ABSTRACT

When children's preconventional attempts at reading and writing are ignored or misunderstood as 'scribbles', these early attempts may be unnecessarily sacrificed for a well-intentioned adult's overemphasis on the importance of only conventions. The ethnography of this kindergarten classroom provided a 'thick description' of how emergent literacy is mediated through complex, interactive cognitive and social processes. In turn, social contexts such as classrooms influence children's opportunities to explore and grow in strategic control of their literacy development. Towards the end of kindergarten, I decided to extend the study by following eight of these children into grade one. The resultant intensive case studies are highly informative in covering a range of early literacy development profiles over time to highlight the variability in children's emergent literacy. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning has been instrumental in helping us to understand how educators play a primary role in apprenticing students into the classroom culture. Children's emergent literacy is, therefore, an integral part of how they are supported in their interactions with both learners and teachers. The direct observation and documentation of actual classroom practices over time can serve as a powerful means for understanding teaching and learning as a social-communicative process. To plan for instruction accordingly, educators need to explore what hypotheses and ideas students bring to the classroom and how these understandings play out in the classroom. Key literacy events such as the journal writing center provide a revisitable trail for both children and teachers. The growth of young children into skilled participants in society is often accomplished through children's routine, and often tacit,

guided participation in ongoing cultural activities, such as emergent literacy. Risk-taking

is a critical strategy for children as they learn to read and write. By having routine ways

of interacting with children such as the journal writing center we are in a better position

to understand their tacit-knowledge and motives. Teachers have to encourage supported

risk-taking, recognizing that for some children 'overcoming dependency on

conversational partners', such as teachers and parents, may present the greatest hurdle in

their literacy development.

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Their openness in allowing me to 'invade their space' made my transition easy. Very quickly, I became part of their classroom lives. They shared with me their work, concerns, and questions.

My family has offered me a special support that only families can. My husband, Kevin, has encouraged me to continue during both emotional highs and lows. My teenage son, James, has learned to cook and do laundry—important life skills. During this time, I became a grandmother. As a citizen of our society, my grandson Nicholas reinforced again my interest in how children become literate. Nicholas' mother, my daughter Jennifer, probably 'rolled her eyes to the back of her head' on numerous occasions as I reminded her to read with Nicholas.

DEDICATION

      This research is dedicated to my husband, Kevin, for his continued love and support. I want to acknowledge my parents' love of learning. They provided me with wonderful books and encouraged me to excel. In addition, Dr. Bruce Bain inspired my research interests at the University of Alberta when as part of my Master's he introduced me to Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory. Unfortunately, because of his untimely death, I cannot share with him the completion of this journey. I dedicate this dissertation to his memory.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Adults often view reading and writing as highly conventionalized, solitary activities. Namely, unless a writer can produce conventional, understandable spellings and sentences, or unless a reader can understand the socially accepted meanings of the print on the page, she cannot be reading or writing. In this worldview, literacy begins with mastering skills first, such as the formation of the correct shape of letters, the discrimination of sounds and decoding, the comprehension of spelling conventions, and the use of basic punctuation marks. However, in recent years, we have become more aware of how much children know about language, reading, and writing as they enter kindergarten and grade one and how important the social aspects of learning are.

In fact, our knowledge of the complexity of literacy development is reflected in the 'emergent literacy' point of view. Emergent literacy is a legitimate phase of children's development and not a precursor to literacy development as once thought (Clay, 1966; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). Emergent literacy gives legitimacy to children's early, preconventional reading and writing behaviors. As children discover that talking can be conveyed by print, they must set themselves the task of understanding many seemingly arbitrary conventions that we as adults accept so readily. The continuing motivation may be that children see writing as a new way of achieving goals they had previously accomplished in other ways, such as by drawing.

<u>Role of Writing in Emergent Literacy</u>

Because durable, strategic learning behaviors take a long time to develop (Pressley, El-Dinary, Gaskins, Schuder, Bergman, Almasi, & Brown, 1992), studying writing may be particularly valuable in helping children over time to make their current hypotheses about the written language symbol system more explicit. Children's writing is a way to explore the connections between writing, reading, and oral language. Forms of language that produce lasting traces, such as in writing, are especially important in the learning process because writing allows children to reveal their emerging understandings using their hypotheses and strategies (Donaldson, 1978). In this way, there is a generative aspect to writing in literacy development. The opportunities to reflect on their learning processes, both during and after writing, may help children to gain greater 'metacognitive control' over their thinking processes (Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991). This greater control, in turn, continues to grow and may allow children to push themselves as writers and readers. The core of children's literacy development is, therefore, in their continued active strivings to convey meaning initially through drawing and then through writing and reading.

Writing, viewed in this way, is almost a perfect medium for emerging, cognitive skills and strategies. Writing allows minds to think about, attend to, and depict as written symbols their understanding of written language while it encourages the processes of reading, re-reading, drawing, or reflecting on these latest discoveries. As a result, children use their knowledge and blend it with new knowledge as they explore and revise their hypotheses.

Writing as a revisitable trail, also allows educators and researchers to view and review children's work when planning for instruction and further research. If, as I have proposed in this study, through writing, children establish the connections between reading, writing, and language, we must look more closely at the early reading-writing relationships. For example, when attempting to read the children's writing, both children and educators come to discover the nature of the emerging, precise and complex connections between reading, writing, and language. Furthermore, as we see growth in children's writing strategies, do we see concomitant changes in their reading strategies?

Along with the emphasis on emergent literacy, there has been an interesting shift in educators' understanding of literacy as being socially situated, both culturally and institutionally (Scribner & Cole, 1981; Vygotsky, 1978). Researchers are starting to more adequately explain the potential collaborative and constructive processes created through dialogue that hold great promise in strengthening instruction and learning activities between teachers and learners in classrooms. However, a clarification of the particular hypotheses and processes involved in producing and understanding written language, both as individuals and as members of a classroom needed to be undertaken. These 'social origins' of literacy development emerge in two ways. Initially, there are the social interactions between the child and teacher and parent. There also seems to be an impetus for literacy development within a 'learning community'—the social world of the classroom which is the focus of this inquiry. Ethnography provides a window on the 'learning community'.

Ethnography as a Window on the 'Learning Community'

The ethnographic study of a kindergarten class situates children's development and understandings about reading and writing by highlighting the strategies that students used to explore their hypotheses in classroom literacy activities. Children's emergent literacy development is an integral part of how they are supported in their interactions with both learners and teachers in classrooms.

Ethnography allows a window on the processes without ignoring products such as writing that is one of the artifacts of literacy development. This inquiry was also built on the premise that the child and the social world of the classroom are mutually involved to the extent that any inquiry precludes looking at them as independently definable (Rogoff, 1990). This study, as a result, has focused on the active changes involved as children explore their hypotheses in an unfolding activity such as writing.

The ethnography provides a 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) of the important aspects and interactions of this particular 'learning community' and how it fostered early literacy development. This is critical because we know that these early experiences with reading and writing shape children's future concepts about reading and writing as well as concepts about themselves as learners. Such studies may provide important information to educators by analyzing actual classroom practices.

Towards the end of kindergarten, I decided to extend the study by following eight of the children as they transitioned into grade one. The resultant case studies are highly informative in covering a range of early literacy development over time to show the tremendous variability in children's emergent literacy.

The chapters lead the reader from the beginning as I reviewed the literature in helping to formulate my research question and ultimately the methodology through to the analyses and finally my reflections. In Chapter two, I present perspectives from theory and research that I initially used as the basis for constructing the focus of this study and for deciding on how the study should be conducted. This study of emergent literacy is, therefore, being informed through the multiple theoretical lenses of development as reflected in emergent literacy, cognitive psychology as reflected in strategic learning, and sociocultural perspectives on literacy as reflected in Vygotsky's theory of learning. As a transition into the methodology, in Chapter three, I highlight the rationale and significance of this study that led me to the research question. Chapter four describes the research process, including the setting for the study and the procedures actually used in each phase from field entry through to the writing. In Chapters five to eight, I present my analyses and results of observations gathered from multiple data sources such as videotapes, audiotapes, the children's work and interviews in kindergarten and then of eight selected children as they entered grade one. Finally, in Chapter nine, I conclude with reflections on implications for practice and future research.

Chapter Summary

The complexity of emergent literacy is being informed through multiple theoretical lenses. Knowledge from cognitive psychology about the development of strategic behaviors has made an important contribution to our knowledge of effective classroom instructional practices, particularly in the area of reading comprehension. Only recently has strategic learning been proposed as important in emergent literacy. In

addition, a great deal of information is presented to children about written language through social interactions. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory emphasizes the critical role of these social influences on learning. As a result of this emphasis, literacy development cannot be understood or evaluated apart from the classroom context specifically, and more generally the culture and historical times.

Because my research interests are exploratory, I chose a qualitative research design. Qualitative research, broadly speaking, focuses on issues found in social organizations, such as classrooms. The ethnographic study of the kindergarten class supported a venue to explore the socially and contextually bound aspects of becoming literate. Educational ethnographies may be particularly important because they analyze actual classroom practices. The eight selected kindergarten children whom I followed into grade one provided portraits of emergent literacy over a ten month period. There is the potential for richly described case studies to bridge disciplinary boundaries so that all those interested in young children's literacy development can enter into a dialogue. In this way, case studies offer not prescriptions for practice, but instead offer insights to vicariously experience the complexity of emergent literacy.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

To better understand how the emergent literacy perspective has been strongly influenced by cognitive psychology as reflected in socially situated, strategic learning, we first need to understand how 'emergent literacy' is different from the previous and sometimes prevailing view of the 'readiness skills' perspective.

Overview of the 'Reading Readiness' Perspective as it Contrasts with Emergent Literacy

The shift from reading readiness as maturation (Gesell 1925, 1928, 1940) toward readiness as the result of experiences, occurred during the late 1950s and 1960s (Durkin, 1968). The reading readiness programs that became entrenched in the 1960s remained prevalent until the late 1980s. For example, every major basal reading publisher has a readiness level for its program that is often used in kindergarten and grade one. In general, the readiness paradigm as it has been practiced in schools and framed by publishers implies the following: (a) instruction in reading can only begin efficiently when children have mastered a set of basic skills prerequisite to reading . . .; (b) the area of instructional concern is reading. It is implied that composing and other aspects of writing (except for letter formation—or handwriting) should be delayed until children learn to read; (c) sequenced mastery of skills forms the basis of reading, as a subject to be taught: instruction focuses almost exclusively on the formal aspects of reading and generally ignores the functional uses of reading; (d) what went on before formal instruction is irrelevant, so long as sufficient teaching and practice presented in logical sequences are provided when instruction begins; and (e) children all pass through the

same sequences of readiness and reading skills, and their progress up this hierarchy should be carefully monitored by periodic formal testing (Teale & Sulzby, 1986, p. xiii).

In contrast, emergent literacy gives legitimacy to children's early, preconventional reading and writing behaviors. Proponents of emergent literacy are not necessarily anti-skills (Strickland & Morrow, 1989); however, they tend to situate children's development and understandings about reading and writing by emphasizing the hypotheses and strategies that children make and explore in authentic literacy activities. These authentic activities include, but are not limited to drawing, message writing, and reading their writing as well as the talk surrounding these activities.

It might be suggested that reading readiness was a good idea that was applied poorly. There should be no argument with the notion that extensive prior knowledge, language facility, and skills such as phonemic awareness are important. However, the reading readiness perspective is built upon a strictly conventional analysis of literacy skills from an adult's perspective rather than from a child's perspective. Furthermore, the readiness perspective impacts educators' thinking about literacy development in a significant way by conceptualizing these early childhood reading and writing behaviors as precursors to 'real' (conventional) reading and writing, implying that only once children have mastered the various subskills does conventional reading begin (Teale & Sulzby, 1986). Both the 'reading readiness' perspective and emergent literacy, have established that specific skills such as recognizing letters and words as well as matching letters and sounds are needed (Clay, 1979; Ehri, 1979; Harste, Woodward, & Burke,

1984). However, emergent literacy is unique in its assumptions compared to the 'reading readiness' skills approach.

<div align="center">Literacy Development as Reflected in Emergent Literacy</div>

The 'reading readiness' skills perspective assumes that young children have to acquire skills such as letter identification and letter-sound relationships, before they can write or comprehend written language. On the other hand, emergent literacy considers the preconventional and eventually conventional literacy development from the child's perspective, rather than from strictly adult standards (Sulzby, 1986). Educators and researchers assume that literacy development, as reflected in emergent literacy (a) can be best observed through children's every day explorations with print (Clay, 1975, 1979; Sulzby, 1985; Teale & Sulzby, 1986; (b) emerges in social interactions with people (Chapman, 1996; Harste, 1990), such as parents and teachers, and with story books as one example of literacy products (Sulzby, 1985, 1991; Teale & Sulzby, 1986) and written products as another example (Dyson, 1982, 1983; Sulzby, 1986); and (c) is further shaped by the parent/family beliefs and values concerning literacy (Anderson, 1994; Cunningham, 1995; Heath, 1983). In addition, researchers are amassing evidence that so-called 'higher' level cognitive skills such as text production, text comprehension, monitoring, predicting, and self-correcting strategies are being developed in young children at the same time that they are developing concepts about letters, sounds, and words (Englert, Raphael, & Mariage, 1994; Klenk, 1994; Palincsar & Klenk, 1992, 1993).

Although certain skills underlie the use of strategies, it is by observing children's strategies or choices in action (Strickland & Morrow, 1989) that we learn more about which skills and strategies are being actively used (Harste et al., 1984; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). Children construct ideas about reading and writing that are not necessarily explicitly taught to them and are not yet conventional. These ideas and hypotheses continue to exist in some unique way in a repertoire of knowledge about written language (Harste et al., 1984; Sulzby, 1986). So that when we observe children writing, what is really meant is that writing is the system of meaning being highlighted in this literacy event. However, in classrooms, writing can also include talking to others, drawing, or reading and re-reading what has been written.

Emergent literacy must be viewed as part of children's overall language development and not as discrete skills isolated from oral language development. Children's later conventional understandings begin in their preconventional attempts as they experience talking and learning about the world and about written language. Those children who have limited experience with oral and written language require early opportunities to begin to write and read. Children enter a typical kindergarten and grade one class with various levels of knowledge about written language (Dyson, 1985; Sulzby, 1985).

Instruction needs to be adapted to these individual differences. Accordingly, before instruction can be adapted, educators must find out what hypotheses and strategies children already possess. In practice however, many teachers may take for granted that children have the concept of a word or concepts about the various functions of written

language, and the underlying concepts about the functions of reading and writing as well as specific information about phonemic awareness. Recent emergent literacy research has shown that some children are more fortunate than others are, participating in many more home emergent literacy interactions than other children. However positive a child's home emergent literacy experiences, the debate on how to best teach beginning reading continues to rage on.

The two sides of the reading camps are usually split between the whole language and phonemic awareness camps. One of the most striking and consistent findings in the research literature pertaining to whole language is that immersion in literature and writing increases children's understanding about the nature of reading and writing and stimulates children to do things that are literate (Graham & Harris, 1994; Morrow, 1990, 1991; Neuman & Roskos, 1990, 1992; Rowe, 1989). We know that consistent experiences with high-quality literature foster growth in understanding the structure of stories, which in turn improves both comprehension and writing, as well as the more sophisticated use of language (Feitelson, Kita, & Goldstein, 1986; Morrow, 1992; Rosenhouse, Feitelson, Kita, & Goldstein, 1997).

Dahl and Freppon's (1995) often-cited seminal research focused on how kindergarten and grade one students in whole-language compared with skills-based classrooms interpreted reading and writing and the instruction they were receiving. There were plenty of positive results in the whole-language classrooms. Students used more sophisticated responses to literature, tried various coping strategies when experiencing difficulties, frequently viewed themselves as readers and writers, engaged more

persistently during reading and writing activities, and had a more sophisticated knowledge of story structures. Overall, the results in the whole language classrooms were more positive than in the more skills-based ones. However, from all that was positive, there was one important difference. Although the whole-language students seemed to have been learning much about letter-sound relations and how to use them, they appeared not to have used them with as much certainty as students in skills-based classrooms. Many kindergarten and grade one children taught using whole language lacked the awareness that words are streams of sounds that can be disentangled, and that these sounds can be assembled to produce words. They lacked phonemic awareness, a metalinguistic insight that appears to be a critical element in learning to read.

It is now generally accepted that phonemic awareness does play a causal role in early reading development (Adams, 1990; Brady & Shankweiler, 1991; Cunningham, 1990; Pressley, 1998; Share & Stanovich, 1995; Torgesen & Wagner, 1998). However, other factors such as family background and family literacy experiences are important as well for predicting reading success (Taylor, 1983). Probably, Stanovich's (1986) term 'Matthew effects' describes well the rich-get-richer and poor-get-poorer effects that begin at home and may continue in the educational process. The 'Matthew effect' outlines a model of how individual differences in early reading acquisition are magnified by the differential cognitive, motivational, and educational experiences of children who vary in early reading development. More recent research (Stanovich, 1993, Stanovich & Cunningham, 1992, 1993) has shown that not only phonemic awareness, but also print exposure that starts in the home, is a strong predictor of vocabulary growth, knowledge

acquisition, and a host of other verbal skills. As a result, exposure to print does seem to be implicated in some educational 'Matthew effects'.

In addition, this body of research has shown that print exposure is a strong predictor of cognitive growth in even the least advantaged children. Namely, the child with limited reading skills and low general ability will build vocabulary and cognitive structures through immersion in literacy activities. This knowledge has an encouraging message for teachers of less advantaged children. Teachers need to take the time to find out what children do know about reading and writing, for example, by taking time to find out what exposure to print they have had. Accordingly, educators are continuing to realize that learning is mediated through complex, interactive cognitive and social processes and this understanding has recently been strongly influenced by cognitive psychology as reflected in strategic learning.

<u>Influence of Cognitive Psychology as Reflected in Strategic Learning</u>

Success both in school and out requires strategic ability to enhance performance (Bjorkland, 1990; Harris & Graham, 1996). Over the past twenty five years, knowledge about strategic behaviors and their development has made an important contribution to our knowledge of effective classroom instructional practices, particularly in the area of reading comprehension. Yet, there is not complete agreement as to how and which strategies should be used in comprehension strategies instruction and how long it takes to become effective strategy users (for reviews, cf. Harris & Graham, 1992; Harris & Pressley, 1991; Pressley, Woloshyn, Lsynchuk, Martin, Wood, & Willoughby, 1990). A point of agreement however, is that as students progress through school and as the

complexities of academic tasks increase, students' flexible and effective use of a repertoire of strategies must also broaden, as evident in observations of good readers.

Only recently has strategic learning been identified as important with younger as well as less adept readers, including in the area of emergent literacy. Good strategy users are conscious of how they reason; they are in 'metacognitive control' of their reasoning (Paris et al., 1991). Until recently, it was assumed that young children had to acquire the reading readiness skills before they could comprehend or produce written language. We now know that reading comprehension involves strategies and interpretations in the search for meaning (Pressley et el., 1992). This assumes that successful readers are actively using their knowledge of the world and written language to make sense of emerging understandings (Englert, Raphael, & Mariage, 1994; Klenk, 1994; Palincsar, 1986; Palincsar & Klenk, 1992). As a result, there has been a shift in seeing 'emergent literacy' in a more balanced or holistic framework that emphasizes the development of intentional, self-directed learners (Harris & Pressley, 1991; Pressley, 1998; Pressley & Rankin, 1994). Literacy competence, viewed in this way, highlights the growth of conscious awareness and the self-regulation of a repertoire of strategies. With more conscious awareness, comes choices and with choice comes empowerment in children's literacy development. Moreover, learning and development involve a complex interaction of factors coming together in collaborative processes as children learn to read and write.

<u>Strategy Development as a Collaborative Process</u>

Learning and development involve a complex interaction of personal, task, and contextual variables (Alexander, 1992, 1998; Bjorkland, 1990; Harris & Graham, 1996). There is consensus that students' individual biological, cognitive, and psychological characteristics interact with the conditions in the classroom context, and the nature of the specific subject being studied. As a result, this complex interaction affects the students' general pattern of strategy development. Although researchers have been able to identify key patterns of strategy development, developmental patterns can be truly individualistic and idiosyncratic. Variation in strategy development and strategic behavior is also evident within, as well as across individuals (Bjorkland, 1990; Pressley et al., 1992; Siegler, 1988). As a result, various instructional approaches have directly or indirectly attempted to address this somewhat uncertain and very complex process of becoming a strategic learner.

Clearly, the instructional support and guidance offered by teachers can do much to foster (or stifle) strategy use and development. One of the main characteristics of the successful instructional programs cited, is their ability to encourage collaborative exchanges where students are stimulated to actively engage in complex problem-solving contexts. In this context, the expert (usually the teacher) is sensitive to engaging learners to reach a slightly higher challenge. Duffy and Roehler (1986) have described this responsive exchange:

The students mediate the teachers' initial instructional information in terms of their old conceptions, creating restructured understandings. The teacher

mediates what students say and do in performing the tasks, using this
information to decide how to respond. This reciprocal cycle is the heart of
instruction, (p.25)

In this way, instruction is more than getting students on task and presenting
materials in organized ways. It is also a socially situated, cognitive interaction between
teachers and students as well as students and students. Much information is presented to
children about written language through social interactions. This reciprocal cycle is also
at the heart of Vygotsky's view of instruction. Vygotsky's (1978, 1986) sociocultural
theory emphasizes the critical role of social interactions on learning. Vygotsky's
assumptions are highlighted to show that in attempting to read their writing, both
independently and in interaction with peers and adults, children come to discover the
nature of the precise connection between reading, writing, and language. Two
assumptions of the sociocultural perspective have driven this inquiry into emergent
literacy development, namely (a) that the cognitive processes related to literacy are
acquired in holistic, contextualized activities and are embedded in literacy as a cultural
phenomenon, and (b) that these literacy processes originate in social interactions.

<u>Vygotsky and Literacy as a Contextualized, Cultural Phenomenon</u>

The first guiding assumption underlying Vygotsky's theory of learning is that
cognitive processes related to literacy are acquired in holistic, contextualized activities.
Vygotsky promoted a contextual view of literacy. This emphasis on studying the context
may illuminate in part why some students benefit from strategic instruction and others do
not; why some students learn to read and write while others struggle. A sociocultural

perspective assumes that the driving mechanism for learning and development is found in the interactions among people. A sociocultural approach is based on the concept that human activities take place in cultural contexts, are mediated by language and other symbol systems, and can be best understood when investigated in their historical development. For adults, reading and writing are often solitary literacy activities. However, for young children, learning to read and write in the primary grades is often embedded in social activities. The primary grades are where children are first inducted into the school 'culture' and where their academic identities are being formed. For Vygotsky, cognitive processes and subsequent understandings and changes are always in some social context, in the interdependence of social and individual processes in the co-construction of knowledge.

Classrooms are also part of a larger culture, namely schools, school boards, and provincial departments of education that are embedded in society. In this way, society provides a critical influence on people's behaviors and interpretations and how literacy is ultimately defined, instructed, and evaluated. Therefore, literacy development cannot be evaluated or understood apart from these layers of context, particularly the interactions found in classrooms. Accordingly, Vygotsky's contextual view emphasizes the viability of learners' competencies as a function of many factors. These factors include but are not limited to the task at hand, the setting in which the learning occurred, the kind of support provided by the teacher, learner characteristics, teacher, parents and learners' beliefs about teaching and learning, as well as the kind of language and symbolic tools used. Artifacts such as children's writing and attempts at reading (Cole, 1990) help us to

understand how higher mental functions such as exploring hypotheses and using strategies are orchestrated in many specialized (individualized) and more global ways. Instruction is therefore, a social-cognitive interaction between teachers and students in what Vygotsky (1978) called the zone of proximal development (ZPD).

The Social Origins of Knowledge

The second guiding assumption underlying Vygotsky's (1978) theory pertains to his concern with the social basis of acquiring higher mental functions. Vygotsky (1981) conceptualized environment (context) as the 'social situation of development'. It is through recurrent interactions with significant others, such as teachers, that the children's ZPD is co-created. In this way, Vygotsky's notion of the ZPD provides an instantiation of his 'general genetic law of cultural development' (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). In the ZPD, learning proceeds from the 'interpsychological' (with others) and then 'intrapsychologically' (within, self-directed). It is from this co-creation that the social domains and subsequent cognitive domains emerge. As a result, teachers need to provide instruction and intervention at an appropriate level of difficulty, taking these emerging abilities into account. Vygotsky (1978) clearly pointed out that:

> The first task of scientific investigation is to reveal this prehistory of
> children's written language, to show what leads children to writing,
> throught what important points this prehistorical development passes,
> and in what relationship it stands to school learning, (p. 107)

Nevertheless, as Clay (1975, 1979) and Harste (Harste et al.,1984) and his colleagues have argued, educators often do not take the time to find out what emerging

abilities their students already have, so that they can plan their instruction accordingly. If these social interactive patterns are part of the prehistorical development of children's written language, then children's literacy development cannot be explained by principles that apply solely to the individual. One way to explore these interactive patterns is to perhaps look at the social origins of knowledge within children's ZPD.

The ZPD as the 'social situation of development'. Vygotsky (1978) proposed that children need to work at least some of the time within their ZPD. How is this accomplished? Vygotsky (1986) provided a clue when he wrote about assisting children by leading questions and by introducing the initial elements of the task as 'mediated' by teachers. Although he did not specify the forms of assistance given learners in the ZPD, he wrote about collaboration and direction as creating opportunities for interpretations rather than strictly eliciting responses, such as the commonly seen 'Invitation-Response-Evaluation' (I-R-E sequences) frequently used by teachers in classrooms (Cazden, 1988; Mehan, 1979).

As Duffy and Roehler (1986) have so eloquently stated, children's learning can be found in 'responsive exchanges' as reciprocal cycles that lie at the heart of instruction. This reciprocal cycle is also at the heart of Vygotsky's view of instruction. Children's cognitive development is an integral part of how they are supported in their interactions with others in specific problem solving contexts, such as classrooms. Therefore, the study of children's early socially-based reading and writing behaviors has given researchers and educators the impetus to study emergent literacy as an alternative view

from the 'reading readiness skills' approach (Crawford, 1995; Hall, 1987; Mason, 1992; Reutzel & Cooter, 1992).

Students as part of a 'learning community'. Researchers are starting to describe and explain more adequately the potential collaborative and constructive processes created through dialogue between teachers and learners in classrooms. These 'social origins' of literacy development have their beginnings in two ways. Initially, there are the social interactions between the child and teacher or parent. There also seems to be an impetus for literacy development within the 'learning community'—the social world of the classroom.

With the influence of cognitive psychology, strategic learning has been identified as important with younger as well as less adept readers, including the area of emergent literacy. The intent of this section of the review is to highlight those studies, namely, 'reciprocal teaching' (Palincsar, 1986; Palincsar & Brown. 1984), 'transactional strategy instruction' (Brown, Pressley, Van Meter, & Schuder, 1996), the 'Early Literacy Project' (Englert, 1992; Englert & Mariage, 1996; Englert, Mariage, Garmon, & Tarrant, 1998; Englert et al., 1994), and 'reciprocal teaching' as part of the Early Literacy Project (Palincsar & Klenk, 1992, 1993) that have been most instrumental in influencing educators to understand how young students as part of a 'learning community' eventually become more intentional about using a repertoire of strategies as part of their emergent understandings.

These approaches have generally met with success in promoting strategy use, increasing comprehension as well as addressing the issues of transfer and

generalizability. All these instructional practices have emphasized teaching reading as thinking, and more recently Englert and her colleagues (Englert, 1992; Englert & Mariage, 1996; Englert et al., 1998; Englert et al., 1994) have emphasized reading and writing as thinking in the Early Literacy Project (ELP). It is students' literacy development with its emphasis on reasoning and problem solving with print (Palincsar & Klenk, 1992, 1993) that has also been addressed in these various approaches.

<u>Subtleties of Instruction in Reciprocal Teaching</u>

The first such approach is found in reciprocal teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). Reciprocal teaching is an instructional procedure that highlights guided practice in the application of four concrete strategies for the purpose of understanding text. The four strategies, used in small reading groups, consist of generating predictions, asking questions, seeking clarifications, and summarizing content. The adult teacher eventually releases control of the four strategies as the students take over the strategic processing. These discussions are not, however, open-ended.

Reciprocal teaching provides a 'meta-script' of how to teach comprehension strategies (Gallimore & Tharp, 1983). A 'meta-script' by definition encourages adaptations based on the needs of the students and teachers in the context of their particular learning community. Duffy and Roehler (1986) describe this kind of teaching as a 'responsive exchange'. Responsive exchange certainly implies the possibility of adaptations and probably the need for adaptations depending on the needs of the learners.

The underlying assumptions guiding reciprocal teaching are that (a) the kinds of strategies selected are used by successful readers routinely, (b) the strategies used in

constructing meaning provide the means by which mental processes can be made more explicit and visible, and that (c) strategies support a discussion in an interactive and socially supportive context. The role of the teacher is to support the involvement of all learners in the discussion by modeling, supporting, and by providing feedback and explanations that will in time enable full participation of the students in the dialogue. The supportive aspects of the instruction are removed as the students, as a group and as individuals, internalize or adopt the dialogue by which they have become more active participants in this social context.

Palincsar and Brown's (1984) initial research was conducted with junior high students who were adequate decoders but had limited comprehension. After two months of such strategic instruction, there was noticeable improvement in the use of the strategies, but only modest improvement on standardized reading tests (see Rosenshine & Meister, 1994 for a review). Because my study is concerned with students in kindergarten and grade one, the research on 'reciprocal teaching' summarized in the following section is particularly salient. This later research using 'reciprocal teaching' focused on first-graders working in mixed groups of five to eight students, most of whom had been identified as at risk for academic difficulty; whereas, one or two students per each group were not at risk (Palincsar, 1986; Palincsar & Klenk, 1992). Students who were not at risk were included to support the other students' growing understandings.

<u>Research into 'Reciprocal Teaching' with First Graders in Small Groups</u>

Earlier research with these first graders (Palincsar, 1986) used an array of unrelated texts drawn largely from readers and trade magazines for children that provided

little opportunity for cumulative reference and acquisition and use of knowledge as an expanded knowledge base over time. In contrast, Palincsar and Klenk's (1992) study incorporated themes such as simple science concepts related to animal survival themes that were represented across the texts. This was done deliberately to help children to identify and use analogy in their comprehension strategies. Analogy, it was found, is an important learning mechanism for building an extended knowledge base. When noting commonalties, learners go beyond the surface features between problems and concentrate on the core similarities (Brown, 1989; Brown & Campione, 1984).

In both studies (Palincsar, 1986; Palincsar & Klenk, 1992), reciprocal teaching involved listening comprehension as the teacher read out loud to the group. The rationale in working with first graders on listening comprehension was based on Resnick's (1989) notion of 'cognitive bootstrapping'. Cognitive bootstrapping is an instantiation of Vygotsky's emphasis on the importance of 'performance before competence' (Cazden, 1988). One example, of cognitive bootstrapping was the use of books and magazines that the first graders obviously could not read, but that gave them opportunities to practice their preconventional readings of articles and stories from the 'stage of the reader's chair'. Another example of cognitive bootstrapping was when the teacher read out loud while the children listened and practiced the four reciprocal teaching strategies.

In the past, because of the widely accepted practice of emphasizing reading readiness skills before comprehension, comprehension strategies were usually only introduced at grade four levels. Interestingly, the initial rationale (Palincsar, 1986) for reciprocal teaching as teaching summarizing, predicting, clarifying and question asking

strategies in the context of meaningful literacy events was enhanced in a later study

(Palincsar & Klenk, 1992). In this later study with five to eight year old students, in

addition to teaching the four strategies of summarizing, predicting, clarifying and

questioning, students were encouraged to construct their own strategies and hypotheses.

In other words, teachers encouraged as well as took the time to not only teach the four

reciprocal teaching strategies, but also to assist students in modifying, refining, and

adapting these hypotheses and strategies. As a result of previous research in reading

readiness, emergent literacy and reciprocal teaching, we now know that decoding skills

and phonemic awareness need to be taught in conjunction with authentic literacy

experiences. These literacy experiences may include but are not necessarily limited to

making sense of what we read by using comprehension strategies such as prediction,

summarization, clarification, and questions (see Pressley, 1998 for an excellent

overview). However, an explicit link between cognitive bootstrapping, decoding, and

phonemic awareness remains a gap in the research.

Furthermore, a review of the transcripts in Palincsar and Klenk's (1992) study

highlights that effective teachers used a broad array of conversational devices such as

cued elicitations, paraphrasing, framing of the children's responses, and selective use of

praise, silence and more. Palincsar and Klenk (1992) concluded that changes in the

culture of the classroom, a 'learning community', were slow and gradual as the use of

conversational devices first initiated by teachers gradually accommodated higher levels

of discourse and opportunities for students to become engaged and eventually to initiate

the reciprocal cycles of conversations. Pressley et al., (1992) have also proposed that it

usually takes many years for both students and teachers to become effective learners and teachers of comprehension strategies. This second approach called transactional strategy instruction (Pressley et al., 1992) is also part of a larger body of research on the teaching of cognitive strategies.

<div align="center">Transactional Strategies Instruction</div>

"Strategy teaching is long term and complex since students are taught to coordinate traditional memory and comprehension strategies with interpretive processes. It is the interpretive practices, in addition to direct explanation, that make this type of teaching transactional" (Pressley et al., 1992, p. 512). It is these interpretive practices that Rogoff (1990) alluded to when she argued that the generality of strategy use commonly assumed by researchers might be illusory in that self-regulation is not an abstract, context-free competence that necessarily transfers across domains. Rather, as Rogoff and others have suggested, learning is not a simple transfer of knowledge from educators to students. As a result of this new thrust, Pressley added ethnography to his research to strengthen his study of strategy instruction by incorporating insights gained from using both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. The result was to study more intensively, using observations and interviews, where strategy instruction was actually occurring and was being systematically introduced. In other words, the use and failure to use strategies cannot be fruitfully studied without a consideration of settings (Garner, 1990). Using ethnography as a way to consider the particular settings, researchers and educators chose to study the best of strategies instruction in schools [see Schuder, 1993 for an overview of the SAIL (Students Achieving Independent Learning) program and

Gaskins, Anderson, Pressley, Cunicelli, & Satlow, 1993 for an overview of the Benchmark program].

The transactional strategies model grew out of the fact that the activities of the groups were determined jointly by teachers and students as they interacted with text (Bell, 1968; Bjorkland, 1989; Sameroff, 1975). These 'joint constructions of meaning' (Morrow, 1990) seem to result in a built-in motivation to read, resulting in more reading and thus more opportunities for strategy use and practice for increasing the knowledge base that in turn mediates future learning. This type of strategy instruction is also transactional in the literary sense (Rosenblatt, 1978). Transactional strategy instruction underscores the significance of seeing any reading event in its personal, social, and cultural matrix.

Reminiscent of transactional strategy instruction, a number of contemporary reading-instructional theorists have also argued for a more balanced approach in reading instruction (e.g., Adams, 1990; Cazden, 1992; Delpit, 1986; Duffy, 1991; Pressley, 1994, 1998; Pressley & Rankin, 1994; Stahl, McKenna, & Pagnucco, 1994). Consistent with this outlook, the teachers in a national survey of instructional practice of primary teachers nominated as effective in promoting literacy development (Pressley, 1998; Pressley, Rankin, & Yokoi, 1996) described their classrooms as integrating the best of both whole language and more explicit skills and strategy instruction. The principle finding was very much in line with the goals of transactional strategy instruction in that the surveyed teachers embodied a balanced perspective. One of the programs using the transactional

strategies instruction model was the SAIL (Students Achieving Independent Learning)

program.

The SAIL Program

The wide use of a procedure or extensive reading requires considerable adaptation

to the particular context or circumstances (Pressley, Harris, & Marks, 1992). In

examining the SAIL (Students Achieving Independent Learning) and Benchmark school

projects, it became evident that it takes years for both students and teachers to become

strategic learners and teachers. The SAIL program was developed explicitly to change

instruction for students at-risk for academic achievement in grades one to six from a

deficit-remedial model (Allington, 1983) to a more student-focused model. The teachers

assumed that all students were capable of learning, rather than emphasizing their deficits

as learners. The SAIL program came about as a result of a problem-solving response of

the staff in a large public school system in the United States. The staff developed a

theory-based, supplemental reading program in cognitive learning strategies to replace

the usual remediation for at-risk students for the entire school of students at-risk.

Instruction started with explicit teaching of a repertoire of learning strategies

during instruction in reading comprehension. It became more student-centered and

refined until it evolved into transactional strategies instruction, a blend of explicit

instruction, direct explanation, reader response, and teacher-student-text interactions over

a three to five year training and implementation period. The goal was to teach at-risk

students in grades one to six how to behave strategically which meant learning how to

choose and use strategies in diverse learning situations that would carry over from year to year in the school.

This intervention program was unusual in many respects. First, students who are at-risk are not usually found all together in one school. However, this was necessary because student introduction to transactional strategies instruction is gradual and as a result takes years to develop and refine. A notable result is that SAIL students' standardized test scores in reading comprehension rose and surpassed those obtained by comparable students enrolled in U.S. government 'Chapter 1' programs for at-risk students. However, one of the concerns of first and second grade SAIL teachers was how to better develop decoding skills in the context of strategy instruction. This was addressed by developing a specific word attack component that was later refined as part of the Benchmark program.

Although claims cannot be made as to how these students continued to do in grade seven and beyond, there are some clear positive results. First, the children continued to grow as more strategic readers from year to year in this school. It is difficult to evaluate and to quantify how and whether the teachers involved implemented the program in exactly the same way because there was no script. The teachers were expected within the framework of transactional strategies instruction to respond to the students' hypotheses, questions, and strategies used. The emphasis was always on responding and focusing on the student. However, a refinement of this study in order to ascertain some of these differences was conducted with second-grade, low-achieving students (Brown et al., 1996).

These students experienced a year of either transactional strategies instruction or a highly regarded, more conventional reading instruction in the same school district. By the end of the school year, there was abundant evidence that the students in transactional strategies instruction had greater strategy awareness and use, greater comprehension, and superior performance on standardized reading tests. This is the most supportive validation to date of educator-developed and implemented transactional strategies instruction. However, effective self-regulated learning occurs over a long time and as a result transactional strategies instruction needs to be implemented over the long term to be effective (Pressley et al., 1992). One year of such instruction at least gets second-graders who are experiencing difficulties in learning to read to improve their reading relative to a year for comparable students in very good more conventional classes. Another program using the transactional strategy instruction approach was Benchmark.

The Benchmark School Program

The Benchmark School was a private school for bright underachievers in grades one to eight who experienced difficulties in learning to read in the first two years of schooling. A strategic teaching initiative, strong instructional leadership, and student and teacher collegiality characterized the instruction at this school. A11 of the students were referred to the school because of their failure to learn to read in regular schools. Most of the students entered at age eight or nine and typically stayed for four years. The primary goal was to prepare students to return to the regular classroom in a public or private school.

Benchmark's teachers focused on students' understanding and helped them to

apply major concepts such as the relationship between geography and culture in social

studies. Therefore, they attempted to bridge the gulf that sometimes separates process

and content. They were guided by the finding that "when teachers [provide] careful

explanations about how skills are actually used, students [conceptualize] reading as a

strategic process and [use] skills strategically" (Duffy & Roehler, 1987, p. 415). In

collaboration with researchers at the University of Maryland, this approach came to be

called transactional strategies instruction (Pressley et al., 1992). Most students emerged

after four to seven years well prepared to return to regular education. Nearly all

Benchmark graduates completed high school, and many attended post-secondary

institutions.

In both reciprocal teaching and transactional strategies instruction, teachers were

able to use their "own professional judgment to be responsive to students' needs and to

alter instruction as it unfolds in class" (Duffy, 1993, p. 233). A third approach, the Early

Literacy Project (ELP) attempts to be even more responsive by cutting across the

language domains of reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

The Early Literacy Project

"Student talk permeated the collaborative reading and writing activities so that

there was no artificial division between written practices (reading and writing) and oral

practices" (Englert et al., 1998, p. 146). In this way, students were engaged for several

hours per day in reading, writing and thinking. By connecting writing, reading, listening

and talking, beginning readers had multiple opportunities to observe letter-sound

correspondences, to analyze the visual-aural word forms, and to practice their metalinguistic knowledge as well as word recognition skills.

The researchers and teachers in the ELP conducted three exploratory studies in the primary grades to determine the efficacy of this program to improve the reading performance of students with mild disabilities (Englert et al., 1998). The researchers (Englert et al., 1994) had previously identified critical activities to literacy development that included the use of thematic units, choral reading, undisturbed silent reading, partner reading and writing, sharing chairs, morning news, and story response and discussion. Each activity contributed in various ways to the children's abilities to read, comprehend, and write narrative and expository texts in a more connected way. The ELP teachers also taught phonemic awareness for ten to fifteen minutes per day for students at second grade levels and below. The curriculum development and implementation were guided by sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978). Critical to our understanding of early literacy development are the underlying assumptions as to the effective enactment of this literacy program. The assumptions have been addressed in greater detail elsewhere (Englert et al., 1994; Englert & Mariage, 1996).

The assumptions guiding the implementations were: (a) literacy instruction should occur in 'meaningful and holistic literacy activities, (b) the origins of 'strategic function' is in dialogic interactions, (c) teachers teach 'responsively in students' ZPD, and (d) students need to be part of a 'community of learners'. The results of these three exploratory studies are promising not only for students with mild learning disabilities, but are also promising for general education students as evidenced in the third exploratory

study (Englert et al., 1998). Generally, the results highlighted the potential for the ELP to be a promising intervention in special education programs and probably as part of the regular classroom as well. The results also suggested that effective outcomes require sustained longitudinal (more than one year) efforts by teachers and researchers to accelerate literacy learning. The effects are probably going to be greatest if the efforts cut across the language domains of reading, writing, listening, and speaking and across the curriculum. In this way, students are engaged for several hours per day in reading and writing activities and thinking. Moreover, although we have learned a great deal about how to teach and learn more strategically, for some students becoming a more intentional, strategic learner continues to elude them.

In the end, for educators the question may be what educational practices best serve to promote a more dialogic (Bakhtin, 1986) approach to literacy? This has been the thrust of the Vygotskian-inspired research by Palincsar and Brown (1984) into 'reciprocal teaching', Pressley and his colleagues' research into 'transactional strategy' instruction and Englert's 'Early Literacy Project' that assumed that 'strategic function' is in dialogic interactions. In addition, Duffy and Roehler's (1986) research addressed the subtleties of instruction focusing on the intersubjective nature of teaching. All of these studies have suggested that differences in the type of classroom instructional discourses might lead to qualitatively different intrapsychological understandings on the part of learners.

The subtleties of the language used in instruction are responsive and elaborative. Non-discursive aspects emphasize facts as exemplified in I-R-E (Initiation-Reply-Evaluation) sequences (Mehan, 1979). In contrast, the discursive aspects of language use

emphasize refinements and elaborations on students' emerging conceptual

understandings. These discursive aspects also have an affective component that has not

been explicitly stated by any of the researchers, except Juliebo and Meaney's (1997) with

their metaphor of students learning to 'trust themselves' as they become more intentional,

self-directed readers. Vygotsky (1987) reveals his interest in this affective aspect of

learners by characterizing the 'living drama of verbal thinking' as follows:

> An understanding of another's words requires more than an understanding
>
> of words alone; it requires that one understand the other's thoughts.
>
> However, even this understanding is an incomplete understanding if we do
>
> not understand the other's motive, the reason that he has expressed his
>
> thought. In precisely this sense, we take the psychological analysis of any
>
> expression to its end only when we reveal the final and most secret internal plane
>
> of verbal thinking, that is, its motivation. With this, our analysis is finished, (p.6)

<u>Chapter Summary</u>

Changing perspectives on children's cognitive development has had a powerful

impact on viewing emergent literacy as strategic as children explore their hypotheses in

socially situated contexts. The successful instructional and intervention studies cited have

made a tremendous contribution to our knowledge as to the socially situated, strategic

nature of learning. They have extended our understandings of how long these type of

competencies take to develop as well as the significance of observing students using their

hypotheses and strategies as emergent readers and writers. As a result, educators may

change their instruction accordingly to meet the needs of students. The influence of

cognitive psychology and sociocultural theory has shown educators how they can play a primary role in apprenticing students into the 'learning community".

