequently identified as a significant concept in education systems (McLeod & Wright, 2015; OECD, 2017). While we acknowledge that both the teachers' and the children's wellbeing are important, this chapter focuses only on children's wellbeing. In Australia, the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008) states that, 'Schools play a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and wellbeing of young Australians' (p. 4). Drawing on this statement and our understandings of *wellbeing* (McLeod, 2015), we seek to refine wellbeing in terms of two specific concepts that are derived from these broader understandings. We draw on the notions of *belonging* and *affect*. We argue that as children in the early school years work towards developing their writing and learning identities, their sense of belonging during writing and their affective experiences are linked to wellbeing. We consider the notion of *place-belongingness* (Antonsich, 2010), where children are able to feel positive about their learning experiences. For example, this could include experiences of safety related to their material environment or experiences of success in relation to their pedagogical environment. Therefore, as we explore belonging we also intertwine affect. Here, we draw on understandings of children's emotions being embodied and performed in relation to others in social and pedagogical spaces (Kuby, 2014).

Wellbeing is not something that can be designed once and for all, even in optimal classroom spaces; rather, it needs to be co-constructed in situ, between the teacher, the children, the placement of furniture, bodies, technologies, tools and so on. If particular children become regularly associated with spaces of trouble, extra surveillance or restricted access, their sense of belonging may be challenged. For example, they may come to associate writing time with either pleasure or fear or time with friends. The sociospatial practice of writing is what comes to count (Dyson, 2016). On the other hand, children may negotiate safe and creative spaces in early years school settings where their imaginations and stories thrive (Dyson, 2016; Marsh, 2016).

In literacy education studies, the sociospatial nature of the classroom became a key focus of attention following Leander and Sheehy's (2004) edited collection, *Spatializing literacy research and practice*. Classrooms are not voids simply to be designed and filled with the requisite numbers of teachers, students, tools, technologies, texts and so on. Instead, spaces are always under construction and always under negotiation. We look to the classroom as an example of a *material culture* through which the types of experiences it comprises, resources it offers and the physical space itself are acknowledged and examined. This then reveals the interrelationships between the time, scale, space, resources, people and interactions that contribute to the classroom experience. Understanding the dynamic nature of social spaces and what is being negotiated and accomplished through the interactions of different people with the everyday stuff therein and beyond the walls is crucial. Teachers' and

children's sense of wellbeing and belonging is contingent on the extent to which they can productively and positively deal with being 'thrown together' (Massey, 2005). How different people enact social and learner identities within classrooms is worked through, over time. This suggests that positionings have complex spatial histories.

As the classroom is a social space, a negotiated space, (Comber, 2016; Dyson, 2016), young children need to learn to navigate this unfamiliar territory and they need to learn to *read classroom life* as a dynamic phenomenon. For example, the child seated near the teacher's desk comes to realise that s/he is often the subject of teacher attention, sometimes to be helped, sometimes to be scolded (Baroutsis, Kervin, Woods, & Comber, 2017). In the process, learning identities are constructed (Marsh, 2016). In early years of school, a major dimension of that learning identity is one's capability with reading and writing. As literacy researchers have observed, early literacy instruction can be seen as subjecting the child to the discipline of schooling such as practicing the bodily habitus associated with handwriting letters in the proper ways. Early writing in the spaces of classrooms is often a highly public act, given that writing is visible to peers and teacher (Dixon, 2010; Luke, 1992). Luke (1992) has described this inculcation as training in 'the body literate' (p. 107). Classrooms are typically regulated environs, where children learn to confine their bodies in space and time, where children learn the discipline of early literacy simultaneously with the discipline of early schooling (Dixon, 2010).

Site and Participants

This chapter draws on data collected as part of a federally funded Australian two-school ethnography where teachers, researchers and children have worked together to provide a fresh understanding of how the teaching of writing is enacted across schools at this time. Here, we focus on data from one composite class of 6- to 8-year-old children and their teacher from one of the participating schools.

The school is situated in an urban suburb of a large seaside city of New South Wales, Australia in a community of high poverty, with families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This suburb was formerly a hub for heavy industry that provided employment for the local population. The school is a coeducational government funded school with a student population of approximately 180. This figure represents a 19% drop in enrolment since 2008. Currently, 12 teachers and four non-teaching staff work with children across kindergarten to Year 6 (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2016). The participants represented in this chapter include one teacher and 25 students in a Grade 1/2 composite class. The teacher was in his third year of teaching and the children were in their second or third year of schooling. Together, the teacher and students embraced a wide range of literacy learning opportunities in their classroom.

Education institutions uphold and reproduce educational arrangements and knowledge traditions which shape educational practice. Understanding the school context is important to contextualise processes teachers and students enact in

classrooms. Proximity to and engagement with particular practices and bodies influence a sense of belonging for children as these established processes orientate bodies in specific directions, affecting who has access to and experiences a sense of belonging within educational sites. While others have shown how belonging relates to race, class, gender and ethnicity (Ahmed, 2012; Kustatscher, 2017), the scope of this chapter is limited to the ways in which children are constituted as learner writers and how they are positioned in relation to the classroom space, materials and time. Our intent is to explore the interplay between *the teacher* and *the children* in terms of the pedagogy of writing as a sociomaterial accomplishment.

Methods

The chapter draws from three data sets produced in one classroom extracted from a larger data set from multiple classrooms in two schools. First, we examine how the teacher describes his classroom spaces and selects resources to facilitate the teaching of writing through the analysis of the teacher's video tour of the classroom. He filmed and annotated key decisions he made about the organisation of spaces and the inclusion of resources. Second, we draw on the children's perspectives of their experiences of their classroom spaces during the processes of learning to write. This is observed through children drawing and talking about their writing experiences during a survey that was administered during an individual interview with a researcher. These data were analysed using a descriptive content analysis where the theoretical framework informed coding categories. Finally, we share key observations taken from 70 min of classroom writing time. In all, analysis of these data provides examples for discussion in this chapter as we identify various perspectives around the sociospatial dimensions of the classroom.

Our study focuses on the sociomaterial aspects of the classroom and the ways the teacher and children represent social, material and pedagogical dimensions of classrooms. We interpret the classroom as a site of material culture (Miller, 1987) through which the types of experiences it comprises, the resources it offers and the physical environment itself can be examined. This view of 'material culture' acknowledges the interrelationships between the time, space, resources, people and interactions. A sociomaterial approach allows for the careful examination of interplay between the physical, temporal and spatial elements that contribute to young children's experiences within this classroom context.

Engaging with experiences within the classroom is a complex process for both the teacher and children, and is affected by a range of assemblages (Fenwick, 2014). The term *assemblage* describes how things and people are gathered together in classrooms in complex and fluid ways that are both locally relevant but also influential in more extended social configurations such as the school, the community, and education. The sociomaterial approach perceives pedagogy as a collection of uncertain and heterogeneous relational practices which are not the exclusive concern of the individual teacher, rather a collective responsibility. Those responsible are the many players,

webs and non-coherences embedded within the pedagogical act. This approach offers our research a ‘method by which to recognise and trace the multifarious struggles, negotiations and accommodations whose effects constitute the things in education’ (Fenwick & Landri, 2012, p. 2). In addition, our approach incorporates children’s bodily experiences in and with the sociomateriality of classroom life as intrinsically related to their sense of wellbeing.

Our research acknowledges that literacy is culturally specific (Heath, 1983) because it is not only ‘situated within material culture... it is in itself a material, cultural practice’ (Rowse & Pahl, 2011, p. 178). Literacy practices are learned within classrooms, which we consider as dynamic cultural systems. Classrooms structure and promote roles, activities and tools through which literacy practices are enabled. In this chapter, we focus on the intricacies of classroom writing as we examine the assemblage of materials, ideas, practices and pedagogies that are always active and interrelated. Our objective is to ‘understand how things come together, and manage to hold together’ (Fenwick & Edwards, 2011, p. 2) to produce knowledge about writing pedagogy, through careful examination of the *situatedness* (Fenwick, 2014) of learning processes and their many interrelations. Importantly, we are interested in the ways in which literacy and learning literacy always involve sociomaterial relationships; relationships in early years classrooms that can profoundly affect young children’s sense of belonging and competence at school.