A prominent theme has been the role of collaboration between teachers and learners and the ways in which these collaborations support strategic development in enhancing students' literacy growth. In the complex area of emergent literacy, this approach suggests that educators need to be forward looking, proposing that developmentally, children are moving toward a time when they will be able to write and read conventionally. In the meantime, we need to follow and understand children's changing and refining motives and strategies as sometimes-observed in bursts of growth and at other times in fits and starts. In the end, the growing knowledge must help researchers and ultimately educators to become more aware of the critical importance of contextual differences, the influence of the reading and writing tasks themselves, and the role of collaboration and social interactions. With these points in mind, in Chapter three I present the rationale and significance of this study.

Chapter 3

Rationale and Significance of the Study

As children grow up in a literate society they learn about this tool called written

language. Children actively interpret written language as they do other forms of symbol

systems in ways that make sense in their worldviews. Kindergarten and grade one is the

forerunner of special attention paid to the written language symbol system. In fact,

children make sense of behaviors modeled by adults in ways that in turn make sense in

their own lives (Cazden, 1986; Corsaro, 1985). During the primary grades, symbols such

as words, drawings, music and numbers become dominant forces in children's lives

(Flavel, 1985; Gardner, 1980; Nelson, 1985; Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). The use of various

symbols provides diverse means of participating in the classroom culture and diverse

ways of developing their own cognitive abilities.

In addition, changing perspectives on children's cognitive development have had

a powerful impact on viewing emergent literacy as strategic whereby children explore

their hypotheses and ideas in socially situated contexts. The influence of cognitive

psychology has shown educators how to teach more strategically. Coupled with this

emphasis on the importance of strategies, Vygotsky (1978) in his sociocultural theory has

proposed that educators can play a primary role in 'apprenticing' (Rogoff, 1990) students

into a 'learning community'. In fact, Clay (1991) focused her research on how children

use opportunities in the classroom to construct an inner (strategic) control over literacy

tasks. Therefore, an approach that examines children's learning over time within their

specific contexts provides us with opportunities to show how social contexts, such as

classrooms, influence children's opportunities to construct this strategic control.

<u>Metacognition and the Role of Hypotheses</u>

During the last two decades, many researchers have explored the limitations of

children's literacy abilities, rather than seeking to describe the knowledge and skills they

are using and building on as they explore their environments. There has been little

research to date that has focused on the metacognitive strategies used by kindergartners

in written language learning. Even exceptions such as Palinscar, Klenk, Pressley and

Brown's work as reviewed in Chapter two did not study kindergarten specifically.   This

is due in large part to the belief that children do not engage in strategic planning and

monitor behaviors until they can read and write more conventionally.

One important exception, Harste et al. (1984) maintain that very young children

use socio-psychological strategies similar to more experienced readers. In an

examination of data collected on comprehension on 3-, 4-, and 5- year olds' reading and

writing, Rowe and Harste (1986) presented evidence that young children monitor their

comprehension to make corrections and to plan the content of their written pieces. The

children also consciously used a variety of socio-psychological strategies to deal with

problems they encountered. These conclusions were informed by observing children's

in-process verbalizations about their work as well as by making inferences from their

behaviors during reading and writing events. More research, such as this study, is needed

to further examine the socio-psychological strategies that children use in their literacy

development.

Other researchers in the area of children's early writing have suggested that children often explore hypotheses in their interactions with print (Bissex, 1980; Clay, 1975, 1991; Dyson, 1983; Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Harste et al., 1984). Trying, refining, and revising hypotheses is viewed as one of the ways that children come to understand written language. It is reasonable to assume that young learners cannot attend to all aspects in each literacy event. As a result, they attend to what they are most interested in or most familiar with. They then incorporate, refine, or discard current understandings and then move on to other areas of interest (Harste et al., 1984). A second finding related to using hypotheses is that children may appear 'to lose control' of processes that they have previously mastered (Deford, 1980; Luria, 1983). Third, there seems to be no firm order in which hypotheses are tried.

Previous research indicates that children's current hypotheses are determined by a transaction between their existing knowledge and skills, their past experiences, and features of the particular literacy events in which they are participating (Harste et al., 1984; Sulzby, 1985). For this reason, the hypotheses explored in this study involved transactions between the available demonstrations and teaching and the interests, purposes, and personal history of the child. Except for Rowe and Harste's (1986) research and more recently Dyson's (1995) research focusing on children's writings, existing research tells us little about how literacy learning occurs overtime in natural contexts such as classrooms. For this reason, it is the process of often-tacit knowledge that I have chosen as the focus of this study.

Particularly relevant, are the questions of how children go about generating, trying, and refining hypotheses in the social context of the classroom and how they incorporate past knowledge to understand new situations. In this way, the process becomes the product or stated more emphatically the process is the product. This emphasis highlights the importance of studying the processes by which children arrive at their written products. The final step is to make sense of these processes and render them public for others to share in the hope of advancing our understanding of how young children learn to write and read.

The Significance of the Study and the Research Question

When children's preconventional attempts at reading and writing are ignored or misunderstood as 'scribbles', these early attempts may be unnecessarily sacrificed for a well-intentioned adult's overemphasis on the importance of conventions. As a result, when educators attempt to guide children's efforts, tensions may surface as reflected in misunderstandings between teachers' and children's intentions and between their ways of fulfilling intentions (Cazden, 1988; Searle, 1985). In fact, some researchers (Clay, 1975, 1979; Dyson, 1982, 1988; Harste et al., 1984; Sulzby, 1986) have argued that educators often do not take the time to find out what emerging abilities their students already have to plan for instruction accordingly. When teachers take for granted that children have the concept of a word or concepts about the various functions of written language, children may be left behind confused and frustrated.

Early instruction must provide children with the underlying concepts about the functions of reading and writing as well as specific information about phonemic

awareness. By estimating what each student already knows and thereby building on students' knowledge about print, educators are in a better position to build on what is already known. As a result, I focused this inquiry on 'children as informants' to find out what hypotheses and emerging abilities about print they already have. The question guiding this inquiry is how do students as hypotheses makers and testers and as part of a 'learning community' eventually become more conscious of using a repertoire of strategies in learning to read and write?

Describing and explaining children's behaviors in classroom writing activities may provide educators with insights into why children do or do not become effective writers and perhaps readers. As a result, educators may be encouraged and helped in learning how to observe and evaluate children's written language development to plan for instruction more effectively. In this way, the teaching of reading and writing can take advantage of what children already know about print.

Therefore, to better understand the development of written language, we cannot simply examine early scribbles and letter-like marks without looking at the child's growth as a more sophisticated symbol user overall as well as a social being (Dyson, 1986, 1989; Vygotsky, 1978). In this study, I chose to look to the children as 'informants' of their learning. By engaging in conversations and by observing what young children are doing, adults come to better understand and participate in children's worlds. In this study, the children were the informants, the experts of their knowledge and I was in many ways the novice as I discovered how the students were 'apprenticed' (Rogoff, 1990) into their 'learning community'.

Vygotsky (1978) speaks eloquently to the emergent nature of literacy, and his insights lend particular support to this study. It is worth quoting in its entirety as follows:

> Our concept of development implies a rejection of the frequently held view that cognitive development results from the gradual accumulation of separate changes. We believe that child development is a complex dialectical process characterized by periodicity, unevenness in the development of different functions, metamorphosis or qualitative transformations of one form into the other, intertwining of external and internal factors and adaptive processes that overcome impediments the child encounters, (p. 73)

In fact, "human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 88). In classrooms, past development prepares the ground for future learning possibilities and these learning possibilities are realized according to the new experiences learners encounter as organized by more competent and knowledgeable others and with their help. For this reason, in this study I sought to make children's often tacit hypotheses and knowledge more explicit.

However, as informants, children do not always have the linguistic skills to describe or explain what they are doing. In other words, children and adults share a context or reference, but not necessarily a shared understanding (Wertsch & Stone, 1985). Children's talk is the beginning of a possible shared understanding between children and members of their community. Eventually, through conversations children grow into their culture. For Wertsch and Stone (1985), "children can say more than they

realize and that it is through coming to understand what is meant by what is said that their cognitive skills develop" (p. 167). As explored in this study, this is one of the main ways that we as educators also come to know what skills they are developing and how they emerge. The methods that I have chosen to conduct this study lend themselves to making children's often tacit hypotheses and knowledge more explicit.

<u>The Role of Qualitative Research</u>

Because my research question is asking 'how' and is exploratory in nature, I decided on a qualitative research design as my methodological framework. Qualitative research requires the investigator to enter the lives of the persons being studied as 'fully and naturally as possible' (Stainback & Stainback, 1988).   In other words, it requires a long-term commitment so that the investigator's presence becomes as natural a phenomenon as possible. In addition, because of my interest in exploring Vygotsky's socially situated theory of learning in literacy development, the 'learning community', the culture of the classroom becomes important. Qualitative research, broadly speaking, focuses on issues found in social organizations, such as classrooms.

Qualitative researchers are concerned with the social, the relationships between people, and how people in their actions together constitute the environment for each other and vice versa (Erickson, 1986). The environment in this case, the classroom has also been defined as a 'culture'. Culture is no longer a term used only in anthropology to study far-away cultures. In fact, Spradley (1980) has defined 'culture' to include what people do and how they come to understand the things they make and use. For example, cultural dynamics can enable or hinder its members to behave in either appropriate or

inappropriate ways in a particular setting, such as in classrooms. Wolcott (1987) has

further elucidated on how a culture may be defined, even a temporarily convened one

such as classrooms. "Culture is not lying about, waiting patiently to be discovered;

rather, it must be inferred from the words and actions of members of the group under

study . . . . Culture as such, as an explicit statement.. . does not exist until someone

acting in the role of ethnographer puts it there" (Wolcott, 1987, p. 41).

I have taken this quote as embodying my research position. Namely, my role and

task is to make an explicit statement or statements as to how kindergarten children as part

of a classroom become more literate and how eight of these children continued their

literacy development into grade one. Furthermore, this position implies some underlying

assumptions. The following assumptions about qualitative research as a study of social

organizations or cultures have guided my research question: (a) Neither the individual

nor the culture can be understood in isolation; (b) most qualitative researchers do believe

that people interpret and give meaning to their experiences and to events in their

environment that lead to their own perceptions of reality; (c) much of what is 'out there'

exists only because we as a society have conceptualized and defined it as reality; and (d)

this constructed reality is dynamic, not static. For this reason, studying the context or

culture is often complex and requires a flexible research approach that allows for the

collection of a wide variety of data in naturalistic settings (Stainback & Stainback, 1988).

Chapter 4

Method

Negotiating Entry into the Kindergarten Classroom

As I planned this study, I worked with my committee on deciding on a kindergarten classroom. For practical reasons, we decided to choose a smaller school district more rural in nature because the larger ones close to the university were inundated with requests not only for research, but also for practicum teachers. One of my committee members suggested a former graduate student of hers who was teaching kindergarten and whom she felt would have the kind of classroom that I was looking for to conduct my research. Namely, the teacher promoted students' writing in her class.

As I finished the proposal for this study, I contacted the recommended teacher, Eleanor (pseudonym). She agreed to meet with me and suggested that I spend a couple of days in her morning and afternoon kindergarten classes. I told her about my tentative plans for my participation. For example, I had been thinking of spending the four mornings or afternoons a week the kindergarten classes ran for the first three months to really familiarize myself with the children and they with me. After three days, Eleanor agreed to my research and we finalized plans.

To gain formal approval to conduct research at the school, my proposal had to be reviewed by the Superintendent of the School District as well as the school principal. Both the superintendent and school principal welcomed my interest in doing research in their district. Since parents would need to grant permission for their children to participate, I wrote a letter explaining my research as well as a form giving permission

for their children to participate (see Appendix A). Because Eleanor had established such good rapport with her students' parents, she felt that a brief letter from her supporting my research would ensure that the entire class could be videotaped. A decision was made at that time to research her morning class because there were some extra confidentiality issues with parental custody in the afternoon class. Within a week, I received all of the permission letters from all twenty-two children and I began my study the third week of February. Over the course of the study, I got to know many of the parents, especially those who volunteered their time in the class. I also got to know Eleanor.

Collaborating with Eleanor

Eleanor was very supportive of having me in the classroom. We talked about my role in the classroom and the data collection and recording techniques that I planned to use (e.g., participant observation, informal interviewing, and the collection of artifacts, field notes, audiotapes and videotapes). She was pleased that I planned to be present in the classroom so much, and that I would eventually participate in the normal classroom activities. She also mentioned that she would be getting a student teacher for part of the study and wanted to know if that would present a problem. I felt that a student teacher's presence would not change the focus of my research as I was looking to the 'children as informants' in their literacy development. Furthermore, the student teacher was to initially observe the classroom teacher and was asked not to change how Eleanor had set up the learning situation.

Next, I outlined how I hoped Eleanor could participate in this study. I suggested that she could share her observations of interesting literacy events, by initially collecting

artifacts before I arrived (the children will have been writing at the writing center for about six weeks before I started), and by reacting to some of the data collected such as videos as well as a couple of informal interviews. I stressed that my role was not on developing or implementing the curriculum, but on observing how learning was occurring in this classroom. However, I hoped that we could work collaboratively—with me supporting her teaching and she supporting my research. Also, Eleanor initially cleared with the student teacher that I would be doing research in her classroom. I sent my proposal to the student teacher for any questions or concerns. She was excited to be part of this study.

The Time and Place of This Study

Because of my interest in Vygotsky's socio-historical theory of learning, I intended to contextualize this study as much as I could so that you the reader can better understand the time and place that the children are in history. Increasingly, educators and researchers have become uncomfortable with theories that emphasize the individual's role in learning and seem to ignore the historical, social, and cultural nature of learning. This study honors Vygotsky's intent by sketching the contextual landscape at this time. I begin by focusing on the provincial teacher certification mandate to paint a somewhat broad stroke in contextualing this study. I then move to the school board level and community, the elementary school, and most significantly the classroom and teachers in this study.

ECS Teacher Certification

In the early 1970s, the Early Childhood Services (ECS) Diploma was implemented provincially. In the late 1980s it was discontinued. Although a complete discussion of the influence of the Diploma on early childhood education is outside the scope of this study, a few key points are worth mentioning (for a thorough discussion see LaGrange, 1991).

Key points arising from the diploma. The Early Childhood Diploma came about as a result of a commitment for specialized knowledge in working with young children. It was believed that the quality of the ECS program centered on having a well-qualified teacher. However, with time, the curriculum increasingly encouraged all teachers to be more knowledgeable about all stages of child development. As a result, teachers who did not have an Early Childhood Diploma began to teach kindergarten. Educational change was occurring that eventually led to the end of teachers requiring certification with the Early Childhood Diploma. The key point for the purposes of this study is that an ideological change had occurred and that ECS evolved as a program for better continuity for children in the age range of five to eight. As a result, teachers were expected to be able to teach this full age range. One can imagine how the teachers, many of whom had gone back to school to get this certification, felt about teachers who could after the late 1980s teach kindergarten without the diploma. The teachers in this study did not have the diploma, although they certainly had had relevant courses as part of their education. Moreover, not much has changed since 1991 with regards to elementary teacher certification.

<u>The Provincial Department of Education</u>

In this province, kindergarten is not a provincially mandated program and children have unrestricted access to any program in which there is room (public or private). However, many parents have their children go to the kindergarten program at their designated elementary school for grade one. In the provincial kindergarten program statement, children are expected to demonstrate "increasing confidence and competence in their abilities to use language to explore, construct and communicate meaning"' (Provincial Kindergarten Program Statement, 1997, p. 6).

The provincial department of education also provides a handbook for parents. The handbook (Kindergarten in Alberta, 1997) provides a clear, concise description of what parents can expect of their child's kindergarten program. In essence, it describes how young children learn, how learning is assessed, and how parents can become involved. I now move to the next context, to the community and school board level of this study.

<u>The Community</u>

The Canadian Pacific Railroad reached this town in the late 1800s. It is located in a picturesque valley. The community is a rural town outside a major western Canadian city. A large part of it is agricultural with some small businesses serving a primarily residential community. I would occasionally glance through the local newspaper to better understand the type of community that these children lived in. One day I noticed that three of the thirty pages was dedicated to classifieds advertising livestock, feed and seed, horses and gardening supplies. The town definitely had a small town focus very

different from the growing large city close by. People for the most part had decided to live here because it offered a particular lifestyle that they valued for their families.

<u>The School Board</u>

To begin with, the school board superintendent, school prinicipal and classroom teachers were very supportive of having me do the research in their school jurisdiction. The mission statement of the school board was to ensure their students' personal success, to teach needed skills to compete in a global market, and to instill a desire for life-long learning. In meeting this mission statement, the school board seemed to have a well-defined, collaborative delivery model for working with children with special needs. For example, the teacher, program specialist, school psychologist and speech and language pathologist worked closely to facilitate that the appropriate programs were in place for identified children. Specific programs could be implemented within the regular classroom or within the resource room, depending on the needs of the student. It is interesting to note that the instruction emphasized 'the process of learning' and the goal was the upgrading of academic skills.

The school board also had Child Development Assistants (CDAs). The role of the CDA was to assist in promoting positive behavior in students. Some of the ways this was done was through peer support and conflict resolution groups. The support for the students was organized around the needs of the students. For example, concerns such as divorce, grief, and loss could be addressed individually or in small groups. Both teachers and parents could let the assistant know about their concerns. In other words, through

this person, the school board was attempting to improve the emotional lives of their students.

The School Community

The school served approximately 560 students from kindergarten to grade four. There were 25 teachers and 18 support staff. The kindergarten program offered was a 400-hour program, either four mornings or afternoons per week, and it was part of a school district that received funding from the provincial government, just like all schools. The grade one program was a regular five day one that ran from September to the end of June. These students then go on to a middle school serving grades five to eight. The principals from both of these schools have worked very closely together over the years to promote consistency and continuity for the two schools. In 1999, they developed a joint calendar to provide common collaborative student planning guidelines. Also, where feasible they built upon each other's professional development to facilitate a greater degree of involvement between the two schools. I have chosen a poem that was selected by the principal and assistant principal to begin their school parent handout that was distributed in September. They believed it set the tone for the school and as such it is important for better understanding the context of this study. I, too, believe it set the tone for the school community.

Two Sculptors

I dreamed I stood in a studio and watched two sculptors there.

The clay they used was a young child's mind, and they fashioned it with care.

One was a teacher; the tools she used were books, music and art.

One, a parent with a guiding hand and a gentle, loving heart.

Day after day the teacher toiled with touch that was deft and sure.

While parents laboured by her side, and polished and smoothed it o'er.

And when at last their task was done, they were proud of what was wrought;

For all they had molded into the child could never be sold or bought.

And each agreed he would have failed if he had worked alone

For behind the teacher stood the school and behind the parent—a home.

Author unknown

The administrators further emphasized in their school handout that "the education of a child is a shared responsibility. The school functions to assist you in meeting the educational needs of your children".

The school staff seemed to be a particularly close-knit group. There were regular birthday celebrations, weekly luncheons prepared by the staff including administrative assistants, and celebrations of weddings and births. If there was gossiping going on, I was not privy to it. However, I often had lunch in the staff room and joined in the celebrations which usually meant great food. In addition, to the weekly parent newsletter, the school staff had an internal information bulletin highlighting in-service development, assemblies, and special weeks such as reading week. Each week there was a quote of the week that the staff was encouraged to contribute to or reflect on. The following two quotes were some of the more memorable ones: (a) The call of the teacher is to revere the ordinary until it becomes extraordinarily ordinary, and (b) The intelligent

anticipation of consequences is a vital goal of education (John Dewey). This was the group of teachers and school that Eleanor and Jill were part of during this study.

<u>Participants</u>

<u>Kindergarten Classroom Teacher</u>

Eleanor had taught preschool and the primary grades for five years before doing her Masters and Ph.D. in Early Childhood Education. Her focus had been primarily on improving science teaching in the early grades, and she was interested in children's play as well as parental involvement. Because kindergarten is not a provincially mandated program, the classroom teacher had some leeway in the way she implemented the provincial guidelines. Eleanor has been strongly influenced by the Reggio Emilio (Edwards, Forman, & Gandini, 1998) approach to early childhood education.

The Reggio Emilio approach takes the child's lead in exploring topics in great depth. For example, while involved in a project on color, children in the classroom were challenged to explore their environments using all 'hundred languages' such as words, drawing, drama, collage, building, sculpturing and/or painting. One of Eleanor's commitments, based on the Reggio approach, was to document children's finished work and work in progress. Documents such as transcriptions of tape recordings, photographs, and artwork revealed how the children planned, carried out, and then completed the displayed work. For this reason, the teacher is considered a collaborator who works closely with parents and children to find out what children already know. In this way, topics and projects are based on their knowledge and interests. This approach also requires listening to children's conversations, sometimes audiotaping them.

Another one of Eleanor's commitments that year, based on the Reggio approach, was to make her classroom space look less cluttered than it had in the past. With this in mind, children's work as well as pictures of children at work were tastefully displayed with comments by the teacher. All craft and art material were stored in cupboards out of sight when not in use. Moreover, Eleanor's passion for science translated into a love of introducing science concepts to children. There were many interesting projects such as watching chrysalis grow into monarch butterflies, making rainsticks to explore sounds, and exploring a unit on prisms and light. The journal writing center was used as well to introduce various science concepts to think and perhaps write about. Once the writing center table had carrot plants growing, to be followed by pussy willows displayed as one of the first signs of spring.

During the first four months of the study, I had a chance to interview and audiotape Eleanor about her philosophy of education as well as to get feedback from her videotape viewings (see Appendix B for questions).

Students in the Kindergarten Class

The kindergarten class had twenty-two children, eleven boys and eleven girls with a mean age of 5 years 9 months (ranging in age from 5 years 3 months to 7 years 3 months) at the beginning of the third week of February. Most of the children came from middle to upper middle class families. There was one girl who required help with speech and was periodically pulled out for speech assistance. She was repeating kindergarten as well as spending the afternoon in the grade one class. Earlier on she had had some developmental delays; however, I was not privy to this information.

I initially had selected ten children to follow into grade one from September to the end of November, hoping to end up with eight children. It is always prudent to start with too many to allow for lack of parental approval, moves over the summer, or changing one's mind. As it turned out, one student did move away and one parent over the summer chose to have her daughter attend another class. As a result, I followed eight of the selected children into grade one for the first three months.

I based my selection on the following two criteria in consultation with Eleanor. First, since I would study these children intensively, they needed to be approachable and willing to talk to me. Second, I wanted to have the children represent a continuum of emergent literacy development.

Selected Children in Grade One

In consultation with Eleanor, we initially selected ten children whom we thought represented a continuum of emergent literacy skills. Children who were repeating were not selected because they were on the average a year older. I asked Eleanor to use the two criteria of approachability and level of emergent literacy development to come up, on her own, with a list of ten children, splitting them into five girls and five boys if possible. Although my study does not specifically address gender issues, there is some interesting research going on in that area as to some possible differences (Dyson, 1997). For example, in Dyson's study boys often began to write as 'typical' boy writers, who emphasized male characters, often using cultural superheroes such as Power Rangers engaged in physical action. Instead, girls in the third grade were writing romantic action stories and issues of gender began to be explored within the context of superhero play

and rescue plots. Also, the kindergarten class was split evenly with eleven boys and eleven girls, which possibly had its own dynamic. We then met to discuss our selections to see how well we matched on the criteria.

Eleanor suggested that eight children might be a more realistic number to follow into grade one. I agreed. The selected children at either end of the continuum were relatively easy to identify for both of us. The challenge became to choose the ones representing the middle of the continuum. At this point, the criterion of approachability, y being able to talk to me about what they were doing was chosen as the main criterion. One of the requests of the parents, besides allowing me to study their children, was to agree to an interview with me either over the phone or in person (see Appendix C for letter sample). Interestingly, all the parents chose to talk to me in person and were obviously interested in what I was doing. I ended up studying four girls and four boys as they entered grade one. You will meet them in greater detail in my analyses and discussions in Chapters seven and eight.

Student Teacher in the Kindergarten Class

Susan (pseudonym) was in her final semester in education, specializing in early childhood education. She had chosen to take additional courses in early childhood to better understand how young children learn through play. As such, she was hoping to get a kindergarten position in the fall. Susan spent the first part of March observing the class routines and children so that there would be a smooth transition. She had already spent some time observing the children the previous fall so that the children were somewhat familiar with her. After a week, Susan started to take over more of the teaching,

beginning with a unit on feelings where the children learned to talk about feelings, read about them, make collages about feelings, write about them if they wanted to, and sing about them.

Susan also kept a journal on various children highlighting how they got along during play or center times, emphasizing social skills and emotions. She later shared these with me. I have used some of her insights in my analysis. In the previous semester, she had done a small group project on early literacy that she thought I might find helpful in my research. I welcomed her input and enthusiasm. I also appreciated the fact that she allowed me to videotape her with the children and generally "invade her space" for the three months that she was there, the four mornings a week that the kindergarten ran. Susan also taught the afternoon kindergarten class that was not part of this study.

Parents and Other Adult Visitors

Parents were encouraged to volunteer their time and expertise with the children. Most of the time there was a parent present and some of the parents came regularly (once a week). This emphasis on establishing a close link with the students' parents has been strongly influenced by Eleanor's emphasis on how kindergarten teachers might ease the transition of children into school as they separate from parents. Eleanor contends that well-intentioned teachers do not want their practices to so successfully separate the parent from the child that future active parent involvement with the school is discouraged. As a result, children were very familiar and comfortable with these adults and would readily turn to them for assistance.

There were also scheduled visits from other interested adults. On one occasion, during book character month, volunteers (other parents in the school) dressed up as favorite children's book characters such as Clifford the dog and Franklin the turtle. During fire prevention week, the fire chief came in to share with the children as to what their families could do in the event of a fire. At other times, there were field trips to a local restaurant as well as a local historical ranch. Although visitors to the classroom were quite common and they interacted with the children when they were present, they did not develop long term relationships with the children. As this description indicates, the children knew and interacted regularly with a variety of adults on a regular basis.

Grade One Classroom Teacher Team Teaching with Eleanor

Jill (pseudonym) was an experienced classroom teacher as well as a resource teacher. As a result, she had a great deal of expertise dealing with students with a variety of learning and behavioral challenges. Over the years, she had also developed expertise in computer technology and was a resource person for other teachers in this area. Jill welcomed the challenge to work with Eleanor in team-teaching forty-eight children in grade one. This was a first for the school. There were many discussions as to how they were going to do this in the fall. I was not part of these discussions because my role was to observe the eight children as they entered grade one with these two teachers. However, I did take the opportunity to talk with and interview Jill about her philosophy of education as well as Eleanor to also find out how they had decided to do the team teaching (see Appendix D for sample questions).

<u>Initial Research Decisions about Methods</u>

This exploratory inquiry focused on describing and explaining the connections that children establish between reading, writing and oral language to gain further insight into this complex activity we call emergent literacy. This ethnography, combined with the case studies of children, emphasized children's understandings about reading and writing by highlighting the ideas and strategies that students have and use during kindergarten literacy activities over a four-month period. Eight of the kindergarten children were then selected and followed daily for three months at the beginning of grade one. The question guiding this inquiry was how do students as hypotheses makers and testers and as part of a 'learning community' eventually become more conscious of using a repertoire of strategies in learning to read and write? Accordingly, as my opening epitaph states 'how we do research,. . . reflects our underlying assumptions about human nature and learning'. Part of these assumptions includes my predispositions.

<u>Researcher's Predispositions</u>

Part of my inspiration and growth as an educator and now as a researcher has come from the work of Pressley and his colleagues. Strategy instruction was initially studied from a quantitative (statistical) perspective, that is hypotheses testing and analyses depending on outcome measures. However, Pressley did not believe that this orientation by itself and the associated methodology captured well the interpretive processes that both teachers and students were using in learning to be more strategic. In his research into strategy instruction, Pressley added ethnography to later studies (Pressley, Harris, & Marks. 1992).

Pressley's 'transactional strategies" model grew out of the fact that the activities of groups in the classrooms were determined jointly by teachers and students as they read texts (Bell, 1968; Bjorkland, 1989; Sameroff, 1975). Transactional strategy instruction underscored the significance of seeing any reading event in its personal, social and cultural matrix. As a result of the recognition of students' very social and sometimes idiosyncratic interpretations of strategy instruction, Pressley and his colleagues incorporated ethnographic studies as a method of more intensely examining what researchers and educators perceived to be the best of strategies instruction.

Because durable strategic behaviors take a long time to develop (Pressley et al., 1992), studying writing may be particularly valuable in helping children over time to make their current hypotheses about the written language symbol system more explicit. I decided to study children's emerging strategic behaviors by carrying out ethnographic research methods to view the children's world as its own culture. Children's writing is a way to explore the connections between writing, reading, and oral language. Forms of language that produce lasting traces, such as in writing and drawing, may be especially important in the learning process because they allow children to show us how they work strategically on their emerging understandings (Donaldson, 1978). In this way, there is a generative aspect to writing in literacy development. The opportunities to reflect on their learning processes, both during and after writing, help children to gain greater 'metacognitive control' over their thinking processes (Paris et al., 1991). This greater control, in turn, continues to grow and encourages children to push themselves as writers and readers. Teale and Martinez (1989) have aptly described this process of reading

one's own writing as becoming the 'reader over one's own shoulder'. In this way, children become our informants.

In addition, some ethnographers (Lutz, 1981) have argued for a purely descriptive ethnography without the use of theory to guide data collection or to provide meaning or understanding of the data collected. This notion is disconcerting in that it is impossible for any human observer to exist without ideas, though the ideas or concepts are often tacit rather than acknowledged. I agree with Erickson (1986) who proposed that "we always bring to experience frames of interpretation" (p. 140). In this way, my previous experience as a teacher and parent as well as my interest in exploring Vygotsky's theory all converge on my role as a researcher—as a 'disciplined eclectic' (Shulman, 1988).

In this inquiry, I sought to explore not only theories but to hopefully construct a working model to demonstrate theory in action. In line with Palincsar and Klenk's (1992, 1993) research, I simultaneously conducted an ethnography of the kindergarten classroom of twenty-two students as well as twenty-two mini case studies. I then followed eight selected children into the first three months of grade one as intensive case studies. The ethnography of the kindergarten provided a 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) of the important aspects and interactions of this particular 'learning community' and how it fostered early literacy development. This is critical because we know that those early experiences with reading and writing shape children's future concepts about reading and writing, as well as concepts about themselves as readers and writers. The intensive case studies of the eight children in grade one were highly informative in covering a range of early literacy development profiles over time to show the typical

variability in children's emergent literacy. In this way, ethnography and case studies

offered the opportunity to highlight children as critical informants of their emerging

abilities and interests.

<u>Children as Informants</u>

Often educators do not take the time to find out what emerging abilities their

students already have to plan for instruction accordingly (Clay, 1975, 1979; Dyson, 1982,

1988; Harste et al., 1984; Sulzby, 1986). For this reason, this inquiry highlights 'children

as informants' to find out what hypotheses and emerging abilities they already have.

Children as 'ethnographic informants' (Hubbard, 1989) extends Harste (Harste et al.,

1984) and his colleagues' metaphor of 'curricular informants' because as 'ethnographic

informants' we invite the children within the context of the classroom to become our

teachers. The assumption underlying this orientation is that children often construct ideas

about reading and writing that are not always explicitly taught to them and are not yet

completely conventional. However, these ideas continue to exist in some unique,

personal repertoire of knowledge about written language (Harste et al., 1984).

Furthermore, Vygotsky (1978) proposed that "make believe play, drawing, and

writing can be viewed as different moments in an essentially unified process of written

language development". . . . ; [however] "erratic , disjointed, and confused it [written

language] may appear superficially, there is in fact a unified historical line that leads to

the highest forms of written language" (p. 16). Vygotsky's emphasis is very much in line

with my emphasis on children's preconventional understandings leading to more

conventional forms. However, how do we tap into this repertoire of knowledge and what might this historical line of Vygotsky's look like?

In Chapters two and three, I discussed the theoretical and practical perspectives that framed my selection of a focus for this research. We have become more aware of how much many children know about language, reading, and writing as they enter kindergarten as reflected in the 'emergent literacy' point of view (Teale & Sulzby, 1986). As a result of our growing knowledge of strategic learning in cognitive psychology, researchers are now amassing evidence that so-called 'higher' level cognitive skills such as text production, text comprehension, monitoring, prediction, and self-correcting strategies are also being developed in young children at the same time that they are developing concepts about letters, sounds, and words (Brown et al., 1996; Englert et al., 1998; Englert et al., 1994; Klenk, 1994; Palincsar & Klenk, 1992, 1993).

As stated in Chapter two, Vygotsky's theory illuminates for me how children become literate. When children are novice readers and writers, their cognitive processes are undergoing changes from less to more conventional forms. Other cognitive theories have rarely addressed this problem in that most explanatory theories in cognitive psychology usually answer questions of mature literacy functioning and processes as somehow static and rarely from the child's perspective. Namely, they rarely look at questions of continuous change over time in immature processing of a complex activity such as writing and reading. Preconventional and emerging literacy skills often evolve gradually, dynamically not statically, often seen as bursts or setbacks in children's

development. For this reason, I saw a need for research that emphasized literacy from the child's perspective over a lengthy period.

Moreover, I decided to frame this inquiry through the multiple theoretical lenses of development as reflected in emergent literacy, cognitive psychology as reflected in strategic learning, and sociohistorical perspectives on literacy as reflected in Vygotsky's theory of learning. Other sources (e.g., LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) have also contributed suggestions about data collection and analysis techniques. The issue of how I would participate in the classroom was the next step.

My Role as a Researcher: How to Participate and Observe?

Since my primary goal in this study was not to affect the curriculum, the issue of how I would observe and participate needed to be addressed both before I entered the classroom as well as on an on-going basis because of my choice of a somewhat emergent design. Therefore, my first challenge was to work through how I was going to participate and observe because the primary means for gathering data in ethnography is repeated observations and participation in daily activities. I needed to examine the strengths and limitations of how I might participate, because in ethnographic research a researcher has to decide from which vantage point or vantage points to view the children's world. Even before I had selected my classroom I decided to look at the issue of participant observation, which is one of the main ways, that I would conduct my research. I believed that an emergent design would allow me to continuously evaluate the particular vantage point that I had been using. Coupled with my role as a participant/observant was the vantage point providing an effective window into children's literacy development.

Mandell (1988) has proposed that there are three positions from that of detached observer (e.g., Carspecken's, 1996 'passive observer'), to marginal semi-participant to completely involved participant. Wolcott (1997) has even suggested that one can rarely be completely involved in a school setting because of the role of teachers as the orchestrators of learning.   Usually, an active or completely involved participant is at best a 'privileged, active observer' in school settings (Wolcott, 1997). I believe that a 'privileged, active observer' best describes overall my role in the research. Perhaps, the only exception was during the last five weeks when I worked with the children as they wrote in their journals at the writing center. At this point, I was certainly more actively involved in working with them.

Some researchers have suggested that young children are less self-conscious than we think (Genishi, 1982; Wright, 1960). Others have highlighted that there may be potential difficulties of entry and rapport in studying children (Knupfer, 1996) that I needed to take into account.   In the end, I needed to be aware of how to enter children's worlds and to be aware of to what extent we as researchers observe and participate, perhaps changing children's worlds.

Several researchers have noted how the ethnographer's experiences may parallel that of the child's (Agar, 1986; Wolcott, 1982). Namely, both are learning the social rules of a particular culture, such as a classroom. Like children, ethnographers may be viewed as hypotheses makers and testers and builders of their own cultural knowledge. This knowledge is itself a 'cultural artifact'.   Unlike children, ethnographers are often caught in the 'dialectic' of participant/observant. Of key importance in child

ethnographies is deciding from which vantage point to view children's worlds. Also, Herzfield (1983) has cautioned us that we are not the only ones trying to make sense of the persons in our research, but that they are trying to make sense of us as well. Namely,

> Ethnography is a human model. Born out of anthropology ... it now enables us to approach classrooms . . . with freshness and clarity. In ethnography, researchers do not reduce classrooms to lesson plans or test scores, but rather we seek to bring to the surface what is intangible, hidden or overlooked in the unfolding of classroom dynamics. . . (Perl, 1983, p.11)

<u>Beginning the Research in the Kindergarten Classroom</u>

I did not want to take responsibility for planning or implementing specific curricular projects. Instead, I wanted to support the teacher's program. I assumed that I could support the teacher by discussing curricular matters as a professional colleague, and by sharing my observations of the children.

Initially, I decided to be more of a 'passive observer'. Carspecken (1996) and others have suggested that it is better to begin the study in this way to reduce the effects of researcher presence on routine activities as much as possible. This more passive observation provides the 'primary record'. It is not so much that a researcher's presence changes behaviors that are the problem, but rather that it is important to know how the behaviors changed (if at all). This is where the teacher's input is invaluable in observing, such as observing the videotapes.

I was aware that if I participated in the classroom initially as a 'teacher' I would necessarily be involved in changing the learning environment, since as Short (1986) has

suggested, "teaching involves consciously offering a demonstration to another learner" (p. 264). Teachers do things intentionally aimed at changing the state of children's knowledge. As teachers, they do not want their students to stay the same. They want them to grow and develop. As a researcher, I observed these learning processes and formed hypotheses about how children learn. To accomplish this, researchers must reflect on the factors that affect students' learning-including their own role in it. Most ethnographers realize the importance of reflecting on the impact of their participation in the setting. However, for teachers/researchers this reflection is a means of gathering information on a substantive problem (i. e., teaching and learning), not just a means of collecting background information to assess researcher effects.

To summarize, I planned this study with the intention of conducting research in a classroom where the teacher was encouraging young children to engage in literacy activities, and where children's efforts were valued regardless of the conventionality of the resulting literacy product. To tap into various vantage points, I decided to use a somewhat emergent design because of the exploratory nature of this inquiry.

The Need for an Emergent Design

In keeping with the nature of exploratory research, this inquiry had an 'emergent' design. The somewhat paradoxical notion of emergent design refers to a research design that is not settled beforehand but emerges during the course of the investigation. The researcher is expected to change methods whenever necessary to better explore an unknown area. Primarily, ethnography necessitates a somewhat emergent design because one cannot put much faith in any one instrument, set of answers, or techniques (Lincoln

& Guba, 1985; Wolcott, 1997). Ethnography demands that the researcher filters all this information from multiple sources, thereby the need for triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The need for triangulation will be discussed in more detail in the data collection section under its own subheading. Furthermore, acting as a human research instrument introduces an openness and a situational sensitivity into research that provides the flexibility required for this type of inquiry.

However, the design is not without a framework or direction. Emergent designs begin with a research question that provides a particular worldview and focuses the inquiry. As the research progresses and understanding expands, new horizons and new questions may arise that may be unexpected. For example, in the present investigation, the initial research was to end in June in the kindergarten class. However, as the research progressed I found that I wanted to follow some of the children into grade one and study them more intensively as case studies to reflect the range of emergent literacy development.

I had decided to share my plans with the classroom teacher. I initially observed using fieldnotes to better understand how learning takes place in this classroom. This is in line with building that 'primary record' (Carspecken, 1996). I then added the use of videotapes to capture the 'learning community' from various vantage points and then focused on 'key literacy events' that arose from the 'primary record and videotaping. Audiotapes were used at the writing center to capture children's talk around writing and reading as well as in interviews with the teachers, and the parents of the case study children. Then, I became part of the classroom community by informally observing and

interacting with children as they played and worked, and by 'helping' out in the classroom during transitions and group times. I also decided to request that I not be given any responsibility for directing instructional activities so that I would be free to move around the classroom and to focus on literacy activities wherever they were occurring. The only exception to this was towards the end of the inquiry where I would be working with the children at the writing center where they had previously worked with both the classroom teacher as well as the student teacher. I thereby moved through Mandell's (1988) continuum of detached observer, to marginal semi-participant, to an involved participant. Ethnographic methods allow for this kind of flexibility.

<div align="center">Ethnography</div>

Ethnography is "a tool with great promise; it offers educators a way of seeing schools through the eyes of the students" (Spradley, 1980, p. viii). When the classroom is viewed as a 'learning community', the object of the inquiry is not simply discrete learning events, but also includes the teacher's and researcher's beliefs about learning. A focus on emergent literacy development involves looking at both the processes (qualitative) and the products of development. Ethnography allows a window on the processes without ignoring the products such as writing that is the artifact of literacy development. In education-based research, ethnographers attempt to record systematically how people behave and how they might explain their behavior.

This inquiry is also built on the premise that the child and the social world are mutually involved to the extent that precludes looking at them as independently definable (Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). This shift in perspectives as sometimes focusing on the

process and sometimes on the products uses the individual in interaction with a specific activity as the unit of analysis (Rogoff, 1982; Rueda, Gallego, & Moll, 2000). This study, as a result, has focused on the active changes involved as children test their hypotheses in an unfolding activity such as writing. For example, when we observe children writing, what is really being observed is the system of meaning being highlighted in this particular event. However, in a classroom, writing can also include talking to others, drawing, or reading and re-reading what has been written. Much information is also presented to children about written language through social interactions.

By intensive comparative study of individual students within the classroom, we can gain greater insight into the complex and interrelated factors that contribute to the variability found in children's emergent literacy (Stake, 1995). Using ethnography and case studies, I sought to demonstrate how students' 'living knowledge' (Moll, 1990) about writing and reading is transformed within the context of the classroom into strategic (metacognitive) knowledge. In this way, their knowledge, hypotheses, and subsequent experiences become the objects of study and reflection. Although I will deal with the case studies separately in my methodology, this is a somewhat artificial distinction as case studies are becoming very much a part of ethnography whereby participants are selected to be studied more intensively (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Palincsar& Klenk, 1993).

<u>Case Studies</u>

Newkirk (1985) and others have argued that there is not always a simple sequence into which educators can plug children; instead, we need to allow for considerable variability in the development of literacy. As a result, intensive case studies can document some of this variability. However, Guba and Lincoln (1981) have proposed that "case studies can oversimplify or exaggerate a situation, leading the reader to erroneous conclusions about the actual state of affairs" (p. 377). They go on to suggest that case studies can "tend to masquerade as a whole when in fact they are but a part—a slice of life" (p.377). More importantly, the case study can be limited by the sensitivity and integrity of the investigator (Riley, 1963). This is partly because there are no specific case study methods per se for gathering and analyzing data. Therefore, defining exactly how a human instrument is supposed to function is far from straightforward (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). As a result, unethical case study researchers could fall into the trap (unwittingly perhaps) of selecting only what they wanted to illuminate or interpret. Triangulating the data and interpretations as well as embedding the case studies of individual students within the findings from the ethnography will address a large part of these concerns.

Case studies are undertaken to intensively study and make the case understandable (Stake, 1995). Case studies also allow for what Stake (1995) called 'naturalistic generalizations' whereby "conclusions arrived at [by the reader of the study] through personal engagement in life's affairs or by vicarious experience are so well constructed that the person feels as if it happened to themselves" (p. 85). In this way,

naturalistic generalizations are reader dependent. Sometimes the case will be important and used primarily by readers to generalize to other case(s) in their experiences; whereas, for some readers the case will be as (or less) important as any other. In addition, insights gained from case studies can be used as tentative hypotheses that may help direct future research (Palincsar & Klenk, 1993).

The decision to describe in detail young children's ways of functioning necessitates gathering a large amount of data centering on a small number of children (Dyson, 1983). Also, detailing the interactions between the individual children and their environment allows one to gain insights into children's thinking and how thinking changes over time as a result of interacting in that environment (Erickson, 1982). An important aspect of the 'written language puzzle' (Dyson, 1985) is figuring out the nature of the symbol system being used. For example, children do not always begin with a planned message. They may first form the letters or draw and only later decide on a message (Dyson, 1983). Also, the literacy curriculum is not controlled solely by the teacher because children interpret school experiences in light of their own understandings (Dyson, 1985). However, in the end "even in the most unique of persons, even in the most unique curricula . . . there are certain patterns" (Stake, 1988, p. 259).