Perspectives of Writing

In outlining and analysing our findings, we focus on the writing classroom space as the third teacher. Particularly, we foreground the sociomaterial dimensions of this space, that is, the human collaborations and material interactions that occur within the classroom and the potential affective consequences on children. We provide three accounts of the classroom space, each adding a subsequent layer of understanding. The teacher’s account outlines how the classroom is imagined (Appadurai, 1996), identifying the carefully constructed spaces, and the artefacts that are created in anticipation of children learning to write. The children’s accounts represent instances of how the prepared space was taken up; the junctures and disjunctures between the imagined and the actual. Finally, the researchers’ perspectives, drawn from classroom observations, generate a discussion about the classroom in action. That is, we identify the lived and negotiated spaces, both imagined and experienced, material and discursive, that operate to ensure children’s wellbeing through the fostering of a sense of belonging.

Fig. 1 Floor plan of the classroom space

The Classroom Space

This classroom space is a large double classroom, occupied by the teacher and 25 students in the Grade 1/2 composite class. The teacher identified spaces in his classroom designated for different curriculum areas and learning opportunities. Children's writing and artworks are displayed on the walls and on lines suspended across the room.

The classroom floor plan (see Fig. 1) shows that on the western end of the classroom (top, left hand side of Fig. 1), there is a floor area in front of a whiteboard and an Interactive Whiteboard (IWB) for the purposes of whole class teaching. The teacher's desk is in the corner of this space, housing the computer that operates the IWB. Set back from this space are table groupings where the children work during writing times. At the other end of the room, he has a reading corner (complete with a range of children's literature, cushions, low chairs and bean bags) where the children gather for story time. To the side of this space are other tables where the children complete their numeracy studies. Between these spaces is an *engine table*; this is a blue semicircular table, slightly removed from the other table groups, which provides an intimate space for the teacher to engage small groups of children in explicit teaching of writing skills and strategies.

Designing Classroom Spaces: A Teacher's Perspective

We now consider the imagined classroom from the teacher's perspective. Drawing on a video tour of the teacher's classroom, we were able to identify the teacher's intent that goes into the design of classroom spaces. Children engage with materials as resources within their environment, and as they become more proficient with literate practices, they talk, handle materials and participate in activities in ways that are expected of them by teachers and school (Rogers, 2003). Teachers make pedagogical decisions as they implement routines and interactions with the intention of facilitating student learning. Leander (2004) describes this as '...a set of discursive and material practices and resources that actively engages in the production of power relations and ideology' (p. 127).

In the video tour of his classroom, the teacher highlights specific spaces, resources, and practices for the children during writing time. He named specific spaces and resources, and identified practices he expected his students to engage with. In his one minute and twelve second video accompanied by a 130-word commentary annotating the visual dimension of the tour, he drew our attention to:

- The *writing wall*, which contained spelling words for the week, the developmental groups the children were organised into and a visual representation of the writing process. The spelling words were printed in a list format and served as a visual reminder to the children about specific words for study. The identification of developmental groups for the children acted as an organisational structure for that period of time as both the teacher and children could identify who was working with whom and their planned focus. These groups were fluid and were updated every week by the teacher, informed by his observations and assessment of the children during writing time. The visual representation of the writing process was covered with self-adhesive strips and individual names so the children could each position their name with the part of the writing process they were up to (that is, planning, drafting, revising and publishing). The teacher indicated in his commentary that this helped him know where the children 'were at'.
- The *word wall* contained a laminated sheet for each letter of the alphabet. Words were written onto these sheets using a whiteboard marker. The children could remove individual sheets during writing time. Children were expected to use and return these so all the class could use the resource.
- Individual *learning goals* were handwritten by the teacher and hung onto the wall. It was the teacher's intention that each child would remove their learning goal prior to writing and have this on their desk during writing time as a reminder of their specific focus.
- The *punctuation area* displayed punctuation marks the children were expected to know and use. Alongside it was a ladder that provided a hierarchy of the punctuation marks and children's names were arranged alongside this to show individual competence with the punctuation form.
- The *writing centre* ran across the wall near the entrance to the classroom. It provided writing samples that were rated (one star to five star, with five star being the