As a result, what can we learn from studying the writings of a small group of children? Children wrest patterns from their flux of experiences. By observing one or a small group of children we have some leads, some questions and patterns to look for in observing other children. While we cannot generalize from one or even eight children to many, conversely, we cannot presume to know an individual only in terms of

generalizations drawn from a group. In schools we usually teach to groups, though children learn as individuals in the context of groups. Perhaps as Stake (1978) has suggested the findings are not necessarily viewed as idiosyncratic to the particular context under study but may be generalized to similar contexts that the reader has known. Therefore, from the point of view of the reader, the study may be externally valid.

<div align="center">Data Collection and Issues of Field Entry</div>

Establishing rapport requires respecting the routines of informants, and getting to know the routines takes time. As a participant/observant, adults can present an attitude of respect by listening and at other times joining in their routines and by letting them know through this genuine attention that they truly do want to learn from their child informants (Cosaro, 1981). However, there may be stumbling blocks in researching young children. Typically, adults hold positions of authority over children, so even seemingly innocent questions may be seen as requiring deferential answers. Above all, this type of research requires time and the patience to learn the patterns of behaviors that guide the culture of the children we are studying. For these reasons, I chose to spend the four mornings a week in kindergarten from the third week of February until the end of June, getting to know the children and their routines and vice versa. In this way, we may be able to see "their vision from their point of view . . . . to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realize his vision of his world" (Malinowski, 1922, p. 25). If we invite children to become our 'ethnographic informants', we can begin to understand their world on their terms, without falling prey to any unexamined, preexisting assumptions about their emerging abilities.

The participant/observer retains an analytic viewpoint. Observational methods are systematic ways of doing research that depend on direct observation of a phenomenon. At all times, the observer is careful to distinguish personal interpretations, observations, or feelings from descriptions of behavior.

<u>Issues Related to Data Collection as an Observant/Participant</u>

<u>Reliability</u>. Reliability refers to the extent to which one's findings can be replicated. Reliability in experimental research designs is based on the assumption that there is a single reality that if studied repeatedly will give the same results. However, in interpretive research there may be many interpretations of what is happening. As a result, there is no benchmark by which one can take repeated measures and establish reliability in the traditional sense. Studies in education are in flux, multifaceted and highly contextual. The emergent design of qualitative studies precludes many a priori and as a result achieving reliability in the traditional sense is impossible because of differing assumptions. In the end, attempted replications of the study are futile and will never yield exactly the same results. This does not preclude studying, for example, kindergarten classrooms in the same school, in the same school board in different schools and in fact more broadly in different school districts and so on. Moreover, observational researchers disagree on the issue of reliability, that is, the ability of the observer to be reliable using subjective methods.

Many researchers have echoed this concern. For example, Kerlinger (1973) suggested that "the major problem of behavioral observation is the observer himself (p. 538). The observer must first notice a behavior, process it and then make an inference

about a psychological construct, such as learning. Yarrow and Waxier (1979) have noted that although the human observer has failings:

> Counterbalancing these failings are the human capabilities of extraordinary sensitivity, flexibility [important in an emergent design] and precision. The challenge is to discover how to conduct disciplined observing while making full use of the discrimination of which the human observer is capable, (p. 37)

The human instrument can become more reliable through training and practice. In addition, the reliability of data from documents and personal accounts can be triangulated by using multiple sources of data, multiple methods, and multiple investigators (Merriam, 1988). Moreover, qualitative observers tend to assume that they are capable of 'disciplined observing' because only the human observer can detect the subtle meanings of behaviors. Statistical accounts of researched populations do not address the individual. Rather, statistically significant findings can only suggest that an individual is likely to be similar to the group sampled on a particular variable or variables. Qualitative researchers on the other hand, are less concerned with accurate measurement than with comprehensive description as proposed by Geertz's (1973) 'thick description' and the interpretation of meanings. In other words, the 'culture' cannot be replicated or tested because it (the classroom) is observed for a finite time through the researcher's participation and observations. The resultant research is then textualized through the analysis of fieldnotes, interviews, videotapes, audiotapes and/or textual artifacts. By the time the research is written up, the classroom has disbanded. The greatest potential of fieldwork is actualized through what has been critiqued by some as its greatest

shortcoming, namely, its dependency on firsthand experience and observation (Wolcott, 1997).

As a result, Lincoln and Guba (1985) have suggested that we use the terms dependability and consistency to replace reliability and offer the following criteria to ensure dependability. That is, rather than demanding that others get the same results, researchers hope that others will concur that the results, given the information collected, make sense. The results are consistent and dependable. There are several techniques an investigator can use to ensure that her results are dependable:

1. <u>The investigator's position</u>: The investigator should explain the assumptions and theory behind the study, her position vis-a-vis the group being studied, the basis for selecting informants and a description of them, and the social context from which data were collected.

2. <u>Triangulation</u>: Especially in terms of using multiple methods of data collection and analysis.

3. <u>Audit trail</u>: Just as an auditor authenticates the accounts of a business, independent judges can authenticate the findings of a study by following the trail of the researcher. In order for an audit to take place, the investigator must describe in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry. Essentially researchers should present their methods in such detail "that other researchers can use the original report as an operating manual by which to replicate the study". (Merriam, 1988, p. 172-173).

I have incorporated all of these into this study.

<u>Validity</u>

Closely related to reliability is the concept of validity. Findings are valid if we have measured or recorded what we say we have measured or recorded. Qualitative methods are ecologically valid in that the researcher generally observes a naturalistic setting, not a laboratory or experimental process, thereby trying to understand the experiences of the informants. In other words, qualitative researchers enter the setting to observe and often participate; whereas, quantitative methods attempt to keep the researcher at a more objective, arms length stance. There are some notable exceptions where interventions are tested and an attempt is made to deliver an intervention consistently by perhaps more than one educator. Educator effects may then be taken into consideration, particularly when there are significant differences between groups on a particular variable or variables. Observer effects have to be accounted for in qualitative research as well. For example, children after initial curiosity generally ignore observers; however some researchers (Knupfer, 1996; Yarrow & Waxier, 1979) have cautioned that researchers need to address these effects, and I concur.

<u>Internal validity (truth value or trustworthiness)</u>. Internal validity is the extent to which researcher's observations and measurements are true descriptions of a particular reality. Trustworthiness, many have argued, is a more appropriate word to use in the context of this type of research. It is more appropriate because it suggests a different set of assumptions about research purposes than does internal validity. Trustworthiness is the degree to which findings correctly map the phenomenon in question. The inquirer maps the phenomenon in the activity, the 'web of significances' (Geertz, 1973) of the

participants, in this case the children's and to a lesser extent the teacher's interpretations. This mapping changes the phenomenon from a "passing event, which exists only in its own moment of occurrence, into an account, which exists in its inscriptions and can be consulted" (Geertz, 1973, p. 19). The activity of understanding and interpretating in this way becomes more like looking over the 'participants' shoulders at what they are doing'. This looking over the children's shoulders is similar to my reference to the children 'looking over their shoulders' as they drew, read and re-read their journals as well as my 'looking over their shoulders'.

Based on a literature review on qualitative research, Merriam (1988) has proposed that criteria such as triangulation, member checks, long-term observation or repeated observations, peer examination, and clarifying researcher's biases be addressed in studies. These will be discussed in more detail in Chapter nine as to possible limitations of this study. I have also incorporated Goetz and LeCompte's (1984) four factors that lend support to a claim of high internal validity in ethnographic research. Their factors, in my opinion, somewhat refine the criteria Merriam raised in her review. Therefore, I have combined their insights to guide my research. Furthermore, Kincheloe (1991) points out that in traditional research all that is needed to insure external validity or transferability is to understand with a high degree of internal validity something about say, a particular school classroom.

External validity or transferability. External validity answers the question of the degree to which findings can be generalized to other settings similar to the one in the study. For example, we know that the makeup of this classroom is representative of

another classroom to which the generalization is being applied further ensures transferability.

Using ethnographic methods and case studies is different from using experimental or correlational designs. In experimental or correlational designs, the ability to generalize to other settings or people is ensured through a priori conditions such as assumptions of equivalency between the sample size, random sampling, and so on. Even in these circumstances, generalization is made within specified levels of confidence. In other words, the production of generalizable knowledge is an inappropriate agenda for interpretive research (Erickson, 1986). Instead, we can substitute the notion of working hypotheses for the notion of generalizations in social science research (Cronbach, 1975). Working hypotheses not only consider the context, but they also offer educators and researchers some guidelines, not prescriptions in understanding the research. In this way, any generalizations are working hypotheses rather than conclusions. Moreover, Cronbach's notion of working hypotheses complements Stake's (1995) notion of 'naturalistic generalizations'. Naturalistic generalizations draw on readers' often tacit knowledge and personal experiences, perhaps as an educator. Viewed in this way, readers may apply the findings to their experiences. This practical view of generalization is shared by Patton (1980) who argues that qualitative research should "provide perspective rather than truth,. . . rather than generation and verification of universal theories, and context-bound information rather than generalizations" (p. 283).

Data Collection

Data collection and analysis were intertwined in this study. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) have suggested, in ethnographic research, "'data analysis must begin with the very first data collection in order to facilitate the emergent design, grounding of theory, and emergent structure of later data collection phases" (p. 242). This study proceeded through four phases in which the focus and techniques of data collection, the amount of time spent in the classroom and the data analysis techniques varied. An ethnographer's ultimate responsibility is to prepare an account to enhance human understanding, in this case, of the various paths that young children traverse in becoming literate.

Deciding What to Observe: Key Events

One of the major tasks of ethnographic research is to move from holistic observations to material that lends itself to analysis. This raises the issue of focus or vantage point. I needed to decide what activities would be recorded and what segments would then be selected for detailed analysis. I attempted to solve this problem by using a case study approach oriented toward 'key situations'. This notion of 'key situation" as developed in the work of Erickson (1975) and Gumperz (1976), holds that lives in complex settings such as in classrooms offer certain 'gatekeeping' encounters. Educational settings are rich in such key situations. For example, students are called upon to display verbally some knowledge or to have their written work evaluated. On the basis of early impressions and initial hypotheses gained from my "primary record' of mainly fieldnotes. I began systematically to audio and videotape certain 'key situations' in more detail and analyze them.

Literacy events are "socially assembled transactions" (Anderson & Stokes, 1984, p.28) often centered around reading or writing. Educational researchers have begun using the notion of literacy events as key events and as a tool to assist in examining contextualized knowledge and routines. It has been a useful tool in tracking the 'broad strokes' of literacy development (Davies, 1988). Hymes (1972) has gone so far as to suggest that "the key to understanding language in context is to start not with language, but with context" (p. 6). Because I am using Vygotsky's theory, I purposely started my research by examining the context of this particular kindergarten classroom. I have used the same definition as Rowe (1989) for a literacy event as beginning when a child arrives at a literacy center, such as the writing center in the kindergarten class. The literacy event continues until all the original participants have left the writing center to join in some of the other play centers. This definition is similar to Corsaro's (1985) definition of 'interactive events' in preschool settings. This led to adopting a somewhat dynamic unit of analysis based on Rowe's concrete definition of a literacy event.

Issue of Unit of Analysis

One fatality of using an individual unit of analysis is that it does not adequately capture teaching and learning in classrooms (Wertsch, Tulviste, & Hagstrom, 1993). Although the cultural nature of activities found in classrooms is easy to acknowledge at one level, many assume that its analysis can somehow be appended onto a preexisting 'basis' account of the individual learner. The very idea that a context is a joint, social construction of two or more participants, means adopting a unit of analysis that encompasses more than an individual. In fact,

Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun. I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. (Geertz, 1973, p.5)

As previously stated, the child and the social world are mutually involved in searching for what it means to be literate which precludes looking at them as independently definable (Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, the unit of analysis in this study is the individual in interaction with a specific activity (Rogoff. 1982: Rueda, Gallego. & Moll, 2000). Rogoff (1990) has argued that the transfer of strategy use commonly assumed by researchers might be illusory in that self-regulation is not an abstract, context-free skill. Although this study does not look at other domains or contexts for transfer per se. it does very specifically consider the way the children are learning and transferring learning within this classroom and very generally the entire school atmosphere as proposed by Campione, Shapiro, and Brown (1995).

Moreover, Palincsar and Klenk (1992, 1993) have proposed that we consider literacy more broadly than students' learning skills, subskills and processes. Perhaps there also needs to be a shift in research that examines the more overarching issues such as purposes and contexts for literacy, similar to Davies' (1988) reference to the 'broad strokes' of literacy development. Triangulating the data and interpretations as well as embedding the children as case studies of individual students within the findings from the ethnography addresses some of these concerns in addition to issues of trustworthiness.

Triangulation as a Key Way to Address the Issue of Trustworthiness

"There is no strategy that can eliminate the routing of data through the perceptual processes of the investigator" (Locke, Silverman & Spirduso, 1987, p. 86). Wolcott (1990) has cautioned ethnographers that the critical task in this type of research is not to accumulate all the data that you think you need but to spend the best analytic time on the best data. According to Wolcott this requires 'constant winnowing'. Therefore, throughout my research, data was sifted, interpreted and written about. In this way, data collection, analysis, and writing became interactive often-simultaneous processes.

Triangulation is meant to be a heuristic tool for researchers. Denzin (1994) suggests that ideally a study have as many categories of triangulation as needed to ensure trustworthiness. The four categories are: data, investigator, theory, and methodological triangulation. Some researchers have also proposed that a fifth one, namely, interdisciplinary triangulation, for example using art, sociology, and perhaps history may extend our understandings of both methods and content (Janesek, 1994). All categories were more than adequately addressed in the present study except for investigator triangulation. This limitation to the study will be addressed in Chapter nine as part of the section on assumptions and limitations.

Data Collection Techniques

The writing center. The act of writing posits children with the challenge of representing intentions in graphics (symbols) to be read. The teacher and peers' questions may help the children to reflect on their strategies and, perhaps, revise them. The nature of the teacher's comments or questions often depends on his or her

observations of a child's behaviors. Questions and comments can therefore, assist

children who are on the brink of conventional writing to better coordinate the

subprocesses of writing (Genishi & Dyson, 1984).

As previously mentioned, I had chosen this classroom because the classroom

teacher encouraged children's preconventional attempts at writing. The children in-

groups of five or six were expected to write once a week at the writing center, a

hexagonal table with chairs. This was a 'key literacy event' for the purposes of this

inquiry. Children were always free to write at other times as well. These more

spontaneous expressions of literacy will be highlighted and presented separately in my

analysis. These spontaneous journeys happened when playing restaurant while taking

orders, while writing prescriptions at the doctor play center, or while making invitations

during craft and art time.

I spent a great deal of my time at the writing center initially observing and taking notes, and then videotaping the group interactions as well as more focused, close-up videotaping of individual children as they sat down and began to draw and write. At those times I did not interact with the children. Both the classroom teacher and eventually the student teacher spent time with them at the writing center. The exact nature of these interactions is detailed in my analysis. For the last five weeks, I worked with the children at the writing table. These sessions were audiotaped and interspersed with notes. All of the twenty-two kindergarten children's work from the beginning of January to the end of June were photocopied and analyzed.

Use of a video camera. Many observational researchers believe that the use of video cameras makes valid observational reality more attainable than does the unobtrusive human observer. Because researchers can observe behaviors by stopping the movement of the video camera, they can do microanalyses of interactions. However, the fidelity of videotaped records and the techniques that break behaviors into minute bits are open to question. A camera lens may have a broad focus, but it cannot 'see' everything. A typical videotaped recording of classroom activity shows the backs of some children, sometimes obscuring nuances. These disadvantages are tolerable because videotapes are still more reliable than our memories, particularly when triangulated with other sources such as fieldnotes, interviews, and audiotapes.

In the present study, the video tapes in particular, played an important role in disclosing the restlessness, complexity, and the dynamism of students. It was the video tapes, which allowed occasional glimpses into childish clowning and pranks that

continually brought the inquiry back to the world of being a young student. In addition, because such incidents were frequently soundless, they were largely absent on the audio recordings. For example, grimaces, frowns, and subvocalizations while the children were writing were easily picked up on the videos. In this way, the videos evoked sympathetic vibrations as I watched the videos repeatedly to better understand the complex way of life this research attempts to capture. The videotapes were revisited often during my research and subsequent analysis. By using videotapes and eventually audiotapes, the research brought "their voices, like gravity, [and] pulled me back to their worlds" (Knupfer, 1996, p. 145).

Enquiring: the use of conversations. If participant observation is the primary mode of fieldwork techniques, enquiring points to the various ways that researchers obtain data by asking (Wolcott, 1997). This can cover a broad range of activities from informal conversations with both the classroom and student teacher, parents and volunteers, other school personnel, the administrators and the children to more structured interviews with both the teachers and the parents of the case study children. By asking, I have at times imposed some structure on the setting rather than strictly letting the field, the classroom participants, parade in front of me.

One of the first considerations was to choose an appropriate way of enquiring. For example, I chose not to do any structured interviews about writing and reading with the twenty-two kindergarten children until mid-April because I wanted to make sure that I had established good rapport with the children. This was even more critical with the eight children that I chose to follow into grade one. These eight children became 'key

informants'. A 'key informant' is a person with whom a researcher spends a disproportionate amount of time because that person, in this instance the case study children, is approachable, articulate and available. One additional criteria of being well-informed does not as readily apply to this study because they are children who may or may not be well informed in the strictly adult sense. However, for the purposes of this inquiry, these children were my informants. At other times, there were some instances when a child became a 'temporary key informant' as when one girl spontaneously explained to me how and why the small group of girls was putting together a list for a secret club.

Using interviews and conversations. Verbatim transcriptions are not the same thing as oral conversations. There is a composure, orderliness, and stillness to pages of transcriptions that may or may not reflect the mutual openness found in true conversations. Split-page format was used for displaying the interviews with the teachers, children and parents of the eight case study children (see Appendix E for an example of split-page format using the kindergarten children's interviews). This format allows for recurrent and retrospective interpretations in an effort to interpret the conversations in such a way that reveal the perceptions of being-a-student or parents' perceptions of their children's pre-school literacy development. The interest is ontological by asking what worldview do conversations bring to the forefront.

The role of interviews with children. Describing and interpreting young children's responses to school tasks may challenge teachers to reflect on their ways of approaching literacy (Dyson, 1983). Researchers using ethnographic techniques in

educational settings have not made extended use of 'key informants' in their studies (for an exception, see Chang, 1992). Wolcott (1984) has suggested that we as educators and researchers often become our own key informants because we are so familiar and knowledgeable about what we think goes on in classrooms that we may fail 'to grasp the native's point of view' (Malinowski, 1922). The problem of the researcher who already knows and fails to ask what the 'native's point of view' is presents the greatest risk to realizing the full potential of using ethnographic methods (Wolcott, 1984). For this reason, I chose to interview the children both one-on-one and more informally at the writing center as well as other times to catch the native's point of view whenever possible. This was also one of the reasons I chose to focus on the eight children in grade one as 'key informants'.

Although my analysis of the children's literacy development at the writing center was on-going, I also wanted to know what children thought about certain aspects of literacy. I decided to interview all twenty-two children one-on-one in a small room across from the classroom. Since I did not want the interview time with me to feel like a 'grilling session', I purposely chose not to spend more than fifteen minutes talking to each child. I was also trying to minimize disruption to classroom routines and when children needed to be there as a group. This was a challenging task with twenty-two children to interview. Since the kindergarten was typically a busy place with quite a high, delightfully productive hum at most times, it was difficult to focus on an individual child to the exclusion of others. In addition, to help make my questions more concrete for the children, some of questions used their own writings as examples as a means to

help young children focus. Children are usually proud of their work and delight in discussing it. We also discussed why some of their work was not their best (see Appendix F for questions used). These sessions were audiotaped.

Interviews with parents. In Mind in Society, Vygotsky (1978) made the case that interactions with others are a critical mover in the development of children's cognitive abilities. Vygotsky proposed that cognitive development moves forward more certainly and completely if the child is in a world that provides assistance when the child needs it and can most benefit from it. Literacy development begins before the first birthday as parents rock and talk to children, read or recite nursery rhymes, and children draw pictures for grandma. Morrow (1983) found that environments that support emergent literacy include, but are not limited to: (a) extensive, warm personal relationships with parents, siblings, and extended family; (b) physical environments that include many literacy type of artifacts such as storybooks, paper and pencils, foam or plastic alphabet letters; and (c) obvious positive regard by parents and others for children's literacy development. Although I could not necessarily ascertain completely or with any certainty what kind of homes and relationships the eight children had as pre-schoolers, I used questions, as open-ended as possible to encourage parents' input during our interviews (see Appendix G for interview questions).

I believe that since all the parents wanted to meet me personally for the interview, this provided for an opportunity to explore further with them as to what their beliefs were and how they might have played out with their children in their homes. Except for one parent, the parents enjoyed talking about their children for at least an hour. The one

parent who spoke with me very briefly was on the reserved side. The classroom teacher had already let me know that this parent did not usually come to parent-teacher interviews or talk at any great length with her.

A Day in the Life of this Kindergarten Class

The classroom curricular context in this inquiry changed and developed over the course of four months. However, the major features and flow of the classroom routines had a pattern. During the four months in the kindergarten class, the daily schedule remained roughly the same.

The Daily Schedule

8:40-9:00 a.m.   Oh Canada followed by rug time with 'free play time'

9:00-9:20   Show and Tell, Paddington Bear story journal, or circle time

9:20-9:40   Library time, computer time

9:40-10:40   Center time, including journal writing center

10:40-10:50   Self-chosen books on rug

10:50-11:00   Story read aloud by teacher (whole class)

11:00-1 1:15   Printing letters (small groups), or singing

11:15-11:30   News and calendar on rug (whole class)

The large inviting classroom was divided into four main sections. Overall, the classroom spaces reflected Eleanor's beliefs in the Reggio Emilio approach to early childhood education. One of her main concerns was that the spaces not look cluttered. As you walked in the door, the writing center table was located to the immediate right. At the writing center, displays ranged from carrots growing to glass fish bobbing in

water, to Easter, and other science and holiday themes. There was usually a scientific type of question to stimulate their thinking. Pencils and crayons were waiting for the children along with their journals. Right in front, was the rug space where children gathered during free play time, show and tell, book times and news and calendar time. This was an inviting space with containers of various blocks and Lego, shelves of books, a comfortable sofa for five or six children to sit on, as well as a window for sun and fresh air. The sofa was nestled against a large weeping fig tree that had a colorful wooden parrot perched on one of its branches.

At the far right corner was the art and craft center. There was a paint easel for two, a sink for clean up as well as a space to organize tables. Art and craft supplies were put away in cupboards. The children's artwork was tastefully displaced and all work in progress was stashed on a drying rack. Eleanor believed that the room should reflect the children's work rather than store bought material.

Against the center of the right hand wall, one could find the sand table. Toys were introduced monthly to vary the play. For example, one month you could find dinosaurs wandering the sand dunes. The next month, there were small trucks and farm implements. The far-left corner featured realistic themes such as a restaurant and hospital where children were encouraged to play. Actual items such as what you might find in a restaurant and a doctor's office were used. Children were also encouraged to add their own touches to their play space. In addition to the themes in the play center, Eleanor also used a thematic approach to learning. So, when they were studying feelings, all the activities including story readings highlighted some aspect of this particular theme,

including the arts and crafts. At other times such as when they were studying

occupations, hats of various occupations could be seen dangling from the ceiling. Many

of the children had brought hats from home to contribute to this eye-catching display.

Children contributed to all the themes.

<u>Morning Greetings</u>

The children would line up outside the kindergarten entrance where Eleanor

would meet them each morning. As the children came in they would hang up their coats

and change into their indoor shoes. They would get their library books ready if it was

library day and then, before singing Oh Canada and attendance, they would copy their

names. Eleanor had initiated this activity as a literacy activity. There were some very

practical aspects to such a simple activity. First, all the children could by now recognize

their name on their clothes hooks, journal and printing books. However, more and more,

Eleanor was encouraging them to become more independent by being able to write their

own names on art and craft projects.

Writing one's own name is an important first step in this complex voyage we call

literacy. It is also a personally meaningful activity (Davies, 1988). Once the children

became comfortable in copying their first and last name, they were encouraged to write it

on their own. As shall be discussed later in my analysis, the children started to add their

own personal touches, as they became more proficient. It also seemed that this was a

personally motivating experience for most children as they challenged themselves to be

able to move from copying to writing independently.

Play Time

  After singing Oh Canada and taking attendance, the children chose an activity for free play. There were various building blocks, lego, and other building materials. Children could also choose from puzzles and simple board games that Eleanor had placed on tables. Eleanor supported a play-centered curriculum that she has also written and lectured about (because of confidentiality and anonymity issues, I cannot reference her work. However, anyone interested in obtaining this information can contact me for references). This was a very important part of the morning as the children unwound and got comfortable with a self-chosen activity.

  Each day was a designated special day for a child. Parents or grandparents could come in to share with their child. Also, free play was followed by Show and Tell whereby children were encouraged to bring in something of interest such as a hobby to talk about to the class followed by questions from the children. Then, the children got ready for library time or computer time once a week, depending on the day. Both the computer and library times were outside the classroom. This was followed by play centers that were open for about an hour each morning. These included the writing table, art and craft center, sand table, water/rice/play dough table, playhouse, tape recorder with taped books to listen to, theme corners such as a restaurant or doctor's office, the science and work bench center, and the two in-class computers.

  During this long play period, the major limits on children's choices were related to availability of space and materials. The writing center was an exception in that the children were expected to write once a week during center time at mid-morning and

was designated as a small group of five or six. However, children could write here or anywhere else at any time. Otherwise, the children could usually choose to work at any play center where there was space, and to move to a new area when they were ready. In line with Eleanor's philosophy, I will call these learning centers 'play centers' to honor her belief that children learn through play and we as adults set up the opportunities for them. Sometimes, Eleanor with the help of a parent volunteer would have the children work on art and craft projects such as gifts for mother's and father's day and Easter. Since many of my observations and eventual participation was at the writing table I will describe this in somewhat more detail at the end of this section.

'Play Centers'

During 'play center' time, Eleanor and the student teacher Susan sometimes invited children to join them in projects. Besides the previously mentioned art and craft projects, Eleanor began to set up educational math games that the children would play at with her or a parent-volunteer. At other times, they were requested to get needed materials or to help with putting finishing touches on projects. Teachers also spent some time mediating disputes which children could not solve on their own and generally helping children to live within the bounds of classroom rules. There were also many conversations between children as peers developing activities together as for example, when literacy type of activities such as party invitations and secret club lists became part of the art and craft tables and restaurant menus became part of the restaurant theme corner. Generally, although adults were continuously available, Eleanor encouraged children to learn to work together and to see their peers as resources. There was no

designated snack time and children could have their snack any time. However, they were reminded about their snack and were encouraged to have it by about 10:30 a.m. At around 10:40, Eleanor would ask children to clean up.

Book Time: a Personal Choice

During this period, children chose their own books from the class collection. They would plop themselves down in the carpet area either in pairs, small groups or by themselves as they began to explore their books, often talking to each other. After about ten minutes the teacher would signal the transition to the next activity by singing softly 'Books away, books away' at which time many of the children would chime in as they put their books away. It was time for group story time read by the teacher, and occasionally by a visiting adult. Children were encouraged to repeat chanting or rhyming parts, to answer questions and to make predictions. This activity was followed once or twice a week by practicing letter printing and at other times by singing songs, often with actions.

News and Calendar Time

This was a daily feature tied into learning about dates and the use of the calendar. The approach varied over the four months that I was there. Initially, Eleanor would ask the children to suggest a news item based on something that they had done in the morning. For example, in February one of the children suggested the sentence "Eric played in the water". Eleanor and eventually the student teacher Susan wrote down the sentence on the white board in the carpet area. They took this opportunity to ask the children various questions about what strategies they might use to read the letters, words,

and the entire sentence. The children were encouraged to come up with strategies such as letter-sound relationships, knowledge of frequently used words, perhaps semantic (grammatical) rules and any others that the children could suggest. Any prompts or questions used were based on the teacher's knowledge of what the children could reasonably be expected to know. For example, many of the children knew the initial consonant letters and their sounds such as the letter 'p' and the sound /p/ in "play" and the letter 'w' and sound /w/ in "water".

This was a teaching and learning opportunity to practice learning to read. As mentioned, this activity varied, as the children became more competent. Later in the year, children would still come up with a sentence; however, they were then encouraged to suggest the spellings of words again using various strategies. The teacher would use prompts, analogies, or questions to help the children. Once the sentence or sentences were written, the child on her special day was asked to choose what letter the class should find in all the words. This activity was varied to include clapping as Eleanor approached the letter "s" or to have individual children coming up to the white board to circle the appropriate letter. A real calendar was used to focus the children as to the date. Daily, Eleanor wrote the date on the white board. The next section outlines the procedures and timelines.

<u>Phase One: Field Entry</u>

Because the method of this inquiry was somewhat emergent, it is important to provide a rationale as to why I chose to do the things that I did to capture various vantage points. In this inquiry, the focus of data collection was adjusted and refined as I began to

develop tentative hypotheses. In the first phase, I entered the kindergarten classroom the third week of February for the four mornings a week that it ran to become familiar with the classroom routines. The twenty-two students had been in school since the previous September. The study continued for four months until the end of kindergarten in June. The first four mornings were spent observing and taking notes. I was free to roam around the classroom positioning myself at various points in the classroom to begin to understand the routines and dynamics of this classroom. I began building my 'primary record' (Carspecken, 1996) using detailed fieldnotes as I explored the classroom. I also took careful notes of the reactions of the teacher, children and parents to my presence in the classroom. For this reason, I wanted to know from feedback from the classroom teacher how my presence was affecting the children.

<u>Range of Observations</u>

During the first month of this study I observed every part of the kindergarten morning, using fieldnotes, videotapes and conversations with the teacher. At the same time, I had a chance to meet most of the children's parents as they volunteered their time. Although this was not a main thrust of this study, it added additional information as to the type of environment in which the children were developing. I purposely did not spend any length of time with any of the parents during school time because Eleanor and I had discussed the impact on children. She and I both agreed that extended adult conversations in front of children during school time changed the environment for them. The focus was always on the children's needs, not the adults.

I did not participate specifically in any of the children's activities during the first month. For example, I did not sit with them at the writing center. Instead, I stood or sat nearby either observing or videotaping. My emphasis at this time was still on being free to roam around the classroom in building that 'primary record'. I continued to photocopy the children's work at the writing center and added my own comments from my observations about their written work. My intent was to gain a general understanding of the range of children's activities involving writing, playing, reading, drawing, math, music, and art projects.

During this initial phase, I viewed and reviewed my videotapes, read my fieldnotes and recorded three kinds of notes (Corsaro, 1985): fieldnotes (FN), theoretical notes (TN), and methodological notes (MN). My fieldnotes described my reflections on the events of the day including the videotapes. As I reflected on my observations, I also wrote theoretical notes where I posed questions and tentative hypotheses related to emergent literacy. The methodological notes contained my reflections and decisions on data collection procedures, particularly whether particular vantage points were really capturing what it means to become literate in this classroom. At the same time, I was photocopying all of the children's work at the writing center, which contained the teachers' comments. The written artifacts were growing quickly so that I chose to not only label them with the date and child's initials, but also to cross-reference them to sections of my field notes or videotapes where appropriate.

Although the range of observations may seem daunting to some, I continued to focus on this more 'broad definition of literacy' because of my question into how

individuals become more strategic learners within this 'community of learners'. As previously stated, a classroom 'culture' is not lying about but rather must be 'inferred' from the words and actions of the kindergarten children.

The First Week

Eleanor introduced me as a visitor who would be spending the rest of the year with them in the class. She also mentioned that they could talk to me and that sometimes I might ask them questions. She told them that I would be writing (taking notes) and videotaping. Because of my interest in keeping this inquiry somewhat emergent, we purposely left my role initially somewhat ambiguous to allow my role to evolve as I saw fit. I was also introduced to the parent volunteers as a graduate student doing research (all parents had received and signed my permission letter). At this point, children called me Mrs. Meaney just as they addressed their classroom teacher and parent volunteers by their surnames as well. I was not sure at this point how the children viewed me.

Within the first week, I probably would describe my participation/observation in the classroom as a 'reactive stance' (Corsaro, 1985). Young children need help with opening snack items, finding lost items, and replacing staples in empty staplers. Since I wanted to build rapport with the children, the children needed to see me as being approachable. Partly, I wanted to become part of the classroom routine, but more specifically my focus was on the children as my informants. Yet, at the beginning I had an additional research agenda in trying to capture in full detail how children learned in this 'learning community'. I did not really want to be interacting with the children for any length of time as interaction changes the classroom dynamics. However, I decided to

respond to children's comments without initiating activities myself. I shared these thoughts with Eleanor. Eleanor understood.

The Second Week

By the second week, I had established what the children did in a week, so that I could then be free to move around with my video camera, catching the delightful hum of children learning as they played and worked. These initial videotapings also became part of building the 'primary record'. After a couple of days, the novelty effect had worn off and the children were rarely posing for me. It was business as usual for them and I had become a regular presence. The only request that arose at this time was that the children wanted at some time to see themselves. This was arranged during free playtime in the morning where a television was brought in on three or four occasions.

After two weeks, I realized that the boundary between 'reaction' and 'interaction' was becoming blurred. For example, as I was moving about with the video camera, children would rarely interrupt with questions or requests. However, when I was observing and taking fieldnotes, the children felt that they could approach me to show me things or ask me questions. Given the fact that I wanted to be approachable and that these children were my informants, this was a welcome development so early in the study. However, I continued to stay away from mediating disputes and enforcing classroom rules. I wanted to see how children used literacy in their peer culture as well as in interactions with their teachers. Corsaro (1985) had determined that children very often reserve a variety of interaction patterns for play with peers. By dissociating himself from a teacher role, Corsaro was able to become more a part of the peer group. I believe

that this is somewhat of an extreme position in that adults naturally cannot be part of the peer group. Nonetheless, I do agree that if I look at my participation on a continuum, assuming less of an adult or teacher role moved me closer on that continuum towards the children's peer group. For example, at no time did the children ask me to play with them, but they often asked me questions, or needed help setting up an activity, or help with the day-to-day events of being a child.

<u>The Third Week</u>

In the third week, I had also decided to try to capture in close-up detail the children working in their journals at the writing center. This meant videotaping all twenty-two children at least once as they rotated in groups of five or six once a week. I developed a working rule for data collection at the journal writing center specifically. I videotaped a particular child from the time that she arrived at the table until she left for another center. This allowed for the focus to be on a specific child, yet also allowed other children to come and go from the table. In this way, this particular vantage point helped me to observe complete sequences of interactions and events that preceded and followed their written work at the writing center. During this period, I started videotaping the entire news and calendar time at the end of the day as a 'key event'. Other 'key events' from the 'primary record' such as the book time on the rug after play centers were videotaped as well. I continued to analyze my notes and videotapes. The main focus continued to be the writing center.

Learning to Collaborate

In addition to getting to know the children, I was also building a relationship with Eleanor. We had already agreed to collaborate in specific ways before the research began. However, in addition to our taped interviews and Eleanor's comments on various videotapes, we had many informal conversations. We discussed the role of play and literacy learning and why Eleanor had set things up a certain way. For example, she made various changes, later in conjunction with Susan the student teacher, during news time. As we talked, we grounded our discussions on the events we were sharing in the classroom. Our conversations introduced us to each other's perspectives and allowed us to build a wealth of shared experiences about the classroom.

These informal conversations became an important source of information that helped me to see patterns in classroom events. Also, sharing anecdotes about children helped me to understand them better. For example, Eleanor told me that one of the boys at first refused to write and did very little drawing as well. Now, he was doing very detailed, colorful drawings about nature. He had an incredible fountain of knowledge about animals and habitats that he was now willing to share, draw and write about. I would not have known about this because I had not been there at the beginning of January when journal writing time had begun. These were invaluable anecdotes about the children that helped me to understand them better.

I concluded at end of the Phase one data collection that children's literacy activities occurred most often during the times specifically devoted to those activities such as the writing center, book time, news and calendar time. However, they were by no

means limited to these areas, as examples of using literacy sprang up spontaneously during free play and play centers.

<div align="center">Phase Two: Highlighting Patterns and Developing Hypotheses</div>

The second phase of data collection began during the fourth week and continued for two months. My focus was on identifying patterns in the literacy learning of individual children during journal writing time. I continued my participation during the four mornings a week during this time. During Phase two, my interactions with the children generally continued the patterns established during the first month of the study. For example, initially a child might ask me what I was writing in my fieldnotes. I explained that I was writing notes to help me to remember what happened in the classroom. This seemed to be enough and fairly soon, they stopped asking. I was focused on learning about their ideas, strategies, and hypotheses that they brought to the writing table. I continued to identify what social interactions emerged in which each individual's literacy learning was embedded.

I continued to videotape the children at the writing center. I also tried to videotape other identified 'key events' such as the free choice book time, news and calendar time in detail and play centers in less detail. I had also decided to view the free play from two vantage points. I would sit near the children as they played while the video camera was mounted on a tripod. I did the same at journal writing time. I was interested in seeing if I would be able to capture additional details missed by using only one method. The disadvantage far outweighed any possible benefits. As long as I held the video camera, I was free to roam and so were the children. However, as soon as I put

the video camera on a tripod it became a source of accidents. Children would trip over the tripod or would come over to see if it was taping. I abandoned this idea by the third day of trying this method.

Once I had documented all twenty-two children in detail at the writing center at least once, I chose in the eighth week to audiotape the children as Eleanor or Susan worked with them during journal writing time. This left me free to explore with the video camera the 'play centers'. The intensive focus that was required during writing time did not leave me free to highlight other aspects of more spontaneous acts of literacy development. I wanted to catch these spontaneous moments in more detail using fieldnotes and video camera whenever possible. I still had the children's journals to look at. The teachers were also writing fairly detailed notes in the journals as to the strategies that the children were using. I believed that it was a compromise that could work.

Although I had noticed some of these spontaneous events peripherally, it was really with the help of the teachers that I had caught some of these. For example, during the restaurant theme in the opposite corner from the writing center, one of the boys was writing in cursive form the menu on a blackboard. Another girl was writing down someone's order on her pad and relaying the information to the cook. I wanted to document these spontaneous moments in more detail and as far away as possible. I wanted to capture these times where no teachers and usually no parent volunteers were involved. This type of observation is least disruptive to children's play. I continued this for two more weeks. Indeed, I had captured many moments of spontaneous literacy events.

Since my goals in collecting data were to document children's hypotheses as well as my own about their literacy learning, I ensured that all of the children were adequately represented in my data. I periodically reviewed my field notes, videotapes and audiotapes to see which children I had observed, particularly at the writing center. I also wanted to capture each individual child at least once in the play centers. By the tenth week, I decided to focus again on the writing center. I continued to audiotape and to use my fieldnotes because the video camera was unavailable for two weeks. Partly because of the unavailability of the video camera, I chose to start my one-on-one interviews with the twenty-two children. The only time I did not interview children was during their journal writing time as I continued to observe these times. Generally, I tried to interview the children when they were not part of news time. Since the classroom had a delightful busy hum to it, I decided to talk to each child in a small room across the hallway from the classroom. Eleanor had let the children know during news time that over the next couple of weeks, I would be asking them to come to talk to me about their writing.

As I began my interviews, I would let the children know that morning that I would be interviewing them. I also tried to remain sensitive to the children's play. For example, I would not come and get a child if he was in the middle of an activity. Instead, I would come to him and say something like, "It looks like you're busy. I'll come back when you are finished". In this way, I left it up to the children to determine if this was a good time for them. Sometimes, the child would say that he was done while at other times he would say that he would come when he was done, and he did. In addition, I wanted to keep the interviews to about fifteen minutes unless a child had more to say. I

certainly did not push the child to conform to this time limit. Most of the interviews were about twenty minutes because I would sit silently giving time for the child to respond. A few interviews were shorter. One sign that the children generally looked forward to talking to me was the fact that in the morning many would come to me and ask me if it was their turn today. So, I started to let them know not only whom I was interviewing that day, but also whom I would be interviewing the next day. I audiotaped their interviews as well as took split-page format notes. Each afternoon I reviewed the audiotapes and wrote reflective comments or questions.

<u>Phase Three: Expanding My Role in the Classroom</u>

For the last five weeks, I worked with the children at the writing center. I knew the children very well from having spent an enormous amount of time in the classroom as well as all the time I had revisited the videotapes, audiotapes, fieldnotes, interviews and their written work. My videotapes, for the most part, recorded events that I had observed directly. The decision to triangulate the data, allowed me to incorporate my knowledge as an observant to interpret the tapes. This same vantage point did not extend to the audiotapes at the writing center with the teachers when I had been free to observe and videotape the play centers. For this reason, I could not use my observations to interpret the tapes, particularly when the audio was difficult to understand. I did have the teacher's written comments of the children's written work. This was a trade-off that I was aware of during this phase of the research.

In the last phase, I took over the role of the classroom and student teacher at the writing center. The children were used to being asked questions and were encouraged to

ask questions of each other as well as the teachers. As a result, I was no longer primarily an observer. At this point, when educational ethnographers begin to introduce activities or take over activities in classrooms, their role is more appropriately labeled participant/intervention rather than participant/observation. These sessions were audiotaped. I again tried to videotape the sessions, thinking that by now the children would not be as distracted or disturbed by a video camera on a tripod. Again, I abandoned the idea as the video camera continued to be a source of a possible accident. The children were free to move about to various activities and centers during much of the morning, and tripods and electrical cords presented a problem. It invaded their space unsafely.

<div align="center">Phase Four: Field Exit</div>

About three months into the study, I decided in consultation with Eleanor to discuss the possibility of following some of the children into grade one for the first three months of grade one. Eleanor, at that time, shared with me that she had requested to teach grade one the coming school year and had asked to have either the morning or afternoon class for grade one with the approval of the parents. This was an exciting possibility to have the same teacher providing some continuity with children whom she knew well. Eleanor encouraged me to continue, so I then approached the principal to discuss the possibility. As usual, the principal was supportive of my research requests and conveyed that message via a letter to the School Superintendent. At the same time, I consulted with my thesis advisor for her input and subsequently sent a letter to the School Superintendent as well. Without everyone's support I would not have been able to do

this. After extending the ethics approval and getting parent's consent letters, everything was in place to continue in the fall of grade one. Toward the end of June, I found out that Eleanor would be team-teaching with another experienced teacher. Both teachers would share the responsibility for both the morning and afternoon kindergarten classes as grade one-team teachers.

I continued to collect data at the writing center until about a week before the end of school. After that, I continued my fieldnotes and videotaping. With the end of the school year drawing to a close, some of the routines were altered. Susan the student teacher had left at the end of April. Eleanor was finishing up year-end necessities such as returning the many borrowed items from families. Until the end, except for a few days, I had been in the classroom the four mornings a week that it had run. At this time, I spoke with Eleanor about plans for September.

By the end of June, we did not know how many more children or who would make up the complement of children in grade one, in addition to the children from the morning and kindergarten classes. The kindergarten parents had the first choice as to whether they wanted their children to continue with the two teachers into grade one. Then, the choice was offered to incoming children. For this reason, rather than delay the research getting all the parents' permission to videotape, I decided to concentrate on getting the permission of the parents of the children whom I had chosen as my case studies. This meant that my methods would be confined to fieldnote observations, the children's written work, and interviews with them as well as with their parents. Since I already knew the children very well, I decided that the lack of videotapes was a

compromise that could work. Since the children represented a continuum of literacy development, they would at times be split between the two adjoining classrooms. I could only be in one classroom at a time. As a result, I had to be free to move in and out of both classrooms without equipment.

At about this time, I also met Jill who would be team teaching with Eleanor. Jill asked me about my research. At that time, I gave her a copy of my proposal and had her sign the permission form agreeing to the research. I met with the principal and assistant principal to thank them for supporting my research into the next school year. We also discussed the possibility of giving a brief presentation to the school staff once the research was written up. All of this preplanning certainly made the transition easy for me as the children entered grade one. I spent part of the summer analyzing and writing up my research as well as planning how I would proceed in the fall. I met with the team-teachers at the end of August to discuss how they planned to teach and therefore, how I might do my research least intrusively.