best). Some samples were from children and others were from curriculum support documents, these were intended to provide models of what was expected during writing time. The teacher identified specific workshops for guided instruction and allocated names of children to these. There was a sign-up sheet for children if they wanted to talk with the teacher.

- *Experts* in the areas of planning, spelling, paragraphs, editing, feedback and conferencing were identified with a photograph and named as available to support their peers during independent writing time.

As the teacher spoke about each named area, he offered targeted video footage of that area within the classroom space. Evident in the video footage were arrows on the floor which marked the teacher's anticipated movement of children through these resources.

The teacher planned specific areas and resources for distinct purposes in his classroom. The physical layout of the room specified areas for specific practices. For example, there were areas to work as a whole class, in small groups and independently. He demonstrated his understanding that writing is a systematic process through his design of the classroom space. The design enabled the children to physically move in ways to enable the children to engage with carefully selected resources. As an example, the teacher demonstrated his expectation about how processes should be enacted within his classroom design through marking arrows on the floor.

As the teacher described his classroom, he used educational discourse to describe spaces, resources and expectations for the children. The teacher's descriptions were informed by curriculum guidelines and his exposure to professional development experiences. For example, the school encouraged the use of Hattie's *Visible Learning* strategies. It gave us a sense of his pedagogical imagination as he foresees spaces and furniture variously occupied by individuals, pairs, groups and the whole class with different tasks in mind. The classroom space as a literacy landscape has been given a great deal of attention and forethought by this early career teacher as he planned ahead for the ways in which he could support young learners to produce texts. Notably and not surprisingly his focus is on the child as a pedagogical subject in this case, 'the developing writer'. In the process, his priorities became academic and managerial as he tries to anticipate different needs and resources that different children will need.

The teacher created personalised resources within the classroom. While these have come from published ideas (for example, writing process model, or the punctuation ladder), he recreated these and personalised them with the children's names, all of which are able to be moved around to represent fluidity in process. Children's written and artistic work samples were displayed widely across the classroom. In most cases, these are whole class sets of products. There were no published posters or display-type resources in the room. There was a wide range of published children's literature. There were many writing samples the teacher has jointly constructed with the children. These constructed writing spaces, materials and organisation of customised resources aim to teach the children how to be developing writers who set individual goals and are self-regulating.

Using Classroom Spaces: Children's Perspectives

Following the teacher's perspectives on his Grade 1/2 composite class, we now explore the children's experiences of their writing spaces in the same classroom (see Fig. 1). Here, we are able to see how the teacher's imagined classroom took form through the children's actual experiences. The children in this class ($n = 20$) responded to open-ended survey questions about their writing including how, when, where, with what and with whom they were writing in their classroom. This was followed by an invitation to draw a picture of themselves writing, during which we adopted a *draw and talk* (Coates & Coates, 2006; Hopperstad, 2010) approach which enabled the children to explain their drawings ($n = 19$). As noted here, one child declined to provide a drawing but responded to the survey questions. Through these modes of data collection, we were able to note the social, material and pedagogical dimensions of belonging that supported the children's wellbeing.