<div align="center">Field Entry: Grade One</div>

Eleanor and Jill had worked out how they wanted to structure their team teaching. Eleanor was somewhat deferring to Jill's expertise because this was the third year that Jill was teaching grade one. Also, Jill had many years of being a resource teacher and therefore in addressing individual differences. They had agreed to team teach primarily because they had a vision in which they would individualize instruction by teaching small groups. There was also a resource teacher assigned to two of the children. She came in at least once a week to help out. Because of the inclusive focus adopted by the team, the

resource teacher provided whatever help was needed within the classroom. She would also help other children as they asked questions or had trouble with an activity. That year, the provincial education department had injected money to be used in early literacy. The teachers identified some children who might benefit from some individual help within the classroom setting. One of the teachers in the school with a special education background worked in this classroom with about six children on a one-on-one basis. She focused primarily on their phonological awareness often using the Chime-in-Poems that the children were already studying.

The two classrooms were identical in size. One became known as the yellow room because the decor was in yellow and the other became the blue room. At first, the two teachers started the school year by designing language arts work centers whereby the children could rotate during the week. The children were expected to rotate to each one of these and then check off on a posted sheet when they were done. If there was work to look at, they were expected to put it in the teacher's 'completed work' basket.

The rationale behind this was two-fold. First, the teachers wanted to have the children have some choice as to when they did the work and second, since forty of the forty-eight children were with Eleanor the previous year for kindergarten, they were used to writing and drawing in their journals. What was unexpected was how many of the children did not work well with this approach. I was not part of the discussions between the two teachers as they discussed weekly what was working and what was not. However, I did see changes particularly in the first month. Certainly, the teachers did let me know that their approach had changed and some of the reasons for it.

Specifically, the environment became more structured than originally envisioned. By the end of the first month, it was clear that some of the students needed a different approach or extra help in either literacy or math. The children were split for reading and writing instruction between the two teachers. This was also done a little later for mathematics because it was clear that some students needed a different approach in this area as well. Since the eight children whom I had selected as case studies represented a range of literacy development, they also were split between the two groups and classes.

Each day I would split my time back and forth between the two adjoining classrooms. I would decide how much time to spend in each depending on what the students were doing and also what my reflections and analyses up to that point dictated. Daily, I followed the eight children for three months from the beginning of September to the end of November of grade one. I observed how they learned to read and write in their classroom using fieldnotes as well as photocopies of their work. The forty-eight children also worked together throughout the day.

First thing in the morning, Jill had the children together on the floor in the corner of the blue room for news and calendar time. She also incorporated knowledge of the weather as well as basic mathematics principles such as counting by units and then tens and the importance of patterns while using the calendar. In addition, the children had music, library time, computers, and physical education in rotating groups but all at the same scheduled time. Although I initially wanted to follow the children in these activities, I decided that it was too difficult and possibly too disruptive to the teachers and the librarian teaching these areas. The eight children were completely split up for these

tasks and cloze exercises, usually independently completed, (d) emphasis on invented spelling from the MacCracken spelling series in their 'creative writing' lessons and journal writing time, and (e) the students were read to daily. In addition, Eleanor had incorporated news time carried over from kindergarten for the entire class. Eleanor's group who did not need as much instruction in phonetics were writing in their journals as well as starting to read in small groups using various reading books from the grade one curriculum.

On the other hand, Jill had fairly quickly abandoned journal writing time in favor of more concentrated emphasis on phonological awareness and invented spelling in more controlled ways such as using worksheets and cut-and-paste activities based on the Chime-in-Poems. Jill planned to start the journal writing in a couple of months. From our interview, Jill captured the essence of what she wanted writing to be, "I like for the conversations to happen. With writing, thinking and thinking together has to be there" [audiotape entry 17/09/99, counter 171]. Jill felt that the journal writing time had not been very productive for many of the children as they spent a large amount of time sitting and waiting for help. Jill liked the MacCracken spelling program because phonetic spelling "cultivates their inventing spelling" [audiotape entry 17/09/99, counter 000]. In addition, Jill felt that the Chime-in-Poems helped to build sight vocabulary and confidence as readers. However, Eleanor and I found the children's reluctance to write surprising because most of the children were from Eleanor's kindergarten classes.

I know that both of Eleanor's morning and afternoon kindergarten classes had been used to journal writing time. This meant that about forty of the forty eight children were used to this activity. Yet, clearly something had changed.

Both teachers acknowledged that the transition from kindergarten to grade one is enormous. There was not nearly as much free play time. In addition, although the children did not sit in separate desks, they did have to spend more time listening to instruction either on the floor as an entire class, in smaller groups, or at small tables seating about six children. Listening or attending was clearly more difficult for some children more than others. Elizabeth echoed this belief in her interview when she said, "their responsibility is to listen when the teacher is talking . . . . yet we are expecting a lot from them [in the first month, my emphasis]" [audiotape entry 17/09/99, counter 086]. Both teachers' vision was to put together the elements of literacy into a more 'formal structure' to help children to put the elements together because the children have not necessarily put it together for themselves. As Eleanor had proposed, ultimately the children have to put it [literacy] together for themselves.

Although the original question and focus of this study was primarily on writing, it became clear that in this grade one class there was a daily long block of an hour and twenty minutes of 'language arts' time where all the activities were seen as preparation for both reading and writing. For this reason, the emphasis in this part of the study in grade one was within an even broader framework of emergent literacy than in kindergarten. Clearly, this summary of activities does not do justice to the two teachers'

thoughtful approaches in addressing children's diversity in learning to read and write. At

best, it provides a snapshot into a complex activity called teaching.

<div align="center">Chapter Summary</div>

The main focus of learning in emergent literacy is on manipulating symbol

systems. The interest in studying children's emergent literacy using my research

question was motivated by the reluctance of many educators to take the time to find what

children's emerging abilities are. In other words, what strategies and hypotheses do

children already bring to kindergarten and grade one? In this chapter, I have described

the setting in which I observed children's literacy learning, including the systematic

approaches I incorporated to make these observations. This description is purposefully

detailed including the researcher's [my] predispositions so that readers can make

informed decisions about my analysis and discussions of the results.

As Harste et al., (1984) have contended, children's ideas influence their literacy

development in varied and sometimes unique ways. For this reason, Vygotsky (1978)

proposed that educators could tap into this repertoire knowledge only if they take the time

to find out what the children's 'historical line' looks like. To tap into the children's

historical line, the children became my 'informants'. I decided on a somewhat emergent

design incorporating ethnography and case studies of the children because

> Naturalistic inquiry assumes an ever-changing world . . . . Rather than trying
>
> to control, limit, or direct change, naturalistic inquiry expects change,
>
> anticipates the likelihood of the unanticipated, and is prepared to go with
>
> the flow of change. (Patton, 1990, p. 53)

I became a 'privileged observer' (Wolcott, 1988) in the classroom. While perhaps overstated, an important feature of ethnographic research is that the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection. The ethnographer is committed to capturing and understanding the complexities by balanced reporting of all the data encountered. Just as a camera lens filters, human observers filter what is observed. Different observational tools such as videotapes and audiotapes filter information in different ways, so that only certain factors can be seen through the lens being used. Accordingly, ethnography demands that researchers filter and systematically record the myriad of information from multiple sources as one way to triangulate data and ensure trustworthiness.

I did not set out to prove Vygotsky's theory with hypotheses to be tested or detailed procedures to be followed on a predetermined timetable. Nonetheless, I was and am interested in his notion of the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Did the ZPD play itself out at the journal writing table or during the 'key events'? This is part of the focus in the analyses and results in Chapters five to eight.

Chapter 5

<u>Analysis</u>

<u>Growing Up with Written Language</u>

In kindergarten and early first grade, most of children's written products are often controlled by their drawings. Namely, their written texts have little independent existence at first. Children's writing development has sometimes been described as a process of decontextualization of their written work, so that it will make sense to anyone in any situation (Donaldson, 1978). However, from the children's point of view, writing may be embedded in their lives just as it is embedded in the lives of literate adults. Also, for young children, written language may not at first have the functional power implicit in adults' perceptions of written language (Dyson, 1989). Rather as this study suggests, through writing children may gradually realize print's social and communicative functions, and this growing understanding supports their efforts to push themselves as writers and readers as they examine their revised and refined hypotheses. The core of children's literacy development is in their efforts to find new ways to capture their experiences and engage in social interactions within the texts themselves.

Like Vygotsky, Donaldson (1978) suggests that forms of language that produce lasting traces, such as in written language, may be especially important in the learning process. Writing and the accompanying readings encourage children to become more aware of their own thinking. It may be that awareness of one's cognitive processes is most easily developed when the context provides opportunities to reexamine the problem situation—as when the activity produces written artifacts that can be revisited at the

learner's own pace. Perhaps it is the lasting character of written language that slows down the communication process and gives children time to think about how meaning is represented. In fact, Donaldson proposes that learning to read and write may be a major contributor to the development of metacognition. She implies that learning to read provides such a rich context for the development of metacognition because children are able to use their knowledge of oral language to support their written language learning.

Learning to read and write is most likely embedded in many daily activities that support and encourage children's reflections on their own thinking as seen in the playful repetition of language in songs, book time and the news/calendar 'key events' in this study. These 'key events' may also encourage children to reflect on their own thinking just as written language learning does. In addition, children need opportunities to work with others to solve problems and to observe what others see as pertinent issues. It may be that:

> Writing has its roots in the young child's growing ability to form representations of the world and to express those representations through various media. Thus, writing, as Vygotsky (1978) has stressed, has a role in the history of the child's ability to symbolize. Writing appears to have particularly close ties to drawing, the earlier developed and less abstract form of graphic symbolism (Dyson, 1982, p. 360).

Children's Transformations of Emotionally Significant Experiences

The kindergarten children in this study often used their time during journal

writing time to write and draw about significant people in their lives, that is, "children . . .

give [gave] outer form to their inner worlds" (Dyson, 1982, p. 54). For example, they

used labels such as "me" and "mom" or more elaborate forms such as " me my mom"

(This is me and my mom). There were drawings of family members complete with labels

Figure 1. Importance of family members.

as shown in Figure 1. I have used the children's actual entries to show that their writing

may not necessarily look conventional, yet the message is clear. They also wrote

endearing messages to loved ones such as "I V M O M " (I love mom) with a drawing of

their home. Personal events with family and friends were also important as when one

child wrote " MY CSEiN KeM For CHristmas" (My cousin came for Christmas). Family

pets played a predominant role with examples such as "i LOVe CAT BO" and "I LOVe

MY CAT BOW". Another child wrote "Me   B playingsoc C   e   r" (Me

and Belle playing soccer) as shown in Figure 2. At other times the writing would take

Figure 2. Importance of family pets.

the form of lists with family members embedded in the list such as follows:

Mom and Dad
Sara and me
Kimi and me
FOX

Friends and peers in the class figured prominently as well as. Children would write statements such as "thi is my FNb Emma" (This is my friend Emma), and I am going to_____house after school as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Importance of friends.

There were many such examples of invitations to play after school at each other's homes. This emphasis on the social world of friends was also evident in many spontaneous examples of using written communication. In March, I videotaped three girls at the creative center during 'play centers' spontaneously printing, drawing, and decorating invitations. One of the girls said, "We put our names on first" and "That says I love you" [videotape entry 11/03/99, counter 1:33:25]. Another time, three children

were making cards and one of the boys said to the group, "I wrote I love you" [videotape entry 18/03/99, counter: 00:00].

This boy's comment is noteworthy in that even up to a month after this time, this particular boy was still maintaining that his journal printing was made up of 'just letters and didn't say anything'. Because the children had an opportunity to read and re-read what they had written in their journals, it was clear from the teachers' comments in his journal that the letters were random and "they didn't say anything" [teacher's comment in his journal 11/03/99]. On the other hand, during the spontaneous card making time at the creative center he had written and maintained that what he had written said, "I love you".

This is an example of one of the types of 'tensions' that may arise when children are moving towards more conventional forms and messages. In other words, if I only had a sample of his journal writing and not the videotape as well, I may have concluded that letters did not hold any significance as a symbol to convey a message or meaning. At another time, during the restaurant theme center in the far corner of the class, this same boy was using cursive writing to put together the restaurant menu on the floor blackboard for customers to look at as they came in. Certainly, this boy had an understanding of written language's functional possibilities and an understanding of some of its conventions (Dyson, 1989). However, this dialectic connection did not transfer to his journal writing time for another four months. It did become evident in May and June as he sub-vocalized and printed "I love mom".

Perhaps, as Newkirk (1989) contends for some young writers, writing needs to exist in a "generous sea of talk" (p. 155). This generous sea of talk while playing may

have been exactly what this particular boy needed to connect the communicative and conventional in written language. The connection took longer to manifest in his journal writing. Or is it that other 'key events' such as news/calendar time helped to support this child's awareness of the uses and purposes of words? Evidence of these types of connections will be analyzed separately under the section 'key events'. Other children also, at first, used random letters and said things like " I don't know what it says". Clearly, neither contexts nor texts carry any significance except as the children as developing symbol users interpret them.

Returning to the previous boy's situation, what we may be witnessing is what Vygotsky (1978) referred to as the use of first-order symbols as they occur in play and in drawing. In first-order symbolism, the symbols directly denote objects or events. This boy certainly did this in his drawings as he directly denoted entities through his graphics. In his journal writing, he did not represent parts of utterances. To use and produce written language, children must become aware that it is language itself which is written down and that written words are not objects like drawn objects. Children traverse these paths in various ways.

<center>Using the Journal Table Center Display</center>

In line with Eleanor's interest and emphasis on having children learn science concepts, she would rotate the display on the journal writing table. Coupled with the display was a question hanging over the table prompting children to think and to explore the scientific topic at hand. The displays varied from a potato and carrot growing to 'Amazing bottles' containing a blend of oil, water and food coloring to actual chrysalis

growing into Monarch butterflies. Some of the children continued to emphasize significant people in their lives as they wrote and drew; however, many of the children used the center display to write something.

To more clearly see how the children connected their writing, drawings with science concepts, I will use several examples. As shown in Figure 4, one girl wrote "BTPFL" (butterfly) as she told me that "the false eyes warn enemies".
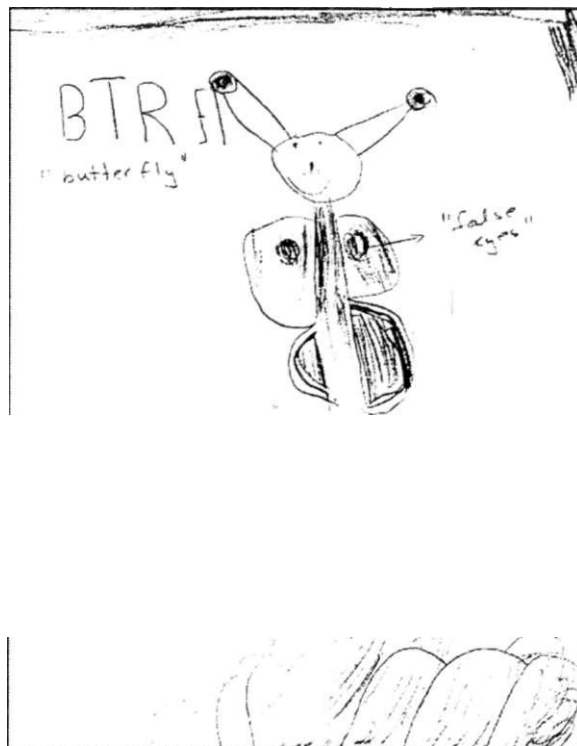
Figure 4. "BTPFL" (Butterfly)—"the false eyes warn enemies".

Another girl wrote "We PLtDM Potatoes" (We planted potatoes). Other children who were using the "This is" stem to begin their sentences also incorporated the table displays as seen in such entries as "This is a Crwslas" (This is a chrysalis.); "This I a

PlaNt" (This is a plant); and "This A C A R A T" (This is a carrot). Some children showed

their increased sophistication by expanding to "These are" as when this boy wrote

"These   ar os kiTiN K L U B S" (These are kiting clubs).

<div align="center">The Role of Repetition</div>

Repetition was clearly evident. The kind of repetition that I am referring to is not

only writing or copying the same words, but rather I am also referring to the repetition of

themes throughout their journal writing. Repetition of writing topics was interrelated

with repetition of drawing topics. For over two months, one boy drew and wrote about

various fighter planes all with the proper names. Other children wrote and drew

repeatedly about various jungle animals such as tigers, cougars and zebras. Sometimes,

these were in the form of a list as seen in the following examples in Figure 5.
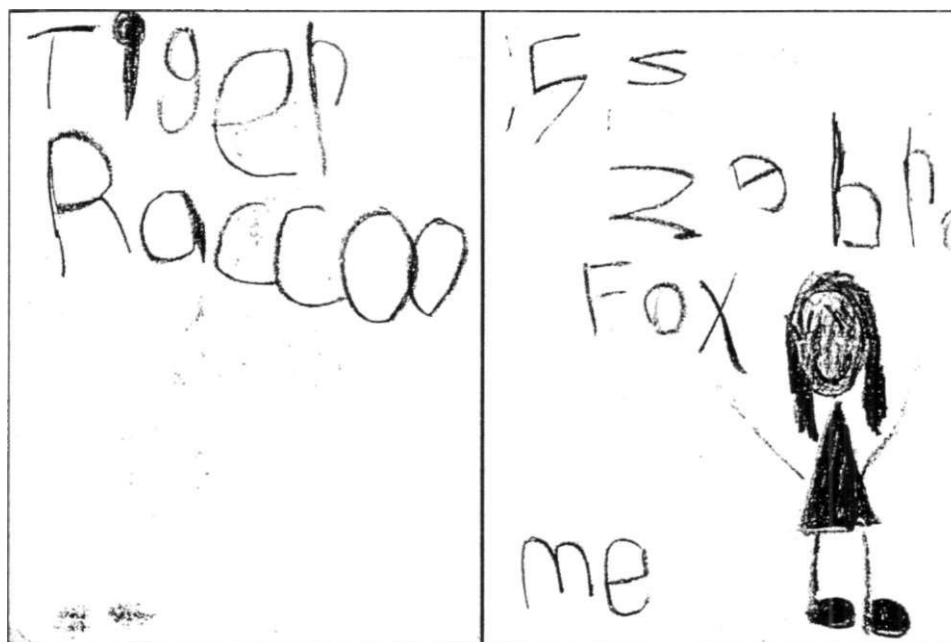
Figure 5. Importance of lists.

Most children relied on their drawings as a resource for writing content. For some children, their drawings were becoming more detailed. Eleanor, the classroom teacher, also saw this in the monthly self-portraits that the children did in their scrapbooks. There were more differentiated body parts as well as better proportion. Other children were rarely relying on drawing for their writing. Three months into their journal writing some children already knew what they intended to write as they sat down at the journal center. Although often not yet completely conventional, the message was clear. Others continued to rely on their drawings and environmental print in their classroom for inspiration. As adults we need to consider how daunting a blank journal page might look to some children. I only need to look at this study to relive how parts of it were difficult to write.

At other times, the repetition was in the form of copying or using the same words and sentences for two months or more. For example, some children once they had learned a particular phrase or words used them in various combinations. The following child used the phrase T am going to_____' when she wrote "I am going Kamping tomoro. I am Paking up today." Another time she wrote "We are Going to a Hootel". Other children began to expand on their knowledge of words by using the 'This is a _____' sentence structure. For example, Bill wrote for the entire five months using "this is" to begin his sentence as seen in Figure 6. This particular boy was capable of expanding his writing because of his excellent command of many words either by sight or phonemic awareness. Both the classroom teacher and I tried to encourage and challenge him to write more or use more varied words and sentences. In May, I suggested that for
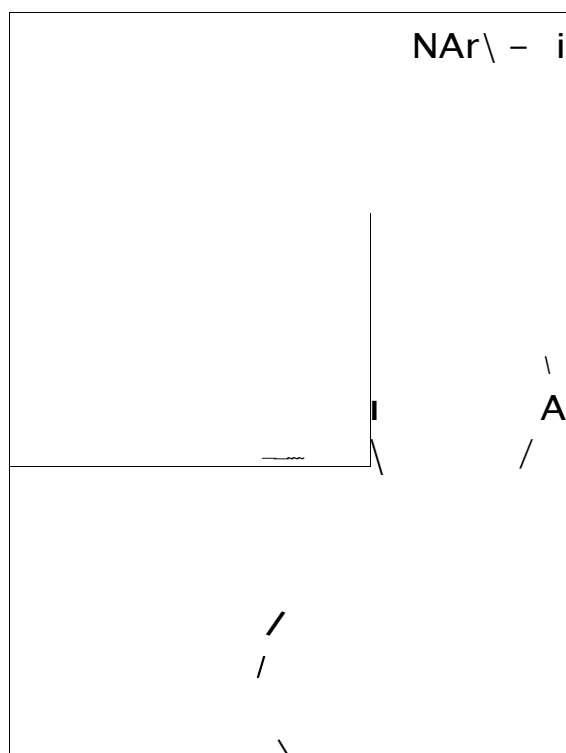
Figure 6. Moving into writing sentences using "This is".

the next journal writing time he may want to write a story or write more about a favorite

topic of his. He told me that he was not ready to write two or more sentences. His

weekend with Paddington bear, however showed me something different.

Every week, one child would take Paddington, the stuffed bear, home with the

class journal in which parents, siblings, relatives or the children themselves could draw

and write about their weekend. Although I knew that Bill was capable of more then he

was doing in class, it was not confirmed until he wrote the journal entry on his weekend

with Paddington [journal entry 31/05/99] as shown in Figure 7. Clearly, this boy was not

working within his zone of proximal development. His extensive repertoire of sight

words, phonemic awareness, decoding strategies as well as his knowledge of spelling

words was not reflected in his classroom writing. His zone of proximal development was much further along the continuum.

Once some children became more confident using various words and sentence forms, they began to play with the forms as seen in this girl's journal entry in Figure 8. There was evidence of this kind of playfulness in other children's journals when they intentionally wrote words backwards as seen in Figure 9.
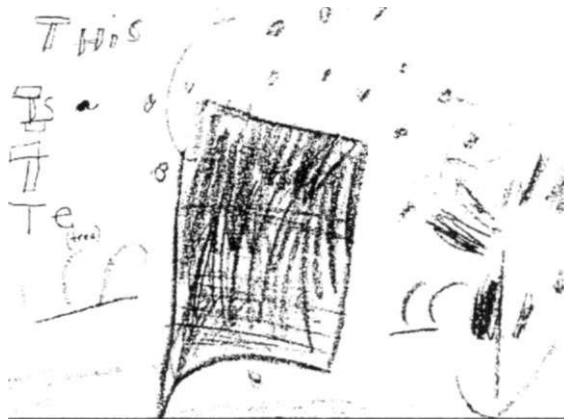
Figure 8. Playing with the shape of words.

Figure 9. Playing by intentionally writing words backwards.

Copying

Many children drew and labeled their drawings as a starting point in their journal writing. There were variations on this theme. For example, initially children might copy a word such as "sun" from the environmental print in their class. The next time some flipped to the previous page of their journal to copy the word sun again. For some children, this continued for a couple of months where they might remember that the first letter is "s" but could not produce the rest of the word. Eventually, most children could write the word on their own. Others chose to embed their copied words with words that they already knew. One girl consistently did this in her lists of family members as seen in the following example in Figure 10.
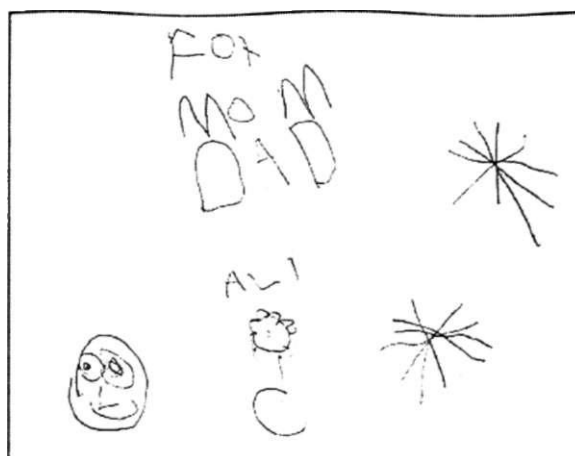
Figure 10. Embedding new words with known words.

A popular source of copying from their environmental print was the alphabet strip with pictures and labels of animals that surrounded the classroom. Many children used this as a source when they felt stuck about what to write. Others used these as well to locate how to print the actual letters. Another important source of environmental print for the children was the signs hanging over the journal writing table.

Other children actually copied the questions hanging over the writing table. One boy copied "Whichcarrot will grow best?" and ended up answering the question orally. He said that he thought that the one in the soil would grow best (as opposed to the one in only water). Another time, one boy wrote "This is" and ended up copying "Amazing Bottles" from the sign hanging over the table. One boy who was particularly reluctant to write often copied the sign as seen on this occasion in Figure 11. Repetition and copying provided many opportunities for children to revisit their work.

Nhatwillh
Potatoes?

Figure 11. Importance of repetition and copying.

Children's Use of Their Hypotheses and Strategies

The key to writing development is not only what is written on the page, but it is also what the child is trying to accomplish in the world beyond the page as well. This study focused on making children's often tacit hypotheses and strategies more explicit. They became my informants as they revised and refined their hypotheses. As previously stated, it may be that writing and the subsequent reading encourages children to become more aware of their thinking in the context of their writings and drawings. Learning to read and write is also embedded in many classroom daily activities that support and encourage children's musings on their own thinking. Evidence of this will be presented as seen in such 'key events' as the news and calendar time and book time.

Some of the strategies that the children used have already been reflected in the previous section. Children often drew and copied the displays over the writing table; they wrote about personally significant people in their lives; and they copied from the environmental print such as the alphabet strip, from other peers and the previous pages of their journals.

What's In a Name?

Children often began their journal writing by printing their names. In February, Eleanor had the children begin writing their first name and eventually their last names by

copying their names on a strip of paper the same size as their name tags. As the children arrived in the morning they would find their name tags placed in the middle of the writing table. Most children had little difficulty with finding their name tags because they were used to seeing their names on their journal writing books, their clothing racks, and their mailboxes. Some children would get their jackets off first while others would first write their names before doing anything else. Davies (1988) contends that "learning one's own names are almost invariably the first written words learned, and the rules acquired regarding written language . .. may be an important personal literacy milestone" (p. ii). The naming of the world around them is a giant step in children's development (Bruner, 1978). This naming grows out of the shared understandings of adults and children. Eventually, the children were encouraged to write their first names and then their last names as well without copying. In fact, Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982) included in their study of children's hypotheses about reading and writing the importance of children's developing concepts of the alphabetic symbol system regarding their own names. For example in their study, 4 year-old Marianna asked for fewer numbers of letters to write her name and 'as much as a thousand' to write her father's name. They concluded that many 3- and 4- year old children linked the number of letters in a person's name with how old the person was, whether a child or adult.

Nevertheless, the teachers in this study expected a correct spelling of their names. Although some of the children later included their nicknames, even these had to be spelled correctly. For this reason, the children asked for correct spellings of their nicknames. Because names do not always have standard spellings, we asked the children

to ask their parents when they went home. We suggested that they write it down at home and bring it to class. They appeared to expect the same conventions to apply to their other words as they were writing in their journals.

Primary teachers often comment that many young children insist on correct spellings of words that they wish to write. In fact, in this study the children were encouraged to use invented spellings. When children asked us how to write a word, we would ask them what they thought or what ideas they might have. This was done consciously to help children build on their strengths and ideas. Some children found this more difficult than others. It is as if we needed to give them permission to write unconventionally. They were trained to write their names correctly, one of their first encounters with writing. Is it any wonder, that some children found the use of invented spellings strange? Nevertheless, the children's name writing and "their newly constructed knowledge is not limited to name writing but is the beginning for an understanding of all written language" (Lieberman,1987, p. 107). For example, one girl during center time wrote "Lin" and said, "I'm spelling out my nickname Lin, but my real name is Linda (pseudonym)" [field note entry 15/03/99]. The children were encouraged to build on and reorganize what they already knew and in this way emerged more literate in an active, purposeful way (Vellender, 1989).

Therefore, it was not surprising that children were also beginning their journal writing by printing their first names. More than half the children did this for the first couple of months. They also labeled many of their drawings of significant people with their proper names or who they were, such as mom and dad. Some of the children chose

to begin their journals in January not by writing their names, but by drawing self-portraits. Overall, the importance of names became really evident in the spontaneous acts of literacy during creative centers and theme corners. As described earlier, children were seen making invitations, menus, art projects and even books using each other's names. Children would ask, '"How do you spell your name?" or "Do you know how to spell his name?" Names were used in the news and calendar times as when the teacher wrote the following three sentences on the white board for the children to read:

Clifford came to our school, [field note entry 18/03/99]

Ms. Lawford came to our school, [field note entry 24/03/99]

We miss Mrs. Cage, [field note entry 24/03/99]

Children's names were routinely used to report activities during news and calendar time as seen on this day as well.

Chris played in the train center, [field note entry 04/03/99]

Abe played in the dollhouse. [field note entry 04/03/99]

James and Evan played with Lego and blocks, [field note entry 04/03/99]

At the Journal Writing Center

As noted from the previous emerging themes, children's understandings of written language's functional possibilities and their understanding of its conventions plays itself out in a dialectical connection (Dyson, 1989). A child's developing knowledge of a symbol system, such as written language, develops because of "changes in interfunctional connections and relationships" (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 299). In other words, children's ways of writing change as children begin to see new functional and

communicative possibilities as they learn written language's conventions. Some of these functional acts were previously accomplished through drawings and talk. Children's sense of what can be accomplished through writing evolved as teachers responded to their writing both during and after the writing process. Peers also responded. Therefore, new ways of writing prompt new responses which in turn generates more writing and with it new functional possibilities. Their seemingly simple texts of significant people, endearments, places and people visited, or descriptions were examples of their first voyages into written worlds.

The children wrote and drew in journal booklets with blank white pages. As a result, they were not expected to conform to lines or any convention per se. The one exception was that the teachers asked them to write in pencil rather than crayons because it was easier to read. In addition, they were asked to use the next page in the booklet so that it would be easier to find their most current work. This was not strictly adhered to as children sometimes wrote with crayons. The children had a designated day that they wrote so that they usually wrote with the same group of five or six children. Although children were expected to write on their designated day, other children could join the group at any time. Also, when children were absent they were encouraged on return to join in. This section captures the twenty-two children's literacy voyages as they generated, revised and refined their hypotheses about written language. The classroom or student teacher was usually present at the table to support them. The children were expected to share and read back what they had written once they were done. I took over the role of the teachers in the last five weeks of school to study the children more

intensively. As Donaldson (1978) contends "it is as a means of getting fruitful hypotheses that the close and detailed study of individual children has its main value" (p. 34).

Bruner's (1990) constitutive argument that it is man's participation in culture and the realization of his mental powers through culture that makes it impossible to construct a human psychology on the basis of the individual alone. Human nature is never independent of culture (Geertz, 1973). Participation, meaning, and our interpretation are rendered public and shared. This worldview assumes that the relationship between an activity and experiencing it is, in the ordinary conduct of life, interpretable. As such, I have inferred from my field notes, videotapes, copies of the children's work, and teacher's comments what hypotheses and strategies may have been used during journal writing time. These portraits of the children's literacy voyages are the result of my reflections on my analysis.

<div align="center">Portraits of the Children</div>

The Journal Writing Groups

Monday's group. Just as in the other groups, there was variability in the emergent development in this group of five children. One of the girls, Josie, was only beginning to make the connection between sounds and the corresponding letters. Even though by February, Josie knew most of the alphabet randomly, she needed a great deal of support in helping her to make the sound/print connection. She began by drawing and writing single words about significant people in her life such as her mom and the house that they lived in. Josie used the alphabet strip on the table to help her locate the right letter.

During the week of March 15, the drawing of hands was a common theme for many

of the children. From my notes, video and memory I could not find the possible source

of inspiration. For example, they were not studying the body or what hands can do. I

assume that the inspiration came from each other, and not necessarily on the same day. If

you remember, the children were welcome to write at any time at the journal table.

Sometimes they would not necessarily join in but would often come over to see what

their friends were writing. On March 15, Josie traced her left hand. She needed the

teacher's help in making the sound/letter match for "h" and "a" but was able to write "n"

and "d" on her own as seen in Figure 12. Josie was making progress in her knowledge
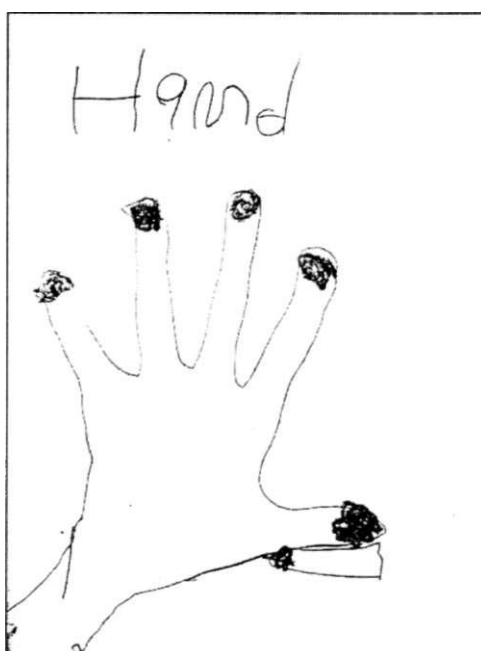
Figure 12. Making the sound/letter connections.

of the sounds and letters of simple words. Unlike many of the children in this group, as

well as others, she did not progress to the sentence level by the end of kindergarten.

Chris spent well into April writing random letters that according to him 'didn't say anything'. At almost every journal session, he began by drawing a house that varied little from week to week. However, at the end of April, he announced to me, "I'm trying to spell the name of a computer game". He subvocalized "om" and then told me that "I know how to write we". He then wrote "We" under his house [journal entry 26/04/99]. Then, in May, Chris announced that this was his homework and proceeded to print and vocalize the letters as he wrote them. Most amazingly, he exclaimed that the "last 3 letters might spell mom" (see Figure 13). It looked like he might have intended to write I lov .. ., although I did not confirm this. However, on the next two sessions he did in

Figure 13. Importance of vocalizing.

fact intend to and did write "IV Mom" [journal entry 31/05/99]. He sounded out the letters himself and then wrote them. During his last session, Chris copied "I love" from the previous page and clearly wrote "mom" by himself [journal entry 07/01/99].

Eleanor, the classroom teacher, had started the children writing their own names in March. However, James began writing both his first and last name in his journal at the beginning of January. At that time, he also copied the month January from the calendar. By the middle of January he was trying to connect two words with "and" (see Figure 14). By the next week he was writing a sentence beginning with "This is" [journal entry 26/01/99] as shown in Figure 15. James continued using "This is" to begin his sentences until the end of kindergarten. He varied both his illustrations and his other words. On May 31, he told me that he wanted "to add more words to his sentence" [journal entry 31/05/99] as seen in Figure 16.

Figure 14. Connecting words with "and".

Figure 15. Connecting words to form sentences.
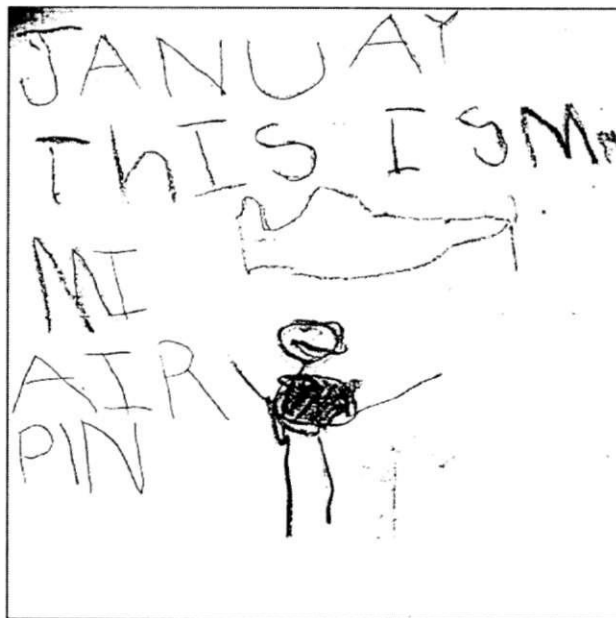
Figure 16. "Adding more words to sentences".

Larry was somewhat of an enigma for his teachers and me because he already knew

quite a few sight words and was well on his way with his reading. Somehow his

knowledge and strategies did not transfer as well to his writing. He did begin in January

by printing his name, and the words " D A D M O M M U R R A Y " [journal entry 05/01/99]

without any spaces. Murray is the name of his brother. On January 19 he wrote "me

SkiiNG", yet the next week the classroom teacher wrote in his journal that "Larry was

hesitant to start, but then did a great job drawing the carrot" [teacher's comment in

journal 19/01/99]. For the next three months, Larry chose to copy primarily the names of

animals off the alphabet chart in the classroom.   However, during our one-one- interview

at the end of April, he responded to the question about 'Why he writes' by saying, " I like

to write" [interview protocol 27/04/99]. Writing seemed so labored for Larry that I

would never have guessed that he liked writing. Certainly, all the copying of

environmental print did not attest to his love of writing.

Larry had excellent phonological awareness whereby he could break down the

word 'cat' into its 3 phonemes. He could easily find words within words that he showed

me when he read some of his previous journal entries during our interview. For example,

he knew the word 'do' within the word "dolphin", the word 'in' within the same word,

and the word 'go' in gorilla [notes from the interview protocol 27/04/99]. All this

knowledge was not translating to his writing as he continued to copy until the end of

kindergarten when he was capable of some of his own writing. The one exception during

this time was his journal entry (see Figure 17). The teacher's comment in his journal was

that he had "worked hard to print "Here is Easter eggs".

Figure 17. Working hard at writing.

Even before the children were encouraged to print their names, Carol began her journal writing using her name along with a cute self-portrait. She then expanded her writing repertoire by adding other people's names such as a classroom friend and her brother. Carol then started copying words primarily from the signs above the journal table. She continued to also write other people's names. In May, she was able to write her friend's name on her own [journal entry 31/05/99]. It was only on the last session in June that Carol attempted to write her first word "statue". Carol knew the "s" and "t" for statue. I helped her with the rest of the letters as shown in Figure 18.

Figure 18. Moving from copying to writing her first word.

Tuesday's group. One morning, three of the six children decided to copy each other [field note entry 16/03/99 and video counter 00:23:57]. Belinda started by tracing her hand with a pencil. After looking at what Belinda was doing, Robbie drew his own hand free hand, and then placed his left hand on the page to see how it fit. Robbie spent at least 5 minutes thinking before he began. He may have been thinking about what to write and could not think of something that he felt he could handle. He added cuffs to his wrist. However, as I was videotaping, I heard him subvocalizing what I thought was the word king. Robbie was trying to write 'This is a king'. He wrote "dse isaking". He wrote "dse" by himself and then had help from Susan the student teacher making the sound/print match as he wrote the rest. Susan wrote in his journal "Robbie wrote "dse without any help, "is a k" with help sounding out and copied "king" (see Figure 19). Actually what had begun as a hand with a cuff turned into a king's crown. Meanwhile,
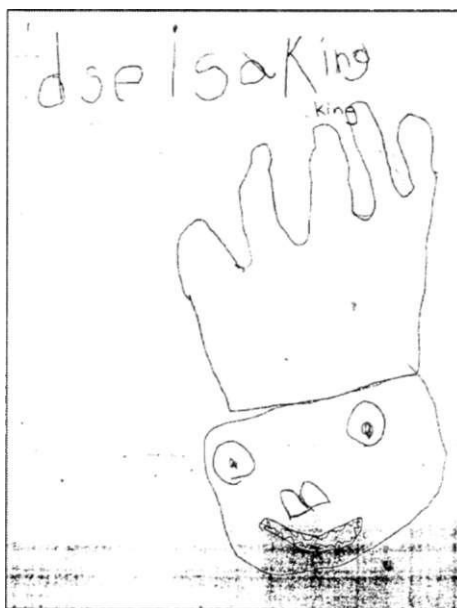
Figure 19. A cuff turns into a king's crown.

Belinda had drawn another hand on the other page. She had actually drawn her hands the previous week and knew that the word hand started with "h" and copied the rest of the word "hand" from the previous week. She continued this theme into a third week where she concentrated on the fingers of the hand.

It seems that repetition is important for children's emerging understandings as many children repeated drawings and words sometimes for months before changing themes. Another girl, Mackenzie, copied what both the children had done by also tracing two hands. She wrote "hd" for hand and "lav" for glove by herself. The hand with "lav" was colored in to look like a glove (see Figure 20). Although Laura started by copying the other two children, she also individualized her hands by coloring in a glove and writing the words on her own. It may be that peers sometimes inspire other children.
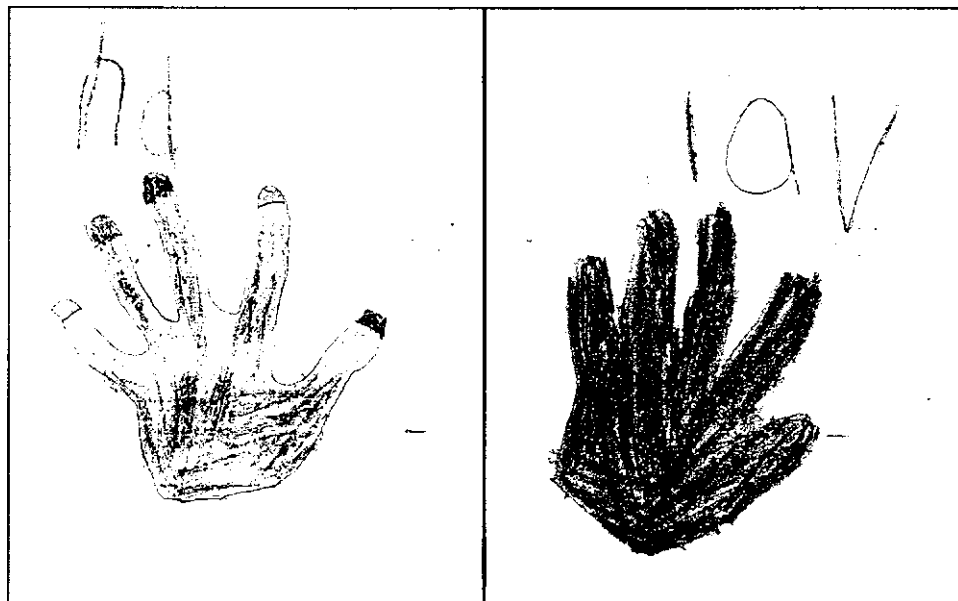
Figure 20. Finding inspiration from peers.

Abe, on the other hand, always started with very detailed drawings about places he had seen, people he had visited as well as imaginary storybook characters and Nintendo characters. He had a great sense of how to weave a story about his drawings; however, he needed a great deal of encouragement to write. At this time, Abe's strengths lay in his attention to detail and sense of story telling. He needed much support with sounding out his words as well as knowing the correct letter that corresponded to the sound. The teachers encouraged him to use the alphabet chart. Later the teachers taped alphabet strips on the journal writing table to help children to locate the correct letter. As of his March report card, Abe could randomly identify only eight upper and lower case letters. The other five children in this group knew how to print most of the alphabet so that when they made a sound/print match they rarely needed the alphabet chart. On this particular day, Abe wrote "jINL" (giant) with the "j" actually reversed as shown in the following journal entry in Figure 21.

Figure 21. A "jINL" (giant) step.

Jackie, on the other hand, often worked independently from the other children. She usually had a sense of what she wanted to write and by now was writing sentences. She often began by printing first and then illustrating her page. On this occasion she wrote "My brother is in grade two" as seen in her journal entry in Figure 22. It looks as if the name Eric is embedded in her sentence; however, the teacher had written what Jackie read back to her. Although she still had to attend more to conventions such as word spacing as well as sound/letter correspondence, she enjoyed writing and wrote confidently. She would always know what her intended message was as she read her entries to teachers and to me.

Figure 22. Writing confidently.

Evan was one year older than most of the children because his parents had felt that he was too immature socially to enter kindergarten. They had kept him at home for an extra year. Evan usually began by drawing one of his favorite fighter planes. He progressed from labeling his drawing with the particular name to writing sentences using the "This is a   stem. On March 16 , he wrote "TIE AtRseTR" (Tie Astrosport) in Figure 23. He wrote this on his own without asking or really wanting any help. Evan rarely asked for help.

Figure 23. Evan rarely asked for help.

Wednesday's group. Another group of six children wrote on Wednesdays. One of the girls, Anna rarely drew. Rather she preferred to write words, particularly lists of words and family and friends' names. Anna started by writing the word "fox" for about two months and then mid-March she still began with the word fox but had added other words to a vertical list. She continued using this format until the end of kindergarten.

Bill who wrote easily used his index fingers to help him to space words. He continued this until almost the end of kindergarten. Another boy, Tyler, always began his

journal entry by drawing using crayons. He preferred to repeat a theme and often drew a series of related pictures. Just like Abe in the previous group, Tyler needed lots of help with the sound/letter match and he often used the alphabet strip as a tool in his journal writing. As of the March report card, he could identify about 17 upper and lower case random letters. He had begun kindergarten knowing six of the upper case letters. Tyler was making progress.

Sara also began by drawing first. She had progressed in her knowledge of the corresponding letter for many sounds. As of March, the teacher would make the sound and she would get the correct letter, particularly the consonants. On her March 17 entry, the teacher wrote "I sounded out balloon for Sara, and she chose the letters she heard" as shown in Figure 24.

Figure 24. Getting help from the teacher.

Rachael, on the other hand, was repeating kindergarten because of some special needs around communication and socialization. She enjoyed drawing very detailed pictures that she often labeled. On this particular occasion [field note entry 17/03/99] she wanted to write the word "sun". Rachael was beginning to identify some of the initial consonant sounds of words. With some help from the teacher she decided that it should be written CIE but wrote CIH. Rachael as of the March report card, knew about twenty upper and fifteen random lower case letters. She often used the alphabet strip to help her to locate a needed letter. The use of the alphabet strip as a tool was helping the children to be less dependent on always asking others for help since this was something most could easily do by now. Rachael had progressed this week by labeling her drawing. The week before she had still been using random letters and when asked what they said, she would answer, "I don't know". Because Rachael was such a quiet child it was difficult to find out why she chose to do the things that she did. However, from observing her as well as reading the teacher's comments, I could see that she was making progress.

In the beginning of May, she came to the writing table and told me that she intended to write "frog'. When I saw that she was having difficulty getting started, I suggested that she begin with a drawing like she usually did. From this one May journal entry, one might surmise that this particular child did not know the concept of word. However, in the context of this longitudinal study, I could easily see that random letters were now not so random. Rachael intended to write a word to label her drawing, not only random letters. She still had a long way to go on making the sound/print match as seen in her May 5 entry of "apl" for the word frog. However, by the end of May as I sat with the

group, Rachael wrote D A D by herself and confidently told me that she had written "dad" (see Figure 25). She also told me that the moth in her drawing was flying over her dad. She was becoming not only more communicative, but was also more comfortable telling a brief story.
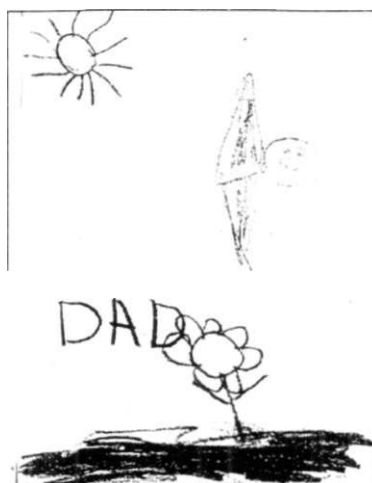
Figure 25. Becoming more communicative.

The sixth child, a boy named Ryan, had an extensive knowledge of the world as a result of his many travels and interest in books. On March 17, Ryan had done a picture of Vancouver. He knew that Vancouver started with the letter " V " and easily wrote it. Ryan had grown since January from a somewhat reluctant writer to a more confident one. With adult support, Ryan was beginning to make the connection between sounds and the corresponding letters. However, he sometimes had an interesting way of using the symbol system. For example, the following week he drew a picture of a window and printed the word "window" non-linearly and definitely not from left to right as convention dictates as shown in the following journal entry in Figure 26.
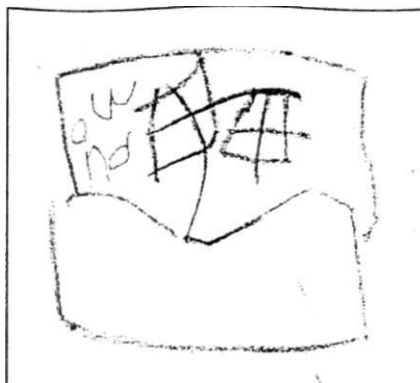
Figure 26. Working on wiring's conventions.

Thursday's group. This group of five children varied considerably in their literacy development. Avria already had an excellent understanding of how sounds matched letters as well as an extensive sight vocabulary. She and another girl named Melanie in this group sometimes helped each other. One day Avria wrote a complete sentence about visiting a friend after school as seen in Figure 27. She also helped Melanie to spell the word flower from a previous entry in her own journal.
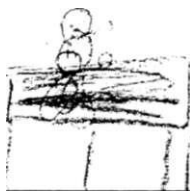
Figure 27. Importance of friends.

Compared to Avria, Irwin was a reluctant writer and drawer. He often seemed anxious about being at the journal writing table. He told me that he had nothing that he wanted to write about. On a particular day, he began by looking at his entry on the previous page from the previous week where he had drawn what looked like a house. The teacher had written, "Irwin didn't want to write anything so instead he copied what Carol had written in her journal. He didn't know what it said." (teacher's comment in journal 11/03/99). Irwin's reluctance and anxiety were also evident on the video [entry 11/03/99, counter 1:17:05]. This reluctance seemed to continue to the end of kindergarten.

Melanie and Avria sometimes helped each other. Melanie was a very verbal child and in many ways an excellent case study because she vocalized every letter and or sound that she was writing. This day she helped Avria with the spelling of her own name as well as the word "after". She usually drew before she wrote. As she finished her entry, she read and reread her work out loud to herself. This was also the strategy that she used as she was writing. Melanie copied the word "this" from a previous page in her journal and "flower" from Avria's journal as shown in Figure 28. The rest she wrote herself.

Figure 28. Rereading one's writing out loud.

Kevin needed help with sounding out his words; however, he knew many of the corresponding letters. He was becoming more sophisticated in the use of his letters as he announced this day that he was writing an "upper case N" [videotape entry 18/03/99, counter 1:34:10]. He wrote "PraSNPC" (prison box) and then proceeded to tell the teacher a story about the prison box seen in Figure 29. His drawings were usually done quickly with very little attention to detail. Kevin often rushed his time at journal writing center; whereas, other children in this group such as Avria and Melanie might spend as much as 20 minutes.

Figure 29. Telling stories about pictures.

Alicia wrote first and then drew and colored her picture of her cat "B O". She wrote the sentence "I L O V e C A T B O" in Figure 30. During this session she worked
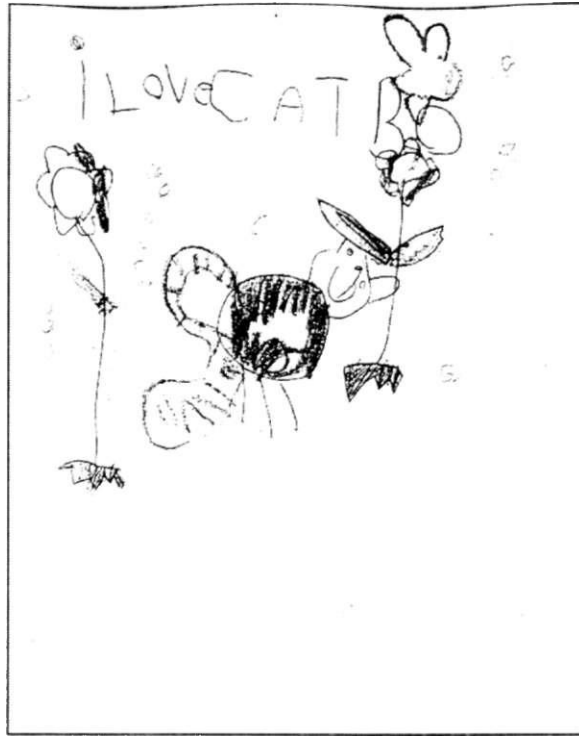
Figure 30. Writing about beloved pets.

very quietly and on her own; whereas, during other sessions she would often interact and

ask for help from her two best friends, Avria and Melanie. These three girls were rarely

seen apart.

<center>Playfulness and Humor</center>

As some children became more confident with their journal writing, they started to

play with the way they represented words. Anna wrote XOF for FOX and Sara wrote

"This is a tree" vertically and somewhat three dimensionally as shown in Figure 31. As

educators, we often treat written language as a subject to be taught conventionally, rather

than as a symbolic tool for children to play and explore as shown in this study.
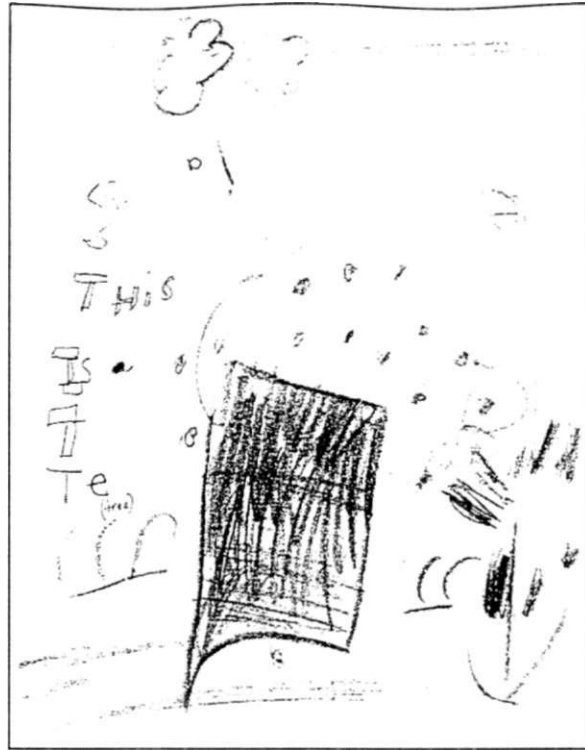
Figure 31. Writing as playful expression.

In Vygotsky's (1978) apt words, "written language must be cultivated, rather than imposed or the child's activity will not be manifest in his writing and his budding personality will not grow" (p. 117). At the beginning of this study, I noticed that one of the girls while painting during creative center was printing the alphabet backwards to look like this   "IHGDfIA   . When I asked her about it she said, "I'm just having some fun with letters" [field note entry 23/02/99]. The children continued to print their names until June. Two of the more reluctant writers at journal time played with their names. One of the boys wrote his name in mirror image starting with his first name on the right side. The other boy introduced his middle initial with a period following it. Because of confidentiality issues I cannot insert these two examples. The examples of spontaneous literacy that follow also address "cultivated' rather than 'imposed' activities.

Spontaneous Examples of Literacy

Within a few weeks of beginning this study, I started noticing spontaneous acts of literacy often outside of what I was concentrating on such as the writing activities at the journal center. On March 4, one of the boys came to Eleanor the classroom teacher to remind her to bring a plastic duck that she had promised to use in the water center. Eleanor asked the boy how she might remember to do that. He emphatically said, " You can write a note to yourself. Eleanor wrote herself a note.

On March 11 during play center time, one of the girls asked for help with writing an invitation to her birthday. She wrote "U R INVT I HP" (You are invited to a happy birthday). She obviously had the concept of word and spacing as she printed on colorful paper and proceeded to decorate her invitations. On the same day, some of the children were working at a play clay center. As I was walking around, one of the girls very proudly said " I made the letter c" out of the clay [field note entry 11/03/99].

Susan the student teacher had done an entire unit with the children on feelings. On March 10, she asked the children to choose a feeling and illustrate what it might look like for them. The illustrations were going to be bound into a class book. Teachers and volunteer parents circulated during this time printing the name of the feeling that the children supplied. However, some of the children wrote the names of feelings on their own from the environmental print on this unit in their classroom. An interesting point was when Abe whom you met from the Tuesday group wrote a string of letters "zunbycarvvonfEQ" before he even began his drawing. I noticed this because it was so uncharacteristic of Abe. Usually during journal writing time, he began by doing detailed

illustrations and was for many months a reluctant writer. Unfortunately, I did not get a chance to ask him what he had written. It was a missed opportunity.

On March 25 during morning free play, five of the girls chose to look at the alphabet books that Eleanor had set out on one of the tables. Alicia while pointing out the letter " K " on the cover of a book about the letter " K " said that "Kirsten (pseudonym) and king start with the same letter k" [field note entry 25/03/99].

Interviews with the Children

Since the children were my informants throughout this study, I chose to do interviews with the children to better understand some of their ideas about writing. I used the interview protocol found in Appendix F. The interviews were done one-on-one in a quiet room across from the classroom. I limited the interview to about 15 minutes unless the children had more to say and was comfortable with a longer one. None of the interviews were more than twenty minutes. By using their journals to discuss my questions as well as by using their names for phonemic segmentation, children worked with familiar material. I began the interviews in April and finished them in May.

What initially struck me as I did the interviews was the answer from about half the children to question 8C) "Which of these pieces (in the entire journal to date) of writing is your best?" This was followed by the following question "What did you do to make it your best?" Out of a class of twenty-two children, four girls and six boys chose their best drawing or design. One of the girls talked about how the drawing was the best because it reminded her about going fishing with her dad. She had drawn a significant moment in her life. At this point in her development it was the use of drawings rather than print that

was her primary symbol system. This was true of her journal writing as well. One of the boys chose his drawing on rain whereby he told me; " I like doing it", [notes from interview protocol 04/05/99]. His journal writing reflected his emphasis on using drawing with limited print. Another boy chose the one with the best design about the Sahara desert that he had done in April. This boy at this point was still a reluctant writer and would often walk away from the journal writing table after he had finished drawing. The teachers had to coax him back to write something about his drawing. Another boy chose one from May about a hot air balloon. He told me that he chose it because "the drawing is [was] better" [notes from interview protocol 05/05/99].

Purposes for Writing

I was particularly interested in their purposes for writing because we know that if they find writing useful for their intentions they may be more motivated to use it. Also, I could not get the answer to these questions from their times at the journal writing center because they were expected to be there at least once a week. When answering questions 5 and 6 "Why do people write?" and "Why do you write?", the following themes emerged. Six children connected writing and reading. They made such comments as, "I love to read" [notes from interview protocol 27/04/99]; "to learn stuff, to learn to read" and "I want to learn because I want to know how to read a newspaper [notes from interview protocol 30/04/99]; "because they want to know how to read" [notes from interview protocol 11/05/99]; "to learn how to read .. .so people would understand" and "I want to learn how to read" [notes from interview protocol 05/05/99; and "so I can read" [notes from interview protocol 05/05/99].

Other children made this same connection in answer to question 7, "What does a good writer do?" A good writer has "to read books" [notes from interview protocol 05/05/99] or "read to be a writer, to look at books" [notes from interview protocol 13/05/99].

Knowledge of Their Writing

In response to question 8A) "Tell me how did you write this?", almost half the children stated that they had to sound out letters or words. One of the boys had a rather sophisticated answer "I have to listen to letters, some letters are silent" [notes from interview protocol 30/04/99]. Many of the children said that they had to know many letters of the alphabet. Others said that they just did the words, learned the words, or have to write words. One boy "saw it in his head". Some of the children said that they asked other people, sometimes other kids.

<div align="center">One 'Key Event': Book time, a Personal Choice</div>

After play centers and journal writing center, the children would plop themselves down on the carpet in the corner of the classroom library. Storybook reading is now widely accepted as critical to young children's emerging literacy development. Young children need to spend time with self-selected books in interaction with the text and others (Martinez & Teale, 1988; Sulzby, 1985). Sulzby (1985) studied the reading attempts of beginning readers as they read their favorite storybooks. She developed a developmental sequence of reading behaviors into a Classification System of emergent reading. She classified the verbal transcriptions and behaviors into two main categories: those dominated by print and those dominated by pictures. However, her study of

children occurred in research-like settings on sporadic visits. The present study describes the strategies and patterns that children used as they occurred in the process of reading individually or with peers during their kindergarten book time.

The purpose of looking at this 'key event' was to examine children's in-process talk and non-verbal behaviors. The children were usually observed three mornings a week from the end of February to the end of kindergarten in June. Very few of the kindergarten children were reading conventionally at this point. Therefore, the goal was to pay attention to the talk and non-verbal behaviors that helped the children to carry forward the 'reading attempt' (Elster, 1994). Metalinguistic comments which are comments about the book or reading, such as "I've looked at this book before" were included because of this study's emphasis on the hypotheses children bring with them as they become more strategic.

Needless to say, the children did a lot of browsing. They would select and reselect favorite books. At first, the children seemed to spend most of their ten minutes getting up and choosing another book. Some of the children would not even get a book. Instead, they would prefer to sit next to someone with a book or use this time to wander about. Because the teachers encouraged the children to select a book, this did not last long. What did some of these browsing behaviors look like? Children did not really attend to the print in the books, but rather picked them up, skimmed through them quickly, carried them around, sometimes argued over who wants the book or exchanged books. Many of the children would get together in-groups of two or three. In these groups, often one of the children would be the leader in attempting to read or at least talk about the book. The

more reluctant children in that group would eventually join in with their own contributions. There was movement from the children's focus on illustrations to a focus on print or at least on what the story might be about.   It was more difficult to gauge what the children were doing when they were looking at books quietly on their own.

The Movement from a Focus on Pictures to Print

The following vignettes of children will illustrate what this movement from pictures to print looked like in this classroom during the free selection of books in a designated 'key event' called 'book time'. The Mr./Ms. books were a favorite with many of the children. On one occasion, two boys were looking at the back cover of the book. One of them was naming all the books found there, such as "Mr. Funny" and "Mr. Messy". Clearly, he was attending to the illustrations of the various characters in this series. In addition, they discussed all the ones that they had looked at already and were making plans to look at the rest [videotape entry 09/03/99, counter 3:15:00].

Counting and alphabet books with illustrations were popular ones as well. The children took great pride in being able to recite the alphabet or count. Although they were not necessarily attending to the print, that is the letter or number on the page, they were for the most part turning the pages at the right spots before going on. Some of the counting books actually had pictures of items to count which some of the children enjoyed doing with their fingers. The attention to illustrations was coupled with non-narrative talk such as labeling, commenting and even following the action. Following the action was most evident when children used primarily non-fiction books. In April, three of the boys who often grouped together were discussing one of their favorite series on

dinosaurs. Because the books were written at an upper primary level, they would use the illustrations to talk about what the dinosaurs might be doing, such as attacking another dinosaur.

It seemed that an important step in emergent literacy is to be able to recall text from memory. A particularly verbal child, this boy was reading the book on colors and feelings. Susan, the student teacher, had previously read this book to the children on 2 or 3 occasions as they worked through their unit on feelings. Recalling the book, he read "On brown days . . . I feel...; On orange days . . . I feel.. ." [videotape entry 11/03/99, counter 1:39:30]. He made an important step during this time, by using his finger to try and follow the words. This was clear evidence in the movement from attending to illustrations to attending to print.

A delightful example of the love of books in this class was how the children sang. On one of my first days in the kindergarten, the children began spontaneously singing their ABCs as they went to get their books. Perhaps the singing that the children regularly did in this classroom influenced this. Also, the signal by the teachers that the book time was over was to sing "Books away, books away". The children often joined in as they put their books away. This attention to the rhythm of songs and rhymes was seen on several times during book time. A favorite book of some of the children was a counting book about monkeys. One day three of the girls were singing "Roll over . . . now there are nine monkeys left" [videotape entry 16/03/99, counter 00:59:28]. They were paying attention to the print or at the very least the action from the illustration on the pages because they turned the book pages at the correct spots. It was clear that they

were recalling the text from memory rather than reading the words per se. However, I do not want to minimize the importance of attending to turning the right pages, as this is an important step in their emergent understandings. Children could be heard singing softly on other days. In March, one of the girls looked at the cover of a book, identified it as "Three Blind Mice" and then began softly singing "three blind mice" as she turned the pages. On this same day another two girls seemed to be telling a story as they turned the pages and then they also started to sing [videotape entry 23/03/99]. I could not make out from the video exactly what they were saying. Those who were attending more to the print could be seen using their fingers to help cue them as they attempted to read some of the words.

<u>Reading Buddies from Grade Four</u>

Since reading per se is not formally taught in kindergarten, children were not expected to read. The children, however, had ample opportunities to browse and as such developed a comfort with books as well as an understanding of what it means to be a reader. They also developed a language about books such as when one of the girls was talking to her friend about which chapter books they might look at [field notes, 18/05/99].

In April, the kindergarten children were paired up with 'reading buddies' from grade four. The two groups of children alternated between the two classes. The kindergarten children were expected to have a book or books selected for these times. They could choose books from their classroom library, use their library books or even their journals if they wanted to. It was another instance of a very social occasion to explore books. Coupled with the teacher's emphasis on the journal writing center and the

news/calendar time at the end of each morning, children had lots of opportunities to explore and practice their emerging understandings. Another opportunity to practice reading was when Eleanor selected books that the children could choose from to take home to read with parents or siblings.

<u>Books to Take Home</u>

In March, Eleanor had initiated the chance for children to take home pre-primer books that either had a few words with illustrations or were highly predictable for more advanced readers. A letter also went home to the parents as to how they might read the books together with their children. The focus was still on making reading an enjoyable experience for both the parent and child. At the same time, children were encouraged to use whatever strategies they could to help them to read. The children could select whatever book they would like and could exchange them as often as possible. By the beginning of June 5, six of the children had borrowed about 25 books. Eight of the children had borrowed 12 to 15 books each. Seven children borrowed five to eight books each. Interestingly one of the most capable readers borrowed only two books. Certainly, one cannot conclude from the number of books borrowed that some children were reading more than others. The children also borrowed a book from the school library weekly and I am sure many had books at home. However, this opportunity to take books home was clearly more popular with some of the children than others. Some of the children even took the opportunity to very proudly read their book to an attentive adult. As they were returning their books for another they would often read to the teachers, parent volunteers, or myself. Another opportunity for the children to practice their

reading was during the news/calendar time at the end of each morning. The news/calendar time could be looked upon as an instructional or focal time on reading, and it certainly was a 'key event' in the children's emerging literacy.

<div align="center">A 'Key Event': News and Calendar Time</div>

At the end of each morning, the children were encouraged to share their 'news' about the morning activities. The teachers took turns writing the sentences on the white board. Then the 'special child of the day' picked letters to be found on the white board. This time together always began with using a real calendar to establish the date. The teacher would then write the date on the white board. Oral and written language was made meaningful and concrete because the words and subsequent sentences came from the children's morning activities.

Throughout February and into the first week of March, the children had orally dictated to the teacher what morning news she should write on the white board. News consisted of examples of their morning activities. Then, with the teacher's help the children read back, usually in unison, what the teacher had written. Later in March, the teachers had discussed the way that they were doing 'news time'. Eleanor felt that the activity was too passive. She wanted the children to begin to more actively make the connections between what they were learning at the journal writing center and at news time. They decided that the teacher would choose what to write using the children's activities.

On March 9, the teacher wrote these 3 sentences for the children to try to read:

Belinda played in the sand with Avria and made a waterfall, [videotape entry, counter 00:12:20]

Jackie played in the sandbox, [videotape entry, counter 00:12:20].

Tyler played in the rice center, [videotape, counter 00:12:20].

As Susan was writing these sentences, based on a brief discussion that the class had had on the morning's activities, the children could be heard murmuring as to what the words might be. Susan then encouraged them to try and read the sentences together with her as she cued them to primarily initial consonant sounds as well as a few sight words such as "the" and "is". The use of written language to communicate, in this case, some of the morning's activities certainly contextualized the language used for the children much more than perhaps a storybook or a reader. Clearly, the concept of letter and sound relationships was made explicit, particularly initial consonant sounds. The concept of a word was also made explicit as Susan wrote down the words and then together, while pointing at the word, read them with the children. They were especially adept at recognizing each other's names as previously noted in this section "What's in a name?". Then, the special child of the day had to choose a letter to be identified. That day it was the letter T that Susan circled as the children clapped when she came to it pointing with her finger. Although this was a somewhat passive activity, it still encouraged recognition of letters that is an important skill.

On the following day, one of the boys [Chris] could be overheard saying to one of the girls, "I don't know what she's spelling" [videotape entry 10/03/99, counter 00:55:21]. Just as on the previous day, the children were whispering what the words

might be. Susan wrote the following two sentences: "The duck got stuck in the sand" and "We put rice in our rainstick". Susan encouraged the children to sound out the word 'rainstick' because it was a craft and singing activity that they had been working on that week.

About a week later, the two teachers had again discussed the way they were doing 'news time'. Eleanor felt that the activity was still too passive. They decided that the teacher would decide what to write after getting ideas from the children. The children were then asked to help the teacher write the words with whatever strategies that they might know. The teachers would cue them to attend for example to initial consonant sounds. On this particular day, Susan was prompted by one of the children's questions about names and capital letters to do a mini lesson on the use of upper and lower case letters. Susan had written the sentence 'Mrs. Casey played her video' [field note entry 17/03/99]. This also tied in very well to the emphasis on the children writing their first and last names.

During this week in March, the children were making tremendous progress in identifying sight words and contributing more to the spelling of words as Susan wrote their morning news. For example on March 16, as Susan wrote " We", the children chimed in with "We" as Susan continued writing "We went to the library" with the children's help. The children were encouraged to identify what letter corresponded to the /w/ sound in "went". Many of the children were already reading such sight words as "to" and "the". Because the children were becoming so confidant using a variety of strategies, Susan began to vary her approach. Sometimes the children provided the corresponding

letters to her sounds and at other times Susan wrote the word and saw what the children did with it. The entire class always re-read the sentence at the end. Some of the children were asked to read it individually as Susan cued the words with her finger for those who needed it.

During the last week in March, Susan invited the children to help her to spell March. She then began to write about a visit from the assistant principal who had read them a story on this day. As Susan wrote Ms. Bing, the children were murmuring about what the letters might be saying, she then encouraged the children to help her with the word "came" and then stated, "You know how to write the word to". The final sentence read "Ms. Bing came to our class" [field note entry 24/03/99 and video counter :51:00]. Rachael confidently raised her hand to go up and circle the T in the word class. This was a tremendous step for quiet Rachael who did not volunteer for anything, to have done this in front of her classmates.

By the end of March, the children were becoming very good at reading the news. On March 25, Eleanor discussed the purpose of a period at the end of a sentence. She was also trying to elicit what the children knew about certain rules. On this day, she wrote, "Today we are going to play on the playground". The children easily identified that the letter "g" says *Igl* and that "o" says *lol* and then some of the children knew that "ing" says /ing/.

Chapter Summary

Writing is an enormously complex activity involving message creating and message encoding. Moreover, written language is a system that children reconstruct as they interact with the environment. Children bring strategies and ideas to the construction of writing tasks. However, the decontextualized nature of written language poses significant challenges for young children. One may also underestimate the importance of personal interactions during writing and how these times together may influence writing strategies and the final written product. In fact, children's first attempts at invented spelling are glimpses into their worlds that they have intelligently and creatively invented as a new way to represent those worlds (Dyson, 1990).

We have seen in this study how children transformed emotionally significant experiences into their writing. Their writings are not yet conventional, yet the messages and intentions are clear. For many children, labels seemed to be an important first step in young children's discovery of the nature of the written-language encoding system, particularly a special kind of label—their own and other people's names. For additional discussion on the importance of labels, see Dyson (1982) and Ferreirio & Teberosky (1982). Moreover, Newkirk (1989) suggests that for some children literacy needs to exist in a 'generous sea of talk'. This was certainly true for the boy in this study who spontaneously wrote, "I love you" during play centers as he was making invitations with a group of children. Significantly, Vygotsky (1986) has proposed that writing demands a high level of abstraction on two planes: "abstraction from the sound of speech and abstraction from the interlocutor" (p. 181). One may argue that for some children the

second abstraction is the most critical. It is learning to deal with the demands of written language eventually without the presence of a dialogic partner—without this 'generous sea of talk'.

The classroom teacher in this kindergarten classroom provided many opportunities for children to engage from 'key events' such as book time and news and calendar time, to play centers where many of the more spontaneous examples of literacy occurred as well as the journal writing table. In Chapter two, I suggested that researchers and educators are beginning to realize that learning is mediated through complex, interactive cognitive and social processes that we are in many ways just beginning to understand. The next chapter highlights the results and discusses the significance of these processes in this kindergarten classroom.

Chapter 6

Results and Discussion: Kindergarten Classroom

The Children's Classroom

I have taken great pains to contextualize this study for readers. In part, it comes from the same motivation as Dyson's research into young children's writing. Dyson's (1981) initial research highlighted writing as an orthographic and communicative system largely influenced by Olson's work (1977). Dyson assumed that as children's writing developed, their written work became "increasingly unambiguous or autonomous representations of meaning" (Dyson, 1981, p. 18). Instead, she found that while on this journey towards more conventional representations, children embedded their literacy development in their social lives. For this reason, Dyson's focus changed and began to center on how writing came to be a useful tool in children's negotiation of their sometimes-complex social worlds. Therefore, in the spirit of John Dewey and taking inspiration from Dyson's work, I have also tried to contextualize the children's development as writers within the "fullness of their worlds" (Dyson, 1995, p. 36) For this reason, my research question is very similar to Dyson's interest and could easily have read, "How does writing come to be a useful tool in children's negotiation of their lives in the classroom?" The use of the word 'tool' is also very much in line with Vygotsky's emphasis on the social nature of learning.

An emphasis on the social nature of learning departs from a strictly skills view of literacy. Instead, I tried to get at the children's often 'tacit' ideas about literacy. Researchers rarely describe their own, teachers', or students' underlying assumptions and

perceptions. One of the key 'somethings' to which children adapt is the teacher's theoretical and personal orientation to literacy, of what written language learning is, and how it should be taught (Edelsky, Draper, & Smith, 1983). Through conversations with the classroom teachers I was able to better understand why they had structured their teaching in particular ways. Spending four months with the kindergarten children and then following eight of these for another three months into grade one gave me a particular vantage point that more casual observers would not have had. It permitted me to engage in conversations and to observe them on their literacy voyages. Getting at the 'tacit' knowledge of children is no easy feat and when I first started out I really did not appreciate the full ramifications of what an undertaking I had chosen.

As stated in Chapter two, only recently has 'metacognitive control' and strategic learning been identified as important with younger as well as less adept readers. There has been a shift from reductionist models to seeing 'emergent literacy' in a more balanced or holistic framework in the development of more intentional, self-directed learners. Coupled with these concerns has been the question of why and how learners transfer their knowledge, including strategies to other subjects and other contexts. The lack of transfer that many students exhibit has plagued research in cognitive psychology. However, in the past ten years, there have been some important developments and insights as summarized in Chapter two. The following quote from that chapter is worth repeating because I believe it captures the essence of why transfer of instruction is not guaranteed. Pressley et al.(1992) contend that:

Strategy teaching is long term and complex since students are taught to

coordinate traditional memory and comprehension strategies with interpretive

processes. It is the interpretive practices, in addition to direct explanation, that

make this type of teaching transactional, (p. 512)

Pressley concluded that because of idiosyncratic interpretations, adaptation of

teaching to the particular context is needed. In addition, it takes years to become

strategic learners and teachers, and teachers grow in their ability to be more 'responsive"

to students' needs. All of these key points were featured in Palincsar's 'reciprocal

teaching' as well as Englert's 'Early Literacy Project'. All of these three research

approaches were also instantiations of 'cognitive bootstrapping' (Resnick, 1989) or

'performance before competence' (Cazden, 1981). Children are 'apprenticed' into their

learning community. The teachers in this study certainly 'bootstrapped' their students'

knowledge during 'key events' as well as other times. In particular, the journal writing

time with the small group of five or six children provided an effective means to

personalizing that 'bootstrapping' in the children's ZPD.

<u>'Bootstrapping' During Some Kindergarten 'Key Events'</u>

In part, this study also addresses the effect of having a teacher present in the

broader context of classroom 'key events' such as the book time as well as the news and

calendar time. Having an exceptional teacher present as well as using writing as a

'revisitable trail' gave the children regular opportunities to revisit familiar work by

copying, talking about it, and rereading it. The analysis in the previous chapter as well as

the discussion in this chapter delineates how this occurred in this study.

One "Key Event': Book June

The results of this study indicate that most of the kindergarten children were already developing emergent literacy-related metacognition as they read self-selected books. Metalinguistic comments such as "I've looked at this book before" and "I have to start reading here" were frequently heard. Many of the children began to recall stories from memory and started using their fingers to follow the words as they began to attend to print more, not just the illustrations. A few of the children were beginning to read by the end of kindergarten.

Reading buddies from grade four extended this key event by providing another opportunity to explore socially, books of their choice. At times, the grade four children would also bring books. Reading buddies encouraged the children to read and shared in their triumphs. This was a favorite time for the children. Both age groups seemed to look forward to their weekly time together. Another time to enjoy books was choosing books to take home to read. There was also the weekly visit to the school library as well as almost daily teacher story readings.

Although I did not specifically look at the times that the teacher read to the group, it was another opportunity for children to enjoy books. I did not explore this event because it was the teacher who did the reading and as such it did not provide me with clear examples of what the children were doing as they listened. However, I mention it in the context of a classroom rich in opportunities for book experiences. The teacher modeled reading in a way that the children enjoyed, often using voice inflections to highlight various characters. Eleanor also used predicting as she turned the page to

encourage children to pay attention to the story features and encourage their understandings. Occasionally, she would ask other questions, but for the most part the story was read for the children to enjoy.

Cazden (1992) and others have argued that perhaps a literacy event such as storybook reading plays a 'decisive' role in developing the child's metacognitive skills. Cazden proposed that those storybook experiences are often adult-mediated. In the context of this study, the storybook reading provided another opportunity for children to experience books, another opportunity to 'bootstrap' their understandings before they could even read at this level.

A Key Event: News and Calendar Time

At the end of each morning, the children were supported in their sharing of the news of the morning activities. The means by which this was done varied from teacher generated to student generated sentences. The teacher focused the children by helping the children to understand reading strategies and invented spellings that they already knew as well as introducing new ones.

The teachers in effect 'bootstrapped' what individual children knew about written language as the entire class participated. Quickly, most children began to recognize and read each other's names in the sentences. Some children could easily recognize letters, some frequently used words, just as others were moving towards reading words and eventually the sentences. Regardless of their present knowledge and strategies, all children were supported in their growth as literate beings. In this kind of supportive setting, even shy and quiet Rachael confidently raised her hand to go up and circle the

letter T in the word class. This takes a tremendous amount of trust on the part of Rachael. She trusted that she would not be laughed at if she made a mistake. I am perhaps exaggerating this point, but you would have had to have known Rachael to appreciate what a giant step this was for her.

<div align="center">'Bootstrapping' During Journal Writing Time</div>

Moving from the Tacit to the Explicit in the ZPD

According to Bodrova and Leong (1996), the ZPD is a way of conceptualizing the relationship between development and learning. Vygotsky maintained that development is not a stage or a point on a scale but rather a 'zone', a 'continuum of behaviors or degrees of maturation'. In addition, Vygotsky proposed that written speech is not just oral speech on paper but instead represents a higher level of thinking. Written language has a profound influence on literacy development because it helps children to make their thinking more deliberate and in the process more explicit as children become more aware of the elements of written language. Written language literally encourages children to look at their ideas and strategies. For example, gaps in knowledge become more evident as children re-read their thoughts or ideas. They and we become the 'reader over one's shoulder'.

As I began this study and now as I write about it, it seems that my original research has led me to consider the children's often tacit intentions or motives. Enigmas have emerged. For example, Larry is clearly a good reader and yet he continues to make only small gains in writing. I met with the teachers at the end of grade one to share anecdotally how my case study children had progressed. Larry continued to complain of

headaches and stomach aches when he had to write. He often said, "I have nothing to write about". Clearly, we do not understand Larry's lack of motivation to write. Why does he not transfer his knowledge and expertise as a reader into writing? Motives are tacit to the children and therefore are often not easily accessible. However, we can watch and listen to children, particularly children's explanations of their writing and reading. These are the methods I have used in this interpretive inquiry to capture the voices of the children.

<u>The Kindergarten Children at the Journal Center</u>

I chose to study in detail children writing at the kindergarten journal writing table because writing provides a revisitable trail. In this way, writing provides Tasting traces' for teachers and children. Ethnography as an interpretive inquiry is ideal in bringing to the surface "what is intangible, hidden or overlooked in the unfolding of classroom dynamics . . ." (Perl, 1983, p. 11). Ethnography aims to use the information to think with. One looks to see if there are any interesting patterns that can be identified. These patterns emerge as children's often-tacit knowledge is made more explicit. Children make their knowledge explicit as they talk, write, and draw before, during and after writing, reading and re-reading their writing and again visiting their own writing at later dates. However, this would only be part of the story if no adult were present at the journal table to individually 'bootstrap' the children's emerging understandings.

Young children's drawings and writing do not always look meaningful. However, just as it is important when speaking to show children that we understand that they are trying to communicate, so it is with written language. Adults need to show

children that they know that children are intending to communicate meanings. One of the best ways is again using the idea of the ZPD by having routine ways of interacting with children, such as during the journal writing time in kindergarten.

Although there were many more strategies than mentioned in this study, I devoted my attention to the ones that I believe readers will find most salient. In Chapter five, I highlighted their strategies to propose that often children are able to write and read long before many adults think they can. In addition, some children are greater 'risk takers' than others.

<center>Children's Strategies: Taking Risks</center>

In this study, I have seen many of the same strategies that other researchers have documented. For example, children look at meaning in written language (Harste et al., 1984). They come to realize that writing has something to say and it is up to them to make sense of it. Clay (1975) coined another strategy. Clay noticed that children move through a stage of spontaneously repeating in both their drawings and their writing. This strategy is called the recurring principle. Many of the children in this study certainly repeated letters, words, drawings and sentences as well as themes. Eventually, as seen with the children in this study, the children discovered the flexibility principle. This means that children understand that variation is appropriate in writing forms (Clay, 1975). Some of the kindergarten children in the present study soon entered Clay's (1975) generating phase. They began to extend their repertoire of letters and words. Their writing became more conventional and more story like with longer statements than they had used in the previous phase.

In Dyson's (1985) research, she noted that children sometimes talk to themselves as they write and draw at writing centers in preschools and kindergarten. Talking, drawing, and writing complemented one another. Dyson concluded that the talk and drawing helped to reveal the encoding process (putting it down in the journal) but more importantly for the child, they seemed to help with the later decoding process (saying for someone else what they were thinking and saying as they wrote and drew). In this way, if there is an adult there to listen to the children and document what they have learned, then as educators we also have a 'revisitable' trail. In this study, documenting children's talk and strategy use during journal writing time helped us to understand their encoding and decoding processes. We also wrote down how they felt that day about writing. In other words, it included their often-tacit motives.

Overall, one of the most striking achievements of kindergarten children is their greater control of written language. Sooner or later children analyze the sounds in words and think about letter names as they write their messages or stories. They begin to understand the concept of word and what that unit looks like written down. They also start to write lists, letters, signs, stories and begin to understand how words are used. Children, in this way, move beyond knowing letters to becoming more comfortable with using them in words. As seen in this study as well as others, often the first word that children write is their names.

Furthermore, children at this point have an understanding that they do not yet know everything that is required for 'real' writing. Children need adults' support because without support they might easily feel overwhelmed and frustrated. All language is

social, but written language has the added feature of being permanent (Harste et al., 1984). This means that writers leave behind a 'revisitable trail' of marks. For some children this can seem intimidating, as they may perceive that they can be held accountable for their written text. Some children have a hard time taking risks.

Pellegrini and Galda (1993) observed this as well in their research looking at styles of writing. They were particularly intrigued by the stubborn refusal of some children to guess at words, even with urging and cues from the teacher and even though the word seemed well within the children's repertoire. Other children gave up at the point when they realized that there were processes involved that they did not know. I will explore this notion of taking risks more thoroughly in Chapter eight in my results and discussion highlighting the eight children whom I followed into grade one as well as in Chapter nine in the section on the implications for practice.

As children move on in their literacy voyages, an important change occurs, as they become more of an 'experimenter' (McGee & Richgels, 1990). As in this study, experimenters exhibited a different attitude that may be characterized as being "more aware, thoughtful, tentative, testing, and vulnerable" (p. 230). Awareness prompts such statements as "I don't know how to write that", or such metacognitive comments as "I think that word starts with the letter 'p' ". Furthermore, Sulzby (1985) discovered that kindergartners were very aware that writing requires much effort. She also found that children would work very hard. This would be particularly true if they knew that they could request help and that their yet unconventional attempts would be accepted and supported, just as they were in this study.

Encouraging and Supporting Risk-Taking

Language develops best when adults include children in conversations and when they consider children as 'conversational partners' (Wells, 1986). Rogoff (1990) contends that one of the ways that we 'apprentice' children into our culture is by talking to them as competent language partners. By extension, as educators we also 'apprentice' children into a literate society by giving children credit for their yet unconventional drawings and 'scribbles'. We acknowledge their retelling and pretend readings of familiar storybooks as real, not merely pretend.

Of primary importance in this study was the emphasis that the classroom teacher, Eleanor, placed on accepting and encouraging children's own constructions of literacy. Children's trust in the classroom environment and a sense of self-confidence were inseparable in learning to read (Edwards, 1994). In Edwards' classroom, just as in this classroom, the teachers supported and encouraged risk-taking. The kindergarten journal writing center provided opportunities to engage children in dialogue and in this way to support them in taking risks. It was the kind of support whereby the teacher responded with questions or provided appropriate clues. If teachers commit to carefully observing and listening, children will reveal what they need.

During this study, Eleanor on several occasions commented to me that she noticed that the morning kindergarten class was making incredible progress in their writing compared to the afternoon class. The afternoon kindergarten class had not received as much individual help from either her or Susan the student teacher because Eleanor did not have as many consistent parent volunteers to help children with some of the other

activities. She also compared the morning class to her four classes from the previous two years and commented on how the morning class was 'miles ahead' of where the children were from the previous two years. In previous years, Eleanor had not had a designated journal writing time where the kindergarten children benefited from small group work with the teacher. Instead, writing happened more spontaneously.

Since this was not a controlled study that controls for threats to internal validity such as maturation we can only speculate as to what the cause of the differences might be. Furthermore, one may suggest that perhaps the morning children were overall more capable than the afternoon class. However, were they also more capable than the children in the four classes from the previous two years were? Clearly, Eleanor observed that something was going on at the journal writing table that was not perhaps happening in the other classes. The main difference was the presence of a teacher, either Eleanor, Susan or myself. I do not believe that most would disagree with the fact that small group and individual help weekly at the journal writing table was a strong contributing factor to children's emergent literacy. Moreover, even with a teacher's help all the children were not equally successful in their literacy development. Eleanor's insight provides a clue as to this complex activity we call literacy. She emphasized that "we can't pour it [literacy] into their heads. They need to do the work of putting it together and how it gets put together is often a mystery" [audiotape entry 17/09/99, counter 140]. This study hopes to take some of the mystery of how they 'put it together' as well as provide some clues as to why some children learn to read and write easier than others do. In the next chapter, we

follow eight of the selected kindergarten children on their literacy voyages into the first

three months of grade one. I highlight how these children 'put it together'.

Chapter 7

Analysis of Eight Children's Literacy Voyages from Kindergarten to Grade One

In Geertz's (1983) words, works of art are "casts of mind" (p. 99). They are the visible manifestations of how people experience the world. In other words, illustrations, stories, arts and crafts, music and gestures are children's ways of giving voice to their experiences of their worlds and who they are in that world, in this case the classroom. As children in grade one whom I had known since the middle of kindergarten, all the children faced the challenge of learning to write and read. They had different styles as symbolizers of their worlds as writers and readers. Each of the children left their unique mark on the collected written work, drawings, audiotapes and recorded observations.

Nelson (1981) stresses that studying children who use various ways of approaching the written word and people can be very revealing. Namely, children invest time and interest in certain kinds of symbols such as drawing, movements of play, the rhythm of language in both oral and written language than others, as well as different symbols at various times. As they move towards conventional literacy, it is important to remember that children do not necessarily abandon old ways of symbolizing as they expand and refine new ones as when they move from drawings to words. Perhaps, most importantly, as educators we need to allow children to use many modes of symbolizing while they become more conventional.