In comparison to the teacher's perspectives about the materials and spaces used for writing, the children also referred to word and writing walls; however, this was less prominent in the children's perspectives. Like their teacher, the children spoke about the usefulness of word and writing walls in their classroom. While none of the children included these walls in their drawings, they did talk about them in their commentary or responses to questions. For example, some children (20%) referred to the word walls suggesting that they found it helpful when writing to have their teacher 'put words on the word wall'. Many more children (40%) referred to the writing walls, particularly the writing processes of planning and drafting, with fewer references to publishing and no references to revising.

The other aspects of the teacher's video tour that were less frequently addressed by the children's drawing and talking include learning goals, the writing centre, the punctuation area and the wall of experts. Only two children (10%) mentioned learning goals as being helpful when writing. While one child (5%) made a reference to the star system in the writing centre, suggesting good writing 'is when you get three stars all over'. Similarly, punctuation was only referred to by two children (10%) and no specific references were made to the punctuation area identified by the teacher. These children associated punctuation with good writing; however, they tended to identify specific punctuation such as full stops or commas. Finally, two children (10%) also spoke about the conferencing time when they are given help with the editing of their writing. However, this last point, the notion of the *expert*, can be seen in the broader context of children working collaboratively with their peers and teachers.

Similar to our findings in the larger study (see Kervin, Comber, & Woods, 2017), a prominent aspect of the perspectives of children from this class included a focus on the social dimensions of their classroom spaces, that is, their relationships with others. This focused on their collaborations with other children and their teachers. The children's commentary on their interactions during the writing process is seen through detailed drawings of their classrooms. In particular, their drawings emphasised the social space through the arrangement of the tables and chairs in their classroom that facilitated collaboration. The emphasis on social spaces was seen in the children's

Fig. 2 Child's drawing depicting facial expressions

responses and drawings with 55% of children making reference to their table configurations in their talk and 89% in their drawings. The children's drawings frequently included faces and facial expressions. Most of the drawings (74%) included a face and in all of these instances, the faces were drawn with smiles (see Fig. 2).

The children's drawings of their writing spaces focused on particular materials that represented writing. Figure 3 shows the dominant depiction of writing that included representations of tables and chairs (89%). When tables were drawn in the children's pictures, just under a third of the drawings (59%) grouped the tables together and indicated collaborations with other children, similar to the drawing in Fig. 3. In this picture, we see three characters working on their own independent piece of writing, but located in a shared table grouping. The author has depicted himself with a smile, while the other two participants are faceless. This finding from this particular class, when compared to the findings of the larger study (see Baroutsis et al., 2017) shows a larger incidence of depictions of children interacting with other children during writing.

In addition to the collaborations with their peers, although these were far less frequent, there were also depictions of children working with adults (see Fig. 4). The semicircle table captured in this illustration is the engine table. The teacher and a child are located either side of the table. The teacher is smiling, whereas the student is not.

Fig. 3 Child's drawing of desks in the classroom, including the blue engine table

Fig. 4 Child's drawing depicting writing around the blue engine table on the right

Discussion of a Writing Classroom in Action

In drawing this chapter to a close, we will now add to the previous two perspectives using our classroom observations. We discuss an episode of writing in this classroom (see Fig. 1) when all the research team were present, thereby enabling us to draw on additional perspectives and comparisons of the imagined and actual classroom spaces. In so doing, we are also able to draw together our understandings of the material, social, and pedagogical dimensions in relation to children's wellbeing.

Our descriptions in this section are from a 70-min writing episode that was introduced using the picture book, *Flood* by Jackie French and Bruce Whatley (2011). The lesson was delivered by the male classroom teacher (T1) who provided the video tour and assisted by a female school leader (T2) who was invited into his classroom specifically for our visit. T1, with the assistance of T2, models the construction of a planning document that the children will need to create and use to write a letter about a flood. We draw on the field notes and observations combined with elements of the previous data sets to identify some of the material, social, and pedagogical dimensions of the classroom space.