As shown in Abe's November 15th journal entry in Figure 32, he already

Figure 32. Writing's conventions: dates, names, and phone numbers

knew the conventions of dating material as well as how to write his name on his work.

Abe added his phone number as well. Due to confidentiality issues, both of these have

been removed. Nonetheless, he continued to use drawings as his preferred mode.

Abe: 'Composing Artistic Delights'

Abe bounced to the kindergarten journal writing table on March 30 and like a true

concerned artist whose tools must be in working order; he asked no one in particular,

"Are the pencils sharp?" [videotape entry, counter 00:58:54]. It was a rhetorical question

as he then picked up one of the pencils and went to sharpen it. He felt the tip of his

pencil with his finger before he began to quietly work on developing his 'artistic

delights', this time of pencils as you have probably never seen them (see Figure 33).

PSLDZ.

_____-1 w

A

01

—r   ^ 7

Figure 33. 'Artistic delights'.

During this session, Abe finished his illustration and went over to sit next to Susan the student teacher. With her help, he was able to write the word "PSLOL" (pencil). Abe very emphatically voiced the sound /p/ for the letter 'p' and then wrote it. Susan repeated the word pencil for him and he heard the sound /s/ and said that the letter's' made that sound. He followed this by saying, "I wonder how you make an s ?" He knew that he could use the alphabet chart with pictures of animals to find the letter he needed. After a time Susan cued him with the fact that the word lion starts with the letter T. Abe found the letter T and printed it correctly. He again looked at the alphabet chart and said "like this one again?" [videotape entry 30/03/99, counter 00:45:10], as he added an "1" at the end of the word.

Abe was a highly articulate, imaginative child who excelled at art and the art of story telling. He was also a very caring and helpful child to others in the class. His

drawings, starting in kindergarten, were detailed usually highlighting Nintendo 64

characters such as Mario as shown in Figure 34, or story book characters such as the
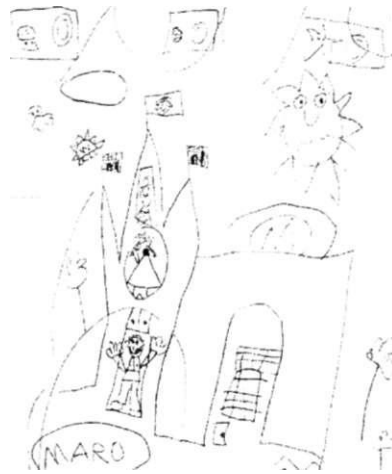
Figure 34. Importance of imaginary characters.

'Three Little Pigs". He often chose to do his drawings in pencil only sometimes adding

color. Abe talked frequently with friends, but the talk was not necessarily related

to his work.

At the beginning of January in kindergarten, Abe wrote, perhaps copied, his name

and copied the month of January. At that time he was using repetition and copying to

make progress in his written word. He copied the word "sun" written with the letter "s"

backwards. He continued writing the word "sun" for about two months; however, he

varied his detailed illustrations and made a couple of additions during that time. The

written word was starting to become an additional meaningful symbol system for him. In

the third week of February when I began my research, Abe told the teacher that he had

written "car" with the help of his last name because his last name began with "car". This

is an example of highly sophisticated connections and hypotheses testing for

kindergarten. The following week, Abe drew in great detail the characters in the "Three

Little Pigs" and explained to the teacher why he had added each character. He then

copied the title with some variations as shown in Figure 35. Drawing from Vygotsky's

Figure 35. Developing a sense of story.

theory, Abe is primarily using first order symbolism to denote the characters in the story.

However, he is making inroads in understanding that print, that is the word, also denotes

the character. This is Vygotsky's second order symbolism. At this point, Abe's written

words hide his well-developed sense of story—his illustrations do not.

   Abe required a great deal of support from the teacher in connecting the sounds with

the corresponding letters. Towards the end of kindergarten, the classroom teacher

suggested that he get some individual and small group help with his phonological

awareness. Some provincial money had been designated for Early Literacy and one of

the teachers in the school was doing this early intervention with children who needed

extra help. Abe benefited from this weekly help as he practiced the sounds that he had

learned that week at the journal writing table. He seemed to be more in tune with the

sounds in the English language as he, for example, blew the /p/ sound against his hand.

Perhaps, Abe needed the tactile aspect of sound formation as he blew against his hand to

'feel' what the /p/ sound was like. The next step was to continue to transfer his growing

knowledge of sounds into written letters and words. He was becoming more aware of

environmental print when he made a "CLOSED" and "OPEN" sign for the Smitty's

restaurant play corner. He copied the words and effectively used the signs each day to

open and close this play area [field note entry 26/04/99].

One of Abe's strategies at the journal writing center was to often use the alphabet

strip on the journal table, or use his A B C song to sing through the alphabet to try and find

the correct letter. Yet, on May 4 as shown in Figure 36, Abe was able to draw a 'fancy'

form of the alphabet from memory with no trouble that he named "Alphagetti Soup".
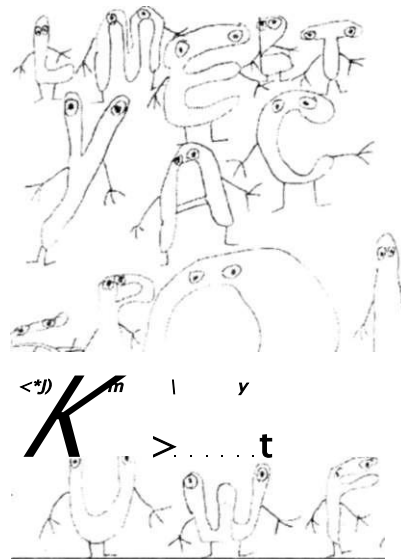
Figure 36. "Alphagetti soup"

Clearly, Abe was making progress in combining his artistic gifts with his imaginary worlds and his strong oral skills. The written word would follow. His love of books also contributed to his literacy development.

During book time, Abe could often be seen using his finger to cue words from left to right and could be heard reading using appropriate book language. For example, while reading a "Mr. Happy" book he was using appropriate words and sentences such as "Then, Mr. Happy met a friend on the way to the store" [field note entry 23/03/99]. He thoroughly enjoyed these times and usually shared this book time with a classmate. He took full advantage of the kindergarten book exchange that Eleanor had started. In all, Abe took out 27 books to take home. The class average was thirteen books.

Another source of information about Abe came from Susan the student teacher. Part of her work, as a student teacher was to keep a journal as to each child's social, emotional, and creative development. Susan gave me permission to photocopy her journal entries as another source of information. Most of the entries were made over the month of March. Abe often played alongside another child without necessarily verbally interacting while they might share for example, the Lego. Rather than engage in an argument, Abe preferred to leave any sources of disagreements and go off to work on his own as when he went to work on a puzzle alone [journal entry 15/03/99]. Abe clearly shone creatively as he created two Lego figures and named them "The Flyer" and "The Jeep" [journal entry 08/03/99].

<u>Grade One</u>

Grade one did not initially agree with Abe. The teachers and I discussed this on one occasion because all of us had made the same observation and were concerned. Abe was usually a cooperative, happy child. During the first month he seemed lost. The teachers decided that it was a transition period from a half-day to a full day in which Abe had to adjust to a more structured environment than he had experienced in kindergarten. Sitting for longer periods and listening was not Abe's strong suit. On more than one occasion in kindergarten, Abe could be seen doing something else rather than listening, particularly in a large group as caught in the following field note entry [18/03/99]. Abe was sitting on the carpet with his class playing with the wooden blocks behind him while Susan, the student teacher, was doing news time by writing "Clifford came to our school". Abe rarely volunteered to read or figure out the letters during news time. I am sure that he did not hear Susan's question about why the class thought that "C1i" might spell the name Clifford by blending the initial 3 letters to guess at the name Clifford.

Sitting and listening continued to challenge Abe. Probably what concerned us most was that he was not even taking opportunities to draw. All the children had a drawing journal which they were encouraged to use at least once a week to draw something that they had observed in detail in the class. On one occasion, I did see Abe doing a great drawing of the classroom hamster. On September 24, he wrote in his journal about Whiskers. What was promising about this journal entry in Figure 37 was the use of a sentence beginning with "This is" and a good understanding of how the name 'Whiskers' might be spelled?
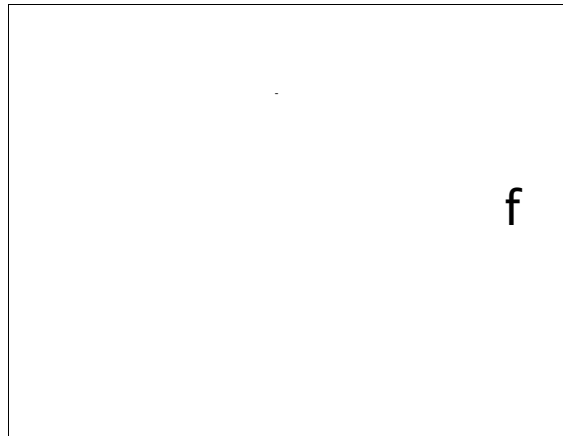
Figure 37. Growing into sentences.

It is difficult to ascertain if Abe continued to progress in his writing development. Abe was in Jill's language arts group along with Carol, Kevin, Jackie, and Belinda. Jill, one of the team teachers, had decided to abandon journal writing for the time being to concentrate on MacCracken spelling, and rhyming using the Chime-in-Poems with activities based on these approaches. For example using the Chime-in-Poem in Figure 38, Abe was expected to cut and paste the poem in the correct order and practice reading it. The teacher and any parent helpers would circulate listening to the children

Figure 38. Using 'cut and paste' Chime-in-poems to read.

read. I would also take the opportunity to have the children read to me. They were

expected to use strategies to help themselves to figure out the words. The poems were

practiced together in class with Jill, using both group and individuals in very innovative

ways. Abe did not make another journal entry until November 15 which clearly showed

his love of drawing and the expectation in grade one that all work be dated as well as his

knowledge of how to write his name and now his phone number. The teacher did

comment in his journal that she expected him to do some writing.

Although Abe's writing development was difficult to ascertain at this point, the

following two examples clearly point to the fact that he continued to use strategies and

hypotheses about print. On September 28, he brought his illustration that he had done at

home. He was very excited about this work that he had done with his mom on the

Sunday. As shown in Figure 39, Abe wrote "T 2 D A " by himself and his mom later told

him that today was spelled "today". Abe told me "that the number 2 sounded like two in

the letter t" [field note entry 28/09/99]. Although this may initially sound garbled
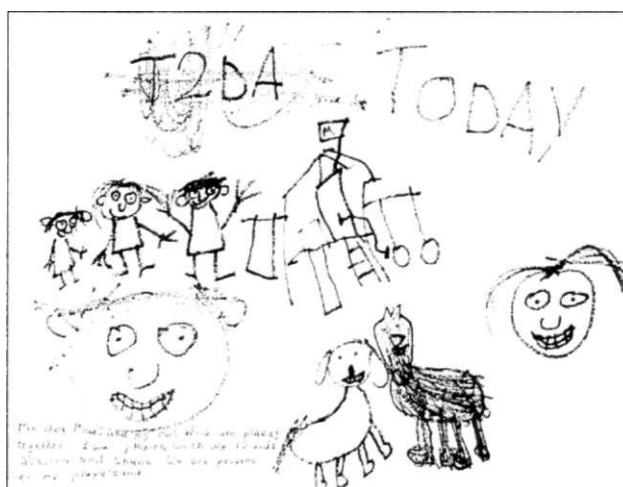
Figure 39. Linking numbers and letters.

or unconventional to us as adults, it convinced me that Abe was continuing to try to make sense of words and was obviously working hard at it—even on weekends. At another time in class, Abe was working on a counting booklet with illustrations of fleas. On each page, he was to practice writing the number corresponding to the number of fleas illustrated. For example, on three lines, the class was expected to write the corresponding number in numerical notation. As I was walking around the class, I noticed that Abe was putting periods down on the line. When I asked him what he was doing, he told me that the "dots on the sheet helps me decide where to start the zeros when I'm printing" [field note entry, 15/10/99]. As a matter of fact, he placed the zeros in a circle before he connected him. He may have seen this in practice workbooks that one can buy off store shelves or just decided on his own that this was a strategy that worked for him.

As I finished my research about two weeks after this session, I did not have a chance to follow Abe's progress. From the teacher's comments on Abe's November report card, he continued to be enthusiastic about learning, had settled into classroom routines, and was beginning to develop some sight words. To strengthen his writing skills, Abe needed to continue to develop sound/symbol recognitions. This is a necessaiy component for him to be successful with his inventive spelling skills. However, I did visit the class in May as they were finishing grade one just to visit the teachers and children. The teachers and I talked briefly. Abe, at that time, was reading at grade level and had made amazing progress in his writing as well. The written word had become an understandable symbol to add to his 'artistic delights'.

Interview with Abe's mom. Abe's mom came after school for the interview. Using the interview questions found in Appendix G, I wanted to find out generally about his parents* view of how children become literate before coming to kindergarten and of course more specifically about Abe, an only child.

Interestingly, mom and dad made a conscious decision when Abe was two years old to nurture his imagination. Mom felt that he took things too literally for a child which was probably compounded by Abe being 'strong headed'. They introduced him to books within the first year and had been building his personal home library since then. They set up an art and craft place for Abe to explore his imagination. Very early on he could look at something and draw it. Abe was a very visual child. His imagination was evident in other ways as well. His mom related an interesting time in young Abe's life when he wanted to grow up to be a mascot to teach kids right from wrong. His mom felt that modeling was important for children. Both parents read at home in front of him and mom often encouraged 'pretend writing'. As mom wrote, she would ask Abe to join her. Early on, Abe enjoyed computers and was playing the flute in private music lessons as well as going to Beavers. Abe had a lot of interests and was afforded the opportunities to develop them.

Larry: A 'Man of Few Words'

Larry was a very quiet child. His quietness was apparent during kindergarten group story time or news time where he rarely fidgeted and raised his hand, but answered appropriately when called upon. Even with his friends, he rarely talked very much. He often chose to play with one or two children whether it was with blocks or Lego. I never

saw Larry at the creative center doing art or crafts. The only craft/art activities were the ones that the entire class was expected to do as when they made a clay gift for Mother's day or the beautiful paper-mache Easter eggs that they made as part of studying color. During personal book time, he would often sit on the carpet and read by himself. I do not want to give the impression that Larry was unapproachable or unfriendly. He exhibited a ready, warm smile if a teacher, other child, or I talked to him. If you said good morning or hello, he would often just smile at you without a word as he tilted his head to one side. He was already a 'man of few words'. However, I did not find it difficult to talk to Larry during my time in both the kindergarten and grade one classrooms.

Larry continued to puzzle his teachers as well as me. Right from when I first met Larry in February of his kindergarten year. I could see that Larry had a repertoire of sight words and was well on his way to reading conventionally. However, his knowledge and strategies did not obviously transfer to writing. Larry spent most of kindergarten journal writing time copying environmental print in the classroom. From March 2 on, he copied primarily animals' names off the alphabet chart without any illustrations as seen in Figure 40.

<u>Figure 40.</u> Importance of copying from environmental print.

Larry told me that he did not like to draw or color. I also did not observe any spontaneous acts of literacy such as writing notes, invitations, making books or artwork. He was one of the last ones to be able to write both his first and last name from memory even though it was one of the shortest ones. He remained a puzzle because clearly he knew many words by sight as evidenced in reading books primarily during personal book time. For example, during our interview on April 27, Larry was able to easily read almost everything that he had written in his journal. He could read the names of the animals that he had copied, even self-correcting himself without help from me. Larry's use of self-correcting strategies clearly showed that he had an excellent understanding of how sounds translated into letters and ultimately into words. The teachers had also heard him reading on other occasions. However, his writing had not yet become an important symbol system for him or one that he could easily navigate on his literacy journey—or so I thought.

At about this time in April, Larry had a chance to take Paddington Bear home with him. Each week the children took turns taking Paddington and the accompanying journal home for the weekend. They were encouraged to draw or write about their weekend with Paddington. Often the children would tell their weekend experience to their parents for them to write. Larry was clearly more capable of writing than he had demonstrated in class as shown in Figure 41.
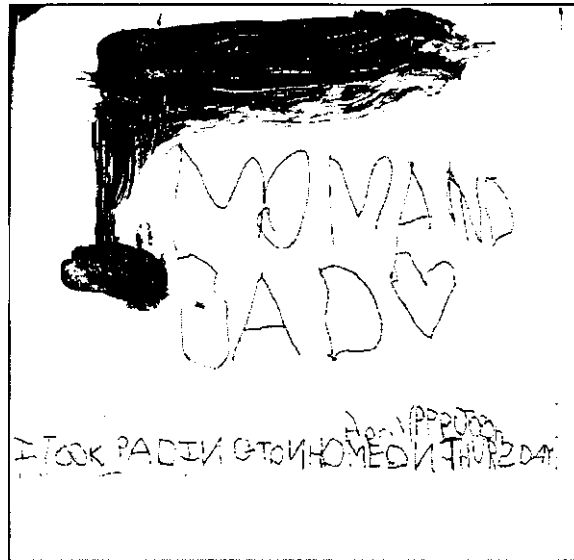
Figure 41. Clearly a more capable writer than seen in class.

Unfortunately, I cannot with certainty conclude that Larry wrote his part without any help from his parents. I suggest, however, that because of the incorrect spellings, lack of word spacing and reversed letters. Larry did it by himself or with minimal help. This was corroborated in my interview with Larry's dad later in October of grade one.

Larry was highly adept at navigating the computer games in his kindergarten class. One of his favorites was called "Number Crunchers". He was clearly good at numbers.

His name was always on one of the waiting lists to use the computer. Although I never did get the chance to see if Larry would be more comfortable writing on the computer. I somehow suspect that this might have been a better venue for him. The computer times were supposed to be once a week in kindergarten but were actually more sporadic because of other activities. The few times that I did go to the computer lab with the children they were practicing using the computer keyboard followed by appropriate books such as "Arthur" and "Paddington Bear" that they could look at and listen to. They were also encouraged to explore colors and shapes for illustrations on one of the programs.

Because Larry was such a quiet, pleasant child, he was also the type of child who could go somewhat unnoticed by some teachers. I am noting this inference because I have fewer observations about Larry compared to other children. He was also rarely seen on my videotapes. If you asked Larry a question, he answered it. He did not try to engage you with questions or concerns like other children in the class. It is more like he floated unobtrusively among a few activities such as computers and Lego and rarely if ever explored creative centers or the various setup play centers. His voice was unheard except for a few occasions such as when he answered a question about a story being read by the teacher. However, Larry always appeared attentive and easily answered questions during story time. For example, as Eleanor was reading "The New Baby Calf, she asked what the children noticed about the illustrations in the book? Larry raised his hand and confidently answered, "They're copied from modeling clay" [field note entry 14/04/99].

Susan's journal entries were again helpful in understanding Larry as a learner. For 'Show and Tell' on March 2, Larry took an extremely long time to set up his hockey poster and other hockey items. He continually looked to his mom for support and only briefly talked about what he had brought to show the class. There was no elaboration as you would have seen with Abe. He continued to defer to his mom when children asked him questions. I saw this kind of deferral again with his grade four reading buddy.

Although Larry was already a capable reader, he would mostly have his buddy read him a story. There is nothing wrong per se with this; however, the children knew that they were expected to choose reading material or something that they had written to read to their reading buddy. Larry could often be seen leaning back on a chair or up against a wall on the floor as his buddy entertained him. On his own on other occasions, Larry was seen helping other children once with block patterns. On another occasion, he showed his creativity when he turned his Lego pieces into the shape of a mustache and went and got the class Polaroid camera to take a picture of it. Susan highlighted the fact that Larry was very "excited" and "wide-eyed" Oournal entry 17/03] when he saw himself on one of my videos. Susan's last journal entry hints as to a source of inspiration for Larry's continuing development as a writer. At the sand table one day, Larry was building a lava mountain. He was talking about lava, freezing and power. At one time, he suggested to the other children at the sand table that maybe "we could make a story like that" [journal entry 08/03/99]. I followed Larry into grade one in September.

<u>Grade One</u>

Right from the beginning of grade one, Larry clearly shone in his knowledge of numbers and number patterns as well as in his knowledge of the calendar and weather as each morning all 48 children gathered sitting on the floor with Jill. For example, on October 15, Larry was able to answer Jill's question about number patterns related to the calendar. The class had been keeping track on a number chart the number of days that they had been in school. In addition, they were discovering various number patterns and part of that was the various ways we could count. Jill asked, "How else can you count the number of days in school, besides by 2s?" [field note entry 14/10/99]. Larry quickly raised his hand. Jill called upon him to answer. Larry proudly said, "5s and 10s" and proceeded to count first by 5s and then by 10s. Most of the other children were still working on counting by 2s. Only a few could do this as Jill then called on other children to try this. Moreover, Larry continued to spend his free time on the computers playing primarily number games.

During the first month of school, Larry missed a lot of days complaining about stomach aches and headaches. The teachers thought that he might be finding grade one stressful but were not sure why. He still found it hard to write. Larry was grouped with the children whose literacy skills were more developed. The class of 48 children was split approximately in half. Larry was put in this group primarily because of his reading skills with the hope that his writing would blossom. This group, including Avria and James, met with Eleanor whom most of them had known since kindergarten. Unlike,

Jill's literacy grouping, Eleanor continued using the group journal writing that she had used in kindergarten.

However, now their journals had lines on half of the page. They could still use illustrations to begin their writing time. The choice was up to the child. Over the summer Larry had made the transition to using sentences. Larry still found the entire writing process difficult, as he worked slowly often not completing his writing in the allotted time. He started in September by using the 'This is" and " I went" stems.

Eleanor noticed that a few others were having a hard time getting started as well, so she would first meet with the group to discuss what they might write. In this way, children like Larry could have a chance to think about what they could write before actually sitting down at the tables. They usually wrote at tables in groups of five or six once or twice a week for about 20 to 30 minutes. I am not sure that this brainstorming helped Larry very much as he still worked very slowly and laboriously. For example, on October 5, Larry was still doing an illustration while others had already written two or three sentences [field note entry 05/10/99]. I am mentioning this because I cannot recall anytime from kindergarten until now when Larry had ever spent 15 minutes on an illustration as shown in Figure 42.
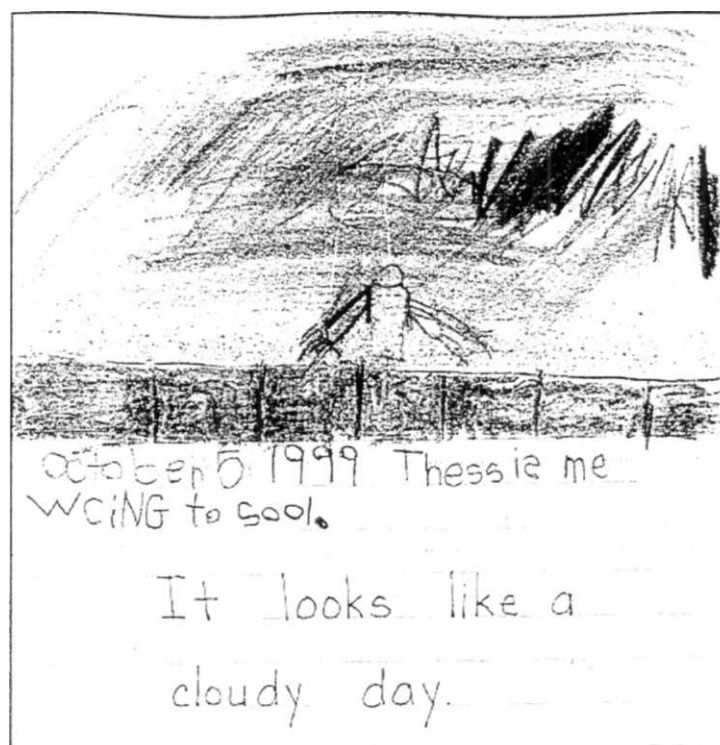
Figure 42. Using illustrations to frame one's writing.

At about this time Eleanor introduced another element to the journal writing. She thought that she might motivate students to write if she responded to their writing. On that day she told them, "When I give you back your journal, read the little note that I wrote back to you. You can use a friend or adult to help you read it." [field note entry 05/10/99]. I think that Larry who was naturally quiet enjoyed this as evidenced in Figure 43 in his journal response to Eleanor's question. Remember that Larry is a 'man of few words'. Using the response 'No' is probably as elaborate as he gets, even verbally. Perhaps, he knew that his teacher was interested in his writing because she was asking

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Figure 43. Teacher's responses motivate this student to write,

questions. In other words there was a purpose to his writing. Even though Larry

continued to take a great deal of time before he wrote anything, he began to write more

details. By providing a clearer purpose in responding to Larry's writing, the teachers had

perhaps tapped into what motivated him to write. By the end of November, Larry was

writing more easily and writing more details than before as seen in Figure 44.

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    fori)$ neou5'hrr. netn *h* aieA–

Figure 44. Writing more easily.

On his November report card, his teachers noted Larry's strong sight word

vocabulary that helped him to read with fluency and expression. However, as previously

noted, he needed encouragement in taking greater risks in his independent writing to include more details. By November, Larry was attending regularly and seemed to be now enjoying the variety of experiences as well as adjusting to the classroom routines and increased expectations of grade one. The teachers took the time to find out what the children were enjoying about school using a self-assessment tool with happy and sad faces. For example, parents were asked on this day to go around to the children to help them to read the statements such as "I like reading". Larry circled the sad face in response to reading and art. Art was no surprise; however, reading was somewhat puzzling because of what a good reader he was becoming. Larry very clearly indicated that he liked playing on computers. Unfortunately, the teachers did not assess writing.

Larry continued to puzzle me somewhat with regard to writing. Although he was making progress, writing did not come as easily to Larry as either reading or mathematics. For my last week in class, I decided to spend most of my time following Larry and not concentrating as much on the other children. Part of Larry's apparent slowness in writing was how hard he seemed to be pressing as he used his pencil. This can be very tiring. His grip although not particularly awkward looking was tense. In other words, how could Larry concentrate on generating ideas and writing them down if most of his energy was going into the mechanics? I realize that this is probably an oversimplification of a very complex activity we call literacy. I add it at the end only as a further insight that was not evident to me before. In the end, Larry with support will have to continue to 'trust himself (Juliebo & Meaney, 1997) more on his literacy voyage.

Interview with Larry's dad. The emphasis in the family since the birth of Larry as the oldest of three children was to lead by modeling literate behaviors. For this reason, Larry and his siblings had been exposed to and involved in the family's everyday activities. These activities included bedtime stories, writing, drawing, scribbling, and counting with every day things in the home such as signs, recipes, mail, and books as a way to "instill the value of a love for learning" [audiotape and field notes from interview 05/10/99]. On more than one occasion, dad would show Larry what a written project draft from his work looked like. Both parents had consciously decided to help their children know the basics before school coupled with a love for learning, so that they would be ready to learn when they entered school.

Avria: 'The Importance of Close Friends and Family'

Three girls are playing with various wooden shapes during free playtime first thing in the morning kindergarten class. The following conversation illustrates how the relationship would continue to evolve until the end of kindergarten [field note entry 16/04/99]. Avria was usually the follower in this trio. The first girl was the leader.

1st Girl (the leader): We'll make another circle here.

2nd Girl: OK. We'll make something different.

Avria: You, guys look at it (as the shapes tumble). Alicia made me do that.

Socially, Avria was a follower; however, academically she was a leader. Avria entered kindergarten knowing all 26 letters of the alphabet randomly. Few of the other children could do this at that time. Avria was clearly a capable learner as she confidently displayed her writing skills in Figure 45. However, there was much more to Avria

Figure 45. Importance of close relationships.

than being a capable student. For Avria, close relationships were very important to her both in class and outside the class with friends as well as at home.

When I met Avria in February, I usually saw her as part of the trio found in the opening conversation. She seemed almost inseparable from the two other girls in the class. The three of them did everything together. They could be seen reading together, building with blocks first thing in the morning, doing puzzles or crafts, or playing at the sand or rice table. Her relationship with the other two girls was a source of concern for both the teachers and her mother. The first girl was clearly the leader of the group and Avria tended to follow her lead. One of the only exceptions that I noticed was at the journal writing table where Avria was more of her own person. She chose to draw and write about what she wanted and did not copy from the other two girls who were part of her journal group. In addition, the second girl could often be seen pouting about something. This girl seemed to be often purposely excluded and arguments would ensue.

Avria's mother confided in me on one of her volunteer days in the class that she wanted her daughter to spend less time with both girls and had talked to her about playing with other children. However, the bond was strong among the three girls as seen in Avria's first journal entry in January in Figure 46. There are the three girls clearly identified with their names printed above their heads. The names have been removed for confidentiality issues. The other names are other people not in the class.

Figure 46. The inseparable trio of friends.

Susan, the student teacher, had also noted that "Avria went to a variety of centers but always chose to be with her friends rather than play independently, except for journal time. It was a group decision" [Susan's journal entry 03/03/99]. On another occasion, the three girls were working at the clay center making pretend finger chocolates. Even at this center, the three girls were cooperating and planning in assembly line fashion [Susan's journal entry 16/03/99]. Avria never went to play at the computers. On

occasion, I could see her looking to see what children were doing on the computers. I decided to ask her one-day if she wanted to try the computers sometimes to do something different. She emphatically declined by saying that she was not interested. This disinterest continued into grade one.

Unlike most of the other kindergarten children, Avria began by writing sentences in her journal. Not one other child demonstrated this level as early as January. She usually began by illustrating what she was going to write about. She often wrote about activities that she had enjoyed with family and friends. Avria wrote mostly about significant relationships in her life. She was also one of the few children who would often come over immediately to the journal writing table. Most of the other children when it was their turn to write would do another activity first before coming to the journal writing table. At times, one of the teachers would have to remind the children to do their writing.

Avria already had a large repertoire of sight words that she could readily produce in her writing. She knew how to write her first and last name without going through the copying stage that most of the other children were doing in kindergarten. Her primary strategy when she did not know the word was to carefully sound it out usually letter by letter. Very early on, she was developing considerable skill in connecting the sounds with the symbols. For example, Avria knew that 'ing' gave the /ing/ sound at the end of words. By the middle of April, it was clear that she needed to be challenged for her to grow as a writer. On April 15, she copied from the previous page in her journal and announced that "It's easy to spell today" [field note entry 15/04/99]. The following week

I began working with the children at the journal writing center. I had made a mental note to challenge Avria by suggesting that she might want to write a story beginning with a few sentences. Avria more than rose to that challenge within two weeks.

On April 29, Avria came to the table and told me that "she wanted to write a story today" [journal entry 20/04/99]. She chose not to draw and began to write. She began by thinking hard about how she might write her friend's name. Since her friend was in the class, I asked her where she could look in class for her friend's name. Avria looked to the library board where they had their name cards that they brought to the library to borrow books. Avria had made a new friend and her new friend was sometimes included in the original trio. She then asked me if this is how you spelled house? Avria sounded out the word restaurant with some help from me. She had written her first connected ideas using three sentences as shown in Figure 47. Avria continued to grow as a writer. She was also making great gains in her reading on her literacy voyage.

Figure 47. Connecting ideas.

Avria was always engaged usually with the same two girls during book time. The group's favorite was all the "Paddington Bear" books. One day in April, the leader in this trio passed out some of these books saying, "Numbers for [me, the leader]_____, 'Colors' for Avria and 'Opposites' for [the 2nd girl]_____." [field note entry, 14/04/99]. During this time, Avria could often be found reading to the other girls. She obviously enjoyed books and enjoyed choosing books to take home. She was in the top three of the kindergarten class for the number of take home books.

Grade One

Avria began grade one reading and writing above grade level. Also, the leader of their trio had moved away over summer. The other girl was in the other group with Jill for language arts and mathematics. Avria could now develop more independently from their influences. I was still curious from my observation in kindergarten that she did not seem to be interested in computers even though this generation has been more exposed to computers than previous ones. During center time, Avria was working on a science experiment and kept glancing at the children at the computers as if she might want to join but was unsure [field note entry 28/09/99]. She could often now be seen with another girl named Jackie whom she had befriended at the end of kindergarten. Jackie was one of the children I had decided to follow into grade one. The two could often be seen together as for example when they were together working on a "Where's Waldo" puzzle [field note entry 30/09/99].

Eleanor and Jill had carried over the kindergarten tradition of book time whereby after lunch children were encouraged to choose a book and sit down with it. Avria often

sat with Jackie. By October, she was using her finger to cue the words and had switched

from primarily single wordbooks such as the "Paddington Bear" ones to simple chapter

books. Avria was also blossoming as a more active participant during group instruction.

She had an amazing amount of knowledge that had not as readily been evident in

kindergarten. For example, after printing Eleanor's group was encouraged to grab an

alphabet book and find words that started with the particular letter, print them and

perhaps illustrate them as well.   Then once everyone was done, the group would share

with each other the words they had found. One day Eleanor was asking about where you

might find a dingo. Avria quickly responded by saying, "in Australia" [field note entry

06/10/99]. This was one example of many demonstrations of her strong background

knowledge.

Eleanor had also started reading buddies with the grade four class. This

opportunity to read with older children was a popular event. Avria consistently chose

chapter books that she read very proudly to her buddy. In the middle of October, Eleanor

reintroduced the news time she had done with the children at the end of their kindergarten

morning or afternoon class. This time she and Jill called them 'morning messages' and

they were written on a whiteboard for the entire class. Children were encouraged to sit

down and try and figure out what the message said before they read it together as a class.

One morning, Jill decided to have some fun with the message to see what they

understood about reading messages.   She wrote the message

"Wehavealreadyhadgymtoday". The letters and words ran into each other. Avria piped

up that "I can't read it because it's all squished together" [field note entry 01/11/99]. Jill

then asked what they needed to do to read it? Jackie suggested that they needed to "put spaces between words". Jill would then call upon various children to read the words that they knew. Larry knew the word "today". Abe said, "I know a number . . ., 1999". Jill always wrote the date at the top of the message and Abe obviously recognized it. The class would then read the message together. Abe rarely took the opportunity to read it together thereby missing an opportunity to practice his reading; whereas, Avria consistently practiced reading the messages, her journal, and books.

The children also had opportunities to work on literacy activities outside their groups. For example, the entire class of 48 children worked on a class book called "Surprise Soup". Jill set the tone for the activity by emphasizing that "We are all authors and writers" [field note entry 07/10/99]. By making such statements, Jill is letting the children know that she thinks of them as authors and writers of stories. They all have and are expected to contribute to the classroom story. The children rose to the occasion and did amazing things as authors. The classroom book was then coil-bound and placed in their classroom library for them to enjoy. The book was a hit. I often found the children looking at it and trying to read what the class had written about the type of ingredients one might find in surprise soup. What a wonderful way to honor the children's literacy voyages.

Avria quickly progressed to writing paragraphs again primarily about activities with family and friends. She had not yet begun writing non-fiction. However, part of that might have been because Eleanor was encouraging the children to write about what they had done. As previously mentioned some of the children such as Larry were having

difficulty even getting started. Writing about what you know is a good place to start. As seen in Figure 48, Avria was clearly making amazing progress as an accomplished writer.
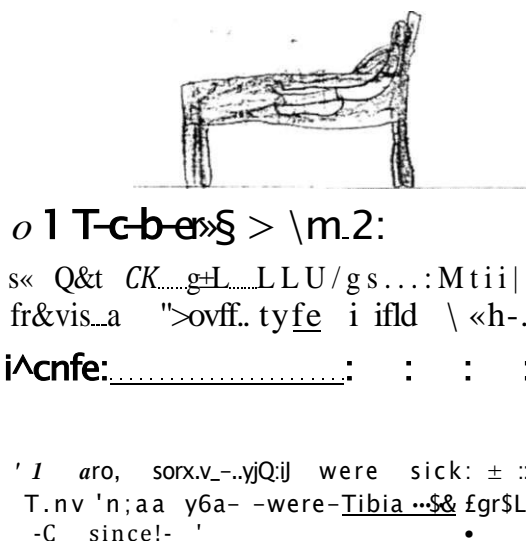
Figure 48. Becoming an accomplished writer.

Half way through October during center time, Eleanor and Jill had stapled some blank pages as potential booklets for story writing as one of the activities. This turned out to be quite popular with the children. I saw Avria begin by writing "Once upon a time" [field note entry 13/10/99]. She told me that "once upon a time is a pretend story". Avria understood the genre of this opening line. However, I later saw that she had erased this and whatever she had written and was copying a story from a book that some of the other children were copying as well. For the moment, Avria had reverted to being a follower again. She obviously needed encouragement to venture into writing make-believe stories. She did not need much encouragement to read.

The entire school in October was celebrating authoring. All the grades were encouraged to write a story that they might read over the intercom after lunch for the

whole school to hear. Avria and another boy were chosen to read their stories. They spent their spare time practicing their readings. On the day of their reading, Avria returned to class to cheers and clapping. The children surrounded both readers with words of congratulations and hugs. The children were genuinely proud of their two classmates. Such emphasis by an entire school certainly encourages the growth of children as authors and readers of their own words. It gives voice to their literacy voyages.

At the same time, Avria was also taking opportunities during center time to write spontaneously. I found her writing a note to a friend and as I came around the table, she covered it with her hand because it was obviously private. I did get a chance to see some of it later. It was a note to another girl in the class telling her what a good friend she was and how much she loved her [field note entry 20/10/99]. At about this time, Avria's self-assessment about what she liked or did not like showed that her favorite activity was music with the music teacher and her second favorite activity was recess. She was not happy with the mathematics because she found it too easy. Avria's preferences showed again the importance of social relationships and yet she knew that she was not being challenged as a learner in mathematics.

Some of these insights were corroborated by the teachers' comments in her November report card that I read a year later. I had chosen not to read the report card so that I would not be unduly influenced by their comments about individual children. However, it is now interesting to go back to it as a source of information about the children. Avria "seems to be developing some new friendships, yet to be maintaining her

individuality . . ." [teachers' comments on November 1999 report card]. As previously

noted, she had begun this at the end of November when she befriended Jackie. Also, "the

open-ended nature of most of our activities offers Avria the opportunity to challenge

herself.... One area of challenge is to continue to expand her writing abilities".

Interview with mom. As I reviewed my audiotaped interview with Avria's

mother, I was struck by the number of times that she used the word 'value'. Clearly,

Avria's parents had consciously established some values that permeated the family. For

example, mom said that as a family they had decided early on with Avria's one-year

older sister that there would be books in every room, including the bathroom. The

parents read to Avria and her sister beginning when they were infants and toddlers before

naptime as well as at other times. Although usually mom or dad would read out loud,

often on Saturdays there would be 'silent reading' time where the entire family would

gather in the living room to quietly read. Board games, alphabet puzzles, card games and

word games in the car were also encouraged. In addition, mom helped Avria to initially

draw and then write thank you notes. Bible stories were another source of enjoyment

because of the importance of establishing a family value of knowing the 'word of God'.

As a result of what mom had learned from volunteering in her older daughter's first

grade classroom, she had made a conscious effort with Avria to help her to 'sound out

words'. This was done particularly when Avria asked how to spell words. Over the

summer after kindergarten, Avria continued to keep a journal of her summer activities.

She had brought it to grade one to share with her classroom teachers and me. All of this

was done to foster a love of learning. Avria's mom continued to volunteer in both

classes. She shared with me that she had noticed that many of the children who were

struggling with reading and writing had a great difficulty in 'focusing' or paying

attention. Since there were limited opportunities for one-on-one with children, she felt

that some of these children were especially missing out if they did not even get this one-

on-one time with their parents at home. She also mentioned that the classroom and

schools were a great source for exposing children to a variety of environmental print.

She concluded by stating that peers could provide some competition and encouragement.

For example, she had noticed that when one child was struggling with a book, another

child had motivated and helped her to continue to read. I got the sense that she believed

that both the home and school environment had something to offer Avria.

<u>Belinda: 'The Wanderer'</u>

In May, Belinda was making menus for the kindergarten play corner featuring

Smitty's Restaurant. Pointing to the sign at the entrance, she stopped to ask me, "Does

that say Smitty's ?'" [field note entry 19/05/00]. On this same day, Eleanor saw that

Belinda was beginning to write a menu and asked her how she was going to spell all the

words. Belinda quickly suggested that "you could write it on a piece of paper and I can

copy them" [field note entry 19/05/99]. If I had concentrated only on the journal writing

times, I would have missed Belinda's independent literacy explorations. She was often

seen on her own or sometimes with others making invitations, greeting cards and the

menus she made for Smitty's restaurant. I have called Belinda 'the wanderer' because

the first impression that I had of her was wandering around the classroom. This

wandering was most evident when it came time to choose a book during book time on the

carpet. She would often wander around looking to see what books other children were exploring. When it was her turn to sit on the special sofa, she would often sit on it looking around without any book. The teachers allowed this to a point but after a while would suggest to her that she find a book to look at. Most often, Belinda would look at a book by herself.

When it came time to write in her journal, she often needed to be reminded and encouraged to come and do her journal writing. Belinda was a reluctant writer and drawer at the journal writing center. However, once she was there she did try with encouragement to draw or write something. The importance of her home, a teepee for Indian people, and a hospital was a recurring theme in her illustrations and writing as shown in Figure 49. For Belinda, writing had to be purposeful which was most clearly evident during her independent spontaneous explorations. She was a very practical child.

Figure 49. Writing needed to be purposeful.

At one point in kindergarten, Eleanor decided to introduce an old typewriter with paper. She thought that some children might enjoy using this to practice their writing. Belinda was the first one there [field note entry 26/04/99]. She began by typing the alphabet and then went on to copy stories out of books. She later did some invitations. The typewriter was a useful tool for Belinda. Other examples of the importance of a purpose as a motivating factor came out particularly in the following two instances. Belinda and two other girls during play centers decided to make a big book to remember one of these girls who was moving away. This was obviously very motivating to all three girls and it was also one of the few times that Belinda worked on a project together with others. The two girls were going to give the book to the girl who was moving away. They continued on it for the next couple of weeks. The big book consisted of classroom memories. For Belinda, this need to have a purpose to the activity continued on in grade one.

During my one-on-one interview in April of her kindergarten year, Belinda again showed her need for purpose as a motivating factor in her literacy development. In her responses to questions 5, 6 and 7 as to why people write, she said, "to go to birthdays, to write happy birthday, to do jobs" and a sentence is "when you're done writing something" [interview protocol 29/04/99]. The interview also highlighted the difficulty Belinda had with the sound/letter match. Writing and using her name, she could not tell me what sound the individual letters made. She also told me that she did not know how to write any words on her own. During her journal writing, she needed a lot of help from the teacher to make this connection. When I asked her at the end of the interview to read

what she had written in her journal, she started everything with 'This is'. She rarely attended to the print cues and instead told a brief story starting with 'This is'.

The other kindergarten activity that Belinda enjoyed was the various building blocks. She was particularly attracted to the colored ones. Most often she would build something on her own. One day she took her inspiration from the chrysalis that had turned into beautiful Monarch butterflies. On that day we had gone outside to let the butterflies go. Belinda chose to make a large colorful butterfly with the wooden shape blocks. She used a combination of triangles, squares, circles and rectangles to build it on the floor. I never saw her at the computer center. She did sometimes paint at the painting center.

<u>Grade One</u>

Belinda continued her 'wandering' into grade one. I cannot believe the number of times that I made this observation in my field notes. She now spent first thing in the morning when the class had free time wandering around rather than selecting an activity on her own or joining another group. The two classroom teachers made the observation that Belinda needed to increase her independence during free choice activities. Particularly, during book time, she would seek out an adult, sometimes myself, to read a book. She usually chose a difficult book so that the adult would have to read to her. I was aware of the need to encourage her independence so that when she brought a book on "Cats" I challenged her to find all the words that she knew. We began with the title of the book, "Cats". Cooperative learning with peers is an important skill and one that the teachers were building. Perhaps, her wandering was not really a sign of disinterest but

more a manifestation that Belinda often did not know how to approach and engage her peers. Her mom's insights during our interview were helpful in this area.