Preparing for Writing

This first excerpt outlines the classroom space and the human and non-human materials where the teacher prepares the children for writing. As with previous indications in the video tour, the elements of this lesson are purposefully planned and specifically executed. Here, we are introduced to new spaces in the classroom, the white board and the carpet area that have not been covered by the teacher's video tour or the children's drawings.

10:12 am We enter the space; children are sitting on the floor in front of the white board. Children seem to have positioned themselves in rows on the floor. Those in the front are sitting (some with knees pulled up in front of them) looking at T1 and the book. This pattern continues across most of the floor.

T1 has a handwritten list on yellow card clipped to the whiteboard. T2 is sitting on a chair behind the children.

10:27 am Children all seem focused. Some fidgeting on the floor.

10:39 am There is a real calmness in the classroom. The children are sitting on the floor, most are looking at what T1 is doing. There are some children a little more reclined than others, but attention remains with T1. T2 reaches out and touches a child on the back to remind them to focus.

10:41 am T1 invites the children to stand up, shake it out and find somewhere new to sit. T2 directs two children to remain with her.

10:51 am Children are fidgeting and moving—most legs are pulled up or children are reclined, some yawns.

In these excerpts from our observations, we predominantly see a teacher-focused lesson with explicit and visible teaching (Bernstein, 1975). Even without prompting from the teachers, the children position their bodies in rows on the carpet, demonstrating the self-regulating effect of surveillance (Foucault, 1979). The children's bodies are oriented towards the teacher and the whiteboard that he is working on. As Ingold (2012) suggests, we think *from* rather than *about* the body. As such, the view from the children's eyes places the teacher, who is standing, in an elevated position and the children need to tilt their heads backwards to make eye contact. The children are seated on the carpet, and interacting with that surface of the floor as parts of their body come into contact with the carpet. The carpet frees the children from the constraints of the desks and chairs that they often associated with writing in their drawings. The carpet provides a fluid space for movement. Some children have nestled themselves against the wall, some are fidgeting and others are partially reclined, while others started interacting with their peers. Later in the lesson, picking up on the fidgeting, the teacher provides an opportunity for the children to 'shake it out' demonstrating an understanding that they have been sitting and focused on the same thing for a very long time.

While we as the researchers observed eager yet patient children, in some of these situations, the children were reprimanded for a loss of focus which may have been due to the elongated lesson where the children were moderately passive within the frame of the lesson. Interestingly, school is considered a place where children learn socialisation skills as a means of promoting place-belongingness. However, in this example, children quickly learned that these social interactions are only permissible in certain situations and in this lesson the interaction between the children was frowned upon. Regardless, the children's behaviour was viewed as a choice that demonstrated not their lack of desire to learn, rather, they were uncomfortable sitting for a long time on the carpet. The reprimand by a teacher seemed to indicate that the upright position is the only body placement that is pedagogically sound and promotes learning. Here, fluidity and movement that is encouraged by sitting on the carpet is not permitted and children were constrained through the rearrangement of their seating positions (Nespor, 1997). That is, a number of children were told to move from their location on the carpet and asked to sit at the back of the room in close proximity to the second teacher. As a practice, this isolation of children from their peers through 'spatial detachment' is likely to develop feelings of non-belonging to the social group (Nespor, 1997, p. 188).

Planning and Modelling Writing

The second excerpt elaborates on elements of the social, material, spatial and pedagogical dimensions of the lesson. Here, the teacher has designed the lesson so that the children are able to experience success and belonging.

10:04 am T1 has a handwritten list on yellow card clipped to the whiteboard. This features an overview of the learning intentions for the writing lesson. He stands in front of the children and discusses his expectations for the children during writing time. He states that ‘This is what you need to do to be successful.’

10:42 am T1 asks the children what part of the writing process they have just finished. He says he expects everyone should be able to answer this. T1 invites T2 to be his ‘composing partner’. T2 asks T1 about the purpose of the text. T2 moves to the front of the room and stands next to the whiteboard. T1 orally demonstrates how he will compose the text to this mother. He uses the pictures, points to these and composes his text. T2 prompts him to think about how he might be feeling. T1 states, ‘When you’re composing, your learning partner should... share ideas, give feedback.’