For reading and writing, Belinda was in Jill's group. Because Jill had decided not to continue with the journal writing, I cannot evaluate what Belinda's progress might have been. However, I do have a few samples that coupled with her work in learning to read using Chime-in-Poems gives me some clues. In October and November, she did write two sentences. This was progress from kindergarten. She continued to expand her sight words and to strengthen her sound/symbol recognition. She seemed to be struggling with the recall of letters and their sounds that inhibited her ability to feel confident. However, spontaneously during free time, Belinda wrote a note to a boy in her class as seen in Figure 50. I did not see her struggle with writing the note. On another

Figure 50. Writing to a friend.

occasion, I saw Belinda writing a note at the table by herself. She began by writing her address and drawing a picture. She was writing a note to her friend on her home street who was moving away. Belinda was visibly crying as she wrote it [field note entry 22/10/99]. These uses of literacy skills were clearly motivating for her.

By the middle of November, I noticed that Belinda seemed to be more involved in group work. I particularly observed how she was participating during group readings with Jill using their Chime-in-Poems. For example, in October she looked like she was reading the following poem from memory in unison with the class [field note entry 20/10/99].

My baby takes his bath in a sink

Full of soapy bubbles of pink.

Belinda was not even looking up at the pocket chart at the words that Jill was cueing with her magic wand. She then had trouble cutting and pasting the poem correctly at her table. They were supposed to be working from memory. This instance was in direct contrast to what happened next month. Jill had put one of the poems that the children had already learned. After reading it together as well as calling on individual children. Jill had the children close their eyes. She would then remove one of the words and the children were challenged to figure out the missing word. Belinda was reading well with the group. She guessed most of the words that Jill had removed [field note entry 02/11/99]. All in all, she seemed more engaged in the activity. At about this time, she became particularly interested in numbers. She decided one day during her free time to partially copy and partially write in the number chart from 1-100. This seemed

particularly motivating to Belinda as I watched her challenge herself to first write as many of the numbers that she already knew. She worked on this for the rest of the week. Belinda was growing in her use of various symbol systems from numbers to letters.

Interview with mom. Belinda's mom corroborated my observations of her daughter as a child who needed more self-confidence, both knowing how to interact with peers and applying her literacy knowledge [interview protocol 17/09/99, counter 299]. Mom shared with me that because Belinda is a perfectionist, she becomes easily frustrated and quickly reverts to crying if she does not know how to do it. For example, one evening at home Belinda had chosen to do a workbook over being read a story. However, as soon as she ran into something that she did not know, she became frustrated and cried [interview protocol, counter 299]. Mom elaborated on this incident by saying that "Belinda has her own way of thinking of how to do things" [interview protocol, counter 312]. "She's a logical child . . . . She can logically figure out the solution to the problem" [counter 352]. Later as I reflected on this comment, I kept thinking of how this contradicted what I had observed in the classroom.

Belinda did not know how to approach her peers, yet her mother emphatically stated that "she wants to be accepted so bad" [interview protocol, counter 387]. Also, she certainly did not use her literacy knowledge to logically figure out how to write and read. On many occasions, Belinda did not want to write and often did not use her literacy skills to her advantage. However, her mother may be right in that unless Belinda saw it as perfect, she would not attempt it. Belinda's sometimes unrealistic expectations were clearly hindering her growth in literacy and her relationships with her peers.

James: 'A Boy Who Knows the Rules'

I caught James and another boy whom he often spent time with, reading a

magazine on snakes. This is the conversation that I overheard [field note entry 16/03/99].

OB (other boy): They shed skin.

James: Do you want to lay down? (They both lay down).

James: It looks like this is going to bite his foot. I like all the pages but my

favorite one is that one (pointing to a snake eating a baby owl, James continues by

using a finger to follow the words).

OB: No, don't eat him.

James: Have you seen a real one?

OB: No, not really.

These two boys could often be seen together absorbed in conversations about books on

wild animals and dinosaurs. At times, another boy would join them to read as well.

James began his kindergarten journal writing by printing his first and last name.

He never needed the practice, as he came into kindergarten knowing how to write his

name. He also began by copying the month of January. Clearly, James was building a

repertoire of sight words in addition to honing his knowledge of sound/symbol

relationships. By the middle of January, he was connecting his words with the word

'and' when he wrote "Meandmsomn" (me and my snowman). He drew a self-portrait of

him standing beside a larger portrait [journal entry 19/01/99]. He continued to begin his

journal by drawing first. James usually worked quietly on his own without talking to

anyone at the journal table. By the end of January, he was writing a sentence beginning

with 'This is'. He continued to use the 'This is' stem until the end of the year. 1 am sure

that he knew how to write 'This is' yet he would often copy it from the previous week's

work. However, he continued to extend his repertoire of words as shown in Figure 51

when he tried to write a fairly difficult word 'krerr' (creature). In addition, he continued

to learn about our language's conventions. In the above example, James told me that the

word "ski is a short word and probably has 3 letters" [field note entry 26/04/99]. On

Figure 51. 'Krerr' (creature)--Extending his repertoire of words.

March 9, he told me that he put a period at the end of the sentence.

In my interviews with all the kindergarten children, James was one of the children

who made a connection between writing and reading. He responded to question number

5 about why people write by saying, "to learn stuff, to learn to read and to read what's

going on far away, to help practice your own words and sounds" [field note entry

30/04/99]. James was one of the few children who could tell me what the rules or

conventions were such as when he told me that "some letters are silent" [interview

protocol, question # 8, 30/04/99]. He also answered my question about what is a word (interview protocol question 4D) by confidently saying, "letters put together make a word because letters make sounds" [field note entry 30/04/99]. With his knowledge of rules and conventions, I found it interesting that he never wrote about animals or dinosaurs even though he spent most of his book time reading abut them. However, he did write about things that he liked to do such as playing soccer, skiing, and his interest in fighter planes, and at times the science displays on the journal table.

James' other major interest was building with Lego and wooden blocks. He and the same boy that he had shared so many books with would often build space stations with various fighter planes. At times, other boys joined them. One could tell that James really became involved in the play as he flew his hand held fighter plane destroying other fighter planes. This was probably his favorite playtime activity. At other times, he would play at the sand table or computer. I never saw him at creative centers making crafts or engaging in some of the spontaneous letter and invitations writing that some of the girls were doing. James did enjoy books.

During book time, he would quickly go over and pick one of his favorite nature books or dinosaur books. It was not so much that James was reading it as he was discussing it with his buddy as the introductory conversation illustrates. However, on the occasions that I did hear him read, he was making amazing progress. During buddy reading time, James was always ready with his books and would enthusiastically meet with his reading buddy, a boy from grade 4, to read and discuss animals or dinosaurs. I guess you might say that he had found a kindred spirit.

<u>Grade One</u>

James continued to attend well during class discussions. Because he is such a quiet child, he does not readily engage in conversations or offer ideas. With encouragement from the teachers, he was beginning to share his ideas more often. He was also a polite, methodical boy who printed neatly, cleaned up after himself, and was generally respectful of others. The teachers noted his excellent coordination and physical skills in physical education where he clearly demonstrated great sportsmanship. He was a teacher's dream to teach. James was already reading fluently and confidently and now needed to push himself as a writer.

He began grade one continuing to write using 'This is' as seen in Figure 52. Very quickly, James started to expand his repertoire of stories. His favorite

<u>Figure 52</u>. Using a familiar form—'This is',

playmate was still the boy from kindergarten who had shared so many hours of books on wild animals and dinosaurs. His journal entry in October told about their playtime together at his home as seen in Figure 53. It was quite more elaborate than previous

Figure 53. Importance of playmates.

writings. By November, James was writing more confidently. The teachers commented

that he now needed to explore both fiction and non-fiction. Because of his interest in

facts and non-fiction books, he probably would really need support in writing this type of

material. Although James had been exposed to lots of fiction with the classroom story

readings, he always chose non-fiction to read.

Interview with mom. James' mom began the interview by emphasizing that she

was a 'stay at home mom'. I am mentioning this because this emphasis permeated the

interview. She went on to say that a significant adult is not a caregiver or someone at a

daycare. As a result of staying at home, she and her husband had chosen to be "adults in

conversation" with their children [interviews protocol 29/09/99, counter 193]. They had

watched very little TV, had done puzzles, read, and made games out of reading by

highlighting the connection between letters and sounds. By age four, this connection between letters and sounds was a "given for James" [counter 233].

James was and is more serious than his one-year older sister. Although mom felt that both siblings were exposed to the same influences, James had learned to read and write faster even though he did not seem as interested as his sister did when he was a toddler. Perhaps this was due to his incredible memory and sense of comprehension. In addition to the home activities, mom had taken James to the library to pick favorite books. She felt that he was not interested in the library group story readings because of the problem behaviors of other children. James is by nature on the quiet side and not as rambunctious as other boys are. James was also building a personal library at home and the Dr. Seuss books had been some of his favorites.

James' mom ended the interview by saying that she really did not know why some children had trouble learning. Perhaps it had something to do with attention span. Earlier on she had provided some insight when she talked about the importance of one-on-one time with children at home. She had really noticed this during the time that she had done some baby-sitting. Children really benefited from individual attention which is perhaps one of the reasons that she was a stay at home mom.

Jackie: 'Delighting in Exploring the Written Word'

Jackie begins her journal writing session by telling another girl at the table, a friend of hers, that she has to draw with crayons not pencils. Jackie begins by sub-vocalizing "Todoe" (Today). She then asks the other girl, "How do you spell your name?" The girl spells her name for Jackie. Jackie rereads what she has written [field note entry,

30/03/99]. Sub-vocalizing and rereading are strategies that she often uses in her writing.

After she has finished writing her sentence as seen in Figure 54, she says, "Now, I can

draw" [field note entry, 30/03/99; video counter 00:29:06].
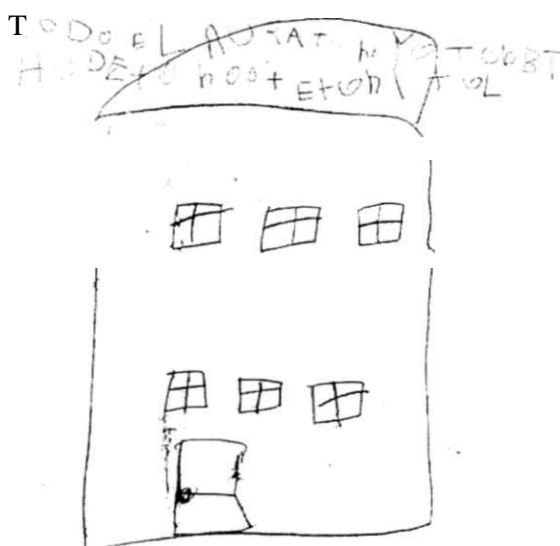
Figure 54. Words came first.

Jackie was also one of the few children who began her journal writing by printing

her first name as well as the date. She did not require much practice to write her last

name when it came time to practice her name writing. Most notably, she thought of an

interesting variety of topics to explore in her writing. Unlike most of the other children,

she did not really concentrate on one way of writing such as using the 'This is' stem or

repeating words. She wrote about going to the park with her mother, going tobogganing

with friends, having sleepovers, as well as writing about some class activities such as the

butterflies and stringing beads. Generally, Jackie concentrated her efforts on the

letter/sound symbols with only peripheral attention to her illustrations. She spent very

little time on her drawings but a great deal of time writing, reading and re-reading her writing. All in all, she seemed to sit down ready to write unlike many of the other children who would sit for five minutes and then tell you that they did not know what to write or draw.

Furthermore, Jackie worked well in cooperative learning situations. She enjoyed shared reading experiences such as the free book time and reading buddies. She was generally a responsible, hard working student who took pride in doing her work. During group discussions, Jackie was attentive and contributed to the discussions. An example of this was during one journal writing session in May. Jackie wrote, "The butterflies emerged" as seen in Figure 55. She told me that she had used the word emerged
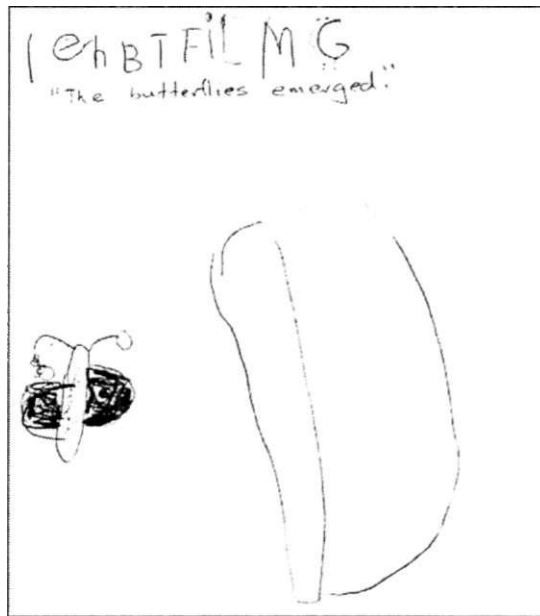
Figure 55. The emergent nature of writers and butterflies.

because Eleanor the classroom teacher had been using that word in the class's discussions on the chrysalis 'emerging' into a butterfly [field note entry 25/05/99]. As educators, we never know how or when ideas will come together or transfer as unique personal repertoires. She repeated the sentence about 'emerging butterflies' the following week. Jackie also helped another boy at her journal writing table to spell the word "butterflies'" [field note entry 01/06/99].

Other kindergarten activities that Jackie enjoyed were the sand table, the creative centers using paints and modeling clay, building blocks and Lego as well as the reading center with books on tapes complete with headphones. I rarely saw her at the computers. Being very tuned into words and obviously delighting in her new found reading and writing skills, Jackie took every opportunity to read and write. She had taken an above average, about twenty take-home books. She was also one of the few children who consistently took advantage of the book tapes. I would often see her prompting another child when to turn the page correctly since there were two headphones and room for two children. Her delight in the written word spilled over in all areas including artwork. The children had finished studying feelings with Susan the student teacher and were completing a class mural on feelings. I found Jackie busily illustrating what she had learned about feelings. She finished her mural by writing the words angry, sad and happy.

As I observed Jackie writing for the last time in kindergarten, I made the following note about her. Jackie seemed to differentiate between words as she read and re-read her writing. However, I wondered how she differentiated between the words because they

ran into each other and were difficult for me to differentiate at times [field note entry 11/07/99]. On another occasion, she made a comment about the letters and words that she had written. She began by writing, often using her pencil to reread what she had written while subvocalizing. After writing what looked like a string of letters rather than letters or words with spaces, she said to the teacher, "I'm not sure that the letters mean something" [videotape entry 23/03/99; counter 1:00:13]. She then drew a picture of her dad on a mountain. For these reasons, I made a note to continue to observe her into grade one to see what had changed.

Grade One

Jackie continued her 'delight in the written word' into grade one. At the beginning of September, I overheard her asking one of the teachers, "Why didn't we write today?" [field note entry 01/09/99]. Even during her mathematics class with Jill that day, Jackie responded to Jill's question about what kind of work math is by saying, "Math is pluses like 1 + 1 . . . . Use words" [field note entry 01/09/99]. She continued to enjoy listening centers with books on tapes and headphones. She was usually one of the first ones to complete the activities at the listening center. Jackie was in Jill's group for language arts.

At first, Jackie did not appear to attend well to the group instruction using Chime-in-Poems. I noticed this because overall she was a very conscientious student and was not easily distracted. As I observed how she was doing over several days, I concluded that for Jackie the tapping or clapping of their hands to get the rhythm of the poem was distracting her from actually paying attention to the words on the flip chart. For other

children it seemed to be working. Perhaps, it was because she already had a very good understanding about sound/letter relationships. Also, clapping and tapping takes coordination that perhaps for Jackie was more difficult than for other children. For this reason, I followed up my observation at the group table activity based on this poem. She had to cut out the lines of the poem and glue them in order from memory. She had no difficulty doing this rather quickly and then successfully read the poem to me using her finger to cue the words so that I could verify in fact that she was aware of where a word began and ended.

Unlike many of the children in Jill's group, Jackie continued enthusiastically with her journal writing. In fact, she had made progress from the end of kindergarten. She was now spacing her words. I noticed that she was using her left index finger to help her space. I am not sure if this is a strategy that she came up by herself or if she got some help. As seen in Figure 56, Jackie continued to write about activities she was enjoying with family and friends. Her sight word vocabulary was growing as well as strategies for

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 . WCYhP^

Ifoh .... KfrhfV   K;   *U* (4 ***drhtu***

....W   *i*   .if..._:_

Figure 56. Family and friends figure prominently in her writing.

decoding unfamiliar words. The MacCracken spelling that both teachers were doing with the students seemed to be particularly helpful to Jackie in fine tuning her attention to the position of consonant sounds. For example, she would have to listen to the word "mat" and note where the *ImJ* sound was heard and the corresponding letter positioned on a dashed line.

Interview with mom. The classroom teachers had let me know that Jackie's morn was very quiet and probably would not talk much. Although this was the shortest interview with a parent, she had some valuable insights. As a result of Jackie's older brother's lack of motivation to read, Jackie's mom was concerned that this would not happen with Jackie. Therefore, as soon as Jackie was about two years old, her mom began to teach her the alphabet and play sounding and rhyming games. Very early on, Jackie showed an interest in writing. For example, by age five, she would repeatedly write the alphabet as well as practice eventually printing words such as "the", "me" and "at". Even with her drawings, mom said that she would put letters around the pictures. No wonder Jackie delighted in exploring the written word. She had begun her voyage as a toddler and writing had grown into a passion.

Carol: 'Moving from Easily Frustrated to More Confident'

Carol was a quiet, thoughtful child who was easily frustrated with reading and writing in kindergarten. On the other hand, she emerged a more confident learner in both independent and cooperative learning situations in grade one. During kindergarten, I approached Carol as she was working at a play center making a feeling book. When I asked her about her "Happy Feeling" book and in particular one of the pages that she was

working on, she answered, "I don't know how to write. It doesn't say anything." [field note entry 25/03/99]. This statement was characteristic of how she portrayed herself as a writer and reader. There was a noticeable difference by the beginning of grade one. This section on Carol's literacy voyage captures this transition.

Carol began writing in her journal at the beginning of January by writing her name as well as what looked to be other people's names. In the middle of January, she wrote what looked like a list combining numbers and letters. At the end of January, the class had been studying various hats and the associated occupations. Carol wrote her name and then illustrated and wrote "pompom hat" as seen in Figure 57.

Figure 57. Importance of self-portraits.

A self-portrait continued to figure prominently in Carol's journal writing well into March. At the beginning of February, she began gaining some confidence in relating the sounds to the letters. With some help from her teacher, Carol guessed the letter 'c' for

the *I si* sound in sun [teacher's journal entry 11/02/99]. The following week, she labeled

her illustration of a house with the word "HAS' for house [journal entry 18/02/99]. With

continued teacher support at the journal writing center, Carol was able to identify the

sounds and letters in Easter and wrote 'EST' [journal entry 08/03/99]. For the next two

months, Carol seemed to stop working at making letter/sound connections and chose to

copy environmental print. She copied some of the signs such as 'Amazing Bottles',

'Butterfly', and 'Caterpillar'. By the end of May, she knew how to write her last name

which she proudly wrote in May [field note entry 10/05/99]. At this time, Carol also

began to add her family members" names in her journal writing. Because of

confidentiality issues, I cannot provide an example of this progress. In addition, Carol

was copying the 'This is' stem, as seen in Figure 58, that the teachers had provided as a
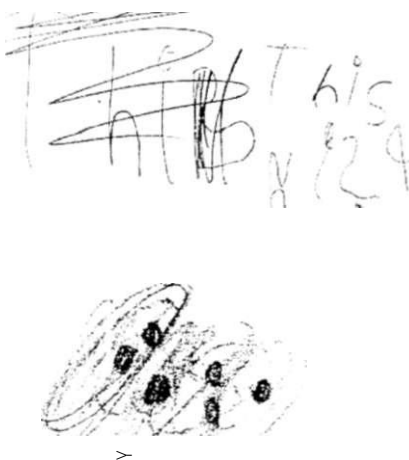
Figure 58. Continued interest in people's names.

means to get some of the children to move beyond the level of single words if they

wanted to. Until the end of kindergarten, Carol concentrated on her interest in people's

names and added the names of some of her classmates to her repertoire. To juxtapose

my evaluation of Carol's literacy development, I had access to the children's report cards. I noticed that in November of her kindergarten year before I had met Carol, Eleanor had written that quite spontaneously Carol and several other children have been using their emerging literacy skills to create such interesting items as a calendar of birthday celebrations as well as artwork. Clearly, journal writing did not fulfill her need to perhaps be more meaningful using her newfound skills.

Carol seemed to prefer the company of boys rather than girls in both kindergarten and grade one. Two of her male friends also lived close by which seemed to consolidate their relationship in class. Carol was known as the 'Queen of Number Crunchers', one of the computer games. I rarely saw any other girl at the classroom computers. It was clear from the friendly competitions that she was the one to beat. She also enjoyed building with Lego and blocks during free playtime in the morning. Although, she would at times be seen at the creative centers doing crafts, more often than not she would be at computers or building with blocks with the boys. However, Carol did enjoy painting and would put her name on the waiting list for the paint easel.

Towards the end of kindergarten, her mom confided in us that Carol absolutely refused to read the take-home books. The idea behind the books was to give more opportunities for the children to share easy reading books with parents and siblings. It was meant to be an enjoyable experience and hopefully a continuation of what was already occurring at home and in the classroom. Eleanor approached me about this and I offered to make an opportunity for Carol to read to me. By this time, I was always with the children. They were now used to me working with them at the journal writing table.

As a result, they were used to me asking them questions. I waited until Carol spoke to me about something else. I was somewhat surprised by her refusal to read with me. Carol emphatically told me that she did not want to read. Further explorations did not yield what her concerns might be. I decided to explore this behavior pattern during my interview with her mother in grade one. In addition, I looked for clues from my interview with Carol.

Grade One

Carol continued to enjoy building blocks during free playtime. As I had noticed in kindergarten, she preferred the company of boys. Perhaps her choice of boys was not so much that they were boys as much as she seemed to enjoy the activities that many of the boys did, namely blocks and computers.

Probably what was most noticeable right from the start of grade one was her renewed interest in both reading and writing. She was one of the few students who immediately began writing in her journal without any coaxing. As shown in Figure 59,
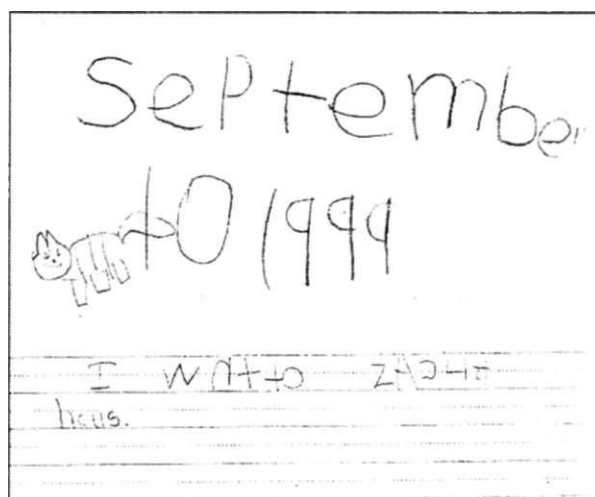
Figure 59. Renewed interest in writing and reading.

Carol clearly wrote the date and began writing a sentence. You may recall that she had spent the last three months of kindergarten doing very little writing on her own and towards the end primarily focusing on environmental print. The following week she again quickly got down to work, illustrated a whale and wrote the following information in Figure 60. At the same time as she was enjoying using her writing skills, Carol was
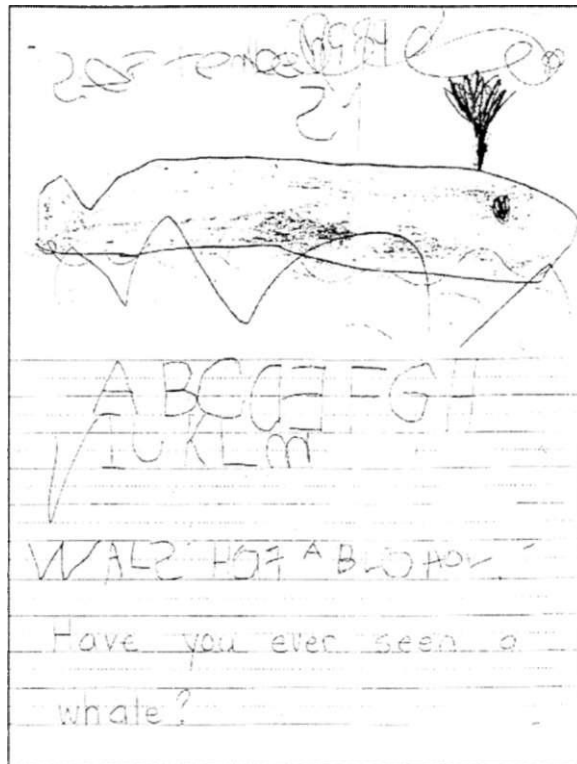
Figure 60. Growing as a writer and reader.

improving her reading. She no longer seemed reluctant to read out loud as she had in kindergarten. Her confidence as a writer and reader was growing daily. On several occasions. I had Carol read her Chime-in-Poems to me. It was great to see how confidently, using appropriate finger cueing, she had read her "What is Red?" poem to her teacher Jill. I think that the following comments from her teachers on her November

report card capture the essence of Carol's growing confidence. "Carol approaches

independent learning situations with confidence". She is "building a strong foundation of

early reading skills and enjoys shared reading experiences" [teacher's comments in report

card]. As early as the end of September, Carol was "busily sounding out letters" [field

note entry 22/09/99] as she wrote "We went up the hill" in her journal in Figure 61. I

have purposefully included Carol's journal entries in greater detail than perhaps

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-.......-   "it??"   *ilk*

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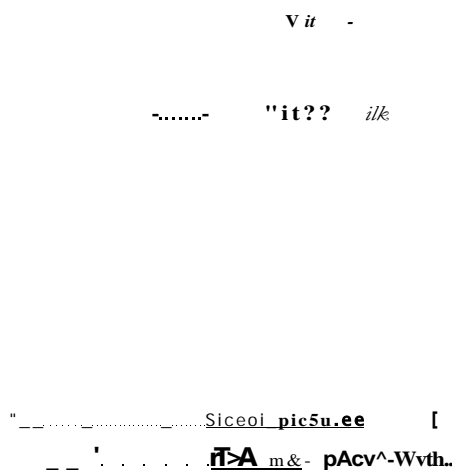
Figure 61. "Busily sounding out letters' while writing.

some of the other children to show the amazing progress she was making in a relatively

short amount of time. At about the same time, I noticed that one day Carol had

spontaneously decided to make up a class list of who was going to use the computer and

in what order. As shown in Figure 62, Carol had done a commendable

job and perhaps had finally found purpose in her newfound literacy skills.

. . . . .. v e / f   f c x h s m   / n

C00   I V n   **toh** T^oog

Figure 62. Using the list to organize the world.

Interview with mom. Carol's mom began our interview by focusing on what had

happened in kindergarten with regards to reading. As I had also previously mentioned,

Carol had been reluctant to read. Now at the beginning of grade one, Carol was enjoying

reading, particularly predictable books. Mom mentioned that most of the time Carol

would bring the books to her and she would read for 20-30 minutes at a time. Naturally,

mom's question to me was what had changed over the summer? Before I could answer,

she provided some insights.

Mom suggested that there were a number of reasons why Carol was experiencing

'success' over the summer and now. First, mom had decided to quit her job and started

working at home. In her words, "my two children seem to feel more secure" [audiotape

entry, 15/10/99, counter 117]. It is as if she said, "Mom, is home. It's OK." [counter

120]. Also, they now sat down together and did homework as a family with Carol's

younger sister. In the past, mom had not consciously done anything to promote literacy

in the home. Overall, the family had made a decision to slow things down because they felt that their family life was too chaotic. Coupled with this family change, mom had decided the previous year when Carol was reluctant to read to make some changes.

Mom shared with me that she had been a reluctant reader and when she had noticed this in her daughter, she wanted to help Carol. Mom felt that this reluctance was part of a bigger picture in that Carol generally was not a risk-taker. She wanted to help Carol to change. So she started to verbalize out loud when she did not know something by saying things such as 'I don't know how this is going to turn out. Let's try it.' She also talked about the role of mistakes and practice as learning experiences. Now, when they read together, mom would say things like "Try it. See what it sounds like." [audiotape entry 15/10/99, counter 167].

This corroborates what I had been observing not only with Carol, but also with other children, that risk-taking is important in literacy development. It seems to have made a difference in Carol's confidence to try using her strategies. Ultimately, Carol had to 'trust herself to take risks.

Kevin: 'Infectious Delight'

One kindergarten morning. I saw Kevin along with the other children using their 'magic finger' (index finger) to trace a lower case letter 'g' in the air. As the teacher was instructing the children to begin away from the tummy, I heard Kevin whisper "it's like an a without the tail." [field note entry 24/02/99]. This was followed by a grin that stretched from 'ear to ear'. Kevin exuded an 'infectious delight' in the classroom.

Kevin would often bounce into class with a big smile and would get down to the business of being in kindergarten. He usually began his morning by playing with Lego, other building blocks, or dramatizing a fighting scene using flying Lego aircraft with sound effects. Although he had a few boys with whom he played, he just as often would "create a role for himself... or adapt the play to fit in with the other participants*' [Susan's journal entry 10/03/99]. In other words, he fit in wherever he chose to go.

Compared to many of the other boys, Kevin had a variety of interests. He enjoyed doing crafts, painting, playing at the sand table, and playing computer games with both boys and girls. He did not need a second invitation to get a book during book time. I usually found him imitating reading behaviors such as cueing with his finger from left to right and at times reciting the alphabet. The Mr. Book series was probably his favorite. Like many of the other children he was not reading conventionally but was obviously delighting in exploring books.

When it came to journal writing time, Kevin often needed a couple of invitations to do his writing. At first, I was not convinced that it was because he did not want to write. Rather it seemed that it was because he seemed to delight in whatever he was doing at the time. More often than not however, he did his illustration and said that he was finished until he was prompted to write something. If anything, the amount of writing decreased over time. In January, he had begun his journal writing by printing his name and copying January. In addition, he had included a list of family member's names with mom at the bottom of the list. He continued to write the word mom on his own almost every week. By the end of January, a focus on a tent or his house became a recurring theme. What

was interesting was that the tent and house were in the shape of a triangle.   He wrote

"tnt" for tent all by himself as shown in Figure 63.
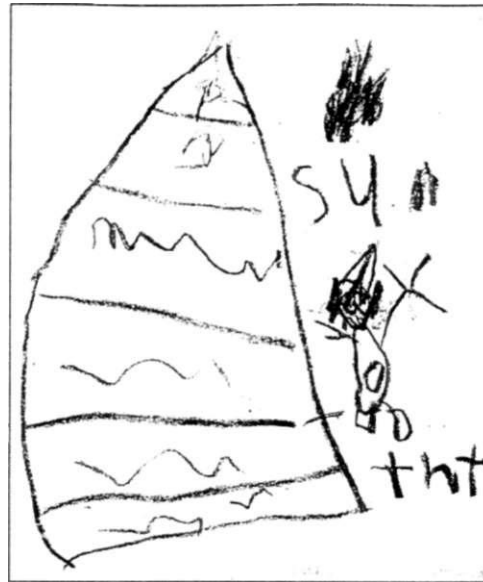
Figure 63. "Tnts" and other homes.

In Figure 64, we can see that Kevin had obviously become fascinated by the

triangular shape and on January 28 labeled his triangle "Mr. Triangle". Kevin
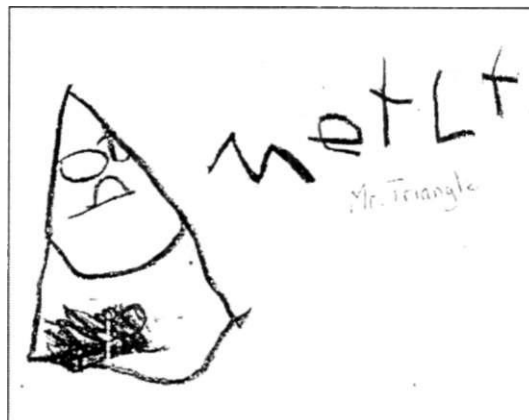
Figure 64. "Mr. Triangle".

continued to do simple illustrations that he labeled with single words. His knowledge of beginning and end consonant sounds continued to grow. By the middle of April, he started to occasionally use the word "and" to connect two words. Kevin arrived at the journal writing table in April and colored first and then said that he was finished. Susan, the student teacher, then reminded him that he had to write something and helped him. She said the words slowly and Kevin wrote the letter sounds that he heard. As shown in Figure 65, his rendering of the word popsicles was particularly well done. Kevin
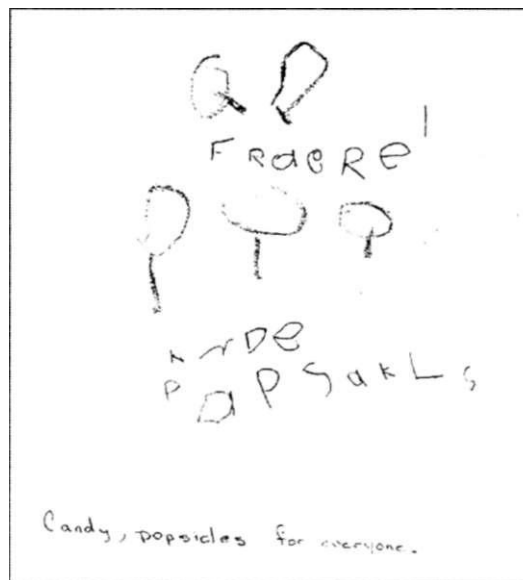
 Figure 65. "Papsakls" (popsicles) and other delights.

continued with teacher support to work on his letter/sound connections. By May, he knew that race car was two words [field note entry in his journal 20/05/99] and in June wrote his first sentence as shown in Figure 66. The teacher wrote that Kevin had worked all by himself to write this sentence.

<u>Figure 66</u>. Writing more independently.

From my interview with Kevin on May 4, 1 found that his phonemic awareness was growing as I had seen it grow in his writing. He had chosen to write the words "mom" and "dad" for his words that he knew. He then successfully broke the word "mom" into the three phonemes *Iml,* /o/, and *Iml.* Not once, however, did Kevin recognize the word "mom" which he had clearly written on many occasions in his journal [interview protocol, question #9]. He actually read very little correctly out of his journal. I think that perhaps Kevin at present was more of a sight-reader and rarely made the letter/sound connections. For example, for the word "sea" which he had written, he said the word "waves", probably taking his cue from his illustration. If he was really attempting to read what he had written, he would have at the very least made the /s/ sound. Kevin had a good repertoire of initial consonant sounds and knew this one. This same inference extends to the word "mom" which he clearly knew how to write on several occasions and had successfully written and broken down for me at the beginning of the interview. The

word "mom" was neither part of his sight word vocabulary nor was he applying his skills to breaking up the sounds in "mom".

Children such as Kevin may be growing in literacy skills that they do not necessarily apply conventionally or consistently. However, such insights cue the teacher to perhaps spend more time on one aspect over another. Even his language around his writing was indicative. He read his January 7 journal entry by saying, "I just drew my ABCs". Perhaps he meant that he had printed them, perhaps not. He had also clearly written (or copied) January that he told me was part of "drawing his ABCs".

Grade One

In September, I overheard Kevin tapping out the words to the Chime-in-Poem "Red" along with the rest of the class. However, he was barely reading along. The same as Jackie in his group, Kevin seemed to have difficulty doing both the action and the reading. However, he quickly got down to work as he wrote his name on the folder that was going to hold the Chime-in-Poems. He then went on his own to the 'not finished' pile to get the alphabet game and was playing it on his own. As Kevin rolled the alphabet die, he seemed to be thinking about the letter to be written. The alphabet was in lower case letters and as part of the game, the children were expected to write the corresponding upper case letter. Kevin was having difficulty with the letter "q". As I walked around the class, he asked me about the letter. He had forgotten the name of the letter "q" and asked me what it was. I encouraged him to go back and tell me out loud the alphabet. He came to "q" and knew it but still did not know how to write the upper case one. I showed him how. Kevin confided in me that "this was hard" [field note entry 07/09/99].

The next day I overheard Kevin telling Jill his teacher that he was ready to read the poem "Red" to her. Before reading the poem, he was to glue the strips with the lines of the poem in order on his sheet. I noticed that his poem strips were not in the correct order. Kevin realized as soon as he started reading the poem to Jill that he had the poem out of sequence. This took a couple of attempts as he tried to recall the poem from memory'. Kevin continued to find these types of sequencing activities difficult compared to other children in this study. For example, in November, they were studying "I can sing a rainbow". The children after having read the poem many times together with Jill as well as having done activities together were then expected to do the activity on their own on paper. In this case, the children had been practicing identifying words that Jill removed from the poem. The children then worked on the same poem on a sheet with words missing. The children tried to figure out which words were missing. Many of the children kept re-reading the poem. Kevin continued to mix up the words and never did figure out the activity. I also observed that he was not hearing or understanding end consonant sounds when Jill did MacCracken spelling with her group. For example, Kevin missed hearing and/or identifying the letter "f' in the word 'self and the letter "m" in the word 'form'.

Kevin began in September by writing a sentence after doing his illustration (see Figure 67). This grabbed my attention because Kevin had never written a sentence in kindergarten. This was significant growth over summer. Perhaps in part, Kevin had

Figure 67. Moving from words into sentences.

grown as a writer because he had kept a journal of illustrations and writing highlighting

places that he had visited over the summer. I have selected a few samples from his

journal to chart his growth (see Figure 68). Certainly, I cannot guarantee that the words
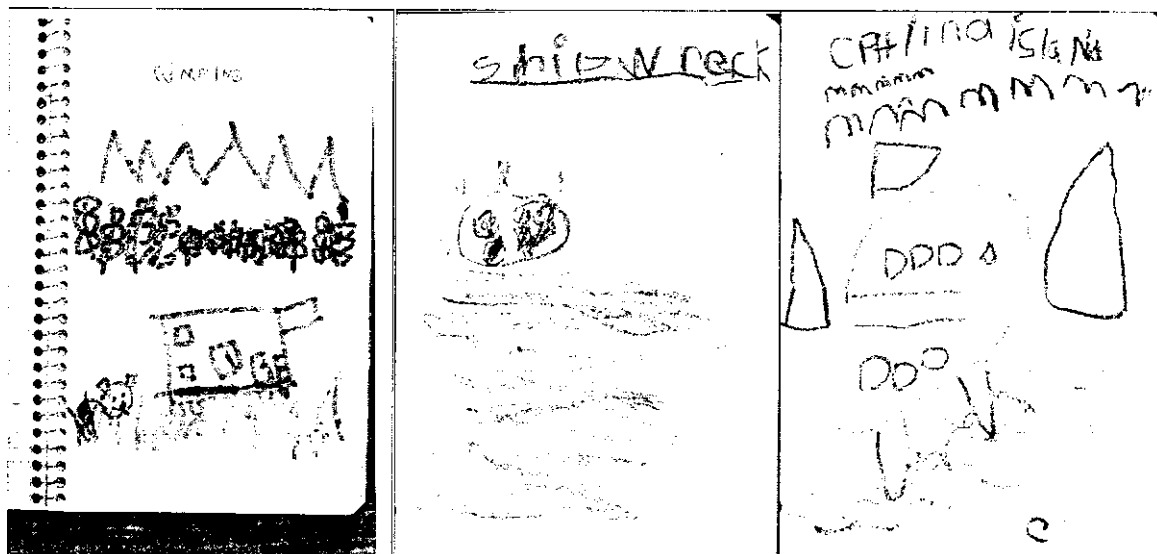
Figure 68. Highlighting summer holidays.

were not spelled out for Kevin. However, in the case of the first sample the word

camping is spelled 'kamping'. Neither is the last sentence conventionally written. I did

get a chance to talk to him about his summer journal. He told me that he had enjoyed doing it because "it helps people to read …. sounding it out is hard" [field note entry 22/11/99]. At this point, Jill had decided to emphasize MacCracken spelling and Chime-in-Poems, so Kevin did not return to journal writing until November. As seen in Figure 69, Kevin wrote a sentence about going to a hockey game. He was growing as a writer.

Figure 69. Growing as a writer.

At the end of November, as I was finishing up my research, I noticed that Kevin was singing the poem "I can sing a rainbow". As he came to the word "is", he self-monitored by breaking the two letters into *HI* and *I si* sounds. By self-correcting, Kevin figured out that the word was "is" [field note entry 22/11/99]. Self-correcting was now part of his repertoire of literacy skills.

Interview with mom. As the older of two children, Kevin had spent a great deal of time with adults, particularly his grandparents. His aunt and uncle had also played a

large role in his early childhood. As a result, she felt that he was unusually "hard on himself [interview, field note entry 04/11/99]. For example, she had noticed that Kevin's younger sister played more. Very early on, mom had spent time with Kevin playing rhyming games in the car, using the chalkboard and reading books. Unlike her daughter, Kevin had no interest in coloring or drawing.

Later in the interview, mom shared an interesting story about her son. The previous summer he had wanted to ride his bike. He had tried twice in the spring, had fallen down, and had given up quickly because he could not do it. The bike was put away. During the past summer, he had tried again and mom is convinced that if he had not ridden away the first or second time that he tried he probably would not have practiced. Mom said that, "depending on how hard it is . . . if it comes too hard to him, he doesn't work at it" [audiotape entry, 04/11/99, counter 00:61].

As we know, children have to work at becoming literate. Mom also mentioned that Kevin may be a "total perfectionist" [interview field note entry, 04/11/99]. She was referring to the fact that his writing had to be neat and he particularly disliked the word "scribbles". In addition, she had noticed that he became easily fatigued when writing at home. She asked about his grip on his pencil and what I thought of it. I told her that I would check on it but up to this point I had not noticed anything unusual as I had with some of the other children.

<u>Chapter Summary</u>

Eventually learning to write is learning to communicate without the aid of a present conversational partner and this makes new demands on novice writers. For example. Bereiter and Scardamalia and (1987) asserted that one of the greatest challenges for the novice writer is overcoming his dependency on a conversational partner. The "most elementary evidence of children's dependence on conversational input comes, however, from observing the effects of prompting children to continue, that is, to take another conversational turn" (p.61). Not surprisingly, prompting in their study as well as prompting by the teacher at the journal writing table in this study often extended the writing. It was not always a conversation per se but rather encouragement to continue to write that was appropriate to the child. In fact, Males (1996) proposed that "the conversational partner in responding to a speaker's speech provides an interpretation of that speech and in providing an interpretation it opens up that particular speech unit and the conversation as a whole to further development" (p.269). As a result, writing for young children is not a solitary activity as perhaps some adults envision. As adults we need to help children to view writing as another way to represent their world.

Families have an important role to play in their children's literacy development. Rogoff (1990) points out that parent/child interactions may be culturally driven as well as being quite dependent on the nature of the task at hand. Most of the parents in this study expressed how they assisted their child's interests and efforts. For example, Carol's mother quit her job to support her daughter's risk-taking in general, and reading specifically. When Abe was a toddler, his parents set up an art center for him to

encourage his imagination, and what an imagination it turned out to be. Jackie's mother did not want her to lack the motivation to read that her older son exhibited. As a result, as soon as Jackie was two years old, her mother began teaching her the alphabet and playing rhyming games. We know that there are no guarantees, only loving attempts by parents to do the best for their children. This certainly was the case in this study.

Chapter 8

Results and Discussion: Eight Children from Kindergarten to Grade One

In grade one, I shifted the study to focus more intensively on eight of the selected children whom I had met in kindergarten. The portraits of these children highlight the typical variability found in children's emergent literacy with some implications for why some children may find learning to write and read difficult. In so doing, I have tapped into children's often-tacit repertoire of knowledge about print as well as their often-tacit motives. This study may contribute to beginning to describe Vygotsky's 'unified historical line' of children's transformations of initially preconventional understandings into more conventional expressions of written language. These are understandings of sometimes seemingly "erratic, disjointed, and confused" written language (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 16). The portraits of the children that follow highlight some of these emerging understandings.

Portraits of the Children's Voices on their Literacy Voyages

Children from diverse backgrounds bring personal, interpretive frameworks to classrooms. Greene (1988) has argued that these differences in interpretive frameworks must become the foundation of our curricula. Although the particular kindergarten and grade one classes in this study are not particularly diverse culturally, the children represent a range of at times idiosyncratic literacy abilities. My emphasis on getting at children's often-tacit knowledge and motives is a move towards getting at these interpretive frameworks. In this way, we as educators give voice to children's experiences.

Abe. We met Abe drawing and composing his 'artistic delights' in kindergarten. The kindergarten teachers continued to build on his artistic strengths by encouraging him to write something about what he had illustrated. Abe made somewhat slow progress connecting the letters and sounds. Unlike many of the other children he still did not know his alphabet and would use the environmental print to help him locate the correct letter before he could even print it. However, as soon as Abe got some help with making the letter/sound connections he began to practice the sounds out loud. We saw this in Figure 33 in Chapter seven when he emphatically voiced the sound /p/ with his lips and wrote the letter 'p'. Abe was a gregarious, helpful child who at first did not seem to enjoy grade one.

Eleanor and Jill had decided to keep some of the elements that Eleanor had used in kindergarten in the grade one activities. Most of the children had been in Eleanor's morning and afternoon kindergarten classes. This was a natural way to keep some continuity and familiarity for the children. For example, the children were used to news time. Abe was used to news time, yet on several occasions I saw Abe fidgeting and not even trying to read or figure out the letters and words. Probably what concerned us most was Abe's lack of interest during the times he could be drawing. This in the end seemed to be a transition time for Abe and by November, he had settled in nicely and was making progress as a reader and writer. As Figure 39 in Chapter seven shows, part of his progress was as a result of the support that he received at home. Later, when I met with the teachers again at the end of grade one, we talked about Abe and the other children. Abe was writing pages of stories, building on his strong sense of oral storytelling. He

was reading at grade level and was now working on organizing his streams of ideas. Abe saw himself as a writer and a reader and as we know an enthusiastic artist.

Larry. Larry, unlike Abe, was never seen drawing or at the arts and crafts center. Probably the only time that Larry drew were his simple illustrations in his journal. However, Larry could always be seen at the computer playing such games as "Number Crunchers'". Larry continued to be an enigma. Very early into kindergarten, Eleanor observed how Larry was growing as a reader. By the time that I began this study in February of his kindergarten year, Larry already had an impressive sight vocabulary as well as great sound and letter recognition. With all these skills, he did not reflect his knowledge or strategies during journal writing time. He spent most of his time copying environmental print. This is a legitimate strategy but it does not adequately reflect his literacy development. However, as Figure 41 in Chapter seven alludes to, Larry wrote more at home than he had ever done in class. The question remains—why?

It seems that Larry did not find meaning yet in classroom writing. For him, it appeared to be an anxiety-provoking event well into grade one as he complained about stomachaches and headaches. As I finished my research at the end of November of grade one, Larry exhibited a glimmer of hope when Eleanor began to respond to the children's journal entries as seen in Figure 43. Although Larry's responses were limited to primarily 'yes' and 'no', it showed at least some limited engagement.

As I write up my research. I think about what motivates Larry to see himself as a reader, but not a writer. The teachers anecdotally told me when I met with them later that Larry did not make much progress with writing at all in grade one and yet he continued to

grow as a fluent reader. I had noticed that Larry gripped his pencil tightly and printing seemed laborious. I wonder if a computer would have been a better 'tool' for him, given his interest in computers. Their brief computer time once a week did not allow much time for writing because it was being used to orient children to navigating the keyboard as well as a few other programs. They could once they were done, listen to stories on headphones as they watched the pages of the story on the screen. The teachers' comments on his November report card concur that Larry needs to "take greater risks in his independent writing."

Avria. Avria began by making very strong connections between writing and reading. Her emphasis on the importance of friends and family permeated her writing. She was already writing sentences at the beginning of January of her kindergarten year. By April of that year, Avria had announced to me that she was going to write a story that day. Over the summer after her kindergarten year, Avria had kept a summer journal of illustrations and writing. This was but one example of the strong emphasis that her family placed on literacy.

By grade one, Avria was an accomplished writer who wrote easily and confidently. Unlike Larry, Avria never tried computers during free time in either kindergarten or grade one. The only noticeable difference was that in grade one, Avria would walk by the children playing computer games, stop, and watch briefly. Computers seemed to be of little interest to her. This still puzzled me as most of the other children were clearly very interested in computers. Also, this generation has had a high exposure

to computers compared to previous generations. I did not explore this with her or her mother if in fact she had a computer at home.

    <u>Belinda</u>. Belinda 'the wanderer' needed considerable support and encouragement to even attempt to write and read. Very early on I realized that I needed to encourage Belinda's independence. She was overly reliant on adults as well as overly identified with them. The teachers also had noted this propensity to gravitate towards adults rather then her peers. Therefore, using Vygotsky's notion of the ZPD, we might describe Belinda as at one end of the continuum. She in some ways over identified with adults at the expense of her peers and as a result it was difficult to minimize an over dependence on the support provided during journal writing time. In other words, how do we support Belinda to move from being interdependent to being more independent? Apparently, she continued this dependence into grade one. Hazel and Schumaker (1988) have noticed in children with learning disabilities, this over reliance on more expert communicators.

    Add to this mix Belinda's propensity for being a perfectionist and easily frustrated and we have a child who does not feel confident taking risks, such as guessing at words or sounds. The teachers shared with me that Belinda was recommended by her grade two teacher for early literacy help early in the fall of grade two. Clearly, Belinda experienced tensions in learning to read and write, some self-made perhaps because of her particular personality and attitude, some the responsibility of the teachers and parents in somehow not meeting her needs. This last statement is certainly not offered as a criticism of the teachers but rather a comment on how complex this activity we call literacy can be.

In the end, for some children we seem to have more questions than answers. Ideally, children and teachers appropriate from their interactions with each other a shared understanding. Certainly, the understandings were not shared at the journal writing table and were very much skewed as Belinda continued to be overly dependent on the teacher at the table. As I am writing this, I continue to look for clues that I may have missed as well. I went back to my journal entries and interview with Belinda. The only new insight that I did not address in the analysis is that her response to many of the interview questions was 'I don't know'. Talking with adults was not difficult for her as she often tried to engage me in conversation or reading a book with her. All I can infer is that by the beginning of grade two, she had not yet been able 'to trust herself (Juliebo & Meaney, 1997) enough with respect to her literacy skills.

James. James was a quiet, respectful boy who by the end of kindergarten had already made sense of many of our writing conventions and some of the rules for the sound/letter connections. In January, he knew how to print his first name and by the end of January he was attempting sentences using the 'This is' stem. He continued to expand his repertoire of words and rather than copying he started taking risks as seen in Figure 51 of Chapter seven when he wrote 'krerr' (creature).

My interviews with James revealed that he knew a great deal about the rules and reasons for writing and reading. He had also connected the need to learn to read to be able to write and vice versa. As his mom stated, the connection between letters and sounds are a 'given for James'. James clearly saw himself as a writer and reader.

Jackie. Jackie was a confident writer and reader. She seemed to enjoy the challenge of writing, in particular, each time she came to the journal writing table. For example, she never had to be prompted to draw or write; rather she often sat down with a topic already at hand. She spent most of her time on writing, reading and re-reading her entries. She relied a great deal on making the sound/letter connections and was beginning to increase her sight word vocabulary. Jackie continued her 'delight in the written word' into grade one. Jackie trusted and believed in herself as a writer and reader. Her journey had begun as a toddler at home as she delighted in writing words around her drawings. She continued to enjoy shared reading experiences and generally took great pride in her work. Children and adults alike enjoyed being with her and as a result it is no surprise that she worked well in cooperative learning situations.

Carol. Carol had changed from a reluctant reader and writer into a more confident one in grade one. She had actually begun kindergarten quite interested in spontaneous literacy activities such as making invitations at the craft center. Journal writing did not seem to completely fulfill Carol's interest in writing. It seems that writing had to have a more functional aspect to it. However, in grade one, Carol emerged as someone who very much enjoyed both reading and writing. Over the summer, mom had changed the home situation to support her daughter's literacy better. The new home environment seemed to help Carol's confidence. Carol had begun her voyage in 'trusting herself that she could read and write.

Kevin. Kevin's 'infectious delight' did not seem to extend to journal writing time. He would do his illustration followed usually by saying, 'I'm finished'. In fact, the

amount of time he spent at his journal decreased over kindergarten. Just as Belinda was overly reliant on adults for support, so Kevin seemed to exhibit a similar over reliance. However, he differed from Belinda in that he would seek out his peers to play with rather than interact with adults.

He continued this dependence into grade one. He needed a great deal of encouragement to read. He continued to have difficulty in sequencing the Chime-in-Poems. During MacCracken spelling, Kevin often missed hearing or understanding consonant sounds, particularly at the end of words. Yet, similar to Larry, Kevin had written more at home during the summer after kindergarten than he had ever written in class. Clearly, his parents supported his literacy development by suggesting that he keep a journal of summer holidays. When I finished my research in November, Jill one of the team teachers, had begun journal writing again. Kevin wrote a complete sentence and seemed to be growing as a writer. However, when I met with his teachers at the end of grade one, they told me that he would probably be recommended, just as Belinda was, for early literacy help. Is it a coincidence that the two children most over reliant on adult support were also the ones who needed extra help?

<u>The Role of Families in Emergent Literacy</u>

Bruner (1986) suggests that knowledge slowly becomes intertwined with culture. As children grow they become 'apprenticed' into the culture and history of the time. This enculturation means that they begin to hold the same truths or views of reality, that is the same knowledge as other cultural members. Adults, parents and educators, instruct children in the 'folk wisdom' (Bruner, 1986) of the culture. Part of this folk wisdom is the importance of literacy. We know that early schooling such as playschool is becoming increasingly prevalent. In addition, in a literate society the home often exerts a strong influence on children's interest in print-related activities, such as frequent story reading.

Certainly, we know that many factors work together and appear to create interest in reading and writing. Although a complete discussion of the influences of home environment is outside the scope of this study, there was one overriding theme that emerged from my interviews with the children's parents in this study. The families in many ways went beyond the call of duty in supporting their children's literacy development. Carol's family particularly stands out. Carol's mom had quit her job to stay home. She started a home-based business so that she could be there for her two girls when they got home from school. This was a time to talk about school, do homework together, and have a leisurely supper together. In her opinion, this change had created a less chaotic environment for all. Mom had also recognized that Carol was not a 'risk taker'. She wanted to help her daughter and therefore decided to model risk taking. For example, she would say out loud such statements as, "I'm not sure how this is going to turn out, but we can try anyway'". They became better 'conversational partners'. Most of

these families also placed books in many rooms of the home, particularly in the child's

bedroom and in living areas such as kitchens and living rooms. Morrow (1983) found

that families who had books everywhere was one of the key factors in children who had a

high interest in literature. For example, Avria's family even had books in their bathroom

as well a time when the entire family read. The Bible was also a focal point for this

family.

Anecdotally, during the interviews, many of the parents mentioned that they

noticed individual differences in their other children's motivation or interest in print.

Given, the same home environment, children initiated or responded to literacy

experiences differently. Increasingly, we are starting to realize that parent-child

influences are reciprocal. In other words, given the interactive nature of these types of

interactions, both parents and children influence print-related home experiences.

Morrow's (1983) research into home and school correlates of interest in literature has

implications for emergent literacy in kindergarten and grade one. We know that

frequency of reading and more importantly voluntary reading (Irving, 1980) has been

found more often in children with high interest as opposed to children with low interest in

literature.

Not surprisingly, Morrow concluded that teachers need support from their

students' home environments to stimulate voluntary reading. Eleanor certainly attempted

to encourage this type of support with her take-home books that included an introductory

letter letting parents know about her rationale. Next she sent home a brief list of

strategies that parents could use in reading with their children. In this way, enjoyment of

reading was coupled with some simple ideas that parents could use to enhance their child's reading. As Morrow (1983) and Eleanor have proposed, it seems important to invite parents to help in developing voluntary readers by bridging efforts between the home and the school. There is no guarantee as some parents may choose not to participate. However, as we saw in this study there was tremendous variability in how many books children brought home and perhaps how many they actually read. However, teachers and parents cooperating on behalf of their children are always worth the attempt. I will elaborate more on this last point in the implications for practice in the next chapter.

Chapter 9

Conclusions and Implications for Practice and Future Research

The Role of Theory in Interpreting Results

Symbolic tools, including drawing and writing, can play a particularly instrumental role in literacy development. The use of any symbol system is both a communicative act and an expression of individual uniqueness (Vygotsky, 1962). The assumption is that children interpret written language as they interact with their environment (Dyson, 1983). This same assumption has guided this study. The question guiding this inquiry was how do students as hypotheses makers and testers and as part of a 'learning community' eventually become more conscious of using a repertoire of strategies in learning to read and write?

The researcher's personal and theoretical predispositions color the answers to this question. Namely, answers to this question present some parts of 'truth'. For example, for cognitive psychologists, the answer has centered largely on theories of cognition that have focused primarily on the role of children as active interpreters of their world. For anthropologists, the answer often lies in the construct of 'culture' with the emphasis, for example, on how schools enculturate students. In research, theories matter because they have the practical effect of focusing one's study, and because they may subsequently influence what one can discover and what one can know.

Therefore, one way of answering my research question is to examine whether the question of literacy learning is individual or social, or do both perspectives on the world describe the process? Some have suggested that this split is more a result of competing

personal worldviews, rather than reality. The more global emphasis of many anthropologists on the 'web of culture' essentially ignores or at least minimizes the interpretive role that adults play in enculturating children. We can similarly criticize much of the work in cognitive psychology where the focus on individuals' cognitive processes has often ignored or minimized the surrounding environment and its effects on learning. In the end, every theory of learning contains elements of truth. No single theory can explain the enormous complexity that humans bring to learning. For this reason, classroom teachers must acknowledge such a 'high eclecticism' (Bruner, 1985) if they hope to be effective teachers.

Vygotsky and the Zone of Proximal Development

Instead, it seems clear that both social and cognitive perspectives have much to offer us in understanding early literacy learning. As discussed by Bodrova and Leong (1996), the ZPD proposes a balance between what is known and what children are almost ready to know. Therefore, the ZPD describes the interesting, intriguing place of learning just beyond what knowledge and competencies children already demonstrate.

If the ZPD is a "dynamic region of sensitivity" (Rogoff, 1990, p. 14), then it may be the region where culture and cognition create each other (Cole, 1985). Ideally, children and their partners appropriate from their interactions with each other a shared understanding based on their efforts to use the culture's symbols, with which each partner is likely to vary in skill. However, as this study has shown, tensions may arise when there is not a shared understanding. For example, my observation of children's use of "This is" to extend their writing was yet another way to make concrete this notion of the

ZPD. I chose not to explore in detail this new way of representing their world. By choosing not to pursue why children were using "This is", I may have unknowingly created tensions for the children because I did not acknowledge and inquire further about their new way of writing about their worlds.

I highlight this important finding to show a specific example of how I as the researcher could have pursued their understandings in more detail as I worked with the children for the last five weeks. Educators need to have the kind of sensitivity and expertise to be able to be open to children's invitations. In other words, we need to take these opportunities to find out what children know. The use of "This is" was a new way to represent their worlds. However, I do not know if it was an extension of labeling or was it a means to explore worlds of fantasy. I will never know. For this reason, I have suggested as a result of this study that the development of young children into skilled participants in society is often accomplished through children's routine, and often tacit, guided participation in ongoing cultural activities, such as writing. In the example given, the use of "This is" moved into the explicit domain when children used it in their writing. However, its use in many ways remained tacit because I chose not to explore its significance. As educators, we must remember that children observe and participate with others in culturally organized practices found in classrooms, and we in turn observe and participate with them.

Assumptions and Limitations of the Study

The ethnographer constructs a reading of all the data as a "multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, any of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which

are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which he must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render" (Geertz, 1973, p. 10). One looks to see whether there are any interesting patterns that can be identified. Analysis is sorting out the 'webs of significances' (Geertz, 1973). Moreover, the ethnographer provides 'thick descriptions' at every stage of the study and ultimately in its rendering as it is written up. Another way to say this is that ethnography, coupled with case studies as in this research, makes children's often-tacit hypotheses and strategies more explicit. Although we do not have direct access to children's knowledge, we can access that small part of it that our informants can lead us to better understand how they learn. In Chapter two, I proposed that teachers need to take the time to find out what children already know about print.

The direct observation and documentation of actual classroom practices can serve as a powerful means for understanding teaching and learning as a social-communicative process. However, observing in classrooms is more than just looking at 'key events'. Classroom observations of children's current hypotheses are found in their interactions with others as well as the transactions between what children know and what they are almost ready to know. These observations can be conceptualized as a series of snapshots or portraits capturing children's literacy voyages. These snapshots of their journeys depict different vantage points of these transactions. In many ways, the various ways that I captured these snapshots could be compared to a zoom lens moving from the broader contextual background to individual children and back again as needed. In this way, the meanings of the children and their classroom events became more transparent. If in fact young children's development as literate participants in society is often accomplished

through children's routine, and often-tacit participation, then ethnography provides a window on these.

Just as a camera lens filters, human observers filter what is observed. Ethnography demands that researchers filter and systematically record the myriad information from multiple sources as a way to address triangulation. As a result, there is a tremendous amount of information to make sense of. We construct interpretations about our own actions as researchers as well as our participants within the context of the study. In addition, different observational tools such as videotapes and audiotapes filter information in different ways, so that only certain factors can be seen through the lens being used. The result is that "any snapshot of reality represents a reduced version of an event, not a copy of the total event" (Ochs, 1979 as cited in Siliman and Wilkinson, 1992, p. 10). Such is the case in this study.

Vygotsky (in Kozulin, 1986) argued that psychology should be about explaining human intentions. Both ethnography and case studies are interpretive forms of research in that they try to delineate these intentions. Furthermore, Erickson (1986) contends that such research is needed in education for several reasons:

1. To make the familiar strange and interesting again—everyday life is so familiar that it may be invisible.
2. To achieve specific understanding through documentation of concrete details of practice.
3. To consider the local meanings that happenings have for the people involved in them.

4. To engage in comparative understanding of different social settings-considering the relations between a setting and its wider social environments helps to clarify what is happening in the local setting itself.

5. To engage in comparative understanding beyond the immediate circumstances of the local setting, (p. 119).

These criteria are different from searching for general laws or grand theories. These five reasons provide a different perspective from experimental studies in assessing the reliability (dependability and consistency) and validity (truth-value or trustworthiness) of interpretive research.

Although I consider this study to be interpretive in approach, others might argue that it is constructivist as well. I do not want to be too dogmatic on the distinction because both perspectives are unified by their commitment to the study of the world from the interacting individual's point of view (see Schwandt, 1998 for a discussion). It is this emphasis on interacting children that is central to our understanding of how children become literate. Both endorse the notion that "contrary to common-sense, there is no unique 'real world' that preexists and is independent of human mental activity and human symbolic language" (Bruner, 1986, p. 95). Following my interest in Vygotksy's theory, "theoretical formulations hover so low over the interpretations they govern that they don't make much sense or hold much interest apart from them" (Geertz, 1973, p. 25).

In terms of this research, I used multiple sources of data as well as multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings. Because this was a graduate dissertation, I did not use multiple investigators. Certainly other investigators would have added richness to this inquiry, such as looking at the afternoon kindergarten class. My member checks included Eleanor the kindergarten teacher to a minor extent. She has read some of

these chapters and commented on them. I also randomly selected videos of the children for her to comment on and of course we had numerous interviews as well as more informal opportunities to chat. This is the extent to which she wanted to be involved as a very busy teacher and as well as involved in staff leadership and presenting at conferences. As a result, involving participants in all phases of research from conceptualizing the study to writing up the findings (Merriam, 1988, pp. 169-170) has been limited to the teacher's availability.

If the research has one major limitation with regards to internal validity or trustworthiness it is with respect to peer examination. The only colleague who read and commented on my findings as I wrote them up was my thesis advisor. Certainly, other colleagues would have provided invaluable insights as the findings emerged. However, the remaining four members of my thesis committee will have reviewed the final report and I have incorporated their suggestions into it.

Implications for Practice

I believe that teachers have an important role to play in young children's literacy development. My descriptions of literacy events will help teachers to be aware of the directions in which children's literacy knowledge can change over kindergarten and grade one. Such awareness can make easier one of the most difficult tasks in teaching, the close observation of many different children. From a basis of careful observation, teachers can respect what children know and support children's continued learning in ways that make sense to the children.

We are all teachers and learners searching for pieces of understanding in this complex activity we call literacy. "Only when we are guided by this knowledge about language and how children use it can we see children's language uses as evidence of what children know, have, and do as language users" (Lindfors, 1991, p. 66). However, "in many corners of the current educational scene, there is pressure on teachers to ignore what children tell us about their learning . . . . The cry goes up for accountability and children's performance on standardized tests becomes the measure of the children's developing language . . . (Lindfors, 1991, pp. 218-219). As I propose in this study, children follow various paths and often employ their own interpretive processes in their literacy voyages. Educators need to commit to finding out what emerging abilities their students have.

Vygotsky's ideas about the relationship between learning and development are also helpful in explaining why teaching can be difficult. Namely, we cannot make exact prescriptions that elicit the exact same developmental change for every child since individual differences are to be expected. Therefore, the precise relationship between learning and development may be different for each child. The notion of the ZPD broadens the scope of 'developmentally appropriate practice' (DAP). Currently DAP is defined by the child's independent achievements, by the processes and skills that have fully developed (Bredecamp & Copple, 1997). It does not include emerging processes and skills or assisted performance. However, effective teachers have known that we do not wait until the desired level emerges before providing activities that encourage it. As a result, children with teachers who take developmentally appropriate practice as carved in

stone rather than as a guideline, may unwittingly keep children at the lower level of their ZPD. In other words, the ZPD melds what children can do independently as well as emphasizing what they can do with help. Together they become developmentally appropriate practice.

One of the challenges in this kind of inquiry is making recommendations for practice without sounding prescriptive. Cases and educational ethnographies "yield not prescriptions for practice, but materials for reflection about particular aspects of the situated nature of learning to write" (Hymes, 1972, p. xiv). As a professional, I hope that educators will use this study to reflect and to make their own interpretations based on their experiences and knowledge. There were so many rich sources of information that one can easily get lost on the voyage. However, here I must bring in, not only what I learned from this study, but cumulatively what I have learned from working with other children who were struggling to read and write.

An Important Strategy: Children Taking Risks

Over the years, I have consistently observed children who were not risk-takers. As part of my master's, I observed seven children, six boys and one girl, being tutored one-on-one in an inner-city school in a major western Canadian city. The seven students in grades one and two had been identified by their classroom teachers as 'at risk' for not developing adequate literacy skills. They were recommended for the Early Reading Intervention Program run out of the University of Alberta.

The reading intervention program focused on teaching students 'self-correcting' and 'self-monitoring' strategies at an appropriate level. The program was inspired by

Vygotsky's theory of learning in that the children worked at least some of the time, within their ZPD. The students worked four or five times per week for a twenty-week period usually for twenty to thirty minutes at a time. Some of the students might then continue for another period depending on their progress.

My role as a researcher, in this exploratory study, was to focus on the students' interpretations of their 'self-monitoring' behaviors. I audiotaped the reading intervention sessions as well as took very detailed notes of all them. Four stages in the ZPD emerged. In the first two stages the child was becoming more 'self-directed'. 'Joint awareness' characterized the third stage and the final stage was best described by the metaphor, 'trust yourself (Juliebo & Meaney, 1997). Ultimately, the children had to 'trust themselves', to be more risk taking, if they were to progress. Of course, I am assuming that they had learned the strategies to be effective readers. In other words, once the children had over time clearly demonstrated that they had many of the letter/sound correspondences, a growing sight vocabulary, self-correcting strategies, what kept some of them from using them? Again, just as Belinda and Kevin in this study showed, some children are overly dependent on adult support. However, even with adult support the children seem not to internalize the help. More to the point, they seem not to 'trust themselves' to use what has been internalized. It is as if these types of children need continuous 'hand holding'. Perhaps it is a form of 'learned helplessness' (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978).

Learning to read and write builds upon oral language, but makes new and sometimes quite different demands upon language (Olson, 1991). Writing and reading demand a high level of abstraction on two levels: "abstraction from the sound of speech

and abstraction from the interlocutor" (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 181). From my previous work as well as the results of this study, I suggest that the second abstraction may be the most significant in helping children to learn to read and write, particularly children who are not intrinsically 'risk takers'. The teacher as interlocutor lures the student into participating more independently in the activity. Vygotsky (1986) emphasized that teaching is effective "only when it awakens and rouses to life those functions which are in a stage of maturing, which lie in the zone of proximal development" (p. 278). He further emphasized the importance of discursive interactions between human beings. Through dialogue and 'guided participation' (Rogoff, 1990), the adult challenges, supports, and finally empowers the learner to construct or to solve the problems on her own. It is the empowering or 'risk taking' that somehow does not get internalized with some children. This may also be similar to the previously mentioned over reliance on more expert communicators that some researchers have seen in children with learning disabilities (Hazel & Schumaker, 1988).

This study has provided educators with examples of how to observe children in the classroom. The Reggio Emilio approach incorporates routinely many of the same methods. These sources of information provide critical portraits of children's literacy voyages. Certainly, the journal writing table provides an important way to 'bootstrap' children's knowledge in a very personal way. By having routine ways of interacting with children, we are in a better position to understand their interpretive frameworks—their tacit-knowledge and motives. In the end, teachers have to find a way to support and

encourage risk-taking, recognizing that for some children 'overcoming dependency on conversational partners', may present the greatest hurdle in their literacy development.

Reflections for Future Research

Today, schools are being challenged to educate most students to levels of literacy expected previously of but a few (Marshall & Tucker, 1992). Given the current practice of inclusion in schools, one can anticipate more teachers struggling with adapting materials and methods to help bring all children closer to the ideal of developing the type of literacy skills needed in today's world. Inclusion also means that there may be more students in the classroom who might not readily adapt or be able to benefit from the ways of instruction and social interactions being used. To this end, the research into strategy instruction, reciprocal teaching and emergent literacy has provided us with important information. This study has stood on the shoulders of researchers such as Pressley and Palincsar and their colleagues. My own model of the four stages of literacy development in children's ZPD is compelling and perhaps can be used to refine the present study (Juliebo & Meaney, 1997). Other researchers have observed very similar stages using Vygotsky's notion of the ZPD.

Stages in the ZPD

Wertsch has translated and interpreted Vygotsky's concept of the ZPD as the possible forms of assistance we can use with children. Wertsch (1979, 1984) focused on adult-child dialogues. He used the term 'semiotic flexibility' to refer to the adult's shifts in speech in responding to the child as they worked through the four levels of the ZPD. His four-level model has provided a template to try and explain other contexts in which

adults transfer responsibility for task completion from themselves to children. Pellegrini and Galda (1990) developed their four-stage model of the ZPD to predict how adults might adjust their interaction style as a function of children's competence in the tasks. In all these three studies, there was a four-stage progression in the ZPD as the adult relinquished the control of the task to the child. The central concern was how to help the student to develop a sense of the task at hand as well as the confidence that will allow for a more independent participation in the future (Rogoff, 1990).

Even Wood, Bruner and Ross' (1976) original study into scaffolding has similarities. In addition, the research by Tharp and Gallimore (1988) into the 'instructional conversations' between teachers and students in classrooms has a similar thrust. We are all interested in examining the processes whereby conceptual changes in children are a result of a gradual internalizing of socially-situated cognitive activities experienced with significant adults or more advanced peers and others in the ZPD. The key to doing these kinds of analyses is to identify the variations in the ways that adults and children share the task situation, such as journal writing. Perhaps, as I have proposed in this study, part of these variations may stem from the children's reluctance to take risks even in the most ideal situations. Although none of these studies described students as having 'to trust themselves', I believe that coupled with this study there is enough overlap among the four stages in the ZPD to warrant further investigations into children's literacy development using the four stages of the ZPD as an interpretive framework. As educators, we need to know how teachers structure classroom environments and use

interpersonal communication to assist children in learning to 'trust themselves' as more independent learners.

In fact, one way to delineate the connections between Vygotsky's interpsychological and intrapsychological processes is to focus on the semiotic mechanisms (Wertsch, 1991; Wertsch & Smolka, 1993). Wertsch and Smolka (1993) have drawn on the work of Bakhtin, a literary critic and semiotician in researching the discourse of kindergarten classrooms in a middle-class US suburban public school as well as a Brazilian public school. Central to Bakhtin's account of social and mental processes was the notion of 'dialogicality'. In his view, "any utterance produced by humans can be understood only by understanding its relationship to other utterances" (cited in Wertsch & Smolka, 1993, p. 73).

In general, dialogicality concerns the various means by which two or more voices come into contact. For example, Bakhtin would have viewed understanding as a process whereby the utterances of listeners such as students come into contact with and may confront or challenge the utterances of speakers, such as teachers. The voice may be in the form of self-talk or external speech. It is the external speech as dialogue or discourse that is 'hearable' in the classroom. Wertsch and Smolka have also drawn on the research of Mehan (1979) using the T-R-E" (Initiation-Reply-Evaluation) sequences commonly found in classroom instruction. After analyzing 15-minute segments of videotapes of the kindergarten classes, they proposed that the dialogues that went beyond a strictly transmission of knowledge served a dialogic function. The educators embracing a more dialogic approach invited a kind of openness by encouraging children to think, to

generate new interpretations and conceptual understandings. They hypothesized that the different forms of interpsychological functioning associated with these different discourses might result in qualitatively different intrapsychological understandings for students. Their methodology might be used to address another gap in the research as a further refinement of this study.

As suggested in Chapter two, a gap in the research exists with respect to delineating the connection between cognitive bootstrapping, decoding, and phonemic awareness. A further refinement of this study might be to examine the classroom discourses during 'key events' as well as during journal writing time as a way to look at this connection specifically.

In the end, if children learn to construct an imagined world by transforming their real ones, how do they do this through writing? Educator and author Vivian Paley (1988) argues that young children's composed stories are only 'empty shells' until those stories are brought to life through the children's dramatic play. In her classrooms, Paley forms a stage area with masking tape on the rug and then, inside that stage, the children literally play out their written stories. In addition, Dyson's research for the past ten years has examined the question of how do children learn to play with others inside the words themselves? That is, how does this living outside of texts become transformed within and by the children? How do children have play partners who are not physically standing on the stage with them, so that the subtleties of their actions and talk can be rendered into black-and-white squiggles? Dyson (1987) concluded that answers to these questions seem rooted in their very individuality—in their styles as symbolizers and socializers. We

observed this variability in this study. It seems that an individual's ways of interacting with people and symbolic materials is an organizing force in writing development. This study extends this notion by making more explicit children's often tacit hypotheses and strategies as they write. I also suggest that all children need support on their literacy voyages; however, some children perhaps need a different kind of support to encourage them to take risks—to 'trust themselves'.

Quo Vadis?

Perhaps with a more multilayered interpretive framework as proposed by poststructuralists, we might be able to flesh out the subtleties of classroom instruction. One influence of poststructuralist thought is the emphasis on the instability of meanings in the ways in which our understandings of ourselves and others are constructed and reconstructed in the context of a particular historical time (Foucault, 1984). Phrased differently, the poststructural perspective proposes an even greater emphasis on a process-oriented vision of teaching and learning.

Over the last twenty years, research on children's learning has been part of a broader interest in the 'cognitive revolution' in viewing children as active, problem solvers intent on making meaning or sense of their learning. Furthermore, the active child was embedded in particular curricular practices such as writing conferences where like the responsive parent; the expert teacher responded to children's writing (Calkins, 1986; Read, 1980).

During the eighties, this vision of the child linked to responsive parents usually the mother or the teacher was given voice by the interpretations of Vygotskian theory.

Vygotsky's theory stresses that parents and teachers facilitate the expert scaffolding of learners. Basic to reconceptualizing the child writer is continuing to understand the tacit understandings that children bring to classrooms. However, the context in which literacy development occurs, the classrooms and education system perhaps need to be reconceputalized first. As Skrtic (1991) contends, a new educational order needs to emerge. Organization and transformation will emerge from a more complex, pluralistic, unpredictable system that will like life itself, always be in transition to tap people's creative powers. Classrooms are composed of children from diverse backgrounds that are distinguished by the diversity of interpretive frameworks. This diversity will be better served in this kind of education system.

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Appendix A

Consent Letter and Form for Kindergarten Parents

February 16, 1999

Dear Parent/Guardian:

My name is Wanda Meaney. I am a graduate student in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Calgary, conducting a research project under the supervision of Dr. Judy Lupart as part of the requirements towards a Ph.D. degree. I would like to have your child participate.

I am writing to provide information regarding my research project, "The Potential for Emergent Writing to Make More Explicit the Writing-Reading Connection: Children as Hypotheses Makers and Testers", so that you can make an informed decision regarding your child's participation.

The purpose of the study is to find out how much children know about reading and writing by studying their preconventional ("scribbles") writing and reading behaviours. The overall goal of the project is a description and hopefully an explanation of what hypotheses (ideas) children have about reading and writing. I am also interested in finding out how eventually as part of a classroom, children become more conscious of these ideas in learning to read and write.

As part of the study, your child will be asked to take part in a one-on-one interview with me that looks at what your child knows about reading and writing. This will probably be over two 10-minute sessions. Also, I will be in the classroom for the first three to four weeks, approximately three times per week, videotaping what goes on in the classroom. Some of the tapings will be transcribed into a written form with the use of pseudonyms to ensure anonymity on paper. Until the beginning of June, your child will be invited to come and write with me and the other children during journal writing time. These sessions will be audiotaped about 2-3 times per week. Again, all or part of the sessions will be transcribed into written form using pseudonyms. I will also be photocopying their work to use in my study. Your child's name will be assigned a pseudonym. You should be aware that even if you give your permission, your child is free to withdraw at any time for any reason without penalty. This also includes your child's decision not to answer a question.

Participation in this study will involve no greater risks than those ordinarily experienced in daily life. In other words, in collaboration with xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx, the

classroom teacher, I will try to mesh my research methods with what is already established practice in her classroom, such as the journal writing. You may also view my presence as an extra pair of hands to work with your child when he /she is journal writing.

Results with the use of pseudonyms will be reported in my thesis dissertation and any published articles. The data while it is being collected will be kept in a locked file cabinet, only accessible to me. At present, the xxxxxxxxxxx School Division keeps copies of the proposal and consent letters for five years. Also, myself, the classroom teacher and my supervisor and/or supervising committee at the University of Calgary will only access the videotapes and audiotapes. Arrangements will be made with the superintendent of xxxxxxxxx School Division as to what to do with the tapes once the research is over and written up. Therefore, I anticipate that they will want the tapes kept for five years as well, at which point they will be destroyed.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at xxxxxxx, my supervisor Dr. Judy Lupart at xxxxxxx, the Office of the Chair, Faculty of Education Joint Ethics Reviews Committee at xxxxxxx, or the Office of the Vice-President (Research) at xxxxxxx. Three copies of the consent form are provided. Please return two signed copies to your child's school by February 22, 1999, and retain the other copy for your records.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Wanda Meaney

<u>Consent for Research Participation</u>

I/We, the undersigned, hereby give my/our consent for (name of child)_____ _____to participate in a research project entitled 'The Potential for Emergent Writing to Make More Explicit the Writing-Reading Connection: Children as Hypotheses Makers and Testers".

I/We, understand that such consent means that_____will be interviewed for about 30 minutes and videotaped as part of the regular class, and audiotaped in small writing groups in the class for approximately 6 weeks, 2-3 times/week.

I/We understand that participation in this study may be terminated at any time by my/our request, or of the investigators. Participating in this project and/or withdrawal from this project will not affect my/our request or receipt of other services from the school board or the university.

I/We understand that this study will not involve any greater risks than those ordinarily occurring in daily life.

I/We understand that the responses will be recorded anonymously and kept in strictest confidence.

I/We understand that pseudonyms will be used to report the data in any published reports.

IWE understand that all raw data, including videotapes and audiotapes, will be kept in a locked file cabinet and destroyed five years after publication of study results.

I/We have been given a copy of this consent form for my/our records. I/WE understand that if at any time I/we have questions, I/we can contact the researcher Wanda Meaney at xxxxxxx, her supervisor Dr. Judy Lupart at xxxxxxx, the Office of the Chair, Faculty of Education Joint Ethics Review Committee, at xxxxxxx, or the Office of the Vice-President at xxxxxxx.

Signature of Parent/Guardian   Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date   Date

Teacher's Signature   Date

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

1. <u>Initial interview with the kindergarten classroom teacher, Eleanor on March 4. 1999.</u>

Many educators have emphasized the importance of personal vision as a methodology for teacher improvement and school improvement. I believe that you have a personal vision for your class, perhaps the school as well. To help you focus our discussion next week, I thought that the following questions might get our interview going:

A) What is your personal vision for your class?

B) What do you think the school's vision is?

C) Do you think that your vision is compatible with the school's vision? Why or why not?

2. <u>Second interview with Eleanor on March 18. 1999.</u>

A) What do you see as the connection between emergent literacy and play, talk and drawing?

B) What are your thoughts on the connection between children's preconventional written forms (scribbles) and the role of play? The role of drawing?

3. <u>Third interview on March 31</u>

I had asked for Eleanor's comments on randomly selected videos (Feb. 23, March 4 and March 9).

4. Fourth interview with Eleanor on Mav 5.

I again asked for Eleanor's comments on randomly selected videos from March 23/24 and May 5.

Appendix C

Consent Letter and Form for Grade One Parents

May 28. 1999

Dear Parent/Guardian

My name is Wanda Meaney. I am a graduate student in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Calgary, conducting a research project under the supervision of Dr. Judy Lupart as part of the requirements towards a Ph.D. degree. I would like to have your child continue to participate in Grade 1, starting in September, 1999.

Your child,_____, has already been part of my classroom research in xxxxxxxxxxxxx class since February 1999. The purpose of the study is to find out how much children know about reading and writing by studying their preconventional ("scribbles") writing and reading behaviours. The overall goal of the project is a description and hopefully an explanation of what hypotheses (ideas) children have about reading and writing. I am also interested in finding out how eventually as part of a classroom, children become more conscious of these ideas in learning to read and write.

For the next part of the research, I would like to follow and work with approximately six Grade 1 students covering a full range of emergent abilities. I would
• like your child to participate as a case study._____will be interviewed and assessed on a one-on-one basis by me as well as audiotaped as part of small reading/writing groups for 12 weeks, 3-5 times/week beginning September, 1999.

As with the first part of the study, your child's name will be assigned a pseudonym. Since some of the sessions will be audiotaped and transcribed into written form, pseudonyms will be used again. You should be aware that even if you give your permission, your child is free to withdraw at any time for any reason without penalty. This also includes your child's decision not to answer a question. Also, to complete the picture of your child's emerging writing and reading abilities, I would like to conduct and interview over the phone or in person looking at your beliefs about literacy in general and beliefs about your child's literacy development in particular. If you are not interested in doing the interview, I am still interested in working with your child. I have prepared two separate consent forms for that purpose.

Results with the use of pseudonyms will be reported in my thesis dissertation and any published articles. The data while it is being collected will be kept in a locked file cabinet, only accessible to me. At present, the xxxxxxxxx School Division keeps copies of the proposal and consent letters for five years. Also, the audiotapes will only be

accessed by myself, the classroom teacher, and my supervisor and/or supervising committee at the University of Calgary. Arrangements will be made with the superintendent of xxxxxxxxxx School Division as to what to do with the tapes once the research is over and written up. Therefore, I anticipate that she/he will want the tapes kept for five years as well, at which point they will be destroyed.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at xxxxxxx, my supervisor Dr. Judy Lupart at xxxxxxx, the Office of the Chair. Faculty of Education Joint Ethics Reviews Committee at xxxxxxx, or the Office of the Vice-President (Research) at xxxxxxx. Three copies of the consent forms are provided. Please **return two signed copies to your child's school by June** 7,**1999, and retain the other copy for your records.**

Thank you for your support since February and your continued support in the future. In response to some parent's requests. I will put together a one page summary of the significance of my study and will send it out the last week of school.

Sincerely,

Wanda Meaney

<u>Consent for Research Participation as Individual Case Studies</u>

I/We, the undersigned, hereby give my/our consent for (name of child)_____
_____to participate in a research project entitled "The Potential for Emergent Writing to Make More Explicit the Writing-Reading Connection: Children as Hypotheses Makers and Testers'".

I/We. understand that such consent means that_____will be interviewed for about one hour, assessed, and audiotaped in small writing/reading groups in the class for approximately 12 weeks, 3-5 times/week.

I/We understand that participation in this study may be terminated at any time by my/our request, or of the investigators. Participating in this project and/or withdrawal from this project will not affect my/our request or receipt of other services from the school board or the university.

I/We understand that this study will not involve any greater risks than those ordinarily occurring in daily life.

I/We understand that the responses will be recorded anonymously and kept in strictest confidence.

I/We understand that pseudonyms will be used to report the data in any published reports.

IWE understand that all raw data, including videotapes and audiotapes, will be kept in a locked file cabinet and destroyed five years after publication of study results.

I/We have been given a copy of this consent form for my/our records. I/WE understand that if at any time I/we have questions, I/we can contact the researcher Wanda Meaney at xxxxxxx, her supervisor Dr. Judy Lupart at xxxxxxx, the Office of the Chair, Faculty of Education Joint Ethics Review Committee, at xxxxxxx, or the Office of the Vice-President at xxxxxxx.

Signature of Parent/Guardian   Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date   Date

Teacher's Signature   Date

Appendix   D

<u>Interviews with both Eleanor and Jill as team teachers in Grade One</u>

Jill

Please tell me about your personal philosophy of education for the children. How did

you work on meshing that with Eleanor's as part of this team teaching?

<u>Eleanor</u>

Since I already knew about Eleanor's beliefs, I also asked her how she was meshing these

beliefs as a team teacher in Grade 1.

Appendix E

Sample of Split-Page Format

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Appendix F

Interview protocol with the 22 kindergarten children

1. Print you first and/or last name on this strip of paper.

2. Did phonemic segmentation using their names.

3. Asked them to write 2 or 3 words that they knew and did phonemic segmentation with these words.

4. Using their Journal Writing from the Previous Day:

A) Tell me about what you drew.

B) Tell me about what you wrote.

C) What is a letter? Or Show me a letter? (I sometimes reversed these questions)

D) What is a word? Or Show me a word.   (I sometimes reversed these questions)

E) What is a sentence? Or Show me a sentence (I sometimes reversed these questions)

5. Why do people write?

6. Why do you write?

With these last two questions I am trying to get at both general and more personal

purposes for writing.

7. Concepts of Good Writing

A) What does a good writer do? Or What do you have to do to be a good writer?

The two questions were used in case the child found the first one too abstract.

8. Using the Journal

A) Tell me how did you write this?

B) What did you have to know to be able to write this?

If these questions were too implicit for the child. I used the following questions as well.

C) Which of these pieces (in the entire journal to date) of writing is your best?

D) What did you do to make it your best?

9. I would then ask the children to use their journal as a reader and read it to me to finish off the interview.

Appendix G

Letter and Interview Protocol for Grade One Parents

September 7, 1999

Dear Parent(s),

It was great to see your children returning to school last week. We have had a chance to get reacquainted. Rather than swamp you with more paper work the first week of school, I have chosen to send you my questions this week. As I had mentioned to you in June, part of getting to know your child better is finding out about what he/she was like as a preschooler. Recent research on emergent literacy clearly indicates that children begin to acquire concepts of reading and writing during the preschool years.

To help you prepare for our phone or personal interview during the week of September 20, I have chosen two rather open-ended questions. The two questions that I would appreciate you thinking about are: **(1) Do you think there is anything parents of 2-5 year olds might do to help their children learn to read and write better when they start school? If yes, what? Think about what you have done in your own home with your child. Please be as specific as you can. (2) Why do you think some children learn to read and write well in school and others do not? Be as specific as you can with examples.**

Since I will be away from September 9-September 15, I will try and phone you the evening of September 16 and possibly on that weekend as well, so that we can plan a time and place for our interviews.

Thank you for the opportunity to work with your children.

Sincerely yours,

Wanda Meaney
xxxxxxx