10:54 am T1 models the page setup such as margin and title for the children. He revisits the learning intention with the children. They chorally read it out.

10:56 am Child asks, ‘When are we going to start writing?’ T1 states, ‘Not today, but maybe after lunch.’

The children are provided with the knowledge and materials to successfully undertake their writing tasks. This is done specifically through the two teachers modelling the writing process. First, the teacher outlines the learning intentions that are listed on a large yellow card and stuck to the whiteboard, thereby bringing the visual and material modes of literacy to the classroom (Kress, 1997). Second, through this modelling of the writing task, the teachers clearly identify the expectations for learning and the standard at which this is to be completed. The teachers also provide a demonstration of what ‘composing partners’ are likely to do with the intention to provide children with a clear understanding of the roles they should adopt to help each other learn. This modelling provides the children with exemplars for communication and collaboration through the role modelling by the teachers. Additionally, the teachers’ ‘acting-out’ identifies the required behaviour that they anticipate will improve both children’s social learning and their writing (McLeod, 2015). However, in the next section, we see tensions come into play between the expertly planned and modelled lesson, and the children’s experience of writing as temporal aspects. We acknowledge that these aspects are often inherent in institutional practices, often outside the control of individual teacher.

Encouraging and Supporting Writing

This final excerpt from our field notes and observations affirms the teacher’s practices associated with encouraging and supporting the children during learning. These practices are likely to develop positive emotions in relation to writing.

10:23 am T1 is continuing to read the text. He breaks every so often and checks children’s understanding of words.

10:39 am A child offers an extended response to the image T1 has put up on the board. T1 encourages the response and thanks the child for his insight.

12:24 pm A child tells T1 they're not happy with their work. He assures him it's ok and to keep going.

12:35 pm A child asks T1 for another [planning] sheet. T1 asks, 'Another one or a new one?' Child confirms it's another one. T1 says, 'Good boy,' and passes him another sheet. T1 adds, '[Name], you are killing it! Well done mate!'

Here, as with the children's drawings, we note that children can 'live out emotions through their body language, play, and art' (Kuby, 2014, p. 1286). The socially driven interactions between the teacher and the children, outlined in our observations, demonstrate how the teacher in this class encouraged children when they were writing. Fostering inclusive social interactions and relationships enables children to develop positive emotional responses, often expressed through the embodied experience. This was evident in the children's drawings. However, not all experiences of writing were positive. In Fig. 4, we observe the child's neutral or possibly negative facial expression as a reaction to being isolated from the other children when working on the engine table. Consequently, we see that both positive and negative experiences of writing affect belonging and the social and emotional wellbeing of children, as well as their productivity as they learn to write.

Conclusions

In this chapter, we have argued that classroom spaces are not neutral or static; rather they are negotiated constantly. We have shown how this teacher organises his ideal environment for children to learn to write and the materials needed to cater for the tasks he designs. He anticipates the students' needs and children variously engage with those offerings and participate in a range of ways. Some children do appear to feel like they belong. Some readily earn stars and become experts and helpers. Other children fly under the radar, deliberately or not, we can only speculate here. Other children earn the extra attention of the second teacher in the room or find themselves regular attendees at the engine table. Day by day and minute by minute, the children and their teacher negotiate classroom spaces in social and pedagogical ways to do the *work* of school. The notion of *assemblage* draws our attention to the complex and fluid ways things and people are gathered together in classrooms, each learning to *read* what is going on. In this complex process, children are also learning to relate to each other and their teacher(s), to learn the expectations associated with being together on the carpet, to listening with stillness and near silence for extended periods. This involves significant discipline as they regulate their bodies in close proximity to peers and also try to attend to what is salient as their teacher(s) speak or read or draw. The sheer complexity of the early writing classroom indicates how much young learners need to manage when they begin school and how much teachers need to do to be ready for them.

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